

# Early Churches in Ceres

## 1817 - 1911

# Pioneers Brought Their Religion and Churches with Them

...In almost every instance we see the people of our land taking their church and their religion with them as they moved to "new frontiers."

Migration had a familiar ring: came from Germanic Regions of Europe about 1750 to Pennsylvania, stayed there until the close of the Revolutionary War, then migrated to SWVA. Settled in Wythe County or in the Walkers Creek Valley, and began to migrate across Walker Mountain or up the Walker's Creek Valley. From these first settlers grew the churches of Ceres which, in the order of their founding.

First came to Germans who brought the Lutheran Faith with them and the Scots Irish who brought the Presbyterian Faith.

Another major denomination – the Methodists – arrived in Ceres area by 1840s probably brought to the area by circuit riders.



# Sharon Union Church

## 1817 - 1911

# Sharon Union Church

- Lutherans and Presbyterians shared the building
- From the records both denominations were active in the early 1800s
- First deed for Sharon Church was dated October 14, 1817
- **Note: 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary will be celebrated tomorrow, October 22, 2017, at Sharon Lutheran Church**
- Deed between the 3 “Jacobs” : Jacob Groseclose deeded land to Jacob Spangler (Presbyterian) and Jacob Kimberlin, (Lutheran) Elders of the German Congregation.
- Fee was one dollar and the parcel of land contained 40 acres patented in 1803 and located in the “Rich Valley, the Waters of North Fork of Holston.

# Sharon Union Church (1817-1911)

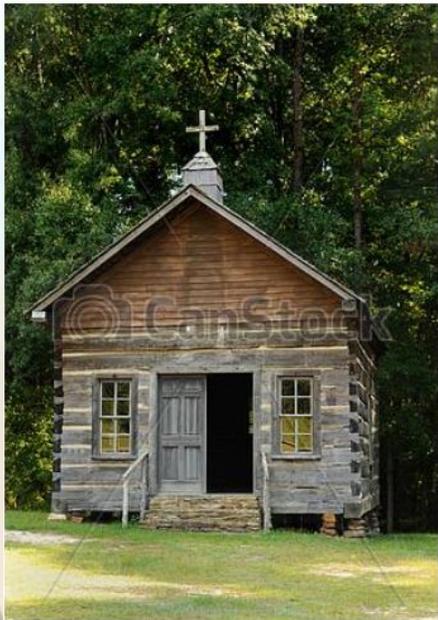
- Church was shared jointly by the Lutherans and the Presbyterians with service being held when a pastor from the faith was available. ***The History of Bland County*** reports that the Methodists were also a part of the Sharon Union Church although no dates are given when they began worshipping there. They did withdraw in 1907 to form North Holston Methodist Church.
- The name “Sharon” does not appear until 1827 with the beginning of the Presbyterian records. First mention of Sharon for this area is in the writings of early explorer, Wilburn Waters, when he mentions stopping to drink at Sharon, a beautiful spring now located in Bland County.
- In 1832 minutes showed that the Sessions of both groups settled their “differences respecting the rights and privileges of the Lutherans and Presbyterians to the “meeting house.” In other words, they would share the facilities as originally agreed upon.

# Sharon Union Church (1817-1911)

- 1817 – 1856: First meeting house was a log structure. Used about 40 years.
- 1856 – 1883: A new brick church was dedicated on the first Sabbath of June 1856 by Rev Stephen Rhudy (Lutheran) and Rev. D. F. Palmer (Presbyterian). In about 1883 a large crack formed in the wall, and when members became afraid to worship there, they tore it down and built a frame church.
- 1883 -1911: frame church that was dedicated on September 24, 1883.
- 1911: the Presbyterians sold their share in Sharon Church for \$309 (equivalent today =\$7,550 in 2016)

