

WELCOME TO

# The Church House

Since its earliest beginnings, The Church House has been a sanctuary of peace. According to historical records, The Church House was founded in 1848 as a "hush harbor." Constructed by slaves, hush harbors were shelters made from tree branches, quilts, and any other materials that could be found. Set away from the plantation home in the unattended woods and far away from their masters, these secret sanctuaries served as a house of worship and gathering place for slaves in the surrounding area. It was here they were able to freely combine their African rituals with Christian practices giving them a sense of identity and hope and, in many cases, an extended family.

Eventually, this organization of men and women became known as the Combahee Circuit Methodist Episcopal Church of Blountville and later as Johns Chapel United Methodist Church. According to the earliest deeds on record, in 1884, John G. Bamfield formerly donated the land The Church House sits on today for the sum of twenty-five cents, and soon after, the first part of the building was built. The wood wall you see as you enter was the original exterior of the building, and the church served not only as a place of worship but as a one-room schoolhouse as well.

Throughout the years, several additions were made to the building. A choir loft was added, an educational wing built, and eventually, the church was bricked in.

In 2022 we purchased this building. At that time, it was vacant, aging, and in much need of structural and cosmetic repair. Many times during the remodeling process, as we peeled off the layers of time, we said, "If these walls could talk." For almost one hundred and fifty years, people have sacrificed to keep this little building standing as a place to gather and connect, find hope and healing, and peace.

Our desire is for that to continue to be the purpose of this space and for all who enter its doors.