



THE HISTORY OF LITTLE RIVER BAPTIST CHURCH

Mrs. Louisa S. Hutchison
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It is interesting that in the *1772 Virginia Notebook* kept by Morgan Edwards, he located Little River Meeting House in Loudoun County as "... 212 miles north by west from Williamsburg and 230 miles south southwest from Philadelphia." Recognizable reference points must have been few and far between. He is the one who tells us the size of the meeting house was 25 x 20 feet. It was on one-half acre of land deeded by William West to Benjamin Hutchison, John Smarr, John Shippey and William Berkley, Trustees. The deed was dated September 2, 1769, and that is the year shown by association records as the year Little River was constituted.

Less than three years later, on March 2, 1772, Samuel Wyckoff deeded to John Lewis and Joseph Hutchison, Trustees, one acre of land for the purpose of erecting a meeting house. This deed identified the parcel of land as lying on the main road opposite to Joseph Hutchison's plantation, which places it at our present location. In 1772, today's Braddock Road was the "main road" from Alexandria and Colchester westward to the Blue Ridge Mountain, and Joseph Hutchison's plantation was across the road where Drees Homes is planning to build [and has now built] a number of new homes. Little River Turnpike (Route 50) would not be built for another 30+ years.

We do not know when the first meeting house was built at this location, but probably soon after acquiring the land. Court records mention it on a road petition in October 1775 as the meeting house at Joseph Hutchison's.

Morgan Edwards also noted that in 1768 fifteen members from Broad Run Church banded together to worship in this area and he listed the names. Among them were Rev. Richard Major, who became Little River's first pastor, and his wife, John Shippey, William Barclay (Berkley) and John Lewis, the latter three appearing as trustees in the first two deeds.

Rev. Major served as pastor of Little River until his death in 1796. He and his wife, Sarah, are buried on the Hutchison farm at Pleasant Valley, which was developed into Lafayette Business Center in the 1980s. He was born in 1722 in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and was raised in a Presbyterian home. In 1764 he embraced the sentiments of and became a Baptist. He came to Virginia in 1766 and was ordained to the ministry in 1768.

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Everyone was required to attend even if they didn't want to and to support the church financially even if they didn't believe. It is interesting to find that the Presbyterians who were under the same colonial laws came to oppose Rev. Major the second time he preached. One time at Bull Run Church a mob appeared against him and among them were the Davis brothers, known as "the giants." After hearing Rev. Major preach, they were so impressed that they ended up protecting the one they had come to attack.

Little River flourished under the leadership of Rev. Major and the membership grew from 81 when constituted to 272 in two years, drawing from an area from Upperville to Manassas. Rev. Major is listed as the one who planted Bull Run Church in 1775 with 126 members, Popeshead Church the same year with 121 members, and Frying Pan Church in 1791 with 67 members. All of these were in Fairfax County. I am sure some of the early members of these new churches were a part of the 272 reported by Little River in 1771.

The minutes of Kectoctin Association show Little River's membership in 1809 as 75. Associations changed at various times and Little River was in Kectoctin, Columbia, Salem Union and Potomac before becoming a part of NorthStar Network.

We assume the first building at the present location was of logs. In 1814 a brick building was erected and stood until it was determined that the walls were unsafe. It was torn down in 1889 and a frame building was erected at a cost of \$945.51 for which contributions had been made to cover the full amount. This building was dedicated on July 5, 1890. The Episcopal Church in Aldie was dedicated that same month. In 1840, Francis Adams and his wife Martha had deeded an additional 3+ acres of land which extended the property line to today's New Road. That road was "new" when it was opened in December 1888. In the 1970s an additional acre was given to the church along the New Road and an exchange was made with Mrs. Catherine Matthew to extend the property line directly behind the church to allow the water draining from the building and the baptistry to flow onto our own property.

The early minutes of Little River were lost when the home of the clerk, Westwood Hutchison, burned. The earliest we have begin in January 1871 and with a few small gaps our history can be traced from that date through them. Earlier information has been gathered from various sources: Association records; Semple's *History of Baptists in Virginia*, 1810, revised and updated in 1894; and histories of other churches who shared a pastor with Little River.

