

Van Wyck Presbyterian Church Historical Sketch

The history of the Van Wyck Presbyterian Church can be divided into two time periods. The first period was from 1884 to 1911, and the second period began in 1911 and covers events up to present day.

On May 18, 1884, a devoted group of people met with a committee from Bethel Presbytery to petition and discuss the organization of a Presbyterian Church in Waxhaw Township (now the community of Van Wyck, SC). The plans went well and in the fall 1884, the Presbytery endorsed the recommendation and approved the organization of a church under the name "Beulah." With this sanction the church was formed with 22 charter members. The new Beulah congregation moved swiftly and on November 1, 1885, Rev. James Henley Thornwell, (Jr.) D.D., conducted the dedication service of the Beulah Church.

Thornwell (Jr.) was at the time the minister of both the Ebenezer and Fort Mill (Unity) congregations and the son of the former minister of the Lancasterville, Waxhaw and Six Mile churches (1835-38). Rev. Dr. James H. Thornwell (Sr.) left for a teaching post at South Carolina College (USC) and became a dominant force in the creation of the southern Presbyterian church. In the mid 1800's, Thornwell (Sr.) was the leading theologian and advocate in the national courts of the "Old School Presbyterian Church." (Dr. James O. Farmer, "The First Generation of Van Wyck Presbyterians." May 17, 2009)

On July 2, 1911, a committee formally petitioned that the Bethel (now Providence) Presbytery give Beulah Church authorization to relocate and construct a new sanctuary on the Main Street of Van Wyck. The Presbytery approved the petition and after 27 years, the Beulah Church was sold to help finance construction of the new Van Wyck Presbyterian Church. The sanctuary of this building was completed in 1912 and began with 28 members.

In 1940-41, the education building and Vaughan Fellowship Hall were added. In August 2007, the congregation entered into a building campaign to construct a new fellowship hall, kitchen and restrooms. Construction of the new addition began with groundbreaking on November 2, 2008, and was completed on March 10, 2009. The new addition was dedicated on Sunday, May 17, 2009 during the 125th Anniversary of Van Wyck Presbyterian Church.

The church calendar has been full of many events over the past twenty years with adult Bible studies, participation in Presbytery mission trips, Vacation Bible Schools, a new Men of the Church group, communicants' classes, creation and expansion of the church's committees, and officers' training programs, to name a few. Our church family plays a vital role in community programs such as the Christmas Lighting of the Way. This ecumenical and regional event, as well as a community Thanksgiving Service, has strengthened the bonds between the churches and people of Van Wyck.

We welcome Providence Presbytery to our church today.

Claudia Thompson
Church Historian