

EARLY CHURCHES IN THE ABA

Kentucky Churches

White Oak Baptist Church

Oldest Church in the American Baptist Association

Nancy, Kentucky 1801- 2003



White Oak Baptist Church has been in existence for 202 years and maybe longer. We know from many reasons that there was something there in the early 1790s. The White Oak Baptist Church constitution reads as follows: "Be it known that on the 17th of July, 1801 on the waters of White Oak Creek, Pulaski County, Kentucky, there was constituted a United Baptist church by Brothers Thomas Hansford, Thomas Hill, Nathaniel Shrewsbury, Robert Scott, and Eligah Barnes. On the number of thirty-five members. Thomas Hill was chosen the first pastor. Bro. Hill was born 1763 in New Jersey and later moved to Virginia, he preached and helped organized churches while he was there. Then he moved to Tennessee also starting churches. In 1798 he moved to Pulaski County, Kentucky and joined the Sinking Creek Baptist Church, which is now the First Baptist Church of Somerset, Kentucky. He immediately started working with the people at Nancy, Kentucky. He stayed in Kentucky until 1817, then going to Indiana where he pastored, started churches, and the Coffee Creek Association of Baptist. He died in Indiana.

We were able to obtain a partial list of the charter members of White Oak Baptist Church and they are as follows: Thomas Hill, Mary Hill, Thomas Hill Jr., John Hill, Peleg Baker, Nancy Hudson, Daniel Hudson, Jacob Hudson, Thomas Whitley, Nathaniel Shrewsbury, Seaton Lee, J. Jones, Ivey Langford, Josiah Lockett, Abraham P. Lee, Matthew Floyd, Suzanna Floyd, Robert Scott, J. Dick, Josiah Duck, J. Langford, and Bazel Meek. From 1801 - 1809, they belong to the Tates Creek Association. The 1806 Tates Creek Minute listed 1790 as the date that White Oak was constituted, so we really don't know what happened, as a result we go by their organization of 1801. In 1809 they lettered up with the Cumberland River Association at its first meeting. In addition to participating in these local associations, White Oak has been active in our national work, through the American Baptist Association (ABA) for many, many years. White Oak is the oldest church in the Cumberland River Association, evidence also points to White Oak as being the oldest church in the ABA to date. We have been honored through the years by having many of the ABA leaders to preach at this church, men of renown, including Dr. Ben M. Bogard, Dr. C. N. Glover, Dr. I. K. Cross, Dr. A. T. Powers, and Dr. George Raley, and many others.

The second pastor of the church was a dynamic and able man of God by the name of Matthew Floyd. History states of this man: "Matthew Floyd was one of the most popular, beloved, and efficient preachers in Kentucky in his generation." He was the grandson of Colonel Matthew Floyd, a native of Ireland, who came to America in command of a regiment of British soldiers during the Revolutionary War. He was the son of Captain Abraham Floyd, who came to America in command of British troops. Bro. Matthew Floyd was born in 1778. He pastored White Oak from 1817 until 1863, a short time after his resignation he passed away.

The following is a list of men who have pastored this church with some serving more than once: Thomas Hill, Matthew Floyd, R. S. Taylor, Willis Derossett, John W. Floyd, Isaac Branscum, John J. Cooper, William Taylor, E. A. Allan, W. H. Foley, A. J. Walls, S. C. Jones, Crawford C. Trimble, Jacob Mayfield, J. J. Cooper, W. M. New, W. S. Taylor, Walker Wilson, C. C. Trimble, J. S. Wade, John E. Hudson, Wesley Colyer, W. A. Reese, G. F. Crumley, Walter Jones, Howard Prather, Jerry Stevens, James Floyd and George Jainchill.

White Oak was constituted by people who were truly missionary minded. Her long history is one of many mission endeavors. White Oak has helped to start many churches, such as; Wolf Creek, Union Grove, Smith Grove, Sylvia, Fairhaven, and many other churches in the western part of Pulaski County. The church continues as a very strong missionary Baptist church under the leadership of their pastor, Bro. James Floyd, who has served from 1980 until present date.



***Third building of White Oak Church,
Nancy, KY, taken about 1920***

So far as we know the White Oak Baptist Church, Nancy, KY is the oldest church in the American Baptist Association. Pastor James Floyd wrote, "There are church history records[1] which indicate the church began to meet in the year 1790 either as a church or as a mission. The church minutes state: 'Be it known that on the 18th day of July, 1801, on the waters of White Oak Creek, Pulaski Co., KY, there was constituted a United Baptist Church on the number of 35 members, Thomas Hill, Minister.' This was the same year the United Baptists of Kentucky were organized. The church was either organized as a church or became organized into a United Baptist Church in the year 1801."

