

## BETHEL UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Is located in Wheatfield township, in the southern part of Indiana county, about three miles north of the Conemaugh river, and the line of the Pennsylvania railroad. This is one of the oldest organizations of the denomination in the county, and like other congregations of its age, the records of the first years of its existence are very imperfect; and hence any history of the earlier years of the congregation's existence, which can be given at this date, must only be an approximation of the truth. It seems that the first meetings for preaching were held at the house of Mr. Liggett near to Centreville. Then meetings were held at the house of Mr. Graham, about two miles north-west from Centreville, and then at a tent near the present site of the church. It is thought that the congregation was organized about the years 1808 to 1810, by the election and ordination of the following named persons as ruling elders, viz: Allen Graham, David Ried, Robert Sutton, Andrew Fee and Isaac Griffeth. It is not known what the names or the number of the persons who composed the congregation at its organization, but it is probable that their number was quite large, as we learn that there were persons who attended church at Bethel, from different parts of the territory now included in the townships of East-Wheatfield, West-Wheatfield, Brush Valley and Buffington. The first house of worship was built in the year 1818, was a stone structure, and is still standing near the site of the house now occupied by the congregation as a place of worship. It was built as a cost of about one thousand dollars. The second house of worship, a frame structure, was built during the summer of the year 1857, at a cost of about eighteen hundred dollars. This house was burned to the ground on the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup> of October, 1865, just as the congregation was assembling for public worship on Monday of the communion services. It was rebuilt during the year 1866, as a cost of about twenty-four hundred dollars, and is at this date still occupied by the congregation as a place of worship. The congregation was supplied with preaching by Rev. McConelle, and others, up till year 1818, when the Rev. Hugh McCrodden, was ordained and installed as the first pastor of the congregation. He served the congregation in this capacity until the year 1830, when he was suspended from the office of the ministry on account of his intemperate habits.

The next pastor, the Rev. N. C. Weed, took charge of the congregation in the year 1833, and served it as its pastor until about the year 1847, when he was released, and removed to Illinois, where he took charge of a congregation, and where he still lives, but in too feeble a state of health to be engaged in the active work of the ministry.

The next pastor the Rev. S. M. Coon, took charge of the congregation in the year 1849, and remained with it in this capacity until the year 1854, when he was released. He now has a pastoral charge in the eastern part of the State of Ohio.

The next pastor, the Rev. H. Q. Graham, took charge of the congregation in the year 1856, and remained with it in this capacity until the year 1874, when he was released, and took charge of the congregations of Homer City and Crete, also located in this county.

The next pastor, the Rev. D. H. Blair, took charge of the congregation in the year 1876, and was released in the year 1877, after having served the congregation as pastor for one year and three months. He now has a pastoral charge in the northern part of this county.

The following named persons are at present the officers of the congregation, viz:

*Pastor* – Rev. T. P. Patterson.

*Elders* – John Dick, sr., Cornelius Hutchison, Joseph Mack, Thomas V. McGahen, David McCroty and Smith Dick.

*Deacons* – Hugh Mack, John Hood, D. C. Mack, Thomas McCune, Robert D. Mack and Robert G. Mack.

*Treasurer* – D. C. Mack.

The congregation has at present a membership of 160 and an attendance of 125 scholars in the Sabbath school. A few years ago this congregation had a membership of over 200, when a congregation was organized at New Florence, composed of members mostly from this congregation. The congregation at New Florence, which was originally composed of members the greater part of whom were formerly connected with Bethel congregation, is vigorous and active, and has as its pastor the Rev. D. W. McLain, whose parents were formerly members at Bethel, where he received his early religious training in the bounds of this congregation, occupy the position of pastors in other parts of the church – and members from time to time have gone out from congregation to the far west, and have been instrumental in helping to build up and strengthen other congregations, such is but a very brief and imperfect sketch of this, one of the oldest United Presbyterian congregations in this county. But the influence for good which it has

exerted in the past and is destined to exert in the future, will only be fully known when Christ's redeemed ones are gathered home.