

Oldham Chapel Cumberland Church

Route One
Ashville, Alabama

Charles F. Pruitt, Pastor

- Acknowledgements -

Greatful acknowledgement is made for the individual assistance of others in gathering countless items of interest for incorporation into this work. Without the combined efforts of all, the task could not have been successfully completed. To the Misses Beatrice and Beulah Kinght for preservation of most of the records, deeds, documents etc; to Mr. & Mrs. P. A. Green for oral supplements; to the Oldham Chapel Board of Elders for their personal support in publication and distribution; to Mrs. E. B. Reynolds for safe-keeping of the remaining records, and to the local congregation and non-affiliated friends for their well wishes and moral support in the effort. To each of these sincere appreciation is expressed, and it is my humble prayer that this work will inspire them as it has the writer. Finally, we pray God that this work will ultimately bear the fruit of future conversions through those who read it and use it as best they can. If such is the case, our purpose will have been accomplished.

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- Prologue -

Any historical work on the Oldham Chapel Church would be incomplete because there are portions of the records missing. Undoubtedly, they were lost or never written at all because the church was inactive at that time. Naturally, there are gaps for which we cannot account, occasionally for long periods of time.

Aside from these irregular periods of silence, however, the records cover the long and exciting years with an exceptional degree of thoroughness. In these pages, yellowed by time, there is a vast source of useful information. Facts are authenticated by dates and signatures which are still clearly legible to the natural eye. Some are recorded in excellent pen-man-ship, and left to posterity by the humble, God-fearing ancestors of some of the present membership. Their pains-taking care in keeping these records has left behind a rich and valuable source from which we can continue to draw inspiration. That part of our history which still remains, is for the most part, still in good condition and well preserved against the ravages of time and useage. It is easy to read them in almost their entirety. Church records such as these are the exception rather than the rule, and to the membership of the local congregation they are indeed valuable.

Most any account of local history will be read by a small group of Christian people who are sincerely interested in the church, but it is our earnest desire that this volume will be the source of re-kindled interest for the masses rather than the few; that it will bring about a better understanding of the true mission of the church, and revive the determination of our forefathers to win unsaved people to a decision of faith in Jesus Christ. It is in this spirit of faith that we attempt the preparation of such a work as this, and humbly dedicate it to the everlasting Glory of one God in Three; the Father, The Son and the Holy Ghost, now and forevermore, Amen.

Charles F. Pruitt, pastor

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Condensed History of The Oldham Chapel Cumberland
Presbyterian Church, St. Clair County, Alabama.

- Historical Data, Early Church -

The earliest known record of the Oldham Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian church, located in Beaver Valley, St. Clair County, Alabama, approximately eight miles East, Northeast of Ashville, Alabama, is dated September 20, 1851. It is a legal deed of title to the property on which the church stands. The indenture (agreement in writing) was made between a J. F. Puckett, party of the first part, (who gave the land) and the citizens of the community, party of the second part (who received the land). Those citizens named to receive title were William N. Favor, Bennett Oldham and William Jones. It was notarized in St. Clair County, Alabama on January 3, 1852, sworn to and subscribed before one Irby Wooley who was Judge of Probate for said county. It was duly recorded in this same office before the same magistrate on what appears to be January 3, 1857, in Book 6 of Conveyances, Page 269. The execution of this document was witnessed by William N. Favor and A. E. Cooper in behalf of the people. The deed carries the signatures of the donor, J. F. Puckett; the recipients, Wm. N. Favor and A. E. Cooper, and the Judge of Probate, Irby Wooley, who was the public official witnessing the transaction. Recording fees came to a total of ninety cents. It's interesting to note that Mr. Puckett affixed his seal to the deed by drawing it himself with pen.

Other than those two men who witnessed the deed, there are seventeen citizens named in the text of the agreement. They include: Bennett Oldham, Wm. Jones, Reuben Phillips, Berry L. Coker, John Watkins, Robert Harp, John Rice, Wm. Johnson, Joel Appling, Thomas Johnson, T. D. Andrews, Andrew Johnson, A. B. Green, Joe Johnson, J. F. Puckett, A. C. Lankford and J. H. L. Wood. Of these, at least two, if

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not more, are still represented in active participation in the local church effort. They are Bennett Oldham and A. B. Green. Quite possibly there are others. Exact wording of the deed is as follows:

STATE OF ALABAMA "This indenture made and entered
ST. CLAIR COUNTY into this the 20th day of September A. D. One Thousand Eight

Hundred and Fifty One between J. F. Puckett of the first part and the citizens of the same vicinity of the second part. Interpreteth that the said J. F. Puckett agrees to give, grant and deliver unto the said party of the second part (viz) (names go here) a certain parcel of land lying and being in the State and County aforesaid, it being in the Northwest corner of the Southeast quarter of the Southeast quarter of Section 4, Township 14, Range 5, East, containing three acres more or less. Said land donated for the purpose of building a house suitable for publick preaching and the teach(ing) of our children. The said described lot of land to be bounded on the Southeast by the public road. On the Northeast from a Postoak tree marked running due North to the East, in the district of lands subject to sale at Huntsville, Alabama. The receipt hereby acknowledged and the said J. F. Puckett doth for himself, his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns forever warrant and defend all right, title and intrust in the above described lot of land unto said party of the second part and their successors. In testimony whereof he has hereunto set his hand and affixed his seal the day and year written above!

