

Bethel United Methodist Church

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Heritage Sunday

April 26, 2026

Pastor: Ralph Wrightstone

Lectionary Scriptures

This Week: Ezekiel 34:7-15; Psalm 100; 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10

Next Week: Proverbs 4:10-18; Psalm 119:9-32; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

Welcome & Announcements, Birthdays, Anniversaries

***Opening Hymn:** *"It's Me, It's Me, O Lord"*

***Responsive Call to Worship:***on back of page*

***Affirmation of Faith** (Apostle's Creed) and Gloria Patria

A time for Sharing Stories and Memories

Offerings of Praise, Thanksgiving and *Doxology

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 1:18-20

Hymn of Petition: *"Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God"*

Joys, Concerns, Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer

Message: *"The Gatekeeper"*

Scripture: John 10:1-10

***Traditional Hymn:** *"Church in the Wildwood"*

***Closing Chorus & Benediction** "Bind Us Together"

**Please stand if able*

Call to Worship

Leader: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. (based on Psalm 23 [KJV])

PRAYER: Father of glory, Lord of light, we turn to you today, recognizing you as Shepherd, Savior, and King. You lead us beside the still waters. You restore our soul. We come together this day and seek to follow you wherever you might lead us. Open our hearts and minds to your blessings which overflow. Let your goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our lives. Here in your house we call upon you to live and breathe and move in our midst. AMEN!

Calendar of Events

Today: *Heritage Sunday at Bethel pond, dinner after in the shelter*

Charge Conference: *in Early May*

All Week: *Keep Safe and Pray*

Worship, Educational and Outreach Opportunities

Today: *Interactive Online Service thru link on Bethel Web Site, Service Page*

Prayer Concerns

Bethel UMC, The UMC, Our Country, those in Military Service, Police, Fire, EMS first responders, Healthcare professionals and home caregivers, Teachers, Students; the Homeless, Pastor Ralph & Judy Wrightstone; Kathie & Al Adams; Lexie Allen; Don & Tracey Bitner, Mark Carlson, Lake Goreau, Ryan Goreau; Kaylee; Savannah Lantz; Annabelle Pafford; Darren Plate; Don & Pat Singletary; Holly Snelgrove; Lawson Wooley; Lon & Lucy Wright; Howard and Ruth Zody

Please use a prayer request form, in the narthex, to submit requests for adding to the Prayer Concerns in the worship bulletin.

Devotionals: *The Upper Room and Our Daily Bread* are daily devotional booklets that are available in the Narthex. Please take one or both and enjoy!

Bethel Website: <http://www.bethelumctlh.org>

Recordings of recent sermons are available on the web site

Recordings of sermons or services are available on CD by request.

Contact: Church phone: (850) 576-1454 email: bumctlh@gmail.org

Pastor phone: (850) 591-9785; email: wrightstone@embarqmail.com

It's Me, It's Me, O Lord

Refrain:

*It's me (it's me), it's me, O Lord,
standing in the need of prayer.*

*It's me (it's me), it's me, O Lord,
standing in the need of prayer.*

1. Not my brother, not my sister,
but it's me, O Lord,
standing in the need of prayer.
Not my brother, not my sister,
but it's me, O Lord,
standing in the need of prayer.

Refrain:

2. Not the preacher, not the deacon,
but it's me, O Lord,
standing in the need of prayer.
Not the preacher, not the deacon,
but it's me, O Lord,
standing in the need of prayer

Refrain:

3. Not my father, not my mother,
but it's me, O Lord,
standing in the need of prayer.
Not my father, not my mother,
but it's me, O Lord,
standing in the need of prayer.

Refrain

Apostle's Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty
maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord:
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand
of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge
the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Gloria Patria

Glory be to the Father
and to the son
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning,
is now and ever shall be,
world without end.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil,
for thine is the kingdom,
and the power and the glory
forever. Amen

Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise Him all creatures here below.
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts.
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
Amen

Seek Ye First

1. Seek ye first
the kingdom of God
and his righteousness,
and all these things
shall be added unto you.
Allelu, alleluia!

2. Ask, and it shall
be given unto you;
seek and ye shall find;
knock, and the door shall
be opened unto you.
Allelu, alleluia!

The Church in the Wildwood

1. There's a church in the valley
by the wildwood,
No lovelier spot in the dale;
No place is so dear to my childhood
As the little brown church in the vale .

Chorus:

*Come to the church in the wildwood,
Oh, come to the church in the vale;
No spot is so dear to my childhood
As the little brown church in the vale.*

2. Oh, come to the church in the wildwood,
To the trees where the wild flowers bloom;
Where the parting hymn will be chanted,
We will weep by the side of the tomb.

