

FIRST RED BANK BAPTIST CHURCH

First Red Bank Baptist Church, located on Old Pittman Center Road, was first a Primitive Baptist Church. The first building, made of logs, was torn down and rebuilt about 1870. Pink Haggard built the stage and John Ferguson the rostrum.

The church and community had a pie supper to raise money to buy the bell, which still rings out over the community every Sunday morning and Sunday and Wednesday nights. The two front rooms were built in 1900.

An 1856 Sevier County fire destroyed records regarding the church and the property it is on, but according to the earliest record found, the Red Bank Meeting House was a constituted body in 1819. A later record indicated that the church was a constituted body in 1826 and still another record states that in May 1838, Red Bank Meeting House requested letters that they might become a constituted body.

In April 1840, a second petition was signed by 38 members to become a constituted body. Finally, in 1840, Elijah Rogers, William Ogle, Johnson Adams, Andrew Connatser, and Eli Roberts were members of the Presbytery, which constituted the church at Red Bank.

Beginning in 1854, Murphy's Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church was a part of Red Bank, as well as the Methodist Episcopal Church South. This increased the number of pastors serving in the church to three. Members of the three groups attended all of the services and when revivals were held, the pastors united and worked together. In 1855, Murphy's Chapel built their own church and members of Red Bank helped.

In the early 1940s, Cam Butler gave land to enlarge the cemetery around which he built the fence that is still there. About the same time, a rock wall was built along the road. Bill and Andrew Elder hauled the rocks that were used to build the wall from the long ford with a horse-drawn wagon.

The church was remodeled and redecorated in 1966. J. B. McCarter and Hobert Maples dug the basement by hand. Three Sunday School rooms were added and a well was dug. Indoor bathrooms and carpet have been added in recent years and friends and church members donated a new rostrum and pews in memory of loved ones. The church bought a new piano in 1987.

In early 1960, a disagreement developed over whether or not to move the church to another location. Members against moving were defeated in the vote count and the majority of the group moved to Highland subdivision in Sevierville. That church is called Red Bank Baptist Church. The remaining members of the original body reorganized to

become the First Red Bank Baptist Church, claiming the right to be known as the original body.

In recent months the church has grown in membership and a cross was placed atop the steeple which will be illuminated when completed, making the church visible from a distance.

A list of pastors serving the church: Robert S. Atchley, William Atchley, Samuel C. Atchley, Russell Wood, Asa Layman, Richard Evans, John Russell, J. W. H. Coker, Benjamin Langston, Eli Rogers, J. N. Clabough, Ernest Parrott, John Fox, Print Valentine, Collie O'Shield, Kelly Huskey, Henry Johnston, Edman Latham, William Parham, Joel Carr, Walter Ownby, Willie Neal, Tommy Hill, Robert Maples, Eddie Whaley, Odis Parrott, Joe Rogers, D. T. McCarter, Eugene Smelcer, Bill Barnes (interim), Dennis Stapleton, Kenny Blalock, and William (Bill) B. Merritt, the pastor at present, 1991.