

Salem's History

Salem Baptist Church is the third oldest Baptist Church in Tift County(Originally part of Worth County). In the latter part of the 18th century a small group of humble hardworking people met in an old log schoolhouse for Sunday School and Church Services. Church Services were held one Saturday and Sunday each month. A Brush harbor had to be made on one side of the log cabin in order to accommodate the increasing number of people. The Church Community was very large at that time covering miles around. Those honest Christians walked to service, rode in buggies, ox carts and wagons. No matter the type of transportation, they came and all the family with them.

In this little log cabin in 1886 Salem Baptist Church was organized with only 12 charter members and later that year became a member of the Little River Association. Wheeler Norman saw the need of a large and more adequate building and he met with the Board of Christian Workers and laid his plan before them. He Contributed the lumber for the building and \$100 toward paying for the construction. John Y. Sutton and Henry Willis assisted by Shabe Conger, Ben Hall and John Castleberry gave the boards to be used as the covering. J. B. Arrington agreed to construct the building for \$100 and John Y. Sutton contributed benches to the Church.

On November 3 1887, Salem became affiliated with the newly organized Mell Baptist Association.

In 1902, a group of men saw the need of bringing the church together during the 4th of July holiday season. An all-day sing was planned with everyone bringing food to be spread during the dinner hour. The sing was not only an annual event of the Church, but it drew people from Florida, Alabama and North Georgia, not to mention the many fine folks from Tift County and surrounding Areas to renew Acquaintances, to see loved ones and to enjoy the singing. The sing continued until 1968. The First B.Y.P.U. was organized on Sept 30, 1916 with Mr. George Ford Jr. as Director.

The first Choir platform was built in the Church in 1926.

In 1935, the Church Organized the first junior B.Y.P.U. in the Church. The Church had voted to give the Junior group \$2.00 to pay for literature. On February 21, 1939, the Deacons recommended to the Church the cutting of timber on Church land for the purpose of building Sunday School rooms.

The first four Sunday School rooms were built onto the Church in 1940. In 1947 the Church voted to have services on the first and third Sunday of each month.

On January 30, 1949, the church voted to finish the brickwork under the church. A big wood burning stove heated the Church until a kerosene heater was installed in 1949. A wood frame annex with six Sunday school rooms and assembly room was built in 1950. Salem went full-time in 1955. In 1961, three Sunday school rooms, baptistery, and columns were added to the church. In 1962, the main auditorium was remodeled. In 1965 the church bought three additional acres of land and landscaped the church grounds.

The church built a pastorium in 1966. The construction of the new educational building with ten Sunday school rooms, three bathrooms, large assembly room and kitchen was completed in 1974. In 1974, the inside of the church and Sunday school rooms in the church were completely remodeled. New Stained-glass windows, new padded pews, a complete set of pulpit furniture, organ and carpet were installed. A stained-glass window "the river of Jordan" was installed over the baptistery.

In 1979, Rob Hobby was called to serve as minister of music and youth and was the first to be paid a salary for these duties.

On November 5, 1980, the church voted to put white vinyl siding on the church. On June 3, 1981 the church voted to purchase a new Baldwin piano. In February of 1984 the church voted to enlarge the choir area and add two new Sunday School rooms.

In 1995, the Church Auditorium was enlarged by removing the petition of four Sunday School rooms and adding new Pews while the entrance to the church was remodeled and 4.371 acres of land was purchased adjoining the Church Property.

In 1998, the Church and educational building was painted inside and new carpet and tile was installed. A new Fellowship hall was constructed which provided for additional seating and Sunday school rooms.

Many Outstanding Christians gave their full support to God and Salem Baptist Church during their lifetime, both physically and Spiritually. May we all thank God this day for what he has accomplished for the health of our families and community.