

Historical Record of Athena Baptist Church

Table of Contents

Pastors.....2

Licensed to Preach3

Deacons.....4

Sunday School Superintendents5

Church Clerks6

Church History..... 7-36

Through 2009

Pastors

Bro. Henry Austin.....	1897
Bro. J. W. Pearson	1907
Bro. C. E. McClellan	1915-1917
Bro. L. Lamar Odom	1917-1918
Bro. J. O Wilcox	1921-1925
Bro. S. Knight Wilson	1925-1926
Bro. Watts	1929-1930
Bro. Holmes	1931-1934
Bro. Joe Connell	1934-1935
Bro. I. M. Moore.....	1935-1936
Bro. Joe Bell	1936-1937
Bro. Charles W. Persons.....	1937-1938
Bro. A. H. Townsend.....	1940-1941
Bro. John R. Collins.....	1941-1944
Bro. Charles W. Persons.....	1944-1951
Bro. K. A. Whaley	1951-1953
Bro. W. L. Price.....	1954-1957
Bro. P. G. Safford	1957-1959
Bro. Roy Bailey	1960-1963
Bro. R. E. Merrell	1964-1966
Bro. Henry A. Pickern	1966-1969
Bro. Marlin F. Williams.....	1969-1970
Bro. Gordon Burgin.....	1970-1971
Bro. Ray Debusk.....	1972-1979

Bro. Olin Wills..... 1981-1984
 Bro. Leland Strickland..... 1985-1986

Pastors (Continued)

Bro. Mike Parker 1988-1991
 Bro. Jo Ed Rice 1993-1994
 Bro. Gerald Smith..... 1995-1998
 Bro. Charles Lyons 1999-2001
 Bro. Roger Ezell 2002-2003
 Bro. David McMullen..... 2003-

Licensed to Preach

Bro. Mace Howell..... June 17, 1922
 Bro. N. L. McDowell..... August 14, 1938
 Bro. Vernon Morgan..... August 5, 1945
 Bro. James Howell.....Feb. 28, 1954
 Bro. Roger Ezell March 27, 1960
 Bro. David McMullen..... July 18, 1982
 Bro. L. E. Parker 1989

Deacons

Perry Hodge	August 8, 1925
Marion Whitfield	August 8, 1925
E. G. Whitfield.....	September 14, 1941
W. H. Ricketson.....	September 14, 1941
Harry Massey	June 7, 1953
Bryant Morgan.....	December 5, 1954
Bill Howell.....	December 5, 1954
Robert Ezell	October 18, 1964
Woodrow Kelly	October 18, 1964
Thad Hardin	October 18, 1964
W. H. McHargue.....	October 18, 1964
Ernest Houck	October 19, 1969
Bill Drawdy	October 19, 1969
Bryant Russell.....	October, 1982
David McMullen.....	September 25, 1983
Dennis Howell	September 25, 1983
J. T. Berryhill.....	July, 2005

Sunday School Superintendents

Warren McCall	1912
M. J. Mace Howell.....	1922
Mr. Nash	1929
Sam Houck.....	1934
J. E. Nixon	1936
N. L. McDowell.....	1937
A. J. Ezell.....	1939
Bryant Morgan.....	1941
Vernon Morgan.....	1945
Bill Howell.....	1946
Bryant Morgan.....	1948
Bill Ricketson	1950
Bill Howell.....	1953
Harry Massey	1954
Jack Bodiford.....	1955
W. H. “Mac” McHargue.....	1957
Vergil Morgan	1967
Betty Jean Morgan.....	1969
Bryant Morgan.....	1970
Dennis Howell	1971
Jack Drawdy	1973
Dennis Howell	1979

Church Clerks

Walter J. Howard	1915
Leila Millinor Whitfield	1932
Robert Ezell	1941
Edna Ezell	1946
Bill Howell	1948
Bryant Morgan	1950
Marguerite Morgan	1952
Wanda Bodiford	1953
Duskey Giddens	1954
Bryant Morgan	1962
Jack Bodiford	1964
Elaine Pridgeon	1966
Melanie Turner	1989
Becky Houck	1993
Pam Berryhill	1996
Darlene Stephens	1999
Judy McMullen	2008

Historical Record of Athena Baptist Church

From “A Brief History of Athena Baptist Church,” (pages 7 through 23) compiled by Mrs. Leila Millinor, Mrs. Elaine Pridgeon, Mrs. Duskey Giddens, and Mrs. Hazel Ezell (Submitted 1974) (Recompiled and edited by David & Judy McMullen)

By the late 1800's there were several families in the Warrior Community, as it was then called. Most of these were young husbands and wives who had taken up homesteads, built homes from the forests, cleared land for farming and found themselves with growing families.

