

A Brief History of the Baptist Union Baptist Church

The specific details of formation of Baptist Union Baptist Church can only be understood in part. Courthouse documents and surviving church records do not cite when the first service was held or how many people formed the congregation. The documents that do remain, however, are testaments to the dedication and commitment of a group of believers, many of whom had been enslaved. Perhaps, the former slaves had promised God that if He delivered them from bondage, that they would worship Him in spirit and in truth. This church can be seen as the fulfillment of God's promise to the enslaved and their pledge to worship and serve Him.

Several of our church's founders had worshipped with the people who held them in bondage at the neighboring Buckingham Baptist Church. Buckingham Baptist Church records reveal that while blacks were welcome at their church services, they were only allowed to sit in the balcony. According to stories passed down from one generation to the next, as soon as our first church members received their freedom, they left the white congregation, cleared a spot in the woods and worshipped there under the open sky~ A brush arbor became the second Baptist Union home. It was followed by a log cabin.

Rev. Samuel Harris served as Baptist Union's first pastor. It is believed that he led the congregation for a little over one year. Carter Trent and Moton Smith were two of the first deacons. Members of the newly formed congregation included: Peter Rice, Albert Wells, Robert Woodson, Simon Jones, Henry Booker, Bob Brown, Henry Reed, Albert Williams, Henry Winn, Thomas Lee, Elizabeth Wells, Jennie Brown, and Amelia Lee.

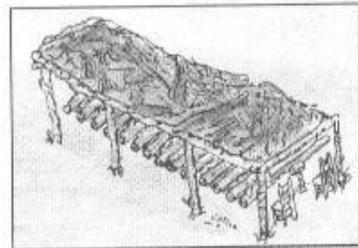
In 1867, Rev. Watson W. Jennison became the second pastor of Baptist Union Baptist Church. Under his leadership, the first trustee board and the first Sunday School Choir were formed. Albert Wells, Albert Sears, and Nelson Sears became the first church trustees. Rev. Jennison ordained the following deacons: Albert Sears, Nelson Sears, Henry Booker, Archer Allen, Archer Logan, John Logan and Elmo Eldridge. Members of the Sunday School Choir included: Willard Scruggs, Letha Scruggs, Jeanetta White, Jessie Logan and Wesley Logan.

As church leaders and trustees, Theo Dungee, Albert Wells and Albert Sears purchased one acre of land

for a church building, on October 2, 1876. They paid eight dollars for the acre. Four years later, John Brown, Albert Sears and Nelson Sears purchased another acre. The cost for the second acre was one dollar. Thomas and Harriet Trent were the land owners who sold both plots of land to our church.

When Rev. Jennison passed away on January 29, 1909, Baptist Union Baptist Church was more than forty years old and had acquired land and a simple but stable church building. Rev. Bowles pastored the congregation for three years. Rev. Alexander Trent assumed the church pastorship in 1912. Under his leadership, the log cabin which had served as our church building was replaced by a new church building. Our congregation held the first service in the new building in February, 1916.

Rev. Trent appointed Mrs. W.A. Wells first church clerk, and organized the first usher board. He ordained the following deacons: Emmitt Sears, Wesley Logan,



Before the first Baptist Union Church was built, members held services in a brush arbor. (Picture from the *Hidden and the Forgotten* by Charles W. White.)

Charles Lewis, Ernest Peaks, Arthur Peaks, Elbert Woodson, John Winn, John Scruggs and Paul Brown. Charles Woodson, Elbert Woodson, George Ayers, Nelson Scruggs and Archer Allen became trustee board members.

