

A HISTORY OF CROWDERS CREEK
ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1892 – 1992

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1992 - 2017

May 31, 1992

On September 12, 1890, representatives from Bethany and Pisgah churches met at the Alfred Ferguson home to consider the feasibility of building another A.R.P. church in the area. Mr. W. A Grier (Pisgah Elder) was elected chairman. His first act was to appoint Messrs. J. A. Crawford, W. S. Love, W. M. Wilson, G. W. Falls, and Alfred Ferguson to select a site and determine the size of the proposed new structure. Mrs. Nancy Ferguson and Mrs. Rachel Pursley, sisters, each offered an acre of their land as a building site. The offer was accepted, and plans proceeded to build a house of worship measuring thirty-five feet by fifty feet. Strong hands and willing minds went to work immediately and resulted in completion of the building on the exact spot of our present structure.

The first service at Crowders Creek Church was conducted outdoors on the fifth Sabbath of May, 1891. Dr. E. E. Boyce, then pastor of Pisgah Church, preached the first sermon. Though the church had been completed, pews had not been secured, necessitating an open-air service. Later in the summer, Dr. J. S. Moffatt, pastor of the Chester congregation, conducted a meeting, and on August 14, 1891, our sanctuary was dedicated. Rev. R. M. Stevenson, pastor at Bethany, preached the dedicatory sermon, and Dr. E. E. Boyce offered prayer. In March, 1892, Dr. W. W. Orr conducted an evangelistic meeting, and twenty-five additional members joined the congregation. The original charter membership of nineteen from Pisgah and sixteen from Bethany had now grown to sixty, and Dr. Orr petitioned First Presbytery to take initial steps toward organization of the congregation. Reverends Boyce and Stevenson, and Elders Thomas Wilson from Pisgah and John Plexico from

Bethany were appointed to go forward with plans. Official organization was effected on May 28, 1892, one hundred years and three days prior to today's celebration. Crowders Creek Church was accepted into First Presbytery on the date of her organization.

In retrospect, we are inspired by the dedicated efforts of those most responsible for the birth of this "daughter" of Pisgah and Bethany. A small mission Sabbath school, located near old Patterson school house on the present Lewis Road had grown into Crowders Creek A. R. P. Church.

The first elders, elected shortly after acceptance of the new church into First Presbytery, were W. A. Grier (former Pisgah elder), W. S. Love (former Bethany elder), George W. Falls, and James F. Pursley. First deacons elected were Alfred Ferguson, James Adams, and John J. Henry. These officers were installed July 9, 1892.

Reverend R. M. Stevenson was installed as Pastor November 5, 1892. He was already serving as minister at Bethany and was assisting with church organization at Clover. For one-fourth time, Crowders Creek agreed to pay Reverend Stevenson a yearly salary of \$216.50. He was most instrumental in helping organize the Ladies Benevolent Society, the group consisting of twenty -one members. First officers were Miss Lou Love, president, Mrs. Mollie Falls, vice-president, Mrs. Margaret Sue Adams, treasurer, and Mrs. Sarah Wood, secretary. The ministry of Dr. Stevenson, ending in 1911 when he moved to Due West to edit The Associate Reformed Presbyterian, proved to be sound and inspiring, for the infant church had put down roots from which one hundred years of constant growth has been the result.

On July 5, 1912, the Reverend William Pressly Grier, a young, single, and dynamic recent graduate of Erskine Seminary, became our pastor. Within a few months he married Miss Nellie Bigham of Chester, and the young couple became the pastoral family for three churches - Clover, Bethany, and Crowders Creek. Three sons and two daughters were born while Mr. and Mrs. Grier lived in the Clover

manse. In 1919 First Presbytery divided and the South Carolina portion became Catawba Presbytery. Though situated in Gaston County, Crowders Creek became a part of Catawba Presbytery, since she was affiliated with Clover and Bethany. A wonderful and dedicated ministry experienced twice the sad spectacle of World Wars and the consequent departure of a number of young men in answer to the country's call to service. A plaque in honor of all service men has been placed in our fellowship hall. Dr. Grier continued to serve Crowders Creek for thirty-four years. He resigned April 6, 1946, to devote full time to the Clover congregation. Indeed, Crowders Creek was blessed to have had only two ministers during its first fifty-four years of organization.

