A BRIEF HISTORY OF MT. ZION BAPTIST CHURCH

OVERVIEW

(from then til' now)

In 1970 Mt. Zion Baptist Church celebrated it’s 150th anniversary. The following is a history of the church put together by Mr. & Mrs. Prentiss Hutto with additions to reflect the 25 years since then.

Under the golden canopy of heaven, near the sparkling stream of water, on top of a hill, at the end of the road, sits the faithful old church of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Franklin County, Mississippi. These sacred grounds were found by the early settlers when they came here about the year 1800 or shortly thereafter. This place was selected where they could worship the true and living God. A log building was erected and was then known as Mt. Zion Meeting House. Records show that Mt. Zion was organized January 22, 1820 at the Meeting House. At the time of the first meeting there were 23 members and on the day of organization there were 17 of these members present. The preacher in charge on that day was Roland Wilkinson, the first pastor of Mt. Zion.

A few pages were missing from the first book of minutes, but later pages revealed the names of some of the first members—Roland Wilkinson, pastor; Thomas Swearingen, M. Murray, Loyd Temples, Alfred Temples, Adam Cloy, Calvin Magee, James Cain, AdamCotton, Joseph Cotton, H.S. Anderson, the Youngs, the Byrds, the Clarks, and Russel Jones.

The records from the abstract history of the Mississippi Baptist Association 1806 to 1906 and minutes at the Archives and History of Mississippi College, Clinton, Mississippi, show that Mt. Zion attended associational meetings before being formally received into the association in 1820. Mt. Zion Baptist Church was received into the Association at Zion Hill Baptist Church on October 14, 1820. The first delegates to the association on that day were Thomas Swearingen and M. Murray. The records show that Mt. Zion Baptist Church was incorporated April, 1836 by Joseph Cotton. James Cain, pastor of the church from 1827- 1832, obtained a deed from the U.S. Government for the land which was 39.56 acres. The probate court at Meadville, Mississippi, shows that Joseph R. Cotton and wife, Adline Cotton, were the owners and Mt. Zion Baptist Church purchased this land for the sum of $50.00. The deed was given January 2, 1858 from Joseph R. Cotton and wife, Adline Cotton. Records state that James Cain, Mt. Zion’s second pastor came from North Carolina, joined Zion Hill Baptist Church in 1812, was licensed to preach in 1820, and pastored Mt. Zion from 1827-1832. The minutes show that he died in 1834. Today Mt. Zion has in her possession a Bible that was used by James Cain in 1807 and belongs to

Mrs. Lola Cain Hyman.

Mt. Zion’s 100th anniversary was held in the spring of 1920 in the old frame building which had replaced the log building years earlier. Records do not show when the frame building was built. By word of mouth we have come to understand that during this period the pulpit was on the west side and in later years was moved to the north end of the church. Brother B.L. McKee from Liberty was pastor at the time of the 100th anniversary.

In 1921 the church decided to build a new church building, which is the present building. This building was erected on the east side of the old building and the old building was sold to the late Hiriams Holl who tore the building down and built a dwelling house on the old Mullins place. The contractor in charge of the erection of the new building was Mr. Moak from near Bogue Chitto. Some of those members who put in dedicated service during this time were the late M.C. McGehee, Sr., the late William Cain, and the late Tom Pickett. Records state that Mr. Pickett sawed the long overhead ceiling timbers at his saw mill near Little Springs and brought them on a log wagon with a team of oxen. The first revival was held in this building the first Sunday in August, 1921. The building was financed by a note or loan from the bank in Gloster.

The late W.A. Green was called as pastor at Mt. Zion in 1921 and served faithfully until 1923. In 1923 Mt. Zion faced a period of financial strain. It seemed as if the church would have to turn its keys over to the bank because the note was past due. After a conference meeting on that Sunday, Mrs. Laura Cain McGehee led the church in a prayer meeting. On the following Wednesday Mr. Willie Cain received a visit from a cousin in Texas. He had come home to visit relatives and during this time he visited Mt. Zion where he was told about the financial condition of the church. Because of Mr. Hiriam Cain’s love for the church, he wrote a check for $500.00 to pay the note. The church minutes state that Mr. Hiriam Cain joined Mt. Zion Baptist Church in 1890.Records show that Mt. Zion Baptist Church has experienced many wonderful times. Mt. Zion has battled these 150 years by the faithful work of its members who have been led by the Holy Spirit.

