

Phillippi Missionary Baptist Church History

Revised by Sis. Betty McFarland - October 2012

Phillippi Missionary Baptist Church is deeply rooted in the formation of the first Black churches in the Elizabethton Tri-Cities area. Horace Leftwich, a former slave, saw the necessity for Black people in Carter and Johnson Counties to have a place of worship. He traveled up and down the hills and valleys of the Tri-Cities area. It is estimated that he made a stop in Elizabethton and organized the Elizabethton Colored Baptist Church in 1867. This body of Believers joined the Watauga Baptist Association. However, in 1869, the members left the Watauga Baptist Association and became a part of the Bethel District Missionary Baptist and Educational Association.

In previous church history presentations we have alluded mostly to the pastors of Phillippi and their physical contributions to the church. Today, I wish to talk about some of the members that make up Phillippi, a body of Believers. The first person I mention is Horace Leftwich. His contribution is by far greater than any other because he was the founder of this church. Because of his contributions the street wherein the church is located is named Horace Leftwich Lane. Due to the thoughtfulness of Sister Sandra Davis, secretary to a former city manager of Elizabethton, Mr. Charles Stahl, the name of the street was changed from East "M" Street to Horace Leftwich Lane.

George Henderson Phillips was brought to Elizabethton by William Jobe to preach at Phillippi. The church called Rev. Phillips as pastor and he served during 1884 and 1885. Rev. Phillips has had numerous descendants who worshipped and served at Phillippi. Today there are still some of his descendants who are members of Phillippi.

The church body consists of ministries established by the members. We have always had a deacon board, a missionary society, Sunday School, Laymen's organization, choir, children and youth ministries. The latest auxiliary ministry to be added is the Usher Board. Some of these organizations are named in honor of members who have gone above and beyond the normal duties of members.

The James H. Ervin Laymen organization was so named in memory of Brother James H. Ervin. Brother Ervin was a deacon who could be depended on to follow the principles set forth by the deacon board.

During the tenure of Rev. William Owens, the Anna Breedlove Circle was organized in memory of Sister Anna Breedlove, the wife of Rev. W.A. C. Breedlove. Rev. Breedlove served as pastor for 43 years. The Anna Breedlove Circle was founded by Sister Pauline Owens, the wife of Rev. Owens. Following the Anna Breedlove Circle, a younger group of ladies was organized into the Minnie Conley Circle. Sister Minnie Conley lived beyond 100 years. The missionary ministry today is known as the Anna Breedlove Missionary ministry. The Minnie Conley Circle has not functioned for a number of years.

The first Sunshine Band, a ministry for children ages 3 - 11 was organized by Sister Alice Tinner, the Sunshine Band, under the leadership of Brother Ron and Sister Gwen Smith, was named the Ophelia Dixon Sunshine Band in memory of Sister Ophelia Dixon who bequeathed the bulk of her estate to Phillippi because of her love for the church. Sister Dixon was the widow of Deacon King Dixon. Her father, Brother Doc Wilson was also a deacon. Because of the generosity of Sister Dixon, Phillippi was able to pay off the mortgage of this facility which was built in the year 2000.

As I look back over the history of the music ministry at Phillippi I can visualize my mother, Florence Myrick, playing hymns for worship service. I see Sister Emma Dirl, a gospel musician who also played during my early childhood. She was followed by Betty and Almeda Myrick. During the tenure of Rev. William M. Holloway, the Mass choir was organized. It was made up of the youth choir and the adult choir. Along came musicians such as Pearl Machen, Kerrol Ernest Thompson and Odessa Forney Johnson with directors Greg Wash and Tracy Haynes.

Phillippi is famous for the music ministry of the Male chorus, directed by Brother Tracy Haynes. They

have made annual appearances at the Elizabethton Covered Bridge Celebration. Their quartet style of singing is admired by all. The group is made up of laymen and choir members.

The youth choir is made up of the older Sunshine Band members and Youth. The youth have introduced miming to the Phillippi congregation. Three Turner brothers began this style of ministry under the direction of Sister Nakisha Campbell, a product of Phillippi.

One of the most important ministries of the church is the food ministry. The Phillippi Food Pantry was established in 1999 during the tenure of Pastor Tim Watterson by Minister Sonya Price and Deacon Hugh Collie. The ministry has grown to over 800⁺ clients who receive food boxes monthly. In 2011 we extended the food ministry to include a weekly food distribution. Another ministry is the feeding of the homeless and others at the "Melting Pot." This is a ministry of the Good Samaritan Ministry.

