

Historical Timeline

1725 Reading places established in private homes in Blackwater and Knotts Island:

*"The Lynnhaven Parish Church of 1692 and two chapels (Eastern Shore Chapel, and Pungo Chapel) served the needs of the members of the Established Church with the help of reading places in private homes in the Blackwater and Knotts Island section...By order of the vestry, July 7, 1725: Whereas Knotts Island and Blackwater Precincts are very remote from the Chappell & Sermon, being there [at Pungo] but once in Six weeks, the Inhabitants are often disappointed of hearing the word of God, and whereas Mr. **Andrew Peacock**, Clerk of the said Chappel has for some time past [for] the benefit and Instruction of the said Inhabitants read in each of the said precincts on Certain times in an orderly Course which is approved by the vestry thereupon it's resolved that he continue to perform the same (according to his usual method) until he Shall be other wayes directed by this vestry."*

*From "Colonial Churches of Tidewater Virginia" pg. 147
by George Carrington Mason*

1774 (1784?) Church planted by **George Plummer** and **Thomas Armistead** and organized by members dismissed from Pungo Church (now Oak Grove Baptist Church). Prior to its organization, **William Cole** and **Daniel Gould** would preach occasionally while passing from Camden, NC to Pungo. Served by itinerate preachers until it obtained first permanent minister.

Thomas Armistead, a Revolutionary War hero, became a Baptist minister in VA from about 1785-1795 and died at "Brandywine" in King William County (VA) in 1809.

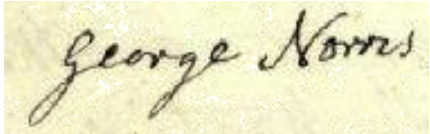

*From: <http://genforum.genealogy.com/cgi-bin/pageload.cgi?baptist::armistead::387.html>
Query by William S. Simpson of Virginia Baptist Historical Society.*



1774-1791 **George Plummer** - Died in Princess Anne County in April 1792.

Robert Baylor Semple's 1810 A HISTORY OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE BAPTISTS IN VIRGINIA (revised, 1894, by G. W. Beale) says that George Plummer "planted" Blackwater Church in 1784 and that the church's first minister, William Sorey, "labored [with Blackwater Church] for a period of twenty-seven years [1784-1811]."

1785 *"The [Kehukee] Association in 1785 was held with the church at Shoulder's Hill, Nansemond County, Va., on the 14th of May. Elder Meglamre presided as Moderator, and Elder Burkitt acted as Clerk. Letters from twenty-one churches were read. Five additional churches came in at this meeting, viz.: One at the Northwest River Bridge, in Norfolk County, VA.; another at Shoulder's Hill; another at Scuppernong, Tyrrell County, NC; another at Pungo, Princess Ann County, VA.; and another on Blackwater, Princess Anne County, VA."*

