A

HISTORY

OF THE

CONGREGATIONS

OF THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST

IN ROBERTSON COUNTY

TEXAS

1845-2022

Research by
HAZEL (MITCHELL) JONES

Edited by
ALBERT L. JONES

March, 1993
Rev. June 18, 2012
Rev. January 2022

This book is dedicated to

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Eula Dickey Weir

1903-1985

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Though not an educated woman, she provided much valuable information before being taken by death in 1985

FOREWORD

The contents of this book represent many, many hours of research, miles driven and personal interviews. It was not an overnight project by any means but was done over a considerable span of time. No doubt there are many inaccuracies both in the facts, the content and the final draft although no effort was spared to make it as factual and accurate as possible.

As far as can be determined, there have been fourteen congregations of the Lord's Church in Robertson County at one time or another since it was first brought into the area in the mid-1800s. However, there is some evidence that there may have been other congregations composed of several family groups meeting here, there and yonder during the early years. Crop failures, lack of job opportunities and poor economic times have all contributed to making the local population rather transient in nature.

Many of the current members of the four active congregations spent many years in the metropolitan areas of Fort Worth, Dallas and/or Houston and have now returned to the County to live out their retirement years.

As indicated in the history of the oldest congregation, Bald Prairie, individual congregations kept few, if any records, from which historical data could be gleaned. The sites of meeting houses were often donated without any official deeds being recorded of the property transfers... and have since reverted back to the donors or their heirs. In many instances worship services were conducted in private homes and/or the local school houses. All this has made the gathering of information even more difficult.

No doubt some may have been overlooked but every effort has been made to include all the names of the individuals interviewed and/or who furnished other information to the researcher. Although some are now deceased, those listed below include most of those people who cooperated in this endeavor to one degree or another:

J. K. Bentley
John R. "Jack" Brown, M.D.
Earl Cazey
Rosalie Cazey
Nan Dowdy
Maurice "Jack" Falkner
Jack Garrett
Tally Grant
Nell Gray
D. J. "Bill" Hamilton
Frances (Holder) Hamilton
Mrs. Louise (Grant) Harris
R. L. Hicks
Mrs. Nettie Hill
Mrs. Zack (Loraine) Hooper
Mrs. Marie Jett
Lyndell "Nick" Johnson
Mozelle (Thorpe) McBride
Natialie McLauchlan
J. David Mitchell
Mrs. Eileen Moses
Alta Rea Reagan
Lucindy (Baker) Rhodes
Essie (Blackmon) Smith
Minnie Mae (Rains) Smith
Eunice Stork
Marjorie (Reagan) Sullivan
Nora Lee (Dowdy) Swingler
Mrs. Vernon (Katherine) Taylor
Eula (Dickey) Weir
Mrs. Katie White
Clora Mae (McDaniel) Yost

Foreword to June 18, 2012 Revision

The idea of a history of the church of Christ in Robertson County originated with the teenage class at the Franklin church studying church history in the late 1960s. Students in this class interviewed their parents, grandparents and other members of their families, as well as older acquaints throughout the county. They were able to get information about eight congregations, handwritten notes kept in an envelope by their teacher for twenty years waiting for someone with the time, interest, talent and determination to put it into form. Members of this class were: David Mitchell, Randy Mitchell, Joe Brewer, Jim Brewer, Randy Sullivan, Jerry Redden, Billy Wallingford, Malcolm Williams, Lindsey Williams, Gary Williams, Margaret Cazey, Bill Cazey, Randy Rhodes, Kathy Morgan and teacher, Nick Johnson.

We sincerely appreciate the dedication and work of A. L. and Hazel Jones who, in their retirement years, not only researched our notes, but found more information about these eight congregations, plus six more, and put together a history of the church of Christ in Robertson County that will give light to generations to come. Brother A. L. authored the unsigned articles from the 1990s.

Additions by Rocky Whitely, Sharon Carrigan and Nick Johnson. Submissions by Eli Borden, Nick Johnson, Jeff Kennedy, Jim Reagan, Evelyn Stalcup, Julie Ramirez and Bobby Sullivan. Many thank yous go to Betty Neff for her proofreading.

Forward to This Revision

January 5, 2022

Nick Johnson continues to collect information from the surrounding churches. He has submitted the changes for the Franklin Church of Christ which have been entered into this revision. He and the office secretary have also reached out to Hearn and Bald Prairie churches for their updates as well.