The history of Mt. Zion would not be complete if the cemetery was not mentioned. The grave with the small wrought iron fence was the 3rd or 4th grave placed in the cemetery. The inscription reads, “In memory of Sarah McCall, wife of D.B. Cain, born in Franklin County, Mississippi, died June 17, 1833, age 20 years.” This grave was placed here 137 years ago. Mrs. Lola Cain Hyman initiated concern for a fence and through this concern and with her efforts, a fence was erected around the cemetery in 1932.

Since the above church history was written in 1970 God has continued to lead Mt. Zion forward. Among the highlights are a new fence around the cemetery, air conditioning in the old educational wing, and a brand new fellowship hall that was constructed from March to August, 1986. The note for the fellowship hall was burned on August 6, 1992 in a ceremony in front of the building.

In October of 1984 Mt. Zion, in partnership with First Baptist Church, Slaughter, Louisiana, started a mission church that is now Wakefield Baptist Church. Since 1983 church members have been involved in various ministries including the Meadville Nursing Home, the Franklin Memorial Hospital Swing Bed program, the Senior Care Unit at the hospital, and prison ministry at the Pike County Work Center. Mt. Zion has also been involved in Mission Vacation Bible Schools among the Choctaw Indians in Philadelphia, Mississippi, and the black churches in Franklin County and on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. This work was documented in a video that was produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board and is currently being shown in various conferences all over the state of Mississippi and in Tennessee.

Mt. Zion has been blessed with good pastors that God used to lay a foundation of love and unity. One such pastor, Bro. John Adams (1980-83), is the great great great grandson of Loyd Temples, a charter member of the church. In 1991 our current pastor, Marvin Howard, was named “Small Church Pastor of the Year” in Mississippi by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. He, along with one of our members (Billy Wayne Sullivan), had the privilege of going on a church-planting mission to Zimbabwe, Africa, in October and November of 1994. Two new churches in the African “bush” were started as a result of that effort. Since that time church members have been involved in short-term missions to Honduras, France, Romania and the Choctaw Indians in Philadelphia, MS. God has allowed this little church on a ridge in the woods of Southwest Mississippi to carry the gospel to its immediate community, Franklin County, the State of Mississippi, and the world.

Mt. Zion has been blessed with wonderful resources and facilities to help us reach our community and the world for Jesus Christ. We have a new 26 passenger bus that picks up children and youth every Wednesday night for our missions organizations. We also put it on the road for youth trips and church outings. This is the fourth bus that has rolled under the Mt. Zion banner. We have a lift to minister to the handicapped elderly and a baptistry that was financed with funds that Idelle Temple left in her will for Mt. Zion. The most recent addition to our facilities is a new retreat center that can house 32 people. This was made possible with funds from the estate of Prentiss and Ailene Hutto, the estate of Monet Cothren and the generosity of Garnett Bayless who began the fund for the construction of the center.

Though sometimes things have been low, God has always blessed this church and kept its doors opened. On this 178th year of Mt. Zion's existence as a Body of Believers we praise the Lord for His faithfulness to us and pray that we, as a church body, will continue to pass the baton of faith on to others.

EXCERPTS FROM OLD MINUTES

In the 1800’s if a member of the church was accused of dancing, selling or use of liquor, profanity, arguing between members, or any kind of misconduct, a charge was brought against them. A committee of two or more was appointed to visit them and cite them to appear before the next conference meeting. At this time they either confessed their wrong doing and asked forgiveness or else they were excluded from the fellowship of the church. If they confessed they were forgiven and restored to full fellowship. Failure to attend church on a regular basis also resulted in discipline by the church. Here are some excerpts from old minutes (copied as they were written):

July 1852—The church met on Thursday before the third Lords’ day in July. After worship by Bro. Z. Reeves adore was opened for the reception of members on which a free woman of collor didere came fored by an experience of grace and was received in fellowship. Reference cold for E. Cain (cc) Z. Reeves Moderator.