Realizing that schools and churches are a vital part of any community, they set about to build a house for classes to be taught, and soon worship services were held there.

The first building was a one room log structure with puncheon floors and benches. The roof was made from boards rived by hand from the cypress logs found in the nearby area.

In 1897, the heads of families decided there was enough Baptist to organize a church. As far as we are

able to establish, the Corinth Baptist Church was organized under the leadership of Mr. Henry F. Austin, a Baptist preacher, who was the first pastor.

Ten charter members are all that can reasonably be established and here are their names: Mr. and Mrs. Henry F. Austin, Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Dixon, Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Coker, and Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Deal.

Before the name was changed to Athena Baptist Church, there appeared 15 other names on the church roll (with 10 charter members) which made a total of 25. Out of this number it is noted in the record that there were 6 deaths, 3 letters granted, 2 dismissed for dancing, 2 lost sight of, 1 turned out for bad conduct, and 1 joined another church.

It is remembered by some that during the days of the early church a Sunday school, though not well organized or equipped with anything except dedicated Christian fathers and mothers, was a part of the church program. The community is still reaping rewards from the bible teaching experiences of these early days.

A Memorable Incident

Mrs. Annie Whitfield, the daughter of Henry Austin and Ida Young Austin, tells this story:

While the church was still called the Corinth Baptist Church, and the log cabin was still used for worship, this part of the county experienced a severe drought.

In June of that year the corn was wilted and yellow, the men who owned cattle drove them to the California Sinks in the lower end of the county to find water.

The church took action; they called a day of prayer. This bright sunny morning was like many others they had seen that year, as the sun shined out hot and lapped up the tiny drops of dew that had dampened the earth the night before.

Some of the men in the community had not shown enough interest in the affairs of the church except to peek in through the windows to watch Mrs. Dixon shout, but this morning two of them were already seated when the people arrived.

Bible reading, singing, and prayer were the order of the day as one after another took part. About 10

O'clock there sounded a great clap of thunder that caused the house to tremble; the rain came down in abundance.

Mrs. Annie said that as everyone made ready to go home, Mrs. Dixon invited her family to dinner. As they began to load the wagons for the trip, Mrs. Dixon refused to ride – instead she walked in the rain singing, shouting, and praising God. The drought was broken.

In 1907, Rev. J. W. Pearson was pastor of what was still called Corinth Baptist Church. There has been no record found between 1907 and 1915.

By
1915 a new
white frame
building had
been built,
and both
school and



worship services were held there. This building was erected on a different site and was used until 1948.

C. E. McClellan was pastor from 1915-1917. During this time conference was held 9 times. A financial report was made which included 2 State Missions Offerings. A recommendation was made to apply to the

Board of Home Missions for aid in constructing a new building, however, it was not stated that this was done. For a missions project the church voted to extend an arm to the Lake Joe locality.

Bro. Walter Howard was elected to serve as church clerk, and Sisters Bertie Whitfield and Nancy Howell were chosen to act as deaconesses for the church. Marion Whitfield had served as church clerk prior to this.

The Lord's Supper was observed once per quarter at the close of services at 11 O'clock on the 4th Sunday of the month.

J. Lamar Odum, Jr. was called as pastor July 8, 1917. We have no record of the length of his pastorate. Only one record of conference was kept and it reveals those 4 men and 4 women were re-instated having been turned out of the church. The men for profane language, and the women for dancing.

The next pastor, J. O. Wilcox, was called Dec. 18, 1921, and served until 1925.

On January 15, 1922, a Sunday School was organized and was held each Sunday morning at 11 O'clock. Bro. Mace Howell was elected Sunday School Superintendent, and Bro. Willie Wilder, Sunday School

Treasurer. On June 17, of the same year, the church licensed Bro. Mace Howell to preach the gospel.

At every church conference the church roll was called to see if any members were absent. If any was absent, a committee was appointed to contact them to find out why. This information was given to the church at the next conference.

S. K. Wilson served as pastor of the church from 1925-1926. On August 8, 1925, Brothers Perry Hodge and Marion Whitfield were appointed Deacons of the church. The church also voted to pay the pastor Knight Wilson, not less than \$10.00 per month.

