

Salem Baptist Church 200 Year Celebration

October 13, 2024

In the early 1800s a group of settlers traveled from North Carolina to start a new life in Alabama. In addition to the physical work necessary to build new homes, The Lord began doing a work in their hearts to build a place of worship for their new community. With this lofty vision, on October 16, 1824 Salem Baptist Church was born. Larkin and Rachel Poe, John and Sealy Cates, Parks King, Sarah Prior, Sarah Rice and Lovie Richards were the founding members. New members were added monthly and July 1825 Bro. James Fortson and Bro. Beverly Willingham were ordained as Salem's first deacons. Nine months later a search began for property to build a church (or meeting house as it was called). In January 1826, James Baines, Beverly Willingham and Amber Files, on behalf of Salem Baptist Church, acquired property from Joshua Halbert and Issac Cannon in the woods on a hill along the Byler Road near Boone Creek in Tuscaloosa County. Byler Road was the first named road in Alabama and connected Tennessee River in The Shoals to the Warrior River in Tuscaloosa. In February 1827, a little over two years after official formation, the first service was held in the little 22 x 26 log "meeting house".

And The Lord continued to bless the work and efforts of the little log church on the hill even through tough times.

In January 1838 talks began of building a new church at a different location but after a few months, it was postponed due to financial challenges. However, the vision The Lord had given the pioneers remained in their hearts and approximately 15 years later property was acquired a few miles north on Byler Road, now known as Hwy 43 and is the current location in New Lexington. The first service was held September 9, 1854 in the white-siding church with a beautiful huge steeple and bell.

July 1861 the church received a letter from the congress of the Confederate States of America requesting prayer for imploring the blessing of Almighty God on our soldiers who were on the battlefield in defense of their homes, firesides and our sacred institutions. In March 1863 in accordance with the proclamation of President Jefferson Davis, a day of fasting and prayer was observed.

But The Lord continued to bless the fellowship of Salem Baptist Church.

In 1953 a new brick building was built which is the current church.

In 2011 a fellowship hall was built next to the church. Prayer meeting, bible study and a meal is shared in the fellowship hall each Wednesday night.

The church was updated in October 2023. Over the past few years, Salem has had continued growth in number as well as evangelism and missionary work.

Today the sign in front of the church reads "Salem Baptist Church", but those who attend regular services here call it "Home". We are so blessed to be celebrating 200 years of Salem Baptist Church and look forward to continuing the work The Lord has for our group of dedicated believers. May we abundantly fulfill His Vision as He continues to bless the fellowship of Salem Baptist Church on Shiver De Freeze Road in New Lexington, Alabama.