



## “Thou Shalt Come into the Ark” — *Genesis 6:18*

### EUREKA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Farms line the country road in northern Wayne County that leads to Eureka United Methodist Church. The quiet, rural highway winds past one white clapboard farmhouse after another before reaching the cross-roads of Eureka. Just past a row of turn-of-the-century storefronts stands the spotless white frame church. Built in 1884, Eureka United Methodist Church has served as not only a house of worship but also the social and cultural center of this farming community for more than a century. With Gothic Revival touches, the inviting exterior resembles many fine churches that dot the eastern North Carolina landscape with its weatherboard frame, lancet windows filled with wavy glass, central entrance, belfry, and gabled roof.

But the most distinguishing feature of Eureka United Methodist Church adorns the inside. Above the sanctuary stretches an intricately shaped wooden ceiling, skillfully crafted of Carolina yellow pine to form the shape of an ark.

The shelter of Eureka’s ark has reached beyond this intimate community of about 300. The memory of its spiritual strength and warmth helped Stanley Yelverton survive in a German prisoner-of-war camp while serving in the U.S. Army during World War II. “When I was in the POW camp thoughts about my church brought me comfort,” he remembered. “We had one Bible between us in the camp and when we would pass it around I would think about hearing God’s word on Sunday mornings back in Eureka.” Sunday morning memories were not the only ones Yelverton had. “I would think about those Sunday picnics, too. We had some good food — fried chicken, cherry pie, and cakes,” he laughed. Through those long days Yelverton felt the members of Eureka were praying for him. “I could feel the prayers coming my way. I knew the people cared for me.” — *Diane Silcox-Jarrett*

Location: **Eureka,**  
**Wayne County**

Current Church Completed:  
**1884**

Worship: **Regular Services**

# Heroes and Heritage

## HOPEWELL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**T**he names of Alexander, Cathey, Davidson, Latta, McDonald, and McGrady have been on the membership rolls of Hopewell Presbyterian Church for many generations. Those good old Scots-Irish names blend with the church's colonial American pedigree to fill Hopewell with tradition, ritual, and legend.

Among the most popular stories is that of local Revolutionary War hero Gen. William Lee Davidson, who was buried at Hopewell after falling at the Battle of Cowan's Ford in 1781. (Davidson College was named in his honor.) Two Hopewell members rescued Davidson's body, which was found "plundered and stripped of every garment" on the banks of the Catawba River. Knowing they could not get to Davidson's home church because of advancing British forces, they brought the body to Hopewell and sent for his young widow so she could attend her husband's funeral. "This story reflects the mettle of the congregation," said the Rev. Jeff Lowrance. "It shows Hopewell's character during a critical time in history."

One of the seven original Presbyterian churches in Mecklenburg County, Hopewell was organized around 1760 by the Rev. Alexander Craighead, a missionary and patriot known as the "father of the American Revolution in Mecklenburg County." Five members of Hopewell signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. The current church building, its earliest sections constructed in 1833, is considered one of the oldest and finest Federal style churches in Mecklenburg County.

One unusual feature of the church's sanctuary is a wall clock, which has faced the congregation since the 1870s. According to Tina Brown, chair of Hopewell's historical committee, "We have always teased our ministers that the deacons back then must have put the clock facing the congregation so they could tell the pastor if he was talking too long."

Along with its American roots, Hopewell celebrates its Celtic heritage as well (*right*). Each December, Hopewell holds an ambitious Celtic Christmas program that features traditional Celtic music, including bagpipes and Irish flute; a medieval English shepherd's play performed by children of the congregation; Scottish dancing; traditional dress; and stories read in Gaelic, Welsh, and Scottish.

In the fellowship hall, 52 tartans hang from the ceiling — their majestic colors tell of Scottish family pride and show support for the church. On Heritage Sunday every October, members take the tartans down and march them into the sanctuary to be blessed. Bagpipes are played, men wear kilts and tam-o'-shanters, and the names of Scottish forefathers are read so all can reflect on those who helped sustain the church. — *Diane Silcox-Jarrett*

Location: Huntersville,  
Mecklenburg County

Current Church Completed:  
1833

Worship: Regular Services