

The  
**History**  
Of  
**Old Fellowship  
Baptist Church**  
of  
**Bulloch County, Georgia**  
**1844 - 2019**

Prepared for the observance  
of the 175<sup>th</sup> Year of the Church



**Old Fellowship Baptist Church in 2019**

## INTRODUCTION

The history committees of Old Fellowship Baptist Church have compiled the events of the church from the minutes of conferences from 1844-2019. This complete history may have some inaccuracies. We hope that the readers of this document will share any information about the church that they have in order to improve the accounts for future revisions.

Listed below are those who have lovingly served on the history committees:

### First Publication in 1994

Wilson Groover, Timothy Squire, Janie Sherrod, Dianne Bath, Hattie Mae Swint, Debra Flanders, and Buck Sherrod

### Second Publication in 2011

Sheryl Swint, Carl (Buzzy) Bragg, Nancy Dixon, and Dianne Bath

### Third Publication in 2019

Beth Groover, Sheryl Swint, and Etta Anne Groover

## THE FOUNDING AND EARLY YEARS OF OLD FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH

From the minutes of the first meeting Bulloch county July 7, 1844  
We the following named Brethren & Sisters at Fellowship:

James Cone	Sara Banks
Robert Cone	Sophromia Cone
Barber Cone	Sarah Wright
Aaron Cone	Susan Davis
Isom Elbery	Mary Elerby
William Sheffield	Kisian Hagin
Stephen Thorne	Mary Hall
Elisha Banks	Lionina Hall
John Grimes	Mary Cone
Lot Hagin	John Hall

Colored man Ishmael

Total Number 21

Having this day been Constituted & Set in order to keep house for the Lord by the following:

Robert Donaldson

Daniel Edwards

James R. Miller

John H Cowart

Edmond Branin

Isaac Barber

William Spier

John G. Williams

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## ORIGINAL ARTICLES OF FAITH

We do set forth our Articles as follows:

**Article 1<sup>st</sup>** We believe in one only true and living God, and that there are three persons in the God Head, to wit Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

**Article 2<sup>nd</sup>** We believe that the Scriptures of the Old & New Testaments are the word of God, and are the only correct rule of faith and practice. We therefore take the New Testament for our rule of faith and practice, for we are not under the law but under grace.

**Article 3<sup>rd</sup>** We believe in the doctrine of particular and Eternal Election.

**Article 4<sup>th</sup>** We believe in the doctrine of Original Sin, and in man's impotency to recover him Self from the state he is in by nature, by his own free will and ability.

**Article 5<sup>th</sup>** We believe that sinners are justified in the sight of God. Only by the imputed Righteousness of Christ.

**Article 6<sup>th</sup>** We believe that God's elect will be Called, Regenerated, and Sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

**Article 7<sup>th</sup>** We believe the saints will persevere in Grace and never finally fall away.

**Article 8<sup>th</sup>** We believe that Baptism by Immersion is the only proper mode.

**Article 9<sup>th</sup>** We believe that Baptism, the Lord's Supper and the washing of the Saint's feet, were all appointed, by Jesus Christ, and that true believers are the proper subjects for these Ordinances.

**Article 10<sup>th</sup>** We believe that no man has a right to administer the Ordinances of Baptism for the Lord's Supper only such as are regularly called come under the Imposition of hands by a presbytery.

**Article 11<sup>th</sup>** We believe in the resurrection of the dead and a general judgement.

**Article 12<sup>th</sup>** And we believe that the punishment of the wicked will be everlasting and the joy of the Righteous Eternal.

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## ORIGINAL COVENANT

This is our faith, and our desire is to give our Selves to the Lord, and to one another, by the will of God, to keep house for the Lord, as His Word directs; and to stir up each other's zeal and love for God, and for each other for Good, to pray for each other and for the prosperity of Zion in general, to bear each other's infirmities, to reprove or rebuke if duty so requires. Also, to Admonish to good works, and to Contend for this faith of this the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and if in our powers to have standing ministrations of the Blessed Gospel amongst us, and to administer therefore as our Several Circumstances may admit of, and live in peace with all men if possible.

## THE EARLY YEARS

Just what the original church building was like, we do not know. Yet, it is known that it stood on three acres of land given by "Wash" Brown. Title was received by Isom Elerbee and Stephen Thorne, and read at the monthly church conference meeting of September 1, 1844. By April 3, 1845, the church had received a copy of the incorporation of the church from the clerk (Bulloch County). The next July it was agreed that Sister Susy Davis should hold the keys of the meeting house and keep the same in order for which the church paid her "what we believe to be right."

The first pastor was John G. Williams, called in January, 1845. The first record of a salary paid to the pastor came in August, 1846, the sum of \$3.00. Church was held monthly, often with worship on the second Sunday of a month, and church conference meeting on the Saturday before. A rule was made on June 6, 1845 "that worship should commence on Sunday at eleven o'clock 'in the fore-noon.'"

John Grimes served as clerk. Conference would begin by "opening a door for the reception of members," by letter or "by experience," that is, to give testimony of experiencing the grace of God in salvation through faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The membership of the church grew gradually, receiving God-loving people of the neighborhood, both white and black. The first Trustee appointed was William Sheffield in December, 1845.

The church agreed to correspond with sister churches in the area, which are now Primitive Baptists. Among them, Ash Branch, Lower Lotts Creek, Upper Black Creek, Lower Black Creek, Deloach Meeting House, and Lane Meeting House. Delegates were appointed to bear a petitionary letter for membership to an association of churches.

