

The History of New Salem Baptist Church

New Salem Baptist Church is located about three miles south-southwest of the Washington College Academy, in the vicinity of the old village of Brownsborough. The church's organizing council first met on April 21, 1845, at the Asbury Meeting House. Missionary William Cate, principal founder of the church, became its first pastor. The newly organized body of believers immediately saw growth. Soon, it was necessary to move the place of worship to the home of John Hunter. For just over a year, church services were held in the home of John Hunter, who would later donate both the land and necessary lumber for a church building. After the first meeting in the Hunter home, baptismal services were held at the Nolichucky River. The Rev. Rease Bayless baptized the following people: Mr. and Mrs. Peter Northington, Mr. and Mrs. William Hoss, and Mr. and Mrs. Hyder Humphreys.

New Salem Baptist Church met in its first permanent facility on March 18, 1848. The church increased in membership during those building days and entered the new church building with sixty-four members. With very little money raised, the members erected the building. The names of the sixty-four charter members are not available due to a fire at Carson Newman that destroyed the first church record books. The following surnames are among those on older grave markers in the church cemetery: Bayless, Brown, Broyles, Chase, Harris, Humphreys, Freeman and Snapp. (*Watauga Association of Genealogist, Upper East Tennessee*).

Life for New Salem Baptist Church in the nineteenth century included some controversial times. The Civil War touched many families in this community. According to oral history, many families held different loyalties, but were such good neighbors that one family would not report any "enemy activities" that would be taking place at the other family's house. Leaders of Baptist societies across the nation sought to work together despite their differences on slavery. These leaders from the North and South dreaded division and did what they could to avoid it.

New Salem Baptist Church survived the Civil War and would later enrolled ex-slaves in bible study. New Salem participated with the Holston Baptist Association in adopting a resolution that would call for bringing these recently freed slaves into the Baptist faith. The church continued to increase in membership through the baptism of new believers. Thirteen members were baptized in 1878.

In 1893 New Salem Baptist Church licensed J. B. Chase and B. Adams to preach the Gospel. In 1895 this young body of believers with a mind-set for growth purchased a strip of land for the purchase price of \$5.00. Goals and visions focused on the rapidly approaching Twentieth Century.

The Twentieth Century

New Salem Baptist Church entered the twentieth century under the pastoral leadership of Rev. E. P. White and Rev. E. D. Cox. Deacon leadership was provided by T. J. Williams, S. P. Hyder, and R. L.



Hylton. The church was well represented at Holston Baptist Associational meetings by messengers such as: Hubert Humphreys, J. A. Bayless, J. B. Chase, Robert Campbell, Grover Chase, W. M. Hunt, G., P. Chase, W. M. Odell, Fred Humphreys, J. F. Hylton, and Mrs. Mollie Dillow. A Sunday School enrollment of the mid-fifties grew to nearly 100 by 1912. Sunday School expenses increased to as

much as \$8.00 annually.

Through monies raised by selling hens and putting on a play at Eureka School building, the church "installed new seats, painting, and papering" in 1930. The second Sunday of July, 1945 would be a "day to remember" at New Salem as members and community celebrated the centennial anniversary with a homecoming. Deacon leadership would include Rex McCurry, Earl Odell, Carmon Bailey, Estil Styles, Bynum Chase and Jap Hylton. Lola Humphreys, Elmer Gillis, and Arthur Fox were ordained as deacons on September 3, 1947. On February 4, 1948 a committee was elected to secure a plan to build a new church. Jap Hylton, Arthur Fox, Lola Humphreys, Rex McCurry, Estil Styles, Alex White, Carmon Bailey, Rev. Oscar Bacon and Rev. John Riddle were all appointed to form this committee. On March 14, 1948, New Salem Baptist Church voted in favor of building a new church. The first Sunday of every month was set as dollar day. Funds raised were to go toward building a new church. Lola Humphreys was elected treasurer of the fund raising efforts. The next month Jap Hylton, Grover Chase, Hubert Humphreys, Pemm Snapp and Clyde Humphreys were elected to secure pledges and money for the new church building. Services would begin in the new building in the spring of 1950.

It was also in 1950 that the ladies of New Salem organized the Women's Missionary Union (WMU) and elected Delia Fox as president. Deacon leadership would increase in the fifties with Ted McKee, S. G. Hensley and Kyle Humphreys being ordained on May 21, 1959. Walter Humphreys was

licensed to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ on June 3, 1959. Land was purchased in 1960, at a cost of \$1050 for the purpose of building a church parsonage. The parsonage was completed in 1962 at a cost of \$10,225.