We, the members of Phillippi, are firm believers of out reach. Minister Price and Minister Collie go to the prisons in our area preaching and teaching of God's goodness. We join them during the Christmas holidays and present a program. We take a meal and gifts to the prisoners.

Pastor Joseph Holifield has been to Kenya on a mission trip. We support foreign mission financially quarterly, as well as, through the Bethel District Baptist Association and the Tennessee Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention.

Phillippi has grown immensely under the leadership of all its pastors and interim pastors. We have accumulated property and furnishings. We have reached out to the community and the world through our various ministries. God has truly blessed us. We give Him the PRAISE. We continue to commune with Him in prayer. We allow his power to lead and guide us. Our growth is due to the continuing forces, three powerful objectives of the church: PRAISE! PRAYER! POWER!

PHILLIPPI MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH HISTORY
(Revised - October 2012)

It is estimated that Phillippi Missionary Baptist Church was founded in 1867 by Horace Leftwich, a former slave. Traveling over the hills and valleys of Northeast Tennessee, he determined that the black people of Carter and Johnson Counties needed a place of worship. The Elizabethton Colored Baptist Church was the name given to the church in Carter County and the church was a member of the Watauga Association of Baptists. In 1869, the Elizabethton Colored Baptist Church left the Watauga Baptist Association and became a member of the Bethel District Baptist Missionary and Educational Association.

William Jobe, a preacher who had established a church in Jonesborough, brought George Henderson Phillips to serve as preacher of the Elizabethton Colored Baptist Church. There were about 40 members of the congregation.

Between the years, 1869 & 1871, the members changed the name to Phillippi Missionary Baptist Church. During the time, Horace Leftwich served as church clerk and a deacon. He was later licensed to preach and served as pastor. In 1884, Rev. Phillips became pastor of Phillippi and served until 1885. Rev. W. H. Ford became pastor in 1885 and served until 1901.

Due to the "May Flood" in 1901, Phillippi was forced to move from "Cat Island" to its present location. Rev. W.A.C. Breedlove was called as pastor and served for 43 years when illness caused him to no longer be able to serve. Rev. J.C. Harris was called to serve as interim pastor until Rev. M.D. Machen was called to serve as pastor. Rev. Machen served from 1943 -1952.

Rev. Fred Mitchell served as pastor from 1952 - 1955. He was followed in service by Rev. William Owens. Rev. Owens became ill and Phillippi lost another dedicated leader. Rev. J.E. Gambrell became interim pastor and served until 1961 when the church called Rev. A.W. Hubbard, a minister from Knoxville, Tennessee. Rev. Hubbard served for 14 years (1961-1975).

In January, 1976, Phillippi called Rev. William M. Holloway to serve as pastor. He served until 1981. On the 1st Sunday in January, 1982, Rev. Larry S. Williams began his tenure as pastor. He served until March, 1994 when he, too, became ill and left us to join former pastors in Gloryland. During the tenure of Rev. Williams, we were fortunate to have the following ministers as associate ministers. They were: Rev. Tim Watterson, Rev. C. Danny Johnson, Rev. Jesse MacMurray and Rev. Jeremy Van Blommestein.

Following Rev. William's death in March, Rev. Watterson became interim pastor and was called as pastor in July 1994. He served as pastor until 2003 when he resigned and Rev. Joseph Holifield was called to serve as interim pastor. In January, 2004, the church called Rev. Holifield to serve as pastor. Rev. Holifield observed his 8th anniversary as pastor in September, 2012.

Phillippi has grown immensely under the leadership of its pastors and interim pastors. We have accumulated property, new structures, furnishings and vehicles. We serve the community in various outreach ministries. We support both local and foreign missions. God has truly blessed us. He has done so much for us these 145 years. We give Him the praise for He is worthy. We continue to commune with Him in Prayer. We allow His power to lead and guide us. Our growth is due too the continuing forces, three powerful objectives of the church: PRAISE! PRAYER! POWER!

Phillippi Missionary Baptist Church Pastors

"Past and Present"

1875 - 1884	Horace Leftwich
1884 - 1895	George Henderson Phillips
1895 - 1901	W.H. Ford
1901 - 1943	William A. C. Breedlove
(During Rev. Breedlove's Illness)	
	J.C. Harris
1943 - 1952	M. David Machen
1952 - 1955	Fred Mitchell
1955	William Owens
(J.E. Gambrell served as Interim Pastor upon death of Rev. Owens.)	
1961 - 1975	Alphonso W. Hubbard
1976 - 1982	W. McKinley Holloway
1982 - 1994	Larry S. Williams
1994 - 2003	Timothy A. Watterson
2004 - Present	Joseph Holifield

"And He gave some, apostles; and some , prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12)