

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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DEDICATION	3
FOREWORD	3
Part One: Looking for a Haven (1785-1839)	3

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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Part Two: Finding a Niche (1840-1877)	19
Part Three: Spreading the Good News (1888-1985)	30
PASTORS OF BOONE'S CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH SINCE 1785	39

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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DEDICATION

This history is dedicated to the memory of Samuel Boone, Sarah Boone, Turner Crump, Robert Fryer, Elizabeth Hazelrigg, James Hazelrigg, John Hazelrigg, Grace Jones, John Morgan, Leah Scholl, William Scholl, George Shortige, Kizziah Shortige, Margaret Shortige, the four unnamed members of that first congregation which met here on the second Sunday in November of 1785, and to Elders John Tanner and John Taylor, whom God led to this place and blessed with his ministry.

FOREWORD

Histories are written by the people who live them, and are recorded by those who wish to learn from the experiences of their forebearers something about the legacy they have inherited. Those persons who are members of Boone's Creek Baptist Church in its 200th year can take comfort in the knowledge that theirs is a rich tradition, made so by the faith, determination, courage, and character of those who passed this way since 1785. While the church has certainly had its tedious times and moments of contention, the Lord has never left its side, and it stands today in this community as a monument to what the will of God can do when His people accept that will and follow his pathway.

This history is, of necessity, informal, partly because of the inadequacies of the author and partly due to the occasional scantiness of available source documents. Much is owed to many people who had a hand in preparing this work, including Reverend Wendell Romans, Reverend Lloyd Mahanes, Mrs. Elsie Dulin, Ms. Cindy Parker, Reverend W. B. Casey, Mrs. Betty Jo Morgan, Mrs. Geneva Gentry, Mr. Don Humphries, and others who contributed research, advice, prayers, and encouragement during its preparation. The praise is theirs, the errors and omissions are mine.

The story that is told here belongs to the hundreds, yes, thousands who have created it as God's children at Boone's Creek Baptist Church for two centuries. It is their story, hopefully told in an entertaining and spiritually meaningful way.

TIM CAPPS
November 1985

Part One: Looking for a Haven (1785-1839)

"THEREFORE, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foreasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58).

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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THOSE words, written by Paul to the church at Corinth (dare we call them Baptists?), have remained an article of faith for succeeding generations of those who have heard and heeded the Gospel message. They are, in many respects, the cornerstone of Baptist theology, for they embody the spirit and steadfast nature that has marked the course of Baptist history since the earliest days when the term "Baptist" was used to describe a group of believers.

Exactly when that occurred cannot be precisely fixed in time, but it is generally believed that the first so-called Baptists were the followers of the man who baptized Jesus, John the Baptist. According to Biblical scholars, the term continued to be applied on occasion thereafter, and there were certainly organized groups called Baptists in England in the Middle Ages. These groups tended to ebb and flow-as did so many splinter religious groups outside the circle of the church at Rome-with the tenor of the times, disappearing or virtually so during periods of religious persecution by stronger denominations or during politically sanctioned anti-religious eras.

One of the reasons for this, apart from any religious viewpoints, was the historic tendency for Baptists to be strongly independent in both their religious and secular attitudes. Baptists believed, and still do, in personal interpretation of God's word and individual communication with God, ideas which were also expressed in attitudes that called for civil and religious liberty, freedom of conscience, separation of church and state, and absolute religious tolerance.

The first organized Baptists apparently came into the American colonies in the early 1600s, some in New England, especially Rhode Island, a few in New York, which was then under Dutch control (Holland was a religiously tolerant country-the only one in western Europe-and many English Baptists had fled there during periods of internal persecution), and others in Virginia, where the groups developed their greatest strength prior to the time of the Revolutionary War. It is with the 'Virginia Baptists that we are most concerned, since it is from their roots that Boone's Creek Baptist Church sprang.

There were, however, important Baptist happenings elsewhere, particularly in New England, where Roger Williams (in 1636) and Doctor John Clarke (1638) established towns built around Baptist churches that are considered to be the first permanent such churches of their faith in America. They created a colony which had as a basic premise the complete freedom "in matters of religious concernment," the first such civil state in the world and a model for the nation that was to follow.

Let it not be assumed that this breath of religious liberty blew unfettered throughout the American colonies, for it was religious persecution that had driven Williams from

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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Massachusetts into Rhode Island, and such persecution, though generally, localized in nature, was not unusual in the colonial period.

According to the 1980 census, there are 179 religious groups in America able to claim over 1,000 members, and 103 of them can claim over 50,000 members. Of those, 23 groups are Baptist in name. Sixty percent of all American citizens claim a religious affiliation with a recognized religious body.

The numbers were not as grandiose in colonial times, but then, were substantial. There were at least 290 Baptist churches of one sort or another in Virginia by the time of the Revolution, and they were not always well treated, nor were they particularly tolerant of each other. They tended to fight over scriptural interpretations and argue over the best method for spreading the Gospel, or whether God really intended for the Gospel to be spread. Preachers were often physically punished, jailed, or simply run out of town for preaching in violation of local ordinances which were deliberately constructed to favor the views of a particular religious sect. Baptists, being the independent souls they were and are, were often the targets, intentional or otherwise, of those situations.

It is ironic in some respects that the early Baptist churches of Kentucky were products of a period and a school of thought that is often called by historians the "Age of Reason" or the "Enlightenment." The irony lies in the fact that much of the philosophy which developed during that time was felt to be anticlerical, anti religious in nature. In actual fact, most of the intellectuals of the Enlightenment were not atheists or agnostics, but were in opposition to what they saw as the unreasoned nature of the established order in Europe and its colonial empires, where ruling classes and bureaucratic religious orders presumed to dominate the human existence, effectively telling people how to live their lives and how to think. Enlightenment scholars believed, above all else, in the freedom of the human mind and spirit, and many among them mixed those concepts and strongly held private religious convictions to build a faith that was "Baptist" in nature.

THE pioneers who left Virginia in the years prior to and during the American Revolution were probably unaware of any Enlightenment. What they sought were new lands, new opportunities for religious and personal freedom, and less crowded conditions than those they faced in Virginia. Theirs was not an intellectual pursuit; it was a matter of basic human longing for a place and an atmosphere of freedom.

Kentucky, an anglicized version of the Indian word Kan-tuck-hee, which was said to mean "dark and bloody ground," was first visited by white men on a regular basis on the 1760s, although it is thought that early explorers visited the state as soon as 1669.

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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Among those visitors of the 1760s was one who liked what he saw well enough to decide that he wanted to come back and make the area his permanent home. That man, a native of Pennsylvania named Daniel Boone became the most legendary figure of his time in Kentucky, a hunter, trapper, and leader of men who had settled in North America, which like its neighbor to the north, Virginia, was a haven for Baptist groups of various persuasions.

Boone himself was born into a Quaker family, although there is no record that he was a particularly religious person, but he probably was a believer in a supreme being and, in any event, was obviously no enemy of those who wished to worship God as they chose. He led a party of North Carolinians through the Cumberland Gap area and into what is now central Kentucky in the spring of 1775, establishing himself and his band of settlers in a site known as Boonesboro, on the Kentucky River east of presentday Lexington. The territory belonged, under the English crown grants, to the Virginia colony, and there were periodic disputes over the next several years as to the proper ownership. In truth, the land belonged more to the Indians at first, if for no better reason than that of pure force. Boone and his cohorts were regularly battling mostly Shawnee war parties, and Boone himself was captured by the Shawnees of 1778. He became a member of the tribe, then escaped to warn the fort at Boonesboro of an imminent Indian attack, which he then helped to stave off. For his trouble, his friends attempted to court-martial him for treason, but he was acquitted and restored to his previous position as the leader of the settlement.

The Kentucky of Boone's day was scarcely what we see today although we think of it as a place of great natural beauty and pastoral scenery. Boone's Kentucky was heavily forested beyond our present imaginations, and traveling a few miles, unless via the larger bodies of navigable water, was a difficult and time-consuming process. There were no interstate highways, although the present routes of I-75 and I-64 mark places where major trails developed over the years.

When Boonesboro continued to be harassed by the Indians into the late 1770s, Boone finally decided to pack up the settlement and move. The spot he chose for a new home was not far away, about 12 miles in fact, at the mouth of a stream which became known as Boone's Creek, about a half-mile from the present site of Boone's Creek Baptist Church. Their move was made in late December of 1779, and then, located themselves near a tiny, village which marked an intersection of trails that led from Lexington to Harrodsburg and from Bryant's Station to Boonesboro. It was called Cross Plains, later renamed Athens, and was not only a crossroads but also a mustering place for the local militia when Indian trouble threatened, which was much of the time. Thus, Athens can be said to have been the home of potential trouble almost since its origins, a fact to which many ministers at the church would willingly attest.

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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These were dangerous times, and it is hard to relate to the daily privations of the people who lived in Kentucky during this period. There were few business or professional people among the population, for most of everyone's time was occupied with the basic task of finding food, making clothing, and avoiding being scalped. The conclusion of the Revolution in 1781 began to change that scenario gradually with more and more settlers moving west into Kentucky, especially the rolling hills of central Kentucky but life was still not easy.

THERE are seven existing Baptist churches in Kentucky which are older than Boone's Creek, starting with Severns Valley in Elizabethtown, First Baptist Church of Cedar Creek, and Gilberts Creek Baptist Church, all founded in 1781. The histories of each of these early churches tells much the same story: buildings built to withstand Indian attacks, with ports for the pioneers to fire their rifles through in the event of an assault. Tradition holds that usually one part of the congregation would worship while the others watched for hostiles, then the two group would swap places. This made for long services and longer lives.