# Sharon Union Church (1817 – 1911)

1817-1856



**First Church Built in 1817 was a log structure. (Not actual image.)**

1856-1883



**2<sup>nd</sup> Church was a brick Structure. (Not actual image.)**

1883-1911



**3<sup>rd</sup> Church built On same foundation as brick church –same building as today.**

**1907 - Methodists left the Sharon Union Church in 1907 to form North Holston UMC**

**1911- Lutherans buy out Presbyterians for \$309.00**



# Sharon Lutheran Church

## 1817 - 2017

# Sharon Lutheran Church (1911 – 2017)

- 1911 – 1921: current location and similar Sharon Lutheran Church.
- 1921: Sharon Lutheran was remodeled and renovated.
- 1921 – 2017: it is considered the oldest church, still operating in Bland County.
- Sharon Lutheran Church and Cemetery
  - On National Registry of Historic Places
  - Many stones in the cemetery are examples of Folk Art in Stone. Sharon Cemetery is featured in Klaus Wust's Book: ***Folk Art in Stone – Southwest VA***
  - Sluss Family members that were massacred are buried there
  - Jim Wilson's family installed a flag pole in 2017 to honor all veterans
  - Fallen Heroes buried there: Henry T. McNutt, Owen Wilson

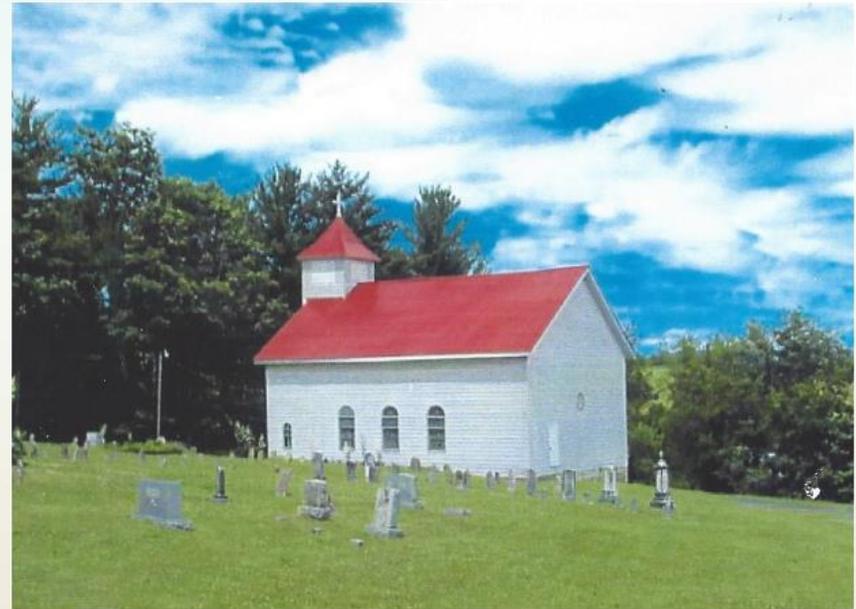
# Sharon Lutheran Church (1911-2017)

1883-1921



**3<sup>rd</sup> Church built as a frame  
Structure on same foundation  
as brick church –same  
building as today.**

1921-2017



**Present Church renovated in 1921  
and improved over the years -**



# Sharon Presbyterian Church 1911 - 2000

# Sharon Presbyterian Church (1911 – 2001)

- Church records date back to 1805, but wasn't taken into Abingdon Presbytery until October, 1827.
- Remained in Sharon Union Church until Sharon Presbyterian Church sold its part of Sharon Church to the Lutheran Congregation in 1911 for \$309 (2016 equivalent = \$7550).
- October, 1911 new church was dedicated on land given by an elder in the church, H. E. Peery.
- Church was remodeled and heating system installed while Rev. Wadsworth was pastor in the 1950s. During that time the church was a member of the Blue Grass Trail Larger Parish joined with Leyburn Presbyterian in Bland; Bland Presbyterian in Crandon and Walker's Creek Presbyterian in White Gate to hold cooperative programs and hire a minister.
- Memorial stain glass windows added in early 1960s during Rev. Cecil Dalton's tenure as pastor.
- Ceres FFA Museum has the stain glass window honoring Henry C. Groseclose, founder of the FFA. He was a member of that congregation.
- On July 1, 2000 the Abingdon Presbytery closed the church due to low membership.