- 1787 November - First reference to Blackwater Church in the Princess Anne County Records.
- “Captain John Woodard made a gift of a parcel of land to the Blackwater Baptist community. The given boundaries were vague, but its land was described as beginning at a sweet gum standing on the edge of a branch [of a swamp]. The land was to revert to Capt. Woodard or his heirs when it ceased being used for a church. This reversion did not take place”.*
- From “Old Churches, Their Cemeteries And Family Graveyards of Princess Anne County,” pg.93
by Laurie Boush Green and Virginia Bonney West*
- May 1791 One of 21 founding charter churches* that sent delegates to the newly formed Virginia Portsmouth Association. The Association met at Blackwater before the war in 1860 and after the war in November 1865.
- 1791-1811 **William Sorey** – First permanent minister. Served for 20 years. Received his license to preach in June. Probably served in some capacity at Blackwater Church during the years 1784-1792, however, perhaps as an assistant minister or as an exhorter.
- 1800's Doing any of the following would lead to possible expulsion from the church:
1)non-attendance, 2)dancing, 3)making, drinking and/or selling whiskey, and 4)playing cards.
- 1811-1838 **Samuel Brown** succeeded William Sorey for 27 years until his death. Samuel is listed in St. Brides Parish in 1830 abt. 30-40 years old. He has 1 son -5, 1 son 5-10, 1 dau -5, 1 dau 5-10, 2 da, 10-15, wife 40-50. Samuel B. Brown in Portsmouth 1840 about 40-50 years old, with 1 son -5, 2 dau -5, 1 dau 5-10, wife 30-40.
- 1837 Original church building destroyed.
- 1839-1843 **George Norris** served as pastor, baptizing nearly 40 persons just before his death. He also ministered at the Pungo Church (Oak Grove) between 1800 and 1837 along with several other ministers.
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- 1843 Served by **Evan Forbes** (NC).
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- 1843-1846 Served by **Pritchard Jordan** [also spelled Jerdan]
He was born in 1809 in Pasquotank Co., NC. He was about 34 years old when he served at Blackwater. In 1850 he is back in NC farming with his wife, Mary and their four children.
- 1846 4½ acres purchased from Henry R. Whitehurst, (age 21), and his wife, Caroline, (age 14), for \$45.00. Trustees in the transaction were Isaiah Etheridge, Edmund Mansfield and D.D. Morse. The property was part of the land on which Mr. Whitehurst resided, that he had earlier purchased from Mr. James E. Bell, a physician in Blackwater.

“The land was to begin at a cedar post on the edge of the road leading from Blackwater Bridge to the Mill Dam Bridge.” “The present church was probably built shortly after the purchase of this land.”

From “Old Churches, Their Cemeteries And Family Graveyards of Princess Anne County,” pg.93 by Laurie Boush Green and Virginia Bonney West

1846-1853 Served by **Lemuel Sanderlin**. Born about 1794 in Camden Co., NC; died 1855.

1853 Served by **Abner Perry**.

1857 Served by **Thomas W. Rayfield** Born about 1814 in NC. He was about 43 years old when he served our church. He also served at Oak Grove.

1858 Served by **Richard H. Baylor**. He later served at St. John’s and Oak Grove Baptist churches.

1859-1861 Served by **William D. Pritchard** Born in May 3, 1811 in NC. His wife’s name was Phoebe Sarah Jennings. He was 49 years old when he served at Blackwater. By the 1870s he had become a missionary for the Union meetings of local churches, including Blackwater, Oak Grove, Deep Creek, St. John’s, Kempsville, and London Bridge, as well as others. (Oak Grove Minutes, July 1872). He died February 8, 1890 and is buried on Shipyard Road in Camden Co., NC.

1860 Present church building erected.

1861-1865 No regular pastor during the American Civil War.

1867-1890 Served by **Nathan Morris Munden**. He is buried in front of Oak Grove Baptist Church.



Nathan M. Munden Obituary

“In Princess Anne County, Virginia, and the adjoining counties,



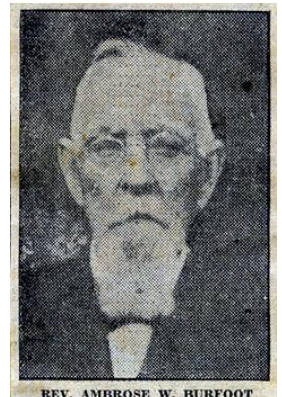
the career of Nathan M. Munden was run. He was a prophet not without honor in his own country. In Princess Anne County, that lies beside the sounding sea, on August 13, 1833, he first saw the light, and at Oak Grove Baptist Church, in the same county, he was baptized in 1855, while two years later he became the clerk of this body. That those who were nearest to him, and so, doubtless, knew him best, had a high regard for his character and ability, is plain, since this same church, in May 1859, licensed him to preach, and the following year, in November, had secured his services as their pastor. His ordination having taken place in January 1861, the presbytery consisting of Elders J. P. Ewell, H. J. Chandler, H. S. Banks, and M. R. Watkinson, he was pastor, though on account of the War not without interruptions, of Oak Grove until 1866. Again in 1872 he became the shepherd of this flock, ministering to them regularly until 1884, when he resigned and moved to Norfolk County. Here he labored faithfully until failing health made it necessary for him to give up preaching. More than one long pastorate is evidence of his sterling character and worth. He