Along with other matters of the church, the business of Biblical church discipline was an important concern. The integrity of the body of Christ was given more attention, and dealt with more directly in those times. Various members were excluded or excommunicated from the membership. The first record of this was on October 4, 1845, for "bearing false charges against a brethren." Causes for such action were immorality or inattention to spiritual duties. While Biblical church discipline is a good expression of Christianity, its absence falls short of that. Likewise, the abuse of the rod of correction is at least as troublesome.

The matter of heavy-handed discipline came into focus at the church conference of June, 1849. A rule was made that "no member in disorder had a rite to partake of the Lord's table until case is settled." In November of the same year the clerk was excluded for "refusing to hear the church." A sizable minority including some of the church leaders opposed that decision. They had possession of the meeting house as well as the church records, which they refused to turn over. The two factions of the church split and began to meet separately. Efforts at reconciliation were attempted, but were unsuccessful. A detailed proposal for arbitration was submitted by Aaron Cone and James Cone, but refused by the "brethren at the new meeting house" which became Fellowship Primitive Baptist Church.

An important lesson about the moral courage of compassion in discipline had been learned. They had recognized that discipline was both authorized and limited by the Scriptures, providing for freedom of conscience in the pursuit of Biblical Christianity. (Later, in 1855, Rev William B. Williams was received for membership after he had been excluded from his office as pastor by Lower Lotts Creek Church seemingly without opportunity to answer the charges against him.) Recognize the restraint expressed in this resolution adopted on February 16, 1850.

**Dear Brethren, we having agreed to take the New Testament as our rule of faith and practice, and its having been greatly violated, both by our church and association by adopting rules, customs and so forth which the Scripture nowhere require, whereby we believe the gospel of Christ is greatly Obstructed, and as we are**

**commanded to prove all, hear all, and hold fast to that which is good, and we being unwilling to condemn any until we hear them and know what they doeth, but resolved that our meeting house is free for all ministers of the primitive order, who feel it their duty to visit us bearing a gospel message. And as we believe no act of a member of our body can properly be considered fellowship destroying until it is proven to be immoral in itself an evil tendency in the institutions of the day. Such as benevolence, temperance and so forth.**

**Be it further resolved, that so far as the above-named institutions is concerned that each member of our body is free and has a right to act agreeable to the dictates of their own conscience.**

There was no turning back from the steps which had been taken. A shift away from the past philosophy of discipline in their church and in their association was carried through in a shift away from their affiliation with Primitive Baptists. (Missionary and Primitive Baptists had suffered a rift in 1837). By July of 1850, they agreed to correspond with the Missionary Baptist church at Middle Ground in Screven County. And in November it was “agreed to prepare a letter for the union meeting (also) held at Middle Ground.” Then in August of the next year, 1851, they hosted a general meeting of the Middle Association, held at “first Fellowship, Bulloch county.” And in October of 1854 the church asked to be dismissed from the Middle Association to become a member of the Baptist Union Association constituted at Elim that same year. Prior to the rift, the membership had grown from 21 to 65. After the rift, the membership was recorded as 34 in 1851 (28 whites and 6 blacks).

An important step in the early leadership of the church was made when Brother James R. Miller was called by unanimous vote on December 13, 1851. Pastor Miller had been on the presbytery of ministers in the founding of Fellowship in 1844, and also helped found Macedonia Baptist Church in 1854. In March of 1852, just a few short months after Miller had been called as pastor, the church “agreed to commence a Sabbath School. Stephen Thorne and John Grimes were appointed teachers.” At the same time they also “agree to collect money for church purposes by subscription.” That is, the church as financed by pledges. And later, in January 1855, that commitment was reaffirmed again by agreeing “to take up a collection by subscription, and also a collection on the Sabbath.” These were very progressive moves in the life of the church, which made it even more distinctive from its neighbors.

From the beginning of this fellowship, it was set on a strong foundation of sound biblical doctrine and personal spiritual experience. Important challenges faced the congregation and became opportune crossroads to those who held to the truths and principles of the Scriptures. Sometimes controversy can bring disintegration to a church body, yet it appears to have brought out the Christian integrity in those that shouldered the load of responsibility in serving the Lord in the early years of Old Fellowship Baptist Church.

The War Between the States was an especially difficult time for our church, and the community at large. The record tells us that “there was no pastor from December 1864, the time of Sherman’s army passing through our neighborhood until January 1867.” It was not until almost two years after the war that Fellowship again had a pastor, “when the Rev. J. W. Linear was called to pastoral care.”  
The membership was 70 (38 whites and 32 blacks).

The joy of praising God has been essential in our worship from its beginning. The record book also mentions that most of our conferences were opened with singing and prayer.

Among the challenges dealt with in that era was the emancipation of the slaves, and this change in society was not less felt in the life of Fellowship Church. In church conference on April 7, 1867, we “appointed a committee for the purpose of drawing up an agreement between the white and colored members of this church respecting (the) building of a house of worship.” “The Building Committee . . . engaged Mr. Washington Brown to build the house for three hundred and twenty-five dollars.” Anna Groover allowed that house of worship to be built on her land (which was officially donated by deed on July 19, 1886).

Only three days later, an agreement was written up to address this situation. The committee states its goal “of avoiding any future misunderstanding or difficulty that might hereafter arise between the white and colored members of the church.” The white members agreed to build a house of worship for its black members, yet they retained the right of ownership of the property as well as authority “to call and dismiss preachers,” to discipline, and “to transact any business that we deem necessary for the welfare of the church.” While the house of worship was being built for the black members, they were allowed to use the old church building for certain hours of worship.