When two or more Baptists get together, the first thing they usually do is eat; the second thing is to form a church. Eighteen people, including Daniel Boone's brother Samuel and wife Sarah, joined together on the second Sunday of November in 1785 to form Boone's Creek Baptist Church. Also included were Boone's cousin, William Scholl, a Virginian, and his wife Lea, Robert Fryer, George Shortige, Turner Crump, John Morgan, James Hazelrigg, Kizziah Shortige, Margaret Shortige, Grace Jones, and Elizabeth Hazelrigg.

There were four unnamed members of that original congregation, but there is little question that they were black, almost, certainly slaves who belonged to members of the original church. Although these people are never mentioned by name in the early records of the church, there is frequent discussion in church minutes of the acceptance into membership of persons who were servants of a member of the church.

We do not know a great deal about any of these original members, other than that they came from Virginia or North Carolina, particularly the latter, and many of them were probably born in other colonies before migrating to either of those two places, then eventually Kentucky. Samuel Boone is an example. He was born in 1728 in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, which is now an affluent northern suburb of Philadelphia, and he married Sarah Day, a young Quakeress also from Pennsylvania, sometime in the mid - 1750s. At about the same time, he moved to North Carolina, settling in the Piedmont region near Salisbury, which was then the western border of the colony. Indian hostility made that an unsafe locale for white settlers, so Boone moved his

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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young family to an older, more established part of South Carolina, thought to be somewhere in northeastern South Carolina, near or along the Congaree River.

He came to Kentucky in 1779, not long before his younger brother Daniel packed up his own family and those of his closest associates and moved from Boonesboro to what they hoped was a safer spot (further from the Indians) near Cross Plains. Sarah Boone is credited with teaching her brother-in-law Daniel to read and write and it is probable that she did the same for her husband. Samuel Boone was a member of the Boone's Creek congregation for the remaining years of his life after being one of its founding members, and his children were also members, as well as his wife. He is believed to have died in 1816, and is buried on Gentry Road at Boone's Station, about a quarter of a mile from the present church site.

The two elders who helped form the original church were John Tanner and John Taylor, and there is some disagreement among historians over the name of the first pastor. It probably was John Tanner, although a couple of accounts indicate that it might have been Elder David Thompson, who was certainly the pastor a few years later.

Tanner was the logical prospect for the job, and it is reasonable to assume that he was the first pastor, if for no better reason than force of personality. Tanner was a "hyper-Calvinist," meaning that he believed in predestination and the so-called eternal decrees which were to be found in the New Testament. He had been actively persecuted for his rigid beliefs and willingness to preach them in his native Virginia, once being shot by a man whose wife he baptized in North Carolina. Apparently a devout and driven man, Tanner decided early that the members of the Boone's Creek Church were not "sound on the decrees," according to S. J. Conkwright in his authoritative *History of Churches in Boone's Creek Association*. A revival swept the countryside in 1787, and Tanner was not a man who believed in revivals, claiming they were shallow and emotional and "the work of the devil."

The result was that he refused to participate in the revival meetings, and refused to baptize those who were saved at the meeting. Reverend William Hickman was then asked by the congregation to carry on the meeting, which he did. The dissension that developed, however, was not ended, and on June 15, 1787, 19 of the members (the church had about 36 members by this time) asked for letters of dismissal and headed off to form Marble Creek Church (now East Hickman Baptist Church). Boone's Creek Church is thought to have originally been made up primarily of regular Baptists, who were moderates compared to the Separate Baptists, who were Calvinists', but often split into separate camps of their own.

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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This split, the first of many in the church, did not materially weaken Boone's Creek, which sent Elder David Thompson, by then probably its pastor, to the Elkhorn Association meetings in 1788 as its messenger. The church reported a membership in that year of 37 persons, and the report of the association itself the following year stated that there were 13 churches belonging to it with 1,143 members.

The minutes and any other records of the church are lost for the period from 1785 to 1795, thus much of the material on the disputes and shifts in membership in those years are not available, but it is believed that another split of the church occurred in 1789, when Joseph Craig was pastor. If Elder Tanner sounded hard-nosed and eccentric, he was the soul of gentility, compared to what historians of the time describe as the personality and style of Craig.

Many, of the preachers and elders of those days traveled from one church to another, circuit riding or working in one location for a brief period, then moving on to another. It was probably something of a relief to some of his fellow Christians when Craig was someplace else, if the accounts of his thinking and actions are accurate. Even Dr. Spencer, who wrote the *History of Kentucky Baptist* in a rather scholarly and diffident manner, called Craig an eccentric, and said of him, "Sometimes his zeal seemed intemperate, as if the man had not common sense, yet there was something in him more original than was found in other men."

That something was the fire of a man pursuing the will of God, having been through failings, fines, and other persecutions in Virginia before arriving in Kentucky, and he was not about to capitulate in a fight so simple as one over doctrine.

What Craig believed in was what Tanner had believed in, a straight forward concept of God's will for man, determined by rigid adherence to the scriptures, especially the New Testament, and he would not give in to compromises, rules, agreements, covenants, or anything that was not taken directly from the Bible. He, and Tanner, were strong believers in the idea that only the elect of God shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, that those elect are preordained by God, and are eternally justified. Others in those early congregations leaned more on certain sacraments, such as foot-washing and the laying on of hands after baptism, as vital to affirmation of faith and justification. These were the types of disagreements which led to dissension and even dissolution in the Boone's Creek Church, and eventually led Craig, like some of his predecessors, to head for East Hickman Church (which was obviously a home for disagreeable Baptists), which he appears to have done about 1791, if not somewhat earlier.

DESPITE the contentiousness of the factions in the church, Boone's Creek seems to have steered a relatively middle-of-the-road course during its first ten years or so of

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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existence, and to have survived and even grown. One of the telling comments made by Spencer and other historians is that there was a marked tendency for all of the churches of this period to split open over doctrinal matters very quickly, leaving splinter churches to spring up in close proximity to the mother church, thus assuring that both congregations would be small and relatively weak. There seemed to be virtually no harmony among the members of the association, whose only common ground was that they were Baptists.

Argumentativeness was a way of life in the colonies and new states of the United States, so it is no surprise that some of this spilled over into the churches of the era. Kentucky was a colony of Virginia, and the end of the American Revolution, which also brought an easing of the Indian problems in the region, simply opened the door to dissatisfaction with the rule of the government in Virginia over its distant colonial subjects in Kentucky. The land area that now comprises Kentucky was divided into three counties: Lincoln, Fayette, and Jefferson. Cross Plains and Boone's Station were, of course, located in Fayette, whose principal town was Lexington. In the best American tradition, those occupying Kentucky soil went to their Virginia brethren in peace to seek a resolution of their problems. In the best American tradition, the Virginians stalled, then convened a series of conventions, ten in all, to discuss the question of what to do with Kentucky.

Kentuckians themselves were not certain of what they wanted, other than some measure of independence from Virginia. There were those who desired statehood in the new nation, which had been loosely formed in the early 1780s and was permanently bonded into 13 original states with the ratification of the Constitution in 1789. There were others who felt that Kentucky's best option was to become an independent nation, an idea that seemed to seize just about every one of the colonies at one time or another, especially those west of the Allegheny Mountains. Growing particularly impatient with Virginia's intransigence, some Kentuckians even threatened to take the colony into the arms of the Spanish, who controlled New Orleans and claimed all of the vast territory west of the Mississippi.

The truth was that Virginia really did not want to release her western colony, but was finally persuaded to do so in 1789, and Kentucky was preserved for a future place in the Union. That place came fairly quickly, when Kentucky became the 15th state of the United States on June 1, 1792.

By the time Kentucky, became a state, Boone's Creek Baptist Church was well established, thriving despite already, having split at least twice, perhaps more. Its members met in a log building, 45 by 50 feet, which was later replaced by another, similar, log building. Although there is question over the times and dates that various people served as pastors of the Boone's Creek Church, it is generally agreed that Elder

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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David Thompson was the pastor of the church following Tanner and probably maintained a preaching connection with the church until its major split in 1811. Thompson was a native of Virginia, and it is known that he was pastor of a church in Louisa County, Virginia, in 1771, when he became a founding member of the General Association of Virginia, a Baptist association which was the forerunner of the modern state convention.

Thompson came to Kentucky sometime after that, although there is uncertainty as to his actual arrival date, and he was not one of the founding members of the Boone's Creek Church. He was, however, the messenger of the church to the Elkhorn Association in 1788, and was probably the pastor of the church at that point, since Tanner had split with other members of the group over the revival question and had headed elsewhere. Although Thompson is officially considered to have been the pastor of the church until about 1811, he was unlikely to have devoted all of his energies to preaching the gospel at Boone's Creek. Most preachers of that day were, if not actual circuit riders, at least involved in preaching for more than one congregation, and many times services were led by members of the congregation who were asked by the church to serve as lay leaders. Several such examples are scattered throughout the early minutes of the church. As for Thompson, he eventually moved to Madison County to pastor a church there, and ultimately followed John Tanner as the pastor of the Tates Creek Baptist Church.

REGARDLESS OF its internal strife and the disagreements over doctrine that seemed to regularly plague its membership, Boone's Creek Church was not untypical of either the churches or other institutions in the Kentucky of the late 1700s. The state became a state in 1792, but did not get around to writing its own constitution until 1798, when the Kentucky Resolutions were passed. The Resolutions initially called for the selection of state government officials by electors chosen by the people, or at least some people, and that provision caused the first constitution to be torn up the following year, to be replaced by one calling for direct election by the population of state officers.

Although we have been taught that America is the home of the free and the brave and is the heart and soul of democratic society, the early governments, both national and state, in American were a far cry from what we have today. A classic struggle was taking place in this country during those years over whether we would have a truly representative form of government, with officials elected by broad popular vote, or a government built on republican principles but dominated by an elite group of citizens whose education and standing in society equipped them to lead, or so they believed, the "unwashed masses."