There were no records found during 1926-1929, the year Bro. Watts was called as pastor. The next minutes were written July 31, 1932, and Preacher Holmes from Cross City was called to be the pastor. The Sunday School was being held at 10 O'clock by this time.

July, 1934, the 3rd Saturday, conference was called to order by F. Marion Whitfield and Bro. Joe Connell was called as pastor. He served for one year.

Bro. I. M. Moore came as pastor October 6, 1935, and on this same day Rev. Moore, presented to the church, a church budget. This was explained to the members, discussed, and adopted. Sixteen members



promised to tithe. In August of the same year, Rev. Moore organized an important phase of our church worship, midweek prayer services. Bro. Moore taught the first study course, “Building a Standard Sunday School,” and led in taking the first church course. God called his servant home in July of the following year.

Rev. Charles W. Persons came as pastor for the years 1937 and 1938. Church services were being held only twice a month. Bro. Persons organized a Baptist Young People’s Union (BYPU.) in Sept. 1938, with Lanty Hogan as Director. The Southern Baptist Convention voted to start a Training Union program for all church members in 1934, called the Baptist Training Union. Bro. Persons helped to organize this program in our church.

A Brotherhood was organized March 27, 1938. The officers were not given.

April 6, 1938, Rev. Persons called the church in conference for the purpose of voting on the officers of the Women’s Missionary Union (WMU). They are as follows: Mrs. E. G. “Leila” Whitfield, President, Mrs. A. J. “Grace” Ezell, Vice-president, Mrs. J. D. “Duskey”

Bodiford, Treasurer, and Mrs. J. R. Hodge, Chairman of Personal Services. These were elected unanimously by the church.

After Rev. Persons left, the Training Union was not very strong and was soon dissolved.

September 14, 1941, Mr. E. G. Whitfield and Mr. W. H. Ricketson were nominated and elected Deacons of the church and were ordained the 4th Sunday in September. Rev. C. W. Persons examined the Deacons, Rev. Roth led the ordaining prayer, Rev. A. H. Townsend gave the charge to the Deacons, and Rev. Martin preached the ordaining sermon. Rev. Townsend was pastor at this time.

In November, 1941, Rev. John R. Collins was called as Pastor. Rev. Collins suggested to the church that we subscribe to the Baptist Witness, a weekly church paper. The church voted in favor to send it to each church family. Another Brotherhood was organized this same year and elected Bro. E. G. Whitfield, President.

Biographical Sketch of Brother Charlie Persons



In looking back today to the life lived by Bro. Charlie Persons, may our faith be challenged by his faithful service for the cause of Christ.

Bro. Charlie Persons was born at Romeo, near Ocala, Florida, December 23, 1894. He received most of his education at Tampa. In Melbourne, Florida, he taught the eighth grades, and graduated with the senior class the same year.

After receiving his B.S.E. Degree in 1925, and his Ministers in 1930 from the University of Florida, at Gainesville, he went to Trenton, Florida as high school principal. He served as principal for several schools including Havana, Greenville and Perry, giving thirty years of his life in faithful services to the youth of the past. During these thirty years, sixteen years were devoted to teaching and preaching. It is this sixteen years in gospel ministry that is to be remembered in shaping the history of the Athena Church.

The first Sunday in October 3, 1937, Bro. Persons came to begin the work that was to really shape the history of the Athena Church. For two years he leads the

church in the organization of other fields of service which were new.

- The first church census was taken in December, 1935
- The first Brotherhood was organized on March 27, 1938
- The first W. M. U. was organized April 6, 1938
- The first BYPU was organized September, 1938

New Sunday School rooms were added to the small frame building

During a two weeks revival in June, 1938, led by Bro. Fred Smith, ten persons accepted Christ as Savior. Ed Whitfield and Josh Ezell were in this group. Some remember the joy experienced when these two walked the isle.

Five years passed, other pastors came and nurtured the seed sown. In 1944, Rev. C. W. Persons came back, this time as full time pastor. Again Brotherhood, WMU



and Training Union were organized. Plans for a new church building were made in September, 1947, The foundation was laid

in July, 1948. The new auditorium was 50 x 30 feet; the educational building was 40 x 25 feet, with an upstairs containing 6 class rooms. The building was finished in December 1948 at a cost of \$8,000. The church moved into the back of the building in December of the same year and held Christmas services in the new auditorium. At last a building worthy of its cause, a full time pastor, a well organized Sunday School and Training Union, and a church membership of sixty. What faith this man of God had to attempt such a task with such few people of little faith and no money.

