

Hebron Baptist Church History 1907-2007



Vimville, Mississippi

Hebron Baptist Church History 1907-2007

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Jay Parker, Minister of Music and Youth**

**Vimville, Mississippi
October 27, 2007**

In every thing give thanks: for this is the
will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

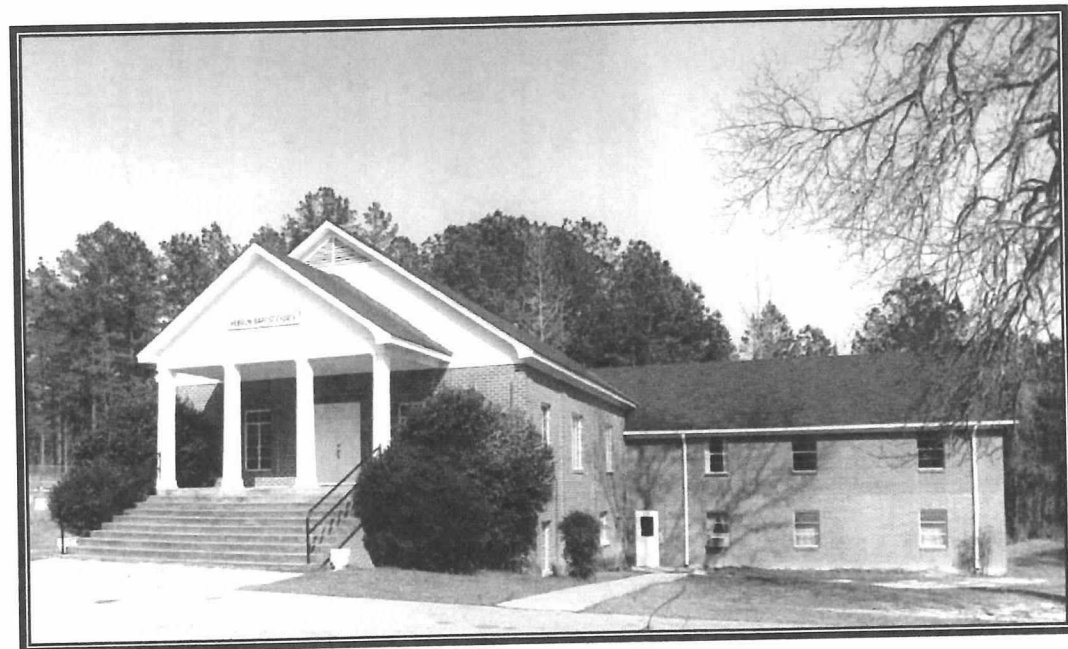
I Thessalonians 5:18

Hebron Baptist Church
4795 Vinville-Causeyville Road
Meridian, Mississippi 39301

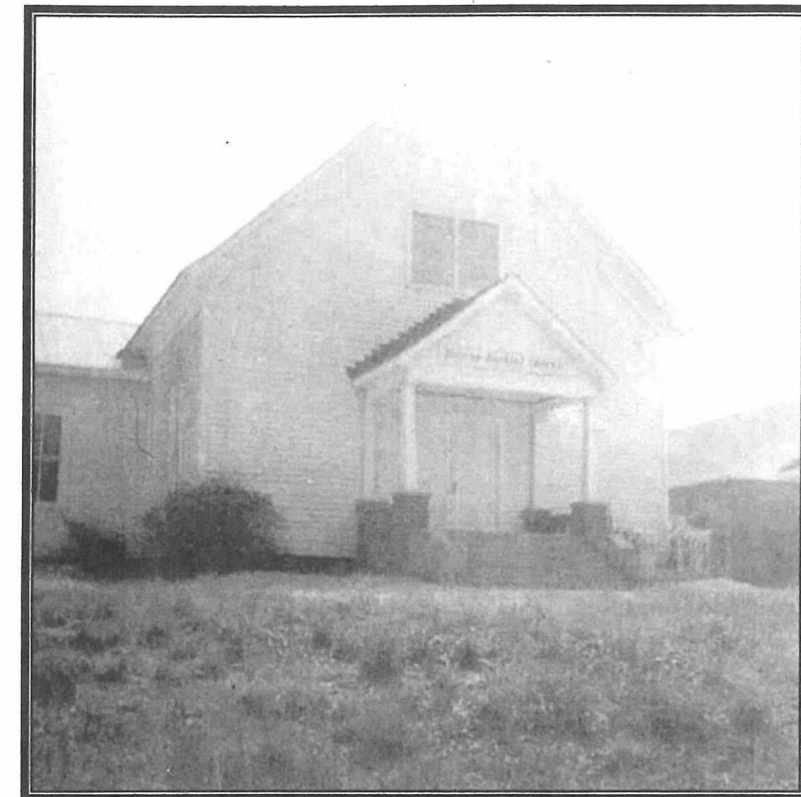
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Hebron Baptist Church in the 1980s