J. H. Spencer made no attempt to state when White Oak was organized. In reporting the 1801 meeting of Tates Creek Association, he wrote, "Three new churches were received: White Oak, Flat Woods, and Otter Creek." However, in the biographical sketch of Matthew Floyd, Spencer stated, "Arriving at manhood, he settled in Pulaski County, near the present location of Old White Oak Baptist Church. Here he commenced his long and eminently successful ministry, about the year 1811. White Oak Church was probably the fruits of his first labors in the gospel. He was called to the pastoral charge of this organization about the time of its constitution, and served it with great acceptance, about 51 years." [2]

Pastor James Floyd continued his article, "Leaving Tate's Creek Association where they had association since 1806, due to the rather large territory which it covered, the church participated in the organization of the Cumberland River Association in 1809. It is with this association the church still associates today."

Concerning this associational move, Spencer reported, "...the following six churches ... were dismissed when joined in another Association, according to the terms of the general union." Included were White Oak, Sinking Creek (now Somerset), Forks of Cumberland, and Union, in Pulaski County. The minutes of 1811 reported 13 churches with 447 members. Thomas Hill was listed as one of the "preachers of the Association." Spencer also noted, "Soon after the constitution of this Association, a very precious revival commenced among its churches, and continued some three or four years. A number of new churches were gathered, and the old ones were greatly increased." [3]

Pastor James Floyd concluded his article, "There have been twenty-five pastors...Elder Matthew Floyd served in this office for fifty-two years without an interruption.

"The church stands with almost two centuries of values 'earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints' ...Many of the fathers of the ABA have preached at the church including Dr. Ben M. Bogard, Dr. C. N. Glover, Dr. A. T. Powers, and many contemporary leaders.[4]

In 1825, the churches pastored by Elder Matthew Floyd with seven other churches formed the South Concord Association. Spencer commented, "Mr. Floyd had now become the leading minister in the Cumberland Valley. His great popularity was evidenced in his being elected Moderator of the new Association, seventeen years in succession." He also preached the Introductory Sermon within that Association on several occasions, three years in succession.[5]

As the anti-mission movement swept the state, the church and association were caught up in the movement. After the constitution of the General Association in 1837, the subject of missions was somewhat controversial. Spencer stated, "there were good reasons for believing it (South Concord) would have followed the example of other nearby associations 'in declaring unanimously against missionary operations, had it not been for the influence of Mr. Floyd, who exerted his entire energies in favor of missions'." [6] Although the opposition was in the majority, and Elder Floyd's views were opposed by most of the preachers in the association, they continued to elect him as moderator.

Because he recognized the missionary churches could not continue within this association, Elder Floyd "secured a peaceable and orderly separation, by the dismissal of the missionary churches, by letter." He then called for a meeting of these churches, and the South Cumberland River Association was organized in 1842. Elder Floyd was Moderator of the South Concord Association since its beginning in 1825, and was elected as Moderator of the new association, and continued until his death in August of 1863.

Spencer concluded, "Besides his pastoral labors, Mr. Floyd preached abundantly among the destitute in Wayne, Pulaski and Russell counties, during his entire ministry of 52 years. He is believed to have been, at least, one of the first missionaries employed by the General Association in his part of the State. His success in the ministry was extraordinary, and he baptized a great many people. He was a wise man in council, as well as an efficient laborer in the field. But his work was finished at last, and on the 19th of August, 1863, he answered the summons to come up higher." [7]

Thus, the oldest church in the ABA is a United Baptist Church, and also a Missionary Baptist Church. American Baptist Association churches in south central Kentucky now fellowship locally in the Cumberland River Baptist Association. They are still known as United Baptists.

What happened in this Association occurred many times as the Missionary and anti-missionary churches separated, and as the Gospel Mission and Convention churches separated, and as the Reformed Movement, better known as Church of Christ, occurred, all within the span of 1822 and 1845.

As early as 1813 a "General Meeting of Correspondence" was proposed for all the churches of the State. In 1831 the idea was revived and a meeting was set for Frankfort on December 11. This finally resulted in the formation of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, held at Lexington, beginning May 25, 1833. After approximately three annual meetings, the idea of a State Convention was temporarily abandoned.

