

Reflections On A Moment in Time...

Linda Pearson-Goode, Beaverdam Church Historian

April 14, 2023

“One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever.”

In 1874, a tiny band of ex-slaves peered into the woods across the road from the site of the present church, (located at 1252 Beaverdam Church Road, Enoree, SC). They were seekers after a physical place for the replenishment of their souls. The crude structure which they built, little more than a lean-to, intended to shield them from the elements, was in fact, a magnificent symbol of the tenacity, the resiliency, and the spiritual courage which characterized our forebearers. Scarcely a decade out of slavery, this group comprehended that “the church,” in an important sense, constitutes the people, that the church is the spiritual face of the black community. Surely, they understood that what they did, and why they did what they did that day, was in fact, a revolutionary application of Christian love for us who came after them. They created a “Church” from little more than dry sprigs, from brush leavings; perhaps even the carrion crow mocked their efforts that day. But that thing, that lean-to, which they fashioned with their own newly-freed and calloused hands,

was no less beautiful, no less blessed, than this building in which we worship weekly.

Who were these people, and where did they come from? The Brush Arbor Church encompassed members from Jonah Springs Baptist Church (located near the intersection of Patterson Plant Road and Highway #49); Piney Grove Baptist Church (located at Martin's Crossroads in Gray Court, S.C.); and the Duncan Creek Baptist Church in Clinton, S.C., the last of which is the lone surviving organized church of the three. Among those members from Duncan Creek is reported to have been an ex-slave named Fortune Parks (the great grandfather of the late Deacon Ulysses Pearson).

We have built three church structures since the brush arbor. One was built in 1909 and dismantled in 1936 after nearly collapsing from sheer exhaustion. The first church was constructed on one and five eighths acres of land purchased from W.H. Drummond, a resident of Laurens County on March 8, 1909 for the price of \$81.25. The second church was constructed in 1937 and destroyed by fire in 1957. The present church was constructed in 1957, remodeled in the period of time between 1966 and 1974. The present structure was extensively renovated and added to in 1995.

Past Pastors

Starting in 1874, Beaverdam has been blessed with excellent spiritual leaders. The Reverends Law Jones,(1874-1907) foreparent of the late Deacon Bravell Lee Jones, Burton, Walker, Cook, Webb, Enoch H. Moore (around 1918), John Henry Watson, Benjamin F. Carven (1924-1926), Allen David (A.D.) Duncan, (1927-1965), Willie B. McMahan (1966-1974), and Andy Young (1975-1981). Those pastors contributed much to the spiritual growth and physical development of this church. Many of them bringing their own special influence on various aspects of church life and operations.

Current Pastor

The Reverend Dr. O.T. Hill came to us in 1982. Since that time, we have had tremendous growth and are continuing to aspire to higher heights. Rev. Hill has emphasized studying to show thyself approved by providing various workshops to train the membership. He has focused on our youth by holding youth retreats and opportunities for them to have good clean fun. Under his leadership, a Singles' Ministry was established, a month-long observance of African-American History Month in February and Women's History Month in March, as well as a pre-revival fellowship for the community were established. In 2022, we held our first Autumn Fall Festival for the community at large. Our He has organized the Festival of Great Preaching

for each night in April by inviting community ministers to conduct church services. The children's community-wide luau is held each June.

The church has made several cosmetic improvements to the physical structure. Anticipating growth. Over time, we have purchased a total of twenty-one acres of land on which our church is situated. In 1996, ground was broken for a new sanctuary. Its completion marks a valiant effort on the part of the leadership and membership of this church. This new sanctuary is a symbol of the sublime marriage of history to memory in African American evolution. The contemporary philosopher, Cornel West, has said that in this nation, infamous for its brash will to historical forgetfulness, African Americans have been the ones who could not "not know."

Past Deacons

Beaverdam's first known deacons were Tom Arch, William Boozer, Jim Spurgeon, Chairman, H.W. Irby, Daniel S. Moody, Sam Cheek, L. Mills, Jim Dugan, D. Farmer, Azon Higgins, and Belton Higgins. Additional past deacons were Allen Gray, Stacey Gray, Otis Byrd, Clarence Moody, Chairman, Clarence Dawkins, Chairman, J.C. Austin, Augustus Abrams, John Bryson, Otis Byrd, James Gray, Wade Irby, Bravell Lee Jones, Zack Mack, James Johnson, Ulysses Pearson, Tobie Ray, Caspar Spurgeon, Lawrence Styles, Granger Massey, Sr., David Massey, Sr., Cleophus

Smith, and James Spurgeon, Wydemon Irby, Chairman, Ralph Dawkins, William Downs, Sr., Jesse Mack Cullen, R.D. Bennett, Fred Cheek, Paul Ray, Charles Abrams, Paul Gilliam, and Julius Ogburn, William Downs, Jr.

Current Deacons

Current deacons are Terry Cullen, Bruce Westfield, Columbus Stephens, Mike Floyd, and James Bates.