The final step to autonomy was recorded on April 7, 1883. "Our old Bible was given to the colored brethren who have withdrawn and organized a church for themselves."  
That church, Friendship Baptist Church on Mud Road, still continues.

Church business continued. A collection was taken in 1869 for a Sunday School library as a testimony to the commitment of Bible study. Another Collection was taken in 1872 for "home missions."

The death of a church member resulted in a committee being appointed of fellow members to compose an obituary of that person. The first recording of the Christian Index was in 1876 when the obituary of Martha Groover was to be sent for publication.

In 1876, the records show a discussion of associational delegates "being given church wishes on becoming a member of the Georgia Baptist State Convention." The church voted against it.

Our cooperative involvement in the association continued with delegates regularly attending its annual meetings. We were active in the Union and Miller Associations, and helped organize the Bulloch County (now known as the Ogeechee River) Association in 1899. We resolved on September 13, 1873, to voice support for an associational missionary to be discussed at the next meeting at Oak Grove Baptist Church. On March 11 of 1876, we agreed to make regular collections during the year for support of the association. In July of 1894 delegates from Statesboro, Corinth, Emit and Bull Creek Baptist Churches met with us. Also, we took our turn in hosting that meeting in 1899.

Our support of missions also grew. In conference on May 8, 1869, we "agreed to have a missionary sermon preached at our next meeting and a collection taken up for associational purposes. We agreed that collections should be taken up with increasing regularity for the support of associational, state and home missions." A gift of \$300 was given for associational purposes in 1887. In December of 1897 we took up a collection for Mercer. We resolved to give half of the collection on February 12, 1898, to "the Baptist Church of Fort Smith, Arkansas . . . (to) help to rebuild their church."

We also supported local mission work by joining in to help in the establishment of several area churches. Some of these churches were: "at Sharp Station" in June of 1887, "at Mill Creek" in April of 1890, "at Emmitt" in August, 1892, and "seven miles below here at what is now called Barn Hill school house" in September, 1897.

Our Sunday School continued to teach the truths of the Bible. On December 11, 1869, "we agreed in take up a collection for a Sunday School Library." Further work on the church library was done in April of 1889 to purchase Christian literature. The ladies of the church also presented the ten volumes of Chambers' Encyclopedia to Pastor J. A. Scarboro. We first mentioned subscribing to the Christian Index, the Georgia Baptist newspaper in February of 1896.

A building committee was mentioned in the conference minutes of December, 1878, and was charged with raising money" to have the church sealed and sashes put in the windows." The "final report" of the building committee was supposed to be made in September, 1879, but was delayed. The committee was authorized on April 9, 1881, to "purchase the lumber for ceiling the church," and on June 10, 1881 was encouraged to "proceed at once to have the church ceiled and all other work necessary done at once." In August, 1883, "L. A. Brown assisted the ladies in directing the work of house painting. C. S. Martin, J. G. Cone and R. H. Cone were appointed to pillar the (church) house." That November, the building committee was dismissed, "but the committee to pillar the house was continued." Their work progressed slowly without "the necessary aid to raise the house," and a day of fasting and prayer was observed in January, 1884. In 1885, steps were added to the pulpit stand. In 1886, funds were collected to carpet the aisles of the church. A committee to purchase an organ reported in February, 1887. Another Building Committee was organized in 1900.

The concluding words of our Church Covenant of 1844 speak of the desire "to live in peace with all men if possible." Unfortunately, times come when peace with both one's own conscience and peace with all men seems to be impossible. This appears to have been the situation our church faced during a controversy beginning in 1895. Brother W. J. Durham had been called to serve as pastor beginning in 1892 with the "desire that he leave other occupations and preach altogether." However, by September of 1895 a petition was presented that demanded his

resignation. He apparently answered negatively, and a committee was appointed to deal with the petition. In October, the committee met with five of those who opposed Durham, but no settlement was reached. A motion was made and seconded that the church consider charges against everyone whose name appeared on the petition for disturbing the peace of the church and destroying the fellowship of the same. "Whereas quite a number (55) of our members signed a paper demanding the resignation of Bro. Durham thereby causing a great deal of confusion in the church." When this was brought up again in the November meeting, "all against whom charges were pending adjourned and left the meeting," after which, the church voted to withdraw fellowship from the five leaders of the petition. Propositions for their consideration were presented "for the good of the community and the cause of Christ" to make peace, but were not accepted. One week later it was unanimously agreed to grant letters to those (23) who still desired to withdraw. The record shows that the settlement of "take the church house and leave the organ or take the organ and leave the church house." It is assumed they took the organ. Durham's presence was not mentioned after this meeting.

Conference did not meet until three months later "to decide how we should fill our regular appointments." It was suggested that we defer calling a pastor for the present and rely upon supply ministers to preach on meeting days. Then in April, 1896, J. A. Scarboro was unanimously called as pastor. We also resolved to rescind all the actions of the church during the period of difficulty in a desire for "mutual acknowledgement and forgiveness of all wrongs either real or fancied of a personal nature." Fellowship was only withdrawn from those "who fail after a reasonable time, by the July conference, to accept or signify their acceptance of the . . . settlement." In July of 1896, a resolution voicing a genuine desire both to request forgiveness from God and one another and to extend the same was passed along with a motion to eliminate from the record and bury the troubles of the past.

