

History of Wilksburg Baptist Church Chester, SC

1897 – Wilksburg Baptist Church organized with 20 charter members. The first pastor was Rev. Curtis. The first building was formerly a Presbyterian Church that was located near the present Melton home. The twentieth annual session of the Chester Baptist Association convened at Calvary Baptist Church on November 4, 1897. During this session, Wilksburg was given admission into the association as the eleventh member church.

1906 – The first church building was moved to a lot given by Betty L. Wilkes around 1906. Major Wilkes donated the building for the church. During the year, a new roof was added along with other repairs.

1912 – In the early part of 1912, the church was raised about two feet and placed on brick pillars.

1913 – The church was in need of a new roof, so efforts were made by W.E.T. Wade, W.A. Foote, W.M. Page and others to cover the roof. When the annual picnic was held, donations for the church repairs were received. Some of the ladies were so interested in this work, that they held an ice cream supper to raise more funds. After enough money had been secured to buy the shingles and nails, the good people of this community hauled them for free and a day was set for the covering.

1914 – In June of 1914, the following members of the church were selected to act on behalf of the congregation to borrow enough money to paint, buy carpeting, benches and make any necessary repairs: W.E.F. Wade, D.B. Wade,

W.A. Foote. So on June 5th, the committee secured a mortgage to Spratt Building and Loan Association for \$300.00 with an 8% interest.

1918 – The protracted meeting was commenced at Wilksburg Baptist Church on Sunday afternoon by Rev. J.H. Yarborough who was assisted in the meeting by Brother Frank Pittman of Edgemoor. There were two services held daily from Sunday until Thursday. One service was held at 11:00 AM and the other at 8:30 PM. This was a grand and glorious meeting from the beginning to the end; while it was very hot at the start, refreshing showers came Tuesday morning. During this meeting, there were 15 candidates received for baptism and two by letter.

1924 – The protracted meeting was held at Wilksburg Baptist Church by Rev. Graham of Lockhart Baptist Church. Six candidates were received for baptism.

1925 – The protracted meeting was held at Wilksburg Baptist Church August 30 – September 4 by Rev. Willis of West Side Baptist Church at the Baldwin Mill. Eight candidates for baptism and six letters were received.

1927 – The protracted meeting of 1927 started August 22. It was conducted by Rev. A.L. Willis of West Side Baptist church. Four candidates for baptism were received.

1928 – The protracted meeting of 1928 started Sunday August 28 at Wilksburg Baptist Church. This meeting was conducted by Rev. A.L. Willis of Chester, SC. Five candidates for baptism were received.

1938 – The protracted meeting of 1938 was held at Wilksburg Baptist Church. It was conducted by Rev. J.T.

Dabney of West Side Baptist Church. There were three who came for baptism.

1939 – The protracted meeting of 1939 was held the third week of August at Wilksburg Baptist Church. It was conducted by Rev. J.T. Dabney and assisted by Rev. Dabney of Greenville. There was one letter received.

1941 - The protracted meeting of 1941 was held the third week of August. There were three who joined the church by baptism. This meeting was held by Rev. J.T. Dabney.

1942 – The revival was conducted by Brother Rowilson the third Sunday in July. There were five who came for baptism.

1944 – The big meeting was held at Wilksburg by Rev. Tuning the third week in July. Three came by letter and two for baptism.

1946 – Wilksburg Baptist Church held its revival meeting the second week of August. Rev. Sinclair held the meeting with Rev. Drum as pastor. One joined by letter and three by baptism.

1950-1956 – New siding was added and a porch was built. Under the leadership of Rev. Truett Willis, the auditorium was renovated, new class rooms added, gas heat, air conditioning and new pews were added.

1952 – The church voted on January 2, 1952 that the treasurer be authorized to negotiate a loan for the church with The Peoples National Bank of Chester for an amount not to exceed \$600.00 and for a term no longer than six months.

1953 – On February 9th, the church started remodeling the auditorium at a cost of \$1,250. Church members and

friends funded the project. On June 14th, the church dedicated the remodeling of the auditorium to the service of the Lord. The congregation of WBC was called into conference on November 19, 1953. It was discussed and decided that two Sunday school rooms and a nursery be added. Several of the members donated logs to start the construction of the rooms.

1954 – The Sunday school rooms and nursery were completed. These rooms cost \$1,546.81 and were paid for in full by donations.

