

Oakland Baptist Church History

1854 – 1979

125th Anniversary

Homecoming, August 19, 1979

Acknowledgments

You are about to read the history of Oakland Baptist Church. Oakland was organized to the glory of God in 1854 and it continues as a witness to his love and glory.

Many persons were helpful. Mrs. Eunice Walton compiled this account. The first such effort, put together by Mrs. Mary Gammon Moore, is included.

Mrs. Barbara Moore Lacy and Miss Margaret Shelton shared information and materials. Mrs. Blanton Johnson and Mrs. Arthur Selph provided photographs. Mrs. Shearin Gammon England typed the manuscript. Mr. Bob Emery converted the photos for the reproduction process. Mrs. Eva Wood Childress did the church drawing on the cover in 1974.

Enjoy reading our story. It is possible because of the lives and service of former pastors, former and present deacons, church officers, Sunday School teachers, Woman's Missionary Union leaders, Royal Ambassador leaders, music leaders and other faithful members.

Robert V. Glazebrook
Pastor

THE HISTORY OF OAKLAND BAPTIST CHURCH

GUM SPRING, VA 23065

1854-1979

Oakland Baptist Church, located near Gum Spring in Louisa County, was organized in 1854. The month of its beginning is not known as all old records were lost. The original building was constructed on land given by Mr. Azgad Cosby, who was not a member himself. Mr. Cosby was the great-grandfather of Mr. Kyle Dabney, Jr. The lumber was given by the people of the community. The original building was in the shape of an ell. The wing on the left side was used for black members. It was removed about 1876 and the central part remained.

“Prepare to Meet Thy God” was written in large black letters on the wall behind the pulpit. On the wall facing the pulpit was a shelf for a clock given by Mr. B. T. Bradshaw to remind the minister when to end his sermon. The valuation of this building was \$530.

In September 1854, B. F. Parrish, J. Rock, and J. W. Saunders appeared before the Goshen Association, which was being held at County Line Church and applied for admission. The church was received in the usual manner and the moderator, L. W. Allen, presented the delegates the right hand of fellowship and affectionately invited them to seats in the body. There was no pastor and no report of Charter Membership.

In 1855, Rev. F. M. Barker was secured as pastor and there were 25 additions to the church that year; 18 by baptism and 7 by letter. Charles G. Dickinson was Superintendent of the Sunday School, which had 16 officers and teachers and 60 scholars; 15 were black. There were 70 volumes in the church library.

In 1856 there were 34 baptisms and 9 members by letters. The Sunday School had grown to 104. In 1857 the church membership had grown to 104, as there were 30 baptisms that year. By 1858 the Sunday School had reached 152 members; 50 were black. The delegates to the Goshen Association that year were Joseph Rock, W. G. Anderson, and J. B. Holland. They reported they had an interesting Sabbath School.

In 1859-60 there was no pastor and no new members added. However, one member was dismissed each year, but no reason was given for dismissal. In 1860 Joseph Rock, a member of the church, of Goochland Court House was ordained as a minister.

From 1861-66, during the Civil War period, there are no records of the Association in the state office and there are not records of this church. Mr. E. W. Colley, a former clerk, now deceased, once stated that Federal troops were encamped nearby and that the church was used as an officers' headquarters. They drew pictures of their cannons on the walls of the old building.

Some of the members who were very active up to this period were: Joseph Rock, B. F. Parrish, G. L. Loyall, S. L. Atkinson, Charles H. Dickinson, C. H. Bowles, J. B. Holland, and B. S. Dandridge.

The next available records show that in 1867, Rev. A. B. Smith was pastor and G. Dickinson was Superintendent of the Sunday School, which had 25 scholars and 6 teachers and officers, but was in session only six months of the year. There were 123 members of the church and 75 books in the library. However, in 1868, a year later, the membership had dropped to 56. No reason was given for this drop, but it is thought that the black members formed a church of their own.

The Goshen Association met here in 1872 and the Rev. J. W. McCrown preached the introductory sermon. The church was not large enough to accommodate delegates from the 47 church represented in the association, so a brush arbor was built to the right of the church. The delegates from the churches spend the nights in the community and dinner was served to the congregation each day.