Generally, our church meetings would last two days each month, with a conference day on Saturday and a preaching day on Sunday. From time to time our worship meetings were drawn out for a longer period of time, and spoken of as "protracted meetings." Occasionally a guest speaker might come to assist the pastor. And on many occasions the Lord used these "protracted meetings" to bring many of our folks to faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and were received in the church body "by experience." We call these meetings today "Revival."

We resolved to have an annual reunion beginning on the second Saturday in June, 1892.  
Other reunions were on January 1, 1893; May 1894, and on the fifth Sunday in July 1894,  
we celebrated our Semi-Centennial with a special meeting and program.

## **THE TWENTIETH CENTURY CHURCH**

The church building was the focus of discussion during a conference in 1900 as it "needed a remodeling." O. H. Warnock was paid in 1903 for building the church. Church seating (pews) costing \$100 was added to the project in 1904. At this time there was no discussion of purchasing land adjoining the church of one or two acres. The building project was completed in 1905. A dedication sermon was preached by J. C. Brewton in July honoring the "new house of worship."

The "rift" in the church family in the late 1800's apparently brought about some disruption in normal church functions such as Sunday School. In October of 1906 there was a meeting to organize a Sunday School and Walter Forbes was appointed superintendent as efforts were made to resume its study of the Word. The method of baptism, once persons were received by the church, was to immerse them in a natural body of water during the warmer months. In November of 1906 the church solicited funds to build a baptistery to accommodate their needs during the cooler months.

The church grounds were expanded in January of 1912 when two acres of land were received from Lewis W. Brown.

The church felt a great responsibility to provide for its pastors. In 1911 it was "decided to build a pastor's house" at Ivanhoe. This was a financial responsibility for a number of years. Discussions regarding paying off the debt were held in 1912 and again in 1917. The deed to the parsonage was received by Bro. McCall in January of 1919.

We are not sure what impact World War 1 had on church life. The only mention of any significance came in November of 1916 when a committee was appointed "to meet with the enlistment campaign at Statesboro Church."

The traditional method of travel, the horse and wagon, was challenged in 1918, when there was a discussion during church conference to possibly purchasing an automobile for the pastor, A. M. McDaniel.

A cemetery committee was appointed in 1921 "to oversee lots." A road was to be put through the cemetery from the side of the church which meant moving one grave. The next year the church took bids on fencing the cemetery. Discussions about "staking lots" were still being held in 1929.

The Ivanhoe parsonage was the center of discussion again in 1925 when it was decided to sell it to D. Howell Cone for \$300.

The automobile was changing the country rapidly. The impact was noted in 1931 when the church discussed giving a "few feet of property to the state highway to widen the road bed" (the present U.S. 80 Highway). They agreed to move "our church back as far as we designated" (the present location).

Preaching took place only twice a month during the years. The Sundays of the month were determined by the availability of the pastor and the wishes of the congregation. In August of 1936 the date for Homecoming was set which we observe today, the second Sunday in October. In 1945 there was a mention of Bible School being held during the summer months "sometimes." After Pastor Serson's death in 1949, it was noted that services would be the first and third Sunday afternoons which was a change from morning services. The church went through some difficult years in the mid 1950's trying to find a pastor. It was decided in 1954 to use students from Mercer University as interim pastors. Church services at that time were only held once a month. Services twice a month in the morning and evening resumed in 1955. It was not until 1969 that church services were held every Sunday "full time." The Mercer students had an influence on the church by focusing on the youth. The church provided a Baptist Training Union (B.T.U.) Study Training course for the leaders during the mid-fifties.

The tradition of observing the Lord's Supper once a quarter was established in May of 1957. "On the same day conference would be held." In that year a motion was made to change the plans of a building for restrooms and pump house to include a 10' by 24' room which served as a Sunday School room for the younger children.

The sanctuary of the church became the topic of discussion in 1959 for improvements. It was decided to purchase a new rug and to move the church entry doors to the center and only have one aisle. Pews were purchased also.

(There were no minutes found from 1960-1964.)

The building Committee was active again in 1969 when it was moved to do some work on the church and social hall. New steps were put on the side and back of the hall. The sanctuary of the church was air conditioned and the small heater moved from the church to the annex. The sanctuary was painted in 1975 and the windows repaired.

The social hall floor received a new covering in 1978.

The following year a heating unit was added to the baptistery.

Again, in 1970 the state highway department asked that six feet of land be given along the dirt road (Mud Road).

During the seventies the church expanded its organizational structure to include the Baptist Young Women, Women's Missionary Union and Brotherhood. The youth group grew during the pastorate of Earl Saxon and in 1975 the church leased the Old Presbyterian Church in Stilson for them to use. To keep the membership informed of news among other Missionary Baptists, they voted in 1977 to have the Christian Index sent to each home. A puppet ministry was added for the young people. Girls in Action and Royal Ambassadors were added in 1981. The missionary work of the church continued through support of Georgia Baptist Hospital, State Missions, Home Missions, Foreign Missions, Georgia Baptist Children's Home and Home for the Aged.



In 1974, the care of a pastor was of concern again when the church began discussing the building of a pastorium. Land for the house was accepted from Harold and Edith Hutchison. By 1978 a motion to finish the house was made. In 1980 the pastorium was completed. The pastor at the time did not need the house so it was decided to rent it and use the money to landscape the grounds.

In 1980, a committee was appointed to study improving the Sunday School rooms. Improvements were made to the social hall by purchasing a stove, hot water heater and refrigerator in the early 1980's. The cabinets over the stove were added in 1988.

The cemetery needed land for expansion. In 1981, one-half of an acre was purchased from and one-half an acre was donated by Mrs. Carl Bragg. Eighty-eight plots were laid out in the new cemetery section in 1986.

