

CHURCH HISTORY

Under the leadership of Rev. Matthias Wolf, a small group of Christian men and women met in Clarke County on May 20, 1847 to organize New Hope Baptist Church. The charter members of the church were: Jesse Watson, Thomas, Bankston, T.T. Riley, Erasmus Carter, Hugh Wilkinson, Charlotte Watson, Hannah Watson, and Margaret Carter.

On Saturday May 22, 1847 the church met for its first service, led by E.L. Carter and Rev. Wolf. Several business transactions were discussed. The church called Eld. H.P. Brunson as supply, Bro. Hugh Wilkinson as clerk, and Bro. E.L. Carter as deacon. The church met in various homes.

In December 1848, the church appointed a committee to select a place to build a church building. In January 1849 the committee presented a selection at the corner of a field belonging to the Stricklands, about a half mile west of Clarkdale School. The church built here, and was furnished with split log benches with peg legs. The Negro slaves were admitted to the church and baptized at the same time as the white members. They occupied seats in the back of the church and were lettered out in the usual way when they decided to build a church of their own.

In the late 1860's or early 1870's New Hope moved into Lauderdale County, worshipping initially at the New Hope School. A new church was built of logs next to where the current Masonic Lodge is located .

In June of 1896 the first Sunday School was organized with G.H. Walker as superintendent. In September of 1896 the church bought its first organ.

In January 1911, a committee was formed to raise funds to build a new church building. In April they reported \$1,800 had been subscribed in money and donated lumber. This building is the one currently occupied by the Masonic Lodge. It was dedicated in April 1914.

In December 1942 a committee was formed to begin raising funds for another building program. This fund raising continued for several years, and in November 1945 the plot of land our current building sits on was purchased for \$100 from H.L. Randall. Bro. Randall donated \$50 of this to the building fund. The new church was completed in 1950 under the leadership of Pastor Deb Stennis, who served as pastor from 1937-1958.

Our current church building has been improved several times. The North Annex was added in 1965 under the leadership of Pastor John Hopper. The East Annex was added in 1971 under the leadership of Pastor Danny Hood. The sanctuary was remodeled and the choir room and two offices were built in 1978 under the leadership of Pastor James Sanders. The Family Life Center was built and the old gym was converted to Sunday School rooms in 1992 under the leadership of Pastor Mike Everett. The sanctuary was remodeled again in 1997 under the leadership of Pastor Randall Creel.