

## BRIEF HISTORY OF SULPHUR SPRINGS CAMP MEETING GROUNDS

The Sulphur Springs Camp Meeting Site and Shed has played a significant role in the establishment and perpetuation of the United Methodist Church throughout this Southern Appalachian region of the United States.

Bishop Francis Asbury, credited as the circuit-riding Methodist preacher who did the most to spread Methodism in frontier America, wrote in his Journal, dated September 16 and 17, 1802: "...today we rode to Cashe's near Jonesborough, Tennessee. I attended a camp meeting which continued to be held for four days: there may have been fifteen hundred souls present." Most likely Bishop Asbury attended several of the first camp meetings here. According to community oral history, it appears that Brush Arbor meetings were conducted here as early as 1802, as the frontier camp meeting movement spread following the Great awakening of that time. It was formally organized in 1820 and was usually held in late summer or early fall.

William Milburn, one of the founders of the Methodist Church in this area and a staunch abolitionist, had the idea to build a shed for the services along with a white framed church (which stood in what is now the parking lot and was subsequently torn down in the construction of the present church). The shed and old church were built in 1842 on this land purchased earlier from Payne Squibb for \$100. The shed, essentially the same size and same place, as the present structure, was used until 1900 when it was replaced by the present shed. Some of the old hand-hewn logs from the first shed were incorporated into the present structure and can even be seen today. Both the 1842 and 1900 sheds were roofed with oak shingles, which was replaced in 1933 with tin after kerosene lamps were replaced with electric lights in 1930. The one-story, open-air, rectangular camp shed (74' x 45') with gables on hipped roof gives a sense of vertical lift, openness and focused reverence. Supported by hewn and pegged timber trusswork and slage unfinished plank pews, it rests on a packed earth and gravel floor.

Originally camp meetings lasted 4-5 days as Bishop Asbury noted. As the need for frontier religious and social expression evolved, the sessions began to last about three weeks, hence the name, "camp meeting". In the 1840's one by one families who traveled some distance saw the need for places to stay; and so several families, often two to a structure, built cabins in horseshoe formation around the shed to stay for the protracted camp meetings. These were later torn down as needs for them declined with shorter meetings around 1915. The families would arrive in wagons in advance of the meetings' openings and set up housekeeping in the cabins and tents around the hillside. Supplies and food (chickens to be killed and dressed and cows for milk supply among other items) were brought in.

There were usually three services a day — morning, afternoon and evening. The sounding of the ram's horn in Biblical fashion could be heard summoning folks to the shed. In some cases, two or three preachers might hold forth preaching to smaller groups outside the shed while the main meeting went on inside. Vibrant singing, testifying, shouting, parading up and down the aisles and all manner of "heartfelt" testifying accompanied the strong preaching. Religious at the core, camp meetings, nonetheless, were as much a social event as an evangelistic gathering, like a homecoming, family reunion, story-telling, gospel-singing and revival all rolled up into one.

Even today, the grounds continue to host annual camp meetings held the first week in August each year. The *History of Washington County, Tennessee (1988)* characterizes the Sulphur Springs community of north Washington County as "*most well known locally and nationally as the site of the historic annual Sulphur Springs Camp Meeting.*" The annual camp meetings have hosted some of the greatest evangelists in American Methodism. Used for weddings, dramas and other services, the shed still serves the needs of the community's and region's people.

# 196th Sulphur Springs Camp Meeting



## August 2-5-2015

6:00 P.M.—Singing & Special Music  
6:30 P.M.—Worship Service

1432 Gray Sulphur Springs Road  
Jonesborough, Tennessee 37659  
(423) 753-5631  
[www.campshed.com](http://www.campshed.com)



## Rev. Dr. Darris Doyal

Reverend Dr. Darris Doyal is a native of Knoxville, Tennessee and a graduate of East Knoxville High School. He received a B. S. Degree from East Tennessee State, a M.Div from Duke University and a D. Min from Drew University. He has served appointments in the Johnson City, Knoxville, Maryville, and Morristown Districts, and Durham, North Carolina. as well as having served as District Superintendent in the Johnson City and Knoxville Districts and Director of Congregational Development in Holston Conference. His passions in ministry have been reaching unchurched persons, youth and children, prison and jail ministry, missions and encouraging persons for ministry. He has also written several publications including “Alive Now”, “Fellowship Times”, and “Word and Witness”.

Married for over 50 years to Erma Branton, Registered Nurse, they have two children, Andrea Doyal Mitchell, a teacher in the Knox County School system and a son, Stephen Doyal, a minister in Holston Conference, and three grandchildren. His interests are gardening, woodworking, fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, and all outdoors activities. Darris served as an active itinerant minister for 46 years and continues to preach.

His theme for Camp Meeting will be “Body Work”! The New Testament is full of images of us as Christ’s Body and Paul makes numerous references to the Church as His Body. Darris will be doing some diagnostics of the “body” and hopefully some recommendations for healing as well.

## EACH EVENING HIGHLIGHTS



KICKOFF CONCERT  
6:00 p.m.  
features.

### Loretta Bowers

**Loretta Bowers** was born into a family that was, and is, blessed by God to be able to sing for His glory. Born in Elizabethton TN, she began singing at Brown’s Chapel AME Zion Church at the age of six. Loretta feels blessed to have been able to perform in the Broadway Musical “Ain’t Misbehavin” from 1980 through 1981, traveling to numerous locations Loretta’s family will be with her including her sister Teresa Bowers-Parker from New York and her youth group from St. Paul United Methodist Church, Elizabethton. You will certainly be blessed by the Bowers family and the St. Paul UMC Youth Group. Music will start at 5:45 P. M. Come early and be blessed.



Monday night will be the Appalachian Bluegrass Band and as many of you remember this was a great group that has been with us before.. Don’t miss it!



Tuesday night the Cherry Hill Music Group consists of a group of local young people who have given their hearts to God and want to praise him

through their music. We are very proud of this group.

## *Calling 1.....Calling All!* *Children Ages 5-9* *Sunday Afternoon* *August 2, 2015~ 6:00 P.M.*

*Parents and children’s coordinators*—make plans now to bring your children to Camp Meeting on Sunday evening. A special night is planned with pizza, Bible stories and Bible verses along with singing, games, and much more!!!!

### *Special Features This Year*

- **Youth Gathering** at 6:00 P.M. Sunday for Music & Worship
- Each evening will feature a mini concert at 6:00 P.M.
- Congregational singing and worship, beginning at 6:30 P.M. each evening led by Ramona Bird
- **Full nursery** care provided in ministry center, ages infant through four years of age
- **Prayer Room** available in ministry center
- **DVD recording** of evening service available at a nominal cost
- **Special Presentations**—Local and District Camp Meeting Supporters on Tuesday
- **Ice Cream Social** after Monday night service be sure to stay for this fellowship.

### *Monday-Wednesday*

**6:00 P.M. a special mini concert by different music groups**

**Congregational singing and Worship at 6:30 p.m.**