As the church's organizations grew a new Constitution and set of By-laws was needed to help govern their functions. A committee was appointed and work began. In 1983, the document was adopted by the church. It helped to provide for rotation of deacons, calling of pastors, maintenance and overseeing of grounds and cemetery as well as other church functions. New hymn books were purchased for the church in that same year.

In 1984, at a church conference the church recognized Mrs. Hattie Mae Swint for her service of 26 years as church treasurer.

Improvements to the church continued as a sound system was added to the sanctuary in 1983, enabling members to better hear the Word from the pulpit. In 1988, the outside nursery and bathroom building (white block building) were discussed. It was decided to add a door between the nursery and the ladies' bathroom for "convenience."

In the mid 1980's, the old records of the church became a concern. The minutes from 1844-1990 were copied to prevent damage to the book by being handled. It was decided to appoint a History Committee to begin compiling an account of the church. The first report of the establishment of the church was made at Homecoming in 1986. The church decided to keep the old records in a safe deposit box. Mr. Wilson Groover took care of this matter.

Concern about the "annual call of the pastor" was brought to the attention of the members at the September 26, 1990 conference when Reverend Timothy Squire asked Reverend Marvin Stamie, the director of Missions for the Savannah area, to come and discuss the "disadvantages and advantages from both the church and pastors stand point". He asked the members to consider changing the By-laws. There was no action to review the By-laws.

In 1990, the church accepted the title to the historical cemetery of Capt. William Cone for preservation purposes. The cemetery is located on Old River Road and a plaque was approved to be placed in the OFBC cemetery designating it as under the care of the church.

The early nineties brought a discussion of indoor bathrooms which led to a discussion of a new annex with classrooms, nursery, and restrooms. The church roof was also in need of repair. The month of May, 1990, was set aside as a time for members to make monetary commitments toward the building project. The members gave generously and the annex was constructed. In 1991, it was decided to add the siding used on the annex to the rest of the church building. The gas heaters were removed from the sanctuary. A handicap ramp was added to the side entrance of the sanctuary in 1992.

At the April 1993 conference Reverend John Parker announced that the Ogeechee Association Missions Committee wanted to do a survey of Eldora Farms to "see about setting up a church in the Eldora Community".

### **PREPARING FOR 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

Conferences in 1993 centered mainly around getting prepared for the church's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary to be celebrated on the second Sunday in October of 1994. It was decided that a pictorial directory would be done of church members for the event. Pictures were taken in the fall of 1993. The Building Committee along with other Homecoming Committees proposed some improvements: expand the choir loft and pulpit areas, upgrade choir loft lighting, raise the canopy at the side door, paint the handicap ramp, install molding to enhance the church

sanctuary, replace the double door at the side entrance with a wider single door, replace the doors from the sanctuary to the Sunday School rooms, paint the sanctuary, refinish the wood floors, replace the carpet, recover the cushions and pulpit chairs, purchase additional pews. The stained glass covering the baptismery was given by the Wilson Groover Family in his memory.

The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event was celebrated in conjunction with Homecoming on October 9, 1994. The speaker for the event was Jim Griffin (Griffith) from the state office. The services concluded with the traditional “dinner on the grounds” under the trees. The first history book was distributed to attendees recounting the major events since the churches beginning in 1844. A good time and a bountiful meal were enjoyed by all.

The mid and late 90’s found the church progressing in its service to the Lord through outreach initiatives and mission programs. More emphasis was placed on providing a program for the youth of the church. The block building previously used as a nursery room was converted into a meeting area for the youth (September, 1994). The youth began to spread their wings with mission out-reach trips to Alaska (summer, 1999) and Pennsylvania (summer, 2000) supported by the church and fundraising by the youth.

Eldora Farms was a growing community in the southeastern end of Bulloch County and the church began to focus on the area to bring the good news about Jesus to the people. In January of 1996, Reverend John Parker announced that a mission project would be started in the Eldora area. A trailer was donated for a church building, and Rev. Phillip Wheelles would be the pastor. He asked Old Fellowship to commit to giving \$100 a month for 12 months to the project. On March 3, 1996 a called conference was held and the church voted to sponsor a mission at Eldora. A Steering Committee (Edward Blitch, Olive Ann Groover, Rosie Saxon, Buck Sherrod, Earl Nelson, and Will Groover) was appointed in April, 1996 to act as a liaison between Eldora Mission and Old Fellowship Baptist Church. They were to serve until they resigned or until the mission was constituted as a church. In July, 1996, OFBC deacons recommended the purchase of land for the mission. Old Fellowship gave the Mission \$10,000 towards the purchase of the property. The Mission in return would pay \$500 a year to Old Fellowship or “as much as they could afford.” The Georgia Baptist Convention would give a grant toward 25% (\$6,250) of the cost of the property and a lien would be held against the property until the Mission could pay. Ronald (Ronnie) Harvey, a deacon of Old Fellowship Baptist Church, decided to give three of the five acres (\$15,000) to the mission, and the church purchased two acres (\$10,000). The State Convention also agreed to pay \$300 a month toward pastoral aid to Old Fellowship as the sponsoring church for the first year and \$200 for the second year and finally \$100 for the third year. A called meeting in August 1996 approved the giving of \$3000 to the Mission for the purpose of moving a mobile chapel onto the property. The chapel was moved in September of that year. The Mission by January 1997 was giving to the Cooperative Program (7%) and to the W. W. Mann Center (1.5%) of their offerings. At a called meeting in January of 1997 the church approved the adding of Venda Thompson and James Hay to the Eldora Steering Committee. In March of that same year the church approved funds to be used to make the Wheelles’ home handicap accessible for Kathy, his wife, who suffered paralysis from a tragic car accident leaving the mission one evening. In July of 1997 a grant (\$41,000) was received through the Cooperative Extension Program of Bulloch County and an after school tutoring program was begun at the Mission in the fall. Old Fellowship Church made a commitment to give every fifth Sunday’s offering to Eldora Mission for purchase and maintenance of a building. It held its first revival on May 29-31, 1998 under a tent in front of the mission trailer.