(signed) J. F. Puckett (seal)

IN THE PRESENCE OF

(signed) William N. Favor

(signed) A. E. Cooper

NOTE: The paper manufacturers watermark is still visible in the upper left corner: Owen & Hurlee, So Lee Mass; and can still be read on close inspection.

On December 2, 1854 Mr. Puckett sold the land around the church to a Thomas I Payne with the stipulation that the transaction was not to include the

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"three acres previously deeded to a schoolhouse". That deed was executed in the presence of one Wm. Montgomery, acting Justice of the Peace for Talladega County. It will be noted that this second deed indicates our Mr. Puckett had moved to Talladega County in as much as it reads " -between James F. Puckett and his wife, Virginia C. Puckett of the County of Talladega of the first part, and Thomas I. Payne of Catoosa County and State of Georgia of the second part- ". Thereby the provision for " --a house suitable for publick preaching and the teaching of our children- " was reaffirmed, and, so far as we can learn, has been maintained as a church to the present time. Exactly when the church was separated from the school does not appear in any of the records, but maintenance of the church is recorded from August 12, 1867. Why there were no records before this date is not known, but that worship services were held here is reasonably certain. In the original Session book there are several pages missing where the Register of Communicants begins. The first recorded date is August 18, 1871, but there are undated entries before this on the same page. This and the missing pages already referred to indicate that there was worship here before the time of these records. Why they are incomplete will probably never be known. But in addition to these known facts, it is recorded that the Rev. Bennett Oldham Baptized a James F. Oldham August 12, 1867. We can surmise then, with reasonable accuracy, that worship services have been conducted on this site from the date of our original deed, in which Bennett Oldham was named as one of three persons to receive title to the property. He was later to become the Rev. Bennett Oldham. This, it stands to reason, is how the church later acquired the name 'Oldham Chapel' - in honor of the first Oldham who lived, labored and died in the service of God here in Beaver Valley. There were other Oldhams also, as the record will subsequently show in later minutes.

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The oldest known Session record is a Ledger called 'Minutes of Session', bound in a costly grade of fine leather which we of today would call suede. The outside is in very good condition, showing the effects of wear mostly at the corners with the border design still almost intact. On the outside cover written in longhand are these words: 'The Session Book of Beaver Creek Congregation', thus revealing the first name ever given to this church. It was the 'Beaver Creek Congregation' and is so indicated on the inside front fly leaf which reads: "Minutes of the Session, Beaver Creek, St. Clair County, Alabama". There can be no doubt as to where the hearts of our forebears lay - in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. And they loved all for which it stood as a denomination!

The first page of minutes kept by the Session is dated September 8, 1887. Three Elders were present: L. A. Jones, Moderator; I. A. Currier, (who was to become the pastor later) and J. R. Oldham. A James F. Oldham presented a letter of recommendation and was admitted to full membership in the church at this meeting. This first recorded meeting of the Elders reveals our departure from the concept of our church fathers in relation to church membership. We receive them in public worship - they received them in private session. Just why it was done this way we can only hazard an opinion, for the records do not say. It was probably because public worship services were few and far between (often only one sermon a month), or because the pastor sometimes lived a great distance from the church, or both. If this be true, we can immediately understand the need of church Elders receiving new members into the body as they presented themselves.

There is no indication as to who the pastor was at this time, but he can be traced to the Reverend Bennett Oldham through the record of Baptisms in an-

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other section of the book. Probably Rev. Oldham was their pastor from the date of Deed of Title (Sept. 20, 1851) to somewhere near the first recorded date of minutes, though there is a Rev. T. B. Taylor who is shown during part of 1877. Assuming that Bennett Oldham served from 1851 to 1876 his term is the longest on record - some twenty five years. It must be remembered, however, that others could have been in service during those first years without having left a single word behind as evidence. But for this record, we can be reasonably sure Bennett Oldham was the pastor from evidence which we do have.

The first contract between the church and a minister is dated April 11, 1880, and was ordered spread on the minutes. In that contract it was agreed by the Sessions of both the Ashville Congregation and the Beaver Creek group that the Rev. R. W. Bengé was to be allowed (by the Ashville Congregation) to serve the Beaver Creek Church with 'preaching one Sabbath at 11:00 AM in each month for one year, beginning February 22, 1880 and ending February 22 1881. The Beaver Creek Congregation agreed to furnish conveyance (buggy or wagon, no doubt) to the church and return. In addition, they also agreed to be responsible to the Ashville Church for the pastor's salary which was set at \$25.00 for the year. The agreement is signed by both the clerks of the respective Sessions, and each affixed his seal.

