

Brief History of Our Church

On the 24th day of June, 1841, a small band, numbering twenty-eight baptized believers, were publicly recognized as the Muncy Baptist Church. Previous to official organization, Baptists in the vicinity of Muncy had been active, especially in evangelistic endeavor, having held meetings in the Methodist house of worship and in the old brick schoolhouse, which stood at the upper end of the village. Much opposition was encountered at first, and attempts were made to close the door to Baptist congregations. This act, however, led to a search for the “old contract”, or “Articles of Agreement”, in which it was expressly stipulated that each denomination contributing to the erection of the school house should be allowed to use it for religious meetings. On examining the names attached to it, it was found that a generous proportion of the necessary funds had been contributed by Baptists. Notwithstanding the tide of opposition, meetings continued with gratifying results. Rev. William T. Hall, then in the service of the Pennsylvania Baptist Convention, held a series of meetings resulting in the salvation of many precious souls. As a result of this evangelistic campaign, Rev. Mr. Hall called a meeting on the 24th of June, 1841, and a group of twenty-eight baptized believers organized and were recognized as an Independent Regular Baptist Church. The church was later admitted to the Northumberland Baptist Association. The building of the old church at South Market and High Streets was commenced in 1841, but was not completed and dedicated until March 1, 1843. In the meantime, revivals were frequent and new members were added. The history of the church until the acquisition of the new building indicates many ups and downs, financially and spiritually, but the trend was steadily toward growth in its constituency. A need for larger facilities gave birth to the movement for a larger and more commodious church edifice. The building of a new church was proposed by Mr. L. B. Sprout at a church meeting held January 4, 1890, and Rev. L. J. Shoemaker, the pastor at that time, was chosen as chairman of the building committee, and served to the completion of the building. On November 22, 1896, the present edifice was dedicated to the service of God. The architect was Mr. Warren H. Hayes of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the design Roman. The cost of the new structure was \$18,000. In 1941 a Centennial Service was observed, testimonies read, old members recognized, and the Rev. Robert W. Matthews preached the sermon. In 1947 a new parsonage was purchased at 106 S. Market Street and was used until 1954.

During the year 1950 the organ which had been given to the church by Mrs. Ellen Sprout in 1919, was rebuilt at a cost of \$6,000. The sanctuary of the church was renovated by painting the walls and ceilings, adding new carpets, varnishing the pews and installing new lighting fixtures. On May 1954 the church voted to build a parsonage on the East side of the church. The parsonage then in use, was sold to John Vermilya for \$10,000. The new parsonage was completed at a cost of \$23,000 and was dedicated August 14, 1955, with the Rev. Harold G. Washburn, pastor of the church, preaching the dedication sermon. Sunday, April 9, 1961, twenty-five persons presented themselves for church membership. Under the pastorate of the Rev. Walter E. Kelly, thirty-three persons joined the church that year. By 1963 the membership had grown to three-hundred and seventy, with three-hundred of these resident members. A \$30,000 renovation program was completed during 1962. A new exit was added to the Market Street side of the building. This project included complete renovation of the social rooms, a new

kitchen, new restrooms and an emergency lighting system. In 1963 the dome area of the church was rewired and the choir loft ceiling was painted.

In 1966 the Church celebrated its 125th anniversary year. Under Rev. Graham Freeman's tutelage the membership conducted a Daily Vacation Bible School, established a monthly newsletter, provided financial support to the Baptist Children's House in Philadelphia and sent packages off to the Pelhams and missionaries in the Congo. The sanctuary was painted and a new reinforced rail was installed on the balcony bordering the second floor Sunday School rooms.

In 1967 Rev. Freeman established a once-a-month visitation schedule and supervised additional Church repairs. Property on Market Street was purchased and, in 1970, a much needed parking lot was completed.

Rev. Freeman focused much of his attention toward evangelistic efforts – members attended local training sessions or went off to Baptist training conferences; week-long revival services were scheduled; and Winter Youth retreats were introduced. Freeman, with many of the Church's long standing congregation, left the Muncy Baptist Church and formed an independent Baptist Church in 1971.