Old Fellowship continued to encourage and support the pastors in providing resources for them to attend the Georgia Baptist Convention and other pastoral clinics to benefit the work of shepherding God’s people. The annual giving to the Ogeechee River Association for the W. W. Mann Center was set at 1.5% of the annual income of the church in April, 1994. The church cemetery committee had new members added and the need for additional funding to maintain the upkeep and care for the cemetery was approved to be increased from \$10,000 to \$30,000 and interest earned annually to be added to the principal for the care. In 1995, Open Windows was ordered and made available to church members.

In January of 1995 a proposal was made and approved that the church would develop a budget for the support of the many functions of the church. This would be the beginning of a new process for carrying on the business of the church and the budget would be approved annually by the membership. In that same year the church drew up a Cemetery Trust Agreement calling for 5 trustees to be appointed. These trustees are in charge of maintaining and repairing the cemetery grounds. These trustees made up the Cemetery Committee who drew up the “rules and

regulations for the cemetery”. The names of those buried in the Cone Cemetery were recorded and a discussion was held in 1998 regarding placing markers in the cemetery.

Building improvements were made. In April 1995, the church approved the purchase of a new piano (\$6500) for the sanctuary. Improvements were made to the sound system (1999). A new Sunday School Annex was completed in the spring of 1998 adding space for classes. Cemetery improvements were made by adding fencing to the south and east sides.

As the church and the mission grew, transportation became an issue. A committee was formed and a van was purchased to support the outreach activities of the church. The twentieth century ended with a committee being established for the purpose of expanding the church sanctuary to accommodate the growing congregation. The membership approved for incorporation in 1998.

### **DAWNING OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

Church membership growth and program expansion led to a need to examine the church facilities to accommodate the growing needs. There was much discussion about the expansion of the church sanctuary for the purpose of housing God’s people. It was approved to add enough room to the sanctuary to provide for four additional rows of pews, a vestibule and a front porch. A growing Sunday School presented a need to remove a wall separating two rooms behind the church sanctuary to accommodate larger classes (spring 2000). Construction on the sanctuary was completed by October, 2001. The following year a water fountain was added to the Sunday School Annex. Playground improvements were made by purchasing new equipment (\$7500). Hearing impaired capabilities were added to the sound system to accommodate for those who needed those services (August, 2001). Air conditioning was added to the music loft (July, 2002). The church pastorium needed some upgrades and improvements. The church approved to replace the carpet, vinyl and repair windows (2002). Wooden blinds were added to adorn the church windows (2003).

The church leadership saw a need to revisit the church By-Laws (2000- 01) for the purpose of clarifying the length of time from pastor recall to the vacating of the office.

The church was experiencing many blessings creating a growing need for a larger facility to accommodate social and business meetings of the church. This led to the appointing of a committee to look into the feasibility of a new social hall (January, 2003). Much discussion was had by members as to the size, location and cost of such an addition. It was decided that the church would not borrow money to build the addition, but would depend on the Lord to move members to give from their heart to accomplish this need. The church grounds were surveyed in preparation for obtaining a building permit (2004). The Social Hall Planning Committee reported the estimated cost of construction could be as high as \$425,000 depending on the amount of work that could be done by members of the church. The ground was cleared for the site, and the plans and permit were obtained in 2004. In 2005, Carl (Buzzy) Bragg offered an additional three acres of land located behind the present church facilities for the cost of surveying property and legal fees. The church accepted the generous gift with a unanimous vote of approval in January, 2006. At the January Church Conference of 2006, the Social Hall Building Committee reported that the new social hall to be at the “dried in” phase of completion. The new social hall was completed and dedicated at the Homecoming Services of October, 2007. A plaque was recommended and approved by the church to be placed in the new social hall listing the Social Hall Building Committee and leadership of the church (2008).

Royal Ambassadors (RAs) was added to the program (2005) to enable our young boys to grow in the knowledge of the Lord and in service.

Music has always been a vital part of the worship services at Old Fellowship, and the organ was beginning to have problems. The church approved the purchase of a new organ in March, 2006 (\$17,783).

The church’s aging facilities needed attention. The pastorium needed window repairs and the church approved to replace all the windows with more energy efficient ones in November 2007. As the sanctuary building continued to age the windows and doors needed some attention. It was recommended that the sanctuary windows be replaced with vinyl ones and the side door replaced (2011). With the addition of a new social hall the attention turned to the

old social hall and how to make it into more useable space. It was remodeled (\$45,000) to provide additional classroom space for the Sunday School. Three additional classrooms and an office were created (2008). The Sunday school rooms were named and plaques placed on the doors identifying the classes (2009).