-The church met on thursday before the third Lords Day in Aug after worship by Bro Z. Reeves adore was opend for the reciption of members, received Harday Cain on apro fition of his faith in Christ. Z. Reeves Mod. E. Cain (cc)

-The church met on saturday before the fourth Lords day in Aug. in a meting of day the dore being opend for the reception of members on which Henry S. Anderson James M. Cruse James M McGehee Calvin Temple Elisha W. Nettles Hallay Cotton by restoration Elizabeth Ann Cotton Rebeca Cain and Aria a woman of colar Bro Willis Cotton by request petition for a letter of dismistion for two one black Bro an sister to wit Guy and Christian the clerk was orderd to rite the letter and did soe Z. Reeves (Mod.) E. Cain (cc)

Feb. 17th, 1854-The church met at Mount Zion on Friday before the third Sabath in Feberary and prayer by Bro. M. Whittington Bro. L Reeves preached and the church entired into conference the door was opened for reception of members References call for The subject of collecting the funs to build the meetting house was taken up by motion of D B Cain there was a committe of five appointed to make collection. appointed on said committee: DB Cain JR Cotton HS Anderson W Cain and W. Cotton, done in conference L Reeves (Mod) JR Cotton (cc)

August 26, 1860-After preaching and singing the church opened for reception of members at which time George (a man of color, property of C.G. Martin), Dan, a man of color, property of Mrs. B.E. Whittington, Squire, a man of color, property of E.S. Westbrook. Austin, property of G. Lee, came forward by an experience of grace. After refreshments they went to the water where they were baptized by Eld. L. Reeves.

September 10, 1892-Church met and after an able sermon by our beloved pastor Bro. D.C. Giving, the church entered into conference. The clerk being absent, Bro. J.H. McGehee was appointed protem. Minutes of last read & adopted. The case of sister Clark was called, motion, she was excused for her non attendance. Motion, a charge was referred against was appointed to cite him to next conference. A letter was received from sister Hattie Myres saying that she was guilty of dancing and that she was not sorry for the same, and the church could exclude her if they decided proper. Motion sister Myres was excluded on a charge of dancing on her own statement. Motion Jessie Myres was granted a letter of dismission, W.L. Cain made a statement to the church from Bro. W.D. Rollins that he had been living in disorder, asking the church to forgive him, and grant him a letter of dismission. By motion his request was granted and he was granted a letter of dismission. By motion the church go into a call for pastor for ensuing year. Bros. P.E. McGehee & W.C. Lea was appointed as tellers. The election resulted in the election of Bro. D.H. Cox for the ensuing yr. Clerk was instructed to notify Bro. Cox of said election. Motion conference adjourn. D.C. Giving Mod. J.H. McGehee cc protem.

EXCERPT FROM TRANSFER OF DEED

This indenture made this the 2nd day of January A.D. 1838 between Joseph Robinson Cotten and wife Adalin Cotten of the County of Franklin and State of Mississippi of the first part and the Mount Zion Church Franklin County Mississippi of the second part. Witness that the said party of the first part for and in consideration of the sum of Fifty Dollars to them in hand duly paid before the delivery hereof hath bargained and sold and by these present doth grant and convey to the said party of the second part all that certain parcel of land lying and being on the waters of Magees Creek in the County of Franklin and State of Mississippi on which the church house known as the Mount Zion Church Franklin County Mississippi belonging to the Baptist denomination now stands and which is known and better described as follows to wit (a detailed legal description of the land followed)...........It is intended however that this land shall be for no other purpose than for the use of the Baptist denomination and for the purpose of securing to them at all times a place for a building to meet in for the purpose of ownership and to that denomination alone In witness wherof we have hereunto let our hands and affixed our seals this the 2nd day of January A.D. 1838

Jos. R. Cotten (Seal)

L.A. Cotten (Seal)

A PARTIAL LIST OF MEMBERS IN 1887

Bates, Cain, Carraway, Chambers, Cloy, Cole, Cotten, Cotton, Cruise, Day, Everett, Fenn, Flemming, Freeman, Gammil, Gammill, Gill, Godbolt, Herington, Hingley, Holland, Hughes, Hunt, Imes, Jones, Lambright, Lard, Lea, Lee, Mars, McGehee, McManus, Montgomery, Morgan, Mullins, Murry, Myers, Temple, Temples, Thompson, Wactor, Weathersby, Westbrook,Whitington, Wilkinson, Williams, Wroten, Young.

New Names in 1889

Adams, Anderson, Bowlin, Bradshaw, Bruce, Byrd, Carroll, Clark, Davis, Hutto, Jordan, Journigan, Marsh, Melton, McDonnel, McMenis, McStephen, Page, Pickett, Poter, Rollins, Seal, Scott, Smith, Strong, Sudduth.

