

The First Baptist Church of Grayson was organized June 8, 1920. Previous to this time a record has been found of another organization of Baptists that had existed from the years of 1873 to 1891 but had ceased to function as a church and no record of a building has ever been found.

For years prayer had gone up from the Baptists of Grayson, that God would plant a church in this little town in Eastern Kentucky. In January 1920 as if in answer to their prayer Dr. J. G. M. Bow, an old saint of God appeared on the scene telling them that he had come for this purpose. He remained for some time and contacted every Baptist in the vicinity.

The Presbyterian Church had just erected a beautiful little brick building in the center of town, and was very anxious to sell their old building on the hilltop next to the County Court House. Brother Bow lost no time in making arrangements to purchase this building.

Residing in Grayson at this time was a gentleman by the name of J. W. Peck, a lawyer who represented bond holders for a railroad company which had proposed to build a railroad for the C. & O. Company here. He confided to Bro. Bow that he had a friend in Falmouth, Kentucky who had expressed her wish to him to help some mountain Baptist church. Her name was Miss Lena Browning. Bro. Bow went to see Miss Browning and she was very glad to help us with the purchase of the church. She gave us \$800.00 to help pay for it. The cost of the old building was \$1200.00. This showed to us her love for God and his people. The night our church was organized the members voted to name the church "The Lena Browning Memorial Church" out of gratitude to this stranger who had made the purchase of this building possible. We little dreamed that she would feel lead to help us again. I sometimes wonder if we ever stop to think what a wonderful thing this poor frail little afflicted woman did for us. We certainly owe our thanks to her for having a church for these past years.

The following members were present on the night of the organization and

and became Charter Members of the Grayson Baptist Church: Fanny Counts, Nettie Bradley, Jessamine Bradley, Lucy Robinson, Hattie Robinson, Clara Robinson, Louella Hall, Lewis Hall, Minnie Hall, Florence Jacobs, Susie Robinson Kibbey, W. M. Crawley, Laura Everman, Alonzo Clark, and Mr. and Mrs. Ed Munn.

The dedication sermon was preached the following Sunday by Dr. J. G. M. Bow. It was a sermon long to be remembered, very doctrinal, but very much needed by the poor, weak Baptists of Grayson. At this time Bro. Bow presented the church with a rostrum which he had made with his own hands. It was two sections put together with a likeness of the Bible carved out of wood.

Our first pastor, B. F. Hyde came to us in August 1920 and remained until the latter part of 1921. Under his leadership the church gained a number of members, who were taught Baptist doctrine in all its purity. He was a consecrated Christian and a good pastor for our newly organized church.

After Bro. Hyde left Bro. E. W. Summers came in June 1922 and remained until 1927. Bro. Summers was living in Georgetown, Ky. at that time, and not wishing to move his family away from the Georgetown College, he himself came and boarded in our town, and preached in and around Grayson. Every one who came in contact with Bro. Summers loved him and I dare still remember the noble life he led and his earnest plea to the lost. In the summer of 1925 Bro. Summers had his two preacher sons, Hollis and Erbert, to come and help him in a revival. His wife and three daughters came. They rented a furnished house and the whole family stayed and helped in the revival for two weeks. Hollis, who is now dead, was a wonderful preacher and brought many soul-stirring messages to us. Throngs of people came to hear these great men of God and many souls were saved. The Summers' really had a good time together in this revival singing and praising God and seeing the lost brought to Christ. Erbert returned in 1927 to help his father in another revival.

It seems that God has always seen fit to send us leaders. In 1921 when the church was very young Prichard High School hired two young lady teachers, Grace Richards and Retha Fortner. Both of them were Baptists and they found their places in the church. Miss Richard's mother and her aunt, Mrs. Staggs came with her. These four women were a great help in organizing the first W. N. S. of our church. They stayed only one year, and after they left it seemed that no one could be found to carry on the work. Our W. M. S. died but not before we had a taste of what a W. M. S. could mean to a church. It was not revived until 1935 and has been active ever since.

In the spring of 1927 the Rev. V. B. Castleberry (who had returned from Brazil as a missionary on account of poor health of both himself and his wife) heard of our little church and came out to prayer meeting one Wednesday night hoping to get the church to have Bro. Reese, a state missionary at that time, to come out and hold a revival. The church told him they were not able to have a revival, although Bro. Castleberry repeatedly told us it would not cost us anything. Seeing our need for help Bro. Castleberry begged us to not be too hasty in a decision but to think the matter over and he would be back the next Sunday for our decision. There were twelve persons present at that prayer meeting.

