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## A Mere Glimpse

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### *The Story of Muddy Creek Baptist Church*

The following contains excerpts from an extensive compilation of the history of Muddy Creek Baptist Church written by Jesse C. Green. Reverend Green was the pastor of the church from 2002 to 2006. His closing words in his Dedication and Acknowledgements are: “May this effort spark and interest in the glorious past of this great Church, and serve as a beacon into its future.”

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The Muddy Creek Baptist Church, with 250 years of history, is one of the oldest Baptist churches in continuous service in the state of Virginia. From the struggles of trying to stay alive in its early years, to its recognition as one of the strongest country churches in the state, to its modern status as a traditional church in a changing world, Muddy Creek builds on its past as it eagerly anticipates its future.

The Gospel, as understood and practiced by the Baptists, first came to the northwest portion of what is now Powhatan County in 1774. Jeremiah Walker and Rane Chastain preached in the area, some twelve miles northwest of the county seat. After meeting with some opposition, “The Gospel prevailed so far as to bring about twenty or thirty persons into the liberty of the sons of God.”

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*He preached to troops in the Revolutionary War, and was persecuted and imprisoned in Chesterfield for preaching Baptist beliefs.*

With these materials a Church was built, and named for the nearby creek which today forms a portion of the boundary between Powhatan and Cumberland counties. One reference has been located which states that a building was erected in 1774, with bricks made where the church then stood. However, there does not seem to be any confirmation of this building, with the first specific reference being made to a Church building in 1846.

In 1770, there were only six Baptist churches in Virginia, but, by the time Muddy Creek was formed, there were nearly 30 south of the James River, and 24 to the north. Only two of these were in Powhatan – Old Powhatan, formed in 1771, then called DuPuy’s Meeting House, and Muddy Creek.

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*Actually, the establishment of the Church predates the formation of its home county by three years, and the Declaration of Independence by two years.*

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Beginning with the original shire of Henrico in 1634, Goochland was formed from a part of that territory in 1728. In turn, Cumberland was cut out of Goochland in 1749. Finally, most of what is now Powhatan County was formed from Cumberland County on July 1, 1777.

A reflection of the looming crisis of the Civil War was a resolution adopted by the Middle District Association in September, 1860, ... calling upon the churches to provide a permanent fund of \$10,000 for the support of “superannuated, afflicted or worn down Baptist ministers connected with the Middle District Association and for the aid of such churches connected with the said Association as may be unable, without assistance, to procure ministerial service.”

*In June of 1859, the Religious Herald reported that: Muddy Creek Baptist Church, in Powhatan, was entirely destroyed by fire on Friday morning, the 3rd (of June). It was a handsome new brick edifice, nearly completed, and cost about \$1800. It is thought that it was struck by lightning. Several workers, who were sleeping in the Church, narrowly escaped with their lives. Carpenters' tools to the value of about \$150 were destroyed.*

Part of the loss of Muddy Creek's membership at the close of the Civil War can be attributed to the formation in 1867 of the Little Zion Baptist Church by a group of blacks then belonging to Muddy Creek. Their first place of worship was a brush arbor. In 1870 land was purchased and a frame structure was erected where the present building now stands (on Cartersville Road east of Trenholm Road). One writer says that one old man refused to leave and was a faithful member of Muddy Creek as long as he lived.

In the summer of 1865, at the close of the Civil War, Robert E. Lee visited at Derwent, the home of Captain William Cocke and near by the Muddy Creek Church. Joseph H. Crute, Jr., author of a

history of Derwent, quotes from a letter to Lee's son:

"During that summer (Lee) was a regular attendant at various churches in our neighborhood (presumably including Muddy Creek), whenever there was service. I never heard your father discuss public matters at all, nor did he express his opinion of public men. At the end of this summer visit, Lee accepted the presidency of Washington University in Lexington. To honor Lee's service, the name of the university was later changed to Washington and Lee."

June of 1965 Leonard C. Vimpeny, from South Carolina, became the church's first full-time pastor. He remained pastor until June 1968 to accept a call to North Albemarle field of churches, near Charlottesville. From that point in time to 2015 the church has enjoyed 8 pastors and a few interim pastors.

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*The church's first full-time pastor.*

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With a strong history, an awareness of its mission in the present, and with faith in the future which God has prepared, the Muddy Creek Baptist Church continues its witness and ministry to Jesus Christ in the Trenholm community, in Powhatan County, and around the world.

*The complete history compiled by Jesse C. Green can be obtained upon request.*

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As of 2024, the church continues to thrive spiritually. The current pastor is Jeff Beard. He is married to Lisa, who is active in various roles in the church. Jeff began as a guest speaker in September of 2016. In November of 2016, he accepted the position of Interim Pastor. In the fall of 2017, he was voted as the Pastor of the church. He served as a bi-vocational pastor until July 2022, in which he retired from his full-time employment with the State of Virginia, and became the full-time pastor of the church.

The church ordained Kenneth Hatcher, Sr., and Gary Stein as lay-elders on November 28, 2021.

The church is actively involved in local ministries and missions around the world. The name of the Lord Jesus Christ is made known and it is honored with due glory and praise. It is all because of Jesus! Amen.