

THE Bolton NEWS

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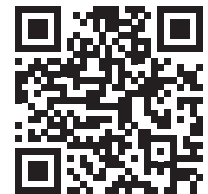
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Chapel Hill M.B. Church plans anniversary celebration



Gloria Wright

Although original Chapel Hill Church buildings fell to snowstorms over the years, a more secure brick facility now welcomes a faithful congregation for worship.

By Gloria Wright

Long-ago snowstorms and a number of renovations mark the history of Chapel Hill Missionary Baptist Church, which will celebrate its 154th anniversary October 27. Signs announcing the anniversary are being placed around the area inviting everyone to “Come and Join” the celebration of the historic church. Located at 5137 Chapel Hill Road in Bolton, the church dates back to 1870, when a group of residents from a small community outside Bolton obtained a parcel of land atop a hill from the State of Mississippi.

On this land, the residents built a house of worship, which they called Chapel Hill. The Rev. Joe Van was elected to lead the congregation. According to oral history, the first building was destroyed by a snowstorm and rebuilt in 1901, with the Rev. Henry Johnson leading the construction effort.

In 1918, Mother Nature again intervened, and another snowstorm destroyed the church. Rebuilding was under the leadership of the Rev. H. C. White. Throughout the years, the church has undergone renovations, until 1965, when the present brick veneer building was constructed.

For the last seventeen years, the church has been under the leadership of Pastor Darryl Smothers. Assisting the pastor in guiding the church are Deacons Johnny Stewart, Willie Mack, Jr., Tommy Garner, Sr., and Glenn Kelly. The Church Mothers are Dorothy Williams, Maggie Lee Johnson, Mamie A. Marshall, Magnolia Jones, Helen Mack, Ada Jordan and Ollie Stewart. Trustees are W. C. Jordan, Floyd Marshall Jr. and Glenn Kelly.

Many descendants of the original families still reside in the area. Some have moved to nearby communities but continue to attend services at Chapel Hill.



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Preparing for the Chapel Hill M B Church's 154th anniversary celebration on October 27 are (l to r) Delores Garner, Shirley Dinkins, Ada Jordan and May Garner.

Delores Gardner, church secretary, and Ada Jordan, one of the Mothers of the Church, remember when, in the late 1950s and early '60s, families came to church by walking, riding in wagons, cars and even tractors. Services began in early morning and continued through late afternoon. Baskets of snacks were brought to feed the children.

Shirley Dickers, the announcing secretary, stated that those baskets should not be confused with “The Baskets” that the Mothers of the Church prepared for special occasions. Those occasions included baskets with food prepared for the dinner-on-the-ground celebrations. Everyone knew who fried the best chicken, baked the finest pies and made the best cornbread. Anyone wanting a special food knew which basket to seek first.

May Garner, a choir member who is in charge of public relations, recalls the original baptismal ritual: “Candidates wore white gowns and white head covers. They were taken in procession to a pond or a lake for the immersion cere-

mony.”

Present-day ceremonies have a pool constructed on the church grounds for baptisms.

Membership in the church has changed through the years. During the COVID pandemic, there were no in-person services conducted, and a conference call system was established for services. Membership decreased during that time and in the post-pandemic days.

Services are held four Sundays a month, and communion is offered on the first Sunday of the month. At each service, time is allotted for announcements, offerings, worship songs, the pastor's sermon and a call to discipleship.

Adjacent to the church among the woods rests a cemetery, where departed members of the church are buried. A number of very old headstones reflect the age of the Chapel Hill Church.

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