The Rev. A. B. Smith was pastor for seven years until 1873. The membership increased to 94. Rev. Smith was very old and the members grew tired of him. Sensing this, he remarked, "I feel like an old horse turned out to graze".

After Rev. Smith left, Rev. J. O. Kirk became pastor. He was followed by Rev. E. P. Hawkins and N. B. Cosby was Superintendent of the Sunday School. Rev. I. N. May became pastor in 1877 and served seven years. Other pastors who served on year each were J. V. Dickinson, S. C. Dorsey, and H. W. Jones. In those days the church was not interested in missions, it seems, for no mention was made of it until 1882 when \$1.00 was given followed by \$1.50 the next year.

Rev. J. W. Reynolds became pastor in October 1889 and served until his death, August 1928. He served the people faithfully for nearly 39 years. He came from Powhatan Court House for many years, traveling by horse and buggy. He would come and stay overnight on Saturday with members and preach on Sunday, then visiting on Sunday night with members, returning home on Monday. The text of his first sermon was "And the People Had a Mind to Work". The membership continued to increase and by 1901 there were 189 members. No mention was made of the pastor's salary until 1902 when it was \$100.00 per year. It was raised to \$125.00 per year in 1905 and continued at that until 1924 when it was raised to \$150.00. The pastor however did serve other churches at the same time and he was being paid by them. About 10 years before Rev. Reynolds' death, he was given a car by the churches he was serving.

The pastors in later years have been C. S. Trammell, who served 11 years. Ira Hudgins, Charles Morgan, Jr., Ernest Saunders, Edgar Hutton, Scott Hutton, Malcolm Hutton, Kent Kiser, Henry Langford, Harry Long and Melvin Spicer. Many of these were from the University of Richmond. Mr. Malcolm Hutton often visited and ate with Mr. and Mrs. K. E. Dabney at their store on Route 250. He was a student at University of Richmond and rode the bus to Dabney's Store on Sundays.

Mr. E. W. Colley became clerk of the church after his father, Rufus Colley, and served for more than twenty-five years. He was followed by Mrs. Lynda L. Wylie, Mrs. Claude Gammon, Mrs. Virginia Crowder, who served for quite a number of years, Mrs. Alice Shelton Jones, Mrs. Mary Bradshaw and Mrs. Beverly Jones.

Among the Superintendents of the Sunday School since 1876 have been N. B. Cosby, E. C. Bradshaw, John Guerrant, and Henry Holman who served from 1904 to 1922. He was followed by G. R. (Bob) Gammon, Robert (Bob) Nicholas, Kyle Dabney, Jr., Otis Grubbs, Robert C. Gammon, Ray Long, P. G. Moore, Robert Dorey, Gerald Pleasants, Martin Walton, William C. Wheedleton, Donald Lacy, and Frank McDaniel.

There have been many faithful members who have served as officers of the church and Sunday School and many have contributed a great deal of time to work on the church cemetery. They have included Walter Marion Foster, Sr., Ray Nicholas, P. G. Moore, Robert H. Grubbs, Kyle Dabney, Jr., Robert Gammon, Dennis Gammon, Ohma Pleasants, William Smith, Robert Dorey, and Martin Walton. They often attended Sunday after Sunday and gave of their best to the Master. There are members who have served as teachers and on committees too numerous to mention. In olden times many of them walked as far as three miles each Sunday. One of these was Mrs. Eliza Martin, who lived in the Gum Spring neighborhood. To quote Mr. Willie Parrish, who lived near Sandy Hook, "It was easier to walk three miles then, as a boy, than it is to ride now".

The preaching service was held on the third Sunday of each month until 1928 when Rev. Trammell became pastor. Then it was held on the first and third Sundays, which continued for many years. Worship hours have been held weekly during the pastorates of Charles Morgan, Jr., John Ivins, James Luck, Joe Stanley, Larry Brett, and Robert Glazebrook, our present pastor.

Long ago revivals were held all day from Sunday through Friday with dinner prepared and served each day to the visiting friends. Each family group had their own table. Later, these services were held with two services in the afternoon with an intermission between them. In 1928 the first revival at night was held, and this has continued to the present time.