On June 13, 1880 the first recorded Presbyterial dues are shown. An offering of \$1.30 was taken, after which the pastor, Rev. R. W. Bengé, preached a sermon on 'The Precious Blood of Christ'. Scripture text was 1 Peter 1:19. Immediately following the sermon the Lord's Supper was administered, giving us the first record of the Communion Service in this local church.

On August 8, 1880 there is recorded the first official move against sin. On that day the Board of Elders entered a resolution forbidding any of the membership to "make, buy, sell, give or use intox-

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icating liquors, or to approve the same in any way; to desecrate the Sabbath by spending it in secular employment'; to 'make idle conversation and worldly practice'; by 'staying away from the house of worship'; to 'indulge in the promiscuous dance or to countenance same by presence'; to 'engage in gaming at cards with which gambling is associated'; or to 'conform to the world in any of it's evil ways'. The resolution is very specific, stating in part two that those who were found guilty of these sins would be handled with 'kindly and uncompromising discipline according to the law of the church!' That our forefathers were sincere we cannot question, for later minutes show that some members were disciplined for these very things. An interesting and educational entry is shown for August 25-30, 1880. The first and only record of a revival meeting is here, and it not only shows the dates, but lists the sermons and scripture texts for each day. The pastor, Rev. R. W. Bengé, preached this series of meetings. His subjects and the texts are as follows:

- Aug. 25th. - "Every Man To His Work" - - - Mark 13:34
- Aug. 26th. - "Prayer And It's Answer" - - - Jeremiah 33:3
- Aug. 26th. - "Irrevocable Sins" - - - Hebrews 12:17
- Aug. 27th. - "Christ The Life" - - - - - John 14:6
- Aug. 27th. - "Rest In Christ Only" - - - Micah 2:10
- Aug. 28th. - "Repentance" - - - - - Acts 3:19
- Aug. 28th. - "Faith In Jesus" - - - - - John 3:36
- Aug. 29th. - "Regeneration From Above" - - - John 3:7
- Aug. 29th. - "Excuses" - - - - - Luke 14:18
- Aug. 30th. - "Sting Of Death" - - - 1 Corinthians 15:56

The record concluded with these words: "The church was strengthened and many penitents expressed a deep interest". Such complete coverage is again the exception rather than the rule.

The minutes of August 31, 1881 show that a Mr. I. W. Currier was received into the church on letter of recommendation, and made a ruling Elder at the same time. Elder Currier was to become pastor Currier later, and serve for approximately fourteen years -

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the second longest term on record. At this point the minutes do not agree with the record of Baptism, causing some doubt as to just where Bennett Oldham fits into the picture. Eleven new members were received on profession of faith at this meeting, and the list included the name of Bennett Oldham. This conflict can be overcome if we remember that Bennett Oldham was one of three persons to whom the original deed of Title was made in 1851. It is not reasonable to assume that a man would be intrusted with the church property thirty years before his actual conversion, as it seems in this record of 1881. In addition, one J. F. Oldham has now become a candidate (for the ministry); minutes of Sept. 11, 1881 and he appears as the same J. F. Oldham who was baptized by Bennett in 1867. If so, we can draw one of two logical conclusions: either there was a mistake in recording the dates of these events, or Bennett Oldham in this page of minutes is a second person with the same name as the first pastor, possibly his own son who is a 'Junior'. There is one final note on this point that serves to bear out our theory of error in recording: the record of Baptisms administered by Bennett Oldham. There are several between August 12, 1867 and September 15, 1875. He could not have administered Baptism if he was not yet converted!

One of the most unusual things in the entire book is a personal receipt for the pastor's salary covering the year 1881. Jas. H. B. Hall had succeeded Rev. Bengé as pastor, and writes his receipt in his own hand. It is for the sum of \$20.83 1/3 cents. (Twenty dollars, Eighty three and one Third cents for the full year.) Exactly how he collected the one third cent is not known to the writer, but he signed a receipt for it, so it must have been paid! His report for the year's work is on the preceding page, and covers these activities: there were 15 sermons by the pastor, 5 by a Rev. T. B. Taylor, who later returned to pastor the second time, and one by

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candidate J. F. Oldham, making a total of 21 sermons for the year. They had 5 Session meetings; 14 persons were baptized (three adults) and they had 20 conversions. The pastor received his salary of \$20. 83 1/3 cents; 74 visits were made to 20 families, and the annual revival was a most gracious one. To find a pastoral report covering a full year's work is most unusual.