New Names in 1890

Bailey, Buttler, Lowe, Oglesby, Owens, Rainwater (Total members—251)

ROLL CALL OF PASTORS

1820-1824 Roland Wilkinson

1825-1826 Asa S. Mercer

1827-1832 James Cain

1833-1834 E. Young

1835-1838 L. Reeves

1839 E. Young & L. Reeves

1840-1842 L. Reeves

1843-1845 Z. Reeves

1846-1849 Jessie Young

1850 R. Wilkinson

1851-1853 Z. Reeves

1854-1861 L. Reeves

1862-1871 Z. Reeves

1872-1877 S. Bufkin

1887-1888 R.N. Hall

1889-1891 D.H. Cox

1892 D.A. Givings

1893-1895 R.G. Stewart

1896-1899 J.E. Lowe

1900 J.B. Lawrence

1900-1903 J.B. Quinn

1904-1909 T.J. Barksdale

1910-1911 Willie McGehee

1912-1913 J.R. Johnston

1914-1919 B.L. McKee

1920 F.G. Polk

1921-1923 W.A. Green

1924-1925 G.C. Sidenspinner

1926 Charles C. Magee

1927 J.R. Haynie

1928-1930 J.B. Hemphill

1931 W.L. Holcomb

1932-1937 Phiffer Porter

1938-1943 W.W. Kaysre

1944 S.G. Pope

1945-1950 W.A. Green

1951-1952 J.E. Moak

1952-1953 Jimmie Dykes

1954-1955 George Mosley

1956-1960 T.H. Maxwell

1960-1961 H.L. Deer

1962-1965 J.O. Hemphill

1966-1967 Byron Stringer

1968-1973 Ernest G. McKay

1974-1975 Ken Marler

1975-1976 Al Hodges

1976-1978 Charlie Hawthorne

1978-1980 Phil Newton

1980-1983 John Adams

1983-Present Marvin Howard, Jr.

NOTES FROM IDELLE TEMPLE’S BIBLES

GOOD CHURCH MANNERS

1. Enter the church quietly

2. Follow the program of worship

3. Be attentive to the speaker

4. Find a seat at once

5. Sit quietly and pray for the services and the Lost that need to accept Christ as Lord.

BAD CHURCH MANNERS

1. Writing and passing notes

2. Giggling and whispering

3. Moving about unnecessarily

4. Talking loudly before and after services

5. Putting on wraps during invitation and leaving during invitation

6. Talking during first song

7. Reading a story during service

8. Loud talking or visiting too long at door

9. Chewing gum or passing candy around

10. Gazing about or laughing during prayer

11. Laughing at those who make mistakes

12. Marking song books or in any way injuring church furniture and seats

SUBJECT—CHURCH MEMBERS

There are four classes of church members: the tired, the retired, the tiresome, and the tireless.

The tired are those who are carrying a heavy load and are getting burned out. They are doing more and enjoying it less. The retired are those who have decided it was time to let someone else do it. The tiresome are the critical, negative people who are always stirring up trouble. The tireless are those who work in the strength of the Lord and who are not burned out but rather are on fire for the Lord. God’s work is accomplished when all of these groups come together under the Lordship of Christ.

YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Where Do You Fit In?

In every church there are 6 classes of people

Those who cause things to happen

Those who watch things happen

Those who hope things will happen

Those who don’t care if anything happens

Those who don’t know anything is happening

Those who hope nothing will happen because it will put them on the spot!

It’s the people, not the steeple that makes the church. Where do you fit in?

People do not miss church services because they live too far from the building; it is because they live too far from God!

Each year that God gives us to live consists of 8,760 hours. To waste one of those hours is to throw away a glittering diamond that you will never find. To waste one of them each day is to throw away 365 precious diamonds. To fill those precious hours with meaningless things is as wasteful as to throw them away. All too soon our time here will be done. These words found on a clock in Switzerland remind us of this very pointedly: “When as a child I laughed and wept, Time crept. When as a youth I dreamed and talked, Time walked. When I became a full-grown man, Time ran. When older still I grew, Time flew. Soon I shall find in traveling on, Time gone.”

A bird does not sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song.

Courage in people is like a tea bag: you never know their strength until they get in hot water.

“Thought”—We are four people:

1. The one we think we are.

2. The one others think we are.

3. The one we are.

4. The one God knows we really are.

A rumor is about as hard to unspread as melted butter.

If the moon paid attention to barking dogs it would stop shining.