The old, original white clapboard building erected at Hebron was located near the site of the present church.

Hebron Baptist Church History

Pioneer Baptists

About a hundred years ago, a small number of devout Christian men and women gathered at a local schoolhouse in rural Mississippi to establish what was most likely the first Baptist church in their growing community. Although many of their pioneer ancestors had probably lived in the vicinity of the old schoolhouse since long before the Civil War, only the Methodist church a short distance up the creek currently

served most of the people in the bustling turn-of-the-century village.

As early as the 1830s, pioneer Baptists had made their homes among the scattered farmsteads along the Tennessee Trace, a local name for an old frontier trail that led northward from Mobile Bay along Buckatunna Creek through present-day Vimville and all the way to the Tennessee River Valley. A Baptist congregation was meeting at "Buckatunny"—Bucatumna Baptist Church — in



Country roads made travel to church difficult in the early 1900s.



Earl and Zula Carlisle

northeastern Clarke County by 1838. Churches, however, were slow to establish in the sprawling pioneer neighborhoods along the trace. Most early settlers had to depend on brush-arbor services led by circuit-riding evangelists.

Pioneer Baptist preachers helped establish several local churches before the Civil War. Ebenezer Baptist Church, organized by Reverend Ambrose Yarbrough near present-day Causeyville in 1842, was most likely the earliest Baptist church in southeastern Lauderdale County. Reverend Mathias Wolfe, who was granted a license to preach the Gospel at Bucatunna in 1843, helped organize New Hope in 1847 and Mount Horeb in 1848.

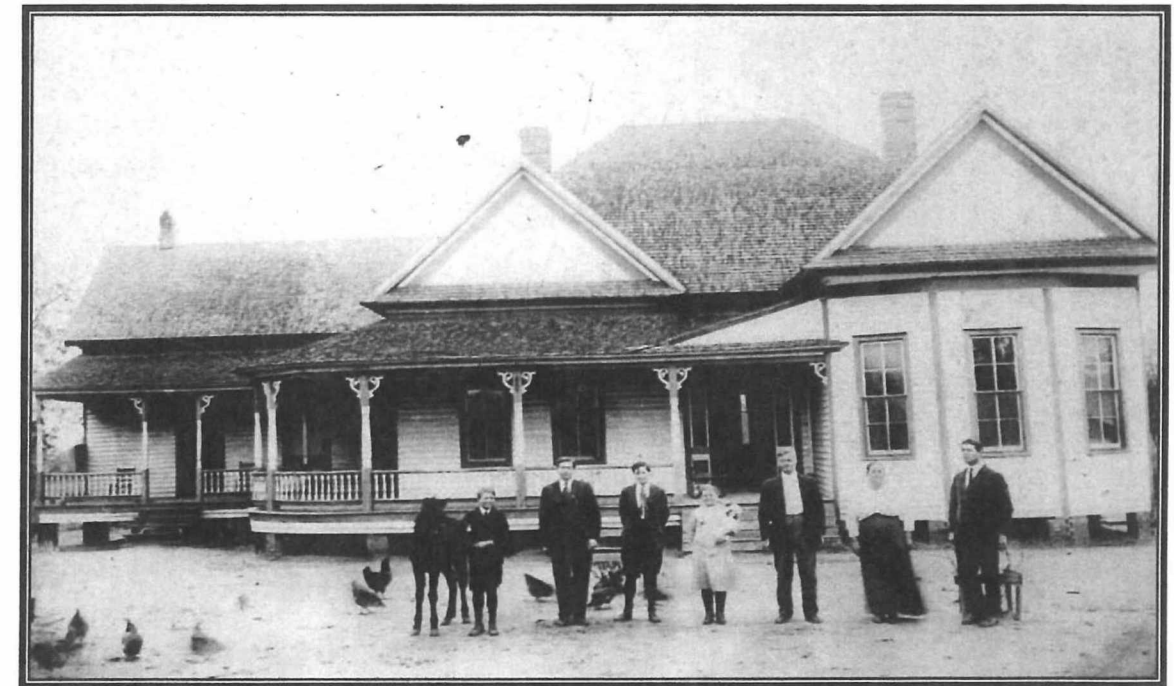
Liberty Baptist Association served pioneer Baptist churches along the state line in both east Mississippi and west Alabama during much of the nineteenth century. Numerous local churches, including Bethany, Causeyville, Center Grove, and Long Creek, were established after the Civil War. The Lauderdale County Baptist Association was formed in 1902 to serve the growing number of Baptist congregations in the county.

