

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF BETHEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**ORGANIZATION:** Cedar Creek Presbyterian Church was organized in Gibsonville in 1812, with three ruling elders; the Reverend Samuel Paisley from Alamance Church was ordained and installed that year as Cedar Creek's first pastor. Since the church site was not accessible for many members, the congregation began looking for a new site further west – to the consternation of Alamance and Buffalo Churches who worried it might pull away some of their members!

**BEGINNINGS:** In 1815, the church was deeded 2.25 acres to erect a "meeting house". Cedar Creek moved seven miles to the west and changed its name to Bethel. A log sanctuary was built just in front of the site of the present building, where they met until they could complete a simple frame church (near the Session House) in the 1820's.

**EXPANSION:** After the Civil War, Bethel needed a larger sanctuary. The building campaign began in 1866, and the present sanctuary was finished two years later. The Session House was constructed in 1875. Subsequently, four small classrooms were added behind the apse in 1905, and a Doric-style front porch in 1923.

For much of its history, Bethel was a yoked congregation – first with Greensboro First (1824-1845), then with Buffalo (1847-1905), finally with Alamance and/or Springwood (1905-1951). Bethel became self-supporting in 1951, and soon built its Education Building and manse. In 1999, the new Fellowship Hall was constructed, and the Session House moved and restored; it is now a museum and resource center.

**SIGNIFICANCE:** Bethel is the third oldest congregation in Guilford County, and is on the Registry of American Presbyterian/Reformed Historic Sites. The frame sanctuary and the Session House are the oldest surviving examples in the county. In 1871, it was the fourth largest congregation in Orange Presbytery – and it hosted the Presbytery convention the following year. Through its history, Bethel has engendered fourteen ministers and two Certified Lay Pastors.