However, the idea first proposed in 1813 was revived, and a meeting was held at Louisville on October 20, 1837 for the purpose of organizing a General Association of Baptists in Kentucky. Elder George Waller was appointed chairman and Brethren John L. Waller and James M. Pendleton, secretaries *pro tempore*. James M. Pendleton, who was pastor of the church in Bowling Green, aligned with Dr. J. R. Graves in seeking to reestablish Baptist "Landmarks." In the permanent organization, James M. Pendleton was named to a tenmember Board of Managers. Spencer reported, "immediately following the organization of the General Association ... the most extensive religious awakening that had occurred in Kentucky since the great revival of 1800-1803" was experienced.[8]

Tateville Baptist Church



Tateville Baptist Church formerly called the Forks of the Cumberland, this church was one of the first six that went into the organization of the Cumberland River Association in the year of 1809, we give 1808 as the date this church constituted. They also lettered up with the Tates Creek Association in 1808. The information that is available also states that this church came out of Sinking Creek Baptist church that is now First Baptist of Somerset, Kentucky. It is believed that Wesley Short, born in 1780 in Rockingham County of Virginia was the first pastor. Another pastor, R. J. Shadoan also served as moderator of this association from 1862-1880. Tateville Baptist Church being at least 186 years old has been and still is one of the faithful churches of this association. Times were very hard for our work from 1861 to 1900. Tateville was always there as well as other churches.

The following served as pastors: Wesley Short, J. Long, Martin Owens, M. Silvers, J. S. Lewis, R. J. Shadoan, W. M. Shadoan, J. A. Childers, J. S. Adams, J. S. Abbott, A. C. Taylor, James Dobbs, W. A. Reese, W. L. Dykes, W. L. Randall, Harold Johnson, Robert Silvers, Paul Godby, Kenneth Hammonds, Merrill Wilson, Ulanda Price, James Lockard, Charles Woodcock, Michael Denney, and David Meece. Some served several times.

New Hope Baptist Church



New Hope was constituted 1809 the same year as the Cumberland River Association. They lettered up to our association in 1811.

One thing in connection with New Hope is a preacher, pastor, member by the name of Richard Barnes. March 20, 1774 by the authority of the church at Boone's Ford, North Carolina, Richard Barnes with 14 others were baptized by Elder John Gano.

Some of the early pastors and preachers in addition to Bro. Barnes: Robert McAlister- b. 1782 d. 1851; Joseph Martin James- b. 1784 d. about 1849; William Stogsdill- b. about 1810 d. 1855; Benjamin Hansford- b. 1770 d. 1853; W. F. Richardson- b. 1813 d. 1873; J. T. Stogsdill- b. 1834 d. 1911; J. W. Bray- b. 1854 d. 1934; John Alexander and H. J. Ridner. This is just some of the early pastors.

One interesting note about W. M. Stogsdill on the first Saturday in September 1855 as he preached the annual sermon to the association, knowing his illness he said, "I know I have but a short time to live, but what time I do live, I intend to spend in preaching Jesus to sinners." Four days later he died.

The following served as pastor: J. C. Barber, Ewell Hargis, Howard Prather, Walter Jones, Gene Hargis, Dorwin Cottongim, Raymond Hail, Rodney Haggard, and Dalous Sears.

Bethlehem Baptist Church



Minutes of Fishing Creek Baptist Church state that in 1836 Jonas Wilson began preaching and later in 1839 after being ordained, he with 21 or 22 other members were dismissed to form a church at Bethlehem meeting house. Also, the minutes of Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church state they sent official aid to help constitute a church at the Jonas Wilson School House.

The official aid included Elder Richard Collier. Bro. Collier was moderator of this association 1842-1862. He was moderator in 1861 when the associations were divided over how mission work was to be done, not over whether or not mission work was to be supported. He stayed with the original Cumberland River Association.

Bethlehem has had 34 pastors, some having served several times. Seven former pastors served as moderator of this association. Our association was held at Bethlehem in 1850, 1864, 1873, 1883, 1892, 1901, 1914, and 1928. I feel something should be said of two members who served this association during very difficult times in the late 1800s and the early 1900s, Elder J. Mart Shadoan- moderator and W. M. Roy as clerk. Jonas D. Wilson was the first pastor. This church continues as a strong missionary Baptist church.

The following served as pastor: Jonas Wilson, Tandy James, R. J. Shadoan, John Nelson, Joe Mart Shadoan- 3 times; G. A. Sears- 3 times; John Alexander, J. W. Colyer- 2 times; L. B. Whiles, B. L. Bradley- 2 times; W. M. Adams, U. P. Harp, W. A. Reese- 2 times, Rufus Godby, Roscoe Stringer, Lonnie Meece, Lester Phelps, Wildrew Cottongim, Warren Carroll, McKinley Sears- 2 times; Edmond Vanhook, Wendell Butte, Millard Drushall, Joe Gay, Pat Lawson, Michael Palmar, Edward Bray, Phillip Roy, Ernest Warren, Walter Jones, Lonnie Sewell, Lynn Shadoan, Raymond Hail, and Gary Evans.

Zion Baptist Church



Zion Baptist Church was constituted in 1845, most of the charter members came from Oak Ridge, Tenn. Charter members were Samuel Lendor, Samuel McPheron, John McPheron, Elendor McPheron, Sevana McPheron, George, Mary and Catherine Massey, Samuel Black, James Richardson, Sarah Hughes, Elizabeth Roy, Nancy Harrison, Nancy Hansford and Elizabeth Hitens.