# Sharon Presbyterian Church (1911-2000)



**Sharon Presbyterian shown in town of Ceres in 1914.**

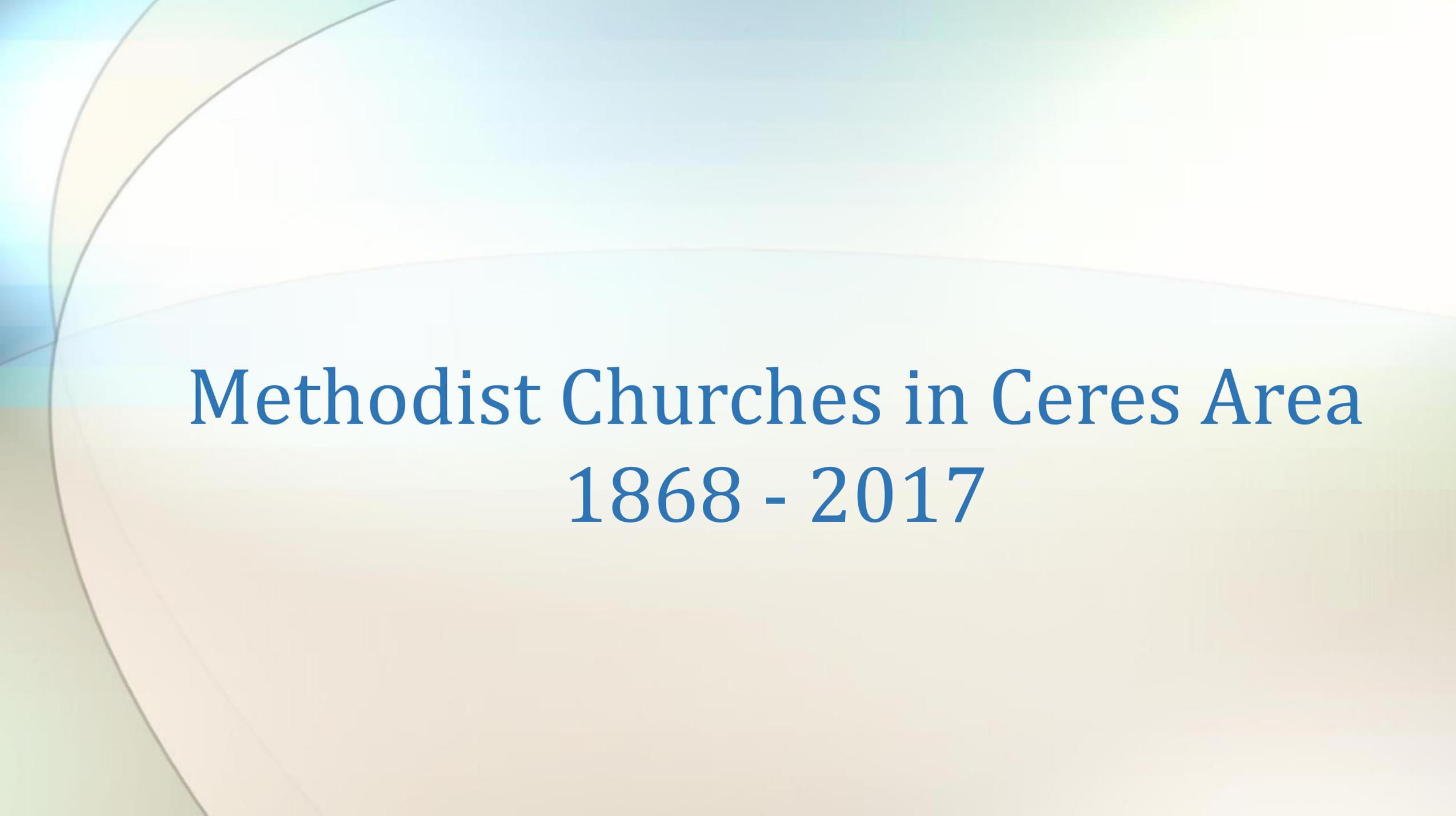


# Old Bethel Union Church

## 1842 - 1907

# Old Bethel Union Church (1842 – 1907)

- **Union Church of Lutherans, Presbyterians and Methodists**
- **Located half-way between Bland and Ceres on the north side of the main road**
- **Bethel was built in 1842 with land deeded to the 3 denominations by Daniel Perkey and James Lambert**
- **Building burned in the summer of 1889 and was not rebuilt**
- **Records show that members of the congregation continued to worship in the old Gravel Hill Schoolhouse after the church burned.**
- **There is no record of the congregation after 1907. It is believed members joined other churches.**
- **No known image.**



# Methodist Churches in Ceres Area 1868 - 2017

# Methodist Churches in the Ceres Area

- Little know about exactly when the Methodist Church began in the area. We do know that early on they were worshipping at Sharon Union Church with the Lutherans and the Presbyterians from about the 1830s until 1906. (More about their withdrawal in the description of North Holston)
- The first Methodist Church in America was established in Baltimore in 1784. Under the leadership of Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke, circuit riders were organized to go to the wilderness areas to establish churches and increase membership.
- These circuit riders, often laymen traveled to the rural areas on horseback to preach the Gospel and establish churches. They traveled through wilderness and villages, they preached every day at any place available (peoples' cabins, courthouses, fields, meeting houses, later even basements and street corners).
- By 1844 with the help of 4,000 circuit riders, they rapidly became the largest Protestant denomination in the U. S.
- Perhaps the most famous circuit rider in the Ceres Area was Brother Robert Sheffey – his tale is chronicled in Jess Karr's ***The Saint of the Wilderness***. Brother Sheffey was know for his quirkiness and his miracles. Otho Cassell tell me he wasn't very popular in the Ceres area for his effect on the moonshining business!