October 30, 1882 is the last page showing J. H. B. Hall as the pastor. It is here also that we find the first evidence of lost records. From this date until November 30, 1884 (over two years later) the pages are missing. Pastors have changed and Rev. W. P. Cobb is now serving. There is no way of knowing who served during these two years. The same page, October 30, 1882, shows that J. F. Oldham had been licensed sometime during those two years, but no definite date is available. On the next page, dated September 13, 1885, he is carried as Rev. J. F. Oldham, Moderator of the Session, though not yet ordained. He served as Moderator until 1887 when J. C. Smith became the pastor. The minutes of March 27, 1887 indicate the first revision of church records, revealing the possibility of human error mentioned elsewhere in this work.

By January 21, 1888 the church had grown enough to raise the pastor's salary to \$50.00 a year for quarter time service. Also in this same minute can be found the first known record of church censure of a member. It was for using 'profane language and drunkenness. A committee of two was appointed to confer with him. On June 9, 1888, five months later that two man committee reported to the Session. The statement made by the member who was under censure was received as satisfactory and all was forgiven.

The minutes of September 30, 1888 carry the first detailed report of a delegate to Presbytery. It reads: "Your representative to the last session of Presbytery which met with the Five Mile Congregation in Jefferson County, Alabama September 13, 1888 begs

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leave to make the following report. He attended and was present at the opening services and voted on all questions that were presented until Friday morning at which time he left and returned home. I respectfully submit the foregoing, J. R. Oldham, representative. What a contrast to the long, detailed report we make today! This same minute also gives us a clue to another Cumberland Church in Riddles Bend, for seven persons were dismissed from Beaver Creek for the purpose of 'organizing a church in Riddles Bend, Etowah County, Alabama'. It was organized, though we have no record of it's name. On December 8, 1888 the two Sessions met and came to agreement that the Rev. W. P. Cobb was to serve both congregations, Beaver Creek to pay \$30.00 of his salary with Riddles Bend to be responsible for the remaining \$20.00.

On June 8, 1889 there appears another record of church discipline. A member was restored at her own request and granted a letter of dismissal and recommendation. The leaders of our early church must have meant what they said, as these minutes show. It is also in this minute that I. N. Currier became a candidate for the ministry. On August 20, 1890 he is shown for the first time as Moderator of the Session and called Rev. by the clerk. He was officially called as pastor on November 9, 1890 and was to see broken service through December 2, 1906 - a total service of about fourteen years. In the course of his ministry at this church many interesting things took place including large numbers of new converts; many baptisms, and the ordination of several Elders, including the late Wm. R. Talley (October 4, 1897) and J. W. Talley (August 13, 1899). Also, at this time J.R. Oldham, who had served as church clerk for almost nineteen years, presented a letter of dismissal from the Middleton church and was received into the fellowship of Beaver Creek. What had caused him to leave Beaver Creek does not show, but we can be sure the church had it's difficulties, and this was but one of them to be recorded.

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The first indication we have of the 1906 heart-break is contained in minutes of December 2, 1906 when the pastor, Rev. I.N. Currier, asked the Session for letters of dismissal for ten people, including himself. They were granted, and Rev. Currier's ministry at this church ended at that point. The influence of the U. S. A. church had crept in before this, and no doubt attacked the membership with discord. Several Cumberlands who had served for a time in the old faith went over to the U. S. A. group. Their names appear in the minutes of both the Cumberland and new Union minutes, indicating a difference of opinion before the break actually came. In Qualben's 'History Of The Christian Church', revised and reprinted in March, 1942 it says on page 533, section 4: "The revision of the Confession of Faith was the basis for a plan of union, approved by the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1904. Formal reunion came about in 1906". Mead's 'Handbook of Denominations in the United States', published by Abingdon-Cokesbury in 1951 states: "In 1906 the Cumberland body was reunited with the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., bringing back to that body about 185,212 members". So, because our General Assembly was willing to have our Confession of Faith nullified, and reunite with the U. S. A. church, we lost almost 200,000 members and untold hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of properties. The church has never gotten over it as completely as it should have, and this local church would have been in the 'lost' numbers had it not been for a handful of faithful members who clung to the historic doctrines of the Mother church; we know it as Cumberland Presbyterian. It's the doctrine of 'Who-So-Ever-Will' may come! Thank God for this Biblical doctrine that will never be destroyed!

