

The Founding of Ashland Baptist Church

It is said that history is very important because you wouldn't know where you were going if you didn't know where you came from. So I am going back before MO was a state, when all of this section of the country was wooded. Houses were crude structures; heat was furnished by fireplace; clothes were homemade; the spinning wheel was a household necessity; food was largely wild game; roads were trails; travel was by foot or horseback; there were few wagons. Turkey, deer and a few bears still roamed at large; and Sac & Fox Indians still inhabited this section of the country. It was not until 1830 that a schoolhouse was built in the southern part of this township. So you can see, our forefathers had a difficult time to organize a church.

Yet, in 1819 a meeting was called to consider forming a church that is now Little Bonne Femme. They constructed a little building in 1820 and in 1845 a brick building was completed and a portion of it is still in use.

In 1828 and just 9 years later, some of those members met in the home of Tyre Martin to constitute a church which is New Salem.

From New Salem, 5 churches were founded:

1841 Mt. Zion in Callaway Co.

1842 New Liberty Primitive Baptist

1858 Mt. Pleasant

1866 Log Providence (colored church)

1879 Ashland Baptist

The town of Ashland was not settled until 1853 or approximately 25 years after New Salem, our mother church was organized in 1828. New Salem people had previously belonged to Little Bonne Femme Church which was organized in 1819. On the 2nd Saturday in March 1879, New Salem granted a joint letter of dismissal to 29 members for the purpose of constituting a church in Ashland, MO.

In the Boone County History Book I found our organization as April 19, 1879. About 40 members were named on its charter roll. The building was erected in 1880 at a cost of \$2,500. When this was recorded it said the membership was 70 and the church bids fair to be a power for good in the community.

A unique feature of the old church was a 600 lb. bronze bell in the bell tower. It was from the Thomas Benton First, a sternwheel steamboat that sank in the MO river near Claysville in 1860 and was covered with a sandbar until 1869 when a fisherman discovered the top of the boat. After 10 days of digging he and several neighbors uncovered the bell. It rang for 64 years calling people to church services, funerals and sounding fire alarms. Because of the deterioration of the belfry, it was removed and put on a stand at the back of the church. It is my hope that one day it will be permanently placed out here in the yard.

Other than the names of all the pastors, we have no other records that I've found until 1920. In the minutes of November 15, 1922, Bro. Eddie Calvin made a touching statement of his call to enter the Gospel ministry. Also, at this meeting Bro. H.P. Cheavens was unanimously called as pastor. Church business meetings were held directly following service on Sunday mornings. It was voted to start having prayer meeting and Bible study on Wed. evenings.

From a united census of Religious Bodies report taken in 1936, Rev. Cheavens was also serving as pastor of New Salem, Hartsburg & Dry Fork churches. He was pastor of this church for twenty years.

We adopted the cooperative program in 1932. The bank closed about that time and the church & the people were having a hard time. By the mid 40's they were recovering. Bro. Ellery Young was called as pastor and preached his first sermon Jan. 1, 1950 and in February the church voted to have its first full-time preaching services. Bro. Youngs salary was \$1,500 and the total budget for the year was \$2,220.80.

We were badly in need of Sunday school rooms and in April 1951 a service was held to dedicate 6 new rooms. Two of them were in the balcony. The next year church was further remodeled by adding a furnace, new floor and raising the pulpit. Up until now we had heated with wood stoves and in winter you left your coat and also overshoes on when it was very cold.

In 1952 a nursery and cradle roll was started.

In October 1953 the church voted to borrow \$5,000 to buy a parsonage and Rev. Allen Emerson was called as pastor.

On November 29, 1953 Marvin Jones was ordained to preach. He had been the Roger Jett here while my son was growing up. He recently retired after serving his last church for 20 years. Not long ago I saw him & said now you can come preach for us sometime and he said, "Just ask me & I'll be there". So if you ever need a supply he's available.

In May 1954 Sunday School superintendent Billy Thomas reported an average attendance for the month of 152. During this year we organized the first Brotherhood, Y.W.A.'s, Sunbeams, Sunday School extension & R.A.'s. (Also BYPU for young people.) We had already organized a Jr. & Intermediate G.A.'s & W.M.U. That wasn't the first W.M.U. Ashland and New Salem had met together before for a long time but decided to separate to be able to report records from each church.

In June 1955 Bro. Emerson resigned and the same year the church purchased the Adkins property which was East of the old church and where the new church now stands for \$4,000. It was converted into Sunday School rooms and later torn down when the basement was completed.

In June 1957 Rev. Harold Smith came as our pastor. The church bought the Carroll Richardson property for a parsonage for \$7,500. We had lunch with Bro. Smith a few years back and he was telling us how much his church had done for him in Cape Girard. But his exact words were "I was never so happy as I was in Ashland. When they offered me \$52 a week, a house & garden & other expenses I thought I was in hog heaven." It was the best time of my life. In 1961 I see his salary was \$3,900.

Cy had a vision of a new church in Ashland and in July 1963 building plans for construction of a basement to be used for an educational building were presented to the church. The building plans were accepted and in July 1964 a basement was completed at a cost of \$9,303.35. Cy had plans for a new church drawn up and a second story on the basement but on June 7, 1967 he resigned after serving 10 years to take another church.