- The establishment of the Methodist Churches in the Ceres Area will be described in the order we think they were established from documents made available at the Bland County Historical Society and in ***The History of Bland County***.

# Nauvoo Academy – Doaks Chapel

## Bethany UMC (1852 – 1880)

- Bethany UMC had its origins in Nauvoo Academy and Doaks Chapel
  - 1852: Nauvoo Academy built on Holston River. They had 92 members of which 5 were colored.
  - 1869: Doaks Chapel was built with Nauvoo Academy members transferred to its rolls
  - 1878: Deed from Robert Doak and wife to I.M. Repass, H. F. Bruce, James W. Doak, Elias Repass, M. L. Baumgardner, S. S. Hanshew and L. M. Repass for purpose of building a church and establishing a burial ground. Acquired addition land in 1887.
- 1880: Bethany Church completed.

# Bethany UMC (1880 – 2017)

- Bethany was dedicated on November 14, 1880
- Pulpit chairs were purchased from Sears and Roebuck by money raised by Mrs. Gray Repass and Rachel Umbarger.
- Mrs. Nannie Bogle solicited money from traveling salesmen and bought the Bible for the Church.
- 1955 stained glass windows were added to the church with money raised (\$188) by Mrs. Gray Repass.
- The church has a beautiful chandelier – donated by ??

# Bethany UMC (1880 – 2017)



# Red Oak Union Church (1868 - 1947)

- Red Oak started as a union church in 1868 for Methodists, Lutherans and Presbyterians
- Located about 4.5 miles east of Ceres
- On 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1868 when Jonas Umbarger and his wife deeded to John M. Cassell, Elias Foglesong, and Peter Umbarger, Trustees to advance the religion and educational interest of his neighborhood.
- The original church was built across the road from the present day church where the cemetery is now located. It had 2 doors, women entered from the right, men from the left.
- Rev. J. A. Leslie started singing schools at Red Oak and produced some of Bland County's best singers.
- A new church was built across the road from the original church and dedicated in October of 1947.