Two years later, May 2, 1950, a lovely dedication program was held. There were special songs, and talks by Rev. Persons and others. Rev. Dewey Mann preached the dedication sermon. The deacons burned the mortgage and the debt was paid. Everyone present really received a blessing.

The First Baptist Church of Perry is to be remembered for giving pews and painting the outside of the building. This shows the kind of man Bro. Persons was; all churches loved and respected him for his complete dedication to the cause of Christ.

During Bro. Persons' pastorate the church licensed Bros. N. L. McDowell, August 14, 1938, and Vernon

Morgan, August 5, 1945, to preach. There were 35 additions to our church also during Bro. Persons' pastorate.

Bro. Persons presented his resignation to the church, July 8, 1951, due to his health. The church accepted his resignation effective October 1, 1951.

August 26, 1951, Rev. Persons appointed a Nominating Committee to seek teachers for the coming year. The following names were the first recorded to serve on this type of committee: Mrs. Dusky Giddens, Mrs. Janie Lee Howell, Mrs. Louise Ricketson, Mr. Bryant Morgan, and Mr. Robert D. Marple, Sr. Rev. Persons' work was swiftly coming to a close. Even though blind, this great servant continued to be faithful in service to his Master, The Lord Jesus Christ and His Church, and the people he loved. God called him home on April 9, 1952, thus bringing to a close a life that was given in service for Christ and his fellowman.

Rev. K. A. Whaley was called as pastor September 19, 1951. On February 13, 1952, a plan to build a pastorium for the pastors was discussed and confirmed. A letter of



thanks was written to the Huxford Bros. for sawing the lumber for the new pastorium. March 29, 1953, Bro. Harry Massey was voted on and was ordained as a deacon of the church on June 7, 1953.

On February 28, 1954, the church licensed Bro. James Howell as a minister. The ordination sermon was given by Rev. Alva Horton, the ordination prayer by Rev. Felix Parker, the presentation of a Bible was made by Rev. Whaley, Rev. Dewey Mann gave the charge to the church and to the candidate. After the ceremony, Bro. James and his wife, Janie Lee, were given the right hand of church fellowship.

The church was called into conference on May 2, 1954, by Bro. Ed Whitfield for the purpose of calling a new pastor. A motion was made to call Rev. W. L. Price and was confirmed by the church

The church came together December 5, 1954, for the purpose of ordaining Bro. Bryant Morgan and Bro. Bill Howell as deacons. Rev. J. B. Rowe gave the ordination message.

March 13, 1957, the church was called in conference by Moderator Rev. W. L. Price. A motion was made by Bro. Bryant Morgan to establish a mission at Ezell's Beach. After a brief discussion the church

voted in favor of the motion. There were 10 professions of faith and 2 came by letter, during the time services were held there. The mission was discontinued in 1960.

Rev. P. G. Safford was called as pastor by the church in a regular business meeting on November 27, 1957.

October 19, 1958, in a special called business meeting, plans for the remodeling of the church auditorium were presented to the church for approval. After a discussion the church voted in favor of the plans. The remodeling was completed in 1959.

Rev. Roy Bailey came to the church as pastor January 10, 1960. During the same year, March 27, Bro. Roger Ezell was ordained by the church. Rev. James Howell, Pastor of Burton Baptist Church, led in the questioning of the candidate. After being examined, a motion was made by Rev. T. D. Lide, a second by W. H. Ricketson that Roger Ezell be recommended to the church for ordination in the Christian Ministry. The motion was carried.

In a regular business meeting April 19, 1961, a motion was made by Bro. Bryant Morgan to add some additional Sunday School rooms to the church. The committee appointed to seek plans for these rooms were

the deacons. Later, a recommendation by the deacons that the new rooms be extended out at the back of the building. Their recommendation carried and four new rooms were built. (The rooms now serve as pre-k, nursery, and office.)

March 25, 1964, Rev. R. E. Merrell was called as pastor. October 18, 1964, Rev. Merrell participated in the ordination service for the following four men: Robert Ezell, Woodrow Kelly, Thad Hardin, and W. H. McHargue. Director of Missions, Rev. Dave Aldermen gave the charge to the Deacons. After an inspiring message, Rev. Hansel Parker came to offer the prayer for the deacons. Rev. Merrell as moderator, presented the deacons with certificates and books. The deacons were then asked to stand as the congregation came by and extended the right hand of Christian fellowship.

