

NEW ERA BAPTIST CHURCH

Reverend Elbert T. Holbert brought the first sermon at New Era Baptist Church on the organization day, November 21, 1885 with 15 members from Henderson's Chapel presenting themselves by letter to form the nucleus of New Era Baptist Church. Elder E. W. Ogle served as moderator protem and William Bryan as clerk protem. Caswell T. Ogle became the first church clerk, serving in that position for 24 years.

The Reverend G. B. Walker received the call to pastor New Era for \$31 per year in February 1886. The church approved the Church Covenant, Articles of Faith, and Rules of Decorum at the first meeting of the congregation.

January 1886, William Bryan, Isaac King, C. T. Ogle, and A. Mashburn became first deacons after their ordination. A revival which lasted 16 days with five Elders preaching began in December, 1889 and resulted in five people being baptized in the river in the icy month of January.

The church voted to start a Sabbath School in July 1889, but it probably was not actually organized until April 1897 when J. B. Walker was elected Superintendent and C. W. McMahan Secretary.

John Salts, John Norton, and George McMahan were ordained deacons May 10, 1913 and by 1914, there were 87 members on the roll. While S. H. Clark was pastor, the church began plans to build a new church July 8, 1916. The church was meeting in the New Era School house at the time.

Will Bryan sold the church an acre of land for \$40 and the church was built for \$1,700. On the third Sunday of September 1918, proud and thankful members dedicated the new building.

John O. McMahan and Levi H. Jenkins were ordained as deacons May 24, 1925 and Brother Jenkins served as church treasurer from 1919 to 1940. Brother McMahan was church clerk from 1925 to 1944. In 1928, Ernest Franklin and Raymond Lowe were ordained as deacons and Wesley Suttles, already a deacon, became a member in 1945. Ernest Franklin was chairman of deacons beginning August 1949 and holding that position until April 1979. Earl McMahan and Charles Franklin were ordained as Deacons in December 1951. Leonard Connatser, Ernest McCroskey, W. D. Tarwater, and Tom Amburn Jr. were ordained deacons in November 1961.

Pastors, some serving more than one term, were the Reverends Lee Reed, eight years; Lloyd Loveday, 22 years; and Reverend Ray Kitts, who served nine years at this writing in 1979. Membership at this time is 218.

The church ordained Wiley Pickins to preach in April 1947, and Harry Gibbs was

licensed to preach in March 1960. Brother Curtis Franklin was licensed to preach in March 1985, and ordained October 4, 1987.

New Era Church is located about four miles west of Sevierville. Classrooms were built in the basement in 1948; classrooms and a beifrey were added to the front of the church in 1960. Carpeting, stained glass windows, and white aluminum siding are added improvements.

The pastor in 1991 is Reverend Fred Wohlwend.