Vimville

Vimville, formerly known as Coker's Chapel, was established near the intersection of the old Tennessee Trace and the road leading from Meridian to Butler

(State Highway 19) in the late 1800s. Early settlers included members of the Copeland, McInnis, McDonald, Brewster, and Coker families. A post office was set up at the site on September 3, 1885. Mail was still being delivered to the post office at Vimville from Meridian along the rural route as late as the 1950s.

Although Vimville was more or less a typical farming community in the late nineteenth century, a church, school, gristmill, cotton gin, and a couple of general stores were located in the thriving village by the early 1900s. According to local public school records, Vimville Consolidated School was established between 1916 and 1920. By 1922 the "first class" school boasted six teachers and 159 educable children in the district with



Butler family home near Vimville (ca. 1910)



Irby family early church members



Smith family early church members



Camp family early church members



Early churchgoers at Vimville (ca. 1900)

six wagons transporting 92 pupils to the school.

Vimville was located within ten miles of Meridian, which was the largest city in the state by the early years of the twentieth century. Residents of the community were eager to see Vimville share in this growth. In fact, at least one local historian in the 1930s records that the name "Vimville" was initially chosen for the village since it meant "City of Vigor." It was during this time of record growth and high hopes for the turn of the century that a few inspired Baptists decided to organize a church.

The Church at Jackson Schoolhouse

On Sunday morning, October 27, 1907, twenty-three members of the little village of Vimville met at

Charter Members

- Mary Elizabeth "Mollie" Camp**
- Darling Lee "D. L." Coker**
- Eleanor "Ella" Ellis Coker**
- John W. Ellis**
- Margaret Jane Irby Ellis**
- G. H. Hill**
- LaVisa Carr Irby**
- Thomas Jefferson Irby**
- Lula Kelly**
- Solomon Kelly**
- Kisiah Rutledge Pogue**
- William M. Pogue**
- Andrew B. Smith**
- Mattie Brewster Kitchens Smith**
- Ada Smith**
- John A. Smith**

Minutes

Vimville, Miss., October 27th 1907.
 The Church at Jackson School House met for service at 11 o'clock in the morning. After preaching by Bro. J. W. Ellis, went into conference with Bro. Ellis as moderator, while Bro. D. L. Coker was chosen as clerk. Upon motion the church went into a formal call for a pastor for the ensuing year which resulted in the election of Bro. Chas. Elliott, Meridian, Miss.
 The Moderator was instructed to notify Bro. Elliott of the call, and to communicate with the State Mission Board to see they would assist in paying the salary which was fixed at \$200.
 Adjourned.

D. L. Coker, Church Clerk. J. W. Ellis, Moderator.

Church at Jackson schoolhouse minutes, October 27, 1907

-----*Minutes*-----

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Adjourned.

D. L. Coker, Church Clerk J. W. Ellis, Moderator

Jackson schoolhouse along the road leading to Causeyville to establish a Baptist church. Old Jackson School was located just south of the present church building about where the current parsonage is situated. The one-room schoolhouse had been erected in 1896 on land deeded by Robert Andrew Jackson to school trustees D. F. Crum, J. W. Camp, and A. B. Smith. A single teacher typically conducted classes for a handful of children at the little school.