On June 10, 1964 during a church business meeting, Mrs. Betty Jean Morgan, church secretary, made a report that the last payment had been made on the Nursery Building. May 12, 1965, Bro. Bryant Morgan, Chairman of the Deacons, recommended that at the end of each quarter all money left over the budget for one month be placed in a building fund. The recommendation was carried. Later this money was put on deposit to draw

interest until such time as the church would start a building program.

On June 22, 1966, the church called Rev. Henry A. Pickern as pastor.

On November 9, 1966, at the regular business meeting it was recommended that a building committee be appointed to make suggestions to the church or remodeling the present building, or building a new auditorium.

At the December 14, 1966, business meeting the committee was appointed by the pastor, Rev. Pickern, and these are the names selected: Bill Drawdy, W. H. McHargue, Lee Roy Morgan, Mrs. Iris Hardin, Berlin Pridgeon, Mrs Deek McCall, and Chairman, Jack Bodiford.

The first recommendation was to remodel the present building. After months of discussion the church voted to build a new auditorium, and remodel the present building for educational and recreations space.

The building committee began searching for contractors and bids for this construction.

The first bid was presented to the church May 9, 1967. Chairman Jack Bodiford, asked the church to delay accepting this bid until more contractors were heard from.

October 11, 1967, the Athena Baptist church accepted the bid of the Roberts Bros. to build the new auditorium, and work began later in that month.

November 12, 1967, ground breaking ceremonies were held. District Field Secretary, Florida Baptist Convention, Bro. B. D. Locke, was present. Friends, members, and former members enjoyed dinner on the grounds, picture taking and fellowship.

The new auditorium was open for worship on Homecoming, August 25, 1968. During Rev. Pickern's pastorate there were seventy additions, increasing the membership to 202.

Services for that Homecoming began with Sunday School at 9:45 A. M. Vergil Morgan, Superintendant, led the assembly program. There were 109 present for SS.

After Sunday School everyone assembled for worship services. Ida Mae Pridgeon, pianist, and Edna McHargue, song leader, led the choir and congregation in singing; "The Church's One Foundation is Jesus Christ the Lord." For special music the choir sang, "Jesus Passed By."

Ushers for the morning offering were: Josh Ezell, Woodrow Kelly, Jody Morgan, and Ira Parker. The

offering for the day was \$648.60. the sermon was by Pastor Henry Pickern.

The Perry News Herald – Tuesday, August 29, 1968, Edition.



After the services the church and friends gathered at the picnic tables and enjoyed food and fellowship. Historical leaflets were passed out to the members and friends by: W. H. McHargue, Lorraine Houck, Loretta Houck and Joyce Morgan. The newspaper caption reports over 300 in attendance.

Please help us rebuild the church history from 1968 until 1975. If you have or know of any church records during these years please let the church know.

January 21, 1976, Thad Hardin on behalf of the building committee explained plans for a new educational building. It would be 60 x 100 feet for 8 classrooms to include heating and lights. Cost estimate was \$75,000. It was recommended that much prayer and study be done and if the church can raise \$10,000 by April, 1976, that would be a sign from the Lord to continue with these plans.

In a business meeting, February 11, 1976, the church voted to send the following on a mission trip: Bill Drawdy, Darrell Whiddon, David McMullen, Thad Hardin, and Ray Debusk to Guatemala. A motion was also made by Ernest Houck to donate \$100 to build a home for the camp manager at Pickett Lake.

Bro. Benny Green was approved by the church as Youth and Music Director to begin December 1976.

In February 1977 the church voted to send more volunteers to the mission field in Honduras. Eight men volunteered to go: Thad Hardin, Darrell Whiddon, Bill Drawdy, Danny Ezell, Lloyd Massey, Pete Kinsey, Allen Wright, Sam Croft and Bro. Ray Debusk. The church covered the cost of the trip of \$2,300.

The church voted to have a softball team participate in the Church League. Fourteen men and boys

signed up to play ball. A telephone was requested and approved for the library.

In November 1977, a recommendation to pour a slab (45 x 90 feet) over the clay court for basketball and other recreational activities. A thank you letter was read to the church for sending \$100 to Bro. John Zion to purchase new books for their church library in Virginia.

Money was approved to purchase a boy's bicycle for \$70 for the Children's Home. Oneal Murphy was given \$200 as benevolence due to loss of home by fire.

On January 11, 1978, a mission trip was planned to Calipan, Mexico. Bro. Ray and Bro. Bryant Morgan would be making the trip. Also, a trip to San Pedro Sula, Honduras to be made by: Thad Hardin, Bill Drawdy, Lloyd Massey, Danny Ezell, Mack Drawdy and Wendell Parker for a cost of \$3,300.

