

31st in a series

Prince William Public Library
Manassas, Va.

Buckhall United Methodist Church.

Our Churches



In the minutes of the First Quarterly Conference of 1905 is found the passage "The following were appointed as trustees for a church at Buckhall-Captain T. J. Moore, J. L. Lineweaver, A. J. Ramey, Morgan Hensley and William H. Breeden."

Although this is the first mention of the church building which has stood for 75 years at Buckhall, the congregation was an active part of the Buckhall community many years before the building was erected.

The first records pertaining to Buckhall are minutes from a Quarterly Conference held at Midland, on April 24, 1897, but the Prince William Charge, including churches at Midland, Hazelwood and Buckhall, was in existence before this time. A charge of the United Brethren in Christ was several churches served by one minister. Midland and Hazelwood had preaching twice a month, Buckhall had a service by the preacher in charge only once a month.

Responsibility for the payment of the preacher's salary was divided between the churches according to their membership and totaled \$180 per year. The records indicate that in the year 1897, Hazelwood contributed \$70 with 54 members, Midland contributed \$65 with 36 members and Buckhall contributed \$45 with 22 members.

During the early years of this century, there were many changes in the Prince William Mission; a total of 14 different churches were included in the charge at various points in time. Some of them (Buckhall, Hazelwood, Midland) appeared thriving concerns while most of them are mentioned only once or twice in the Conference minutes, then dropped from the records.

In 1903, "the question of dropping some of the appointments was discussed, but no action upon the question was taken. The pastor and the

In 1905, Buckhall had approximately 20 members and was contributing \$50 toward the preacher's annual salary of \$235. It was decided that a church should be erected at Buckhall and in June of that year, a board of trustees was elected and charged with the construction of the building.

The land on which the building stands was donated by Joseph and Lydia Hensley, Captain Thomas J. Moore, a member of the first board of trustees, promised "I will use the best timber and plenty of nails so it won't shake."

On Feb. 17, 1906, after the church had been completed and was in use, the trustees made their official report on the construction costs: "The total cost of the church in money and material work was \$830.80. Total amount received in money including \$50 borrowed from the bank (was) \$426.80. Total amount received in lumber and works (was) \$266.50. Amount yet unprovided for (was) \$137.50."

The charge, consisting of Buckhall, Hazelwood and Midland churches, continued their routine meetings and services for the next several years. In 1908, a group at Hazelwood Church was charged with finding a new location for the Hazelwood Church. The building was moved to a lot in Aden and dedicated in 1910. The old property was kept as a cemetery.

Another church was added to the charge in 1911. It was located at Oak Hill and remained an active part of the charge until 1916 when it no longer appears in the Conference reports. The

classrooms. Money was raised by the church members and the Conference was to donate an amount also if the written report of the planned improvements was approved.

Not all of the churches were expanding however, for in 1940, the Conference minutes indicated that the possibility of dropping the Manassas Church from the charge was seriously considered. This was prompted by several factors—declining enrollment in Sunday school classes and poor attendance at Christian endeavor meetings and worship services. Also there had been no board meetings of the officers of the Manassas Church and, as the preacher in charge, Rev. M. J. Miller, pointed out, "this was a serious offense."

The 1940s brought many concerns to Buckhall Church and its members. In 1941, excavation was begun to raise the church and build a basement; this construction was completed in 1944. On a larger sphere, the church was seeking to advance its position by increasing membership and ministering effectively to the spiritual needs of its members. This decade saw many personal tragedies during the war and the church was there to comfort — "ministering to homes where boys are in the service as casualty lists are coming in from the invasion."

Two important mergers occurred in a seven year period. In 1939, there was a merger between the Methodist Episcopal Church, North and South, and the Methodist Protestant Church to form the Methodist Church. In 1946, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ merged with the Evangelical Church to become the Evangelical United Brethren Church. The whole tone of the church changed and evangelical missions became an important part of the church's work.

In 1947, a third merger was proposed between the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church but there was not much discussion in the local Evangelical United Brethren Conference and the matters appears to have been dropped. Of more concern to the members of the Charge was the Kingdom Advance Program "to acquaint our people with the needs of this country as well as abroad." Evangelical campaigns also occupied much of the church's efforts

during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

In 1955, colored glass replaced the plain glass in the windows in anticipation of the church's 50th anniversary which was celebrated on Oct. 30 and commemorated with a history written by Rev. Donald Austin.

In the minutes of the 1958 local conference, there was a note stating conference approval for the relocation of Manassas Church. Three and one-half acres were purchased in 1961 at a cost of \$10,000 and designated for the Manassas Church and parsonage. The ground breaking was Jan. 20, 1963 and both the church and parsonage were dedicated on March 15, 1964.

1964 was also the year when Buckhall began to make plans for a program of major renovations costing approximately \$10,000. The plans included adding two rooms to the basement and two rooms to the upper level, a well, refinishing the interior of the sanctuary, painting, and grading and graveling the driveway. The membership at this time was 76.

When a merger between the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren was again proposed, the local churches were given the opportunity to suggest names for the combined church. On Nov. 30, 1966, the conference was informed the name of the church will be the United Methodist Church. The "United" symbolizes the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

With the vote to be taken in 1968, the next 12 years were set aside as the period to bring the churches into harmony. The union of the churches on April 23, 1968 began a flurry of activity in the local conference. In May of 1968, a merger was requested between Grace Methodist Church and Manassas Evangelical United Brethren Church, but the Methodists were informed that the Virginia Conference would not merge until 1970 and appropriate action would be taken at that time. However, permission was granted to move the Aden Evangelical United Brethren Church building to property owned by the

Asbury Methodist Church and to merge with the Nokesville Charge.