was pastor of Black Water for twenty-two and of Pleasant Grove for twenty-nine years. Lake Drummond was under his care for five years, and the First Church (Norfolk), St. John's, and Deep Creek for a shorter time. 'His special fondness for souls, bright intellect, tenacious memory, gift of speech, genuine godliness, and genial disposition won for him at once a place in the hearts of all he met.' He was never a strong man physically, and finally a long but patient sufferer. He grew old gracefully, becoming more tender as the end drew near. The night of November 19, 1903, he fell on sleep, having reached his three-score years and ten. His wife, who, for forty-five years, had been his faithful companion and helpmeet, still survives him. His pastor, whose obituary has furnished the facts for this sketch, conducted the funeral service, assisted by Rev. N. B. Foushee, of the Methodist Church. The body was laid to rest in the Oak Grove cemetery."

From Virginia Baptist Ministers, by Taylor, pg. 89-90
 Loc: North Carolina State Library, Raleigh NC

- 1870 Participates in the Norfolk and Princess Anne Union Meetings.
- 1871 Hosts January Union meeting.
- 1872 Hosts December 27 Union meeting.
- 1873 Hosts November 28 Union Meeting
- 1882 Sexton was paid \$1.00 per month.
- 1883 Reuben Bradley, Thomas J. Cartwright, John G. Chappel, William L. Lane, and P. J. Mansfield, were elected trustees to build Gibbs Woods Sunday School House on the lands of the Public Free Schools.
- 1884 Baptismal houses built on bank of Blackwater River on property of Edwin Ives and Edmon Simmons.
- 1886 Trustees appointed to serve both Blackwater and Gibbs Woods.
- 1891-1892 Served by **C. W. Matthews.**
- 1892 Served by **J. M. Dunaway.**
 Ladies Aid Society was granted the old organ to use as part payment on a new one.
 Timber was sold for \$3.00 per 1,000 feet.
- 1893 Served by **J. D. Berry.** Church sells one acre for \$30.00 for public school purposes.
- 1894 Served by **Nathan Morris Munden** until his death November 19, 1903
- Early 1900's Revivals lasted all day with dinner on the grounds and much visiting.
- 1904-1915 Served by:
L. C. Brickhouse

Ambrose W. Burfoot Born about 1848 in Camden, NC. In 1920, at 71, he lived next to George W. Cox family in Fentress Village area with his wife, Margaret and son, Ambrose Jr.



Willam E. Lankford was born in 1859. He was 47 years old when he began serving our church. He also served both Oak Grove, Knotts Island, and Centerville Baptist churches.

Rev. L.F. Paulette

Samuel N. Hurst Born the 7th of 8 children on February 1867 in Wasee Township in Pulaski Co., Virginia in 1885 he met and married Ida M., born about 1878 in Kentucky. In 1900 they lived in Pulaski, VA where he was a lawyer. By 1910 they had 7 children including one set of twin daughters and lived in Louisville, KY where he was a student at the Baptist Seminary. In 1930 the Hursts are living in Appalachia, Wise Co., VA where he is again practicing law and preaching. The Hursts named one of their daughters Evangeline.

1905 Steeple and stained glass windows added. Logs were floated down the river to the saw mill. Heating was by woodstoves on either side of the building and lighting was by kerosene lamps. Women sat on one side and men on the other during regularly held Sunday services. Spittoons were a common accessory.

1919 Served by **George W. Cox**. He was 52 years old when he served. He lived in Fentress Village area next door to the Rev. Ambrose W. Burfoot family in 1920 census along with his wife, Lulu, daughter, Francis and son, George Jr.



G. W. Sawyer

1921 Served by **George Washington Sawyer**. In 1910 he was a life insurance agent. By 1920 he had begun his ministry. Born in Camden, NC in 1882 he spent most of his life in Portsmouth until his death in 1955



THE REV. H. B. COLE

1923-1935 Served by **H. B. Cole** who also served locally at Fentress and Norview Baptist churches. He was from TN.