The minutes record a youth revival that was held March 12-19, 1978. No results were given. A recommendation from the deacons was made by Bro. Bill Drawdy to begin a Bible Study class each Sunday morning beginning at 9:30 AM as an outreach program in Salem. Bill Shaw's building would be rented for this.

Bro. Leslie Keys and wife Naomi, missionaries to Honduras, were flown from New Orleans to Tallahassee

paid for by the church for a weekend retreat for them to speak and meet the people of the church.

The church approved to have a tent revival for August 27-September 2 in Salem. A softball team was also fielded by the church in 1978.

June 17, 1978, a group of young people from Brunswick, Ga. will come sing and talk to the youth and church. Roger Ezell was approved by the church to come and lead the music for week revival.

On July 30, 1978 the 81st Homecoming was held. Bro. W. L. Price spoke. Singing and great fellowship was enjoyed by all.

March 28, 1979, the church held a special business meeting for the purpose of approving the purchase of a 15 passenger Dodge Van for \$8,521.58 from Tallahassee Dodge.

The church approved to support and help build the 5th Baptist Church in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

The church agreed to sponsor the full amount of the National Acteens Convention in Kansas.

On June 7, 1979 Bro. Ray Debusk presented his resignation as pastor. Bro. Ray had been a very godly pastor in leading our church in volunteer mission work overseas and much community mission work. He

inspired the church to do more than it was thought possible. The Education wing was completed under his ministry and many other improvements to the facility.

Bro. James Howell was approved as Interim Pastor in November 1979.

June 12, 1980, the church approved a mission trip to Juticalpa, Honduras to build a chapel. The cost is now \$300 per person for the trip.

In July 1980, a love gift of \$500 was given to Pine Lake Church near Mayo, it was destroyed by bad weather. A discussion followed as to what doctrine was preached at this church. After several minutes another motion was made to give the money anyway due to the fact that the people still needed a place to worship.

On April 15, 1981, Bro. Olan Wills from New Bethel Baptist Church, Thomaston, Georgia was called as pastor. The church also approved the purchase of fencing to be placed in the back of the pastorium due to the fact of a dog owned by Bro. Wills.

Mrs. Florence Deal was the recipient of a new roof installed on her house by the brotherhood in September 1981.

In October, '81 the men also helped to put on the roof on the mission at Blue Creek. (Later to become Blue Creek Baptist Church).

The men of the church also put shingles on Mrs. Gertie Morgan's carport during this month.

January 27, 1982 a special called business meeting called to order by Acting Moderator Bro. Bryant Russell for the purpose of approving a church site purchase grant for the Fellowship Mission, Steinhatchee, Florida, through the "Mother Church," Athena Baptist Church, Perry, Florida. Second by Wendell Parker and approved.

A motion was made from the mission's committee to apply for a \$15,000 loan from the Florida Baptist convention to develop the mission at Steinhatchee.

April, 14 1982, men of the church went to Steinhatchee to help pour the footing for Fellowship Mission. The deacons reported that Bro. David McMullen would be preaching at the mission when possible.

April 21, 1982, the church approved Kim Newman as Youth Director of the church. Kim would be on the field May 22nd.

In the May 12th, 1982 business meeting, Mack Drawdy gave a report that plans were being made to roof

the houses of Neville Pettit, Merle Russell, and the Fellowship Mission. Sunday School average attendance was 106 for the month. A heater was to be installed in the baptistry.

On July 18th, 1982, Athena Baptist licensed to preach Bro. David McMullen. Pastor Olan Wills made the charge to the church and Bro. Snyder Turner, preached the charge to the candidate. Deacons present were Bro. Bryant Russell, Bro. Bryant Morgan, Bro. Robert Ezell, Bro. Bill Drawdy, Bro. Harry Massey, and Bro. Ernest Houck.

In the summer of 1983 the youth journeyed to Ridgecrest in North Carolina for the Centrifuge retreat. Eighteen youth went to this event.

September 25, 1983: The church ordained Bros. David McMullen and Dennis Howell as Deacons of the church. The charge to the church preached by Rev. Gordon Burgin. The challenge to the Deacons was preached by Rev. James Howell.

In July 1984, the Deacons recommended that Bro. David McMullen serve as interim pastor. The motion was so carried.

On January 6., 1985, Bro. Leland Strickland was presented to the church as pastor. The church voted in his favor and he served until August, 1986.

