

13741 Minnieville Road
Woodbridge, Virginia 22192
Tuesday, October 12, 1976

Dear Mr. Hill,

I realize that grant money does not come easily for churches, especially those that have been moved from their original site. But I do feel that Bethel deserves consideration because of her importance in her local community. Her architecture is of simplest nature due to the limited funds of her founders.

Land was donated by a local resident and the congregation built the church. In fact, one of our current member's great grandfather hand-hewed the sills. During the Civil War, Bethel served as a hospital and some in the community tell of the bones that were uncovered across the road, they supposed were those of soldiers from the war. Bethel does not have an existing cemetery.

After the war, repairs were necessary to the church and the slave balcony was removed. Over the years, Bethel continued to serve this little community of families that had gathered near her skirts. Political speakers traditionally met here before elections to speak to the community. The speakers stood on a flat bed wagon.

Sometimes the congregation provided fiddlers at these gatherings to help draw a crowd. While the ladies prepared suppers on the wood stoves, the meetings continued. Other members brought cakes for cake walks.

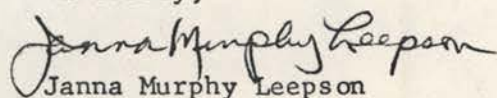
In recent years, Bethel has been a meeting place for 4H and Boy Scout programs and has provided additional classroom space for the Muriel Humphrey School for Retarded Children.

We have found our simple country ways to be quickly disappearing as more and more people move into Prince William County. We do not want our church to become a victim of developers who would not think twice about tearing the building down. We have plans to begin building a new church and hope to move the old one to within 200 feet of its original site. The money we are requesting from you would go toward moving and restoring the old church -- not toward building the new one.

In April 1976, we learned for the first time that it was possible to move and restore our church. Several members started a committee to raise funds. We did not ask the congregation for donations because they are obligated to build a new, bigger, modern building. Although many members have given donations and church bake sales have been held, the bulk of the \$6,500 raised thus far has come largely from the community. In fact, money has been donated by the descendants of members of Bethel's first congregations. This points to the major reason why Bethel has to be saved.

For 126 years, Bethel Church has represented the simple needs of a small, once-rural community. If the church is not saved, we fear that the last vestige of the community's country spirit will die with it. Within a matter of a few short years this area will consist of subdivisions and shopping centers. It is our hope that the old Bethel Church will remain within this suburban area -- a reminder of its proud rural heritage.

Sincerely,


Janna Murphy Leepson