Bro. Gary Payne was called at a salary of \$5,200 a year, plus other benefits. During the few past years building had been climbing in price and new and cheaper plans had to be made to be able to build and April 9, 1969 a meeting was called to vote on building a new church at a cost of \$78,000. With much

discussion and prayer, cooperation, love & faith it was a unanimous vote to build if we could get the money. We had to sell bonds and many were near the retirement age but took their savings to buy the bonds. The experience of that building program drew the members of this church together in a spirit of love & harmony. It was not built for mere comfort or selfish pride, but rather for the Glory of God Almighty.

The budget for 1969 was \$21,000. We had our first music director and from a membership roll of 29 in 1926 our membership had increased to 270.

Bro. Payne resigned as pastor effective January 4, 1970 to further his education and the new church was dedicated October 11, 1970.

Bro. Loyle Van Horn was called as pastor May 31, 1970. He resigned Sept. 19, 1971.

Bro Roy Weister then became our pastor in Nov. of that year ('71). Average Sunday School attendance for April 1972 was 93.

The Ashland church was host to the 134th annual session of the Little Bonne Femme Associational Meeting in August 1974. That's the last time they've met here.

On July 4, 1976 we had an all day Bicentennial Celebration with dinner on the grounds, a truly old fashion day meeting.

At the September 6, 1978 business meeting it was decided to purchase the Winfrey lot just east of the church for \$6,500.

March 7, 1979 we voted to borrow \$40,000 at 10% interest with payments of \$506.71 a month to finance the second mortgage on the church.

Bro. Weister's last Sunday with us was May 6, 1979. June 10, 1979 we had an all day meeting to celebrate our 100th anniversary. Our membership was 302. We had a very large attendance and the guest speakers were Eddie Calvin and Marvin Jones who were our own ordained preachers.

Oct. 17, 1979 we voted to call Bro. Glenn Forman and to remodel the parsonage. In 1980 we bought a bus.

In 1982 the total baptism was 29 and 11 by letter. The total receipts for the year was \$68,327 and the membership was 352. Average Sunday School attendance

was 128. We had just received \$26,000 from the Horace & Ruth Sappington estate and it was decided to add a second story to the basement. The new addition was completed and dedicated Sept 10, 1983. In 1983 we hired our first church secretary, Della Baumgartner.

In 1984 we remodeled the kitchen in the basement, bought 4 new ceiling fans and the Hawkins property for \$25,000.

In March of 1985 we paid the last payment on the church loan and in August we bought the property at 207 E. Broadway for \$15,000. That gave us all of the property up to the Masonic Hall. God has truly blessed us.

June 15, 1986 Bro. Forman resigned and in August the church voted to sell the parsonage.

September 10, 1986 Bro. Jim Smith was called to be interim pastor and October 19th was high attendance Sunday with a record of 169. Jim Ketter was Sunday School superintendent. Bro. Smith was called as a bi-vocational pastor January 7, 1987. The budget was \$75,000. In July of that year the two houses that were bought were torn down, the pews were padded and a church library was started.

July 3, 1988 Bro. Smith announced he was going to step down as pastor but would continue until a replacement was found. We had a surprise Appreciation Day for him and his family September 11th.

On Sunday, August 21, 1988 a special business meeting was called for the purpose of voting on whether or not to extend a call to Bro. Steve Pinnell to serve as pastor. He accepted the call and would be on the field by Sept. 18th.

A welcome reception was held for our new pastor-Bro. Steve Pinnell and family November 6, 1988.

The new budget for 1989-90 is \$89,438.06.

All through the years our records have shown this church to be a firm supporter of missionary work thru the cooperative program and Associational Missions.

Many faithful members have gone on to be with God, but we feel indebted to them for having kept us under the Grace of God and His Holy Spirit, laboring for the upbuilding of His Kingdom. We just pray that we may keep our hearts and minds in Christian love and fellowship that this church will always be a beacon of light in this community.

I hope by our taking time to record this much of our history when you celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of this church which will be the year 2029, it won't be such a job for the committee to work on as Della had consented to keep it up to date. I've enjoyed doing this, but I don't plan to be here for that celebration.

A special business meeting was held January 29, 1989 for the purpose of voting on calling Bro. Kent Mayberry as minister of music. The vote was unanimous.

In March of 1989 the deacons recommended, and the church approved Bro. Jim Smith to serve as deacon.

The Little Bonne Femme Associational meeting was held at the Ashland Baptist Church August 27-28, 1990.

Donna Burkett resigned as church secretary as of Aug 30, 1991.

Bro. Pinnell resigned and in November letters were granted to First Baptist Church in Cuba, MO for the Pinnell family and a new search committee was appointed.

The Ashland Baptist Church met in a special called business meeting Sunday evening, June 30th for the purpose of voting whether or not to extend a call to Bro. Jim West as pastor. A total of 76 ballots were passed out to members present and the vote was returned 100% in favor of calling Bro. West. He accepted the appointment and will be on the field by Aug. 1, 1991.

At the September 1991 business meeting it was reported that Lois West had been hired as church secretary.

June 30, 1992 Barbara Nichols resigned as church treasurer after having served 10 years.

At a special business meeting on February 12, 1992 a motion was made to purchase an Allen 3100 A60 Standard Model organ for \$9,995. The church voted to buy the organ and a dedication was held March 15th at 7 p.m.

At the April 8, 1992 business meeting the following candidates were nominated for ordination of deacons: Stanley Casady, Joe Lee & Pal Morefield. The ordination was held June 7, 1992.