Various business activities of the church transpired. The church membership approved the first Sunday in November to be set aside each year as Pastor Appreciation Day. A new pictorial church directory was completed in 2004 and again in 2009. A Mosaic Directory picture was presented to the church and hangs in the social hall. The church approved to resume Sunday evening worship services in August, 2004. The church By-Laws were reviewed again in 2005-06 and changes approved. The church appointed a committee to investigate whether or not the church should have a web site. The committee surveyed the membership and 72% felt that the church could benefit from a website and one was established (2007). In 2008, the church voted to move additional general fund dollars to the cemetery fund bringing the CD up to \$100,000 in order for the interest to be used to maintain the cemetery. In 2009, the church approved to move the financial business of the church to be budgeted on a calendar year beginning in 2010.

The church was blessed in membership being led to give to the work of the Lord. Five thousand dollars was approved to be sent to both the Georgia Baptist Children's Hospital and the Georgia Baptist Disabilities Association and some amount given to the Indian Nations Baptist Church (2003). The church increased its contribution to the Christian Social Ministry from 1% to 3.7% (2003). It also gave a one-time donation of \$2000 to assist the WW Mann Center with its indebtedness (2003). Two sister churches experienced devastating fires, Emit Grove and Lawrence Baptist Churches, and the church donated \$5000 to each to assist them in construction costs (2007).

The church felt moved to recognize Donald Brown for his life-long service on the Building and Grounds Committee. He, being a man of the Lord, did not see a need for this recognition; however, he did finally agree to enjoy a fellowship meal on the ground at the church in the spring of 2003.

Eldora Mission was doing well under the leadership of the Eldora Steering Committee (Reland Morgan, Barbara Morgan, Edward Blicht, Rosie Saxon, Buck Sherrod, Wes Sherrod, Jennifer Sherrod, Terry Sherrod, Rose Brown, Sara Williams, and Charlotte Malott). In January of 2000 Old Fellowship approved the purchase of the Eldora Mission building from the Georgia Baptist Association for \$7,000. Eldora Mission would pay \$2,000 and Old Fellowship would pay \$5,000. At the same time, it was voted to discontinue the fifth Sunday offering donation to the mission once the building was purchased. In February, 2001 the church voted to call Reland Morgan to serve as Associate Pastor and serve Eldora Mission. Improvements were being made to the mission facilities by adding carpeting to the floors. Pews were given by Olive Branch Baptist Church (April, 2001) to replace the chairs. In 2002, to support Sunday School at the mission, Old Fellowship Church approved the gathering of the used Sunday School literature to be given to the mission to help offset the cost until the mission was financially able to take on this expense. A Women's Mission, Bible study and Brotherhood were added to the programming offered to the community (2004). The Community Baptist Church had decided to discontinue keeping house for the Lord and gave the church building and grounds to the Ogeechee River Baptist Association. In turn, they made the building available to Old Fellowship Baptist Church and the Eldora Mission for the cost (\$42,000) of removing the building and relocating it to the Eldora Mission site. The building was moved in the fall of 2004. The building was restored and dedicated to the Lord on May 16, 2005. The old mission building would be used as a social hall and walkway was constructed connecting the buildings. In July of 2006, the Eldora Steering Committee reported that the Eldora Mission would like to move toward becoming a church. A committee was formed to write the constitution and by-laws for the establishment of a church. Old Fellowship Church approved by vote the establishment of Eldora Mission as a church in January of 2007. Eldora Mission, begun in 1996, was constituted as Eldora Baptist Church on January 28, 2007. We praised the Lord for His blessings and for His continued blessings on this new body of people who were setting up house to serve him.

Old Fellowship Youth continued to grow and reach out to other youth. They began an annual Valentine Dinner (2004) as a fundraiser to support their trips to Super Wow and other youth functions. In 2005, the church began a serious discussion about having a Youth Director who could devote more time to leading the youth. Suggestions were made to look at the Baptist Student Union at Georgia Southern to find youth who could assist. Daniel Stall came for a summer (2006) to lead the youth. Ping Pong tables were purchased for the youth program (2007). A committee was appointed to find a Youth Director. Alex Clark came in January 2009 to work with the youth followed by C. A. Jones in 2010.

Women on Missions has been a vital part of the church's out-reach programming on missions and has taken charge of supporting the various mission programs. They annually promote the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering by setting a goal for the church. WOM began to collect recipes for the first church cookbook which was published in 2008. In 2010, they began supporting the Back Pack Buddies, a program in the schools for children to have food over the weekends. A clothes closet was begun in that same year for needy families.

### **CHURCH APPEARANCE IN EARLY 1900'S**

A verbal recollection of how the church appeared was given by Mrs. Edith Hutchison, the daughter of Mamie and Henry Woodward, who attended the church as a child. She recalled the church was a simple structure with two aisles on either side of the sanctuary. There were windows located behind the altar with a large wood stove on the left side near the pulpit where people would gather during the cooler months. Where the baptistery is now there were four classrooms added for Sunday School. This building addition was led by Mr. Woodward and Mr. Brown, Donald Brown's father, with help from other church members. She recalls that her dad simply came to the church and began work and others joined in.

### **TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CONTINUES**

Ministries from Old Fellowship Baptist Church continued. Youth continued to grow. In 2011, Ben Phillips from Georgia Southern Baptist Student Union led the Youth. They participated in ministries such as Youth Evangelism Conference and D NOW sponsored by Georgia Southern. Another ministry was Operation Christmas Child in which shoeboxes were sent to needy children. Women On Mission continued ongoing mission projects, such as donations to the Georgia Baptist Children's Home, Eldora Backpacks, and Choices of the Heart. At the recommendation of Reverend Mel Shuman, a men's ministry was begun and continues to meet on a regular basis. In 2012, the church discussed the need for a benevolence fund. It was determined the church will refer all benevolent need requests to the pastor and deacons to consider, and the church will take up a love offering based upon their recommendation.

