

FLAT ROCK BAPTIST CHURCH – THE FIRST 110 YEARS

In 1857 John Brower built a large log church on the Marshall Farm about one and half miles northeast of the Crossroads. This church was built for the use of different denominations and was named Laurel Hill Church for the abundant laurels which grew nearby.

It was here on January 15, 1899, that fourteen men and eleven women met with a Presbytery composed of ministers and elders from Mt. Airy First Baptist church to organize a new Baptist church which they named Flat Rock. Among the members of the Presbytery was Rev. C. C. Haymore who helped organize many churches, including Mt. Airy First Baptist in 1879 where he pastored for ten years. He served as pastor of Flat Rock in 1911.

In February 1899, the tiny congregation elected its first pastor, J. H. Powers. By the summer of 1905, Flat Rock was a member of the Pilot Mountain Baptist Association and on July 23rd collected \$12.31 for association expenses and state and foreign missions. The pastor's salary was \$50.00 for the year.

Later, a lot was purchased next to the Flat Rock schoolhouse and a church was built. It was a one room granite structure with two aisles dividing three rows of wooden benches. A coal stove stood near the pulpit. To divide the sanctuary into classrooms for Sunday School, dark green burlap curtains were pulled between sections of benches.

In 1919, the first Women's Missionary Union was organized. By 1926, the church membership was 271 with 124 enrolled in Sunday School. That year Flat Rock joined the Surry Baptist Association. By this time, the church owned its first parsonage.

In 1937 the church bought and remodeled the old Flat Rock School and for thirty-seven years, this building, along with an educational facility added in 1954, was home for Flat Rock Baptist Church.

By 1958, church membership numbered 500 with a Sunday School enrollment of 453. Sadly, like so many of her sister churches throughout the nation, Flat Rock experienced a decline in membership and attendance from 1960-1980. These circumstances, however, did not dampen the spirits of the faithful as evidenced by their commitment to build a beautiful new sanctuary in 1974.

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In 1993 and 1994, the church erected a new educational facility and in 1995 began an early morning worship service to meet the needs of persons who worked on Sunday. In 1998 they began a remodeling of the sanctuary and employed their first full time youth minister. With a church membership of over 450, it can be said that once again this church was growing.

The past ten years has reflected an increase in attendance, an increase in youth activity and an increase in giving. In the mid 1990's, the church chose to adopt Flat Rock Elementary School at Christmas and gifts to the children there have steadily increased over the past few years. In August 2007, our current pastor, Rev. Todd E. Byrd, issued a challenge entitled "52 Days of Commitment." As a result, the \$45,000.00 church debt was paid off and the church celebrated as the note was burned in December of that year. In spite of the closing of many businesses and an uncertain economy, Flat Rock has experienced a substantial increase in the involvement in and giving to missions. From 2002 to 2008, mission gifts have increased from \$1,646.00 to \$13,196.00 per year. In 2008, the church also established a food pantry to help meet the needs of those in the community who had lost their jobs or were experiencing difficult times. In order to meet the increased ministry needs that accompany growth, in 2008 the church called its first full time associate pastor.

God has clearly been faithful to His Church here at Flat Rock. We look toward the future with excitement and anticipation to see how He will be faithful to "do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen."

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