In the early 1940's the cemetery was started. A fund for its maintenance was started by one of the most faithful members, Mrs. Aria Foster, on the birthday of her grandson, Walter Foster. Since that time, the cemetery has been divided into lots and a fund has financed the upkeep. In 1973 the church adopted new rules and regulations for the cemetery use so it will have continual care.

In 1944 Mr. And Mrs. George R. Hudgins presented to the church a bookcase and books. This was one of the largest donations ever presented up to that time. In 1945 the church bought the pulpit furniture in memory of its members who served their country in World War II. Of the many boys from this church, only one gave his life, John Guerrant, Jr.

There were only five marriages performed in the old church. They were:

Miss Lucy Lacy and Mr. Noah Lippy
Miss Rosa Wiltshire and Mr. Ben Cornell – January 1899
Miss Lucy Wiltshire and Rev. Abner Knibb – July 1899
Miss Julia Hollins and Mr. Orian Ware – January 1905
Miss Jane Crowder and Mr. Bernard McGehee – November 1952

There have been many marriages performed in the new church; the first of which was Miss Shirley Selph and Mr. Massey Tomlin – September 1956.

Some years ago a fund was set aside for a new church building and many donations were made to this. In September 1955, this fund was \$7,400 and the congregation felt it was ready to begin work on the new building. Members and friends contributed money and labor; approximately half of the cost, and the structure was completed in July 1956 enough for use. This was all accomplished because the people "had a mind to work". However, many improvements have been made on the building and lawn since then. The building consists of an auditorium, nursery, five classrooms, and an assembly room. New pews were given by the members. Some were in memory of loved ones. Among those who contributed so much labor on this building was Claude Gammon and his family and P. G. Moore. Other gifts are an electric organ, Venetian blinds, water system, light fixtures, choir seats, chairs for the classrooms and doors and paint for the classrooms.

The first service in the new building was conducted by the pastor, Melvin Spicer, on the third Sunday in July 1956. His text was Isaiah 6:8.

The membership at that time was 175 and Sunday School had 112 enrolled.

(The preceding was written by Mrs. Mary Gammon Moore, August 1956)

(The following was written by Mrs. Eunice Grubbs Walton, July 1979)

In 1957 the church sent \$184.00 to missions. The messengers to the Association in 1957 were Mrs. Jennie Guerrant, Mrs. Arthur Selph, Mrs. Robert Grubbs, Mrs. Virginia Crowder, Mr. P. G. Moore, and Mrs. Lynda Wylie.

In July 1959, Oakland church and Berea church (near Boswells Tavern, Louisa County) entered an agreement to form a field for the purpose of calling a pastor. The salary would be \$2,550, of which \$1,200 would be paid by Oakland. Rev. John Ivins was called to be pastor. The superintendent of the Sunday School during these years was Ray Long and the church treasurer was Mrs. E. Ray (Bernie) Nicholas.

In 1961, Mr. Ivins, having graduated from the University of Richmond, was ordained in the Calvary Church in Richmond.

After much prayer and consideration, the church agreed in 1962 to terminate its field agreement with Berea and at the same time called Mr. Ivins to serve as pastor of Oakland Church with services each Sunday. He accepted and during these years he was attending Union Theological Seminary in Richmond and later Southeastern Seminary in North Carolina. He served until August 30, 1964. During this year, the church had seven additions and lost one member. The Sunday School enrollment was 117 and the superintendent was Robert Gammon. Mrs. Virginia Crowder was clerk and Mrs. Lucille Gammon was treasurer.

On April 18, 1965, the church agreed it was time to build a church parsonage. The land was given by K. E. Dabney, Jr., and Lillian Dorey Dabney. Mr. Robert Windle, Mr. Arthur Selph, Mr. William Wheedleton, and Eugene A. Foster were elected to serve as trustees. The parsonage was completed in 1965 and James Luck was the first to live in the parsonage. The dedication was held on May 22, 1966 with Mr. Ivins bringing the dedicatory message.

