

NORTHERN KENTUCKY VIEWS PRESENTS:

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Beech Grove  
Baptist Church

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by  
O. V. Jones

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From  
**A History of Owen County Baptist  
Association and Its Churches**

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## History of the Beech Grove Baptist Church

By O. V. Jones

Organization. Our beginning takes us back to the middle of the nineteenth century, when our ancestors were fighting and toiling to make America a better place in which to live.

Millard Fillmore is serving as President of the United States, while Lazarus Powell is Governor of Kentucky. There are only thirty-one states in the Union and one hundred counties comprise the state of Kentucky.

It is twenty-four years before the telephone was in operation; twenty-seven years before Edison invented the electric light bulb; fifty-one years before the Wright brothers made their first successful airplane flight; fifty-seven years before the Model T Ford made its appearance.

Our forefathers, who lived in the vicinity of what is now known as the Beech Grove community, are beginning to accept the challenge of establishing a place of worship in their community, so that they can better serve and worship God.

Yes, July 9, 1852 was a momentous occasion, when a group of God's people gathered together to organize a Baptist church in the community. This group was twelve in number as follows: Elders Farmer Rees, Archer Smith, A. Cobb and Brethren N. Shelton, W. Smith, E. Bainbridge, J. Marston, J. Perkins, O. E. Wilhoite, Z. Randedell, L. Rowland and D. Smith. They named the church Beech Grove and adopted a Constitution and Rules of Decorum.

Thus, from this small beginning to the present, Beech Grove Baptist Church has enjoyed many fruitful years of faithful service to this community and to God.

Buildings. The exact date of the erection of the first building is not known, but it was probably built soon after the church was organized. It was a hewed-log building which did not have a floor. The seats were benches made from logs also. The building was used for a school for several years. In 1880 the members became dissatisfied with the structure of the building and constructed a new place of worship near the site of the present building. It was a frame type building with a rock foundation. Many notable meetings and memorable events have transpired in this historic building.

It was not until 1947 that any great improvement was made to this building. During the pastorate of Rev. Ralph Murray, there developed a considerable increase in membership and attendance, which created a need for more classrooms. Under his farsighted leadership, the church adopted a Building Fund and raised enough funds to build a basement under the church. This was completed in 1947.

A few years later, during the pastorate of Rev. Claude Kelley, a deep concern for a new building was manifested, so a Building Fund was again initiated and still exists today. On June 14, 1959, under the leadership of Rev. Leon Goodley, the church voted to construct a new brick veneer building. The old frame building was razed on July 29, 1959. Through the splended cooperation and efforts of the members, the new building was prepared for occupancy on November 15, 1959. Thus, a dream of many years, accomplished by faith, hard work, sacrificial giving and able leadership, was realized.

Pastors. Thirty-two brethren have served as pastors from 1868 to the present. Of these, three have served on two different occasions. Many of these devoted ministers have pastored for less than \$100 a year.

Ministers who have served the church as pastors are as follows: J. H. Young, J. L. Ballard, James Elsie Kenney, William Cobb, Clark M. Riley, James D. Clark, John W. Waldrop, John T. Burton, William T. Ellis, Robert Kirby, P. T. Glass, W. H. Johnson, B. F. Hunter, Wallace C. Crume, Walker L. Shearer, Henry Holbrook, John Allie Lee, Earnest R. Sams, Everett Cobb, John B. Prather, Birchett Kemper, Lathy E. Curry, Robert C. Briggs, Ralph L. Murray, R. T. Greene, Homer C. McElyea, Claude B. Kelley, Lee Wyatt, Leon Goodley, Thomas Conley, and James Covington.

Our present pastor, Rev. James Covington, assumed the pastorate of the church on December 6, 1964. He was graduated from Union University, Jackson Tennessee, and is now a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is married and has one daughter.



Truly, Beech Grove has been blessed in the selection of her pastors. Without a doubt, the wonderful history of the church with its many achievements and the progress it is now enjoying, can be largely attributed to these faithful and gifted men of God.

Minister Ordained and Licensed. From its membership, the church has licensed or ordained seven of its brethren into the gospel ministry.

W. A. Duvall was licensed in 1897 and ordained in July 1899. Dr. R. E. Carlton preached the ordination sermon. Bro. Duvall supplied at Beech Grove for a brief period and pastored in Northern Kentucky for several years. He died in Covington about twenty-three years ago.

In 1923, Bro. Everett Cobb, who later became pastor of the church, was ordained to preach the gospel. During his short ministry he served as pastor of Mussel Shoals, Harmony, Gratz, Beech Grove, and several churches in Grant County. While teaching at Hammonds School, he was stricken with appendicitis and was taken to a Lexington hospital, where he underwent an unsuccessful operation on December 28, 1928.

On September 12, 1943, the church licensed Bro. O. A. Hatcher and ordained him on December 17, 1944. Rev. A. L. Gillespie gave the examination and Rev. W. T. Dunaway preached the ordination sermon. He died on July 27, 1949.

Bro. James Hammonds was licensed to preach on November 14, 1943.

The church licensed Bro. Jesse Bourne to preach the gospel on December 6, 1951. He was ordained by the Pleasant Home Baptist Church, while serving as its pastor. He is a graduate of Owenton High School, Georgetown College, and Southern Baptist Seminary. Presently, he is pastor of the First Baptist Church, West Liberty, Kentucky.

On September 4, 1960, Gayle Toole was licensed to preach and on June 25, 1961, he was ordained by Beech Grove Church, while serving as pastor of the Concord Baptist Church in Gallatin County. He is a graduate of Owen County High School, Georgetown College and is now a student at Southern Baptist Seminary. He is now serving as pastor at Poplar Grove Baptist Church.

Bro. Ralph Bourne was licensed by the church on June 18, 1961, to preach and was ordained on May 5, 1962. He has pastored at Mt. Zion and is now pastor of Elk Lick Baptist Church. He is also a student at Georgetown College.

Miscellaneous Notes. The Owen Association was organized at Beech Grove. During her membership in the Concord Association, she entertained it in 1907 and 1923. The 1907 meeting was considered one of

the largest attended meetings of the association. She has served as host to the Owen County Baptist Association Meeting on two occasions, 1953 and 1959.

The church is located almost in the center of Owen County. During recent years, the church has provided much associational leadership. One year the Associational Moderator, Sunday School Superintendent, and Brotherhood President were members from Beech Grove. She has also provided the Association Training Union Director and Sunday School Secretary.

Nineteen of the twenty-seven charter members of the Westside Baptist Church, Wichita, Kansas were from Beech Grove.

A church library was established on April 25, 1965.

Several members from the church have served as public officials. From her midst have come a state senator, three state representatives, two county school superintendents, tax commissioner, magistrate and perhaps other officers.

The first Brotherhood in Owen County was organized at Beech Grove on August 30, 1953.

This 113-year old church has enjoyed a glorious and eventful past. The Lord has heard her prayers, honored her efforts, and supplied her needs. May He continue to bless her as she labors in His matchless name to serve as a spiritual lighthouse unto the community.