



**Gassaway Baptist Church
125 year Church History
By Mrs. Beverly Cottrill**

The Gassaway Baptist Church was organized as the Little Otter Baptist Church on November 9, 1895, with J.E. Hutchinson as moderator and A.N. Lough as Church clerk. James Brown was called as Pastor, and he began his ministry. Services were held at Little Otter and several part-time ministers served the church until lots were purchased in Gassaway and a new church built. The first service was held on October 5, 1913, and the church was renamed the Gassaway Baptist Church.

There were several part-time ministers during 1913 and 1914 until the church voted to hire J.F. Frame as full-time minister in September 1914. You can see photos of all the Church Pastors on display in the gym.

During the ministry of Frame, it was decided to have business meetings each month after Prayer Meeting. It was shown that within 6 months of Frame becoming the minister there had been 76 additions to the church membership, 46 by baptism. Many changes were made in services and programs. Frame resigned in January 1917 and a call was issued to Rev. J.J. Cook who served until March 1918, at which time J.F. Frame was recalled as part-time minister.

The Triplet Fork Baptist Church merged with Gassaway Baptist Church on March 8, 1921. It was then voted to hire Rev. Frame as full-time minister. Then in May 1921 it was decided to build an addition to the church. Dedication and Homecoming was held in March 1922. Frame resigned and Rev. S.B. Tucker accepted the call to GBC. In Sept. 1923 Clara Thorne was elected Pianist; a position she held for a sum total of over 46 years.

Between 1923 and 1942 many changes in leadership and programs evolved for the church. Rev. Kelly Smith accepted the call to serve at the Gassaway Baptist Church, which he served until 1947. Rev. Lewis McCord served as pastor from 1948 till 1953. During his tenure there were many social gatherings and the first major addition to the church building was constructed-the Educational Wing.

In 1953 Rev. John Mates was called as minister and served till 1955 when he resigned to go into the military as a Chaplain. Rev. Donald Taylor was called in 1955. He was just out of seminary and cared for the welfare of the membership of the church and the neighborhood, ministering to both physical and spiritual needs. He served until October 31, 1959.

Rev. William Messinger was called in 1960 and served till 1966. Many improvements were made to the church property and the construction of the church parsonage by Flint Construction was begun. Membership under Messinger increased considerably, as well as the finances improved. Messinger left to go to the Lauckport Baptist as Pastor.

Rev. James Simpson accepted the call in 1967 and the Simpson family was the first family to live in the newly completed Church Parsonage. Several new members joined both by letter and baptism. Simpson resigned in 1973.

Rev. James Neal was called and served until 1979. During his service the church grew considerably and there were many improvements to the church building ... The Baptistry was installed and dedicated as a memorial to older church members. In 1974 he started a project to preserve items of historical value to the church.

In 1977 Mrs. Bernice Rose donated \$2,100 for a new cupola and spire for the bell tower.

Rev. David Wood served from 1980 till 1982 during which time there were 21 baptisms. He stressed the importance of music and with the assistance of Karen Tolley the youth presented a memorable Christmas Cantata "Sunshine and Snowflakes."

Rev. Asa Harris served as interim pastor from 1982 till the calling of Mark Stump from Union Baptist Church in 1983.

In March of 1983 Rev. Mark Stump was called to serve the Gassaway Baptist Church. Under his Leadership, witnessing classes began and weekly visitation was conducted by witnessing teams. During his first 9 months, membership increased by 27. Spiritual Growth classes were started and Youth Program development was stressed. Darlene, his wife worked with the youth of the church and the youth grew not only by number but in knowledge of the scriptures. The youth visited shut-ins taking freshly baked cookies, visited nursing homes, shoveled snow at several homes as well as kept the church sidewalks clean.

It soon became apparent that a larger sanctuary was needed, and the church purchased the Mollohan property which was next door. The Mollohan house was demolished in 1988 and the new sanctuary and basement were constructed at a cost of \$250,173.15. The first service was held on Maundy Thursday in 1989.

In August 1991 Bill Morlan was called as a Bi-Vocational Associate Minister to oversee the Children and Youth Departments. Children's Church was started and many volunteers assisted with this program.

The church and its programs continued to grow. The Music Ministry was designed to strengthen the overall ministry of the church. The Adult choir, directed by I.J. Cottrill and Youth Choir Directed by Karen Tolley, assisted by Scott Cottrill and the "Little But Loud Choir" directed by Rhonda Blevins presented musicals, Christmas Plays and dramatic presentations. In 1995 the need for a Minister of Music was identified, and Bronlyn Morlan was hired.

Evangelism and Outreach as well as the "Discover your Gifts" classes were offered to all church members. Recognizing that prayer is a vital part of the Christians walk, Gene Gower began leading classes for Prayer Warriors. Other Ministries were started: Singles Ministry, Helping Hands Ministry, Intensive Care Ministry providing pastoral care to small groups for fellowship, sharing joys as well as concerns. The Van Ministry under the direction of Karl Bashlor and IJ Cottrill was started and Mansel Carr was the Van Driver going to Braxton Manor and bringing people to Church services.

The Family Life Resource Center, utilizing seed money donated by the Bud Cole Memorial Fund was completed under the direction of Rosemary and Frank Napierkowski. Materials included books, videos,

and tapes of programs and services that could be checked out for in-home use. Jill James assisted in setting up the Resource Center which was one of the goals in 1994.

In 1995 the celebration of 100 years of Ministry was celebrated by the Gassaway Baptist Church.

In 2004 Lance Linden was hired as Minister of Discipleship. With his leadership a new Outreach for the church began in Glenville with the Anchor, designed to reach the college students and residents. It had Sunday morning and evening worship services as well as midweek Bible Study. It soon became a self-supporting church with Lance as the Minister.

It soon became apparent that a larger sanctuary was needed. Pastor Mark was preaching 3 services every Sunday morning to accommodate the growth the church had experienced. The Church voted to start a building fund and land was purchased from Mike Rexroad at our current location and designated the "Field of Dreams." The Building Committee with Darin Hunter as chairman began their extensive work. Construction began in 2012 and was completed and the first service held on Easter Sunday, April 20, 2014.

Since that time numerous new programs have been started to assist not only our congregation but the county; Weekly Small Group Studies which meet on different days during the week; Grief Recovery for those who have lost loved ones, the Pregnancy Center which serves expectant and new parents needing assistance with diapers, clothes for newborns, as well as emotional support, and Christian Counseling services.

Most recently the Call to Prayer was begun and the ladies and men of the church meet each Saturday evening for prayer.

Rev. Rick Garavaglia was hired in 2017 as Pastor of Children and Family Ministry. He conducts the children's church on Sunday mornings and on Wed. evenings. Rick was raised in Gassaway Baptist Church and came back to serve the Church and community.

Jimmy Shaver; also raised in Gassaway Baptist Church was hired to serve the Senior Adult Ministry. He serves to help meet the needs of the Senior population of the congregation.

In the past 125 years we have seen many changes, and much growth has occurred. Many residents and members have been served through the ministry of the Gassaway Baptist Church. We will continue to serve our Lord and Savior.