In September 1966, the church issued a call to Joseph R. Stanley to become pastor. He and Mrs. Stanley contributed much to the music of Oakland Church. The choir went to sing at other church revivals and also sang for an associational meeting. During this time, there were also four organists in our church; Mrs. Layman, Mrs. Barbara Lacy, Mrs. Mary Catherine Gammon and Mrs. Shirley Long Flournoy. During Mr. Stanley's ministry he held the first service of dedication of small children and babies and this was because the church had many children at that time. Also, Joseph Stanley, Jr., and Christopher Mark Stanley were the first children to be born in the church parsonage. Mr. Stanley served until May 1969.

The membership was 150 and Sunday School enrollment was 89 with an average attendance of 60 in 1966. This year marked the highest financial obligation ever incurred by the church in its history. The first full year of payment was made on the parsonage. The final payment was made in November 1971 and a note burning ceremony was held at the church on December 5, 1971.

Rev. Lawrence E. Brett, Jr., became our pastor and served until September 1972. As the pastor and congregation saw the need for further space for classrooms, office, baptistery, and kitchen, a bid was accepted from the James A. Ford Construction Co. for \$25,250 and this addition was completed in 1971. Mr. Brett and the members worked hard and quite a bit of cash was also donated for construction. The total value of the church building today is \$150,000. The parsonage is valued at \$50,000.

The added space has really been a blessing and the baptistery has been, too. A number of members have been baptized here; the first being Elizabeth Ann Lacy. Before this time, we were using the baptisteries of the neighboring churches. And before that we used the pond on Claude Gammon's place and Mr. Bob Gammon's place and in the South Anna River at Shelton's Mill. I was baptized at Shelton's Mill in 1929.

The past few years have shown an increase in our mission program. We went over our goal in 1972 for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, and that year the church sent \$1,513 to the Cooperative Program. In 1978, the year of Bold Mission Thrust, our goal was set for \$500 for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, and we sent \$522.58. Again in 1979 we exceeded our Annie Armstrong goal by \$6.00, the goal having been set at \$300. Mrs. G. R. (Sarah) Gammon and Mrs. Rhoda Jane Owens, early organizers of mission work in our church, would be very pleased with our progress in mission work.

In more recent times, Mrs. Virginia Dorey has contributed so much to our mission work and to establishing Mission Friends, GA's and RA's. She has been assisted by Steve Alford, John Barber, Shearin Gammon England, Betty Fields, Lesley Alford, Debbie Bradley, Joan Lloyd, and others.

Also, one of our members, Miss Gracia Farmer, was chosen from the State of Virginia to work in a summer mission program in Israel during the summer of 1979.

We also had in our church and community this year Miss Robin Price, who has worked with the children and youth and has worked hard planning activities for their involvement. She has been very dedicated to this mission work.

In January 1973, Robert V. Glazebrook became pastor of Oakland Church. He has worked hard and contributed a lot of time in planning and visiting. He has given his full time to the church since he came. He has edited our church newsletter, The Acorn, which is sent to present and former members. He has taught mission books, taught Bible study courses which we have had annually, reestablished the library, conducted senior citizens' meetings, and conducted one all night prayer meeting. We have had much Christian fellowship too; kite flying, Brunswick stew supper (cooked by Mr. Glazebrook), and he has worked with youth group activities also. Mrs. Glazebrook has organized and managed a very successful pre-school department for the children under school age. Also, she has served as program chairperson for our WMU and she has had some interesting programs.

Cassette recorders were donated by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Stephens and Sandra, and by Grayson and Carolyn Grant, so that the church services could be taken to Mr. Dorsey Saunders whose eyesight had failed. Mr. Saunders was a retired honorary deacon. The cassettes were also used to take the service to other shut-ins.

Among those recognized for perfect Sunday School attendance in 1973 were Edith Layman and Arthur Selph, who had a perfect attendance of 14 years.

The highest Sunday School attendance was in August 1977. A total of 141 were present that day. In 1976 the church installed a central air conditioning system. A large part of the cost was given by the ladies of the Hospitality Committee. Included in this were Betty Smith, Gwen Bradshaw, Brenda Carrasco, Agnes Grant, Lillian Dabney, Avis Foster, Pat Pleasants, Sharon Smith, Audrey Brown, Estelle Pleasants, Nancy Pleasants, and many others who helped donate food.