1926 Women's Missionary Union organized by Mrs. Dorcas Johnson of Deep Creek with 15 enrolled. This led to Sunbeams (Mission Friends), GAS (Girls in Action), RAs (Royal Ambassadors) and YWAs (Acteens) as well as adult mission groups (circles).

1930's Baptism took place in Blackwater River on the Gilbert Farm. "Shall We Gather at the River" was sung at each service. Mrs. Blanche Baxter donated glass front bookcase to the church.

1936-1937 Served by **Mott. A. Cumby**.



Rev. M. A. Cumby

1936 Church participates in Cooperative Program for the first time.

1938-1951 Served by **Ralph W. Mapp** who was born on the Eastern Shore of Virginia on May 28, 1900. He was educated at the University of Richmond and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, where he earned the Master's Degree in theology.

Rev. Mapp came to Cradock Baptist directly from seminary in 1926 and served until 1933. He served churches on the Eastern Shore of Virginia,

Zion Baptist and Parksley churches; Centerville Baptist Church in Chesapeake; Oak Grove Church in Princess Anne County; and retired at Surry Baptist Church in March 1965.

After retirement Rev. and Mrs. Marion Mapp moved back to Cradock, where he was elected Pastor Emeritus, as a tribute to his many years of Christian ministry and the church's high regard for him.



He was active in denominational affairs locally and was a member of Lake Drummond Lodge No.178. He was Past Master of Princess Anne Masonic Lodge No. 25.

Rev. Mr. Mapp passed away on December 25, 1986.

- 1945 Average church attendance: 28
- 1947 First Vacation Bible School organized by Paul W. Matthews (Mrs. Clara Belle Shirley's father).
- 1948 The first choir with 14 teen members is organized by Miss Eleanor Parsons. The accompanist was Mrs. Forrest O. Baum.
- 1949 Extensive renovation; services were held at Blackwater Elementary School (site of fire station). The lectern, 4 chairs, and the communion table are donated by Sam & John Frost.
- 1952-1956 Served by **Wade G. Harding**.
- 1953 Commemorative picture plates of the church were issued. Deacons were E.E. McClain, Milton Mansfield, C.L. Davenport, Earl Tebault, Stuart Ives, and Luther Gilbert. Business meetings were no longer to be called 'Conferences.'
- 1954 November - Dedication of 4 new Sunday School classrooms.
- 1955 Average attendance: 75. First formal choir robes were made by Mrs. Emmett McClain.
- 1956-1961 Served by **David G. Costas**.
- 1959 2 more classrooms added. Charlie W. Shirley ordained in the first Deacon Ordination Service.
- 1961-1964 Served by **Gary B. Thompson**.
- 1961 Baptistery pool added.
- 1962 First indoor Baptism Service held. Pulpit Bible presented by Mrs. E.E. McClain in memory of her husband on October 28.
- 1964-1987 Served by **Ralph L. Horn**.
- 1966 3 classrooms are added allowing the Sanctuary to be used for Worship services only.
- 1971 Library begun with donations of books and other articles. Mrs. Violet Jensen is first librarian.
- 1972 Music Department becomes third active organization under the direction of Dave Keenan. Mrs. Chrystal Frost appointed Chairman of the Audio-Visual Committee.