Rev. Harry Kline stepped in as supply, or interim, pastor until Rev. A. Ronald Smith arrived in April 1972. The parsonage was refreshed and the church office was remodeled, making room for a library and supply room. The Church was spared from the direct waters of the great flood of 1972, however the ground surface runoff was great enough to inundate the basement level with several inches of water requiring the finish flooring and base to be replaced. In 1974 Miss Margaret Waldron purchased a sound system for the church and, in 1975, Mrs. Del Roy Sprout donated the eternal light which was installed in the church sanctuary

Rev. Smith supervised additional renovations and upgrades to both the church and parsonage properties as well as overseeing the completion of the room dedicated to Dr. Sarah Hall.

Rev. D. Gene Patterson assumed his Muncy ministerial duties in 1980. Under Patterson's tutelage, the church membership formally celebrated its 140th, 145th, and 150th anniversaries. The church opened its doors to a number of other service organizations – the Boy Scouts, West Branch Chorale, Muncy Garden Club, TOPS, Alcoholic Anonymous and Business and Professional Women.

During Rev. Patterson's tenure the sanctuary was repainted, ceiling fans were installed, new baptistery draperies were mounted, the Sunday School rooms were replastered and painted, a chair lift was installed at the Market Street entrance, the organ was embellished and chimes added, and new solid oak, custom-made doors were installed at all entrances. A restroom was installed on street-level at the church and the parsonage's kitchen was remodeled. Major work on both the church and parsonage roofs was performed in 2003.

Rev. Patterson served the Muncy Baptist Church for twenty-four years. The Church's congregation hosted Rev. Patterson's retirement services on July 11, 2004.

In 2005, Rev. Scott Warren received a call to Muncy Baptist Church. Some of the events and ministries that had occurred by the time of this writing include an emphasis on Small Group Ministry, with men's, women's and combined groups, a cooperative youth group with Muncy Presbyterian, Evangelical Free Fellowship, and St Andrew Lutheran churches. There were baptisms each calendar year including seven people baptized in the Susquehanna River in the Summer of 2007. In 2010, a video projection system along with new audio-visual equipment was purchased. There were many improvements to the church building and parsonage including painting the sanctuary, a new floor in the church basement, repairs to the baptistry, painting of the nursery and other Sunday School rooms, painting in the parsonage, new boilers in both church and parsonage, and other smaller projects.

Early Baptisms (Partial Listing)

In the Susquehanna River:

Elder Ely's baptisms: Abraham and Mary Page, Ann (Page) Rathmell, William, Rebecca, Hannah and Elizabeth Ann Webb, Susan and Angeline Lewis, Mary Anderson, Rebecca Winder, Ann, Margaret Ann and Elizabeth McCarty (Mrs. Adam Hall), Simon Shoemaker, Charles Eagins, Julia Merrill, Margaret (Fiegles) Cramm, Elizabeth Harlan, Nancy and George Bovard, Isaac Rea/Ray, Ann Stratton, Sarah (Stratton) Bear, Peter Weaver, Elizabeth Edwards, Eliza and Mary Betts, Christopher Derr, Norman St. Clair, Samuel and Susan Green, Thomas Wallis, Dinah and Ann Grange, Mary Ann Fowler, and Elizabeth (Edwards) Mecum.

Jacob Oyster, George Feigles, William and Sarah Page, Joseph Stevison, Samuel Doctor, Peter Row, George Mecum, William McGugan, Lorenze Newberry, Sophia Crouse, Sarah Hill, Jane Bennett and Mary Malone were baptized on April 2, 1943 in the waters of the Susquehanna River. On April 25, Miles baptized Ameila Waldron, Margaret Malone, Matilda Egans, Benjamin Merrill, Margaret Worthington and Margaret McReynolds. The River might have been a little warmer for the May and June baptisms of Sarah (Walton) Shaw, Jane Feigles, Margaret Edwards and Edward Worthington.

David McMahan, Samuel Gortner, John Webb, Joseph Smith, Edmund Webb, Sarah Bly, Emma Gortner, Anna Webb, Mary A. Hall, Margaret Betts, Mary Moffitt, Susan Ann McKelvey, Elizabeth Watson, and Mary Watson were baptized early in Rev. Kelly's tenure.

Rev. Andrew Shanafelt baptized Emma Merrill (Mrs. Emma Smith) and Emma (Henry) Norton, William Harris, Nancy (Quinn) Cable, Hannah (Taggart) Baker, Annie Woverton, Elizabeth Renn (Mrs. Resh), Martha (Snowden) Soars, Mary Baker (Mrs. Christian Hess), Ann (Lentz) Smith, and Susan Renn in the Susquehanna River during the winter months of 1867-68.