1955 – The congregation of Wilksburg Baptist Church was called into conference on January 2, 1955. It was discussed that the congregation borrow \$600.00 to pay off the remainder of what was owed on the pews, which cost \$1,280. The majority voted favorably for this and authorized the deacons to a loan for the church with the People's National Bank for \$600 for no longer than six months. On April 3, 1955, a congregational meeting was held to discuss the possibility of starting a cemetery. Mr. Roy Wade and family said they would give a track of land to locate the cemetery. Mr. J.F. Ouzts made a motion that we start a cemetery, and it was seconded by Mr. Pete Cassels. The board of deacons were nominated to see which location would be best for a cemetery and how to get started. On July 5, 1955, the note to People's National Bank for \$600 was paid in full. The church congregation held a meeting on July 24, 1955 to discuss and approve the purchase of an air conditioning unit and lawn mower.

1956 – On March 11, 1956, the church voted 14-4 in favor of establishing the cemetery adjoining the church instead of across the road from the church.

1957-1958 - The land for the cemetery was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Roy Wade. The congregation erected a fence around the property and prepared a layout for graves. Rev. Otis McCluney came to Wilksburg in October 1957. He started Wednesday night prayer service and training union. During his time the church continued to develop the cemetery. He was the church's first full time pastor. During this time a well was drilled on the grounds and an electric pump was installed by Mr. Ouzts for \$640.98.

1959 – Rev. Elton Hunter accepted the call to the church and began work March 1959. The church rented the teacherage at West Chester School for him to live in. Plans were made to build a parsonage. A committee was elected to secure a lot and select plans for the house. A well was drilled at the site selected for the house and contract was given to Wallace Wilks, low bidder, to build the house on a lot on Highway #9 for \$10,700. A loan was secured from Southern Mutual Insurance Company to finance the balance of the cost of the house, \$8,000. The debt on the building was paid off before time was up on the loan.

1960-The pastorium was completed at a total cost of \$11,289.30.

1961 – The church voted on February 12, 1961 to ask each adult to save .25 a week and have the fourth Sunday of every month to help pay the debt of the pastorium. On April 23, 1961, the church held a conference and voted to give the pastor \$25 each month for utilities.

1964- On May 24, 1964, the church held a conference for the purpose of buying some land for the future.

1965 – In April of 1965, the church bought 13 acres of land from Fred Worthy for future use for \$2,072.00. This was the land adjoining the present lot where the parsonage is located. This land was paid for at the time of purchase. The church started a fund raiser for a new church building. On September 18, 1965, the church voted that deacons would not be eligible for reelection for one year after their four year term. The finance committee was discontinued and their roles replaced by the deacons.

1966 –The church enrolled more young people than ever before. We owed \$450 on the parsonage and had until the fourth Sunday in March to pay it off.

1967 – Having reached a goal of \$10,000, the congregation voted to start looking at plans for a new church building. A committee was elected to serve as the planning committee. L.B. Sealy, James Porter, Otis Gregory, Clyde Perry and Margaret Cassels made up the committee. In July, 1967, Rev. Hunter resigned to accept work at Corinth Baptist Church in Monroe, NC. Jimmy Goyle was called as a supply pastor until a new full-time pastor was called to the church.

1968 – The church voted to purchase a new piano. The piano was bought from Alexander Music House in Spartanburg, SC for \$800. In June, Rev. Thomas Rawls accepted the call to pastor our church.

1969 – In May, the foundation for the new church was started with the help of the members and pastor. The congregation voted to secure a loan to finance the church for the balance of the money for a total of \$44,502.38. A.B. Devinney was given the contract to build the church on April 21, 1969. In July, the church voted to buy pews and

stained glass windows for the new building. The pews were purchased from Fairview Church Furniture Company in Monroe, NC. The windows were purchased by members of the church at \$200 each. The pews were purchased for \$150 each. Work on the new building progressed quickly with members of the church and pastor doing the work as they were able. L.B. Sealy wired the church. On November 9, 1969, the first service was held in the new building. Everyone was happy to be able to worship this day, the ninth of November, in the new building.

Total cost of the building: \$53,517.79

Cost of Furniture \$5,312.28

Total debt January 1970: \$30,463.56

- Pews Given by:
 - Mr. & Mrs. Otis Gregory and Family
 - Mr. & Mrs. J.F. Ouzts
 - Mr. & Mrs. Tom Gaston
 - In memory of W.W. Dallas
 - Mr. & Mrs. Jack Holt
 - Miss Ruth Sealy
- Windows Given by:
 - Marion M. Thomas
 - W.W. Dallas
 - T.T. Rawls
 - Bobby & Helen Perry
 - Mrs. E.W. Haile
 - The Cassels
 - Margarite Lipford
 - Zeb and Shorty Vance
 - Mary and Paul Ivey
 - Anonymous

- The Bible stand was given by:
 - Hattie Hardin & J.H. Yarborough
 - Other contributions came from Spring Mills and W.J. Cassels

The church bought 100 hymnals. On December 14, 1969, the church voted to re-establish the building fund in a separate account with the money to go toward the new building.

