

## A HISTORY OF BURNS CHURCH OF CHRIST

Burns Church of Christ had its origin on Beaverdam Creek in what has since been known as the Old Beaverdam School House, which was located approximately two miles southeast of Burns, about one hundred and fifty yards from the creek. This first church and school building was a small log structure. Brother Luther lived at that time about one quarter of a mile northeast of the Church and school building.

As we know it today, this was near the intersection of Beechwood Drive and Girl Scout Road.

The Church of Christ was organized there about the year 1884 by the first preacher A. J. Luther (better known as "Uncle Jack" Luther). Seth Stuart states: "*There is no record available which reveals the exact identity of the original members. It is known, however, that a Brother Frank Davis was at that time working closely with Brother Luther.*" Brother A. J. Luther conducted regular services at the church building upon the second Sunday of every month, along with the Lord's Supper upon every Lord's Day.



Front Row L to R: A. J. Luther & wife Amanda; brother Marshall Luther & wife Virginia.  
Back Row L to R: Dora Luther, brother Arous Luther, sister Alice Luther Baker & her son Willie.

It is interesting to note that Brother A. J. Luther was the grandfather of one of our faithful members, the late Alma Gray. He was also the great grandfather of Bobby Gray, Earl Gray, Lacy Gray, and the late Ben Gray.

From a small beginning, records show that their membership expanded within a few years to such an extent that the school house meeting place was no longer adequate. Around the turn of the century, they moved from this small structure to the "Union Meeting House" in Burns. At this time, the membership was estimated to be forty-five or fifty members.

After several years, with their membership continuing to grow, it became necessary for the church to begin assembling in a larger building. Construction began on a new building at the intersection of what is known now as College and Church Streets on a lot donated by Mr. & Mrs. S. L. Chandler in the year 1910. This is Mike Chandler and Jenny Fuqua's grandfather. While waiting for the church building to be completed, the church continued to assemble at the "Union Meeting House" located about a quarter of a mile north of the new building site. The original church building was dedicated and the first service was held in the late summer of 1911.



Stephen Lafayette (Fate) and Sarah Evalina Chandler

Seth Stuart in his compilation of the history of Burns Church of Christ wrote:

"Originally, the new building consisted of an auditorium only. There were no classrooms, and no baptistery. In those days there was no electricity or running water. The building was heated with two wood stoves, while kerosene lamps provided the lighting. Baptismal services were conducted near the lime kiln on the banks of Beaverdam Creek.

There was no regular preacher for each Sunday. Certain preachers came on predetermined Sundays of each month. Oftentimes, there was no preaching service; only Sunday School, which was followed by the Lord's Supper."

The early group of Christians which assembled here did not hesitate to lay their beliefs upon the conviction that Jesus Christ died not for a chosen few, but for all; and that the New Testament provides a plan of salvation that all can understand and adopt. It insisted, among other things, that there is no instruction in the New Testament for instrumental music in the church services, and, in fact, the lot which the church building was built on was donated with the stipulation that if this was not carried out, ownership of the lot, and the building on it, would be passed on to the nearest Church of Christ that will carry out this provision of the contract.

From time to time various additions were made to the original church building. Bible Study Classrooms were added in 1946, and the interior of the building was remodeled in 1955. Another classroom was added in 1990 with much help from Horace and Bobby Deal. In 1992, more space became necessary, and another room was built on the south side of the church building. With all these improvements, the church building at Burns stood as a most imposing structure, lending charm, beauty and history to the town.

In 1999 it became necessary for a new church building to be built. The old building was removed and a new structure was erected. The old building had served the Burns community for many decades and now there is a beautiful new structure on the lot to the south of where the old building stood. The new church building was built to seat more than 200 in the auditorium with multiple classrooms in the basement. There is a 60 by 90 foot multiple-use building attached. There is an additional office and classroom building at the rear of the structures. Our first day of worship in the new building was on April 16, 2000.

At that time (1999), the church had two elders, Burt Everson and Jeff Kuhns. As of October 2014, we are under the leadership of five elders: Dennis Brunett, Glenn Buffington, Charles Dauphin, James Hinkle, and Stan Whitfield.

Several other men have served Burns Church of Christ as elders over the years, including (in alphabetical order) Jackson Brown, Campbell Coulter, Huron Daniel, Milton Daniel, Bert Everson, Ben Hall, Butch Jack, Jeff Kuhns, Jack Jones, Sam Lowe, Dave McClain, Harvey Meek, Charlie Miller, Alfred Oliphant, Ben Olipant, George Polk, Bobby Reeder, and Vernon Wyburn.

Furthermore, several men have served in leadership roles for Burns Church of Christ in the past. These men include Warren Glenn (Chunky) Brown, Charles Dauphin, Kenny Gibbs, Bobby Gray, and George McClary.

Several men have served in the role of song leaders at Burns Church of Christ. These include the following: Herman Luther, Alfred Oliphant, Sam Lowe, Clarence Gentry, Lucian Johnson, Seth Stuart, Kenny Gibbs, Bobby Eaton, Keith Oliver, and Mike Hollingsworth. Eric Petty is our current song leader.

Regarding our song service Seth Stuart noted the following:

In November, 1917, a man by the name of Derryberry of Hillsboro, Tennessee, whose initials have since been forgotten, conducted a three-week singing school in the present Church building. The school was conducted six nights a week (Saturday nights were excluded). He was very knowledgeable

of basic music, possessed much enthusiasm for singing, and rendered an excellent service for the Burns congregation. The school was open to the public, and was well attended each night.

A new hymn book was at that time just recently off the press, the title of which was "Gospel Praise." New songs were learned from that book, which was introduced into regular congregational singing after the singing school had ended. That book continued its use as the congregation's main hymnal until the early thirties, when Christian Hymnal No. 1 was introduced. That book was replaced by Christian Hymns No. 2 in the early fifties. Presently, "Great Songs of the Church," and "The Majestic Hymnal" are used for regular services.