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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The elitist philosophy was a mixture of the English form of government, where men of property controlled the plebiscite and, through it, the government, and the fear of the random concepts expressed in post-revolutionary societies such as that in France, where the painful excesses of the French Revolution were almost as repugnant to civilized people as was the pompous repression of its pre-Revolutionary order. It is fair to say that the eastern states, particularly those of the Northeast, were more inclined to view matters in the conservative English mold, while the western and southern states were decidedly opposed to that scheme and were always headed in the direction of making the vote available to all citizens.

The key point to remember is that even in Kentucky prior to the time of Andrew Jackson's presidency, votes for national offices were restricted to people who owned property, which excluded a good portion of the population. This occasioned a good deal of restlessness among the general population, and the country was mainly held together during the first 30 years or so of its existence by threats from foreign powers to its sovereignty, and the fact that local affairs more often than not involved everyone.

Boone's Creek Baptist Church was an absolute model of democracy compared to the secular government, and that factor can be noted throughout the record books of its first years. In October of 1798, Brother William Thon was found to be guilty of dancing, and was ordered to appear before the congregation at the November business meeting. Thon, perhaps unwilling to face the music, did not show up at the meeting in November, and Brothers Winn, Bradley, and Vanlandingham were dispatched to "cite" him for a second time. Whatever the brethren did must have worked, for Brother Thon not only showed up at the December business session, but also got up and "made such acknowledgments as the church thought necessary" and was again restored to the church's fellowship. He apparently either admitted that he had danced and asked forgiveness, or proved that he had not. The former seems more plausible.

The following year, Boffman's Fork Church, which had formed out of one of the Boone's Creek splinters in the late 1780s, approached its mother congregation about the possibility of reuniting with the original church. Boone's Creekers, not eager to forgive and forget in this case, decided to postpone action until "the next meeting," something they kept doing. There is no indication that the two churches ever merged, although the records for 1800 are missing and it is very possible that the reconciliation did occur.

On May 25, 1799, Brother George Bainbridge was called upon to serve as preacher at Boone's Creek for the first Sunday in each month, and Brother Marshal was asked to write a letter to him to the effect. Brother Marshal, who had been involved in issuing

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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the call to Brother Bainbridge, obviously did not get off on the right foot with the new man, and a committee was formed to visit Brother Marshal to resolve his problems. These committees must have discovered some very persuasive tactics, for almost all references to them eventually end with the matter being resolved and everyone appearing to be happy, as was Brother Marshal.

Marshal's problems were with a preacher, but Leonard Bradley, son-in-law of Samuel and Sarah Boone, had difficulties staying out of personal altercations, like fist fights. He was cleared of charges brought before the church in 1799 concerning one such fight, then later that same year had some sort of disagreement with Brother George Winn, one of the most frequently mentioned leaders of the church during that period. Leonard was evidently prone to get into trouble, being suspended in 1801 by the church for drinking to excess, and it is probably, good that the minutes for 1800 are missing, since it seems likely that he would look even worse if we knew what went on that year. He subsequently moved his family, to Missouri, following several members of the Boone family although it is not known when the move happened, and it might not have been until after his father-in-law died in 1816.

IF the church had largely settled its doctrinal differences by 1800, it cannot be said that harmony reigned. It is clear from the business meeting minutes that the church very much played the role of a local legislature and court system, establishing rules of moral conduct and enforcing those rules, at least insofar as its own membership was concerned. Because most people of that time were heavily influenced by local religious activities, even if they did not belong to a church, this situation had much more impact on the social behavior of the local community than would be the case today.

The Boone's Creek of the early 1800s was a strict church, and its minutes are peppered with charges, counter charges, confessions of error, and disciplinary measures. Members could bring charges against other members, or against themselves when they felt particularly self-confessional. When this happened, the church usually appointed a committee to approach the member so charged and discuss the matter with him or her (there were a number of "hers" charged as well as "hims"). The member would then typically come before the church and talk about his or her problem, with the church acting to settle the matter. Most of these situations were resolved with the person being forgiven and either continuing in or being restored to the church's fellowship.

There is very little in the minutes to enlighten us on the precise nature of many of these circumstances, other than the periodic tidbit concerning something that was particularly lurid for the times. One woman was suspended from the church's fellowship because of the way she swayed when she walked. She was a little too

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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seductive for somebody, probably the ladies of the church, and accordingly was grounded. A similar problem surfaced in 1812 when Sister Elizabeth Ward was excluded from the church after a male member and his wife brought charges against her for what was referred to as "devililing" him. To make a long story short, Ms. Ward took a liking to this fellow, went to his home and told him how handsome he was and that she had fallen in love with him, and proceeded to hug him. We do not know what happened next; perhaps his wife discovered her ill action, or maybe the member told his wife the details, but they did charge Ms. Ward with unseemly conduct and the church severed her from its rolls.

It is also worth mentioning that the practice of admitting slaves into the congregation continued routinely, with many notations in the minutes concerning the reception of people such as "Negro James, servant of W. Spears." They were received into the fellowship of the church based upon their "experiences," meaning their salvation experiences, as candidates for baptism. A rough count indicates that about half of all the monthly meetings of the church had some sort of dissatisfaction toward a particular member expressed. Additionally, there seemed to be an increase in such incidents as the years went by, and it is evident from even a cursory study of the minutes that turbulence was developing within the congregation over the question of the church's role in disciplining its membership. Some of the members seemed to believe that the church had simply gone too far in its intrusion into the member's personal lives, and that it had become an open forum for every petty personal feud and disagreement between two individuals, a place for bringing before others things that should be handled privately.

This came to a head in 1810, when Brother Absalom Bainbridge was charged with speaking untruths. Some have interpreted this as indication that he was accused of lying, but it seems just as likely that he was being charged with statements that were considered heretical. In any event, he was so charged, and those who were supportive of him suggested that as an alternative to trying him, the congregation should agree to separate. The minutes of the meeting of December, 1810, treat the situation thusly: "On question for a division to take place in this church, a majority agrees it is best to divide," and a committee (they were typical Baptists even then) was formed to draft a plan of division.

The plan they developed was conciliatory to say the least. It was presented to the two groups in January of 1811 and immediately adopted. Under the plan, each member was allowed to join the half of the church he or she wished to join, and each group would have the use of the existing church building half the time. The segment staying in the Elkhorn Association would maintain the building, and have its choice of Sundays for worship (it chose the second and fourth Sundays), while the other group would assist in the maintenance of the property with a financial contribution. The majority,

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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group retained the name Boone's Creek Baptist Church and stayed in the Elkhorn Association, while the other called itself Particular Baptists and joined the Licking Association.

There was some unhappiness between the two groups over the disposition of the church's record book, but they did not get too far apart, and eventually reunited in the 1830s after more than two decades of friendly rivalry. In May of 1813 there was mention of the selection for ordination of Brother Anson Mills, who was duly ordained into the ministry in June of that year. He is the first person named as having been ordained by the church, although there could have been other such events prior to 1813 which were not noted in the minutes. Since different people acted as church clerks in the early years of the church, there is no way to determine whether some of the customs of the church were developed early and not mentioned until later or whether they were noted as they appeared. Regardless, some are worth mentioning, because they are demonstrative of the underlying reasons for the church's continued survival through its own self-inflicted miseries.

For instance, each business meeting, no matter how sensitive things might get, began with prayer, singing, and a reading of the church covenant. This obviously served as a reminder to the members that their primary purpose was to worship God and to attend to the needs of his church and his children. It was a simple but effective affirmation of faith and purpose that undoubtedly prevented some of the stormy periods in the church's early existence from being worse than they actually were.

This does not mean that the church, as it matured, abandoned its attention to the members' personal lifestyle, or its willingness to intervene when it deemed necessary. There were, in the late teens and early 1820s, numerous references (although not as many as before the great split in 1811) to members being asked to explain their behavior, such as fighting, drunkenness, or other such public displays of sin. One lady (?) was excluded from the congregation for abusiveness to her family and the use of bad language in connection with that abuse.

THE openness of dialogue of the church in those years, while sometimes offensive to members who believed it went beyond its bounds, was a boon to the congregation in other ways, for it allowed people who wished to join the church to come forward and explain their desire to do so and discuss any concerns the church might have in an open manner. There are several examples in the minutes of persons who came from other churches where they could not obtain letters of dismissal and were brought into the fellowship of Boone's Creek after they had satisfied the membership of their beliefs and their intent. One man, who had been excluded by another church for "religious sentiments" (unspecified), but was "orderly otherwise," was examined by the

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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congregation, and accepted, with the minutes stating, "We find his faith and belief agreeing with ours, and agree to receive him as a member."

The first recorded deacon of the church was Squire Boone, son of Samuel, who was mentioned as a deacon in 1814. It appears that there was only one active deacon in service at a time, and that he was entrusted with such funds as the church raised for any purpose. Jeremiah Vardeman, who probably succeeded David Thompson as the church's pastor, was also seemingly the first minister to be paid for his services.

Money was a problem for the pioneers, both because of its scarcity and its uncertain value. The economy of day, especially in the western states, was still heavily reliant on the barter system of trading goods for goods or goods for services, or whatever, and currency, either metal or paper, was something new to much of the nation. The term "not worth a Continental" grew during the American Revolution to describe the value, or lack thereof, of the currency issued by the Continental Congress to pay for materials needed by the Continental army, in its war effort.

Alexander Hamilton, the country's first Secretary of the Treasury, was a proponent of a national banking and currency system, but he found it difficult to convince many of his illustrious contemporaries that either of these instruments of credit and trade was necessary. Government issued paper or coin was believed, like the national bank, to be a means of government intrusion into the economic activity of private citizens, and most Americans of the day were not much on government intervention of any sort.

