

WALNUT GROVE FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH

The Walnut Grove Free Will Baptist Church was organized in 1927, by the Rev. Amos Rice, who served as its first pastor. Services were held in the old Chauncey Grade School building, until 1930, when the church moved into the present church building.

Originally it was a two-story frame structure built before 1920, and was used as a place of worship by black residents until 1930. The church was then made available for use by the Rev. Amos Rice and his congregation.

Through the years, the church building has undergone many changes to meet the needs of the congregation.

In 1977 the church, under the pastorship of Rev. William Preston Vance, underwent a major building project to expand the sanctuary, add two classrooms and face the entire exterior of the church with brick. Most of the building materials and the brick for this project were salvaged by church members, from the old Omar Jr. High School building at Omar.

In 1979 the Walnut Grove Free Will Baptist Church founded the Beth-Haven Christian School, using classrooms in the church to operate the school. Pastor Vance saw a need for children to learn discipline and academic excellence in a loving Christian atmosphere. The school continued to grow, and in 1981 opened the doors of a new facility, also located at Chauncey.

Church records show that following the ministry of Rev. Amos Rice, other pastors have been: Rev. George Adkins; Rev. Ira Johnson; Rev. Allen Browning; Rev. Tom Mahorne; Rev. Lonnie Lane; Rev. Rufus Johnson; Rev. Garrett Stamper; Rev. Kenny Sellards; Rev. Walter Lambert; Rev. Zack Browning; Rev. Lester Varney; Rev. Frank Wiley; Rev. William P. Vance; Rev. Christopher Jackson, and in 1993 Rev. Charles W. Blankenship was elected as pastor and has served the church since.

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