Brother J. W. Ellis presided at the first meeting held on that late October morning. Brother Charles G. Elliott of Meridian was called to be the church pastor with an annual salary of \$200. D. L. Coker was elected church clerk. Missions were



Brother J. W. Ellis and Margaret Jane Irby Ellis

an immediate priority of the little church, and at the next meeting in November members donated \$3.06 to the local orphans' home. Members decided to hold worship services every Saturday and Sunday before the fourth Sunday of each month. In December the church established a committee to prepare the Articles of Faith, Rules of Decorum, and Church Covenant.

In January, 1908, members voted to elect Solomon Kelly, a veteran of the Civil War, as the first deacon. "New Hebron" was selected as the name of the church. In the following month, however, Brother Ellis made a motion that was accepted to change the name to simply "Hebron." Brother Ellis, A. B. Smith, and T. J. Irby were appointed to write a church constitution. The constitution was adopted and the first communion service was observed in May. Songbooks were selected in June of that same year. In July the first building and finance committees were established to consider the building of a house of worship and raise funds for the same.

First New Members

- Mary Elgin Camp
- Audie Irby
- Ethel Irby
- Jinks Irby
- Martha Irby
- Maggie Kelly
- Thad Kelly

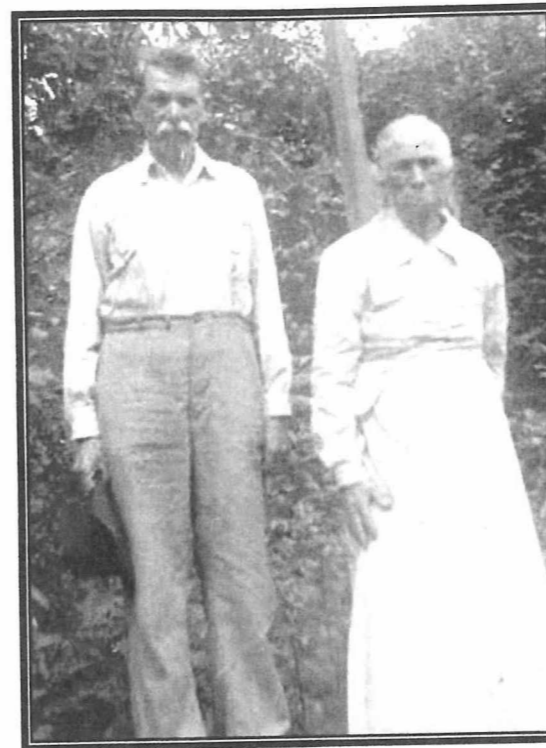


Old Jackson School (ca. 1913)

Although travel was difficult along country roads, and illness and poor weather sometimes hindered getting to church, in the early years it was not uncommon to have extended revival services of a week or longer in duration. The first revival, or what was commonly known at the time as a "protracted meeting," was held at Hebron in August 1908. Thirteen new members were added: eight by church letter and five by baptism. In that same month Brother Ellis, A. B. Smith, and Solomon Kelly were appointed as the first delegates to the recently formed Lauderdale County Baptist Association, and the first letter to the local association was prepared, read, and adopted.