After the break, an attempt to take this church was made, and a Rev. J. T. McCluney came as pastor. He was 'employed' by the acting Session in January,

1907, for one fourth of his time. In April of the same year a building committee was appointed by the pastor, but there is no indication in later minutes that the building was ever improved. There is indication, however, that the church was having moral difficulties, for the minutes of July 10, 1910 state that 'this church was dedicated to religious purposes only'. The Rev. McCluney stayed until September, 1911 after which the church again became inactive. The next minute appears on the reverse side of the same page and is dated March 14, 1915, showing further inactivity. That the church had great difficulty keeping alive at all is shown by the record of pastors until it was again inactive during 13 years from 1917 to 1930. J. C. Talley pastored the church for one year - March, 1915 to April, 1916. J. H. B. Hall returned for four months - April to July of 1916, and R. P. Taylor from July, 1916 to April 8, 1917, which is the last record before our reorganization in 1930 - thirteen years later! The extreme hardship of those days is self-evident, and there can't be but one logical answer: That the majority of the people who still lived in the valley still clung to the Cumberland Presbyterian doctrine of 'Who-So-Ever-Will', and believed it in their hearts. Consequently, the Beaver Creek Congregation once again became inactive - this time for thirteen long years. If the record is accurate, the church was active only seven years out of twenty three! It had four different pastors and the same number of church clerks in those seven active years. Total time under the merger, twenty three years; total of active service, seven years; total number of years inactivity, sixteen! God forbid that such a thing should ever happen again to this people!

- REORGANIZATION -

The next page in the old book is dated August 20, 1930, and following are the exact words written

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there in long hand: "The Union Presbyterian Church, known as Beaver Creek Church, located near Ashville, Alabama, St. Clair County, has for years been inactive. The people of the church and community desire reorganization and that the church pass under the control of the Cumberland Presbytery. Following one of the best revivals known in the history of the church, conducted by Rev. T. E. Bright and J. O. Lankford, the church was reorganized as a Cumberland Presbyterian Church on the night of August 20, 1930, with nine original members and thirteen new ones. The people of the church desired the name of the church be changed from 'Beaver Creek' to 'Oldhams Chapel'. There were thirty conversions during the revival". (signed) T. E. Bright, Moderator, Hester Talley, Clerk. And thus it was that we came to be known as 'Oldham's Chapel' on August 20, 1930. After that great revival the congregation immediately began to organize in earnest. The next day two men were ordained Elders - James L. Watson and W. L. Mars. Elder J. W. Talley (who had served as clerk of Session in the Union Church) was retained in the newly organized Cumberland group, and Hester Talley was officially elected as church clerk. The next day following this (on August 22, 1930) the Board of Elders met to organize a Sunday School Department with the Rev. J. O. Lankford as Moderator. Four classes were brought together with teachers for each of them. They were as follows:

- Superintendant - - - - - Mr. Bradie Jones
- Asst. Superintendant - - - - - Mr. W. L. Mars
- Secretary - - - - - G. R. Whisenant
- Teachers -
- Adult Class - - - - - Mr. J. W. Talley
- (Assistant) - - - - - Mr. Grover Whisenant
- Intermediate - - - - - Miss Beatrice Knight
- (Assistant) - - - - - Mrs. Beulah V. Watson
- Junior - - - - - Mrs. B. W. Jones
- (Assistant) - - - - - Miss Bertie Harp
- Cradle Roll - - - - - Mrs. Grover Whisenant

(Assistant) - - - - - Miss Hester Talley

The Rev. J. O. Lankford was also called to pastor at this meeting. Then, on August 31, 1930 the Rev. T. E. Bright met with the Session 'On the bank of Beaver Creek to administer baptism by immersion'. Four persons were baptized and two others received into the church by 'experience' and 'letter'. Then something happened which is not included in the record. The church went back to quarter time service; several names were dropped from the roll, and still others were challenged for one reason or the other. In one record (November 18, 1930) that Session 'ruled the voting place out of the church'. What it means, there is no way of knowing, but it does indicate a murmur of discord. The congregation had visitors from other Cumberland Churches in this area - probably to help settle differences between parties 'unknown' in the local church. The minutes show that Elder John Glenn (East Gadsden Cumberland Church) sat in a meeting on October 19, 1930. Rev. J. O. Lankford left the church in June, 1930, and no minutes were recorded until January, 1933. Rev. A. R. Sparks became the pastor and stayed three months, from January to March, then left quite suddenly. F. H. Lafollette was called to finish his unexpired term. A Rev. Newton sat in as Moderator in August of that year. Rev. J. O. Lankford returned a month later as a visitor. Five men were baptized by Bro. Lankford on this visit. They were: Andrew Watson, (still active) Henry Bowling, (still active) Arlin Bowling, (deceased) Paul Mars and Amos Stule. Then again the church went back to quarter time service in June of 1934 as it again dropped more names from it's roll of membership. There is record of one person who 'confessed' his faults and promised to ammend it by living a better and 'cleaner' life. (He also asked the Session to accept his resignation as an officer)

On September 16, 1934 the Rev. J. O. Lankford appeared again - this time to preach an ordination

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sermon. And again the church changes pastors in 1935 then loses him in 1936. J. O. Lankford returns as pastor in October of 1936 and resigned on January 5, 1937, three months later. A. R. Sparks returned and stayed a year and a half, until September 24, 1939, which is the last entry in the original book.