Rev. Murray W. Griffith became pastor of Crowders Creek Church in May, 1946. The pastorate was shared with Bethany, with that church receiving two-thirds of the pastor's time. The manse was at Bethany Church. Children of the manse were Jo Ann (now a missionary in Ethiopia), Carolyn, and Jane. Son Dale arrived during Mr. Griffith's pastorate. Arrangements were made for morning service at our church, and the change was especially appreciated upon recollection of years of sweltering Sabbath afternoons when this arrangement was necessary. During Mr. Griffith's pastorate, Catawba Presbytery met at Crowders Creek Church, October 8, 1946. In May, 1949, Mr. Griffith accepted a call to Parkwood Church in Charlotte. We will always remember the quiet dignity and dedication of this family whose ministry contributed so significantly to the growing strength of Crowders Creek Church.

Though we were without a minister from June, 1949, to June, 1950, our church continued to plan for the future. We withdrew from Bethany Church and Catawba Presbytery in anticipation of obtaining a full-time pastor. Crowders Creek was refunded her share of the jointly-owned manse, and the funds were applied toward construction of the manse which now serves us. This two-story, nine room brick veneer home was completed in May, 1950, at a cost of \$13,476.15. George F. Henry

acted as chairman of the building committee. The challenge to become self-supporting as a single pastorate was being answered.

During the Spring of 1950, Dr. Joseph L. Grier accepted a call to Crowders Creek Church from Chester, South Carolina. He assumed his duties on June 11, 1950, as our first full-time pastor. The earnest and warm spirit of love by all his family endeared them to all of us. Dr. Grier was stricken with paralysis in May, 1952. He resigned October 14, 1952. Dr. and Mrs. Grier's son, Eugene, graciously supplied our pulpit until the end of the church year.

On April 1, 1953, Rev. W. Nale Falls assumed the duties of pastor of Crowders Creek Church. Mr. and Mrs. Falls (Mable) along with children Phyllis, Sarah, and Billy Nale comprised our manse family. Cathy was born during Mr. Falls' pastorate here. We recall Mr. Falls' zeal in promoting Synod's New Life Movement, and personal evangelism was exercised with special vigor through our Fisherman's Club. The entire family was musical and energetic, and their spirit of enthusiasm radiated throughout all the church groups. On August 11, 1957, Mr. Falls offered his resignation, having made plans to enter Princeton Seminary for further study. The Reverend Earle P. Barron, Jr., his wife Mona, and two daughters, Margaret and Sara, were greeted by our congregation at a family night supper on December 31, 1957. Mr. Barron had recently accepted our pastoral call and was duly installed on March 23, 1958. With the cooperation and sanction of our new pastor, the congregation voted to commence a building program during the summer of 1958. Elected to serve on the building committee were Kenneth Barnes, chairman, Mrs. James Adams, and William J. Clarke. Kenneth Barnes was awarded the building contract, and George Stowe succeeded him on the building committee. Our church is honored today as we enjoy and appreciate our beautiful sanctuary. We are grateful that planners, the builders, and the supporters of the bold venture never ceased until the job was done. Approximately half of the estimated \$53,500 cost of renovation had to be borrowed. The first service in our new edifice was conducted October 11, 1959.

Mr. Barron read Psalm 122 and preached on the topic "Rejoicing in God's House". His ministry was interrupted from June until October, 1960, as he pursued further studies and ministry at Boston State Hospital. Though we remember this fine family for many things, perhaps Mr. Barron's persistence and hard work toward making God's house and surrounding area a place beautiful to behold is one of his most lasting memorials. He conducted his last service at Crowders Creek on May 24, 1964, having accepted a call to Little Joe Presbyterian Church in Barium Springs, North Carolina.

An Allen organ had been installed in the sanctuary in 1961, and emphasis on church music and singing was revitalized under the direction of Mrs. James Adams and Mrs. George Stowe.

In the fall of 1960, a member of Crowders Creek Church, Mr. James Barker, made a significant decision. He felt led to enter full-time Christian ministry and entered Erskine Seminary. Mr. Barker's service in our Synod has been most noteworthy.