Many donations have been made to our church. When the new building was dedicated, Mrs. Moore and her sister, Miss Violet Gammon, gave the organ we now use. Mr. and Mrs. Moore also gave the carpet for the aisle and front of the church in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Bob Gammon, Mr. Claude Gammon, and Miss Violet Gammon. The piano in the sanctuary was given by Rev. Joseph R. Stanley, offering plates were given by Claude Gammon's family in his memory and many other gifts including paint for classrooms and, recently, the carpet for the vestibule and steps in memory of Mrs. Alice Dorey, given by her daughter and son-in-law, The Charles Vaughans.

The largest donation to benefit Oakland Church has been by Mr. Ed Jones in 1976 by way of a trust fund of approximately \$263,000. The church will receive the trust in several decades according to the arrangements in his will. He was a member of our church for a short time, the brother of Mrs. Robert T. Windle and Uncle of Mrs. Grayson Grant and Mr. Robert Windle.

Also, Mr. Henry Closs, who passed away in 1976, husband of Mrs. Winnie Wiltshire Closs, who passed away in 1977, left \$138,000 to Baptist causes in Virginia.

There are so many who have contributed so much and we wish to recognize all of them, but especially Mrs. Virginia Crowder, who was church clerk for many years and supported all of the church activities; Mrs. Edith Layman, who was teacher, song leader, WMU mission book teacher, and general supporter of all activities; and Mrs. Annie Grubbs, who was messenger to the Association for so many years and also WMU leader for several years; Mrs. Addie Fleming for her many years of working with the Beginners class—and I remember especially that she had a special place in the old church building surrounded by the little children and she always had cookies she made for them; and to Mrs. Hybernia Foster Nicholas who has been working with the young children and babies for the last 40 years and still works with them today.

The total budget for 1978 was \$22,200 and the offering for missions was \$3,556.53.

The present church membership is 192 with Sunday School enrollment of 142 with an average attendance so far this year of 83. The total annual budget for 1979 is \$23,300.

For one hundred twenty-five years this church has been a light unto the pathway of many people, and may they continue to say with the Psalmist "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord".

Excerpts from *My Life's Story* by Mary Gammon Moore

My father, George Robert Gammon, and his family were members of Hopeful Baptist Church. After he and Sarah Dennis Nicholas were married on December 19, 1900, he moved his membership to Oakland.

I was their oldest child and from a very early age I have memories of Oakland. All my early training was by my Christian parents who worshiped God and taught their children to do so. I learned to read from sitting on my father's lap as he read the Bible. This was our only book, as we were poor. We attended church regularly and in the winter months there was no Sunday School, but preaching was held every third Sunday. We traveled by buggy or wagon until cars began to be used. We lived near Shelton's Mill, and by the time we reached church, we had to build a fire in an old wood stove and then wait shivering for it to warm up.

During the revival in 1912 I felt that I should go up and make a confession, but I was only 11 years old and I felt that my father would not approve. He felt that children should wait until they understood what they were doing. I wanted very much to go for I felt the call and understood what it meant, but I waited until I was 14. The Rev. P.A. Sawyer was Evangelist and Rev. Reynolds baptized me in the South Anna River at Shelton's Mill.

Mr. Trammel and his wife were greatly loved at Oakland. They stayed for many years and he did a fine job. During these years our church grew. I went away to college, became a teacher and married and brought my husband, Percy More, back to Louisa County from Chatham, Virginia, in 1928 to become an active member in my home church. Oakland has been a small country church, but we have had many able ministers. Many of them were students at the University of Richmond, since we could not pay a full-time salary.

Through the years I have worked in Sunday School, Training Union, and WMU. I have taught Primary Class, Ladies Adult Class, and Young Peoples Class. I believe I have enjoyed the Young Peoples Class best of all. I love young people and enjoyed working with them.

Mr. Ivins was a fine worker and pastor. He started the Training Union Program and also the first church budget.

In February 1965, we lost one of our active young people, Ray Long, in a tragic plane crash.

Pastor Joseph Stanley and his wife Barbara led the church in a good music program.