

*"Go home and tell them  
what great things the Lord  
has done for you..."*  
**Mark 5:19**



# **History of Westfield Baptist Church 1878-2023**

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*Westfield Baptist Church  
Homecoming  
October 8, 2023*

On September 1, 1878 Westfield Baptist church was organized with a service held beneath a brush arbor near the site of the present day church building. These twenty-four members are the charter members.

- J.E. Simmons
- M. O. Hill
- T. L. Sarles
- W. A. Simmons
- J. M. Jessup
- Samira Christian
- Mandy L. Welch
- J.W. Caudle
- Malinda Sarles
- M. J. Simmons
- L. J. Moir
- Ellen Lowe
- Jenni King
- Lizzie Moyer (Moir)
- Laura J. Tedder
- Delia Welch
- M.J. Jessup
- Mary E. Jackson
- Delia A. (Lizzie) Jessup
- Frances Caudle
- Joel Matthews
- Abigail Neal
- Matt Hill
- Presley Pierce

The first house of worship was a small, white frame structure heated by a pot bellied stove and lighted by lamps. In later years, electricity was installed from the R. T. Joyce Mill near Asbury. Little is known about the first 25 years of the church as the records were lost. Pastors serving the church from 1904 until the mid 1920s were Reverend Hence Beamer, Elder Pinkney Oliver, and Reverend J.T. Lewellyn.

- First Sunday School was held on the third Sunday in March 1896. J.J. Jessup and E.J. Payne served as Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent.
- 1923 Joined Surry Baptist Association.
- 1924 a piano was purchased from Mr. A. F. Christian.
- On June 13, 1925 the first Missionary Society was formed which was later called the Women's Missionary Union or WMU. There were 12 charter members. Mrs. Emma Smith served as the first President.
- In 1927 a beautiful new house of worship was erected near the site of the first Church at a cost of \$12, 121.10. For the next ten years, because of the Great Depression, the membership struggled to pay off the debt but on July 18, 1937 the church was dedicated to the Lord in ceremonies conducted by Reverend John Marion and Dr. J. T. Smith.
- February 19, 1950 the Church voted to build new Sunday School Rooms.
- 1953 Parsonage built to house a full time pastor. Reverend Reece Kyzar was the first full time pastor.

- September 22, 1957 ground breaking ceremonies were held for a new educational building under the direction of Pastor Waldo Early. A baptistry was added and a mural painted and donated by Thurmond and Mary Ellen Midkiff in memory of Joel Jessup. The first baptism was held on July 15th 1959.
- May 15, 1962 the parsonage was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. Westfield did not have a fire department at this time. Within a week plans were made to rebuild the parsonage.
- July 17, 1966 a special service was held to dedicate the Carillon (bells and music in tower) presented to the church by Mr. and Mrs. Royal Hunter in memory of their son, Rixie Hunter
- 1969 Air conditioning was installed.
- 1971 The church purchased a second-hand school bus to help with the youth and other church outings.

- Fall 1971 The youth group from Westfield Baptist Church combined with the youth of Woodville Baptist along with other Christian youth from the surrounding area gathered to form a community youth group named Spectrum. This group of more than 30 young people produced a Christian musical entitled “Tell It Like it is” performed in the old Westfield School auditorium. After the production, former pastor Charles Howell gave an invitation that saw several youth receive Christ as their Savior along with many rededications. This production was led by Mrs. Gilda Cooke of Woodville, with Olivia Jessup as pianist, and June Tilley as advisor. After the initial production, the group repeated the performance in many local churches in the surrounding area. Other Westfield Baptist Church adults working with this group included Frank and June Tilley, John and Iris Kuhl, Wayne and Jackie Nester, Madge Tucker, Aldean and Trevella Collins, Joe Bill and Ruth Jessup, Rayford and Betty Jean Taylor, and Boyd and Barbara Jessup.

