

BEECH SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH

Beech Springs Baptist Church is situated in Kodak and was organized May 12, 1883 in the old Underwood School. The Presbytery included D. F. Manley, Moderator; Wm. McPherson, Clerk; W. C. Bayless, and .1. F. Haggard. The Articles of Faith, Church Covenant, and Rules of Order were the basis of the organization and the following members constituted the church:

Napoleon White, James A. Maples, Sallie V. Maples, Tennessee Bales, Noah Atchley, Susanna Atchley, David W. Atchley, Thany Gilreath, Mariah Underwood, R. R. Maples, John Vanhoser, Lyle Vanhoser, J. G. Bryan, Sallie Bryan, John Underwood, W. F. Hodges, and Elizabeth Hodges.

Meetings were held once a month with church business being held on the Saturday before the regular church service. No business was transacted on Sunday.

Reverend Wm. McPherson preached the first sermon in the newly organized church the second Saturday of June 1883. James Maples was chosen clerk and J. G. Bryan treasurer. New members were Elizabeth Huffaker, Albert A. Moore, Lizzie Moore, received by letter and Frank Pollard, Thomas Hickman, Hettie Atchley, Mary Hodge, and Mary Underwood received by experience and approved for baptism. Napoleon White, John G. Bryan, and John Underwood were sent as the first messengers to the TSB Convention.

In 1884, the building program was initiated with Larkin Gilreath, J. T. Pollard, and N. B. White serving as trustees.

The Tennessee Baptist Convention helped the building fund at a rate of \$15 per year. The rest of the material and work came from the local group. Logs for the church were hauled to the sawmill by yokes of oxen. Log seals were hand hewn. The church bell came from Knoxville in 1883 by horse-drawn hack. Isem Hodges gave the land on which the church was built, the August 22, 1886 deed being signed by heirs Elizabeth Ellis Hodges, William H. Hodges, Mahala Henry, Mary Jane Cowden, Joseph E. Hodges, N. P. Hodges, and Minnie Hodges. Isem Hodges died before the church was constructed.

The Reverend Henry Gossett served during the initial year as the pastor. In May of 1884, Reverend H. C. Hampstead was called as pastor and the first Lord's Supper was commemorated on the second Sunday of May in 1884. Reverend H. C. Hampstead has been a legend in the history of the church. He was known for his wisdom and decorum. He died at the age of 85 and was buried in the Beech Springs Cemetery. His tombstone inscription: "A Sinner Saved by Grace."

In 1887, the church organized a missionary society designed to promote active and aggressive mission work. The first sisters appointed to carry out the missions work were Elizabeth Hodges, Mrs. H. C. Hampstead, Thany Gilreath, Rebecca Moore, Mary

Hodge, and Marian Underwood. The current WMU was not organized until 1935 under the direction of Mrs. Blanche Huffaker and her assistant, Mrs. Grace Henry.

Brother Frank Pollard was first elected as Sunday School Superintendent in September 1890. Throughout the years Beech Springs Baptist Church has been served by the following pastors: The Reverends Henry Gossett, H. C. Hampstead, W. L. Cate, J. W. H. Coker, W. H. Hodges, Samuel Atchley, L. C. Childs, J. R. Dykes, W. A. Masterson, W. E. Watson, Jerome Hicks, Lee Reed, Mansel Smith, Floyd Langston, Charles Crawford, A. C. Wadley, Elmer Crawford, Ralph Cline, Billy Davenport, Jerry Vittatoo, and Barney Evans.

J. W. Coker was pastor during the turn of the century. It was during these years that the Carmichaels, Allens, Snyders, Smiths, Baileys, Johnsons, and many others came into the church as active members. In the late 1890s, Billy Catlett came to Beech Springs from Bethel and was a dedicated servant in the work of the Lord. He served as deacon and church clerk for many years. Samuel J. Allen came by letter from Jones Chapel in 1900 and served as a deacon.

In 1903 the first church organ was purchased at a cost of \$50. Daisy Kelley was first organist. During that year, the church motto was adopted. It was emblazoned across the wall above the pulpit in the old church: "Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel." Phil. 1:27

Sam Atchley served as pastor with evangelistic fervor. A revival was held in September of 1908 when 75 were baptized and taken into the church as members.

L. C. Childs was pastor during World War I. He lived in Mascot and rode horseback over muddy terrain to reach our church. J. R. Dykes came as pastor in July of 1918 and under his leadership the church grew to over 300 members. His salary was \$500 per year, and he was the first half-time preacher. This man was known as a strong preacher of the old-time gospel and he led the church toward the organization of a Baptist Young People's Union and participation in the Southern Baptist Convention's "75 Million" campaign for which the church pledged \$4,751.

The depression brought hard times for everyone. However, Beech Springs continued in the work of the Lord under the leadership of Reverends Watson, Hicks, Smith, and Reed. Bruce Hodges, a church member, was an inspiration during this time. Floyd Langston served as pastor during 1939-1940. The old church records notes that on September 3, 1939, the church voted to "take electric lights" at a cost of \$1 per month.

Charles Crawford became pastor in the early 1940s and stayed until the latter part of 1946. He holds a special place in church history as the first full-time pastor. "Preacher Charley" would call on everyone to come to the altar to pray for the servicemen risking their lives in the war against the Japanese and Germans. A flag with servicemen's names hung in the church as a constant reminder of their fight for God and country. During this time many day services were held when farmers laid down their plows and teachers

closed schoolroom doors so the attention of the entire community could turn toward the spiritual needs of individuals and the church.

Reverend A. C. Wadley came to Beech Springs in 1947. His family was the first to live in the first church parsonage. During his pastorate the church began to make plans for a new brick building. Preacher Elmer Crawford came to Beech Springs in 1956. He had the distinct honor of being pastor of the church when the new brick building and parsonage were completed. In the ground-breaking ceremony, Mr. Crockett Carmichael and Mr. Bruce Johnson were honored as the two senior members of the church. 'The first funeral in the new church was that of Mr. Tom Bailey. The last in the old church was the funeral of Uncle George Huffaker.

Many wonderful ministers contributed to the growth of Beech Springs through the years, and they are named in the church history. However, the one who had the longest church pastorate was the Reverend Ralph Cline who came to the church on Easter Sunday of 1964 and served as pastor for 16 years. During his ministry, countless souls were saved and many members were added to the church. The new Sunday School addition was added and the auditorium was remodeled during the Cline years. Preacher Cline served four times as moderator of the Sevier County Baptist Association and spent 34 years as a Southern Baptist pastor. The influence of his earthly work in the name of the Lord lives on to lead others to meet him in heaven where he now dwells with the Lord.

Pastors serving the church during the 1980s were Billy Davenport and Jerry Vittatoe. Our current pastor is Barney Evans who has taken the challenge to lead the church into the future.

(Adapted from a Bicentennial History written by Stella Underwood) Church History Committee: Stella Underwood, Juanita S. Cate, Debra Cline.