- Modern History -

The last page of recorded minutes in the original Session book is dated September 24, 1939; the first page in the new ledger begins with September 3, 1944 five years later. How these five years were 'lost' the writer does not know. There are those 'old timers' who could fill them in, no doubt, but time and space prohibit such extensive investigation. We are compelled to continue with what we have before us in actual records.

It was at this meeting that Miss Beatrice Knight began her service as church clerk. Though only on a Pro-tem (temporary) basis, she was destined to serve eleven and a half years at the post, (Sept. 1944 to Feb. 1956) missing only four meetings in the entire time! Other than J. R. Oldham, who was church clerk for nineteen years (Sept. 1878 to Oct. 1897) no other clerk has ever devoted that much time and effort to that particular task. And most certainly few have ever served so continuously without being absent more times than that. A most remarkable record worthy of inclusion in any work on the history of the local church!

And once again the church begins to 'rise up' and make itself known in the valley, throwing off it's lethargy (indifference) and reaching out for the unsaved. Rev. Jesse Adkins has become the pastor by this time, and there are five Elders sitting with him in business meetings. (NOTE: No record of names of Elders present in business meetings was kept from July, 1935 to September, 1944 even though there are records of the meetings themselves) One of the

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items to be passed on was a new Session record book, indicating some progress. This is, without doubt, the same book from which we are now working. Also; a resolution was passed to purchase six copies of the Cumberland Presbyterian Confession of Faith - a sure sign that they were interested in Cumberland Presbyterianism. In addition, a regular date was set for the business meetings - another sign of progress. In the meeting of October 4, 1944 the church adopted the envelope system of financing. On the 28th day of the same month a committee was appointed to collect money for the church pews, indicating the purchase of new pews, or repair of the old ones about this time. The pastor's salary was fixed at \$25.00 a month (December 10, 1944) and plans were made for improving the church and grounds. (January 15, 1944) New lights had been installed by October 6, 1945, and a new stove (heater) was bought. On June 26, 1946 Henry Bowling was appointed to purchase paint for the outside of the church, and Mr. M. C. Bowling was appointed 'with full authority' to get help and material to the place and erect two rest rooms on the property. Rev. J. A. Adkins resigned August 1, 1946 to accept work in another field, but he left behind two years of progress unexcelled before or since, so far as the record is concerned. An exceptional record for so short a time on the field.

The next five years (Sept. 1946 to Oct. 1951), brought the greatest heartache the church had known; even greater than the break in 1906. It stunned every member of the church, and they left in large numbers. Elders lost faith and dropped out; Christ Himself was questioned by some, and Christianity as a whole was laughed to scorn by unsaved people who could'nt understand how it could have happened. The local church lost it's influence and dropped sorrowfully to it's knees, shocked and irreparably hurt by spiritual wickedness in high places. The successive blows dealt her in rapid succession were so great

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she lay gasping in the throes of spiritual death, and was given up as 'lost'. But this church had weathered many a violent religious storm in her colorful history, and she was determined to weather this one - in spite of all the power the forces of satan could muster against her. Battle Scarred and broken, she was reduced to almost nothing, but she still lived. Defiantly the proud old veteran lifted her head toward Heaven and prayed for deliverance. It came - for it was not the will of God that this church should die. It was His church then, as it is now, and He answered the prayers of those who were left. Deliverance came, slowly at first, but surely it came with no more than a handful of people left. Rev. Lem Lockmiller was called to be the pastor, and a committee of three was commissioned to carry the call to him in person. He accepted and came on the field February 10, 1952. It took courage - but he came. However, the battle was not yet won, for on December 14, 1952 the church was forced to discontinue the pastor's salary for lack of funds and give him the morning offering. He resigned in the same meeting after having served one year. Rev. J. O. Lankford was re-called and stayed only five months, from February to July of 1953. Carl Easterwood came in August of 1953 and remained until December, when Rev. F. S. Stewart was called. During his service a communion set was purchased then he resigned in Oct. of 1954 after ten months. He was replaced by J. W. Nicholson in January of 1955 who stayed until May of 1956. He appears in later minutes briefly and was replaced by Wade Acton on April 14, 1957. Wade was on the field eight months and was replaced by the present pastor. Troublesome times and trying indeed but Oldham Chapel still lives, and if God be willing she will continue to do so.