Upkeep on the church facilities continued to be an ongoing project. In 2010, windows were replaced and a handicapped door was installed in the sanctuary. An audio/video color camera for broadcasting to the social hall was installed in 2011. Additional projects included refinishing the hardwood floors and installing carpet in the sanctuary. In 2012, the church modified existing playground equipment and installed outside lighting and playground fencing. Also, in 2012 the church removed the old cement block building and installed lighting in the front of the church. In 2013, a new lighted sign replaced the old sign in the front of the church. Also, in 2013, the cemetery committee oversaw the installation of a chain link fence around the perimeter of the cemetery.

From 2014 until 2018 ministries continued. A long-range planning committee was formed. The church recommended and approved a youth/children's director. In 2015, the Women on Mission group exceeded their goal of backpack donations for needy children at the Eldora Church. In addition to the backpacks at Eldora, WOM was involved in the Backpack Buddy Program, which provided food for needy students at local schools on a regular basis. In 2017, the number of backpacks donated had increased to 100.

Various business activities of the church also continued. In 2017, the following was an addition to the church By-Laws to read: "We engage the word "marriage" means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word "spouse" refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife." Also, in 2017 a deacon was added to make the total number of deacons seven. Facility improvements included repairs to the church building from Hurricane Matthew, replacing the heating and air conditioning in the pastorium, and adding projectors and screens in the sanctuary. A storage building was purchased to replace the old block building in the back of the church.

In 2019 the pastorium underwent repairs and upgrades in preparation for the new pastor and family.

Dr. Lambert began a new Senior Saints ministry.

Plans are underway to celebrate Old Fellowship's 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the October Homecoming.

**Record ends with minutes from July, 2019.**

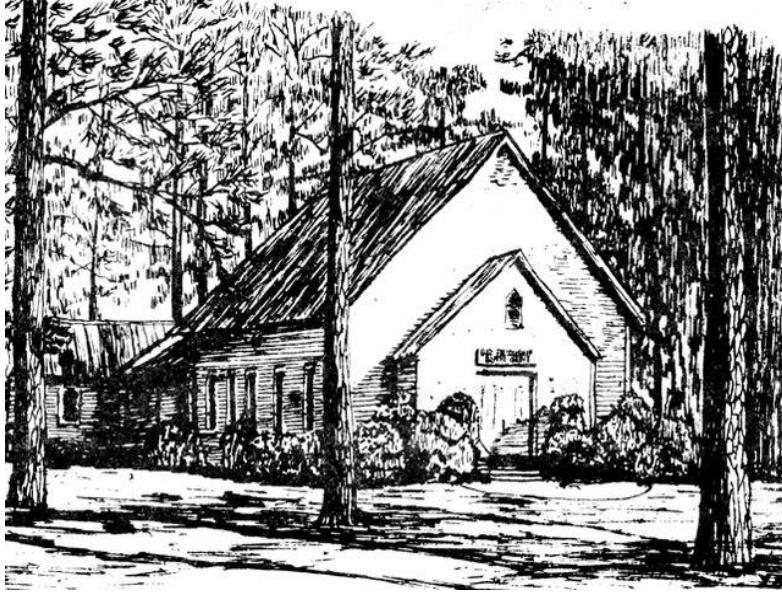
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**PASTORAL LIST**

1845-1849	John G. Williams	1940-1942	C. M. Coalson
1850	William S Moore	1943	R. H. Hodges
1851-1862	James R. Miller	1944	(No Records)
1863	Brother Murrow	1945-1949	T. Earl Serson
1864-1866	No Pastor	1949	William Kitchens
1867-1868	J. W. Linear	1950-1952	George Lovell
1869-1880	Hue E. Cassidy	1953	W. L. Bolton
1880-1881	John C. Brewton	1954	Wade Hiltabidel
1882-1884	J. W. Lanier*	1955	Harville Hendrix
1885-1889	J. A. Scarboro	1955-1956	Jimmy Oliver
1890	J. H. Dew	1956-1964	William (Bill) Price
1891-1895	W. J. Durham	1965-1968	William Kitchens
1896	J. A. Scarboro	1968-1972	Robert Holcomb
1897	T. J. Cobb	1972-1974	Eddie Potts
1898	J. L. Purvis	1974-1975	Earl Saxon
1899-1905	T. J. Cobb	1976-1980	Dr. Robert Smith
1906-1913	W. D. Horton	1981	Otis Bentley
1914-1919	A S. McDaniel	1982-1984	Phillip Daley
1920-1928	William Kitchens	1985-1991	Timothy Squire
1928-1935	W. H. Robinson	1991-2001	Dr. John T. Parker
1935	C. M. Coalson	2001-2015	Dr. Reland Morgan
1936-1940	William Kitchens	2016-2019	Chuck Beaver
	*Lanier is the same person as Linear	2019-2020	Dr. Tony Lambert

**ELDORA MISSION PASTORS**

1995-1998	Phillip Wheelles	1998-2000	Frank Koger
1998	Robert (Bob) Green (Interim)	2000-2001	Reland Morgan
		2001-2007	Wesley Sherrod
1998	Bud Talbort	2008-Present	Scott Howard



**Drawing of Old Fellowship Baptist Church in the 1980's**



**Old Fellowship with Sunday School Addition**





**Old Fellowship in the 2018 snow**



**Old Fellowship Baptist Church Today**