Deacon leadership increased with the ordination of Roy Gillis and Tommy Bailey on February 11, 1979. The mid-seventies also saw the completion of an educational / fellowship building.

In July of 1989, New Salem Baptist Church commissioned and sent Rev. Keith Whitehead, Roy Gillis, Tim Jaynes, Toby Waddle, and Ritchie Humphreys on mission related work to the Philippines. While there the team worked in mass evangelism, church growth, and home Bible studies. On September 24, 1989, Gary Cox, Jack Snapp and Larry Waddle were ordained as deacons.



The 1990's centered around celebration, improvement, outreach, and planning. The church celebrated 150 years of worship in 1995.

A new organ was purchased in 1996, and the stained glass windows in the foyer and sanctuary were replaced. Pastor Garry Edwards used one of the oak trees which were cut down near the educational building to build the beautiful oak door presently in use at the back entrance. The church also installed new glass doors and window at the front entrance to the church. In 1997 Luke Gillis went with members from other area churches on a mission trip to Poland. That same year Pedro Cabrera (February) and Tim Jaynes (May) were licensed to preach. In 1998 we upgraded the heating systems in the church and educational building, and purchased land across the street for future growth. In 1998 five youth and two leaders went on a World Changers Construction/Mission trip to Wilson County, Tennessee. These included Lori Gillis, Luke Gillis, Lacey Holley, Karri Jones, Greg Bennett, Tim Jaynes, and Kellie Jaynes.

The youth were so impressed with this opportunity to serve others that they went on two more trips. In July of 1999 John Barrow, Lacey Holley, Tim Jaynes, Kellie Jaynes, Karri Jones, Buck Mayzes, Mark Phillips and Daniel Smith went to Nashville with World Changers 2000.

The Twenty First century

New Salem Baptist Church would enter the new millennium under the pastoral leadership of Rev. Gary Edwards.

In June of 2000, members of the church went on second Hope Builders mission trip. This time, the group went to Johnson City. This Hope Builder's trip was participated in by Lacey Holley, Tim Jaynes, Kellie Jaynes and Daniel Smith. In the same year Guy McAmis was licensed to preach. Also in 2000, Pastor Garry Edwards and Guy McAmis went through the Faith witnessing program and brought the program back to our church teaching Nancy Gillis, Roy Gillis, Tim Jaynes, and Ginger McAmis to become teachers in the program. This was also a year for building and grounds improvement. A new church sign was purchased and installed at the corner of Bailey Bridge Road and Lester Snapp Road. Major renovations were done to the front porch and a ramp was constructed at the back door. An elevator was installed in 2001.

In June 2002, the church completed incorporation proceedings with the help of attorney Ivy Scarborough. The official title on all bank accounts, loans, certificates of deposits, etc. would now read New Salem Baptist Church of Limestone, Inc.

Pastor Garry Edwards resigned in March of 2003 and the church was without a pastor until August of that same year. During that time, the church did major renovations on the parsonage, including new kitchen cabinets, building a new closet in the front room and installing new carpet throughout the house.

Rev. Craig Ponder became our pastor on August 10, 2003

In 2004, two baptismal services were conducted at the Nolichucky River, on the property of S.G. Hensley. On Sunday, April 18th, Pastor Ponder baptized Jimmy Hammonds. On August 22nd, Tammy Brooks and Meagan Reeder (mother and daughter), Alex Street and Nick Gillespie were baptized.

The year 2004 saw many changes and improvements to the New Salem facilities:

- January – New church van purchased from Erwin Motors. The old van was purchased by Larry Thompson
- March – Projector, retractable screen and new sound system installed in the sanctuary.
- August – New sound booth constructed in time for homecoming and termite damage was repaired in the education building restrooms.
- September – Construction begins on carport for church parsonage and new carpet was installed in education building.
- October – Church carport finished. New vinyl flooring installed in education building. Work begins on the new basketball court.

2005

Winter Revival 2005 was held February 6th through February 9th. The Lord blessed in a mighty way with large crowds every night, anointed preaching and uplifting music. Several people were saved and many rededications were made.

In April 2005, basketball goals and volleyball poles were erected on the new basketball court. Following some repairs to the baptistery, Pastor Ponder held baptismal services on April 17, 2005. Nikki and Meagan Harmon (mother and daughter), Garrett and Samuel Wright (brothers), James Morrow, Amber Persianni and Tonya Gwynn were added to the church membership through baptism.

Baptismal services were held again on August 7, 2005. Pastor Ponder baptized Randall Hicks, Melissa Waterhouse, Leo Pasciak and Arial Pasciak.