- 1973 Church purchases present organ.
- 1974 200th Anniversary Celebration with TV news coverage. Members and guests dressed in period fashions. Guest speaker was Honorable G. William Whitehurst
Baptistry mural entitled "The Beginning" is painted in memory of Charlie Shirley by Jimmy Lopes.
First audio system installed by Dave Keenan.
Mrs. Catherine Dailey elected first church historian.
- 1975 Lights outside the front door donated by Mrs. Luta Tebault in memory of her husband, Richard.
- 1976 First central heating and air conditioning system installed. Wheelchair ramp built by Forrest Bishop and Ray Gardner. Church interior renovations begun with paint and repair and choir loft enclosed.
- 1977 Renovations continue with refinishing sanctuary floors (including choir loft), new carpet, and installation of new cushioned pews. (Old pews were sold and installed in Grassfield Baptist Church). New folding chairs purchased.
- 1979 New storm windows purchased and installed by Cecil Shirley Jr.
- 1981 Groundbreaking ceremony for social hall wing to be built on land donated by Cecil Shirley Sr. and the Spruill Family. Ray Gardner headed construction and church craftsmen did all the work.
- 1982 Dedication services held for completed wing. Mirror in wing foyer donated by Shirley family members.
- 1984 Sunday School Membership totals 186.
First publication of monthly newsletter in October; editors were Edie Gardner and Bonnie Marrow. Title "God's Country Tidings" added in February 1985 after contest for name.
- 1985 February 10 – Mrs. Edna Parsons presents pulpit Bible to church in memory of her husband, J. Louis Parsons.
- 1986 Porch added to front of church.
Deacon Ordination for Craig C. Creamer, L. Jennings Furlough, and Charles W. Lewis.
- 1987-1988 Served by **Melvin Hughes**.
- 1989-1990 Served by **Steven E. Wiseman**.
- 1989 Nursery enlarged. One furnace. audio system updated. Cemetery Committee formed.
- 1991-1994 **Dr. Roscoe Musselwhite** becomes first full time pastor.
- 1992 Dedication of permanent church sign erected in memory of former deacon, Horace C. Shirley.
- 1994-1995 Served by **R. Otis Colston**.
- 1995 New piano purchased and dedicated in memory of music lover and former deacon, Jennings Furlough.

\$2500.00 donated from Blanche Rankin Estate to cemetery fund.

- 1996 January - New parsonage purchased on corner of Blackwater and West Gibbs Roads.
- June 1996 Served by **Michael C. Jones**, our first resident minister until September 2003. He and his family are the first occupants of the new parsonage.
- 1997 Church inherits \$25,000 from the estate of Mrs. Helen Lucas Charlton.
The family of Harvey Gilbert planned and planted a prayer garden in Harvey's memory.
Sales of cookbook created by Linda Jordan nets enough profit to purchase computer system.
In September the church had an all-day 223rd anniversary celebration with a gospel sing and luncheon
- 1998 Sanctuary renovated with new pew cushions, drapes, wall-to-wall carpet, and paint job. Curtis Shirley donated a 3-dimensional Italian handcrafted ivory picture from of "The Last Supper" which matched the wallpaper border. An oak cabinet, brass communion set and offering plates was donated from Mrs. Luta Tebault's memorial fund.
- 1999 Mrs. Adabelle Riddick appointed 2nd Church Historian.
The church observed its 225th anniversary with dress of that period, decorations of olden days and dinner for all.
- 2000 A church quartet called "Blackwater Harmony" was formed.
Joint services with Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church end at Mt. Pleasant's request after 40 years of shared Thanksgivings.
Church directories were made.
- 2001 Bob Steinhilber donates land beside church, formerly part of the Cecil Shirley Sr. farm.
Church's exterior painted.
Cemetery Committee increased fees for burial sites and set aside ten spaces for hardship cases.
One furnace replaced.
The Ruth Walden Circle designed and sold 120 afghans depicting church history.
The first church website begins at blackwaterbaptist.org.
- 2002 Mrs. Clara Belle Shirley donated brass sconces for the sanctuary.
P. J. and Gloria Whitehurst donated a Canon copier for the office.
- 2003 Jeremy Schratwieser ordained a Deacon in August.
Gary Jones appointed a Church Trustee.
Church parsonage is rented for first time
Mrs. Mildred Furlough (91 years old) was honored as one of the oldest living GAs in Virginia by the Virginia WMU.
- June 2004 June - Ruth Walden Circle celebrate their 50th anniversary.
June - Carrion bell system is installed in the church steeple; donated to church in honor of Ralph and Irene Frost by their children.
- 2004 – 2014 Served by **Gregory (Greg) Hammer**.
230 year anniversary celebrated with Pig-Pickin' barbeque luncheon after morning worship.
- December 2004 First living nativity scene held on Christmas Eve.