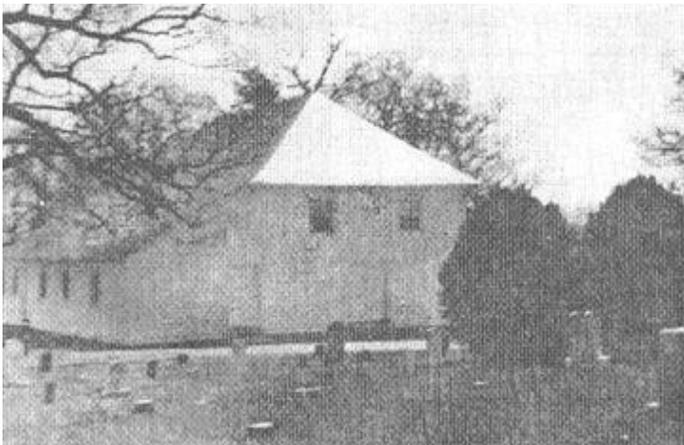
Rev. H. R. Venable became the fifth church pastor in 1937. Under his leadership, the first official church choir was organized by Jessie Logan, pianist, and Jeanetta White, directress. Rev. Venable ordained the following deacons: Granville Eldridge, Morton Eldridge, Randolph Gregory and Norvell Stanton. Granville Eldridge served as chairman. Arthur Ruffin, Buster Watkins and Raymond Peaks became trustees. Beulah Brown served as president of the usher board, and Arthur Peaks replaced W.A. Wells as church clerk. Edna

Anderson replaced Arthur Peaks as church clerk and also became church financial secretary. Rev. Venable led the congregation until 1955.

Rev. Thomas E. Holmes became the sixth pastor of Baptist Union Baptist Church in 1956. He ordained two deacons: Percy Gregory and Edward Eldridge; and appointed Bernard Brown, William Allen, Sr., Ollie Stanton, and Herman Eldridge to the trustee board. Bernice Peaks became church clerk.

Rev. H. R. Venable returned in 1966 to lead the congregation for a second time. Under Rev. Venable's leadership, the Willing Workers Club, headed by Cora L. Eldridge, as president and Oreatha Eldridge as vice president, raised the funds to renovate the church building. Indoor restroom facilities were added during this time. Florine Brown, Betty Lewis and Oreatha Eldridge served as church clerks. The Men's Club was formed with Arthur Ruffin as the first president. After his death, William T. Allen, Sr. served for a few years, then Percy Gregory became president.

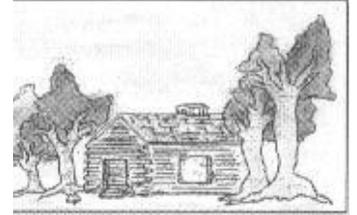
Rev. James H. Franklin became church pastor in 1973 and served until 1976. He returned to the pastorate in 1977. Church renovations were completed under his pastorate. Rev. Franklin began worship services on the first and third Sundays of each month. Before his tenure, Sunday services were held on the third Sunday of each month. Annual Vacation Bible School began under the direction of Linda Venable and Vera Cooke. The Junior Choir, which became the Young Adult Choir was



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organized and directed by William T. Allen, Jr. The Pastor's Aid Club was organized under the leadership of C. Bernice Peaks. Rev. Franklin ordained the following deacons: Bernard Brown, Herman Eldridge and Eugene T. Miller, Jr. Percy Gregory served as chairman of the deacon board. Later, Bernard Brown became chairman. Harrison Jones and Roger Sears were appointed trustees.

The first church building that Baptist Union members worshipped in resembled this drawing. (Original drawing by Carolyn Eldridge)



Raymond Peaks served as trustee chairman.

Rev. Dr. Alfred Allen Winn became pastor in December 1986 and served until 1991. Under his leadership Sunday worship services were held every Sunday, and the time moved from 11:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Weekly Bible studies were held each Wednesday evening. He ordained E. Howard Booker as deacon. Charles Wilson and James McKinney joined the Deacon Board. Deaconesses began to take part in Sunday Communion Services, under the direction of Cora L. Eldridge. William T. Allen, Sr. became president of the Men's Club. The Finance Committee formed and the Youth Ministry started. The first women, Bernice Peaks and Oreatha Eldridge were appointed to the trustee board. The Young Adult Choir became the Baptist Union Baptist Church Gospel Choir, directed by Shirley Winn. The Senior Citizen programs were also organized, with Ruby Johnson serving as chairperson. The Thelma C. Vowels Missionary Circle was formed in 1989 under the leadership of Vera Cooke. The Good News Junior Missionary Circle was organized the following year, with Latoya Mosley as president.