At the present time, we have a hymnal titled "Songs of Faith and Praise" that is used occasionally. The majority of the time our songs are projected on a screen using "The Paperless Hymnal" power point slides.

Numerous preachers have served the church over the period of time. They are listed on the next page. Matthew Hiatt is currently serving as the preacher for Burns Church of Christ.

In 2014, the oldest member Pearl Gentry Johnson is 99 years old. She has attended services at Burns since the late 1920's or early 1930's. She taught Sunday School classes for 40 years.

Burns Church of Christ has now been in existence for 130 years (1884 - 2014). For the last 104 years (1910 - 2014) it has met each Sunday morning on College Street in Burns. It still believes that Jesus Christ died not for a chosen few, but for all; the New Testament provides a plan of salvation that all can understand and adopt; and that we must have Biblical authority for all we do and teach.

Burns Church of Christ still strives to be a light in the community for love, grace and forgiveness under the cross of Jesus Christ.

Compiled by Keith Oliver in 2014 from the following sources:

- A Brief History of Burns, Tennessee from Early Pioneer Days to June, 1975 (compiled by Seth S. Stuart)
- Burns Church of Christ Directory, dated 1995
- Burns Church of Christ Directory, dated November 2000
- An Undated Pamphlet
- The Heritage of Dickson County, Tennessee 1803 - 2006 (copyright 2007). Article 238, Page 238

## PREACHERS AT BURNS CHURCH OF CHRIST

This listing of preachers at Burns Church of Christ is not necessarily all inclusive because:

1. Other men have filled in as preacher at Burns when between regular ministers or
2. Some who preached in the past have returned in an interim role.

In his history of Burns Church of Christ, Seth Stuart records the following men have also preached at Burns. These men are not be listed below: T. B. Larimore, H. Leo Boles, Brother Yeagley, Matthew C. Cayce, and Leonard Jackson.

Seth Stuart noted "in 1946, the first full-time preacher was employed. Some of these preachers have moved their families to Burns and lived in the community. Others have commuted from Nashville on Sundays, Wednesday evening for mid-week Bible study, and on other occasions as needed for visitation, funerals, weddings, etc."

Please note the dates shown for more recent preachers are, in some cases, approximate.

A. J. (Uncle Jack) Luther (Origins in 1884)	Edwin Blackwell		
Matthew Casey (1917)	Price Billingsby		
Will Hassell	Brother Stephens		
Oscar Pharman	V. E. Gregory		
Jimmie Allen			
Sam Pitman	James McBride	?	Sept. 1972
I. B. Bradley	Gerald Barker	Jan. 1973	Aug. 1973
L. B. Jones	Perry Cotham	Aug. 1973	Oct. 1974
Alfred Taylor	James Reynolds	Dec. 1974	Dec 1976
Granville Tyler	Norman Keener	March 1977	Jan. 1980
Leonard Tyler	Dean Freetly	Jan. 1980	Dec. 1984
Jack McElroy	Steve Miles	March 1985	Aug. 1985
J. B. Boyd	John Martin	Nov. 1985	Oct. 1986
Larry Lock	Tim Garton	Oct. 1986	July 1989
Jack Duncan	David Hamrick	Sept. 1989	Aug. 1991
Johnnie Edwards	Eugene Brown	Feb. 1992	Oct. 1998
Aude McKee (mid to late 1940's)	Gary Hargrove	Nov. 1998	Aug. 2002
Dan Spann	Clarence DeLoach	Aug. 2002	Feb. 2003
Rudy Sanders	Andy Erwin	Feb. 2003	Oct. 2003
Gwyneth Ford (filled in a few times in the 1980's)	James Hinkle	Jan. 2004	Dec. 2010
Axel Swang	Mike Hollingsworth (Assoc. Min.)	July 2004 to July 2005	
Jack Ashley	Matthew Hiatt (Assoc Min.)	March 2006 to Dec. 2010	
D. Ellis Walker	Matthew Hiatt	Jan. 2011	To Present

### THREE POEMS COMPOSED BY A. J. LUTHER

I'm quite a little scholar  
Bright as any silver dollar  
To spell, and read and write,  
And do with all my might.  
Such work as I may follow  
My work must all be good,  
If I indeed be blest;  
If I can only do my part  
The Lord will do the rest.  
So now my speech is said  
I hope you heard it all.  
Its good because, it means so much,  
And is so very small.

*Composed by A. J. Luther for his daughter Ethel Luther - 1889.*

Shall we walk in the dark;  
Without one spark,  
When light is all around us?  
Shall we grope our way,  
Through nature's day,  
As blind as nature found us?  
With book and slate,  
both soon and late  
I'll give myself to study.  
I'll go to school through rain or snow  
Or when the ground is muddy.  
My teacher she is very kind  
She makes the scholars love her.  
There's no one here, but parents dear  
That I esteem above her.  
My parents they are very kind  
To get me books and dresses  
I love to meet them on my way  
And get their fond caresses.  
So now my speech is said.  
My Father made and gave me  
I'm sure I could no better do  
If it were all to save me.

*Composed by A. J. Luther for his eldest daughter Edith Luther - 1889.*

I'm quite a little girl  
My age is only seven  
If I live to be four more  
I'll surely be eleven.  
I did not like to speak  
But thought I ought to try  
So you see my speech is very short  
But, sweet as Sugar Pie.

*Composed for Evalena Luther by her father, A. J. Luther in 1889.*

*To be recited at her first school program.*

*Recorded by his granddaughter, Alma Blanche (Brown) Gray, from memory 80 years later on  
February 27, 1969.*