

Bethlehem Free Will Baptist Church

2387 Rich Walker Road

Wade, North Carolina 28395

(910) 485-6364

<http://bethlehemfwbc.org>

In the late 1800's, Bethlehem F.W.B Church was organized by Mr. Ben Haywood, a branch of Mt Olive F.W.B Church. Their only means of transportation was walking, ox cart, mule and wagon. Due to the distance, they had traveled the members began church services in a longhouse located on a wagon road.

In later years, land was purchased in the Flea Hill Township (today Eastover Township). On the 11th of March, 1908, deed to the property was signed by trustees of the church, Brothers John Elliott, Henry Elliott, James A Williams and Jack Armstrong. During this year, a wood frame church was built. Very small, no electricity, no inside restrooms, no choir stand and the church was heated with a wood burning stove.

The wood frame church faced the opposite direction of which it stands now on a wagon road. Later years it was turned around to face, what is now Rich Walker Road. A new church (cinder block) was built beside the wooden church; this is why the church is so close to the road today.

In the early 1940's the church was reconstructed from a wooden church to a cinder block church and out houses were built away from the church. Church services were held on the first Sunday of each month with Deacons opening the services with old time hymnals. Children Day was held on the first Sunday in June. Food was served on tables outside and from the back of wagons. Quarterly Conference was held on Saturday morning at 1 o'clock before the first Sunday. Communion was held on the first Sunday after Quarterly Conference. During the month of July, the church had two revival services each day -- Monday thru Friday 11 o'clock and six thirty p.m.

The former Pastors were; Rev. Barney Bethea, Rev. Andy McNeal and Rev. Marshall McKoy. in the early 1920's, Rev. Connie Smith of Dunn, NC become Pastor and served for fifty plus years. After the death of Rev. Connie Smith, Eldress Mary J. Williams became the first lady Pastor in 1973, she labored for twelve years. After her death, Eldress Catherine Elliott was interim Pastor until she was voted in by the church family. She served for 18 years until her death in 2008. Dr. D.W. Elliott became interim Pastor and voted in as Pastor, July 2008 and still serving.