Between 1991 and 1992, Baptist Union Baptist Church continued to prosper. E. Howard Booker became the director of the Gospel Choir. The Missionary Circles sponsored the first outdoor picnic and clean-up day for senior citizens.

Rev. Dr. Roy L. Foots became our pastor in 1992. Under his leadership the Audio/Visual Ministry has come into being with a special booth constructed in the

rear of the church building, on the second level, for this purpose. Eugene Miller, Jr. developed and coordinated these efforts. Rev. Foots has sponsored a number of physical improvements to our church environment. A street light was added to the church entrance road with the assistance of Craig Anderson. Eight and one-half acres of new land was added to the church's property holdings. A portion of this land was set aside and cleared for additional cemetery space. The old school house which sits on church property was renovated, the bathrooms remodeled and the nursery started during church services. Rev. Foots conceived and developed the concept of establishing a Baptist Union Baptist Church Day Care Center for our church family and the community as a whole. Construction is slated to *The first members of the Baptist Union Baptist Church had once worshipped in the balcony of the Buckingham Baptist Church until the Late 1860s.* begin in the summer of 1997.

The Mass choir was formed and Karen Gregory Green became the director of the Mass and Gospel Choirs. The Baptist Union Sunday Church School was restructured with Men's and Women's classes held separately and youth classes meeting each Sunday morning. The Men's Club was renamed the Men's Auxiliary and the Pastor's Aid Club was renamed the Pastor's Aid Committee. Additions to church musicians core were made at this time under the leadership of Rev. Foots and Altony Foote.

Youth Rap Sessions were organized and are held periodically on Saturdays. An Outreach Ministry for the young men at New Dominion School was established and an "October Fest" for senior citizens was coordinated under the leadership of John Silver. Discipleship Tracks, distributed periodically, were initiated by Anna McKinney. The Missionary Circles hosted the first Health Fair and Black Family Workshop during the summer of 1993.

Praises!, the Baptist Union Baptist Church monthly newsletter, was developed and published, under the editorship of Dianne Swann-Wright.

The Nurses Unit was organized and incorporated to serve during Sunday morning services directed by Juanita Silver. The first church census was conducted under the directorship of Laura Foots. The church census reflected a two-fold growth under Rev. Foots' pastorship, with active membership increasing to more than three hundred saints. The male usher board was organized

under the leadership of Ralph Gregory. A college scholarship fund, sponsored by church auxiliaries, was also established. Rev. Foots developed classes for new members led by James McKinney. An annual friends and family picnic is held each summer. The first Pastor's Anniversary Banquet was held on September 21, 1996, sponsored by the Pastor's Aid Committee, the leadership of Beatrice Banks and coordinated by Vera Cooke Merritt.



In the fall of 1994, the old Washington Carver School was renovated by the church membership. It now serves as the BUBC Food Bank.

The church hosted the first 100th birth-day celebration for one of its members, Sister Willie Ann Stanton Woodson, on April 5, 1997. She has been an active member of Baptist Union Baptist Church for over eighty-five years. Rev. Foots has ordained two deacons: Charles Merritt in 1994 and William Merritt in 1995. Altony Foote joined the deacon board at this time. Herman Eldridge became chairman of the Deacon Board. Rev. Foots has appointed three persons to the trustee board: Arthur Gregory, Clyde Turner, and Craig Anderson. William T. Allen, Sr. became chairman of the Trustee Board. Georgia Swann Brown replaced Oreatha Eldridge as church clerk. Oreatha Eldridge had served in this capacity for twenty-four years. The position of church clerk was changed to church recording secretary.

The Baptist Union Baptist Church Village of Angels Child Care Center opened in the summer of 1998. It provided a safe, educational, and Christian environment for community children from birth to age four. An after school program was also available for school aged children.

