

ROCKVALE CHURCH OF GOD

TO CELEBRATE THE 95TH ANNIVERSARY BY BOBBIE SUE SHELTON



Rockvale Church Of God 1911 - 2006

this milestone.

The recording and memories of several now deceased members has provided the early history of the Rockvale Church Of God.

According to the late Oden Williams, Mrs. Nannie Coursey from Missouri sent the "Gospel Trumpet" to her husband's brother, Mr. Newt Coursey which they shared them with their neighbors. Inspired by what he read, Mr. Edgar Williams sent for Brother Willis M. Brown to conduct a revival in the Rockvale Community in October 1909.

The Church Of God, with U. S. offices in Anderson, Indiana, had began in 1881 as a movement emphasizing the unity of God's people and holy living. Daniel S. Warner and several associates sought to forsake denominational hierarchies and formal creeds, trusting solely in the Holy Spirit as their overseer and the Bible as their statement of belief. These individuals saw themselves at the forefront of a movement to restore unity and holiness to the church. Their aim was not to establish another denomination but to promote primary allegiance to Jesus Christ so as to transcend denominational loyalties.

In 1891, the movement's first missionary was sent to Mexico. Since those early days, the Church Of God has continued to grow into a multinational community of faith. There are approximately 2,300 congregations in the United States and Canada with weekend attendance in the congregation's totals approximately 250,000. Worldwide the movement has work in eighty-nine countries and territories representing approximately 7,300 church and more than 750,000 believers.

The late Julie Burns Brannon told of a revival in a one-room schoolhouse in 1910. Brother J. Lee Collins was the evangelist and Brother Long and his wife were singers. "On the final night, Brother Collins asked that those who believed he had preached the gospel to raise their a hand."

Most of those present did so. "Then he asked if anyone wanted to take a stand for the Church to stand up. Six or eight people stood up". Sister Brannon said,



Rockvale Church Of God - Built 1955-56

The congregation of the Rockvale Church Of God will be celebrating their 95th anniversary on Sunday, September 17, 2006. A former pastor, Reverend Dwayne Pierce, of the Cedar Creek Church Of God, Greene County, Tennessee will be returning to preach the sermon for this glorious celebration. Several other former pastors are also planning to be in attendance as well. The church extends an invitation to join them, celebrating

"That night was when the Rockvale Church started."

There was no place of worship except in the schoolhouse, tent or prayer meetings in homes. This schoolhouse was located in the right hand corner of the lot where the Burns Log home is across the road from the Jackson Ridge Presbyterian Church. Julia was the daughter of George Washington and Emley Ellen Burns.

After the revival in 1910, Edgar Williams bought the lot where the church and parsonage now stand from Mell Morgan for \$75.00. In July 1911, a brush arbor was built on this lot and N. E. Setser conducted a revival.

On October 26, 1911, the first lumber was placed on the lot for the new church building. Some gave money; logs for framing and many gave work. Everyone was happy to have a place to worship. November 14, 1911 contractors Tom Rutledge and Andrew Sims began construction on the one room frame building. Mr. Williams paid them \$100.00 for their work.

The first service was held in the new church April 20, 1912 and in the summer of the same year, W. P. Long and W. A. Sutherland held the first revival in the new church.

According to the late Mildred Bell, the first pastor in the new church was R. H. Craig. The first Board of Trustees was composed of the following: Edgar Williams, A. W. West, J. T. Wilson, T. J. Todd and R. A. "Dick" Stegall. First Sunday School Teachers were: Inez Williams, J. T. Wilson, Annie Wilson and Minnie Williams and classes were held in separate sections of the one room church.

Unfortunately, this building burned to the ground in the fall of 1916 during a revival. Only one revival service was missed. A tent was pitched and the revival continued.



Board of Trustees 1955-56 L to R: Jeff Covington, Tom Williams, Ike Burns, Ed Williams, Horace Burns, Houston Hendrix



1955-56 New Church Building Committee (L to R): Mildred Bell, Ed Williams, Silas Turnbow (Pastor), Vera Covington, Kenneth Frizzell



Pastor Donnie and Joan Clayton

Another church building was constructed before Christmas of the same year. Five new Sunday school classrooms were added to the back of the church in 1945 while Reverend Harry F. Martin was pastor.

Quoting from a small note book preserved by Oden Williams dated 1916, "Rockvale Tennessee" The Church Of God Chapel at this place burned on the night of Aug. 22, 1916 and left the congregation without a house of worship. In order to raise money to furnish a new building the ladies of the congregation organized a sewing circle, which meets each Wednesday afternoon. In order to do more work and for the convenience of all, the club was divided

into two sections. A joint meeting was held at Sister Burns' Sept. 6th, quilted one quilt, collection \$1.00. Sept. 13, meeting at Sister Williams' and Shoemaker's, quilted two quilts collection \$2.00. Sept. 27, a joint meeting was held at Sister Johns', two quilts quilted, collection \$2.00. Oden Williams also stated, "The Church Of God message in song as well as in sermon attracted people all over the countryside." She said, "The Word was preached in its purity with signs following them that believed."

In 1955, a new brick church building was started. The old building was torn down but the classrooms were moved and joined to the back of the new building. The first service in the new building was on February 5, 1956. Dedication Service was held on April 22, 1956 at 2 p. m. with Bro. Thurman Hall as the dedication speaker and Bro. Ira Marion from Riverside California, a former pastor, praying the dedication prayer.

The parsonage was built in 1938. It was remodeled several times before being replaced.

In April 1963, a building committee was elected to make plans for building a new parsonage, which was completed within the same year. The Morgan Davis family was the first occupants of the new parsonage. The old parsonage was moved and added to the back of the church building for more classrooms.

The Christian Fellowship Center (C.F.C.) was constructed in 1977, consisting

of a half court gymnasium, kitchen, two classrooms and rest rooms. Over the years, the entrance to the church was enlarged and new glass doors and a covered entrance has been added. Many other donations and improvements have been made over the years to make the Rockvale Church Of God a beautiful and comfortable place of worship.

The Rockvale Church Of God has had 33 different Pastors in the past 95 years. Reverend Morgan Davis who served as pastor the longest from 1961 to 1972 left the Rockvale Church for a position as the Area Administrator of the Church Of God of Tennessee, located in Murfreesboro.

Present Pastor Donnie Clayton, a native of Dayton, Tennessee has been a full time minister for 30 years, serving in Tennessee, Alabama, South Carolina and Pennsylvania. He and his wife, Joan, also an ordained minister, have 3 sons and 4 grandchildren. They have served the Rockvale Church Of God since July 1, 2002.

Pastor, Donnie Clayton stated: The Rockvale Church Of God is made up of people who have been here since birth, those who have only been with us for a short while and a host of others whose coming was somewhere in between. Many have gone on to heaven and some have moved away and still others, who are relatively new, have come to bless the rest of us with their presence and their involvement.

Rockvale Church of God is located 7824 Jackson Ridge Road, Rockvale, Tennessee.



(L to R): Lorene Hendrix, William Billings, James Covington, Vera Covington Attending A Youth Convention, Winchester, Kentucky