Chorus:

3. How sweet on a clear Sabbath morning,
To list to the clear ringing bell;
Its tones so sweetly are calling,
Oh, come to the church in the vale.

Chorus:

From the church in the valley
by the wildwood,
When the day fades away into night,
I would fain from this spot of my childhood
Wing my way to the mansions of light.

Chorus:

Celebrating Our Heritage

As you may know, from the brief history on the back of this bulletin, “the earliest record of Bethel Methodist Church is that in August of 1834 a camp meeting was held on the banks of Bethel Pond”. But do you know what one of these “old fashioned Methodist Camp Meetings” might have been like. In the Methodist “storybook”, *Endless Line of Splendor*, we are told that “the camp meeting was as American as Indian corn or sweet potatoes” and occupied a “large place...in the life of the frontier and in the religious life of the people...”.



While we might not think of Tallahassee as being on the frontier, in 1834 it had been just 10 years since the site for the new territorial capital was chosen near a picturesque cascade and the “old fields of Tallahassee”. Methodists were on the scene early with itinerant preachers John Slade (the “Father of Methodism in Florida”) and John Triggs reported to have given occasional sermons “before 1825” which were “probably the first ever preached in the city”. Actually, the new territorial capital was chronologically just midway between the frontier town of perhaps 6 homes in 1824 and the state capital that it would become in 1845. That same year, Bishop Joshua Soule, standing at Bethel’s pulpit in Trinity church, conducted the first meeting of the Florida Conference of the Methodist Church.

Still, in 1838 Tallahassee was “reputedly a wild frontier town”.

One of the hazards of life in this growing urban setting was the threat of disease. Outbreaks of yellow fever in 1831 and 1841 contributed to annual migrations away from the city during the unhealthiest months of August, October and November. Perhaps this desire to get out of the city during these months also contributed to the popularity of the open-air camp meeting in this area.

Though we have no details concerning the camp meeting at Bethel Pond, the history of Florida Methodism, *From Saddlebags to Satellites*, describes a typical camp meeting in this way: “They would, as a rule, meet for four days, starting on noon Friday and lasting till noon Tuesday. Prior to the meeting, land would be cleared for there were very few open fields in those years in Florida. Pine woods, with some of the trees thinned out, proved to be a favorite site for such meetings because there was less underbrush and palmettos to clear”. A nearby source of water for animals and people was also important. “These meetings were important as social gatherings and visiting as well as the spiritual enrichment they rendered....Some came by ox carts, others on horse or mule back, others walked...they all came because the camp meeting was the most exciting event going on....There were times that shouting could be heard for miles from the camp grounds.”

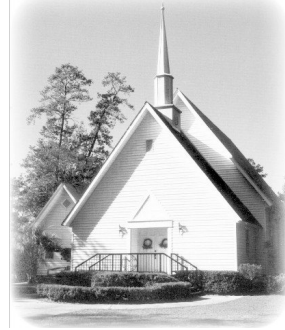
Yes, times have changed, but Heritage Sunday is a time when we can remember those who have gone before us, our spiritual mothers and fathers, as well as our own journey of faith which has brought us to this time and place...always remembering that: “The Best is Yet to Be!”



1940's



1960's



Today

The History of Bethel UMC

The earliest historical record of Bethel Methodist Church is that in August of 1834, a campmeeting was held on the banks of Bethel Pond. Church meetings were held in neighborhood homes following this. In good weather brush arbors provided meeting places for these early worshippers. Later, services were held in a small log schoolhouse about a mile north of the present church.

On March 17, 1847, Joseph and Thirza Hale deeded two acres of land to the Methodist Episcopal Church with the provision that Bethel Meeting House be built in the center of the two acres. A small frame church with wooden shutters was built where our Sunday School rooms are today.

In 1909 the congregation started building the present sanctuary. The church building was originally roofed with wooden shingles. The windows contain the original panes with the imperfections of early glass. The interior of the church was not completed until 1947. The narthex was added in 1970 and the steeple in 1972.

The furniture in the Church constitutes one of the most interesting parts of its history. The Pulpit was used by Bishop Joshua Soule on February 6, 1845 when he convened the first Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in Trinity Methodist Church, Tallahassee, Florida. Trinity gave the pulpit to Bethel Church circa 1895. The chancel rail, communion table and two of the pulpit chairs were part of Trinity Church during the 1800's and were given to Bethel in 1946. The larger pulpit chair was a gift of John Sullivan, friend of our Church.

(history prepared for bulletin cover by Thelma Royce, church historian)



"Surely the Lord is in this place! This is none other than the house of God" Genesis 28:16