Rev. McNair led seven converts – James, Louisa, Debra and Emma Woodington, Maggie Sprout (Mrs. John Waldron), Anna Richold and Susy Steele – into the cold Susquehanna River, at Port Penn, in February 1868 for baptism. Although Stephen Soars' business obligations prevented his river immersion that Sunday, he was nevertheless offered the "right hand of fellowship" that same day. Two months later, he and his wife, Martha, were granted letters of dismissal to their new home in Kansas while Mrs. Delia Hudson and Hattie Derr were baptized that month.

Jennie Soars and Annie Fry (Mrs. Annie Rickolt) were baptized in November 1869 and on December 26, 1969 Mr. and Mrs. James Mackey, Sarah A. Brown (Mrs. Hall), George Buck, and Elizabeth Harris were “dunked”. George Mudd was baptized in February 1870.

In January 1876 Rev. Houck baptized the following in the Susquehann: Charles Soars, William P. Merrill, Robert Drysdale, C.B. Rickolt, Lloyd Winegardner, Davie Funk, Howard Merrill, Stephen Soars, Trainie Shipman (Mrs. Sprout), Fannie A. Soars (Mrs. Edler) and Jennie Brown. In March, John Waldron, Susan Edwards and Ella (Root) Righter were baptized.

In December 1877 Houck baptized William Goodenow, Mary Dimm, Emma Gray (Mrs. Barbour), Debby Bender (Mrs. Oscar Corson), Rebecca Koch (Mrs. Winegardner), Clara Merrill (Mrs. Clarke), and Minnie Richold.

Kocher’s first baptisms were at river’s edge, in Port Penn on June 25, 1882: David Baker, Charles Corson, Laura Bickel and Lulu Sprout (Mrs. Stephen Soars).

In the Church’s Baptistry:

In 1885, the baptisms were Robert Soars, Samuel Rogers, and Horace Lichenthaler, followed by Anna Manville, Birdie Munro, Maggie Shaw (Nichols), Susan Manville, Cora Bickel, Martha Hower, Maggie Coulter (Mrs. Brittain), Dora Coulter (Mrs. Sprout), Maggie Hess (Mrs. Thomas Stohler), Florence Brown (Mrs. English), and Lydia Gates (Mrs. Lake).

1886 was a year of membership growth for the Muncy Baptist church – Ella Kelchner, Alice Schuyler (Mrs. Heebner), Jennie Black, Carrie Winters, May Coulter (Mrs. Wendrick), Maud Rogers, Samuel Rogers, Robert Manville, Jacob Boyd Rogers, Frank Rogers, George Campbell, Sarah App (Mrs. Albecht), Emma Schuyler (Mrs. J. Peterman), Boyd Baker, Charles Waldron, Wilder Soars. In 1887, Rachel Worthington (Mrs. Miller), Eva (Fahnestock) Banghart, and Annie Carpenter were baptized. In 1888, Henry Golder, Thomas Stohler, Fred Sprout, Fred Best, Hattie (Baker) Hummel, Jennie Sprout (Mrs. Opp), Barbara Ritter, Ada Figles (Mrs. Bower), Cora Hess (Mrs. Walhuser), Carrie (Smith) King. Charles and Ella Downing, another wealthy merchant family, would be received by letter from their Michigan church. Milton Shipman is the only recorded baptism for 1889.

1890’s baptismal list includes Walter Beeber, Clyde Gortner, Smith F. Betts, W. M. Worthington, Abbie Beeber, Mary Worthington, and Fannie (Resh) Straw.

Munro’s 1892 immersions includes Mary Derr, Judson Derr, Levi Colley, Mary Colley, Frederick Rickolt, Lulu Baker (Mrs. Ritter), Mame Jones, Mame Prowant, Flora Ives (Mrs. Manville), and Lillian (Edwards) Tule.

Ellis’ baptisms were David Feigles (who drowned in the Susquehanna River five months later), Tressie Price (Mrs. Worthington), Della Lydia Sprout, Bessie Fay (Sprout) Hoffman, Sue Ida Karschner, Linnie (Rickolt) Bower, Frank Hamilton, Henry Hackenberg, George Clarence Rogers, Lulu (Smith) Banghart, and Kate Manville.

