

## **LIBERTY CHAPEL MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH**

### **HISTORY**

#### **1853 – PRESENT**

The belief in God and a desire to worship Him led the forefathers of this community to worship in the Master's Church. The Pastor, Reverend Samuel Wrother Young, a native of North Carolina, was a Christian man who believed in Christian education, allowed the slaves to worship with them.

In the early 1850's as the congregation grew, it was decided by the masters John Henry Carter and Reverend Young to give the slaves a plot of land to build their own house of worship. The slaves were given boards and logs to construct the first log cabin. They worshipped under a brush arbor under the leadership of Reverend Ben Howard while the cabin was being built. At the death of Rev. Ben Howard, Rev. Will Frazier served as the pastor for many years.

On this plot of land four churches have been erected. In the spring of 1853 the cabin was completed. The name "Liberty Chapel" seemed to be appropriate in as much as they were "free to worship." This present church was the first block structure and it was renovated recently in 2002.

In citing the history of our church, we must mention the early families and accomplishments of some of our leaders. Some of the first families to help bring this church to present include McMahan, Frazier, Roberts, Ellis, Smith, Graham, Kingcade, Jacobs, Thomas, and Davis.

Rev. Crivlier petitioned the United States Postal Service for a mail route to serve the outlying community that stretched from Blaze Pond to Pepperhill. His request was granted in the early 1920's. At that point in time, the members wanted to build a new church with a bell tower and hanging kerosene lamps.

Lumber was hauled in from the lumber mill at Fairfield and Irvine by Bro. Virgil Kingcade and Bro. Isaac Graham. The money for the building was kept by Bro. Walter Thomas, the church treasurer who maintained that position for over thirty years.

Some of the other members who helped erect the third building were Brothers, Aaron Smith, George Roberts, Columbus Frazier, J.W. McLaughlin, Henry Williams, William Behn, Jake Roberts,

George McMahon, John Kingcade, Lott Dorsey, Sanders Roberts, Charlie Thomas, Louis McMahon, and Randall Sherman.

First Aid service was given by our mid-wives at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Sisters Margaret Brooks and Kate Sherman.

Some of the outstanding women of that time helped by keep the workers fed. They included Sisters Estelle Burton, Nora Ervine, Jessie Frazier, Susie Jacobs, Josephine McLaughlin, Diana Williams, Margie Kingcade, Ona Roberts, Alice Graham, Ida Roberts, Rosa Howard, Sarah Simmons, Henretta Dorsey, Sarah Simmons, Ella Houston, Mary Smith, Rebecca Roberts, Christine Joshua, and Sallie Newsome.

Later in the 1920's Sis. Ona Ellis Roberts asked the church to purchase a piano. Her wish was granted and she organized the first youth choir.

In 1928-1929 the congregation celebrated its first high school graduates: Sisters Minnie McLaughlin Green and Lucretia Thomas Sims. These ladies completed their studies at Fessenden Academy and remained faithful and dutiful to Liberty Chapel until their deaths serving as secretary and treasurer for many, many years. Also in 1928, the church was saddened by the death of Bro. Mose Spike's entire family when Lake Okeechobee flooded the Everglades.

From the founding and for close to seventy-five years, members hauled in barrels of water to serve the needs of the congregation. Deacon J. Will McLaughlin proposed drilling a well and installation of a pump and saw this effort realized in the early 1930's.

Many developments took place during the period of the late 1930's through the 1950's. A very talented young man by the name of Bro. Adam Thompson joined our ranks to serve as a musician. He put together a youth choir that became one of the most outstanding choirs in the Northern District of the Second Bethlehem Association of the National Baptist Convention. Bro. Dave Graham was the first president of this group.

An outdoor baptism pool was installed.

Bro. Henry Williams kept track of the burials in the cemetery, made every effort to keep family members together in the appropriate plots, and was dedicated to the beautification of this burial ground that was immediately adjacent to the church. It was his desire to have a cemetery lawn free of brush and briars. Bro. Earnest Graham Sr. bought 300 pounds of grass seed and with

the help of Brothers Mose Terrell, Sanders Roberts, Sis. Vera Alexander, and Bro. Charlie Thomas, sowed the seed by hand to help fulfill this desire and enhance the beauty of the cemetery.