Although the merger of the two churches was officially announced at the annual conference in 1968, the administrations of the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren Conferences in Virginia did not join until 1970. Many of the activities in the local churches remained unchanged, but the union of the churches raised some questions: should the charge be served by a former Methodist pastor or an Evangelical United Brethren minister? Should Grace Methodist Church merge with the Manassas Evangelical United Brethren Church? Should Buckhall be closed?

Once the turmoil of the merger settled, these questions were answered.

Buckhall was served by a former Evangelical United Brethren minister until 1970, Grace and Manassas remained separate churches and Buckhall was not closed. The minutes of a 1970 meeting state that it was never the intention of the Alexandria District to close Buckhall. It was to be retained and expanded; since it was a small church, it would be assisted by the Mission Board as if it were a new church.

During the years following the merger of the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist Church, Manassas Church grew in size and strength. Once the burden of debt, caused by the completion of the church building, was removed, the church expanded its ministry into the community in modern and

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Churches

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In 1903, "the question of dropping some of the apportionments was discussed, but no action upon the question was taken. The pastor and the members were urged to greater efforts, so as to not make it necessary to drop the mission or any part of it." Despite their apparent concern, however, many of the smaller congregations disappeared from the Conference records.

In 1905, Buckhall had approximately 20 members and was contributing \$50 toward the preacher's annual salary of \$235. It was decided that a church should be erected at Buckhall and in June of that year, a board of trustees was elected and charged with the construction of the building.

The land on which the building stands was donated by Joseph and Lydia Hensley, Captain Thomas J. Moore, a member of the first board of trustees, promised "I will use the best timber and plenty of nails so it won't shake."

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Another church was added to the charge in 1911. It was located at Oak Hill and remained an active part of the charge until 1916 when it no longer appears in the Conference reports. The Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church was purchased in 1917 and became known as the Manassas United Brethren Church.

In 1938-39, Buckhall was preparing to expand the church building by adding

classrooms. Money was raised by the church members and the Conference was to donate an amount also if the written report of the planned improvements was approved.

Not all of the churches were expanding however, for in 1940, the Conference minutes indicated that the possibility of dropping the Manassas Church from the charge was seriously considered. This was prompted by several factors—declining enrollment in Sunday school classes and poor attendance at Christian endeavor meetings and worship services. Also there had been no board meetings of the officers of the Manassas Church and, as the preacher in charge, Rev. M.J. Miller, pointed out, "this was a serious offense."

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BUCKHALL

innovative ways. Buckhall also increased in size but more slowly and by 1974, the difference between the churches was evident in the pastor's charge conference reports. However, it was not until 1976 that it was suggested a separate pastor for each church would be in the best interest of both congregations.

In June 1977, Paul Pearson arrived as pastor to Buckhall United Methodist Church. Under his guidance, the assets of the charge were divided between the two churches (Manassas purchased Buckhall's half-interest in the parsonage), membership increased 12 percent and within two years, the church was functioning as a complete organization, a church involved in the community it serves.

Today, Buckhall has a total membership of 110. As the area surrounding the church grows, the church grows also. There are no large signs or advertisements proclaiming the church's presence, yet somehow people find their way to Buckhall and once they come, they return again and again to the little church on the hill.

There is a sense of love and faith which cannot be measured, but can be felt. This feeling is best summarized in the words of one member who believes "the aim of this church is to establish and maintain an atmosphere where from youngest to oldest each can continually develop in appreciation of his fellows and in love and respect for his God."

Pastors Serving Buckhall
L.A. Racey, 1897-1899;
C.M. Good, 1899-1901; G.W. Stover, 1901-1903; W.M. Maiden, 1903-1904; A.V. Vondersmith, 1904-1906; Arthur L. Maiden, 1906-1907; H.B. Ritter, 1907-1910; J.W. Brill, 1910-1916; L.C. Messick, 1916-1920; S.D. Skelton, 1920-1923; C.J. Racey, 1923-1924; Wilmer R. Swank, 1924-1926; Lee E. Sheaffer, 1926-1929; Grant M. Miller, 1929-1930; William Marvin Maiden, 1930 (5 month supply);

Arthur L. Maiden - returned, 1930-1932; Olin R. Kesner, 1932-1938; Daniel Newman, 1938-1940; Stanley A. Knupp, 1940-1946; Daniel Newman - returned, 1946-1948; H. Fred Edge, 1948-1952; Delmas Sherman, 1952-1953; Donald A. Austin, 1953-1956; Roy Hedrich, 1956-1958; Lloyd S. Bowman, 1958-1963; H. Eugene Baker, 1963-1966; Wilton B. Thomas, 1966-1967; Richard Ruth, 1967-

1968; Jerry Jordan, 1968 (part of year); Glen Black, 1968-1970; Russell Walker, 1970-1973; Paul Allen Beighley III, 1973-May 31, 1977 (Manassas Charge

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consisting of Manassas and Buckhall dissolved.); Paul W. Pearson 1977-1978; Brooks L. Ambos, Jr., 1978-1979; Gary L. Hulme, 1979-present.