

VALLEY VIEW BAPTIST CHURCH

Valley View Baptist Church, located in Wears Valley, is a church with a rich heritage whose Smoky Mountain influence continues to be felt through the descendants who gather for worship in the 80s.

The church was established in 1938 when families of the Bryans, the Ownbys, and the Whaleys felt God leading to build another church in Wears Valley. On June 15, 1934, Congress authorized establishment of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park, making it necessary for some of the residents to leave their homeland and move to Wears Valley. The church they left was Elkmont Baptist Church, whose membership declined as the United States Government bought more land, until the building stood alone and silent.

Meanwhile, a church was coming alive in Wears Valley. Mrs. W. B. Bryan Sr. wrote: "People met in a home in January and February, 1938, and made plans to organize and build a church in Wears Valley. In April, the church met in an abandoned store-apple-storage house which was converted into a meeting house." The shelves were taken from the walls and made into pews and services were conducted.

It was in that building that 30 Christians gathered Sunday, April 17, 1938, along with 15 ministers and 1 deacon from various churches. Valley View Baptist Church was officially organized. The church became a member of Sevier County Baptist Association the same year.

The first pastor, Reverend Ezra Ellis Adams, was one of those present at the April 17 meeting, representing Old Chilhowee Church. He was a carpenter, which proved to be a great asset when the church was built.

W. B. Bryan Sr., J. F. Bryan, and John Ownby formed a building committee in May. John Ownby was successful in obtaining the Elkmont building and moving it to land donated by Baus Ownby in Wears Valley where it was rebuilt.

Church members helped the contractor, Reverend Adams, and the building was ready for service when the first worship service was held July 3, 1938. It was a white frame, one-room building with two front entrances, much like the original at Elkmont. A major renovation took place in 1951 when walls and ceiling were paneled with white pine and new oak pews were installed. Other additions made through the years include Sunday School rooms, fellowship hall, basement, and others which make Valley View a beautiful and comfortable place to worship.

Valley View Baptist Church is a strong Southern Baptist Church with a sweet fellowship. Reverend Bethel Crisp is pastor in 1988.

Pastor, Reverend Bethel Crisp, 1989.

Information, Preston Joslin.