The result of this lack of coordinated national policy on banking, credit extension, and the coinage of currency was a system that was not a system in any sense of the word. In fact, by the early 1820s, it can be said that the nation was in economic chaos because each state had its own banks and banking rules, issued credit or allowed credit to be extended as local needs dictated, and coined its own currency, most often paper, whenever local political needs so dictated. Thus, America had a multiplicity of items floating around loosely called money, of widely differing values according to location and circumstance, and credit practices that ranged from the orderly merchant banking activities developing in large eastern towns to loansharking (even if it was not called that) by so-called state banks. There was a national bank, but it had no official control over the banking system, and retained power only because it held most of the federal government's deposits, such as they were.

The country thus alternated between wild inflation and sweeping depression, sometimes within a matter of months, sometimes with both things going on simultaneously in different parts of the nation. One of the most famous political cartoons of the era was one depicting debtors (those owing money) chasing creditors (those whom they owed), trying to pay them with paper money that was depreciating

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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almost as fast as it was printed. The creditors simply did not want to be repaid in worthless or near worthless currencies.

This was becoming a problem even in frontier economies. People were often paid for their services in foodstuffs or cloth, but a medium of exchange was increasingly necessary simply because of the sheer volume of transactions in a populated society.

Paying people in currency was becoming a necessity, and we begin to find indications of such actions in the 1820s, with a janitor being paid \$6.00 per year for his services. On another occasion, the church raised money for the purchase of an adjoining piece of property and the clerk was careful to note that the amount raised (\$12.00) consisted of \$3.00 in silver and \$9.00 in paper.

The church also changed in some subtle ways in the matter of discipline of members, as indicated by its decision in 1821 to ask all members guilty of public offenses to come forward on their own and make acknowledgment to the church of their deeds. It was also a major factor in something of historical importance to Kentucky Baptists and to local Baptist churches, in particular. In January of 1822 the church voted to participate in the formation of a new association, and ratified the constitution of that body, known as the Boone's Creek Association, in May of 1823.

The influence of the so-called "Campbellite" movement was being felt in Baptist churches throughout America during this time. Alexander Campbell was an Irish-born, Scotch- educated, former Presbyterian who had gained wide following as a result of his persuasive writing and speaking skills and who had joined the Baptist faith, at least nominally, during the period of 1813 to around 1827. He did not believe that the church should be so active in the secular life of its membership as had been his experience in the Presbyterian Church, and also strongly held to the notion that immersion by water was essential to salvation and that communion should be open to all Christians, not just members of a particular congregation, a view rejected by most Baptists of the day, including Boone's Creekers. Eventually, Campbell's advocacy of his ideas was so forceful that he split with the Baptists and formed the Disciples of Christ.

THE year 1824 saw an attempt to reunite Boone's Creek and Boggs' Fork Churches with the idea that the two groups would get together and build a new meeting house, but the plan came to naught, and Boone's Creek decided to go ahead with plans of its own to buy new property (it added an adjacent lot) and build. A new brick building was erected over the next few years.

Never content with staying happy for too long, the church tried to separate on a friendly basis in early 1830, but the motion to do so was defeated, although it had substantial support. After another attempt to separate also failed, the reform

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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element of the congregation (those who wanted to separate) decided to try another tactic: a wildcat takeover of the property. They occupied the meeting house as a way of establishing themselves as a separate church, but the majority still ruled, excluding them from both membership and use of the building. So much for friendly separations.

Remember, now, that there had been two churches meeting at the same place for almost 20 years, and it was not long (1831) before an attempt was made to bring them back together. There were meetings toward this end, and some progress apparently was made, but the actual reunion took about four years to be consummated. The home church voted to dissolve her constitution in mid-1835 if the other church would likewise dissolve hers, and this was apparently done, although a gap in the records does not allow us to fix the date of the reunion, except that it probably happened in July of 1835.

One reason why the matter took so long to develop was illustrated by notes in the minutes about the paucity of meetings in 1833 due to fear of cholera, a disease that periodically swept through the pioneer settlements of early America with devastating effects. The economy had seemingly, stabilized, for the custodian's salary was up to \$12.00 per year by 1838, and another member contracted with the church to "provide wood and water, and build fires," for \$20.00 per year. In the same year, Brother Frank Ratcliffe was charged with drunkenness, confessed his misdeed the following month, at which time the church agreed to bear with him, then did it all over again the next month, after which he was excluded.

Although it may have been a pro forma thing, pastoral calls were renewed each year, possibly as a way of keeping either the preacher or the congregation or both on their toes.

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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Part Two: Finding a Niche (1840-1877)

ONE of the first acts of the newly united Boone's Creek and Boggs' Fork churches was to write a covenant agreement as a means of demonstrating their spirit of togetherness. The covenant read as follows:

"We whose names are undersigned a portion of us members of Boggs Fork Baptist Church, another portion members of Boonescreek Baptist Church, believing that it would be for the glory of God and for the prosperity of Zion that we should come together in one church, do hereby agree to unite together in one church, to be called Boonscreek and to dwell together on the following principles.

"We believe that the Old and New Testament are the only certain and infallible rule of faith and practice containing everything needed for us to know. believe, or do, in the service of God and being able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, by which we expect to be judged in the last day, and to which our opinions and practices at present and always ought to conform, we therefore voluntarily give ourselves to the Lord and to one another according to his word to live together in obedience to the laws of Christ, and in conformity with the sages of the united Baptists of Kentucky and of the United States, with whom we seek fellowship and Christian communion. We know nothing for baptism but the immersion of believers, and no ground of fellowship but obedience to the gospel, and all who thus practice according to the word of God, shall have our fellowship and Christian regard.

"We intend by the grace of God and by divine assistance to do all things in our different relations and capacities that the Lord has commanded us particularly to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow Christ keep the faith and assemble ourselves together at all our seasons of worship, as the Lord may enable us, and for grace enable each other thus to comply with the will of our divine master we will always pray in behalf of each other, that all needed grace may be abundantly given through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior."

The forgoing covenant was adopted by a unanimous vote and the members present while singing a hymn gave the right hand of fellowship.

The combined church had over 100 members and it is obvious from reading minutes in the subsequent years that the right hand of fellowship was not always extended amongst the members, especially in matters of money or discipline, although it is also evident that the church was, more often than not, in a forgiving mood when dealing with its own.

The congregation voted privately to call Brother Edward Darnaby to serve as its pastor for the next 12 months, which was its habit in those days. It is impossible to know

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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precisely why the church was disposed to renew its call to the pastor annually, other than to surmise that this was a way of testing the preacher to make certain that he was faithful to the needs of the church. More likely, it was simply a tradition that no one really thought much about.

Regardless, Brother Darnaby told the committee which spoke with him that he would like to have some conversation with the church, whether about the duration of the call or whatever we do not know. The church did not care for that response and at its January, 1841, business meeting agreed "to drop the whole proceeding." That was item number one in the minutes. Item number five appointed another committee to go speak with Brother Darnaby about becoming pastor. He visited the church in February, of 1841 and agreed to become its minister, preaching one Sunday a month (the third). At the same meeting, the church paid \$14.00 of a \$19.76 repair bill to a man named Wyatt, then voted to get the remainder from absentees at the meeting.

That tactic, which was typical of the financial dealings of the church in this, as well as the earlier period, worked, for they paid him the balance of the bill, plus a dollar left off the original bill, the following month. The church also voted to have communion four times year (April, June, August, and October), thus establishing its intention for the service which seemed to perpetually create a problem among its members and would-be members, some of whom believed that Communion should only be among the members of the church body, with others believing that it should be shared among all Christians.

There was a passage in the minutes of the March, 1841, meeting which was interesting in its rarity, its intent, and the impact it would ultimately have on the church. It read, "It is the unanimous request of the church that Brother B. E. Allen exercise his gift as a public speaker among us." Allen, who was church clerk at the time, appears to have been invited to preach to or teach the congregation, presumably on Sundays other than the regular monthly service presided over by, Brother Darnaby.

In June of 1841, Brother A. Bush charged Alexander, a black man "belonging to Dr. Webb," with "intoxication, swearing, and other ungodly conduct." The church took up this matter and since some members had tried "to labor with him and he had failed to show up after being cited to do SO," he was expelled. Later the same year, another member was cited for his "neglect of church meetings."

PAYMENT of the pastor, as well as any other payment of significant bills or obligations was handled by subscription, which meant that everyone was asked to pledge a certain amount of money order to cover the expenditure. Sometimes, a specific amount needed to be raised. At this particular point, however, the pastor's salary was a matter of individual conscience, which made things tough for the minister in terms

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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of future planning, regardless of how democratic the process might have been. In 1842, the church opened a subscription for Brother Darnaby's stipend and raised \$75. Brother Allen was ordained at the same meeting as the funds were given to the incumbent pastor, and someone came up with the idea of asking he and Darnaby to share the pastorate. The following month the members decided that this was not a good idea and called Allen to be the pastor, while asking Darnaby to "visit us as often as he can." Brother Darnaby's thoughts are not recorded.

The first test for the new pastor was the church's decision in mid-1842 to consider the ordinance of foot washing, which was rejected quickly. The same year Brother Bush was appointed to "see that the blacks occupy their proper place," although we are not told whether or not this means that the black members had started to become unruly. It is important to recall that this was a decade when the issue of slavery reached a boiling point, and Kentucky's status as a slave state, but one with considerable sentiment toward the other side of the slavery argument, was a potential cauldron of trouble. There does not seem to have been much difficulty within the church or the community over the slavery issue, or over the comings and goings of blacks, although church records make it clear that slavery remained a fact of life in the area during the Civil War period as well as before.