Brothers Louis McMahon and Sanders Roberts opened and closed the Church, kept oil in the lamps and wood for the heater during the winter seasons. They were also responsible for requesting equipment to maintain the grounds and the cemetery. It was not until 1947 and rural electrification, that the Church installed electric lights.

Several local churches grew out of this church: Calvary, New Chapel, and Gallilee. Several ministers had their beginning at Liberty Chapel: Reverends John Kingcade, George McMahon, Columbus Frazier, Aaron Smith, Leroy Jacobs, David Graham, Wallis Green, and Winston Dawson.

With community growth and expansion, a three church federation was organized between Liberty Chapel, New Chapel and Bethlehem Baptist churches to offer a rotating plan of services for fifth Sundays.

In 1963, the first woman trustee, Sis. Vera M. Alexander was placed on the Church board with Sis. Loretta Thomas the second woman added the following year.

The present church was completed under Rev. Edgar Thomas, as well as the former dining hall in 1969, which was demolished in 1997. Construction of the 5,300 s.f. addition of the multi-purpose building was initiated under the leadership of Rev. Samuel R. Seales, Jr. and completed under the leadership of Rev. Charles M. Streeter, III.

In 1971, a vacation bible school with the three church federation was organized under the direction of Deacon John Boatwright. His efforts brought many youth into church activities.

Liberty Chapel has been blessed with the following pastors through the years. Reverends Ben Howard, Elias Smith, John Nance – 1892, L.W. Crivillier 1892-1932, N.H. Shaw 1932 – 1935, Rev. Marshall 1936, A.C. McQueen 1936-1939, G.W. Dobson 1940-1947, C.P. Brown 1947-1951, M.L. Hawkins 1951-1960, G.W. Dobson 1960-1964, Edgar Thomas 1964-1973, R.C. Curry 1973-1986, George Jones, Jr. 1986-1988, Samuel Seales Jr. 1990-1998, Charles Streeter 1998-2003, and Charles Perry 2004 to present. During the illness of Rev. N.H. Shaw, Rev. Lorenzo Slaymon served as interim pastor.



Ladies who served through the years as Church Mother: Mother Jessie Frazier, Mother Lucy Graham Bone, Mother Newrandy Behn, and now Mother Iatrice Roberts.

Trustees who served through the years include: Bro. J.W. McLaughlin, Bro. Walter Thomas, Bro. William Behn, Bro. Henry Williams, Bro. Willie Houston, Bro. Randall Sherman, Bro. Louis McMahan, Bro. A.D. Dawson, Bro. Sanders Roberts, Bro. Charlie Thomas, Sis. Vera Alexander, Sis. Loretta Thomas, Bro. Mannie Burnett, Bro. Wardell Frazier and Sis. Elnora W. Mitchell.

Some of the Deacons who served through the years are Deacons Lott Dorsey, Columbus Frazier, Aaron Smith, George Roberts, John Bone, John Kingcade, J.W. McLaughlin, Jake Roberts, Henry Williams, Mose Terrell, A.D. Dawson, Frank Miller, John Boatwright, Walter Thomas, Winston Dawson, Willie McCombs, Eugene Graham, John Dukes, Wardell Frazier, Robert Jackson, Scott Monroe, and Robert Jackson, Jr. as a Junior deacon.

Some outstanding workers in the church: Dea. John Boatwright served as a dynamic Sunday School Superintendent for many years; Sis. Jessie Wise served as a Sunday School teacher for many years; Senior and shut-in food ministry began by Rev. Winston Dawson (with the assistance of his wife Gwendolyn), a deacon at the time; Sis. Josephine Dawson served a Church Clerk for many years.

God has continued to bless this church and the membership as a whole even in the times of trouble, upheaval, dissension and storms of life. We are still making progress from 1853 to 2006, and we have grown in many ways spiritually, and financially. We are still holding on to the faith, peace, joy and love of our forefathers who proudly proclaimed:

“I love Thy church, Oh God; Her walls before me stand; Dear as an apple of Thine eye, engraved in Thy hands.

(Updated August 2006 by Sis. Vera Alexander)