# Red Oak United Methodist Church (1947 - 2017)

- A new church was built across the road from the original church starting in 1846 and dedicated in October of 1947. A new church was built to give more room for the Red Oak Cemetery
- Note: the Red Oak Cemetery contains the graves of Sarah Bales, the victim of the 1<sup>st</sup> murder in Bland County in 1870 and a Mr. Perry, traveling salesman who was murdered by Ivy Jackson. Ivy Jackson was lynched in Bland in February of 1885. At the time of their burials, anyone who did not die of “natural causes”, e. g., murder, suicide, etc. was buried outside the fence at the cemetery. When a new fence was erected, they were included with the other graves.
- Red Oak operates as a part of the Tazewell District of the United Methodist Church and currently is served by R. Neal Hammons as its pastor.

# Red Oak Union/United Methodist Church (1868 – 2017)



**Original Red Oak Union Church  
(1868 – 1947)**



**Current Red Oak United  
Methodist Church  
(1947 – 2017)**

# Zion United Methodist Church (1876 - 2017)

- Zion UMC is located in Smyth County very close to Ceres. It is located at 3171 Old Rich Valley Road, Saltville, VA 24370.
- It was established in 1876 near Nebo. Land for the Church was gifted to the congregation.
- Zion operates as a part of the Tazewell District of the United Methodist Church and currently is served by R. Neal Hammons as its pastor.



# Fairview Church (1889 – Closed)

- Fairview Church is located in Smyth County very close to Ceres
- It was established in 1889. Land for the Church was purchased by the congregation.
- It is closed, date unknown.



# Ezelle United Methodist Church (1894 - 2017)

- Ezelle UMC is located in Smyth County very close to Ceres. It is located at 998 Sunset River Rd, Ceres, VA 24318.
- It was established in 1894. Land for the Church was gifted to the congregation.
- Ezelle operates as a part of the Tazewell District of the United Methodist Church and currently is served by R. Neal Hammons as its pastor.



# Goodman Chapel United Methodist Church (1896 - 2017)

- Goodman Chapel UMC is located in Smyth County very close to Ceres. It is located at 902 Old Wilderness Rd, Saltville, VA 24370 .
- It was established in 1896. Land for the Church was gifted to the congregation.
- Goodman Chapel operates as a part of the Tazewell District of the United Methodist Church and currently is served by R. Neal Hammons as its pastor.



# Mt. Victory Methodist Church (1906 – 1972)

- Mt. Victory Methodist Church and Cemetery located in the “Poor Valley” section of Bland County on Rt. 625 just off Rt 42 (West Blue Grass Trail)
- It was sold and converted to a hunting cabin in the early 1972



# North Holston UMC (1907 – 1995)

- Methodist members of the Sharon Union Church left in 1903 to form their own church. The Church was dedicated in 1908.
- Reported reason for leaving was that the Methodists for having a “protracted” revival meeting and wanted to extend the revival into a Sunday when it was the Lutherans turn to have services. The Lutherans refused to relinquish their church time and the Methodists (and a few Presbyterians) left to form their own church. It is stated in the ***History of Bland County*** that most of the Presbyterians returned to Sharon Union.
- This church was known as “the dam church” because it was located close a mill dam.
- Story is told about Roly Poly Bogle who belonged to the church and was rumored to have ridden with Jessie James.

# North Holston UMC (1907 – 1995)



# Trinity United Methodist Church (1911 - 2017)

- Trinity UMC is located at 4459 West Bluegrass Trail, Bland, VA 24315
- It was established in 1911 on land given to the church by Seldon Stowers' grandfather, Mr. Frank Stowers.
- Trinity operates as a part of the Tazewell District of the United Methodist Church and currently is served by Kevin Richardson as its pastor.





**The End**