- November 2005 Larry Bearden and Curtis Shirley are ordained as Deacons.
- December 2005 Foundation work begins to eliminate water beneath the church.
- January 2006 Second service for Contemporary Worship added, held 8:30am each Sunday.
- February 2006 Organ sold and Yamaha Digital Keyboard purchased.
- October 2008 William (Bill) Russo ordained as new Associate Pastor.
- September 2009 235th Anniversary on September 19 with BBQ dinner & fried chicken. Service included remarks by Rev. Ralph Horn, message by Pastor Greg Hammer, music of Mike Davis, and testimonies. Tent worship service was held the following Sunday. Children's activities included Noah's ark, obstacle bouncy, snow cones, cotton candy, and popcorn.
- November 2009 South wing with youth hall and 2 classrooms added.
- March 2010 First combined worship service on March 29 with New Oak Grove Missionary Baptist Church. Fellowship luncheon served after the service. This event was historic when one considers that Blackwater Baptist Church once had a "slave balcony" in its sanctuary.
- April 2010 Water-side Easter Sunrise Service held at Blackwater Trading Post
- November 2011 Deacon Ordination for Adam Cary
- August 2012 Panama Mission Trip, first blood drive
- June 2013 Crochet Club formed with 22 members.
- February 2014 Church Renovation: Kitchen revamp
- May 2014 240th Anniversary on May 18. New Oak Grove Missionary Baptist Church and Representative Scott Rigell attended the outdoor event. Parsonage sold on May 9.
- September 2015 **Dr. Lynn Hardaway** voted as new pastor after serving one year as Interim Pastor.
- September 2017 Don Arth and Jimmy Slocum were ordained as Deacons on Sept 10th.
- 2017-2018 Added bathrooms to Youth Hall.
- 2019 Celebrated our 245th Anniversary on September 15 at Northwest Park in Chesapeake. Deacon Ordination for Kevin Rowell.
- 2020 During the Coronavirus year BBC closed on March 15. Drive-in services began on Easter Sunday using 103.3 FM on the radio. Live streamed services were now available on Facebook. Reopening of the building began in November with masks and social distancing requirements in place for Thanksgiving services. Full restoration began in June 2021.
- 2021 Renovation of social hall with vinyl floors and fireplace.

NOTES:

- John Asplund's 1791 ANNUAL REGISTER OF THE BAPTIST DENOMINATION IN NORTH AMERICA says that George Plummer was the minister of Blackwater Church from 1790-1791 and that William Sorey was licensed to preach in June 1791.*
- John Asplund's 1794 UNIVERSAL REGISTER OF THE BAPTIST DENOMINATION IN NORTH AMERICA states that Plummer died in 1792 and that William Sorey served as the minister of the church following Plummer's death. Interestingly enough, even though he became Blackwater's minister in 1792, William Sorey had not been ordained by the time Asplund's book went to the publisher during the summer of 1794. He was still, at that time, "a candidate for the ministry" [i.e., had not yet been ordained]. I am convinced that William Sorey had served in some capacity at Blackwater Church during the years 1784-1792, however, perhaps as an assistant minister or as an exhorter.*
Comments by William Simpson, Baptist Historical Society, Richmond, VA
- * 21 original Virginia Portsmouth Association churches: Blackwater, Cut Banks, Fountain's Creek, High Hill, Meherrin, Portsmouth, Pungo, Sappony, Seacock, South Quay, Western Branch, Black Creek, Eastern Shore, Great Creek, Isle of Wight, Northwest, Prince George, Rowanty, Reedy Creek, Shoulder's Hill, Sussex*
- July 24, 1747. Died July 10, Mrs. Mary Ann Sears GOULD, wife of Daniel GOULD, leaving husband & widowed mother in feeble health, an only brother & one or two infant children.*
From: From Mary Endicott's Diary, pg. 174
[The Salem Press Historical and Genealogical Record, Volumes 1-2](#)