History of Dry Run Baptist Church

Even though Dry Run Baptist Church was organized in 1800, you could say our real history began in the late 1700’s. Because of the easy availability of land, the lure of freedom from religious persecution, and the spirit of adventure, people were moving to Kentucky in droves. A large number of these pioneers were Baptists from Virginia, many of whom were preachers. Robert Semple, an early historian of Virginia Baptists, referred to Kentucky as the “vortex” and the “graveyard” of Virginia Baptist preachers. Let us not take lightly what these Virginia Baptist pioneers endured to make their home in Kentucky. They had to travel the narrow Wilderness Road, often having to abandon their wagons, most had to travel on foot over rough terrain, with the fear of sickness, injury, and the threat of attacks from outlawed Tories and Indians. One such band of Baptist pioneers was led by the Reverend Lewis Craig. In September of 1781, 200 members of Craig’s Upper Spottsylvania Baptist Church and 400 other travelers left Spotsylvania County, Virginia for the new frontier of Kentucky. Three weeks later, in the Wolf Hills of Virginia, they came upon another traveling church who had left Virginia in December, 1780. Here they camped together and waited for a safer time to travel. In October, they celebrated the news of the British surrender at Yorktown. Early in November, they began traveling again. In early December, they crossed over the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky. They traveled onward to a site known as Gilbert’s Creek, which is in present day Garrad County. Here at Gilbert’s Creek, some 600 miles from their departure point, they assembled together on the second Sunday in December, 1781, as the first church ever.

Eventually this “traveling church” began to disperse and start their new lives in various areas of central Kentucky. It was noted, that nearly every church constituted in central Kentucky after 1783 included several members from this group of Baptist pioneers. With the Baptist population growing and with new churches being organized, Rev. Lewis Craig, Rev. John Taylor, Rev. William Hickman, and others decided to form an organization which would bring about a union of the Kentucky Baptists. In June, 1785, the Regular Baptists and the Separate Baptists met together for the first “Baptist Conference”. Church messengers represented churches from South Elkhorn, Clear Creek, Big Crossing, Tates Creek, and Gilberts Creek. The main order of business was the question of whether or not to use the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. The Regular Baptists won out and it was voted upon to adhere to the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. By May of 1788, the Separates had organized their own confederation. This confederation was called the South Kentucky Association, and it had no confession of faith. Meanwhile, the Regular Baptists had plans to form an organization of their own. On Friday, September 30, 1785, the Regular Baptists met at John Craig’s house at Clear Creek. Reverend William Hickman preached the introductory sermon. On the following day, the association elected William Cave from Great Crossing as their moderator and Richard Young as their clerk. During this meeting, the association appointed a committee to deal with “struggling” churches, they dealt with doctrinal matters, and sat up three quarterly meetings for the year. And so, the South Elkhorn Association was born.

Between 1786 and 1800, the association admitted 45 new churches. It was at this time, in 1800, that Dry Run Baptist Church was organized. Interesting to note, that out of these 45 new
churches, only a few of these small churches survived. By God’s wonderful grace, Dry Run Baptist Church has survived.

Instrumental in the formation of Dry Run Baptist Church was Rev. Joseph Redding. Joseph Redding was the first pastor of Dry Run. He was born in Germantown, Fauquier County, Virginia in 1750. His mother was German and his father was of Welsh descent. He was left an orphan at an early age and received very little formal education. Under the preaching of William Marshall, he was converted from a wicked life and was baptized in 1771. He immediately began to preach. He spent 2 years preaching in Virginia and nearly 5 years preaching in South Carolina, where he often preached at the historic First Baptist Church, Charleston. With his strong voice and zealous preaching style, he attracted attention wherever he went. He arrived in the Bluegrass in 1789, just in time for the Elkhorn Associational meeting at Boone’s Creek. He was asked to preach at the associational meeting in October, 1789. After preaching at this meeting, he became an instant success. In 1790, Redding moved to the Great Crossing vicinity and at once became “the most popular preacher in Kentucky“. It was at this time that an unfortunate rivalry occurred between Redding and Rev. Elijah Craig of Great Crossing. It seems that a majority of the members at Great Crossing wanted Joseph Redding as their pastor instead of Elijah Craig. Eventually, the situation was mediated in 1795 by the Elkhorn Association and was concluded with Joseph Redding as pastor of Great Crossing and Elijah Craig as pastor at a new church at McConnell’s Run, now Stamping Ground Baptist Church.

Joseph Redding was pastor of Great Crossing Baptist Church from 1795 until 1810. It was in 1800 that the “Great Kentucky Revival“ occurred. In 1800, the church at Great Crossing baptized 175 persons. The congregation became so large and widespread that it sponsored new churches. Thus, in 1800, under the leadership of Rev. Joseph Redding, Dry Run Baptist Church was formed.