In November 1893 Rev. N. B. Randall of New Jersey closed a two-week long evangelistic session in which 29 in total were brought into the church including the new converts: Frances L. Baker, Catherine Betz, Anna Feigles, Mary Rath, Rachel Anderson, Agnes Betz, Maggie Clarke, Mabel (Rogers) Little, Elsie Winegartner (Mrs. John A. Dewald), Mary (Barbour) VanTuyl, Emily Edwards, Mabel McComb Downing, John Anderson, George Elliott, Annie (Rickolt) Schodt, Sarah Opp, Alice Edwards, Clinton Tule, Philip Sprout, Edward Bowers, James Banghart, David Fahnestock, Henry Britton Ring, Clay Whitmoyer, Mary

Anderson, Rebe Ugene Merrill, Fannie (Bower) Jarrett, Blanche Coulter, Ada G. Ritter (Mrs. Fred Sprout) and Mable Baker.

Before the Booth's received their letters to move to another congregation in November 1895, the pastor had baptized Daisy (Renn) Waldron, Esther (Shaffer) Wertz, Alma (Houseknecht) Moore, Elsie Smith, Bertha (Merrill) Mulligan, Bessie Burkholder, Jennie (Houseknecht) Snyder, Margaret (Miller) Karschner, Emma Trump, Mary (Trump) Slee, Harry A. Starr, Almira Shoemaker, Alice (Bryan) shoemaker, Hannah Trump, and William H. Trump.

Rev. Shoemaker's converts included Rachel Daisy (Rickolt) Pass, Bella (ring) Eaker, Edna (Opp) Colley, Ray Edgar Sprout, George Opp, Robert McBride, Ralph Winegardner, Paschall Shoemaker, Ada Bruch, Dora (Fink) Trestle, Laura Rosella (Betz) Myers, Gertrude Rogers, Sophia Foust, E. P. Hall, Jonathan Colley, Eva Bair, Mrs. Jonathan Colley, Plummer Ort, L. Moss Clarke, Ameila Ort, Mame Taggart, Myrtle Kliemann, Amanda Colley, Raymond Hockley, Fanny Houseknecht, Nancy M. Hall and Lewis Hower.

Ministers Associated with Muncy Baptist Church

1841-43	Rev. J. Green Miles
1843-43	Rev. Edward Ely
1843-45	Rev. Joel E. Bradley, D.D.
Supply	Rev. William S. Hall
Supply	Rev. E. Bochenoogen
1847-48	Rev. J. Edminister
Supply	
1850-53	Rev. C. A. Hewitt
Supply	
1855-56	Rev. George A. Peltz
1856-59	Rev. Joshua Kelly
1859-61	Rev. S. G. Kelm
Supply	Rev. N. Callender
1863-64	Rev. A. F. Shanafelt
1864-66	Rev. T. M. Shanafelt
1867-72	Rev. George McNair
1873-76	Rev. E. C. Houck
1876-76	Rev. Samuel Pauling
1876-80	Rev. Samuel Houck
1880-83	Rev. R. Kocher
1884-92	Rev. H. C. Munro
1892-94	Rev. J. R. Ellis
1894-95	Rev. T. W. Booth
1896-99	Rev. L. J. Shoemaker
1899-1901	Rev. Randolph Rock
1901-07	Rev. D. L. Wood
1907-12	Rev. W. T. C. Hanna, D.D.
1913-16	Rev. I. T. Geistweit
1916-21	Rev. Joseph D. Brechaut
1921-26	Rev. Irvin Staub, D.D.
1926-30	Rev. R. W. Matthews
1931-43	Rev. Earl Williams

1943-47	Rev. Albert Gacia
1947-59	Rev. Harold Washburn
1959-65	Rev. Walter E. Kelly
Supply (65-66)	Rev. Harold Loughhead
1966-71	Rev. Graham Freeman
Supply (71-72)	Rev. Harry Kline
1972-79	Rev. A. Ronald Smith
Supply (79-80)	Rev. Herbert Brownlee
1980-2004	Rev. D. Gene Patterson
Supply (04-05)	Rev. Duane Johnson
2005-2012	Rev. Scott Warren
Supply (12-13)	Rev. Bill Harrell
2013-Present	Rev. Robert W. Rice