Ada Smith Irby and William Ezra Irby

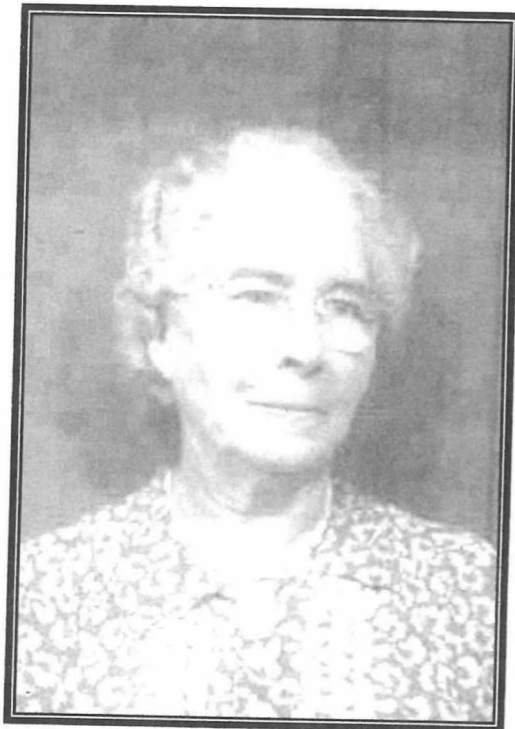


Thomas Jefferson and LaVisa Carr Irby

The early church was the law and order of the Baptist community. All members were expected to ask forgiveness for sins to maintain good standing within the church. Each service provided a time for members to acknowledge unchristian acts. Church minutes indicate that dancing, in particular, was simply not tolerated at Hebron. Fellow members sometimes took it upon themselves to remind those who failed to acknowledge their own unchristian conduct. A committee of church members was usually appointed to counsel, or "labor," with these backsliding members. It was not uncommon to be excluded from the membership for a month or so and return to good standing only after seeking forgiveness.



A. B. Smith family



Mary Elizabeth "Mollie" Camp



Mary Elgin Camp

Hebron Baptist Church, Part I

In January, 1909, the first Sunday school officers were elected, and members decided to secure funds to purchase framing materials for a new church building to be erected on an acre of land deeded by Dr. H. W. Brewster. A wood frame building with white clapboard siding was eventually erected approximately where the handicapped parking area is currently located in front of the church cemetery. Nineteen new members were added to the church during revival services held in August 1911. In September \$440



Ethel Irby



Russell and R. V. Camp (ca. 1917)

was subscribed for enlarging the church, and, though the matter was later postponed, two members were appointed to collect the money by November 1.

Although there are no extant minutes between February, 1914, and February, 1917, the church at the old Jackson schoolhouse apparently continued to grow. Hebron was not, however, without hardship during the early years. In November, 1917, members observed a special Thanksgiving service in the midst of World War I. No services were held in October of the following year when an outbreak of influenza in the community shut the doors of the church. Millions died worldwide when the terrible influenza epidemic spread across the globe between 1918 and 1919.

In 1923 T. H. Smith and Dr. H. W. Brewster deeded additional land to the church at Hebron. Several years later in April, 1929, the trustees for Causeyville School donated the old Jackson School land to the church. By the following summer the church was ready to go "half-time," and services were held on alternate Sundays with Brother Horace Sollie as pastor. Later that

Pastors

- 1907 Charles G. Elliott
- 1910 J. W. Ellis
- 1911 R. W. Sumrall
- 1916 L. M. Phillips
- 1919 A. H. Miller
- 1923 R. W. Sumrall
- 1927 Horace Sollie
- 1932 A. H. Miller
- 1940 O. V. Swearingen
- 1944 Horace Sollie
- 1946 Herman Sollie
- 1949 V. R. Meadows
- 1951 Philip Walker
- 1952 Eugene Keebler
- 1954 Leland Goodman
- 1957 I. E. Boggs
- 1958 Bob Hunt
- 1959 Kenneth Jones
- 1965 Fred Chancellor
- 1969 Ed Bryan
- 1972 Joe Lynn Joyner
- 1976 Danny Bradley
- 1977 Larry Moore
- 1979 Tommy Jones
- 1999 Jerry Lowery
- 2002 Paul Earley
- 2006 Joe Lynn Joyner



Farm scene in the early 1900s



Family farm (ca. 1900)

