

Hopewell United Methodist Church

A Brief History

The little white church that stands in the midst of the harvest fields traces its beginnings back to the early 1830s.

The first mention of Hopewell by name is recorded in 1836. It was a time many immigrants from other areas were arriving in Knox County, and the fellowship joined Gambier as part of the large Danville circuit.

Without early records of membership prior to 1873 concerning the church, it can only be guessed that for a long time the Hopewell Society was without a regular meeting house of its own.

Before a small structure was built in the 1870s, services were held in homes, in the open air, or at the local school house. In 1880 Pleasant Valley was expelled from the charge for failing to pay its assessment, and Millwood was detached from the circuit leaving Gambier and Epworth alone.

The new circuit decided in that same year to construct a parsonage in Gambier. As a result of this location, it was concluded the pastor would reside in Gambier, "preach twice every Lord's Day in Gambier (morning and evening) and once every other

Lord's Day at Hopewell in the afternoon."

The assessments in 1880 were Gambier \$625.70, and Hopewell \$180.50.

The small congregation soon outgrew its original building, and August 1, 1919 saw the laying of the cornerstone of the new Hopewell Methodist Episcopal Church. Most of the labor came from the members themselves. The cost was about \$5,000.

Revivals were a regular occurrence during the early decades of the new century and the records indicate many baptisms and marriages. In 1921, minutes revealed 103 members at Hopewell and 167 members at Epworth.

Unfortunately, the churches rarely kept a pastor for more than two or three years. The 1832 Discipline forbade the bishop from allowing any preacher to continue at one place for longer than two years in succession.

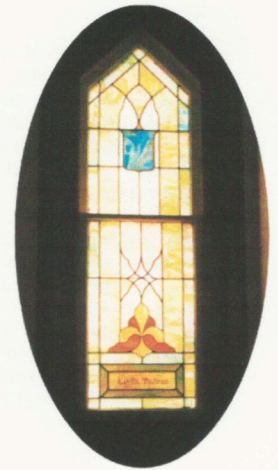
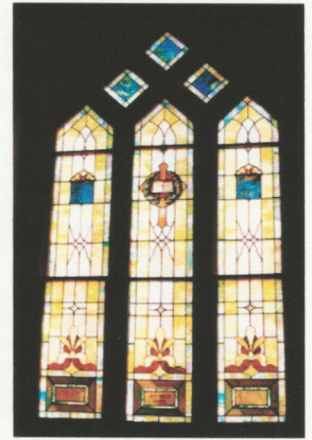
In more recent years, student pastors have served the charge because of the limited financial strength of the congregations.

The effectiveness of part-time ministerial service to the membership made growth difficult. It was not until 1981 that Hopewell joined Epworth and South Vernon in a charge employing a full-time minister.

The Hopewell fellowship can claim a special place in history. Rutherford B. Hayes once taught Sunday School at Hopewell while a student at Kenyon College. The 19th President of the United States never joined a church during his lifetime, but Christian principles strongly influenced his political and personal life. His wife, Lucy, was a Methodist who was active in the early Temperance and Woman's Rights movement.

Another young pastor who served Epworth and Hopewell, later became a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. William L. Harris pastored the congregations from 1841-43 and was consecrated a bishop in 1872.

Although it has remained a small country church, Hopewell has not been little in its faith or witness, and continues to this day to serve its Lord and community.



First conference

In 1812, 61 ministers traveling by foot, wagon and horseback covered hundreds of miles to be present for the first Ohio Methodist Conference.

Held on Oct. 1 of that year, the conference embraced the state of Ohio, western Virginia, much of Kentucky, eastern Indiana and the western slope of the Allegheny Mountains.



Hopewell 2007



Hopewell about 1900