Bro. Mike Parker was presented to the church as pastor on June 14, 1988. Bor. L.E. Parker was licensed to preach under Bro. Mike's pastorate. Bro. Mike served the church until September 1991.

After Bro. Mike left, Rev. Harold Reams and Rev. Jack Anderson served as interim pastors until 1992.

Bro. Jo Ed Rice was presented to the church in May, 1993. We had 12 members come under his direction, He served as pastor until December, 1994.

In December of 1995, Bro. Gerald Smith was presented to the church and he left Athena Baptist in December of 1998. There was a total of 24 new members added under his ministry and several re-dedications. We also had our kitchen remodeled in July of 1997 for our 100th homecoming.

Within the past year, 1997, we have taken one of our Sunday School rooms that needed some repair, and remodeled it into a prayer room. It is always available and ready to be used by God's people. The Children's nursery has had a new, very bright and colorful facelift.

In the very near future, we will be remodeling our kitchen to make it larger and putting a new roof on the auditorium. We are now in the process of building a volleyball court for our young people.

For the past several years we have had a ministry at the Perry Health Facility which has recently been growing and is always a blessing for both young and old.

The Lord has been good and blessed us here at Athena Baptist Church in many ways. While we wait for the Lord to come, we will continue to do His work here on this earth by helping, ministering, and sharing God's Word with others.

The Homecoming Committee would like to thank Athena Baptist Church for being able to use this information as part of their history in the 100th Homecoming Birthday Celebration, August 10, 1997.

Betty Jean Morgan

Lee Roy Morgan

Linda Williams

Gary Williams

Sherry Hunter

Bro. Charles Lyons came to be our interim pastor in September of 1999 only to become our full time pastor in December of 1999. He and his wife, Nancy, served our

church for a little over two years when in December of 2001, he had to reluctantly give up his position to be able to spend more time taking care of his wife. During his ministry, we had 11 baptisms, 12 letters in and 12 letters out.

February 1999 we voted to have a large sign put up by the highway for our church. In March 1999 we had new flooring in the fellowship hall installed. In December of 1999 we had a heater installed in our baptistery. Bro. Jack Bodiford was in charge of handling this project. He also installed a child proof gate leading up to the baptistery.

In February 2000 we replaced the nursery furnace. We also had a piano donated to the church for use in the sanctuary. The old one was put in the fellowship hall for use when needed.

August of 2000 brought remodeling of the women's restroom. We also had new carpet and painting done to the nursery in September of 2000.

January of 2001 some of the men and women worked hard on getting new playground equipment installed for our children. In August of 2001 Bro. Gary King accepted the position of Youth Director. He and his wife, Joyce Ann, will work hand in hand with them. He

served until about February of 2002. In November of 2001 we purchased a new sound system for the auditorium for \$19,500.

June of 2002 brought a new look to our church auditorium. We had the pews refinished, walls painted and new carpet installed. God has truly blessed us. In December of 2002 the church sold the old pastorium. It served many pastors and their families well for many years.

In March of 2002 Bro. Roger Ezell became our interim pastor. He served as interim pastor until December of 2002. He and his wife Melva are a great blessing to us still as he now serves as our Worship Leader. We had 2 baptisms, 3 letters in and 6 letters out under his ministry.

While we have not built anymore buildings, there have been many improvements. Athena Baptist Church has supported many Missions and Missionaries over the years.

The church of the living God is not finished but will continue to grow until Jesus comes. The membership of Athena Baptist Church hopes to have a part in this glorious work in His Kingdom.

Bro. David McMullen became our pastor in February of 2003. Bro. David was licensed to the ministry on July 18, 1982 here at Athena Baptist Church. We have had 39 baptisms, 30 letters in and 18 letters out thus far under his ministry through 2009. He is joined by his wife Judy. Bro. Roger Ezell was voted on and agreed to fill the position of Worship leader for the church. He has done a wonderful work with the choir, as they have presented a Christmas and Easter Cantata each year.

In March 2003 the church voted to purchase a video projection system to be used in the auditorium for songs, teaching, slides, etc... for \$13,472. In July 2003 we began the remodeling of the education wing. It was finished in February of 2004. There is a very special thank you to Bro. Roger and Bro. David for all of their hard work and talents to make this possible. We would also like to thank everyone that had a hand in making this project come to completion.

Athena Baptist Church has gone international in its reach to people. We have a web site on the internet. www.AthenaBaptist.com. Bro. David designed this site using LifeWay web building site for churches. This is a free site and does not cost the church any money.

