

## OUR CHURCH

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:18-20.

Murray was incorporated on January 17, 1844. At least ten Baptists in or near Murray were convinced that a Baptist Church was needed in their recently established town. With a view to organizing such a church, these interested persons assembled on April 18, 1846, to devise a plan for doing so. They agreed to request a council to examine their standing and consider the propriety of organizing them into a church. On May 23, 1846 the Murray Baptist Church was organized with eleven constituent members, namely, Henry W. Harding and Elizabeth Harding, his wife; Beverly P. Elliott; William H. Covington and Mildred Covington, his wife; Gilbert Harding and Adah Harding, his wife; Tabitha Pitt; Frances Rowland; Sarah Curd and William P. Guthrie.

In 1848 the first house of worship was constructed at a cost of \$440. In 1899 it was sold and removed. A new brick building was erected at a cost of \$7,550. Ten years later a Sunday School Annex was erected for \$5,500. It was razed in 1924 to make room for a much larger and better building. A third house of worship was erected in 1924-26. When finished and equipped at a cost of \$130,000, it was dedicated in 1936. Our educational building was erected in 1949-50. The building and equipment were dedicated in 1952 on May 25.

Increasing attendance at our services and a foreseeable growth in our population constituted a challenge to our church to provide a larger and better house in which to worship God. Those with vision, interest in the future of the church and concern for others who need to be reached and won wanted to do what needed to be done and could be done. Others who had not given the matter any thought saw the need when it was called to their attention. A planning committee was elected. This committee requested Brother R. W. Key to serve as architect. More cognizant of our needs from the standpoint of architecture than most of us, and because of his personal interest in the adequacy, beauty and comfortableness of our place of worship, Brother Key had given much thought and study to this for months in advance. He and the members of the Planning Committee, composed of Brethren I. H. Key, Noel Melugin, H. L. Oakley, Joe Pat Ward and Fred Workman, had numerous meetings and worked diligently at their task. Eventually the plans were perfected, after which they were approved by the church. The church authorized the Building Committee, composed of Brethren L. D. Miller, Jr., I. H. Key and A. W. Russell, the Purchasing Committee, composed of Brethren W. C. Elkins, W. R. Perry and Galen Thurman, Jr., and the Finance Committee, composed of Brethren Hafford Parker, Waylon Rayburn and E. F. Settle, to proceed with the construction according to the plans. Brother Rufus Saunders was selected as Superintendent of Construction. Brother Luther Nance was elected as Bookkeeper and Treasurer of the Building Fund. Numerous trips were made by the architect and committee members during the building program and all at their own personal expense. The services of each of these men, except the superintendent of construction who was on the job forty hours per week, were rendered without cost to the church. This is something for which we as a church will ever owe them a debt of gratitude. It is a joyous privilege and duty to thank them publicly for their faithfulness in rendering this service. I am sure that each of them has much satisfaction and joy in knowing that he has had a part in bringing this project to completion. Words are inadequate to express our appreciation to Brother R. W. Key for his services as architect. Then, I would express to every person who has sold materials at a discount, given materials, donated labor or made contributions in cash our most sincere appreciation and abiding gratitude. A special tribute is due our sexton, Brother Alvin Outland, for untold additional hours of extra cleaning because of the remodeling and enlarging of our building, to Hunter Love for making pictures, to Joe Ward for his services as artist and to the Committees for today--Publicity, Flower, Reception and Registration.

The expenditures on this project have exceeded \$196,000. Of this amount we owe the local banks \$120,000.

Five of our present members united with the church before 1900 as follows:

Mrs. Polly Keys on June 26, 1895, Mrs. Mavis Morris on May 23, 1897, Mrs. Edith Banks on June 3, 1897, Mr. Tremon Beale on September 12, 1897, and Mrs. Lutie Gibbs on November 24, 1899.

Permit me the privilege of speaking a personal word. One who has had experience in a church building program does not covet the task of going through another. This is usually the case when one is building a home for himself and family and does not have to consider the whims or wishes of others. It is even more so in a church building program. Nevertheless, I am grateful to God and to you for the privilege of working with you in each of our building projects. I am grateful for the vision, faith, prayers, cooperation, contributions and work of all who have helped. I want to compliment this church for this progressive achievement. This beautiful auditorium is a splendid tribute to this congregation's interest in the house of our Lord. It is an asset to the town in which it stands. For me or anyone else to find fault with it would be a revelation, a reflection and an advertisement of the fact that the one doing so did not have prayer, interest or money in it. No member of this church need be ashamed to bring any guest to this building and say, "This is the house of the Lord in which we worship and have fellowship with Him." To you through whom our Lord has made it possible for this glorious task to be completed, I have nothing but commendation and appreciation. To our gracious Lord be all the glory and praise for it. To Him we owe our very best. He certainly deserves the best of everything.

Our church is a divine institution. If it had not been, it could not have survived and be what it is today. Our church is a spiritual body, a company of disciples and a group of friendly helpers. It is an institution which concerns conscience, convictions, character, consecration, conduct and charity. It urges understanding, unselfishness and usefulness. It calls for courtesy, cheerfulness, compassion, courage and cooperation. This house of worship is a place where the Word of God is preached, the power of God is felt, the spirit of God is manifested, the love of God is conceived and the salvation of God is received. It is a place to which we come for communion with God, for Christian fellowship, for Bible instruction, for spiritual inspiration and for real service. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

Our church is a congregation of baptized believers in Christ, who are voluntarily united in the belief of what He has taught, and who have covenanted together to do what He has commanded in perpetuating His ordinances and propogating His gospel to the ends of the earth.

What is and must ever be the mission of our church?

I. To Make Christ Known To The Unsaved.

Evangelism is the proclamation of the "good news" concerning the redemptive love of God as revealed in the atoning sacrifice of His Son. While this is the primary task of our church, it is not the only one. In the early church at Jerusalem each member was a personal witness and a soul-winner. They did not wait for the unsaved to come to the services, but they carried the gospel message to them. They went everywhere preaching the Word. People were saved daily because of the witnessing of the Christians in the homes and at the places of work. Any church that uses this method will succeed.

II. To Win The Lost To Christ.

Christ instituted the church for the specific purpose of winning the lost to a saving knowledge in Him. His mission in the world was "to seek and to save that which was

lost." The true mission of every New Testament church is that of winning lost souls to Christ. As individual Christians we need a greater concern for the salvation of those who are lost.

III. To Baptize Those Whom Christ Saves.

IV. To Teach The Christians.

V. To Enlist The Saved In Doing God's Will.

VI. To Glorify The Lord Jesus Christ.

Just as certainly as all of God's acts in the past and all of His promises for the future tell of His worth and wealth, so should we in all that we do bring glory to His name. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end" (Ephesians 3:21).

What is the message of our church? Christ died for our sins, Christ was buried, and Christ arose. In these three central facts of the gospel there is nothing except that which should increase our faith in Christ, our love for Christ and our devotion to Him. Without any hesitation whatever, we take our stand believing firmly in His supernatural birth, His absolute dignity, His vicarious atonement, His bodily resurrection and His personal return. With Paul, we ask nothing more than to discover His will and to do that will faithfully.

"When I survey the wondrous cross," etc.

"Forbid it, Lord! that I should boast," etc.

"See, from His head, His hands, His feet," etc.

"Were the whole realm of nature mine," etc.