

History of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

The church is the greatest influence in the community. It is one of the oldest established institutions in the world. It may be known by many other names, but wherever a temple, a cathedral, or a house of worship is established, it makes for a better community, city, country and people.

The real church represents a group of God-fearing people, training for Christian growth. It opens its doors to all races, colors and creeds. It was such a group of dedicated Christian men and women, fresh out of the bonds of slavery, which went from house to house with a prayer in their hearts and a song on their lips, thanking God for their freedom and the opportunity to live as human beings. They prayed the prayer of faith with earnest hearts and what was to be, and is now known as Pleasant Hill Baptist Church was born.

In the year 1869 a brush harbor was erected and service were held each Sunday during the months of May through October. It was too cold to have service during the winter months, but the group carried on prayer service from house to house.

In the spring of 1870 a spot of ground was donated by Samuel Frasier and M.P. Dixon to Emory McDowell, Albert Teasley and other Trustees. This land was to be used only for church purposes.

The Brush Harbor was rebuilt with fresh tree tops whenever necessary, in order to provide shade for the worshippers. A nearby sawmill provided sawdust for a cool soft carpet for the ground, and seats for pews were made from slabs obtained from the same sawmill. Hymn books were unknown and the whole congregation was one big choir. Prayer was the key and God heard and answered their prayers.

A small group of men, W.M. Earle, John Williams, Gad Thompson and Alford Knox were instrumental in getting the group organized. A log church house was erected on the same spot of ground. In the summer of 1870, the church was officially organized by Reverend Andy McGuffin, a white minister. He used a set of borrowed deacons from another church during the organization. The above named men were ordained as the first deacons of the church.

The first pastor, Reverend Daniel Presley, served the church for a short period of time. He was followed by Reverend Lewis Whitfield. Reverend W.R. Parker was the third pastor, and during his administration a large group of men and women became converted, and were baptized and added to the church group. The fourth pastor, Reverend Daniel Burris, was followed by Reverend P.A. Pinson. From the very beginning to this time, twenty-one years had elapsed and the church was going strong, growing by leaps and bounds. It became necessary to expand.

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In 1884, the present spot on which the church now stands was purchased from Hugh Blair. The spot contained two acres and was purchased for two dollars per acre. What we now refer to as the old church building was demolished in 1969 and the present building was erected and completed during the administration of Reverend Daniel Prosley. Reverend Richmond Williams was the first pastor of the new church at the present site. It was dedicated in 1890 by Reverend Williams. Reverend R. D. Glenn served until his health failed. Dr. J. J. Starks served as pastor until he was elected president of Morris College, Sumter, South Carolina. Dr. Gordon B. Hancock served as pastor until duties called him to Virginia Union University, Richmond, Virginia.

Rev. A.B. Morton was elected pastor and served longer than any previous pastor. Reverend T. A. Gideon, who was at that time, President of the Seneca River Sunday School Educational and B.T.U. Convention, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Seneca River Baptist Singing Convention, and active in other outstanding organizations of the county and state, served as supply pastor for a short period of time, until a regular pastor could be secured.

Reverend W. W. L. Clark was elected pastor and served faithfully until he moved to Baltimore, Maryland. Reverend James D. Hicks was elected pastor and served untiringly. He was the first and only pastor the church lost to death while serving. Homecoming Day services, the third Sunday in August, 1957, was his last meeting with Pleasant Hill. Reverend Paul Drummond served for a short period of time. Reverend A. E. Roberson was elected 1962 and served until 1972. The present building was constructed during his administration.

We cannot leave these able pastors without mentioning Dr. W. H. Neal, who conducted revival services at Pleasant Hill under the administration of Reverend J. D. Hicks for twenty three consecutive years. Dr. Neal was a dynamic asset to the church and community. The Christian influence of these pastors will live through generations of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church. The culture and dignity of their lives can never be erased; their words were seeds sown in good grounds, though some, no doubt, fell on stony ground and failed to take root, others were consumed by the fowls of the air, some fell among thorns and were choked, but some fell on good soil for we are the fruits they are now bearing.

Brother Henry C. Childers served a chairman of deacons under the administration of Dr. J. J. Starks. The next chairman, Brother George Poole, served until his death. Brother Allen Childers served as chairman for twenty-five years. He was succeeded by Brother Leonard Poole, who served faithfully for several years.

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Under the leadership of Reverend A. E. Roberson, Brother Benjamin F. Hunter was elected as chairman, with his quorum of deacons: Brothers G. B. Thompson, Henry C. Carter, John Frank Hunter, Henry T. Childers, and Henry Jenkins Sr..

The first clerk of the new church was Brother Harrison Earle. He was succeeded by Brother G. A. Childers, Brother George Campbell, Brother Isaiah Oglesby and Brother B. F. Childers who served until his death in 1963. He was succeeded by his wife, Mrs. Velma Childers, with Mrs. Marie Henderson serving as assistant. Mrs. Elaine Terry served a short period of time. Mrs. Doris V. Grant is our present clerk and Miss Miranda Prater served as assistant clerk until 2001, when Mrs. Pamela Little accepted the position.