In July 2003 the church called Tim Lundy as youth director. He and his wife, Atesa, worked with the youth until April 2006. Bro. Tim left his position to become pastor at Midway Baptist Church. Bro. Tim was ordained to preach June 25, 2006, here at Athena Baptist.

February 2004 the church approved to have Keith Padgett paint a scene on canvas for our baptistry. He did a wonderful job. The cost of this scene was \$800.

During the morning service of March 20, 2005, Athena Baptist Church recognized Mr. & Mrs. Lee Roy Morgan and Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Houck for their dedicated service to the Lord Jesus Christ and Athena Baptist Church.

There was a short video of Ernest and Helen Houck about their life on the farm recorded by Silas Turner, and was shown during the service. Lee Roy and Betty Jean Morgan gave a short testimony about their lives together also.

Each couple was presented a plaque with the inscription as follows:

**“Two hearts dedicated to the Lord
can bring light to the world.”**

**“In appreciation of your many years of dedicated
service to the Lord Jesus Christ and
Athena Baptist Church.”
“March 20, 2005”**

April 2005 the church ordained J.T. Berryhill as a deacon. July 2005 the church purchased new tables and chairs for our fellowship hall. Also the church approved the purchase of sound equipment and a video projector with computer for the youth to use. The cost was \$5,800. In September of 2005 new ceiling fans and lights were installed in the fellowship hall. The church began working towards getting plans for a new fellowship hall and remodeling of the kitchen.

A new water system was purchased and installed to improve the drinking water for the church.

The church has been involved in volunteer mission work since Bro. David came to be our pastor. Yearly trips to Nicaragua were sponsored by the church. During this time Bro. David and the mission teams began to work with Bro. Leonard Coulson of Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua. Bro. Leonard is pastor of Mt. Olive Baptist church and the Director of the church sponsored school that he began in 2003. In September of 2006, the church

approved to send \$200 a month to Bro. Leonard Coulson, Pastor of Mt. Olive Baptist church and director of Mt. Olive Baptist School. This gift is above the cooperative fund giving of the church. It has truly been a blessing to see God bless this work.

July of 2007, the church voted for the house and grounds to begin getting bids on building a handicap ramp, new fellowship hall, new kitchen, remodel of old kitchen and then the nursery.

The handicap ramp and handicap parking was completed in September, 2007. Bro. Larry Stroud volunteered to lay out and weld the handicap rails for us. The project cost approximately \$2,500. The men did an excellent job and are to be commended for their efforts. In December, 2007 the church sensing that it was the Lord's will to update the facilities, passed a motion to begin work on this project. The metal building was ordered from Heritage Building and was delivered March 14, 2008. On Easter, March 23rd, 2008, a ground breaking ceremony was held. Work began on ground preparation. This was completed by Tree Capital Land Development. Dennis Hunt graded and leveled the ground. In May the foundation was formed by Mr. Renfroe from Madison and concrete was poured on June

6, 2008. Work progressed on the building and is now dried in. The total cost that has been spent thus far is around \$65,000. All the monies have been given through the church and as of yet we have not borrowed any money for the project. Praise the Lord, God is so good.

God continues to bless our church through new members being baptized and others coming by letter. This church year five new members have been baptized: Austin Lago, Micah Palmer, Trenton Coxville, Joan Pridgeon, and Lisa Haygood. Two new members was received by statement, Carlena Hires and Mrs. Dixie Baxley.

In April, 2009 the video projection system was updated. Work on the fellowship hall is progressing with the septic systems being installed. Plumbing work by Rus Knight and electrical work by our men will be completed this fall.

Bro. David McMullen has served for almost seven years as our pastor here at Athena Baptist Church. We have had many new things purchased and a lot of remodeling of our church done. We have continued to grow in our giving and helping in the mission field. For 112 years, the Lord has been good and blessed us here at Athena Baptist Church in many ways.

It is our prayer that this historical record of Athena Baptist Church has been a blessing. Part of this history was put together by past committee members. A special thanks to Judy McMullen, present Clerk for combing the minutes of the church over the last 40 years to expand this booklet. If you have any historical information concerning our church history please turn it in to the church clerk.

August 9, 2009 Homecoming will feature Bro. Fred Edwards as the guest preacher and the Shikinah Glory for special music. Bro. Fred was a part of our congregation in the 1960's. Thank you for being here and sharing in our 112th Homecoming Celebration.

2009 Homecoming Committee

Lillian Bennett

Helen Houck

Darlene Stephens