Sunday morning came and so did Castleberry. When he asked about our decision Brether Charlie Huff again told him we could not have Bro. Reese, but since he was there would he please give a little talk. Now anyone who has ever heard Bro. Castleberry knows that he does not make little talks. He preached a sermon that morning and the Holy Spirit was there. At the end of the sermon when the invitation was given one of the members of the church came weeping down the aisle saying she had just that day been saved. 3

This caused the brethren to ask for another little talk that night and these little talks lasted five weeks.

Bro. Castleberry tells a story of a Junior girl who was saved, afterwards took smallpox, and was well and ready to be baptized with the rest of the converts at the end of the revival. He came back and preached for the church several times that summer and in September the church called him as their pastor. He and his wife and three children moved to our town. For two years Mrs. Castleberry ran a column in our county paper telling of their experiences in Brazil. His work in Grayson and surrounding communities was very successful and it was with tears of regret that we accepted his resignation in 1929.

In 1929 Lena Browning died and left a will bequeathing most of her estate to our church. Her relatives contested the will and Bro. Charlie Huff was sent to Falmouth, Kentucky to appear in Court in behalf of the church. The church won and he was paid \$4300 in cash and there was more property to be sold, but Bro. Huff said he would rather lose it than to face the scornful looks of the relatives again.

In 1930 David Brainard was called as pastor. He stayed only one year and during that time the annex was built to the old building with the money we had received from Miss Browning.

In 1931 Bro. S. M. Meade was called by the church to be pastor. He labored hard, but financially and spiritually the church was in a bad condition. The depression had given Grayson Baptists a severe blow. I often wonder how Bro. Meade survived on the meager salary we paid him, but it surely can be said of him that he never once complained although he received from \$17 to \$40. We ran our church on the budget plan and the pastor received 70% of the collection. He resigned in 1934.

In 1935 Bro. Alonzo Outland was called as pastor of the church and he remained until 1946, when his health failed and he was forced to give up preaching. He served our church faithfully and I am sure every one loved him more than he, his good wife, and son Charles will ever know. His labors with us were very successful and he will long be remembered by the Grayson church.

In 1946 C. E. Wiley was called as pastor. He refused to accept the first call. The church met and called him again; this time he accepted as he felt it was God's will. He came with a zeal for lost souls and his heart was on fire for God.

The first thing we did after Bro. Wiley came was to buy a bus for the church and bring the people in from surrounding communities. He started missions at Willard, Wolf Creek, and Carter. The members of the church went out with him and helped in revivals and Sunday Schools. From the very first God blessed him by giving him souls for his labors. Many were saved and united with our church.

The Willard Church which at one time had been one of the strongest churches in our association had completely gone down. Bro. Wiley started preaching there and trying to reorganize the old church. People from that community came into our church and at last there were enough to reorganize a church of their own.....this was done on March 19, 1950. The old church had been first organized in 1884. The Grayson Baptist Church gave 56 letters to members to unite with the Willard Church.

Bro. Dewey Jones from Catlettsburg preached the sermon the day of the organization. His subject was "The Church". It was a timely sermon for them and a day of great rejoicing ...one member of the first organization was there. Mrs. Libby Horton, Mrs. Nan Fleming, Mr. Amzy Pennington, and Filmore Kennedy sent statements as they were unable to be there on account of illness.

The Willard Church has done well from the very start. They have had an all-time pastor, bought new pews for the church, new Sunday School rooms have been added and interest has been good.

The Grayson church gave letters to sixteen members on Aug. 1^o, 1951 to Wolf Creek when they organized. They at once built a new little church and have it well furnished.

On November 26, 1952 the members from the Carter mission organized a church at Iron Hill and the Grayson Church gave 18 letters to members to unite with this church.

On the 18th. of April 1949 W. K. Wood of Pellard Church, Ashland, came to our church to hold a revival. There had been much concern about this revival. Cottage prayer meetings had been held for a week. Bro. Wiley had gone up every little branch and mountain with a loud speaker telling the people that a bus would be run to bring anyone to church who wanted to attend. The crowd became so large that the church would not hold them and on the fourth night we moved to the gymnasium in the Prichard High School for the rest of the revival and 50 members were added to our church. God had answered our prayers in a wonderful way.