1970 – On May 10th the church voted to hire a nursery to plant shrubbery around the church. On May 31st, the cornerstone was laid in the church. Articles placed in the receptacle included the Bible, church periodicals, names of former pastors and dates served, names of present deacons, names of former deacons, active members, a brief history of the church, several church bulletins, associational minutes from 1969, *Home Life* magazine and a copy of the dedication day services. The mementos were placed in the receptacle by Susan Cassels, while Otis Gregory held it. The list of items were read by Margaret Cassels. Rev. Rawls laid the stone after which Mr. L.B. Sealy said a prayer of dedication. The church then sung the Doxology. Scripture passages included Acts 17:22-31, Psalms 127:1, I Corinthians: 3:10-16, I Peter 2:6-10, and Ephesians 2:19-22. The congregations sung “The Church’s One Foundation,” “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less,” and “Rock of Ages.” The new church was dedicated on June 14, 1970.

1973 – Baptismal drapes were given in memory of Edna Ouzts Thomas by her family on June 12, 1973.

1974 – February 10th, the church building was paid off. It only took 4 years and 5 months. On March 31st, the church burned the church mortgage. The church voted to install a tennis and a basketball court on the property at the back of the church. Marion M. Thomas donated \$1,150 for this project. Rev. T.T. Rawls requested his salary be reduced to \$80.75 per month in order to participate in the Southern Baptist Protection Program, Health Benefit Plan, Group Life Insurance and Long Term Disability Insurance.

1975 – On February 16th, the church voted to buy an organ and to pay for Karen Dotson's lessons. On July 13th, the fence around the tennis court was erected.

1976 – 166 members, 32 tithers, 149 enrolled in Sunday school, 81 attended Vacation Bible School.

1977 – The Women's Missionary Union received the Distinguished Achievement Award.

1979 – On January 16th, the church pews were covered for \$1,575.00.

1981 - Carpet was installed in the church for \$3,988.48. Received "M-Night High Attendance Award" from the Chester Baptist Association.

1983 – On June 26th, a church sign was added. On October 9th, the church purchased a typewriter and copier for a cost of \$1,632.80.

1984 – The church voted on April 29th to paint the outside of the church and also add the iron hand rails for \$805 plus the cost of paint.

1985 – On October 21st, the church voted to lower the ceiling in the fellowship hall by 5 inches, adding ducts, light fixtures, and fluorescent lights for \$5,865.

1986 – A protective coating was added on the outside of the windows on April 20th at a cost of \$250 per window. Carpet was installed in the fellowship hall and floor covering in the kitchen and bathrooms on June 27th. Rev. Thomas Rawls announced his retirement on November 30, 1986. The church gave the Rawls family a gift of \$1,000 for his 18 ½ years of faithful service. Rev. Otis McCluney was called to serve as supply pastor.

1987 – Mr. Arthur Smith accepted the call as our pastor.

1988 – July 17th, Mrs. Ernestine Gregory came forth to thank the church for sending the Acteens to Camp La Vida. She also told of the plans to go to the National Acteen Convention in San Antonio, Texas in 1989. Rev. Smith resigned effective October 30, 1988. The church called Rev. Thomas Rawls as supply pastor. October 30th, mini blinds were installed in the Sunday school rooms and social hall for \$820. On December 11th, the church voted to buy a singing machine for the youth choir.

1989 – Rev. Chris Garrison accepted the call to be our pastor on February 12, 1989. We averaged 68 each night at Vacation Bible School. The church produced its second church directory. July 16th the church voted to buy a church van that would hold 20 passengers for \$21,980. The church voted to add a ramp on the front of the church. The church voted to paint the outside of the church and put up aluminum gutters and vinyl siding in all wood areas. Complete cost of \$6,205.

1990 – The church painted the 6 doors, 4 wooden columns, glossed and finished 22 pews and painted all inside rooms. Purchased new flags for the sanctuary. A new copier machine was purchased for the church for \$1,745 (a discount of \$1,050.00). We averaged 57 for Vacation Bible School.

1991 – On February 17th, the church donated \$500 to the West Chester Fire Department towards the purchase of a new truck. The church voted to hire a summer youth worker for \$1,500 on April 21st. On October 13th, the nursery was upgraded. We averaged 50 for VBS.