The official call was extended to the writer September of 1958, though he had been preaching here since May of that year. Number of services each month, 2; amount of salary, \$10.00 per service; the term of agreement, indefinite. During the first few

months the church idled along, making progress slowly as it struggled for recognition. There were two conversions in 1958, with three more additions coming by letter. There were four more conversions by September of 1959. Then on August 25, 1959 formal baptismal services were held in Beaver Creek and five converts were immersed in response to their requests. Most of these were converted as a direct result of the annual revival held the second week in August. In that revival the Rev. T. E. Bright served as evangelist - the same T. E. Bright who had reorganized the church in 1930! At the time of this writing, the Sunday School attendance has risen from average twenty persons to average thirty three. Two inactive Elders are again at work in the business meetings as well as the worship services, and there is good reason to believe others will return. Interest in the church is good and the desire to be in it's services is self-evident. A new church is in the offing, and plans for a modern brick building with Sunday School rooms in the basement have been approved by the congregation. The blueprints will be finished before this book is published. The old building will be torn down and replaced with a new sanctuary facing the road on the same location. We expect to build on the pay-as-you-go basis, with labor for the project contributed by the membership and friends of the church who live all around us. Volunteer help has come from every quarter, and we eagerly await the time when all our crops are in so we can be started. More than ten thousand feet of timber have been donated by the membership and non-affiliated neighbors: there is over two thousand dollars in our building fund, at this time, with another thousand or more due from the sale of 'Lords Acre Cotton'. More than five hundred has already been pledged for payment when construction begins. The ladies of the church earned four hundred dollars at the Halloween Carnival held on August 31, 1959 at the home of Elder & Mrs. E. B. Reynolds. There

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were forty five people in the field when we gathered the 'Lord's Acre Cotton - many who did'nt belong to the church. The pastor and the membership of the Mt. Zion Methodist Church in Shove Creek Valley have graciously opened the doors of their church to us, granting permission to use their building for worship services during the construction of our own. There will be no charge to this congregation whatever, but Oldham Chapel will certainly bear it's expenses such as lights, heating etc. while there. Truly, the Lord works in mysterious ways His miracle to perform, and it's a certain fact the Methodist Brothers and Sisters in Christ will prosper for the kindness shown us!

Yes, Oldham Chapel is alive, and it will continue to live long after the present generation has passed from this life if the Saviour does'nt come before that time. And it's only because the Father willed it to be so through His people who live in this community - the battle scarred Christian soldiers who refused to die!

- CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF PASTORS: 1851 to 1959 -

- Beaver Creek Cumberland -

1. Bennett Oldham - September 1851 to September 1875

UNACCOUNTED FOR: - - - - - September 1875 to 1877

2. T. B. Taylor - - September 1877 to February 1880

3. R. W. Bengé - - - February 1880 to October 1880

4. Jas. H. B. Hall - - - - July 1881 to October 1882

UNACCOUNTED FOR: October 1882 to November 1884

5. W. P. Cobb - - - - - 1882 to November 1884

6. T. B. Taylor - - - - - May 1886 to October 1886

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| 7. | J. C. Smith - - - January 1887 to November 1887 | 23. |
| 8. | W. P. Cobb - - - - January 1888 to August 1889 | 24. |
| 9. | I. N. Currier - - - August 1890 to October 1891 | 25. |
| 10. | J. F. Oldham - - December 1891 to October 1892 | 26. |
| 11. | I. N. Currier - - - August 1893 to December 1906 | 27. |
| | - UNION PRESBYTERIAN, U.S.A. - | 28. |
| 12. | J. T. McCluney - January 1907 to September 1911 | 29. |
| | UNACCOUNTED FOR: September 1911 to March 1916 | 30. |
| 13. | J. C. Talley - - - - - March 1915 to May 1915 | 31. |
| 14. | Jas. H. B. Hall - - - - April 1916 to July 1916 | |
| 15. | R. P. Taylor - - - - - July 1916 to April 1917 | 1. |
| | UNACCOUNTED FOR: - - - April 1917 to August 1930 | 2. |
| 16. | J. O. Lankford - - - - August 1930 to June 1931 | 3. |
| | UNACCOUNTED FOR: - - - June 1931 to January 1933 | 4. |
| 17. | A. R. Sparks - - - - January 1933 to March 1933 | 5. |
| 18. | F. H. Lafollette - - - - March 1933 to July 1935 | 6. |
| 19. | Gertis Harper - - - - March 1936 to October 1936 | 7. |
| 20. | J. O. Lankford - - October 1936 to January 1937 | 8. |
| 21. | A. R. Sparks - - - April 1938 to September 1939 | 9. |
| | UNACCOUNTED FOR: September 1939 to September 1944 | 10. |
| 22. | J. A. Adkins - September 1944 to September 1946 | 11. |

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887 23. B. L. Colley - - October 1946 to September 1948

889 24. Bill Wallace - - - October 1948 to October 1951

891 25. Lem Lockmiller - - - February 1952 to July 1952

892 26. J. O. Lankford - - - February 1953 to July 1953

906 27. Carl Easterwood - August 1953 to December 1953

28. F. S. Stewart - - December 1953 to October 1954

911 29. J. W. Nicholson - - January 1955 to January 1957

1916 30. Wade Acton - - - - April 1957 to December 1957

1915 31. Charles F. Pruitt - - - May 1958 to

1916 - ALPHABETICAL ROSTER OF PRESENT MEMBERSHIP -

1917 1. Armstrong, W. W. - - Route 1, Ashville, Alabama

1930 2. Battles Bob - - - - " " "

