

Historically Speaking
Commission on History

Mississippi Baptist 10/1/81

By R. S. Walker, Chairman

HISTORIC CHURCHES:

Many new church congregations have been formally constituted in recent years. We are all very proud of these new, and, in many cases, thriving churches. But all our churches are not new. Some have indeed an interesting heritage.

As a matter of record, Baptists have been engaged in preaching and teaching God's Word in what we now know as the State of Mississippi since 1780. The first church was organized in 1791. They have been zealous engaged in world missions in some measure through these early years to the present.

There are many historic church congregations in Mississippi. A little sadly, we take note of the fact that many once happy and fruitful churches have long since been desolved. On the other hand, there are many of the early churches yet much alive and active in the service of the Master.

Not all, but a goodly number of these historic churches are yet identified with the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi (formerly Mississippi Baptist Association). According to diligent research by the churches themselves, and the Mississippi Baptist Commission on History, the following churches cooperating in the work of the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi are listed in the Baptist Missionary Association of America Directory and Handbook (1980-1981) published by Baptist News Service, as being more than One Hundred Years old - some much older:

Farmington Baptist Church near Corinth is believed to have been constituted some time prior to 1812, possibly as early as 1800. Antioch Baptist Church at Soso is believed to have been organized in 1817. First Baptist Church in Bay Springs, it is said, was established as Mt. Nebo Church in 1828. Union Church near Bay Springs (in Smith County) constituted in 1833.

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Others are Unity Church near Guntown, 1840; First Baptist at Mantachie, and Hppewell, Fulton, 1843; Washington Church at Neely was constituted in 1845; Mt. Pleasant, Fulton, in 1847; Boguefala at Mooreville in 1849.

Mt. Moriah Church near Ellisville was established in 1854; First Baptist Church in Louin organized in 1855; Shiloh Church, Mt. Olive, in 1860; Big Creek Church at Soso was constituted in 1862 (there had been an earlier church which was desolved); Palestine Church near Montrose was established in 1864; and Bethel near Basfield in 1869.

The Fairhope Baptist Church near Beaumont was constituted in 1870; Ten Mile Church near Perkinston also in 1870; Oak Grove Church east of Poplarville was established in 1871; First Baptist of Henleyfield in 1874; Bethel at Fulton in 1875; Oak Grove near Mantachie, 1875; and also Parkview Church (Laurel's first and oldest church) in 1876. Others are Cypress Creek, 1879; and Paramount, 1880.

There may possibly be others. It is certainly not our intention to leave any of these historic churches out of this honor roll. We salute them all!

HISTORIC ASSOCIATIONS:

There are 12 local or district Baptist Associations in Mississippi whose churches cooperate with the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi as well as the work of the B.M.A. of America. Some of these are historic groups. The Judson Baptist Association organized in 1853 is the oldest of the twelve. The Hobolochitto Association was organized in 1856, and is the second oldest of the twelve.

Others are the Big Creek Association, organized in 1896; and the Washington Association in 1912.

Organized in more recent years are the Ten Mile Association which was organized in 1950 from a number of churches formerly with the old Red Creek Association (organized in 1880) after that group left our work to help form the "Faithway" group.

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Others are the Harmony Association organized in 1954; Capitol and Oak Grove Associations in 1958; Gulf Association in 1962; Tombigbee, 1964; Delta, 1975; and the State Line (some churches in Alabama) in 1977.

Only eternity can reveal how much more has been accomplished because these churches realized the strength of unity; the sweetness of Christian fellowship; and the wisdom of togetherness. They have stood together; leaned upon one another; prayed and counseled together; and shared common goals and resources as did the first century churches.

HOMEcomings AT SYCAMORE:

Homecoming Day, September 20, 1981, marked the 69th anniversary of the founding of Sycamore Church on the 3rd Sunday in September, 1912, with twelve charter members. Two of these charter members were present for the "all-Day Services" of Homecoming - Miss Cora Mitchell, 92; and Mrs. Carrie Dalla (Mitchell) Stockstill, 88. The day also concluded five days of revival services with the pastor doing the preaching.

FORTY YEARS IN THE MINISTRY:

The week of revival and homecoming at Sycamore also marked my 40th year in the gospel ministry. That's how long Moses stayed on the "back side of the desert" as a herdsman for his father in law in the land of Midian.

I came to realize God's call to preach His Word in late August of 1941. I began preaching the best I could wherever I had opportunity immediately. My first work was a mission in a home in Picayune in September. This mission became Mt. Calvary Baptist Church October 6, 1941.

I was licensed and ordained by the Liberty Baptist Church near Picayune.

Over these forty years I have pastored the following churches (not necessarily in this order): Mt. Calvary, Picayune; First of Henleyfield; Spring Branch (Cedar Drive), Pearlinton; Old Spanish Trail, Waveland; Central (Bay View), Bay St. Louis;

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Oak Grove, east of Poplarville; New Bethel, south of Poplarville; Liberty, Mill Creek, Antioch and Sycamore, Picayune; (In my early years I sometimes pastored two, three and four churches at the same time) First Baptist (Mt. Nebo), Bay Springs; Union, near Bay Springs; Mt. Calvary, Chickasaw, Ala.; Sunset Hills, Mobile, Ala.; Woodlawn, Pascagoula; Fairview (Lighthouse now), Pascagoula; and several scattered missions points.

My personal sermon records show that I have tried to preach a total of 9,190 sermons. Church and Associational records show that I have been privileged to baptized a total of 560 into the fellowship of churches I have pastored; Received 852 into the fellowship of churches pastored by transfer of membership (letters); making a total of 1,412 additions to churches pastored. I have been privileged to perform many weddings, and assisted in lots of funerals. I praise God for His marvelous grace and love. "That according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" - I Corinthians 1:31.

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S. S. W.