A couples retreat was held on November 18 and 19 at the Holston Baptist Retreat Center Rogersville, TN. Six couples attended and James and Dianne Barker hosted.

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Spring Revival 2006 was held May 14th through May 19th. Revival concluded with a community-wide block party on Saturday, May 20th featuring a 3-on-3 basketball tournament. Nearly 150 people attended. At the close of the revival, a new teen center called The Spot was officially opened and was dedicated to the service of the Lord at the corner of Bailey Bridge Road and Bud Ball Road.

A community-wide baptismal service was held in the Nolichucky River in Lamar on July 16, 2006. Ten different churches were represented. Pastor Ponder baptized Breanna Baker, Kelsey Bailey and Cheyenne Steward, who all became members of New Salem Church.

July 24th through July 28th, ten people went on a mission trip to Gulfport, Mississippi. The team worked on a new house being built by the Holston Baptist Association for Rev. and Mrs. M.C. Miskal, who lost their house to Hurricane Katrina.

On July 30th, New Salem commissioned Greg and Christi Bennett as International Missionaries to Thailand.

The men of New Salem built a porch for Elmer and Betty Taylor in August and put a roof on it in November.

The church family continued to grow with baptism being held on Christmas Eve. Troy Norton and Martina Harmon were baptized.

2006 was a year marked by God's blessing at New Salem! We watched as God brought 28 new members to our church family; 8 of which came by baptism. We saw a new teen center opened in the heart of our community. We ordained 3 new deacons and commissioned two brand-new foreign missionaries.

2007

2007 began like 2006 ended, with church additions and baptisms. A baptismal service was held on February 4 during the morning service. Joe and Cary Bishop (father and daughter) were baptized, along with Lindsey Arrowood. Lou and Melissa Keene were baptized on April 22.

2008

Preliminary meetings were held in March and April to begin discussing renovations to the sanctuary and installation of bathrooms in the foyer. On April 24, a new roof was put on the fellowship hall. On June 29, 2008, the building and planning committee, consisting of Sandra Jaynes, Steve Cutshall, Kyle Humphreys, Tommy Bailey, Linda Bailey, S.G. Hensley, David Long, and Tim Jaynes, presented a proposal to the church for a renovation project. This proposal included an expansion to the foyer to include the construction of two new bathrooms; as well as some major renovations to the sanctuary. The proposal was approved by a unanimous vote on July 6, 2008. July 8 - 11, twelve children along with Pastor Ponder and Cindy Garland attended Fun in the Sun Kids Camp at Ridgecrest, NC. During the evening service on July 13 – Pastor Ponder baptized Jeff Tolley, Izak Dotson, and Jakob Dotson. Construction began on bathroom additions and sanctuary renovations on August 14 and would be completed in late November. Dedication of new sanctuary was held on Sunday, December 7th. Total cost of the project was \$168,281.00.

2009

Designated by Pastor Ponder as “*The Year of the Family*” A new Sunday School class called *Homebuilders* was started on May 3rd for parents and couples. An outdoor stage was constructed in late May. *The Voices of Lee* were in concert in May. June 20 – June 27; Tim Jaynes took eight teenagers on a *WorldChangers* mission trip to Huntington, West Virginia. July 7-10, 14 kids and 4 adult leaders attended Fun-in-the-Son Kids Camp at Ridgecrest, NC. A new flag pole was erected on dedicated on July 5.



2011

Renovations to the basement hallway and S.S. classes were completed in May.

2013

In March, New Salem began a new radio ministry with Sunshine 790, WETB. The show was entitled “*Because He Lives*” and aired every Monday from 5-5:30pm. Construction begins in May on the new pavilion. Bible study was first conducted in the pavilion on Wednesday, October 2nd. The first meal was eaten on November 3rd. In October, the church purchased 3 acres of land across Lester Snapp Road for future expansion for a total cost of \$18,000. On November 24th, the church elected 3 new deacons: Gary King, David Long, and Ronnie Snapp. Bro. Gary has was previously ordained and was activated.

2014

New stove, cabinets and countertops installed in the parsonage.

2015

Renovations to the parking lot were completed in December. Parking spaces and sidewalks were added along the western side of the church.



2016

On Saturday, January 9, 2016, a council was convened for the purpose of examining David Long, Ronnie Snapp and Gary King for deacon ordination. An ordination service was then held on Sunday, January 10. Pastor Ponder preached the charge message to the new deacons. Ben Proffitt, Director of Missions for the Holston Baptist Association, was in attendance as a special guest.



2017

In July and August, a new playground and a GaGa pit were installed.