On Saturday, February 7, 1801, permission was finally granted to twenty-seven members of the Great Crossing Baptist Church to constitute the Dry Run Baptist Church. At a church meeting held at the house of Brother Long, on Dry Run Creek north of Georgetown, on the second Saturday in April, 1801, the brethren present were: Joseph Redding, George Eve, Thomas Foster, James Adkins, Colby Jackson, Jesse Threlkill, Daniel Johnson, Nicholas Long, Younger Pitts, William Ward, Louden Snell, Richard Tyner, Lewis Collins, John Miller, James Hodgeskins, John Adkins, John Bartlett, Rodin Coppage, James Withers, William Curry, Thomas Osborn, Sarah Foster, Lucy Threlkill, Sarah Johnson, Elizabeth Long, Hannah Miller, Hannah Hodgeskins, Nancy Adkins, Sarah Bartlett, Nancy Coppage, Mary Withers, and Darius Curry. These petitioned and proceeded to constitute the members above named, when the Philadelphia Confession of Faith was adopted with acceptance later into the Elkhorn Association of Baptists. At a church meeting, again held at the home of Brother Long, the Rev. Joseph Redding was chosen moderator; Younger Pitts was chosen as clerk; Waller Rodes and Younger Pitts were appointed as trustees; and Thomas Foster and Joseph Smith were unanimously chosen as deacons.

For some time, members continued to hold their church meetings at the home of Brother Long on Dry Run Creek. Eventually, land was purchased and the first church building was built. The deed for the church lot reads as follows: “Nicholas Long and Wife to Waller Rhodes and
Younger Pitts, Trustees of the United Baptist Church at Dry Run, one acre of land in consideration of $8. February 5th 1802.

The original church building was replaced with a beautiful white frame church house. In 1926, Mr. and Mrs. Ben J. Delaplain (for whom Delaplain area was named), willed the church some money and subsequently, Sunday School rooms were built on the front of the church by Mr. James (Jim) Risk and Mr. Roy Power. Around this time, Dry Run Baptist Church was the center of social life in the community. It was the responsibility of the deacons to see that the young pastors, usually Georgetown College students, got to and from church to preach. Many wonderful families of the church looked after these young pastors and their families in a most wonderful and heartwarming way. Through the efforts of the Women’s Missionary Union, the first piano was obtained. In 1948 - 1949, during Bro. H Morgan Radford’s ministry at Dry Run, the church parsonage was built. Bro. Joe Pribble contributed the first $100.00 toward the building of the new parsonage.

On December 13, 1953, during the morning worship service, a passerby by the name of Bim Carrick saw that the church was on fire. Mr. Carrick then knocked on the door of the church to notify the congregation of the fire. The door was answered by Bro. Joe Pribble. Mr. Pribble walked quietly to the front and informed Rev. Ralph Quisenberry of the situation. Reverend Quisenberry then asked the 83 people in the congregation to file orderly out of the building. Fortunately, they had time to carry a portion of the furnishings with them. In all, they were able to carry out the pump organ, piano, pulpit, pulpit chairs, pews, records and even the hymnals. After the building was cleared of the furnishings, the building soon became engulfed in flames. Damage was estimated at $25,000. A feed building on the farm of Paul Risk, on Burton Pike, was loaned to the church congregation for prayer meetings and church services. Later, the church held services at the Oxford School. A new $28,000 brick building was built on the same spot where the former church had stood. In August of 1954, the building was completed and a dedication service was held. Approximately 250 people attended the special service. Many former pastors and members were in attendance.

The church continued to prosper over the next four years, but on January 5, 1958, about 3 o’clock in the afternoon, the church was again destroyed by fire. This fire was particularly devastating because the auditorium was smoke filled, nothing could be salvaged from the building and because members had to stand helplessly by and watch the church burn. Apparently, the county owned fire department had recently disbanded and their fire truck had been sold. Even though several firemen from the city’s fire department were at the scene, they were not permitted to use the city’s fire truck outside of the city limits. Members of the church tried to gain special permission to use the city’s fire truck, but because of a slight breeze that day, the fire burned rapidly through the building before permission could be obtained. Reverend George J. White and the congregation met for Sunday services at the Scott County High School and for Wednesday night services they met in the basement of the parsonage. The second brick building was once again built on the same historic spot. The building that was completed, very much resembles the 1954 building. A special dedication service was held on May 17, 1959.

Over the years, the present building and grounds of Dry Run Church have gone through many changes. Some of the changes are listed as follows: Sunday school rooms were added in the
basement; hard wood floors have been covered with carpet; air conditioning has been added; Mr. & Mrs. Joe Shropshire donated money to black-top the driveway; Dr Landon, professor of music at U.K., donated the organ; the church auditorium was remodeled in 1996; the church parsonage was remodeled and rooms were added in 1998; and presently the basement’s kitchen, bathrooms, fellowship hall and Sunday School rooms are being completely renovated. All of these changes were made possible by God’s blessings and by the dedication, prayer, and hard work of the members and friends of Dry Run Baptist Church.

Most importantly, for the past 200 years, Dry Run Baptist Church has been a place to worship God through prayer and praise, a place to preach and teach salvation through Jesus Christ, and a place of Christian comfort and fellowship. We are grateful to God for the founders of our church and the men and women of vision who have continued to carry on God’s work here at Dry Run Baptist Church. We pray for God’s blessings on future generations and that Dry Run Baptist Church will continue to be in service and worship to the Lord.