Elder Tandy James, the first pastor, and wife joined Zion church by letter in 1845. Pastor James was born in Tennessee in the late 1790s. N. E. Massey gave the land for the first meeting house located near the Massey Cemetery.

Zion first went into the South Concord Association in 1860 and then the Cumberland River Association. They have been in this Association over 137 years. The Cumberland River Association was held at Zion in 1853, 1868, 1881, 1890, 1904, and 1923. Fifty three pastors have served this church. Some having served more than once. The first ten pastors were: Tandy Jones, W. M. Roy, Rueben Sanders, R. J. Shadoan, John K. Martin, Martin Silvers, Jacob Miller, William T. Hail, Moses Keeney, J. A. Childers.

The following pastors have served as Moderators of this Association: R. J. Shadoan, G. A. Sears, J. W. Colyer and Walter Jones.

The following also served: Tandy Kelley, G. A. Sears-served 5 times; J. W. Colyer, James Hughes, William Cross, W. H. Miller, James Dobbs, W. S. Adams, J. C. Barber, H. Mitchell, George Mayfield, Rufus Godby, Clifford Randall, Lester Phelps, George Holt, W. L. Dykes, L. R. Hinkle, Ed. Sears, Walter Jones, Nelson Bradley, Wildrew Cottongim, J. Dykes, Edmond Vanhook, Noah Sears, Lowell Gossett, Dorwin Cottongim, Lowell Parkey and Ed Watkins.

Pitman Creek Baptist Church



Pitman Creek Baptist Church was organized in 1852 on the 4th Saturday of May. This church came out of the Sinking Creek Baptist Church which is now known as the First Baptist Church of Somerset.

Some of the First members were: J. G. Saunders, W. M. Bishop, J. B. Lee, J. Arthur, C. Doolin, W. Leese, John Keeney, W. M. Cross, G. B. Massey, A. Warren, James Waddle, W. H. Warren, G. Waddle, M. P. Hamilton, Jesse Brown, W. T. Hail, Catherine Waddle, Sarah E. Leese, J. B. Smith, T. L. Warren, L. T. Hatcher, Moses Keeney, J. Burch Jr., O. Burch, Margaret Brown, Harriet B. Massey, Elizabeth Gregg, Mary A. Price, Mary Hughes, L. A. Jones, Mary A. Faulkner, and William T. Godbey.

The following have served as pastors: Bros. J. G. Saunders, R. J. Shadoan, F. L. Warren, W. M. Cross, W. T. Hail, W. L. Lawrence, Joseph Girdler, Joe Mart Shadoan, G. W. Ridner, G. A. Sears, Walter Jones, Libern Hart, Lonnie Meece, Roscoe Brong, Wendell Butte, Edward Bradley, Bernard Meece, Royce Hart, S. L. Sears, Ernest Warren, Steve Meece, Doug Eggers, and Gary Wilson.

The Association met with this church the following years: 1855, 1862, 1876, 1886, 1895, 1908, 1921, and 1936. The following pastors who have served as moderators of this association are: Bros. R. J. Shadoan, F. L. Warren, Joe Mart Shadoan, G. W. Ridner, G. A. Sears, J. W. Colyer, and Walter Jones.

Piney Grove Baptist Church

Piney Grove Baptist Church was organized May 26, 1860. Charter members were: Moses Keeney, Marian Hargis, Jacob Meece and Milton Sewell. They came from Buck Creek, New Hope and Bethany Baptist Churches. Some of the early families were: Barber, Brays, Chaney's, Earps, Fulchers, Glovers, Meece's, Phelps, Sears, Slavey's, Sewell's, Hargis, Keeney's, Smiley's, Millers, Alcorns, Brinsons and Warrens. The first pastor was Elder E. Smiley. Other pastors were: John Bray, J. C. Barber, H. J. Ridner, Milford Hargis, Bro. Edmond Vanhook, Lynn Shadoan and Doug Eggers. The Cumberland River Association met with Piney Grove Baptist Church the following years: 1882, 1897, 1926, 1950, 1970 and 1987.

[1] David Benedict, **A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America**, II, p. 542, printed a chart which showed 1790 as the date of organization with Thomas Hill as the minister. In their letter to the Tate's Creek Association in 1806, the church reported 65 members.

[2] J. H. Spencer, II, p. 91, p. 555.

[3] J. H. Spencer, II, p. 234.

[4] James Floyd, "At 200, Is White Oak the Oldest Church in the ABA?" **The Vine Line**, June, 1991, p. 4.

[5] J. H. Spencer, II, p. 555.

[6] J. H. Spencer, II, p. 555.

[7] J. H. Spencer, II, p. 556.

[8] J. H. Spencer, I, p. 671.