2020

On Tuesday, March 17, Pastor Ponder called a special deacons meeting to discuss how New Salem would respond to the COVID-19 threat. Also in attendance were Tim Jaynes and Joe Barker. After prayer and much discussion, it was decided that all worship gatherings would be postponed through and including April 5th. This would include all activities on Sundays, Wednesday nights as well as any and all small group meetings through the week. It was also decided that the annual Easter Egg Hunt would be cancelled. The praise team and audio visual team will gather on Sunday mornings only to livestream the morning service via Facebook and YouTube.

On Wednesday, March 25, New Salem officially made on-line giving available to our congregation. The service will be available through a Christian company called DigiGiv and linked through the church's website which is hosted by another Christian provider called Ministry Designs.

On Tuesday, March 31, Pastor Ponder called a special deacon meeting to again discuss concerns as to just how New Salem should respond to the ever-growing COVID-19 threat. Tim Jaynes and Joe Barker were also in attendance. In accordance with the directions of the President and the CDC and the governor's stay at home order, it was unanimously decided that all activities on Sundays and on Wednesday nights, as well as any and all small group meetings through the week will be postponed until further notice. A minimal group will continue to gather on Sunday mornings to livestream the morning service via Facebook and YouTube.

On Sunday, May 31, New Salem returned to corporate worship. Morning worship services were offered at 9 and 11 with the 11am service streaming live on Facebook (FB and YouTube. We also began meeting in person for Wednesday night prayer and Bible study (live on FB).

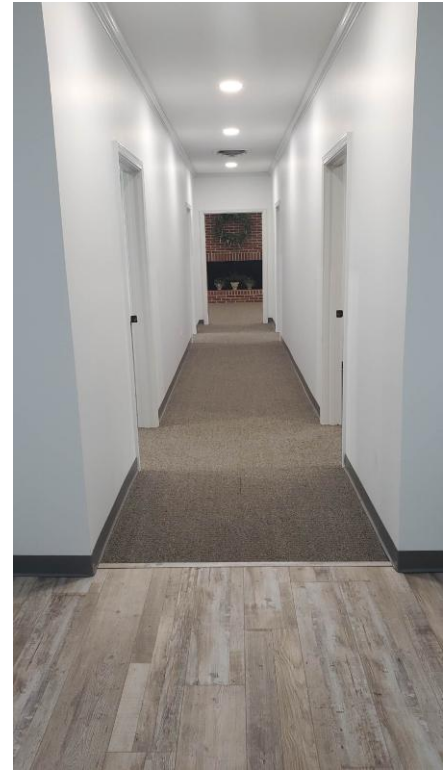
On July 12th we relaunched 2 adult SS classes. On October 18th our children's and youth ministries started up again. (No SS. Just Children's Church at 11am and youth group at 5pm.)

For 3 weeks (Dec 27th, Jan 3rd and Jan 10th) we went back to virtual only on Sundays with no SS, youth or children's ministry.

2023

On December 14, 2022, the church voted to convert our existing Fellowship Hall into an education space. In addition, the church voted to convert the pavilion into a new Fellowship Hall.

Work commenced on January 9, 2023 to convert the Fellowship Hall in educational spaces. Final touches such as carpet and decorating were completed in May. The building was officially dedicated on August 20 during our Homecoming celebration. Dr. Troy Rust, Associational Mission Strategist (AMS) for the Holston Baptist Association (HBA) was in attendance and lead the prayer of dedication of the newly named Education Building.



2024

On October 3, the remnants of Hurricane Helene ravaged east Tennessee and western North Carolina. The Nolichucky River flooded its bank and reached a flood stage not seen in over a hundred years. Roads and bridges were destroyed from Unicoi County to Greene County. Dozens of lives were lost along with hundreds of homes. Bailey Bridge was destroyed. Snapp Bridge and Jackson Bridge were impassable for over a week. During that time, New Salem's pavilion became a staging area for disaster relief efforts from all over the country. Donations began to pour in a Divine fashion from churches and agencies from as far away as Pennsylvania. Truckloads of supplies along with dozens of volunteers showed up every day. Countless people were helped. The New Salem Help Center was open from October 4 through October 13.



November 10 – 14, New Salem partnered with several local churches to host *Revival at Jackson Bridge*. This inter-denominational event grew out God's blessing and provision during the flood and its aftermath. The revival was held at The Farm at Jackson Bridge and was a glorious success in every way.



2025

Work began in March to enclose The Pavilion and convert it into our new fellowship hall. Work continued throughout the summer. Windows and doors were installed on June 17th. Homecoming dinner was served on August 17th in the newly renovated fellowship space, now referred to as The Pavilion



New glass doors were installed in the Education Building on August 20th.



