

NOLAN FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH

The Nolan Freewill Baptist Church was organized in 1941, and was first know as the "Welcomeland Freewill Baptist Church of Jesus Christ. The church officially organized by Rev. Melvin Sanford, who also served as the first pastor.

The Charter members of the Welcomeland Church were Grace and Everette Stevenson, Mr. and Mrs. Ebb Whitt, Lassie and Will Bryant, Tom Jackson, Dave Jackson, Grace Duncan. Mr. and Mrs. Bartly McCoy and Alice Ball. The first trustees consisted of Mose Muncy, Edward VanHoose and Arlie Joe Ball.

Services were first conducted in an old schoolhouse until the congregation erected a church building on the Kentucky side of the Tug River, directly opposite Nola, sometime during the late 40's. The congregation then purchased a Methodist Church building which was located at the site of the old church building (which now serves as the auxiliary building/kitchen). The construction of this church began in June 1953 and was opened for serves in November 1953. Several years later numerous Sunday School classrooms and a steeple were added to the church. The additions and the steels were completed in 1957. Two items from the old Methodist Church were saved and placed in the newly constructed building; the original, elaborately carved, portable pulpit stand, and the church bell. The old pulpit was later used in the pilgrim Home United Baptist Church at Maher, W.V. The old church bell is still a part of our church heritage, its tolls can still be heard throughout the community each Sunday morning before Sunday School. The "old church" which now serves as our auxiliary building/kitchen, was used from 1953 until 1986, the year in which the present building was completed. A parcel of land was purchased from the Everett Thompson family. Construction on this building began around 1984. The steeple was added in 1993. Approximately 7 years later, the church was able to buy the land that the old Nolan Grade School sat on. That land was asphalted and is now used for a parking area. The church membership has increased over the years from the original twelve members to one hundred and thirty nine members today.

In addition to Rev. Melvin Sanford, several other ministers have served the church as pastor. They include Rev, John W. Bryant, Rev. Willie Kirk, Rev. Arlie Joe Ball, Rev. Glenn Ray Moore, Rev. Taylor Cantrell, Rev. Ray Taylor, Rev. Roy "Bo" Bryant, and the Rev. John C. Wellman. The Rev. Ray Taylor served as pastor of the Nolan Free Will Baptist Church from 1957 to 1964. He then assumed the pastorate of the West Williamson Freewill Baptist Church for approximately three years. He then returned to Nolan Church in 1976 and is currently serving as pastor of the church. Several members of the church congregation have entered into the ministry.

The Nolan Freewill Baptist Church sponsors various programs for its members. Along with Sunday School each week, there is The Master Men, The Ladies Auxiliary, weekly Youth Group meeting for the children of the area and monthly Nursing Home services. The annual Sunday School Picnic is held in June along with many other special events throughout the year.

The Nolan Freewill Baptist Church is a member of the Unity Association of Freewill Baptists. They are actively involved in the work of the Association and support the other churches that are members there.

God has also blessed the church to be able to buy a large portion of land surrounding the church building. They recently purchased 5 lots of land across the road from the Auxiliary building and were able to pay it off in about half the time the loan was issued for. The elders and others in the church are in prayer as to what the Lord has in store for the use of the property. There is much potential there and the Nolan Church wants to do the Lord's will in the project. All in all, God has truly shed His abundant blessings on the little white church building that once housed the Welcomeland FWB Church. It has grown from the little lot on which that building sits to where the Nolan FWB Church now rests. There is plenty of work for the church to do and our prayer is for God to lead and guide us in His Holy will.

***NOTE:** This information was given to the Historical Committee of the West Virginia State Association of Free Will Baptist, sometime in, or around June 2001.*