1992 – On March 29th, the church voted to participate in adopt-a-highway per the request of Mr. Ashley. Rev. Garrison resigned to become pastor of West End Baptist Church in Newberry, SC. April 5th, Rev. Mike Woods accepted the call to be our pastor. May 17th, basketball goals were added. August 9th, installed a new sound system for \$7,529.00. November 1st, a handicap ramp was installed.

1993- The church voted to buy new hymnals. Church members were given the opportunity to buy them in honor or memory of someone for \$10.

1994 – January 5th, the church voted to start covering medial insurance of the pastor. June 5th, Rev. Woods no longer pastor. August 14th, Rev. Hunter called to serve as supply pastor. June 22nd, the church was officially incorporated.

1995 – Rev. George Jeffreys accepted the call to be our pastor. April 23rd, Jason Childers began cutting the grass. We averaged 58 for Vacation Bible School.

1996 – Rev. Jeffreys resigned to go to Bethel Baptist in Campobello, SC. November 17th, Rev. Elton Hunter called to serve as supply pastor.

1997 – The church voted to accept bid from Joe W. Humphries to install heating and air conditioning – Trane equipment – with a 20 year warranty for \$25,600. September 7, 1997, put new vinyl in the kitchen and bathrooms area. Installed carpet and padding in the fellowship area for \$6,765.55.

1998 – The kitchen committee was established.

1999 – The church voted to establish rules and regulations for the cemetery. September 12th, voted to purchase an ice maker for \$2,400. November 28th, voted to purchase a church van for \$25,395.

2000 – Otis Gregory was given the title of Deacon Emeritus on April 9, 2000. April 30th, Ann Wade Hall agreed to add a gate and sidewalk to the cemetery at no cost. August 6, 2001; Rev. Billings resigned. November 5th, the church voted to thin the pine trees behind the church (50%) and to receive \$5,500 for the wood.

2001 – January 14th, the church voted to remove the old church building. Randy Jones did the work for the cost of fuel. We produced our third church directory. June 3, 2001, put new plumbing in parsonage and replaced some wood that had rotted, cost \$3,913.68.

2002 – February 22nd, the church approved Sam Poulos to move forward with his Eagle Scout project to add a flag pole, benches, and fencing around the trash cans at the cemetery. April 14, 2002, Rev. Kevin Ogle accepted the call to be our pastor. September 1, 2002, enlarged the ladies

bathroom for \$500.00. October 24, 2002, put new flooring in Sunday school rooms and in the hall. The church voted to add crape myrtles at the property line of the cemetery.

2003 – Raised \$2,627 for ACS through Relay for Life. May 4, 2003, put new shingles on the church \$11,585.00. Also put new shingles on the parsonage for \$2,800.00. July 1, 2003, Rev. Ogle resigned to relocate to Camden, S.C. July 7, 2003, called Rev. Elton Hunter to serve as interim pastor.

2004 - Raised \$3,265.27 for ACS through Relay for Life. January 4, 2004, Rev. Charles Terry accepted the call as pastor. January 24, 2004, purchased a new copier machine for \$811.00. August 15, 2004, purchased new tables and a stowing cart for \$3,752.00. October 24, 2004, planted trees at the cemetery. The cost of the trees and landscaping, \$2,260.00. September 26th, Bessie and George Vastis gave 1.115 acres of additional land to the cemetery.

2005 - Raised \$3,245 for ACS through Relay for Life. August 21, 2005, Stephenson Electric and Security Service did electrical work in the fellowship hall at a cost of \$3,400.00.

2006 – Raised \$3,071.72 for ACS through Relay for Life. February 12, 2006, put chandeliers in two Sunday School rooms, the vestibule and church sanctuary. A church member paid for the chandeliers for \$1,195.00. The church voted to buy a building for outside to use for storage. March 19, 2006, purchased a projector for \$2,000.00. November 11, 2006, purchased a projector screen. The price of the screen, plus cable and switch \$1,359.80. VBS averaged 72 under Dana Parker's leadership.

2007 – Raised \$4,490 for ACS through Relay for Life. February 11, 2007, purchased a new piano \$18,700.00 plus

\$250.00 for delivery. Mrs. Mildred Rawls left the church \$1,000.00 in her will and this money was applied to the cost. She was our devoted pianist for 33 years. The piano was dedicated to her. February 11, 2007, purchased new all stainless steel appliances for the fellowship hall at a cost of \$2,601.00. July 1, 2007, voted to buy a new copier for \$1,200.00

2008 – Raised \$4,119.54 for ACS for Relay for Life. January 6, 2008, put tile in the fellowship hall including the kitchen area and two bathrooms, at a cost of \$5,470.00 plus \$600.00 for sealing and waxing, for a total of \$6,070.00. September 14, 2008, Rev. Terry announced his resignation effective the last Sunday in September. November 23, 2008, the church called Rev. Cecil Johnson as interim pastor.