It feels necessary to note that all updates have been received after the COVID pandemic of 2020. We do not know the lasting affects of this pandemic, but we have seen a decrease in attendance at most locations since churches shut down for a time. Some closed their doors for good. Others have struggled since reopening. And also, by the grace of God, some have found themselves thriving. It just seems to depend on the community and dedication of those attending.

Additions by Nick Johnson & Alicia Parker.

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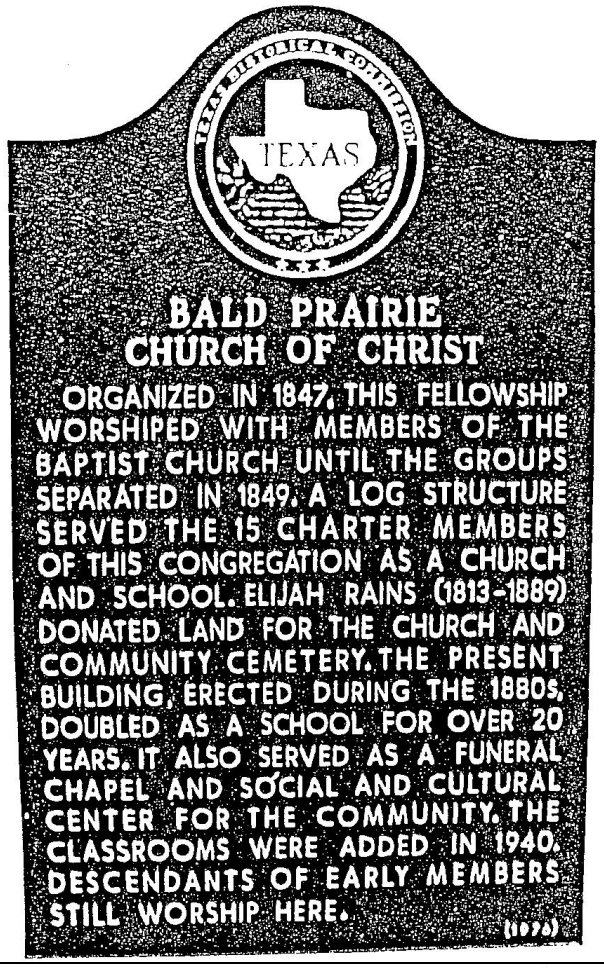
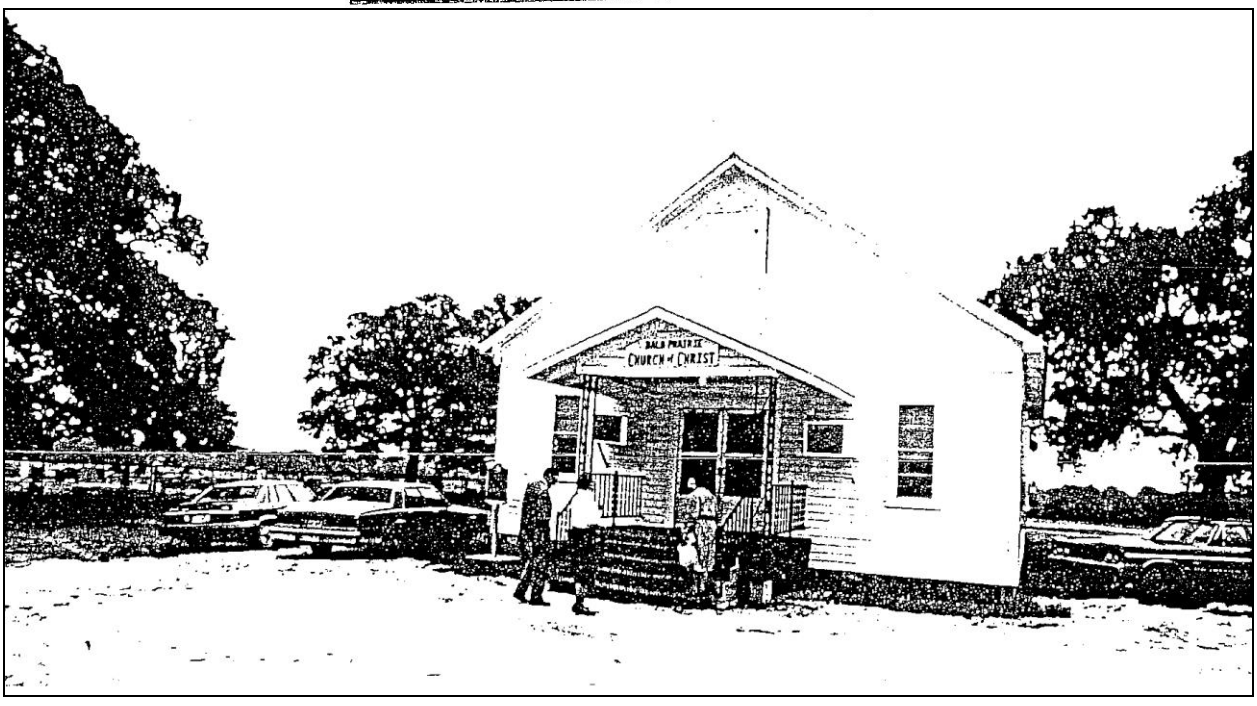