Two Deacons were ordained in 1998, Brother Arthur R. Gregory in June and Sister JoAnn Jones in

November. Deacon James Scruggs joined the Deacon Board in July 1999.

In September 1999, Pastor Foots' spiritual vision led him to establish his own church in Richmond, Virginia. Brother Bruce Robinson and Sister Diane Swann-Wright were appointed in April and ordained Deacons in December 1999.

The pastor's ordination service for Rev. Nathaniel T. Perkins, Sr. was held December 2000. Under his leadership in 2001, the Youth Choir began rendering the music for the entire fourth Sunday service; the church clerk was changed to Deacon JoAnn Jones; the Deacon Ministry chairman was changed to Deacon Bruce Robinson; three trustees were appointed, Sister Sandra Hutcherson, Brother Douglas Green, Sr., and Brother Waverly Bolden. The Deaconess Ministry was reorganized. The church hosted the second 100th birthday celebration for one of its members, Mrs. Dora White on March 3, 2001.

In June 2002, the Pastor's Aide Committee, spearheaded by the president, Brother James Gregory, sponsored the second Pastor's Anniversary Banquet. It was held at the Cavalier Inn in Charlottesville, Virginia.

In 2003, the Prayer and Praise Teams were established.

In June 2004, Brother Robert Woodson was ordained Deacon. Brief Health Awareness presentations are observed once a month.

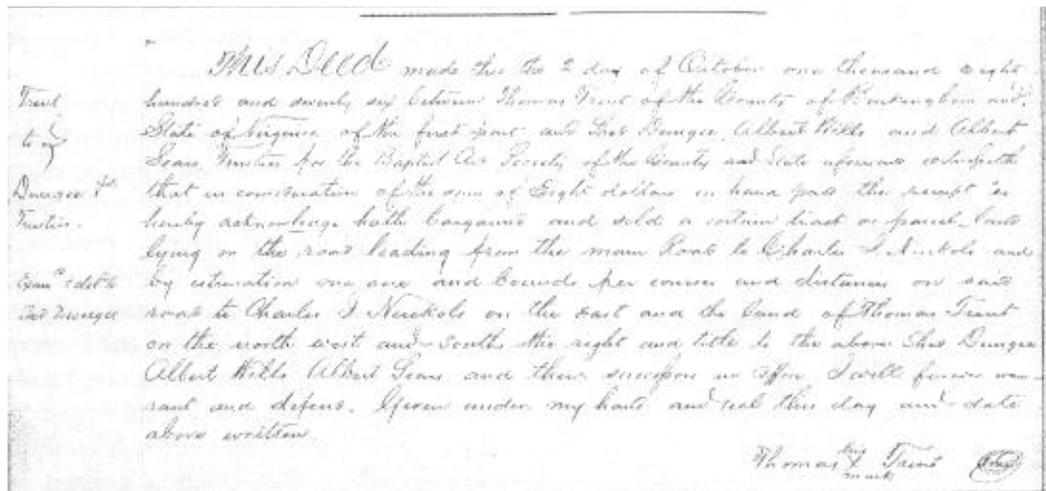
The Village of Angels Child Care center operated for six years. Due to regular public school federal funded programs, the center's enrollment declined. This led to the closing of the center in October 2004.

In an effort to off-set our mortgage obligation, the Lord blessed us to end 2004 with Project Faith.

On August 14, 2005, the Men's Chorus was reorganized. The Lord has blessed them to sing on second Sundays.

Baptist Union Baptist Church continues to be blessed through Bible Study, Vacation Bible School, Revivals, Family and Friends Day, Homecoming, Special Services, and Auxiliary Anniversaries.

We recognize that the Good Lord has held this church—this Baptist Union Baptist Church—in the palm of His hand for now over one hundred forty years. We thank and praise Him for being with us. As we move toward one hundred and forty one years, we look forward to worshipping Him in Spirit and in Truth and in lifting up His Holy Name.



The deed for the land where Baptist Union Baptist Church stands was signed by Thomas Trent on October 2, 1876.