

# HERNDON FREE Will BAPTIST CHURCH

## THE BIRTH AND LIFE OF THE HERNDON FREE WILL BAPTIST HURCH

In spring of 1953, THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD moved upon the hearts of a few dedicated men and women to establish a church in Herndon, W.Va.

Acting without any supporting church and without much capital, they began following their dream by meeting in tent revivals. Rev. Hillard Edwards, who would become the first pastor, conducted these services. Cottage prayer meetings with Bro. Edwards and Rev. Adkins were held at Herndon Heights. As the number grew they began holding Sunday morning and evening services at different homes keeping the dream alive. The church was organized in Bro. John and Sis. Violet McKinney's home in late fall of 1953.

In spring of 1954 Bro. Edwards and Rev. Sherman Sizemore journeyed to Pineville to see a Pocahontas Land Company agent, Mr. Hayes about purchasing land where the church now stands. The company donated about 1/2 acre for the church, with the stipulation that if the church ever ceased to be, the land reverted back to the company. The church later purchased 3 1/2 acres and original parcel for \$3500.00.

Following the land agreement; construction began in early spring of 1954. The first load of lumber, rough and green, was purchased from Garland Sisko Bro. Edwards served as head carpenter for the project, he was assisted by Bro. Chap Quesenberry, Bro. John Mckinney, Bro. Sherman Sizemore, Bro. Ronald Adkins, and Bro. Arnold Fitzgerald. These faithful men worked in the evenings and on Saturdays. By the fall of 1954 sometime between August and November, the Herndon Church was dedicated to the Lord.

The church had no electricity at this time, gas lanterns hanging on the walls provided means of lightning. A wood and coal stove heated the little building that still had only the sub-flooring. The rough sawmill wood

eventually seasoned and cracked. These cracks measured 1/2 to 3/4 inches apart. The under pinning had not yet been installed and winters snow circulated the building as the Faithful followers of Jesus Christ sang, prayed, and preached the gospel. Many precious souls were saved despite these unfavorable conditions. Some of the seating was donated to the church from the Rialto Theater in Mullens.

The first pastor and founder, Rev. Hillard Edwards was forced to leave the church in 1957 due to poor work environment in W.Va. moving to Ohio.

Rev. Jess Snead succeeded Bro. Edwards. Bro. Huling Brown and Rev. Basil Baldwin also pastored the church. Rev. Ronald Adkins pastored from 1960, until April 1964. Rev. Sherman Sizemore succeeded Bro. Adkins, pastoring until his resignation on January 8, 1972. Rev. William O. Tolliver was then contacted about pastoring the church. Bro. Tolliver was voted on and began pastoring the church on February 20, 1972. He still resides as pastor of the Herndon Free Will Baptist Church.

Charter members (1954) were: Hillard Edwards; Nola Edwards; Ronald Adkins; Irene Adkins; Sherman Sizemore; Ruby Sizemore; Chap Quensberry; Ima Quensberry; John McKinney; Violey McKinney; Arnold Fitzgerald; Helen Fitzgerald; Jesse Snead; Nancy Snead; Shirley Snead; Dewey Snead; Mary Snead; Roscoe Mitchem; Ruby Mitchem; Jean Mitchem; Freeman Sizemore; Della Sizemore.

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

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## **INTERESTING FACTS**

Sis. Helen Fitzgerald was the first clerk, who was succeeded by Sis. Eva Moran who held the clerk position for a long tenure, before resigning due to her declining health. Sis. Carol Wiley currently holds the position of the church clerk.

The first treasurer was Sis. Ruby Sizemore, succeeded by Sis. Goldie Jennings who served for many years. Sis. Goldie was succeeded by Sis. Linda Grimes who is the current treasurer.

The first Sunday School Superintendent was Rev. Sherman Sizemore.

The first Bible teachers were; Bro. Snead or Bro. Roscoe Mitchem.

Sis. Ruby Sizemore was the first children's teacher.

Electricity was installed in the church in 1957.

The first deacons elected were Bro. Sherman Sizemore and Bro. Ronald Adkins.

Bro. Sherman Sizemore was ordained on October 21, 1958.

Sis. Violet McKinney would go to Tralee Mine office during these difficult economic times to collect change from the coal miners to help build the church.

In 1975 a deep well was drilled to provide good water, The well still supplies ample water.

Rev. Jack Green was licensed to preach in 1968 at the church and ordained in 1969. He served several churches as pastor. Bro. Jack came back home in 1989. He served as assistant pastor very faithful until his untimely death in 2003.

Rev. Marvin Jennings was ordained from the church. Bro. Marvin also played music and sang. He is now pastoring.

## **FROM 1973 TO PRESENT DATE**

Many changes have been made, these changes consist or:

- 1) Purchasing new pews at a cost of \$5000.00.
- 2) Changing the entrance of the church from what was the front of the church and reversing the pulpit to the other end.
- 3) Adding a full basement for Sunday School Classrooms.
- 4) Building a large nursery.
- 5) Increasing the size of the main sanctuary.
- 6) Building 3 bathrooms, including one in the nursery.
- 7) Replacing the heating system.
- 8) Adding air-conditioning.
- 9) Adding a steeple.
- 10) Adding a cross and the name of the church in the front.
- 11) New siding installed.
- 12) Bro. Marvin and Sis. Goldie Jennings donated a new 1997 van to the church for the bus ministry.
- 13) More new pews being ordered.
- 14) Flag pole added to the church lot.
- 15) New front entrance added to the church in 2004.
- 16) Bricking of the church in 2004.

A new church sign which adds much beauty to the church has been placed on the church lot. It was purchased and paid for by the Ladies Auxiliary at the cost of \$7800.00.

An auxiliary building was added including a bathroom and a beautiful new kitchen. Later a Sunday School room and picnic shelter were added. The auxiliary building was bricked also in 2004.

Three projects were done to complete the parking lot. The first clearing and dirt removal was done by Harry Thomas for \$500.00. Later it was increased in size and paved, with parking area for about 75 cars.

Three large granite crosses now add much beauty to the parking area. These crosses were placed in memory of Chesley Eugene Monk, Jr., by his parents, Bro. and Sis, Eugene Monk. Chesley was killed in an automobile accident in 2001.

The church basement was destroyed by the flood of 2001. Mud was 2 to 3 feet deep in the basement, with the furnace, furniture, and other equipment being destroyed. The entire basement including the walls were replaced and new carpet was installed at a cost of about \$25,000.00, in which the insurance did not cover the damage.

The closing of different coal mines through these years worked a hardship for the church. Among those were Alpoca, Tralee, Garwood, Herndon, and Itmann. We once had over 20 men working at Itmann alone. Its closure was hard to bear as many left the area. Our child bearing couples were especially hit hard, and the number of children in the area diminished. Their numbers are still very small.

We have experienced the deaths of young and old. These Precious saints include people in all positions of the church. Many, many layman whose hope in Christ was found at the church, have left the fold waiting for the great reunion.

Many Precious Saints of God have served the Lord at the Herndon Free Will Baptist Church since its inception. Almighty God surely has kept the record.

Information for this church history from 1953 to 1972 was provided by Rev. Sherman Sizemore, and Rev. Ronald Adkins.

Information from 1972 to present date for this church history was provided by our Pastor, Rev. William O. Tolliver.

**Our Special Thanks To These Brothers**