

History of the Mount Olive Baptist Church

In 1772, John Rector, a German immigrant, came to Virginia, and settled on 4,872 acres of land on what is now Route 713. Rectortown, named after its founder, became a busy agriculture center shipping wheat and cattle daily by rail. Soon the village incorporated, and Rectortown became Fauquier County's first town. It was this village during the mid-1800's the people of Rectortown gathered for weekly prayer meetings in the home of Charles and Julia Grant.

Thus begins the history of the Mount Olive Baptist Church, a church built on the solid rock of prayer: a church that offers rich rewards from grandparents, great-grandparents, and great-great grandparents. These ancestors envisioned an institution that would be a consecrated place for the whole community.



Second Sanctuary

In 1867, just down the road from where the present church stands, a Prayer Band began the construction of the first church. Rev. James Carter of Culpeper, Virginia, was called as the first undershepherd. However, he resigned and moved to Boston, Massachusetts, in 1870, before the building could be completed.

In 1871, Rev. Richard P. Dawson of Orange County, Virginia, became the second pastor. Under Rev. Dawson's leadership, the church which continued to grow and prosper, was completed. However, this church was destroyed by fire. Due to his great leadership abilities, the people were not discouraged, and they rebuilt a new edifice on the same site.



Rev. Richard P. Dawson

During his pastorate, the Sunday School, Willing Workers Club, Whole Soul, Bell Club and a choir directed by Mrs. Harriet Johnson Hall were organized. Four great sons of the ministry developed under this pastor: Rev. G. C. Bannister, Rev. Peter W. Austin, Rev. N. H. Johnson and Rev. Arthur Stuart. Many deacons also emerged under this leadership. Rev. Dawson consented for the church to be used as a school, and Thomas Shorts of The Plains, Virginia, was the first teacher. During Rev. Dawson's leadership, Mount Olive's growth advanced beyond the church into Northern Virginia. Mount Olive was one of the churches that founded the Northern Virginia Baptist Association in 1877. Revivals were as special as "All Day Meetings," and ministers from the community supported the spirit-filled services.

Rev. Dawson died in 1921. He was a pastor, father, friend and Christian leader to the Mount Olive family for over fifty years.

In the early 1900's visiting ministers traveled to Rectortown via railway. The line ran from Washington, D.C. to Harrisonburg, Virginia. Rectortown was considered the "Branch Line."

Our members lived in Rectortown, Flat Woods, Frogtown and on "The Mountain." They traveled by foot, horse and carriage to church.

The Mount Olive Church relocated approximately one half mile west to its present site. The cornerstone was laid on September 17, 1911. The new edifice was something to behold. The first couple to exchange their wedding vows in the new sanctuary was Thomas Smith and Blanche Tines.

Although Mount Olive had a new church, the second church building was still being utilized for church services, school programs, and festivals. This building was sold and demolished in 1924.

A year after the death of Rev. Dawson, Rev. Francis E. Pree was called to lead Mount Olive. During his ten year pastorate, renovations were made to the pulpit and new pews were purchased. One of the pews remains in the multi-purpose room today. The bell that continues to toll today was a gift from the Bell Club.



Rev. Francis E. Pree

In Rev. Pree's first revival, sixty-five people were baptized into the faith. One of those sixty-five, Sister Susie Stuart is still a dedicated member.

Mount Olive was the first rural church to have an usher board and individual communion servings under Rev. Pree's guidance. Those of us who remember him can still hear him singing, "Every Time I Feel The Spirit."



Rev. J. H. Ford

Mount Olive called its fourth pastor, Rev. John H. Ford, in 1932. Church services continued to be held every third Sunday. Holy Communion was served on alternating third Sunday evenings. Several new organizations were established: Sunday School Club, Young People's Club, Busy Bee, Junior Choir, Mount Olive Chorus, Baptist Training Union and the Missionary Society. On January 18, 1954, many hearts were saddened as a result of Rev. Ford's death.



Rev. G. W. Richardson

Rev. G. W. Richardson of Washington, D.C., came to us in February, 1955 as our fifth undershepherd. He organized the Deaconess Board, Floral Club, Counselor Fathers, Men and Women Clubs, Willing Workers, and reorganized the Baptist Training Union. Rev. Richardson appointed Junior Deacons, a Junior Usher Board and a Youth Missionary Circle. Thursday night was chosen for Prayer Meetings and church services were now held on the first and third Sundays. Our major project during this time was the construction of the dining room and kitchen, which were completed in 1956. Rev. Richardson pastored until his death in 1960. Although his time as pastor was short, much was accomplished.



Rev. Norman W. Smith

Our present pastor, Rev. Dr. Norman W. Smith, Sr., was called to Mount Olive in June 1961. Rev. Smith was a recent graduate of Washington Baptist Seminary and the assistant pastor at Salem, Baptist Church, (Dranesville) Great Falls, Virginia. Mount Olive has grown spiritually through the guidance of our pastor. Pastor Smith directed the church to sponsor a Boy Scout Troop, initiate a scholarship program, develop a Senior Citizens Program, develop a Food Bank Program and an Emergency Relief Committee. Together Mount Olive and Pastor Smith have seen the formation of Vacation Bible School and the expansion of our Sunday School. In 1986, our ministry extended to the residents of Oak Springs Nursing Home in Warrenton, Virginia, where service is conducted every second Sunday at 2:00 p.m. Pastor Smith's love for music led to the organizing of the Rosebuds, the Gospel Chorus, the Gospel Tones, the Mount Olive Special, the N. W. Smith Chorale and the Men's Chorus. "The Olive Leaf" newsletter was also created.

Mount Olive has grown beyond that first one story structure. Land adjacent to the church was purchased to build rest room facilities and a baptismal pool. On April 17, 1982, the education wing was dedicated to the Lord. The interior and exterior of the sanctuary have been renovated. On March 22, 2003, the congregation gathered to break ground for an extension of the fellowship hall and a new entrance. The addition was dedicated May 30, 2004. In 2008, stained glass windows were installed.

The Rectortown Extension of the Lynchburg Seminary and College utilized the education wing of Mount Olive for many years. Our fellowship hall served as the voting precinct for the Fauquier County Scott District.

Pastor Smith's leadership and foresight encouraged us to step out on faith and discontinue rallies to become a tithing church. Mount Olive has prospered by this act of faith. In 1983 Pastor Smith retired from the United States Postal Service and became a full time pastor.

As we grew as a church, our fellowship with other churches and organizations developed. We are still active members of the Northern Virginia Baptist Association and the Sunday School Union. We are affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Virginia, the Progressive National Baptist Convention, and the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention, Inc. where we support foreign missionaries in Guyana, Haiti, India, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Support is also provided to the Washington Baptist Seminary, Virginia Union University, the local Red Cross chapter and other local and international entities.

Regular Sunday services include Sunday School at 9:30 a.m., followed by morning worship at 10:45 a.m. During the summer months, June through August, morning services begin at 10:00 a.m. This provides members the opportunity to worship with family and friends at neighboring churches on their Homecoming day. Holy Communion is observed on the third Sunday. An intercessory prayer service is held each Wednesday from 12 – 1 p.m. A Bible study and prayer service is held every Thursday from 7 – 9 p.m.

The Prayer Band, who had the vision to start a church, perceived more than a building. They saw their descendants using their time, talents and gifts to serve the Lord, the Church and the community.

We are proud to Remember Yesterday.

We are glad to Rejoice Today.

We have the faith to Reach for Tomorrow.