- April 27, 1975 the Church approved plans for tennis courts, a basketball court, a softball diamond, a picnic shelter, and playground equipment for a cost of \$17, 698.50. York Tucker donated much of the bulldozer work for this project.
- November 13, 1977 Mrs. Roxie H. Payne was honored after 40 years of serving the church as pianist and music director. Mr. Luther Byrd presented Mrs. Payne a plaque of appreciation and money for many years of service.
- Late 1970s Telephone ministry Sunday School class began for homebound students lead by Mrs. Wanda Journey.
- October 1978 Westfield Baptist Church celebrated its 100th Anniversary.
- In December of 1985 Reverend Billy Washburn led the church in its first Hanging of the Greens service.
- In 1987 a handicapped ramp and paved parking was built on the west side of the church in Memory of Mickey Collins, son of Larry and Brenda Collins.

- June of 1999 ground was broken for the new Fellowship Hall and Educational Building.
- On September 9, 2001 Joel Stephens preached his first sermon.
- March 2003 Church voted to call a fulltime Associate Pastor for Youth and Children.
- June 2003 Matt Harris became the first fulltime Associate Pastor of Youth and Children and on August first, Super Kids and Super Church was held.
- January 2004 choir loft was rearranged.
- September 2004 Westfield Baptist purchased their first van.
- January 2005 Early Service began at 8:30 and regular service was held at 11:00.
- February 27, 2005 Westfield dedicated a new flagpole area in memory of Bruce Lowe. Reverend Joel Stephens, Thurmond Midkiff, and Ken Lowe spoke.
- September 2005 Mack and Sylvia Smith donated the Grand piano.
- April 2006 Spire on the Church was replaced with cross, built by Jeff Rule.

- On October 21, 2007 the note was burned paying off the new Fellowship building. The members of the finance committee were Jill Smith, Kathy White, Jonathon Inman, Dwayne Greason, Cooke Jessup, Tim Tilley and Barbara Lowe (Treasurer).
- June 2008 an Open House was held for the new church library. Deborah Voigt and Lois Tilley worked tirelessly to install a new computer system, shelves and books. The library has close to four thousand books in 2023.
- August of 2008, the new playground was installed next to the upper parking lot.
- November 2008 Jim Richland selected as the new Associate Pastor of Youth and Children. Ordained April 26, 2009.
- July 2014 the Church voted to purchase the Westfield Medical Center, now known as the Annex.
- July 2016 the Fellowship Hall was refreshed with new flooring, new window treatments and paint. New tables and chairs were also purchased.
- May 2017 Luke Mabe, Scouts, and members of the church including Grant Christian, turned the picnic shelter into a storage facility, painted it, and landscaped around the Annex and playground for Luke's Eagle Scout Project.

- May 28th 2017 Pastor Joel Stephens resigned.
- June 25th 2017 Wes McGarry became Associate Pastor of Youth and Children.
- July 2017 Prayers and Squares Ministry began.
- January 2018 Interim pastor Brad Quesinberry began his tenure.
- January 2018 Parsonage remodeled by Mickey Arrington.
- July 8, 2018 Reverend Brian Chilton was voted in as Senior Pastor.
- December 2018 House removed from land across the street.
- March 2020 Due to the pandemic the church opted to hold services via Facebook.
- November 2020 Jacob Haywood built a masonry base for the sign in front of the church and landscaped around the sign for his Eagle Scout Project.
- May 2023 The World War II memorial was moved from the Old Westfield School. Troy Haywood built a sidewalk, cement base, and landscaped the area for his Eagle Scout Project.

Westfield Baptist Church has a rich history dating back to 1878. The Church has grown and changed physically but our mission has not: to reach the community and share the love Jesus Christ has for his people, to teach the principles of his Holy Word, to be doers of the Word not just hearers.

Westfield Baptist Church is growing and thriving in 2023. Pastor Jimmy Lancaster came in February as our Transitional Interim Pastor. Under his leadership we are experiencing a renewal; physically and spiritually. Tricia Lowe was hired in April of 2023 as our Director of Family Ministries. She is reaching out to our young families with classes, camps, Wednesday Night meals, and activities for all family members. As with all growth there are ups and downs, Addy Knepp, our talented piano player, has taken an internship but we will trust in God and see what he has in store for the music program, our young family ministry, and Westfield Baptist Church. We are making history everyday!

- This history is taken from notes and written histories from Roxie Payne, June Tilley, and others in the Archives.