Our next pastor, Rev. Charles Mitchell, preached his first sermon October 3, 1964 and was duly installed November eighth. Mrs. Mitchell, son George, and daughters Mary Ethel and Cheryl Jane, comprised our attractive manse family. The Mitchells contributed immensely to our continuing church growth. A new fund was established for construction of a cottage at Bonclarken. At a cost of \$34,000, the ten-room structure was completed in the summer of 1960. It has been the focal point of our church's presence at Bonclarken.

During Mr. Mitchell's pastorate Catherine (Kitte) Clarke was commissioned for mission service in Pakistan. She was a teacher in Murree Christian School for three years.

On May 28, 1967, Crowders Creek celebrated her seventy-fifth anniversary. It was truly a "high light" day. Memories were revived in a special way. Our mortgage note was burned, and we rejoiced at the evidence of hard work and sacrifice. Some say that even the ninety-two degree weather of the day was "providential". Within a few days after sweltering through the service, the George Henry, Jr. family had air conditioning installed in the sanctuary. Mr. Mitchell

resigned his pastorate in November, 1973, effective December thirty-first. He had accepted a call to Covenant A. R. P. Church in Statesville.

On December 1, 1974, Rev. Charles B. Evans, III was installed as our pastor. He and his wife, Carolyn, and daughter, Holly, came to us from Upper Long Cane Presbyterian Church in Abbeville, South Carolina. Little Christy arrived during their time in our manse. Enthusiasm and boundless energy characterized Mr. Evans' ministry among us. Church growth continued in a fine way under his leadership. Stained glass windows, added during this period, enhanced the worshipful nature of the sanctuary. Mr. Evans' last sermon for us was delivered October 12, 1980. He had accepted a call to Pinecrest A. R. P. Church near Bonclarken.

Our new pastor, Rev. Robert J. Hamilton, Jr., was installed October 18, 1981. He and his wife, Anita, along with their three boys, Benjamin, Jesse, and Nathan, commenced immediately a very fruitful ministry in our midst. Growth included the pastor's family when Jordan arrived on the scene. Especially helpful was his leadership in developing our senior adults into an organization called HARPS (Happy A.R.P.'s). The physical plant saw the erection of a tremendously important addition in 1984 when our new education/fellowship building was completed. This major structure, costing approximately \$250,000 met a long-felt need, both by providing six classrooms on the first floor and a kitchen/dining area upstairs. (Note: Crowders Creek Church has been extremely fortunate in this latest building program as well as the major sanctuary renovations in the fifties. Two professional builders were part of our membership. Kenneth Barnes, earlier, and Glenn Oates at this time made possible these building efforts with almost at-cost expenditures and sizable savings for the congregation.) Rev. Hamilton resigned from the pulpit on August 25, 1985.

First Presbytery met in a called meeting on February 18, 1986, to act on a call to Rev. Richard A. Mill to be our pastor. The action was approved and Rev. Mill arrived with wife, Annette, and children Boone, Allison, and Rebecca. Our new

pastor organized ministry teams and Shepherd groups who served to assist in the ongoing programs of the church. The varying facets of the work of the church were under the direct leadership of the appropriate ministry teams. A part-time youth director was employed as well. The mission emphasis of the church was revitalized and faith promise giving to support the work was significant. It was during this period that the final indebtedness on our new fellowship building was retired, and Crowders Creek Church was debt free. A fund was immediately started toward the purchase of a church van. (The van has now been secured.) On March 13, 1990, Rev. Mill reported that the Board of Church Extension had extended to him a call to become a mission developer for the proposed new church in Raleigh. He indicated his desire to accept the call, and his resignation was accepted to be effective May 1, 1990. Once again our manse was vacant.

Note should be made of a number of special gifts to our church by various members, the Women of the Church, and others through the years. Numbered among them are gifts of furniture, stained glass windows, baptismal font, organ carillon and chimes, pulpit candles and offering plates, and a baby grand piano, to name a few.