Bro. Wood was asked to return the next year for another revival. Bro. Wiley conceived the idea of a county-wide revival this time, and all the churches joined in whole-heartedly in the first attempt of such a meeting. Again Bro. Wood came and began to preach. We went to the school on the first night this time and such crowds as we had! People came from Grahn, Olive Hill, Willard, Carter, Webbville, and many came from Ashland. Many were saved and as a result of that many were united with our church for months afterward, either by baptism or letter.

Bro. Wiley resigned Sept. 30, 1951 and accepted a church in Indiana.

On December 5, 1951 Bro. W. T. Durham was called as pastor of the church. At that time we were anticipating a new building but as in the early history of the church they felt that they were not able to build, and they tried to patch up the old building. The baptistry was rebuilt in the first year of Bro. Durham's ministry with us and several other things were done to the old building but still there was a very poor place in which to worship.

Bro. Durham started a mission at Smith Branch and preached there every Sunday afternoon for two years. He resigned in August of 1955 and moved to Mariam, Kentucky.

On December 14, 1955 Bro. J. C. Stephens from Chaffy, Missouri was called as pastor. He preached his first sermon as pastor on Jan. 1, 1956. The first thing he did after he came was to plan a departmental Sunday School and Training Union. On March 18, 1956 an installation service was held and 74 officers and workers installed. On April 11, 1956 the Church purchased the Castle property adjoining the church from Joe Johnson for the sum of \$8000.00 and at the same time the Church voted to be incorporated.

The first attempt to raise money for the paying of the property was August 26, 1956. On this day \$3995.00 was raised in cash and pledges; \$2948 in cash and \$1047 in pledges.

On September 2, the Sunday School was graded and moved up from a class Sunday School to a departmental Sunday School with 12 departments and 61 workers.

On October 3, 1956 a church budget of \$14,841.51 was presented and accepted, the largest in the history of the church. On January 9, 1957 four members of the building committee went to Nashville, Tenn. for a conference with T. Lee Anderton, Chief Draftsman of the Department of Church Architecture, who drew the floor plans for the Educational Building and the future Auditorium. October 6, 1957 the Bond Issue was presented and adopted by the Church.

The Bonds were printed for the sum of \$224.00 and were ready for sale December 28, 1957. The first Bond was sold to Judy Bea Clark on Jan. 3, 1958 and on Jan. 4 two other bonds were sold to Robert Earl and James Samuel Woods, thus began the sale of the church bonds. \$29,650.00 of the bonds were sold in approximately thirty days.

On January 5, 1958 the note on the Castle property and the note on the balance for the parsonage on Lansdowne Avenue purchased from Myrtie Kitchen on September 29, 1949, were burned and both buildings were dedicated free of debt. These debt balances had been paid in only 22 months.

May 21, 1958 the Church voted to build the first unit of the Educational Building. June the 8th. was the ground breaking ceremony for the new building, and an important day for Grayson Baptists. The building was started August 8,

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 and as we look back on us in permitting us to live to see this happy day,
 and as we look back over the years and think of the faithful ones who never gave up, but made so many sacrifices for us, we feel that they are conscious today of our happiness and are rejoicing with us around the Great White Throne of God.

Now, as a charter member I would like to dedicate this poem to my Church.

MY CHURCH

My wish was always
 to be there
 With earnest thought and fervent prayer
 Upon my lips and in my heart
 As God's man did His Word impart.

I loved to hear the voices fall
 Soft and sweet from wall to wall
 When the choir would sing Amazing Grace
 The Holy Spirit was every place.

Outside the world was sometimes cold
As the sweetest story ever told
Was sounding forth inside with Might
And sinners saw "God's Holy Light".

No other life could be so sweet
No other joy quite so complete
As to meet God's people, pray and sing
Praises to Our Christ and King.

We've carried our loved ones to God's throne
Trusting His Grace to save alone.
We've oft' felt grieved by their delay
But always then we'd kneel and pray.

The burden He lifted when we read his Word
Where He promised our prayers would surely be heard
So let us live by faith and work together
Until we dwell in the "House of Our Lord Forever".

Susie Robinson Kibbey
March 22, 1959
Dedication, Educational Building