The first, and perhaps still, most prominent Kentucky politician on the national scene was Henry Clay, who was actively involved in attempts to legislatively deal with the slavery question, and it is he who is credited with developing the scenario for what became the Compromise of 1850. an action by the United States Congress which probably staved off the advent of the Civil War for more than a decade but also perpetuated the misery of slavery. Clay's dilemma in dealing with the situation was typical of most politicians of his era. He recognized the moral issue raised by human servitude, but felt politically bound to help preserve slavery as an institution, at least where it already existed, even though he was opposed to its expansion.

While the nation was grappling with the slavery problem, unsuccessfully as things turned out, Boone's Creek Church was simply trying to build upon its resources, which would eventually mean a new church building. After voting to end the formality of renewing the pastor's call annually in April of 1843, the church decided not to repair its present building, but to construct a new one, which would be financed through the taking of subscriptions, i.e., a building fund. In October of that year the plans for the new structure were finalized and a committee was appointed to visit other churches in the area to determine the cost of building a building with which the congregation would be pleased.

A month later the clerk noted that the initial subscription had produced \$951, while the committee reported that a suitable building would probably cost about \$2,600.

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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The new church was to be 45 x 30 feet, with 15-foot ceilings, a foundation two feet wide and three feet high, with walls 18 inches thick. There would be 14 windows on each side, 18 lights (12 x 14 inches apiece), and two doors in one end, with one door at the other end.



This sounded a bit like Noah's Ark when written into the minutes. The following month (January of 1844), the decision was made to enlarge the basis structure to 45 x 50, and \$1,500 was authorized for total expenditures on construction.

The minutes of the February, 1844, meeting rather tersely state that the congregation decided to decline the building for the moment, and discharged the building committee. Although no reason was given, it seems probable that the cost was greater than the church wanted to incur at the time. The idea was certainly not abandoned, for later that year the church bought a piece of property adjoining its own lot for the eventual construction of a new meeting house.

The membership records which are listed in the back of the minutes books are a bit confusing to read, since they periodically note death rates or removal from the rolls by letter of dismissal or exclusion, all without giving specifics as to timing, but the church appears to have had about 111 members in 1845. The need for more space was certain, and in July of 1846 the church voted once more to build a new place of worship, with many of the same specifications as before, although the number of windows was reduced to a total of nine, with an additional window space used to make a door for the blacks to enter separately into their own area of the sanctuary. The pews were to be 7 1/2 feet long, and venetian shutters were to be placed on all windows. The church also voted to purchase additional property to allow expansion of its property to the Paris road and, almost as an afterthought, to build a balcony.

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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The year 1846 brought the first mention of messengers being sent to a state convention, although it is possible such had happened before without being noted in the minutes.

The new building was dedicated the following year, and Brothers Marshall and Thomas Barker were asked to sell the old church. There is nothing to indicate that they ever did so, but this was one of the first mentions of Mr. Barker, who had been appointed housekeeper (custodian) the previous year and was to become a leading member of the congregation, serving as church clerk for many years and leaving several family members who likewise played key roles in the future development of the church.

REFERENCE was already been made on several occasions to the part played by the Boone's Creek Church in governing the everyday behavior of its membership, and this tradition continued, perhaps more strongly than ever. In November of 1847, Brother and Mrs. Eddleman had to explain to the church why they had asked for a letter of dismissal and then had not affiliated with another church or had not returned to Boone's Creek. Obviously, if you asked for your letter, you had better be prepared to do something positive with it, like join another church. In this instance, the church voted that they "were not well pleased with their (the Eddlemans's) reasons.

In 1848, the church voted to let a black man named Lewis, who was acting as housekeeper, build a house on one corner of the church property, with the church agreeing to furnish it for him, but warning that the trustees would oversee him and that if anything went amiss (i.e., he was fired), the church would own the house. There is no indication that the house was ever built, and a new housekeeper, Sister Ratcliffe, took over the custodial duties and retained them for many years.

The church still owed \$13.00 on its new building, and went the subscription route to raise the necessary funds, which it succeeded in doing. The same year, the church voted to purchase hymn books, the first time such a purchase was mentioned, although, as with many things, it is possible that hymn books had been bought earlier without any record being kept.

To demonstrate that pledging to a subscription was considered serious business, consider the case of Brother Bush, who refused to pay the remaining part of his building subscription, with the result that the church agreed to meet his obligation for him, but insisted that he remained bound for the money. There were also examples of persons who asked for their letters, and were refused them until they had paid back subscription obligations. If that seems harsh, consider that the church, in 1850, voted to raise money to send Sister Ratcliffe's daughter to school and to continue to support the child as necessary. Although there is no statement made connecting the two persons, the records also carry the tale of Francis or Frank Ratcliffe (remember him?),

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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who may have been the good sister's husband, and his activities could help explain why the church felt it necessary to help school Sister Ratcliffe's daughter. Frank was periodically charged with drunkenness, and he always came before the church in humility, asking for forgiveness, which was always granted, although most second or third offenses resulted in exclusions from fellowship for other offenders. Frank seemed to lead a charmed life, and we can only speculate that it was his connection with Sister Ratcliffe that kept him from being tossed out on his ear.

The same year that the church opted to pick up the Ratcliffe girl's schooling, it also voted to let Brothers Hickman and Berry, two of its leaders, maintain their membership in the Temperance Society, provided they "sustain a proper Christian charity." The various temperance groups around were known for their enormous zeal, sometimes bordering on infringement of personal liberties, and perhaps this was a gentle reminder by the church that a little Christian kindness could go a long way. Or perhaps the church had its share of closet drinkers who did not wish to be bothered.

Closet drinker is the right term, for drinking was one of several moral matters which were of immediate concern to the church if one of the members was found or even rumored to be thusly engaged. In late 1850, Brother George Stip, Jr. was brought before the church to answer charges that he "had been to the races," a fact he readily admitted and further stated that he no longer wished to be affiliated with the church. His wish was quickly granted. In January of 1851, a black man named Joseph was excluded for "gambling and swearing," and a month later a black lady named Patsy was dropped for "disorderly conduct." The church took its moral responsibilities seriously indeed.

There is a temptation today to say that at least insofar as the temperance activity, was concerned, the churches of the day made little or no dent in alcoholic beverage consumption. It is, however, a fact that from 1830 to 1900 alcohol consumption in America declined steadily, a circumstance that most scholars have attributed to the work of temperance groups and the growing influence of the community church in peoples' lives.

OF course, if it isn't one vice, it it's another, and dancing became the next bugaboo with which the church had to deal. A member was excluded for dancing and swearing in 1853, and Brother Kizer and his wife were charged with allowing dancing in their house in 1854, while George Kizer and the Stip brothers (James and George, remember him) were charged with dancing, presumably in the Kizers' house. Mrs. Kizer was retained after acknowledging her part in the situation, but the male Kizers and the Stip boys were excluded.

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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While looking out for its members' sins, the church was also exhibiting signs of concern for the welfare of others, instructing the deacons to "look on members who might require aid and administer to them as they may deem fit." The church also agreed to contribute to the building of a new church in Missouri after a request from a former member was received.

Through this entire time, the church continued to hold one official service per month, usually on the third Sunday, although this was changed around sometimes, usually to suit the needs of the pastor, who preached at other churches on other Sundays. Ministers were scarcely closer to being full-time preachers of the Word in the 1850s than they had been in 1785. Almost all of them outside of large cities did something else for a living (Brother Allen, pastor of Boone's Creek for almost 20 years during this time, was a farmer who held two or more pastorates simultaneously).

The church could not or did not attempt to pay a preacher enough to allow him the opportunity to lead the church all the time, and it was a struggle to keep the active members coming to the meetings with regularity. The church certainly did attempt to do so, however, with tactics that would make us blush today. In 1854, a committee was sent to get six members to attend church more regularly. What the committee said is known only to the participants and God, but the results were dramatic. Three came back and repented, one was excluded, and the other two were charged with gambling and excluded. Perhaps the committee found more than it intended to find. Anyway, this was typical of the activities of the church in making certain that those on its rolls were always accounted for and kept aware of their need to be in God's service.

Perhaps as a sign of the changing times, the black members of the church requested the use of the building for their own services in 1858, but were denied permission. They were welcomed as members, but their place was sharply defined.

Brother James Berry, already a key part of the congregation, was elected to serve as a deacon in September of 1858. He died on October 13, 1858. Deacons are supposed to be the death of pastors, not the other way around.

MONEY was also changing in the sense that there was more need for it and more of it around. The church paid \$109.72 for repairs in 1859, and opted to increase the pastor's yearly wage to \$100 or more in August of 1860. For preaching a ten-day revival meeting in November of that year, Brother Helm received \$35. The following spring Brother Parker asked permission to build a post and rail fence around the cemetery behind the church, which had been originally opened in 1845 at the request of the church for a place to bury family members. He was granted his wish if he agreed to bear the expense of the construction effort.

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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The Parker request came in March of 1861, a month before the start of the bloodiest conflict ever fought on American soil. There is no mention of the war in the Boone's Creek minutes, and only scant references to it, but those which exist are telling. In August in 1861, the church voted not to allow its building to be used for "political speaking." Kentucky was a border state, which presented special problems because both the Union and Confederate governments, and their armies, wished to control the state. The Union troops always held the upper hand in Kentucky, and by late 1862 had established unquestioned control of the state. There was a brief attempt to set up a provisional Confederate state government in southern Kentucky, but that effort was quickly dismantled, and Kentucky remained in the Union, although its sons fought on both sides of the conflict.

Apart from protecting itself against splits that could be generated by political factionalism, Boone's Creek also acted to head off another type of potential problem by appointing a servant named Henry to watch over the other black members, "to warn and reprove them, and in case of disorderly conduct to report them to the church." There is no indication that any such problems arose.

