

## **DRY BRANCH FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH**

Around the end of the ninetieth century, Rev. E.M. McVey of Greenbrier county was active in establishing several Free Will Baptist Churches in the Kanawha Valley. In 1884, the Dry Branch Free Will Baptist Church was one of the churches that he helped establish. The congregation met in the one room school house at Dry Branch hollow for the first few years. In 1912, a two story building was built at the mouth of Dry Branch hollow. The second floor was used by the Mechanic Lodge and the Daughters of Ruth and the first floor was used as the church. Rev. McVey served as the first pastor. Those laboring with Pastor McVey in the work of the new church included: the Withrows, Slacks, Spauldings, Kittingers, Currys, Mitchells, Hensleys, and the Praythers. Rev. Mc Vey's residence was at Hampton "East Bank", W.V., so he rode the train to Dry Branch on Saturday evening and spent the weekend with the Withrows. There were two services on Sunday; Sunday School in the morning and worship service in the evening. During the winter months, both services were held in the afternoon. On Monday morning, Pastor McVey would walk home to East Bank.

The church was heated by a "pot belly stove." The first janitor, Elijah Withrow, had to carry wood from his house across the railroad tracks and coal was furnished by the Dry Branch Coal Company. Four oil lamps were used for lighting. Dan Irvin, one of our Deacons, worked as a clerk at the Dry Branch Company Store and as a young boy, requested donations from salesman to purchase two electric lights for the church.

In 1912, Rev. Pat Withrow held a revival. One hundred and seventeen (117) souls were saved and were baptized by Brother Withrow and Rev. Sam Willis.

During the 1920's, Rev. George Cooper from Winifrede and Rev. Pat Patterson of Dry Branch were among those who served as pastors. The church records were destroyed by a house fire when the house of Elijah Withrow burned. During World War II, the ladies of the church participated in the war effort by meeting to roll bandages and have special prayer.

In 1953, Mr. John Slack as representative of the Mechanic Lodge, signed papers giving the church ownership of the building. In order to make way for the construction of the West Virginia Turnpike, the church had to be

relocated. A track of land located on the creek bank in the center of Dry Branch was purchased. A ground breaking ceremony was held by Rev. Carl Davis, and construction for our present church was started. Several of the men in the congregation helped and would often work after church services on Wednesday and Saturday nights. The church was completed and services were held.

In March 1954, a revival was held by the Rev. Glen Pugh and over one hundred (100+) souls were saved. Several are still members today.

The church continued to grow through the sixties and seventies. A church bus was purchased and a weekly paper was published. Additional space was needed and in 1976 an activity building was added to the property and dedicated in December of the same year.

In 1983, a parsonage was built by the members of the congregation in the Activity Building.

Children's church was started in Sunday mornings in March 1983, and a new church bus was purchased.

In April 2, 2006 the attic of the church caught fire, destroying the sanctuary. The Church met in the activity building until the sanctuary and classrooms were completely remodeled.

The Church belongs to the Kanawha County Conference of Free Will Baptist, the West Virginia State Association of Free Will Baptist, and the National Association of Free Will Baptist.

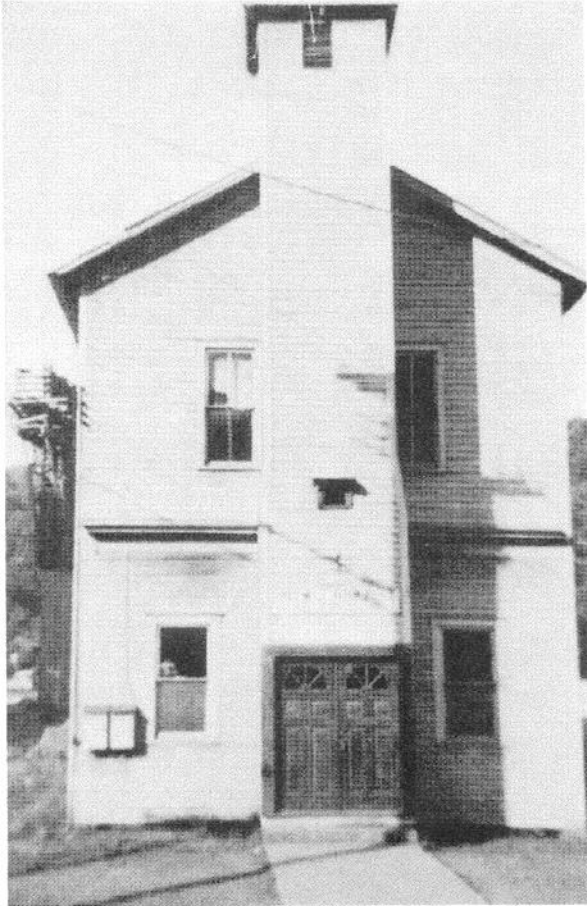
Ministers who have pastored the Dry Branch Free Will Baptist Church are as follows:

Rev. E.M. McVey  
Rev. George Cooper  
Rev. Pat Paterson  
Rev. Charles Arnold  
Rev. Joseph Kelly  
Rev. Jesse F. Owens, Sr.  
Rev. Carl Davis  
Rev. Forrest Cooper  
Rev. Ron Armstrong  
Rev. Rex Thompson  
Rev. Forrest Cooper  
Rev. Rickie Holstein  
Rev. Shawn McCormick  
Rev. Greg Stover

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Attached you will find: a picture of the old church, in the 1912 to 1953;  
a pictures of the present church; and pictures of some of the pastors.  
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**NOTE:** *Information supplied to the Historical Committee of the West  
Virginia State Association of Free Will Baptist, came from a  
book put together at the church's 100th year celebration, and  
from other sources of information to updated the information.*  
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## **From The Past - To The Present**



**The old Church - 1912 - 1953**



**New Church (completed in 1954)  
Activity Building and Parsonage (to the right, were added later)**