

A decorative blue floral border with intricate scrollwork and leaf patterns, framing the text on all four sides.

Church History

The historical Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church, Inc. was founded in the year of 1866, only a few years following the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. The founding fathers established this house of worship to give African Americans of the community the opportunity to freely worship God in their environment. We are told that the first church structure was made of logs and bushes. In 1927, the building was destroyed by a tornado. During this time, services were held at Ephesus United Methodist Church and the local schoolhouse located near the old railway depot.

The struggle of rebuilding was hard, but finally, the building was completed within four months. Six months later, tragedy struck once again. A storm destroyed the ante-room, bell tower and one side of the church, causing a great amount of damage. Once again our fore parents had to work hard to repair the building. Soon the church members were marching into their new building which could not have been accomplished without God's help, grace and guidance.

We see this building with its present frame as being God's "Bethel" place (house of God or Holy place). A place where people of all walks of life can come after wrestling in the arenas of life to cast their burdens into the Master's hands.

History informs us that following the signing of the Emancipation, Bethlehem was the first African American Baptist congregation to be organized in the West Wateree area of Kershaw County, South Carolina. In the years 1870, Bethlehem gave birth to Fort Clark Baptist Church of Elgin, South Carolina to make it more convenient for those members who traveled a great distance in order to worship.

God has blessed us in that an educational building has been added and renovation made to the sanctuary. Additional properties and buildings have been purchased to include the Family Life Center and a two-story house to be used for temporary living assistance.

We are grateful for such a rich history and pray that history will continue to be made as the years come and go. Praise is unto God for all of the marvelous things He has done.