Among pulpit supply ministers during the summer of 1991 was a young seminary student named Jay West. He virtually became our pastor to the extent that his schedule would permit, and upon his graduation in December our call, having been appropriately approved, was in his hands. Sunday afternoon, January 12, 1992, was the date of ordination and installation for Rev. J. T. West. Pastor West, Mrs. West (Jennifer) and little Jack are now occupants of our manse. Mr. West has already proven himself tireless in his pastoring, and we rejoice that the one hundredth year of our existence finds a man of immense zeal and energy at work as our Shepherd.

Today every former pastor still living is with us and participating in our service. What a joy for us and what cause for earnest gratitude to God that

through a full century of time we have been so blessed by outstanding men of God,
who have served as Shepherds of the flock in this place.

Crowders Creek ARP Church

Twenty-Five More Years of God's Blessings

1992 - 2017

- The 100th anniversary in 1992 left us with Rev J.T. West in the pulpit.
- December, 1992 The church gets a new sign in the manse yard for \$2,700
- October, 1993 The Session accepts Rev. J.T. West's resignation
- December, 1993, Dr. Harry Schutte was approved to serve as interim Pastor at CCARP
- Jan, 1994, The Session approves purchase of a lot adjoining our Bonclarken lot for a cost of \$23,000.
- Sep, 1994 Instillation Service for Rev. Barry Sanders. (Wife Debbie, Samuel and Catherine Ann)
- June, 1997 /Rev. Sanders last Sunday at CCARP
- August, 1997 Memorial funds were used to purchase a Church Van
- March, 1998 Soup Fundraiser to get new furniture for the Bonclarken Cottage
- May, 1998 Collected a Love offering to help support Jynne Stowe's trip to China.
- Sep., 1998 Rev. Jim McLurkin installed as Pastor (Wife Norah)
- December, 1998 Mae Ferguson retires as Secretary after 26 years of service.
- February, 1999, Pastor's Study relocated and updated and a New Desk was donated for it.
- April, 2000, Gwen Stowe retires as organist after 10 years of service.
- May, 2000 Awilda Stowe retires as piano player
- July, 2000, Melissa Jackson appointed as organist
- October, 2000 Dedication of Hand bells donated by Mike & Mae Ferguson and Rev. Jim & Sally Barker.
- Dec, 2000 Cub Scout Troup approved by Session
- April, 2001, Session approves financial support for Jynne Stowes upcoming China Trip
- Sep, 2002 Secretary Ann Patton resigns
- Jan, 2003 A \$12,000 gift to the church was used to have Clover Glass to cover the stained-glass windows. The Session decided to dedicate the newly completed Sound System to it's designer and builder Mr. Lewis Rhyne.
- July, 2004 Dedication Service for new NIV pew Bibles donated to the church

- August, 2004, We received a gift of \$2,500 to convert a bathroom stall into a shower for use with the Interfaith Hospitality Program that we participated in.
- July 2005 Received a \$10,000 donation to be used to help those in need in the community.
- Oct, 2005 the congregation donated funds for the Pakistan Earthquake Relief Fund
- October, 2005 Sonja Balsom submitted her resignation as secretary
- April 2006 Shannon Millar designs a church brochure that wins Local and State Honors and was submitted for judging on the national level.
- May 2006 The church received the donation of a granite bench for the cemetery
- March 2007 Information was placed in the historical room concerning John Henry Forbes who is thought to be the first person buried in the church cemetery
- Sep, 2007 Session accepts Rev Jim McLurkin's retirement request. Jim left regular attendance in our pulpit on 12/31/2007 but filled in often in the ensuing years.
- May,2008 secretary Cindy Braswell submitted her resignation.
- August, 2008 Jodie Naylor hired as new Secretary
- August, 08 Instillation of Ben Wingard
- Feb, 2009 Session approves a summer intern position, Kelly Brooks is appointed to it
- June, 2009, Roofing work on the Manse
- October, 2008 Session approves a BBQ fundraiser at Penland's Tree Farm to raise money for playground equipment
- May 2011 received funds from a member's estate to be used toward Bonclarken Cottage repairs.
- August 2013 Rev, Ben Wingard submits his resignation and moves to Australia
- May 2015, it was decided to offer the call for a new pastor to Rev. Stuart F. Fowler
- Oct 2015 Secretary Jessica Bolin resigns and is replaced with Melissa Holbrooks.