December of 1861 brought the relatively sudden death of Brother Allen, who had been pastor since 1842. A long and moving eulogy to him is published in the church minutes, the only such tribute in the church records. It states that he was the grandson of Joseph Craig (Craigg), the powerful -but eccentric preacher who had been an early influence on the Boone's Creek Church. Allen was saved in 1818 and was a "zealous and active member of Boggs Fork many years before it was known to his brethren that he was burning with desires to preach the gospel." He pastored Providence Church, Tates Creek Baptist Church, and Bryant's Station Baptist Church, among others, in a career that did not begin until he was 41 but was full of the glory of God before he met his maker at the age of 60.

Despite the cataclysm occurring around about it, the church seemed to do business pretty much as usual during the war, even voting to pay the pastor quarterly during 1862, then telling the committee which had to get the money to keep collecting after its first quarterly effort got \$38.26. When Brother Isbell was called as pastor in 1863, he agreed to come for \$150 per year, payable in increments of at least \$10 per month. He wanted to be sure that he got his cash up front. The only unusual pattern to the minutes during the Civil War period are that they were sometimes rather brief, indicating no business being done, and that they periodically would state that nothing was done because not enough men were present. Since only the men could vote on church business, their presence was necessary for anything to be accomplished.

In January of 1869, the church voted to erase the name of John Parish from its books when it was learned that he had joined a Baptist church in Tennessee. Kentuckians

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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apparently did not care much for Tennessee even in the days before football and basketball were invented.

The church had previously acted sporadically to provide community mission services of sorts, but its first recorded venture into formal mission activities outside of its membership came in 1870 when it agreed to pay a proportionate part of a "reasonable sum" (unspecified) for the support of a missionary within the Boone's Creek Association. This was the first actual mention of any effort like this on the part of the church.

Even though the practice of calling pastors annually, or renewing their previous call, had been formally ended years before, it seemed to still happen on occasion, and it almost seemed as if a new preacher was put on trial for a period before he was officially called. Several times the church asked someone to become its pastor, but did not get around to officially voting him into place for several months. Brother Richard Evans asked for his letter into March of 1871, but was not granted his request until he paid up several years of back subscriptions that he owed. Not only that, but he was also asked to make acknowledgment of his misdeed, which meant appearing before the church, confessing his mistakes, and asking forgiveness. All of this he apparently did. Later that same year, Brother John Ward was excluded for drunkenness and profanity, that being his second such offense. This, too, was a typical pattern, with those charged with moral offenses often repeating themselves at a later date. Brother Ratcliffe, as mentioned earlier, was a chronic offender, at least when it came to the use of alcohol.

A group of so-called reformers" had left the church in the 1840s, but had continued to meet in the old building and were apparently on reasonable terms with the church. They approached Boone's Creek in 1872 about a debate on religious principles, with an obvious eye to settling their differences and perhaps coming together. The response was swift and certain. Boone's Creek agreed, if the following stipulations were accepted in advance:

1. The Baptists possess the Bible characteristics which entitled them to be recognized as the Church or kingdom of Jesus Christ. ***We affirm.***
2. The "Disciples or Reformers" possess the Bible characteristics which entitle them to be regarded as the church or kingdom of Jesus Christ. ***We deny.***

So much for a peaceful initiative by the reform church. Since nothing further was mentioned on this subject, it is safe to assume that the diplomatic response by the Baptists took care of the whole affair.

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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In late 1872, several people were excluded on two different occasions for joining the Campbellite Society. There were also various references in the minutes to black members, which indicates that they were still involved in the church, although certainly in diminished numbers. The pastor at this time was Brother D. B. Ray, who was given a special endorsement by the church in January of 1873 to "debate the Methodists." We are not told more about this, but it seems that the church was especially combative toward other churches during this time, possibly because of Brother Ray's leadership. That same year, three woman, Mariah Powel and her two daughters, were excluded from the fellowship for what was simply termed "grossly immoral conduct." One can conjure up many visions from that statement, but this marked the first instance of female members being excluded on moral grounds.

A committee was formed in A1874 to raise money for missionary purposes in the association, another example of the growing missionary activity of the post-Civil War churches. Boone's Creek committees were not always well received, however, such as the one that was sent to see James Kibler in 1874 to sound him out about charges of drunkenness and profanity. He not only didn't admit to anything, he refused to even hear them out. As a second offender, he was excluded.

While its moral tone was strict, even Boone's Creek had a hard time getting certain items past its membership. A resolution was introduced in November of 1874 disapproving of church members engaging in making or selling intoxicating liquors as a beverage. Sounds simple and straightforward enough, and something likely to be passed, right? Well, it did pass, but only after its third reading. It read: "Resolved, that we consider the making and selling of intoxicating liquors, contrary to the spirit of Christianity and the teaching of the Scripture, and we hear by express our disapproval of the practice, and request the brethren to abstain from it in the future." For a church that regularly excluded people for abuse of alcohol, this was a logical step. The next month, the church postponed action on the resolution, for no explained reason, and it was not heard from again.

Late in 1874 and early in 1875, several men and women were accused of dancing, and all of them repented in front of the church, except for two men who were promptly excluded. They later confessed the error of their way and were reinstated.

A centennial committee consisting of four woman was formed in 1875, although we are told nothing about any, activities of the church to celebrate its hundredth anniversary.

There were 144 members of the church at this time, 83 females and 61 males, which helps explain the emphasis on temperance within the church.

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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February of 1876 saw the church form a Committee on Home Missions for the first time, and the committee reported that it had \$24. The same year the church got into a bit of difficulty in trying to call a pastor, being unable to find anyone with whom the entire church was comfortable. Brother John Christian was called after getting a 33-15 vote, but refused the call when the minority would not make the vote unanimous. Brother T. V. Riley was then called, again without a unanimous vote, and he, too, refused the call. Finally, a second vote was taken on Brother Riley. with all who voted selecting him as their pastor, although eight people refused to vote. He accepted the call for \$400 per year for two Sundays (second and fourth) a month. Although he was voted upon in March, the minutes carry no notice of an official call until November, and he eventually refused the call in January of 1878, after preaching at the church for several months.

In November of 1880, a member named Holton Mann came to church, shall we say, under the influence, but was forgiven this lapse after he "made his acknowledgment to the church."

That mission programs were becoming more important was certain in 1883 when the church gave \$15.00 to foreign missions, the first mention of any such gift. Additionally, the Sunday School, which had been mentioned in passing in the 1860s, was discussed at a business meeting, where the decision was made to continue it with Brother William T. Barker as superintendent. In December of 1883, Brother J. D. Simmons was called as pastor, with the proviso that if he could only be available one Sunday per month, the church should endeavor to "get a student from the Theological Seminary in Louisville, if we can raise money enough."

The Barker family's role in the church, already strong, continued when Hugh T. Barker was elected church clerk in July of 1886, following the resignation of longtime clerk Thomas F. Barker that same month.

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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Part Three: Spreading the Good News (1888-1985)

REVEREND J. Pike Powers was a particularly noteworthy pastor of this era, although he only served from May of 1888 until December of 1889, when ill health forced him to relocate. Brother Powers was evidently a dynamic preacher, or at least one who believed in revivals, for he held several (we are not told how many) during his tenure and 55 people were saved with 15 additions by letter in 1 1/2 years. When he left the church he had more than 160 members.

Although the church's membership seemed stable enough by the 1890s, one has to wonder about the financial situation. The records from this era are much more detailed with regard to financial circumstances, and it is enlightening to look at the records of receipts and expenditures month by month.

For example, in 1890 we read:

January (4th Sunday)

Balance from previous book	\$6.93
Cash Collection	.35
Paid for telegrams to preachers	1.60
Paid for coal	2.40
Paid for bucket and dipper	.55

February (2nd Sunday)

Cash Collection	.39
Paid for envelopes	1.80

The cash collections were kept in a separate column from the expenditures, all in proper accounting sequence, and at no time did they ever exceed \$2.77, with most of them being less than a dollar. Expenses included purchases of song books, "Sunday school papers," stovepipe, stove polish, "Taylor's buggy," printing of minutes, etc. There were a few occasions when the notation "No collection" was made, indicating that either no one gave anything or that no collection was taken. Since the third thing that two or more Baptists do when together is pray and the fourth is to take an offering (recall that the first two are to eat and form a church), we may assume that when the plate was passed, nothing was dropped into it.

Another factor in the small amounts mentioned is that tradition called for the church to literally assess members for certain activities, such as the money to pay the pastor, or funds for new buildings, or similar major expenditures, and the member was expected to meet the terms of the so-called "subscription," or face expulsion from the congregation. The pastor was paid about \$400.00 annually, with one instance recorded where a preacher was only available one Sunday each month and was paid \$200.00 per year for his services, with the church having to find someone else for the

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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other Sunday it met each month for preaching services. The upshot of this system was that the actual cash collections and expenditures therefrom could be misleadingly low, for the church often spent money that was given by members under special assessment for a particular budget item.

This, however, should not be taken to mean that the church of this period was actually well off financially, for such was not the case. The nation went through a severe financial squeeze triggered by the "Panic of 1891," one of the worst monetary crises ever experienced within the American economy, and there was a general depression in the early and mid - 1890s which left much of the country economically disadvantaged. Kentucky, like almost all of the South, was still largely agrarian in terms of its economic framework, which insulated it somewhat from the boom and bust cycles that were common to the more industrialized sections of the nation, but also prevented it from making significant economic gains or realizing steady improvement in the standard of living of its citizenry. Kentucky, like its Southern neighbors, had not changed dramatically in economic shape or scope since the days prior to the Civil War. Transportation was still primitive, communications erratic, and capital scarce, meaning that the state's economy was mostly localized in nature, which for most people meant that they lived at what we would today call a subsistence level. People still raised what they ate and made what they wore, with cash being hard to come by.