Following Rev. Major's death, the church was without a pastor for several years and experienced a period of decline. Rev. Robert Latham was the second pastor and served for 15 years. He lived in Prince William County and was listed in the Association Minutes that are available in 1809 and 1821. From the diary of a niece ("Miss Newman") who lived with the Latham family from December 1823 until January 1840, we find Rev. Latham sometimes preached after Rev. John Ogilvie became pastor in 1829. He also preached at the Association Meeting at North Fork in August 1832 just a few months before he died in April 1833. Miss Newman also gives us the date of the first prayer meeting at Little River. This was October 21, 1832.

Following Rev. Latham were Rev. John Johnson, 1824-1827 and Rev. Lovell Marders, 1828. Rev. John Ogilvie became pastor in 1829 and served 19 years. He was also pastor of Broad Run church and others. He was the principal of New Baltimore Academy for 20 years and during some of this time he pastored four churches, each of which he visited once a month on horseback. He would leave his school on Friday afternoon and return on Monday morning. We know from Miss Newman's diary that services were held at Little River on the first Sunday of each month and the Saturday preceding.

The next pastor was Rev. Lovell Marders and it was at this time that 14 members withdrew from Little River and organized Mt. Zion Old School Baptist Church in 1851 and built the brick church on the Little River Turnpike. This was when many churches divided over doctrinal differences, particularly the subject of missions.

During the next three decades a number of pastors served short periods of time. During the Civil War and following it was difficult to raise the funds for the pastor's salary and I am sure this was true at Little River also.

Rev. Timothy A. Hall, who was pastor from June 1884 to September 1888, also served Manassas and Antioch churches in Prince William County and Bealeton Church in Fauquier County. Think of the time spent traveling by horseback to such a scattered field of churches. "Field" was the term Baptists used to denote a group of churches sharing the same pastor.

Rev. John J. Baillie (Bailey) a native of England became a citizen of the United States during the year he was pastor of Little River. The next pastor, Oscar C. Peyton left after one year to take a special course of study for pastors at the Southern Baptist Seminary at Louisville, Kentucky. He then pastored churches in Kentucky and Tennessee.

Rev. C. Wirt Trainham served from 1894 to 1903 a field which included Manassas, Little River, Haymarket and Antioch Churches. He was always troubled with poor health but he again became pastor in 1921 and served three years until he was no longer able to use his voice.

Back to 1904, Rev. T.D.D. Clark became pastor and it was during his pastorate that a personal service league was organized among the young people. After one year they had a membership of 18. Rev. Clark served for 10 years.

Little River had withdrawn from the field with Manassas and when Rev. George T. Baker was called in October 1914, became associated with the Leesburg Church and in 1917 North Fork became a part of the field. Rev. Baker served until 1920.

After Rev. Trainham's second pastorate from 1921 to 1923, Rev. W.J. Banks was pastor for two years.

Rev. James H. Smith was called and became our pastor in June 1958 and was with us until August 1966 when he resigned due to failing eyesight. It was during his pastorate a team from the Baptist Student Union of the University of Richmond came and held a weekend revival. In 1963 the Vacation Bible School enrollment was 113 and in 1964 the Sunday school had an average attendance of 73 and Training Union of 25.

On July 1, 1967 Rev. Joseph B. Anderson, Jr., became pastor and remained until February 1972.

On December 11, 1971, the church building was destroyed by fire. There had been some discussion about relocating the church to some site on Route 50 before this and the subject was again brought up. However by a vote of the majority it was decided to rebuild on the old site. Services were held at the Arcola Elementary School until the present building was completed. Mr. William Brewer who had been licensed to preach and who had recently moved into the neighborhood conducted services for us for about eight months. A number of members stepped forth and took leadership positions as we undertook the task of rebuilding and searched for an interim pastor. Rev. Jesse H. Parker preached for us the first two Sundays in November 1972. He was called as interim pastor effective January 1, 1973, and in November was unanimously called as pastor. Our present building was dedicated on August 5, 1973.

During Rev. Parker's ministry there was an active Youth Group under the leadership of Peggy and Ed Wean with several able assistants. This was also a time when a visitation program was successful in reaching out to the extended community. Youth Retreats and Adult Retreats were special times of study, fellowship and recreation.

In 1986, after devastating floods in West Virginia, a truckload of supplies and building materials was taken to Parsons, West Virginia, and while there our team joined others in loading and unloading donated supplies from other donors.

Rev. Parker retired December 31, 2007.

Rev. Daniel Hough is now serving as interim pastor.