The first treasurer, Brother John Williams, was followed by Brother Isaiah Oglesby, Brother Henry Carter, Sr., Brother Leonard Poole and Brother Henry Jenkins, Sr. and Mrs. Nettie Jenkins. Mrs. Helen Rosemond-Saunders is our present treasurer.

The church ground was entered in a rural beautification contest. The improvements to the ground won first prize of \$25.00. This money was used to further improve the ground and to put a cement walk in front of the church.

The schoolhouse building and ground were bought and added to the church property. A portion of this land is being used for cemetery lots and the building was used as a community activity center.

The strip of land between the main highway and the schoolhouse was deeded to the church by the late Mrs. E. G. Poore. The strip of land between the highway and the church was deeded to the church by Mr. and Mrs. Harold Richardson.

March 15, 1957, the president of the Ladies Auxiliary, Mrs. Lila Childers brought to the church conference a proposal to raise money for a new church building. She was granted the privilege to ask each family to be responsible for one hundred dollars. With this and other projects, a building fund started to grow. Mrs. Lurlie Oglesby gave the first dollar. Reverend J. D. Hicks gave the second dollar, and after eleven years of toil, sweat, tears and lots of prayers, the new church building became a reality. The ground was broken March 1969 and six months later, August 17, 1969, the new church building was dedicated. We pray that much good will be realized from the use of our church building.

December, 1972 two additional acres of land was purchased, increasing the value of the church property. The note and the mortgage, in the amount of twenty thousand dollars, was paid in full and a photo static copy was burned May 6, 1973.

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Rev. Stanley L. Walker, of Greenville, South Carolina, was elected as pastor, January 20, 1973. By his authorization, three additional deacons were ordained on May 6, 1973. They were Brother James Verner, Brother Roy Whitner and Brother James P. Haymon.

May 20, 1973 was a red letter day of Pleasant Hill. On that day, under the leadership of pastor, Reverend Stanley L. Walker and the Masonic lodges, Blue Ridge #97 and Seneca Lodge #204, the cornerstone was laid.

The church continued to increase in membership and the organizational program of the church was expanded. A Pastor's Aid Club was organized. Also a very active Brotherhood Club was organized May 17, 1970. The presidents are as follows: past/present: Brothers Robert Grant, Henry Jenkins, Jr., James B. Simpson, Tupper Childers, Elbert Thompson, Rodney Hunter, Willie Washington, Edward Hampton, Harry Hunter, and Raymond Saunders – present president. A Children's Choir, a Junior Choir and a wide awake Gospel Choir, all added greatly to the spiritual well being of the church. The Senior Choir also continues to provide music for spiritual strength and comfort. The church musicians are as follows past/present: Mr. Jim Prater, Mrs. Ellen Hurston, Mrs. Pauline Perry, Mr. Jimmy Rosemond, Mr. Edward Prater, Miss Valencia Hawthorne and Mrs. Jackie Hunter.

Mrs. Mary J. Gilbert was elected and served as the first Financial Secretary of the church. Mr. Willie Washington was elected and served faithfully for a number of years. Miss Miranda Prater is our present financial Secretary. We have been blessed with the addition of a Trustee Board: Brothers Edward Prater, Willie Verner, Doyle Gilbert, Roy Carter, William Grant, Rosco Jenkins, King David Gilbert, James Boyd Simpson and James Carter.

The adults and youth of our church and community have for many years been inspired and encouraged to Christianity by their experiences in Sunday School each Sunday. Sunday School Superintendents are as follows past/present: Brothers Allen Childers, Frank Hunter, Robert Grant, Henry Carter, Tupper Childers, John E. Skelton, Antonio Hawthorne, Jeremiah Cummings, Delane Rosemond and Willie Washington. Deacon James Verner is our present Sunday School Superintendent. Brother Terry Hawthorne is Assistant Superintendent. Sunday School musicians were as follows: Mrs. Sharon Hawthorne Hardy, Mrs. Collette Hawthorne Rhue, Miss Sonya Hawthorne, Mr. Kelvin Moore, Mrs. Sandra Cobb Clark, Miss Connie Cobb, Mrs. Elaine Verner Terry, Mrs. Andrea Hawthorne Jacobs and Mrs. Wanda Moore Caldwell.

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Very active missionary societies provide the women and girls of the church the opportunity for mission study and work. Missionary Women Societies are as follows: Senior Missionary #1 / Past Presidents: Mrs. Lila Childers, Mrs. Ruby Hunter, Mrs. Dora Thompson and Mrs. Ellen Hurston. Our present president is Mrs. Marie Grant. Mrs. Hadie R. Walker is the Vice – President.