The 1890s do not seem so far away to us as the pioneer days, and it is sometimes hard to imagine that the state of Kentucky just prior to the onset of the 20th century could be a dangerous and difficult place to live. Not only was the economy little different from what it had been 50 or 60 years before, but customs and moral codes were also typical of an earlier time. In 1899, Kentucky elected a Republican, William S. Taylor, as governor in a very close contest with Democrat William Goebel. The loser attempted to contest the election in the state legislature, but was shot and killed on January 30, 1900, prior to the date set for the legislature to make its decision on the outcome of the gubernatorial contest. Of several men arrested for this crime, the most prominent was Caleb Powers, who was Kentucky, secretary of state. Powers was tried three times for the murder of Goebel, and was finally found guilty on the third try.

There were also numerous stories of raids by marauding gangs, some, of course, by the Ku Klux Klan, others by men who can only be characterized as outlaws. Typical was a group known only as the Night Riders, who terrorized rural communities and small towns around the state in the early 1900s with the single purpose of stealing valuables and destroying property or people if necessary. Kentucky's natural resources, especially its coal, were beginning to be exploited at this time, and the pace of this development accelerated just prior to World War I. This upheaval in what

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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had been a subsistence farming economy also produced a great deal of unrest and increasing amounts of violence as outsiders came in to work in mines or to run the companies that acquired and managed mine properties.

The church records from the late 1800s and early 1900s are either unavailable or very sketchy, to the point that we know little specific information about the Boone's Creek Church of that period other than the comings and goings of its pastors. There is nothing to suggest, however, that Boone's Creek was undergoing any unusual upheavals during this time, at least nothing out of the norm. Among the things that is noticeable is the number of pastors that served the church, particularly from 1903 to 1915, a 12-year period when the church had six pastors.

Why six preachers in 12 years? The possibilities are endless, but without records to point to specific situations it is reasonable to conclude that the basic reason for much of the turnover was the same circumstance that had created the same conditions for much of the church's existence since the lengthy pastorate of Brother Allen. The fact was that a relatively small country, church like Boone's Creek was, in those days essentially incapable of supporting a full-time minister, or at least unwilling to attempt the effort, and many pastors undoubtedly either understood this when they came to the church or quickly grasped the situation, thus almost assuring the church of losing their services when a more stable situation developed elsewhere. It is also possible that the factionalism which had previously existed and was to prove so disastrous later reared its head during the early 1900s, but that seems unlikely for the records available between this time frame and the early 1930s appear to paint a picture of a reasonably harmonious church.

One interesting matter was the apparent disappearance, or largely so, of black members from the congregation. There does not seem to have been any attempt to openly bar them from membership, or at least it is not mentioned in any available historical records, but it is almost certain that the incidence of black membership had been on a steady decline since the end of the Civil War. Those blacks who had been enslaved in the central Kentucky region were, of course, freed as a result of the war, and many left the area to move to places where there were better economic opportunities. Others who stayed behind tended to form their own churches, as we recall blacks of the 1850s wishing to do within the Boone's Creek Church. Kentucky did not have the large black population of most states in the Deep South, and likewise did not have either the potential for large-scale social unrest that bred the fears of the white population in those states and had much to do with the so-called 'Jim Crow' laws which made life for many blacks in the South not better than it had been under slavery. Instead, the loss of black membership from Boone's Creek may have been, as stated before, more a matter of black migration from the area and the independence of local blacks being asserted through the formation of local churches.

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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SUNDAY SCHOOL records from 1914 are illuminating, for they indicate that the Baptists of that era were similar in their attendance habits to those of this, and presumably, all eras. One of the enrollment sheets states that there were 103 members of the Sunday School, which we can take as our standard, although the other records do not carry such enrollment information.

There were anywhere from three to five Sunday School classes listed, with a couple of sheets containing pencil marks indicating that certain classes were combined on a particular Sunday. The classes were numbered, so we do not know what age groups were involved, but the number of members present varied between 18 and 27, with a visitor or two usually recorded and three to five officers and teachers in attendance. Collections also varied widely, and because no designations are given, we cannot be sure whether these offerings were in dollars or cents, but it is virtually certain that they were in cents, with the typical numbers being 36 or 39 or 44 or some similar figure. On average, it seems that about one out of every four enrollees showed up for Sunday School, which makes the numbers of today seem less unattractive. The report sheet listed the members present as "scholars," which may have confused a few people who might have thought of themselves in more humble terms.

Boone's Creek ordained Brother John Stallings, who had already been called as its pastor, on June 25, 1920. He was replaced as pastor by Reverend Paul C. Luttrell in May of 1921, and Brother Luttrell served the church for three years. The church published a newspaper, or newsletter, during Brother Luttrell's pastorate, and he was its editor and publisher. It was called the Athens Baptist Messenger, and was a monthly publication in which there was paid advertising and for which subscribers paid 50 cents per year or five cents for individual issues. There were lots of interesting items in it each month, some of them naturally devoted to church business and to general religious matters, and others more attuned to community activities and reports of local news items. There were children's puzzles, a children's page with a short story, inspirational sayings and a column which had an inspirational theme, sort of a philosophical pep talk, and even a "house" ad from the church admonishing people to attend church on the grounds that good citizens are regular church goers and vice versa.

The Mother's Day edition was devoted to, logically enough, mothers, and the overall impression of the editions which have been preserved was of a basically well edited, inspirational little paper which certainly had to be of great value to the church in its role as a servant to the community. One saying of note which was found on its pages:

REMEMBER

The Lord has a place in heaven
For all who'll work and boost,

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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But the fellow who's always knocking
Must go elsewhere to roost.

Organizational activity in the church was promoted in the newspaper, including that of the Women's Missionary Society and the Royal Ambassadors, with an admonition in reference to the latter group that "Every real boy in the community should belong." Brother Luttrell was succeeded as pastor by D. C. Sparks, who in turn was followed by T. B. Hill. Hill died in 1932, and was followed by Reverend J. A. Bass, who had the misfortune to preside over the congregation during what very well might have been the most shameful episode in the history of the Boone's Creek Church.

It is always difficult to discuss church divisions, especially acrimonious ones, and it is particularly hard to do so when so many years have passed since their occurrence. The reasons for such events are often obscured, for many times such fissures start out as trivial cracks over some tiny doctrinal dispute or, worse, ego problems which develop when people decide that it is they, not the spirit of the Lord, who guide a church's policies and actions.

Precisely what engendered the difficulties at Boone's Creek is uncertain, it is not clear whether the problems had been building for some time but the bitterness and strife which burst into the open in 1932 hounded the church for many years, and did not really begin to clear until the 1940s.

In the center of the affair was the Barker family, although their role in incidents that began in 1932 is also not clear. Basically, a faction led by H. F. and E. A. Barker attempted to oust the pastor and any who supported him from control of the church, its services and property. Unlike past disagreements which developed within the church and were settled within its confines, this struggle was actually taken to court when the Barker faction sued the other group, which supported the incumbent pastor, over the latter group's right to use the church, claiming that a vote taken at the January 24, 1932, business meeting of the church had ousted Brother Bass.

The two groups each elected their own moderator, clerk, treasurer, and trustees, and took their grievances to the Fayette Circuit Court. One judge lecturing the warring factions and telling them that such matters did not belong in court, refused to hear the case. Finally, judge Richard C. Stoll listened to the various arguments, then appointed A. S. Moore to serve as a special commissioner of the court, actually a referee who would investigate the situation, report to the judge, and evolve a plan of action that would be binding on both parties.

Moore's report was widely reported in the local press, as was the entire episode. The Lexington *Leader* reported: "Solomon's sword fell on the Boone's Creek Baptist Church

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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yesterday, dividing time for use of the church between the two factions in a controversy for control of the church which began last fall."

The writer used a little Biblical history in his account of Moore's findings, referring to Solomon's idea of splitting a child in half and giving one-half to each of two women arguing over their right to the child. Moore essentially proposed the same deal. The two factions would both get to use the church on an equal basis, with the Barker group to have it on the first and third Sundays of the month and the Bass group to get it on the second and fourth Sundays, with fifth Sundays being alternated. Brother Bass was allowed to continue to live in the parsonage, although his faction would have to pay one-half of the value of rent on the house. Moore reported that the two factions were about the same size and that any different division of the church would be "unfair, unjust, and discriminatory."

Moore also expressed the hope that Christian spirit would help heal the wounds which had opened, saying, "If they are real Christians they will become reunited. . . if not under the present leadership, then under some other.

"If they don't, this commissioner doesn't see how the court can do more."

For the report to have the force of law, the presiding judge, King Swope, had to confirm it, and certainly it would help if both factions approved it. Predictably, this did not happen, with the Bass group immediately protesting it, claiming that the meetings at which Brother Bass was allegedly removed were not regular or legal meetings of the church and did not represent the attitude of the majority of the congregation.

Nonetheless, the special commissioner's report was put into effect, and the separate services were commenced, although the Sunday School program continued on a combined basis. Brother Bass left the church in 1933, and was followed by Reverend H. O. Nicely, but Bass's departure did not stop the discord. Judge Swope had encouraged both groups to get together and attempt a reconciliation of their differences; in fact, he insisted upon it, and some progress was apparently being made after the judge said that the court would allow a majority vote to decide whatever issues remained over control of the church.

However, there were incidents when the two groups tried to hold simultaneous services, with one group singing when the other attempted to pray, or the second group playing the musical instruments when someone from the other side tried to speak. This led to restraining orders against both groups, and a sheriff's detail being placed at the front gate of the churchyard to prevent Brother Nicely from moving into the parsonage. Not to be outdone in contentiousness, the Bass/Nicely faction then

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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proceeded to move their man in the back way by slipping him in through the cemetery.