Some of the Past Deaconesses & Wives of Trustees

Hattie Spurgeon, Lillie Gray, Pitney Byrd, Cora Lee Austin, Irene Abrams, Julia Irby, Lillian Mack, Gladys Dawkins, Alzonia Downs, Mary Cheek, Pauline Massey, Thelma Ray, Sandra Gilliam, Thelma Stephens, Frances Massey, Margaret Jones, Annie Styles, Ellen Mills., Nina Dawkins, Floree Irby, Julia Antrum Pearson, Vivian Stephens, Lucille Johnson, Carrie Ray, Pearlie Abrams, Betty Ogburn and Brenda Downs, Annie Styles, Alzonia Downs.

Current Deaconesses

Levonina Thompson, Debbie Babb-President, Louise Sheets, Brenda Floyd, Betty Ogburn, Dorothy Garrett, Williette Hicks,

Trustees

The Trustee Ministry was organized in 1951. The first members of the trustees were J.C. Austin, R.D. Bennett, Bravell Lee Jones, James Johnson, Ulysses Pearson, and Samuel Watson. Additional trustees were Fred Cheek, Rossie Abrams, Talmadge Austin, Arthur Cheek, Richard Dawkins, Sr., William Downs, Sr., Walt Fletcher, Paul Ray, James Spurgeon, Charlie Stephens, Claude Stephens, Grover Stephens, Luther Anderson, Perry Downs, Charles Wallace, and Marvin Stephens, Paul Abrams, Chairman, Wendell Massey, Jesse Cullen, Ezell Gilliam, Perry Downs Linda Pearson-Goode, Chairman, Edward Garrett, William Downs, Jr., Henry Dawkins, Jesse Cullen, Henry Jackson, Shelbert Styles, Ezell Gilliam, and Elijah Ray, Chairman, Simmie Hicks, Chairman

Current Trustees

Sam Boyd, Chairman, George Pitts, Linda Pearson Goode, Gardenia Byrd, Wilamena Jones, Fred Babb

Church Clerks & Current Clerk

Early clerks were John Bryson, Jonah Farmer, J.C. Austin, Lathadues Bennett, and current clerk is Doris Gilliam.

Church Treasurers & Current Treasurer

The treasurers have been Clarence Dawkins, Ralph Dawkins, Madge Byrd, and current Treasurer is James Bates.

Financial Officers and Current Officer

Financial officers have been Talmadge Austin, Columbus Stephens, Doris Gilliam, and the current financial officer is Irene Jackson.

Church School Superintendents & Current Superintendent

Early Sunday School Superintendents were Nannie Lee Spurgeon, Clarence Moody, Cleophus Smith, Wydemon Irby, Charles Abrams. Virginia Ray Hampton, Current Superintendent is James Bates.

Church Mothers & Current Mother

Early church mothers were Hattie Spurgeon, Nannie Irby, Mattie Montgomery, Lillie Gray, Irene Abrams, Lula Boston, and current church mother is Louise Robinson.

Associate Ministers

Early associate ministers were Stacey Gray, James Gray, Frances Irby, Lee Irby, Oscar Irby, Nancy Parker, Ernest Pickens, and currently Catherine Cullen-Evans.

Mission and Education

Beaverdam has given financial support to various agencies and schools over the years. Among those receiving support are the NAACP, American Cancer Society, Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation, Helping Hands Organization, Alzheimers Association, various Greek organizations, Prison Ministries, area youth sports camps, Morris College and Benedict College.

Affiliations

Beaverdam maintains affiliation with the Tumbling Shoals Baptist Association, Union #3, Women's Auxiliary, the State Baptist E. & M. Convention, the State Baptist Congress of Christian Education, the National Baptist Congress of Christian Education, the National Baptist Convention U.S. A. Inc., and the Laurens County Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, and the Greenville County & Vicinity Ministers' Fellowship.

We celebrate each year of standing as a beacon light in this world. Those of us holding membership today, will use this dedicated edifice but for a brief season. Its true worth lies in the future where our children, our children's children and their children will preside. This moment is for them—the generations. To those yet unborn, we commit our efforts in this place. Whatever they find here is the result of much labor..and much love. This history is not complete—history never is. We keep adding each year as more and more history unfolds. The past has its place but with eager anticipation, we look forward to a future of Christian service.

Current Church Directory

Gwen Tribble—Administrative Assistant

Doris Gilliam—Clerk

Linda Pearson Goode—Historian

Publications—Rev. Catherine Evans

Gardenia Byrd & Levonina Thompson—Librarians

Gospel Chorus—Wilamena Jones

Singles Ministry—Virginia Hampton

Transportation—James Bates & Wilamena Jones

Fellowship Choir—Barbara Norman

Senior Choir—Irene Jackson

Young's Delight—Christine Dawkins

Male Chorus—Wendell Massey

Musician & Praise Team—Elvenez Robertson

Shardae McDowell—Drums

Male Ushers—George Pitts

Senior Ushers—Patricia Speaks

Youth Ushers—Brenda Floyd & Williette Hicks

Missions—Madge Byrd

Pastor's Aid—Brenda Floyd

Audio/Visual—Barbara Norman

Ecclesiastes 1: 4-7

One generation passeth away,
And another generation cometh;
But the earth abideth forever.

Ths sun also riseth and the sun goeth down,
And hasteth to his place where he rose...
The wind goeth toward the South,
And turneth about unto the north;

It whirleth about continually
And the wind returneth again according to His circuit

All rivers run to the sea; yet the sea is not full;
Unto the place from whence the rivers come,
Thither they return again.