2009 – Raised \$5,435 for ACS through Relay for Life. February 22, 2009, did work at the back of the church where water stands. Andy Land did the grading and pouring the concrete at the cost of \$2,025.00. Bobby Enix removed the old conduit, and replaced new line for switch, \$400.00. K&M Seamless Gutters did some work for \$232.00. Upstate Awnings put the awning up for \$3,180.00

2010- May 2, 2010, replaced the lavatories with cabinets in the ladies and men's bathrooms in the fellowship hall and also the men's upstairs restroom. Estimated cost, \$900.00. September 26, 2010, voted to do renovations to the parsonage, total cost of material and labor, \$23,707.50. November 2, 2010, Mr. Don Matthews came and presented CHAMPS to us. This study will help us to develop a strategic plan for our church and community to help us to be the church the Lord would have us to be. November 30, 2010, the church had a called meeting and Rev. Johnson gave

out papers about (CHAMPS), Church Health Assessment and Mobilization Planning Strategy. The Deacons recommend that we do this study.

2011- On March 20th, the church supported three mission trips with a donation of \$500 each: Yvonne Oswald (Rev. Johnson's daughter) to Japan, Janice Thomas to Haiti and Abigail Hinson (Fort Lawn Baptist Church's pastor's daughter) to India. The church also supported the United Methodist Church's Salkehatchie program with a donation of \$250.

2012- The kitchen committee began serving meals on Wednesday evening to boost attendance at Wednesday night prayer service. Through the CHAMPS program we adopted the vision statement of "Pursuing God's Best – Salvation and Fellowship – for our church and Community." The church approved the addition of a superglide stairlift to help senior citizens up the stairs. Due to the declining health of Rev. Johnson, Sunday night services were canceled until a full-time pastor was hired.

2013 – Rev. Sean Sellars was called to serve as pastor on January 27, 2013. Upgrades were made to the parsonage: replaced 17 windows, repaired any damaged wood, added railings, and replaced the furnace. Kenneth Thomas accepted the call to the ministry and was licensed by the church December 22, 2013. The church agreed to help support Kenneth in his call.

2014 – The windows in the basement and Sunday school classrooms were replaced for a cost of \$8,395. The congregation donated \$1,000 to the West Chester Fire Department to help build the Wilksburg substation. New

protective coverings were added to the stain glass windows for a cost of \$7,630.

2015 – Painted the church Sunday school rooms and sanctuary for a cost of \$3,168.

2016 – The church voted to install a new church sign for a cost of \$10,433.80. Members removed the old sign.

2017 – Celebrated the 120th anniversary on September 17, 2017.

Last updated: 9/10/2017

Pastors who have served:

1897 -	Rev. Curtis (first pastor)
1910-1913	Rev. J.H. Yarborough
1923-1925	Rev. D.W. Garvin
1925-1928	Rev. A.L. Willis
1929-	Rev. R.A. Thompson
1930-1936	Rev. C.L. Norman
1937-1942	Rev. J.T. Dabney
1943	Rev. R.A. Griffin
1944	Rev. Chewning
1945-1950	Rev. Paul K Drum
1951-1957	Rev. Truett Willis
1957-1959	Rev. Otis McCluney

1959-1967	Rev. Elton Hunter
1968-1986	Rev. Thomas T. Rawls
1987-1988	Rev. Arthur Smith
1989-1992	Rev. Chris Garrison
1992-1994	Rev. Mike Woods
1995-1996	Rev. George Jefferys
1999-2001	Rev. Jamie Billings
2001-2003	Rev. Kevin Ogle
2004-2008	Rev. Charles Terry
2008-2013	Rev. Cecil Johnson
2013-2017	Rev. Sean Sellars

General Wilksburg Community History

- The community was named after Major Wilks.
- The Wilksburg School opened in the 1880s and ran until 1937 when it was consolidated into West Chester School. Baton Rouge, Sealy's Creek, New Hope and Wilksburg Schools formed the new West Chester School which was dedicated on April 29, 1939. West Chester School served the children and families of the western party of Chester County until further consolidation in 1969.
- The Wilksburg Post Office ran from January 26, 1831 until May 31, 1908. Originally know as the Caramel Hill Post Office, the name was changed to Wilksburg on June 26, 1883.