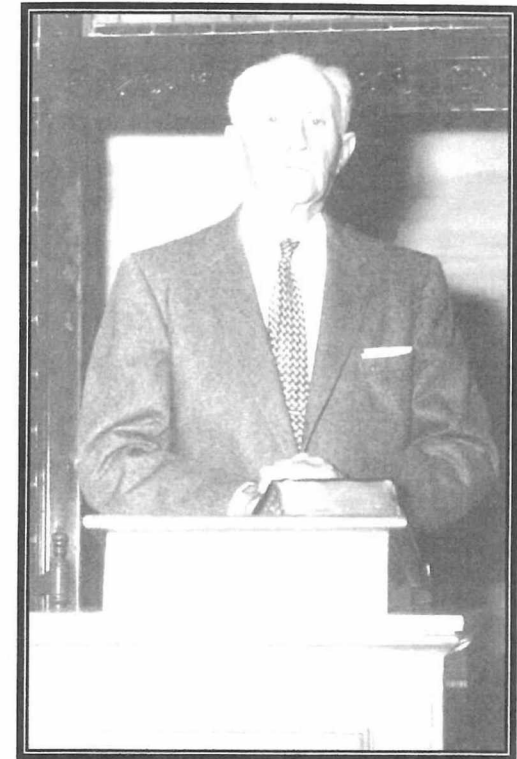


Early churchgoers after worship services at Hebron

same year the church ordained Brother Herman Sollie as a minister of the Gospel. During the Great Depression, in December, 1931, a building committee was appointed to consider plans for additions to the church and to locate timber for making shingles.

Despite World War II, the faithful men and women of Hebron continued to serve the Lord during the 1940s. Prayers were answered, and the work of the church in the local community never faltered. In November, 1943, the church voted to send the Baptist paper to all the homes of the church. While several members were still away from home during the war, the church made plans for new Sunday school classrooms in May 1944. The first Bible school was held at Hebron in July 1945. Furthermore, members donated \$200 after the war to help build Carmel Baptist Church a few miles northwest of Vimville.

In 1953 members voted to build a "church community house" while Dr. Eugene M. Keebler was serving as pastor. A dedication ceremony was later held at the foundation of what is now the current church building. In November, 1954, Brother Leland Goodman was called as pastor, and during his tenure the present facility was completed, using mostly volunteer labor from within the church membership. Services were held in the new red brick structure for the first time in February 1955. Dr. Keebler and Brother Annis Shorosh led dedication services for the new church building in April of that year. In October, 1957, a reception was held to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the church.



Brother A. H. Miller



Brother Horace Sollie



Rupert Camp during World War II

Hebron Baptist Church, Part II

In 1958 the church decided to go "full-time." Brother Bob Hunt, who later served as a foreign missionary, was called as the first full-time pastor. In August, 1961, members of the church were notified that the old Jackson School land was going to be sold at public auction. Hebron evidently never received a deed when trustees for Causeyville School donated the land to the church in 1929. On September 1, 1961, members of the church went to the county school superintendent and purchased the land for \$42. In 1963 the church acquired additional land from W. E. Dabbs and Mary D. Stroud for enlarging the church cemetery. On July 12, 1964, a "note-burning service" for the new building



Linnie Smith and Louise Thompson with Bible school children in 1946



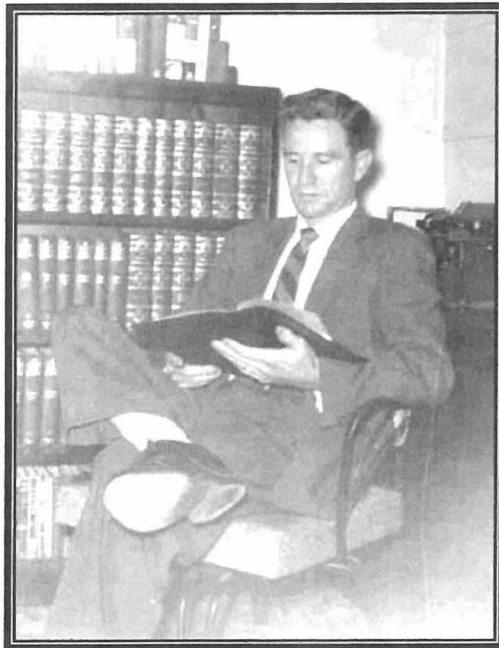
The present building at Hebron was erected in the 1950s.

