



HOPEWELL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

JEFFERSON COUNTY ROAD 4 RAYLAND OH

The congregation of the Hopewell United Methodist Church is faced with a problem involving the deterioration of the old church structure located on Jefferson County Road 4 Rayland, Ohio. In 1990, the Hopewell United Methodist Church dedicated a new church building, leaving the church that was built in 1844 abandon.

The history of the Hopewell United Methodist Church dates back to the 1780's, when the members were holding meetings at homes; the church has been noted as probably the first denominational church in the Northwest Territory. In 1798, the first Methodist Church in Eastern Ohio was built by the people, a simple log church; first known as the Methodist Episcopal Church. Around 1802, the name was changed to the Hopewell Chapel. In 1844, a new church was built, made from hand hewn timber, this is the structure that still stands. The church originally had wooden clapboard siding but brick veneer was added to the building around 1918, giving the church its current appearance.

The church was given a historical plaque by the Jefferson County Historical Society in 1976. In 1986, the General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church presented the Hopewell United Methodist Church with a plaque marking the church as a historic site. The Jefferson County Chapter of the Ohio Genealogical Society wrote about the soldiers buried at the Hopewell Church Cemetery, some dating back to the War of 1812. In September of 2010, the congregation celebrated the 225th anniversary of the Hopewell United Methodist Church.

The church building has been abandon for over twenty years, during which time, there has been no heat in the building and no maintenance performed; the physical condition of the church is poor. The old church has no water or sewer access, therefore cannot be adapted for life today. To restore the building would serve no purpose; it would not be occupied, it would still be an insurance liability for the church members, and a continued target for vandalism.

The church members have contacted the Catholic University of America located in Washington D.C. They have inspected the building and are planning a college course that involves dismantling the building and construct a new structure, like a gazebo, on the same site using much of the material from the old church. The project is scheduled for May 8 – June 30, 2012. The plan include saving some of the items, like the pointed arch windows, oak hardwood flooring, and some of the hand hewn timber, to be used as decorations in the new church building, or to sell to cover some of the costs of the new structure. Saving some of the items would be a way for the members of the church to retain some of the historic value of the old structure. One benefit from the project would be the improvement of the site for the community; the new structure could be used during funeral services, and by visitors to the Warren Township cemetery. Another benefit from the project includes helping the environment by re-using the old building material and preventing waste to landfills, along with the appreciation of U.S. history through reclamation of historical building materials.

The college has applied for grants to cover some costs of the project but it is necessary to ask for additional help from local people with equipment and supplies. Equipment that is needed includes a telescoping lift, a man-lift, small crane, skid steer, scaffolding, roll-off containers for unusable materials, and storage containers for materials to be re-used. Supplies that are needed include mortar, nails, screws, bolts, and roofing material. The students will be housed at the new church building during the project, but we are in need of temporary shower facilities at this location.

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Thank you.