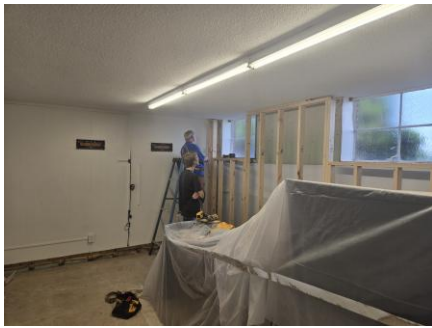
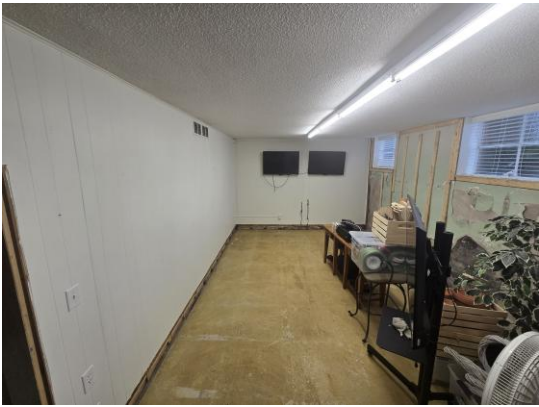
2026

On Saturday, March 8th, a council was convened for the purpose of examining Scotty Davis, Phillip Dugger and Brandon Shipley for deacon ordination. An ordination service was then held on Sunday, March 9th. Pastor Ponder preached the charge message to the new deacons.



On Saturday, July 11th, nearly 7 inches of rain fell and as a result, 4 inches of water filled the church basement. ServPro was contacted and work commenced on drying out the basement and removing damaged walls, carpet and furnishings. AFS Foundation and Waterproofing installed 2 sump pumps, dug trenches along the walls and encased the outer walls in plastic to prevent future flooding. Through a Divine set of circumstances, TN Baptist Disaster Relief provided both the materials and volunteers to reconstruct our basement. Volunteer teams showed up on August 25th and in less than 2 weeks, new walls were framed, sheet rock was installed and we were ready to paint!





New Salem Baptist Church Pastors

Nineteenth Century

William Cate, 1845-1860
 William Newell, 1860
 A. G. Starkwether, 1860
 William A. Keen, 1861
 R. R. Owens, 1863
 E. Spergen, 1865
 M. V. Noffsinger, 1867
 G. C. Thrasher, 1872
 N. W. G. Baxter, 1873
 R. N. Lee, 1874
 J. H. Moore, 1874
 J. S. Thomas, 1878
 Sam Harold, 1880
 Dr. G. W. Griffin, 1882
 N. W. G. Baxter, 1882
 Rev. McPhertridge, 1883
 N. W. G. Baxter,
 1883-1886
 T. H. Crouch, 1890
 J. H. Moore, 1893
 E. P. White, 1895
 W. C. Patton, 1898

Twentieth Century

E. P. White, 1900
 E. D. Cox, 1900-1901
 M. B. Upchurch,
 1901-1902
 J. H. Moore, 1903
 J. B Chase, 1904

A. J Watkins, 1905-1906
 M. B. Upchurch, 1906-1907
 J. N. Garst, 1908-1909
 J. A. Broyles, 1909
 J. H. Moore, 1910
 R. M. Devault, 1911
 J. B. Chase, 1912
 T. A. Hensley, 1913
 Ernest Hite, 1914
 J. M Good, 1917
 J. C. Cochran, 1920
 Leonard McCracken, 1924
 J. M. Good, 1925
 G. W. Sebastian, 1936-1939
 S. B. Lockhart, 1939-1941
 H. H. Doty, 1941-1942
 Otis King, 1942
 Edgbert Barnes, 1943-1944
 John Riddle, 1944-1947
 Loyd Greer 1948-1950
 W. M. Evans, 1950-1951
 Fred Smith, 1951-1954
 A. H. Norris, 1954-1955
 Robert Kendrick, 1956-1957
 S. W. Myers, 1957-1960
 A. H. Norris, 1960-1961
 Earl Dingus, 1962-1964
 C. B. Dickenson, 1964-1966
 Dick Teaster, 1966-1968
 J. C. Cartee, 1968-1970

Terry Flowers
 1970 - June 30, 1973

Louis Kincaid, 1974-1975

Ron Owens
 Dec. 1975 - Dec. 1979

Tony Mavrakos
 March 1980 – June 1984

Eldridge Cullurn
 November 1984 - 1986

Keith Whitehead
 March 1988 – 1992

Twenty First Century

Garry Edwards
 February 1993 - March 2003

Craig Ponder
 August 2003 - present