Church Membership Records

| | |
|------|------------------------------|
| 1923 | Joseph Russell Camp |
| 1935 | Willie Howard Hagwood |
| 1935 | Louise Miller Thompson |
| 1938 | H. F. Boswell, Jr. |
| 1938 | Helen Boswell Smiley |
| 1939 | Rowena Carr Smith Moore |
| 1940 | Raymond Moore |
| 1943 | Margarette Pogue |
| 1943 | Ouida Smith Raulings |
| 1944 | Ben Harper |
| 1944 | Billy Irby |
| 1944 | Bobby Irby |
| 1945 | James Otis Boswell |
| 1948 | Adelia "Pete" Thurman Thomas |
| 1951 | Laurine Brewster Carlisle |
| 1951 | Virginia Williams Smith |
| 1953 | Janie Gibson Camp Wright |



Women of Hebron Baptist Church have long been active in community service and development (ca. 1954)



Brother Leland Goodman

was held with Brother Horace Sollie preaching. A committee was immediately appointed to consider adding classrooms.

As early as 1952 church members had planned to build a home for the pastor and his family. In June, 1955, the church accepted an acre of land to be used to build a parsonage from Mr. and Mrs. H. F. Boswell, Sr. The first parsonage was constructed north of State Highway 19 on land owned by the Boswell family. This home served the church until the 1970s. In 1976 church members purchased land from Wilmer Lewis to build the current parsonage adjacent to the church. A loan received by the church to build



Children attending church at Hebron



In the late 1950s the church decided to go "full-time."



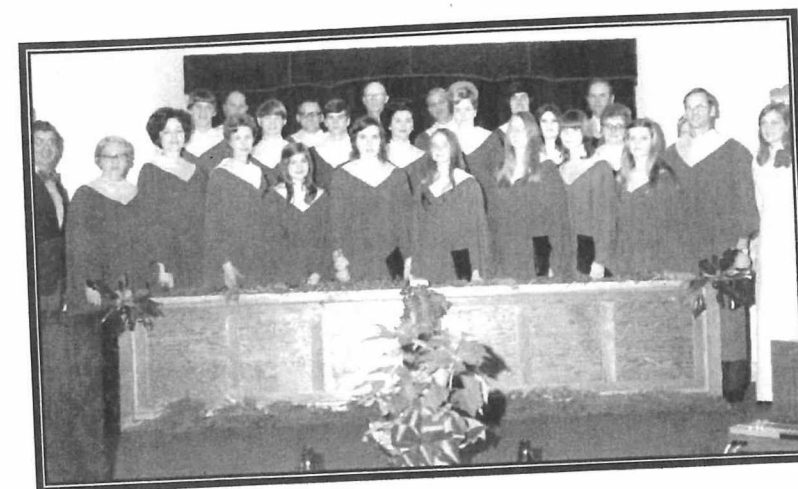
Brother I. E. Boggs and John A. Smith at the fiftieth anniversary celebration in 1957



Brother Kenneth Jones

the pastorium was paid-in-full by October 1979.

Missions were important to the early members at Hebron and have remained a priority throughout the long history of the church. A local branch of the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) was established at Hebron by 1914. In February, 1957, church members voted to donate 20% of the offering to the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention. By 1962 the church budget set aside \$1,986 for the Cooperative Program. In December, 1973, the donation to the Cooperative Program was increased to 22% of the church offering. In September, 1991, members voted to create a local benevolent fund with an additional



Music has long been an important ministry at Hebron.



The new pastorium was completed in the late 1970s.



Over a hundred members attended Sunday school by the 1980s.



Leo McDonald and Brother Tommy Jones in 1980



Former music director George "Skeeter" Gordon and his wife Ruby in 1990

5% of the offering. Members continue to set aside a large portion of the church offering for various mission programs.