1931 3. Battles, Norman - - - " " "

1933 4. Battles, Stella V. - " " "

1933 5. Bellew, Leslie - - - - Route 4, Gadsden, Alabama

935 6. Bellew, Mrs. Harvey - - " " "

936 7. Bellew, Talmadge - - - " " "

937 8. Bowling, Albert - - - Route 1, Ashville, Alabama

939 9. Bowling, Mrs. Albert (Florine) " "

944 10. Bowling, Mrs. Bobby (Faye) " "

946 11. Bowling, Henry - Rainbow Drive, Gadsden, Alabama

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| 12. Brown, Oscar - - - - | Route 1, Ashville, Alabama | 33. |
| 13. Brown, Ossie Mae - - | " " " | 34. |
| 14. Brown, Shirley - | 1209 Bay Street, Perry, Florida | 35. |
| 15. Brown, Mrs. Oscar (Velma) - | Ashville, Alabama | 36. |
| 16. Bryant, Brenda Gail - | Route 1, Ashville, Alabama | 37. |
| 17. Bryant, Mrs. Herschel (Estelle) | " " | 38. |
| 18. Bryant, Herschel - - - | " " " | 39. |
| 19. Bryant, Mrs. W. M. - - | " " " | 40. |
| 20. Bryant, Viva - - - - | " " " | 41. |
| 21. Franklin, James - - - | " " " | 42. |
| 22. Franklin, Leroy - - - | " " " | 43. |
| 23. Franklin, Lloyd - - - | " " " | 44. |
| 24. Franklin, Mrs. Leroy - | " " " | 45. |
| 25. Franklin, Mrs. William | " " " | 46. |
| 26. Green, P. A. - - - - | " " " | 47. |
| 27. Green, Mrs. P. A. - - | " " " | 48. |
| 28. Hughs, Mrs. Patsy Moore | " " " | 49. |
| 29. Johnston, Guy, - - - - | Route 1, Ragland, Alabama | 50. |
| 30. Knight, Beatrice - - - | Route 1, Ashville, Alabama | 51. |
| 31. Knight, Beulah - - - - | " " " | 52. |
| 32. Mars, Joe W. - - - - - | Box 31, Weaver, Alabama | 53. |

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| ama | 33. Mars, Mrs. Joe W. - - - | Box 31, Weaver, Alabama |
| " | 34. Morgan, Cynthia - - - | Route 1, Ragland, Alabama |
| ida | 35. Morgan, William - - - | " " " |
| ama | 36. Morgan, Mrs. Wm. (Magnolia) | " " |
| ama | 37. Moore, Mrs. D. D. (Irene) - - | Ashville, Alabama |
| " | 38. Reynolds, Dewayne - - | Route 1, " " |
| " | 39. Reynolds, E. B. - - - | " " " |
| " | 40. Reynolds, Mrs. E. B. (Ruth)" | " " " |
| " | 41. Reynolds, Jimmy - - - - | " " " |
| " | 42. Reynolds, Larry - - - - | " " " |
| " | 43. Runyun, Alton - - - - | U.S. Post Office, " |
| " | 44. Runyun, Hubert - - - - | Route 1, Ashville, " |
| " | 45. Runyun, Mrs. Hubert - | " " " |
| " | 46. Shortnacy, Mrs. Allie Lou | Route 1, Ragland, Ala. |
| " | 47. Shortnacy, Beadie - - | Route 2, Glencoe, Alabama |
| " | 48. Shortnacy, Geneva Brown | " " " |
| " | 49. Shortnacy, Helen - - - | " " " |
| ama | 50. Shortnacy, Mrs. Minnie | " " " |
| ama | 51. Swindall, Daniel - - | Route 1, Ashville, Alabama |
| " | 52. Swindall, Janie - - | " " " |
| ama | 53. Swindall, Ross - - - | " " " |

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ama Knight, Beatrice - - - - - Route 1, Ashville
 Phone LYric 4-3219
 ama Reynolds, E. B. - - - - - Route 1, Ashville
 Phone LYric 4-3213
 " Reynolds, Mrs. E. B. - - - - - Route 1, Ashville
 Phone LYric 4-3213
 ama Runyun, Hubert - - - - - Route 1, Ashville
 Phone LYric 4-2494

- Sunday School Officers For 1960 -

Primary - - - - - Mrs. Willa Mae Franklin
 Second - - - - - Mrs. E. B. Reynolds
 " Third - - - - - Mrs. Florine Bowling
 " Adult - - - - - E. B. Reynolds
 " Sunday School Superintendant - - - - - Leroy Franklin
 " Secretary - - - - - Miss Mary Usrey

- Church Ushers -

" Jimmy Reynolds - - - - - Route 1, Ashville, Alabama
 " Larry Moore - - - - - " " "

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