Young Girls' Association (presently known as Young People's Association) past leaders were as follows: Mrs. Dora Thompson, Mrs. Ruby Hunter, Mrs. Mary Jane Grant, Mrs. Louise Hampton, Mrs. Evelyn Carter, Mrs. Magdalene Hawthorne and Mrs. Jenetta Moore, Present leaders are Mrs. Cathy McKnight and Mrs. Geneva Grant.

The Young Ladies Missionary (presently known as Senior Missionary #2) first president – Mrs. Theresa Lindsay, second president – Mrs. Susie Thompson, third president – Miss Lila M. Poole and presently, Mrs. Lula B. Brown serves as president.

Recently another missionary group was organized. They are our Young Woman's Association, which was formed for women between the ages of eighteen and forty five. Mrs. Melvina Earle is the advisor.

The Usher Board is very active. It helps to create an affective atmosphere for all our church services. Usher leaders: past/present – Mr. Gilbert Thompson, Mr. James P. Haymond. Miss Lila M. Poole is present president.

We are blessed with morning services every Sunday, beginning with Sunday School at 9:30 AM, followed by morning worship at 10:30 AM. The church doors are open for weekly Bible Study and Prayer Service on Wednesday nights at 6:30 PM for those who wish to avail themselves of this opportunity. A Teen Pressure Workshop was organized under the leadership of Mrs. Gloria Washington and Mrs. Andrea Hawthorne Jacobs in 1989. A tutorial Workshop was also organized under the leadership of Mrs. Magdalene Hawthorne and Mrs. Jenetta Moore. A Youth Workshop was held each Wednesday night by Mrs. Belinda Cummings and Mr. Anthony Holland.

Along with the spiritual growth, physical improvements were being made to the church. The Ladies Lounge was rearranged, the woodwork was painted, a refrigerator was purchased for the kitchen, the church name sign was erected, the stairway carpeted, table linen purchased, telephone and PA system installed, a lectern donated by Mrs. Ellen Hurston and Family, file cabinet and other office necessities secured for the Pastor's study.

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The two additional acres of land fore mentioned, purchased by the church will eventually take care of expansion and future growth.

Reverend Darnell Moorer, of Orangeburg, S.C. was elected pastor on May 26, 1979 and served until September, 1982. Two additional deacons were added at this time: Brother Elbert Thompson and Brother Walt Hawkins.

Reverend Sidney Durham was elected On December 3, 1983 and served until September, 1993. Under his administration, a nursery for children and a Nurses Guild was organized, and a food bank for the needy was established. Two deacons were added: Mr. James B. Simpson and Mr. John E. Skelton. Also the following Trustees were added: Brothers Harry Hunter, Willie Washington, Edward Hampton, Clarence Pitts and Bruce Patterson. During this period, the Birdie Poole Holland Scholarship Fund was organized. This fund is intended to provide assistance to members or any person affiliated with Pleasant Hill Baptist Church. Applicants must pursue a two or four year college degree.

Reverend Edward Scott, our current pastor, was elected April 2, 1994. Through his leadership and spiritual guidance, we are achieving great things through Jesus Christ. Church membership and attendance continues to increase and Bible study attendance has increased steadily.

A major renovation project has been completed, which added more restrooms, more classrooms, a new kitchen and fellowship hall, more choir and pulpit space and a new pastor's study. This project helped to better accommodate the growing congregation of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church.

A Bus Ministry was started in 1997 – 1998 when the Brotherhood purchased a van.

Also during this time a Youth Council was formed. The Youth Council coordinates youth activities at the local, district and state levels. The council members are: Deacon Henry Jenkins, Jr., Sister Pamela Little, Sister Helen Rosemond-Saunders and Sister Gloria Washington.

January, 2001 the Brotherhood made the Juniors a separate body. President Raymond Saunders appointed officers for the first year. The appointed advisor is Brother Jeff Wright and Brother James Bolton is assistant advisor.

Our Deacon Board has increased by five members since 1994: Deacons Doyle Gilbert, King David Gilbert, William Grant, Henry Jenkins, Jr. and Willie Washington. Deacon Henry Jenkins, Jr. is our present chairman.

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During this period, the Trustee Board has increased by thirteen members: Trustees Jeremiah Cummings, Conrite Hallums, Terry Hawthorne, Floyd Gilbert, Andrew Haymon, Christopher Haymon, Randolph Hunter, Jimmy Rosemond, Rodney Hunter, Terry Hunter, Raymond Saunders, Artis Valentine and Jeff Wright. Present chairman of the Trustee Board is Trustee Edward Hampton.

We do not take credit for the progress that we have made during these years; for our goodness is but filthy rags in the sight of God. We bow humbly before Him and thank Him for his goodness and mercy towards us. It is our prayer that He will continue to bless this church and the work of our hands to his service.

THE CHURCH MOTTO IS: "THE LITTLE CHURCH WITH A BIG HEARTH WHERE EVERYBODY IS SOMEBODY IN THE SIGHT OF CHRIST"