It was obviously a time of great anguish for all concerned, and it is no small miracle that the church survived in any form, for the air of tension, while dissipating somewhat as the litigation faded, remained evident into the late 1930s. Many people left the church during this time, some out of frustration with the disagreements, others because they were part of the problem. Compounding the situation was the Great Depression, which was wreaking economic dislocation on people throughout America, with rural areas frequently being particularly hard hit. The finances of the church were naturally affected by the financial strain of the '30s, and were further tested as a result of the problems created by the split. Brothers Walter Walker and J. A. Walters followed Brother Nicely to the church during the '30s, and some of the wounds began to heal, but not to the degree that prevented another split involving many of the same persons in 1940, the year that Lloyd Mahanes became pastor.

IT is known that the Lord works in mysterious ways, and perhaps He had decided that it was time to take over the squabbling church and rescue it from itself. In any event, the 33-year ministry of Brother Mahanes at Boone's Creek saw the muting of the nearfatal factionalism which had dominated the decade of the 1930s, and the church was launched into an era of growth in membership and activity which was unprecedented in its history.

Lloyd Mahanes was ordained by Ashland Avenue Baptist Church in Lexington on December 19, 1937, and worked with that church as an assistant to its pastor until he was asked to preach for Boone's Creek for several Sundays in 1940. He was called by the church to be its pastor on March 31, 1940, ironically on the advice and counsel of Brother J. A. Bass, and began his service immediately.

As Brother Mahanes himself says, his first few years were spent trying to "regain the confidence of the community," a task that was undoubtedly difficult after eight years of internal battling. A bus ministry was added to help families who were hindered by gas rationing during World War II and found it difficult to attend. Brother Mahanes also led the music program, helping it develop into one that is today among the best in the area.

Growth was slow but steady, and in 1947-'48 a new addition to the church for the purpose of housing the Sunday School was necessitated.

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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At the same time, the Sunday School was departmentalized. A weekly newsletter was begun which was mailed to the entire community around Athens, and mission organizations such as the WMU, RAs, GAs, YWAS, and others were expanded and emphasized more heavily. It is accurate to state that the church's outlook shifted substantially under the leadership of Brother Mahanes, becoming far more missionoriented and concerned about outreach programs of all types.

Church growth prompted a need for a new building, and a building committee was formed in 1959 to begin consideration of the needs and possibilities for a new church facility. Trips to the Southern Baptist Church Architecture Department in Nashville, Tennessee, were made, as were visits to many other churches to solicit ideas, and a building fund was started in 1960 after the note for the educational unit was paid. Within two years the church was averaging over 300 people in Sunday School, far more than the building would reasonably accommodate, and committees on plans, financing, and contracting were appointed.

Each of these bodies submitted reports to the church in May of 1964, with recommendations that the church build a new auditorium, razing the old structure which had stood since 1847, and a new parsonage. The total cost was estimated at \$100,000, of which \$85,000 was to be borrowed. A special offering to raise \$5,000 to cover additional expenses was taken in November of 1964 while work was in progress, and Brother Mahanes and his family moved into the new parsonage. The first Sunday in January of 1965 marked the initial use of the new building, which was still being completed, and its official dedication service was held on April 4, 1965. It is a tribute to the generous spirit of the church and the graciousness of the Lord that a ceremony to burn the note for the construction of the church was held on August 19, 1973.

Brother Mahanes had left the church earlier that year, and he was replaced by Reverend W. B. Casey, who came to the pastorate at Boone's Creek in May of 1975.

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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BROTHER CASEY, a talented teacher and leader and superior Bible scholar, led the church for more than 31/2 years, before leaving to serve on a foreign mission field in Zambia. He returned to the area after his foreign tour and is now retired and still active as a member of Boone's Creek Church, although the many demands upon his time as a minister, teacher, writer, and counselor to churches keep him absent from the congregation for lengthy periods. He remains a strong source of support to the present ministry of the church, and a beloved and valued friend and a man of God to Baptists throughout the area.

The church called a young pastor, Reverend Steve Smith, to serve as its leader following Brother Casey's departure in 1979. Brother Smith came to Boone's Creek in November of that year and left in December of 1980. Unfortunately, his brief tenure occasioned some difficulties within the church which led to factionalism of the type that has marked the history of the church, although it did not approach in either longevity or severity the searing problems of the 1630s.

Brother Smith's departure came about primarily due to some philosophical differences with segments of the congregation and administrative difficulties which ensued. When he left, a group of more than 30 members eventually followed him to a new church which he founded and still pastors in Lexington. As with other such dislocations, this period created several hardships within the church, including the inevitable financial crisis. Out of adversity, however, there sometimes arises strength, and the Lord once again took the church into His hands.

The church called Reverend Wendell Romans as its pastor in May of 1981, and under this experienced and capable minister, who came to Boone's Creek from Mount Washington, near Louisville, the church has been rejuvenated. Financial concerns are no longer a problem, growth has begun anew in all phases of the church's life. The mission and music programs thrive and the church has been able to steadily increase its mission giving, both in special offerings and in percentage of tithes and offerings given to the Cooperative Program and various programmed mission efforts. The Sunday School, which had fallen on hard times, has also grown in recent years, and the church is averaging between 180 and 200 per Sunday in this vital program.

The church now has excellent recreation facilities, including a park located on Athens- Boonesboro Road about three quarters of a mile from the church building which has a lighted baseball/softball field and picnic grounds. It was the scene of a tent revival during the bicentennial celebration in 1985. There is also a home, purchased in 1980, which houses the Minister of Music and Youth and his family and is located adjacent to the church. Extensive renovations were made to the church auditorium in 1985, including padding of pews, new carpeting, a new sound system, and other decorations.

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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One of the unique things about the church that strikes a visitor is the number of young people, both married couples and singles, who are active members of Boone's Creek. That is usually a sign of a vital, spirited, growing congregation, and is an attractive situation for people who are looking for a church home.

If there has been any suggestion that the ministries of Lloyd Mahanes and Wendell Romans were or have been successful in healing scars and setting the church back on the path of Christian growth and community outreach solely because of the efforts of these two pastors, let that be clarified. It is God who guides us in the direction we are supposed to take, and it is through his leadership, manifested in the John Tanners, David Thompsons, Buford Allens, Pike Powerses, Paul Luttrells, Walter Walkers, Lloyd Mahaneses, W. B. Caseys, and Wendell Romanses of society, that churches are born, grow, struggle, survive, and grow again. Boone's Creek Baptist Church, an embryo in 1785 in a wilderness whose future as a haven for civilization was as shaky as the foundations of the tiny church, has ebbed and flowed with the tides of religious and secular change that have come to its members and the community in which they live.

Athens, and Fayette County, and Kentucky, have all been dramatically altered since the colonial period of our history. So has the church at Boone's Creek. But its alterations have been less severe, and have helped dampen the shock of secular change for the world around it. The reason for this is simple: the church on Boone's Creek, perhaps in spite of itself, has persevered because it has adhered to a few basic principles. These include faith that God is our Supreme Being, the creator of our lives and author of our faith, that the Bible is the inspired word of God, and that adherence to the teachings and admonitions of the scriptures will invariably lead us down the path God has carved for us.

Simple but pure belief in God and His almighty power and wisdom brought 18 frightened but trusting pioneers together on the second Sunday of November in 1785, and that same faith sustains us today as we celebrate their legacy. It is the prayer of those who live the current history of this church that God will use and guide us in such a manner as to make Boone's Creek Baptist Church a place of salvation, comfort, and charity for all of those whom it reaches.

May our faith be sufficient to merit God's continued grace.

PASTORS OF BOONE'S CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH SINCE 1785

1785	- John Tanner/John Taylor
1788	- William Hickman
178?	- David Thompson*

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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- 1815 - Jeremiah Vardeman
- 1817 - Richard Morton
- 1822 - Enoch Mason
- 1827-'30 - George G. Boone (also first moderator of Boone's Creek Association)
- 1830 - John M. Anderson
- 1831 - John Dean
- 1833 - Samuel Elrod
- 1841 - Edward Darnaby
- 1842 - Buford E. Allen
- 1861 - R. T. Dillard
- 1866 - C. E. W. Dobbs
- 1870 - D. B. Ray
- 1873, 1878 - John L. Smith
- 1879 - J. C. Freeman
- 1882 - William M. Pratt
- 1883 - J. C. Truman
- 1885 - Dr. William Stuart
- 1888-'89 - J. Pike Powers
- 1890 - B. P. Johnson
- 1891-'96 - I. T. Creek
- 1897 - J. M. Shelburn
- 1899-1902 - J. S. Wilson
- 1903-'04 - T. C. Stackhouse
- 1905 - A. R. Willett
- 1906-'08 - Dr. C. L. Graham
- 1910-'11 - J. W. Campbell
- 1912 - T. L. Willingham
- 1913 - Don Q. Smith
- 1915-'17 - E. S. Summers
- 1918 - W. S. Taylor
- 1919 - Robert Griffin
- 1920 - John D. Stallings
- 1921-'24 - Paul C. Luttrell
- 1925-'26 - D. C. Sparks
- 1927-'32 - T. B. Hill
- 1932 - J. A. Bass
- 1933-'34 - H. O. Nicely
- 1935-'38 - Walter Walker
- 1939 - J. A. Walters
- 1940-'73 - Lloyd Mahanes
- 1973-'75 - A. B. Colvin (interim)

A History of Boone's Creek Baptist Church

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1975-'79 - W. B. Casey
1979-'80 - Steve Smith
1980-'81 - W. B. Casey (interim)
1981-'89 - Wendell Romans
1989-'90 - W. B. Casey (interim)
1990-'97 - M. Chuck Bass
1997-'98 - W. B. Casey (interim)
1998-2002 - Don Embry
2002-2003 - Wendell Romans (interim)
2003-2011 - Matthew Perry
2012-present - Charles Dixon