



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LITTLE RIVER BAPTIST CHURCH

Address of Rev. Westwood Hutchison
Given at the Celebration of the
160th Anniversary of the Church
September 1, 1929

The history of Little River Church is so closely connected with the early history of the Baptists in Northern Virginia that it seems but fitting to give some account of the first introduction of Baptists in what is known as Northern Virginia and the subsequent results of this movement.

In 1756 Elder John Garrard, imbued with the missionary spirit, left Berkeley County, Va., and crossed the Blue Ridge Mountain into Loudoun County. Tradition has it that he came to Berkeley County from England. Truly his life work shows that he had a scriptural zeal for carrying out the Master's orders to give the world the Gospel. Under his preaching many were led to accept Christ, and a Baptist church was organized and named Kettocton after the name of the stream; and for the same reason John was baptizing at Enon, near Salem, because there was much water there. The second church organized in the territory was Mill Creek, in Shenandoah County, under the labor of Brother Garrard. About the same time Smith Creek, in Berkeley County, was organized.

*Truly God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform
He plants His footsteps on the sea
He rides upon the storm.*

And in His wisdom He moved upon the hearts of two Brethern living near what is now New Baltimore to spread the Gospel light, and learning that the glad tidings of salvation were being preached in Berkeley County, they traveled across the Blue Ridge Mountains and secured the services of Elder Thomas, and under his ministry souls were born into the Kingdom of Christ and a church organized and called Broad Run.

These four churches – Kettocton, Mill Creek, Smith Creek, and Broad Run – being so remote from the Philadelphia Association, met in 1776 and by letters of dismission from the Philadelphia Association, organized an Association and called it Kettocton.

The territory of this Association extended from King George County in the Northern Neck of Virginia to the Red Stone settlement west of the Alleghenies, and from Orange County south of the Rapid Ann River to Frederick, Maryland.

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So gracious was God in this movement on the part of His people who believed in New Testament teaching as Bible Schools and missionary effort, that within 10 years this little band of four churches had grown to 40 churches with a membership of 4,000.

In 1820 the Association had grown so large that a new Association was organized, mostly from the churches from the lower end of the district and called the Columbia Association.

The Little River Church was organized in 1769, under the preaching of Elder Thomas, and Rev. Richard Major became her first pastor, and under his leadership God greatly blessed this vine so that in two years they had a membership of 272, which covered a territory from Manassas to Upperville. After the death of Bro. Major, Bro. Robert Latham was called and served the church 15 years. Some of his descendants are living in this community.

Bro. John Ogilvie succeeded Bro. Latham and served 19 years. After his death Bro. Lovell Marders, who has grandchildren living in Manassas, was called to the church as pastor – and it was during his pastorate that a division as to the doctrine of election and evangelical services took place in the membership, which resulted in the withdrawal of some of the members in 1851 and the organizing of the Mt. Zion Church, calling themselves Primitive Baptists.

Bro. Marders was followed by Bro. Greer; and then the sainted Samuel Rogers, who died at an early age, and after his death Rev. John W. Jones became pastor and served until the close of the War Between the States.

For some time, the church was without a pastor, but in 1870, Rev. Samuel Athey accepted a call and served two years and resigned; and again the church was without an undershepherd.

Now comes an incident in history of the church how God hears and answers the prayers of His people when made for His glory. The Norris family, who were Baptists, lived near what is now Hickory Grove and when the War came moved to Baltimore; and the youngest, Miss Rebecca, learning that the church was without a pastor and spiritual condition at a low ebb, sought the Great Head of the Church to send an undershepherd to Little River. And in answer to her prayers Rev. A.E. Rogers came unexpectedly to the church one cold Saturday while the Brethern were getting some wood. An appointment was made for him to preach on Sunday, and he was called, and during his pastorate the church was greatly revived.

After the resignation of Bro. Rogers, Bro. Samuel Athey became pastor for the third time and was succeeded by Rev. Luther Steele, and he by the Rev. T.A. Hall, and the Rev. J.J. Bailey followed Bro. Hall; and then for a short time Rev. Oscar Peyton was pastor. At the suggestion of Dr. W.E. Hatcher, of blessed memory, the church called Rev. C. Wirt Trainham who served the church faithfully for 10 years, and was followed by the "sweet singer of Israel," Rev. T.D.D. Clark. The church now has as pastor the Rev. Joseph M.

Long, who is giving the church full time and has the cooperation and love of the members.

The first location of the church was on what is known as Riticor's Lane, about a mile from Ish's Tanyard. This structure was evidently of logs. When the church grew in numbers and financial strength, the old site was abandoned. A brick house of worship was built on the present site in 1814. Spiritual interest was shown in the slaves; a gallery was built for their accommodation, and when a boy I well remember the large gathering of the colored people on first Sundays. No greater missionary work was ever done than that of the South for the Negroes.

We have heard a good deal lately about women in our public assemblies – this is no new thing, as shown by a minute in an old church book which was lost when my house burned. In business meeting a Bro. offered this resolution: moved that our female Brethern be allowed to vote. This thing of organizing churches into groups or circles, is not new, as shown by this church who had what they termed overseers, whose duty it was to look after the members in their district.

To show how strict they were in the matter of discipline the old record showed that the church had one of these overseers to come before the church to answer some infraction of their discipline.

In reviewing the history of the Kingdom we see how the vision of Ezekiel, in the 47th Chapter, has been verified in the growth of the Kingdom. First a little stream coming under the door of the Holy of Holies, then ankle deep, then up to the knees, then to the waist, and then a great river. First, a babe in Bethlehem, then three years of patient teaching, then the cross, then His glorious resurrection, and afterward Pentecost. And there is coming a time when the rock cut out of the mountain without hands shall grind to powder all the nations of the earth, and shall be set up a Kingdom which shall never end, and then shall it be that the Gospel shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

And in that glad day when the morning stars shall sing together for joy, and the saints on earth shall join with the redeemed who have gone before in the song of Moses and the Lamb. And it is a joy to me to know that this old church has had some part in the glorious work of carrying out the Master's marching orders to give the Gospel to the world.