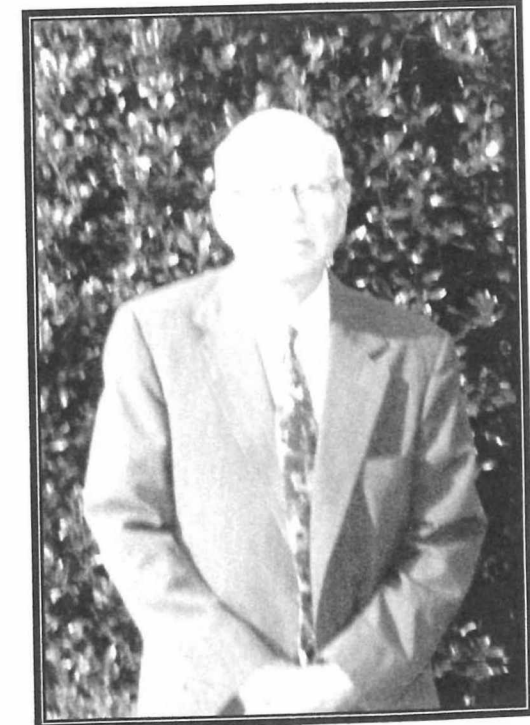
Brother Tommy Jones was called as pastor in 1979 and served the church at Hebron for nineteen years. By the 1980s the church was averaging well over a hundred members in Sunday school. Church members approved plans for additional classrooms in July 1982. In 1988 the church began a renovation project to enlarge and improve the sanctuary, fellowship hall, and choir rehearsal room. In May, 1989, homecoming services were held for the first time in the newly remodeled sanctuary. The John Curtis Smith Family Life Center was erected in the 1990s. In addition, Mr. Leo McDonald and his



Hebron Baptist Church in 2007

son Mark donated twenty-six acres of land to the church in 1996.

Hebron Baptist Church continues to grow. Over three hundred members are currently enrolled at the church established in the one-room Jackson schoolhouse a hundred years ago. In 1999 members approved a remodeling project to the family life center to provide a new gymnasium, larger fellowship hall, an improved kitchen, a choir rehearsal room, and additional classrooms. Forever serving the Lord, the vigorous little church without a building of its own at the turn of the twentieth century has become a spiritual lighthouse to the surrounding community. Brother Joe Lynn Joyner serves as pastor, and Brother Jay Parker serves as minister of music and youth.



Russell Camp has been a member at Hebron since 1923.

*"On motion it was agreed that the record
show the church held a Thanksgiving service."*

**Hebron Baptist Church Minutes
November 1917**

Sources

Pioneer Baptists

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Hebron Baptist Church, Part I

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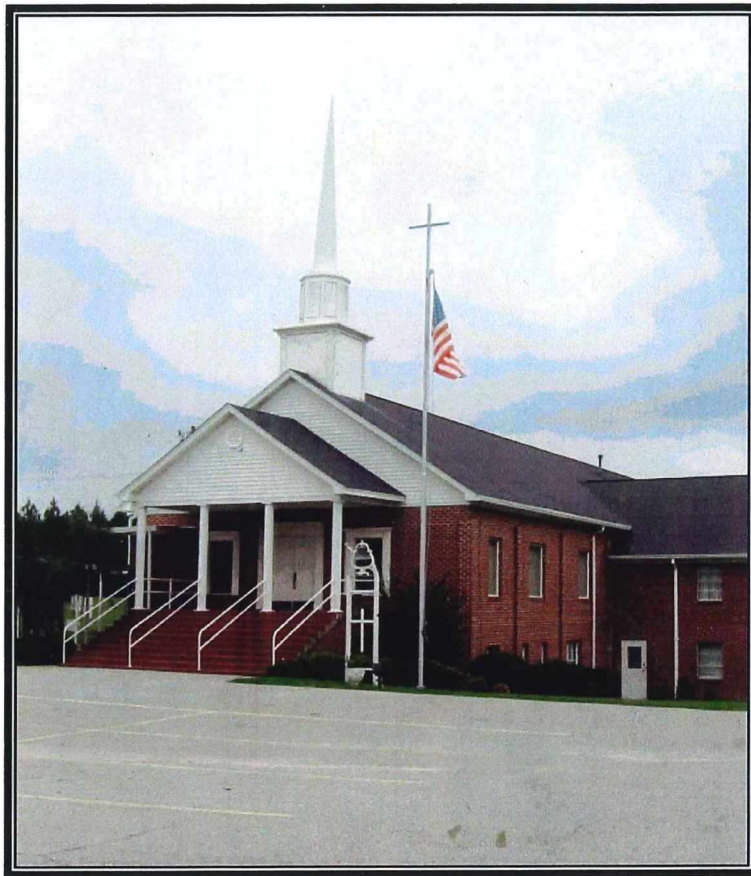
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