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
TEXAS
BALD PRAIRIE
CHURCH OF CHRIST
ORGANIZED IN 1847, THIS FELLOWSHIP WORSHIPED WITH MEMBERS OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH UNTIL THE GROUPS SEPARATED IN 1849. A LOG STRUCTURE SERVED THE 15 CHARTER MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION AS A CHURCH AND SCHOOL. ELIJAH RAINS (1813-1889) DONATED LAND FOR THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY CEMETERY. THE PRESENT BUILDING, ERECTED DURING THE 1880s, DOUBLED AS A SCHOOL FOR OVER 20 YEARS. IT ALSO SERVED AS A FUNERAL CHAPEL AND SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CENTER FOR THE COMMUNITY. THE CLASSROOMS WERE ADDED IN 1940. DESCENDANTS OF EARLY MEMBERS STILL WORSHIP HERE.
(1970)


BALD PRAIRIE
CHURCH of CHRIST

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

BALD PRAIRIE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1845 TO ...

Located near the junctions of Texas Farm Roads 979, 2096 and Robertson County Roads 460, 468 and 471.

A history of a small church such as the Bald Prairie Church of Christ is usually difficult to uncover. One reason for this difficulty is that NO central agency or authority for the churches of Christ exists here on Earth. Each congregation is autonomous. A nominal bond of friendship and fellowship exists among the congregations but each remains entirely independent and self-governing.

Because there are no world-wide, national, state or local conventions composed of church delegates to formulate doctrine nor to keep records, the history of the Bald Prairie Church of Christ was gathered from many sources including some very aged people who could remember having attended either church worship services and/or public school at the church location during the latter 1890s and early 1900s.

Figure 1: Bald Prairie Church of Christ building (September 2011)

Additional information was obtained from historical journals, personal letters, the few church records and reports in the newspapers of Robertson County. Only in more recent years have individual congregations begun to keep any kind of systematic accounts of all church activities.

Churches of Christ were planted in what was to become Robertson County, Texas, before the Civil War. In 1845-47 at Bald Prairie, Texas, a sparsely settled area, members of the church of Christ and some members of the Baptist Church began to assemble for worship together with the understanding that each group would retain its own doctrine. After about two years, each group formed its own congregation. The church of Christ had about fifteen charter members.

In the year of 1849, a church building was erected of logs felled near the spot known as Chambless Crossing, a widely scattered community standing along the headwaters of Duck Creek. The principal individuals responsible for the erection of this building were:

Elijah Rains and wife
Levi Boggs and wife
W. A. Bedford and wife
Clinton Owens and wife
Ryley Donegan
A Mr. Phillips and wife
Allen Jackson and wife
D. M. Owens and wife
Matilda Wilson

Little is known about these early pioneers. Presumably, a few moved to other communities while others remained in the area acquiring land, rearing their families, making a meager living and helping their neighbors However, a few of the early settlers of the area have descendants still having some ties with the community who can recall some information about various charter members of the congregation. W. A. Bedford and his wife homesteaded several miles northeast of the present location of the Bald Prairie church building and cemetery in the area known as Coal Branch. By hard work and skillful management, Bedford and his family developed his land holdings into what was considered at the time as a small plantation. In addition to his activities in agriculture, he was very active in church and religious matters. Seemingly, he encouraged his family members and neighbors to attend worship services every Lord's Day.

Residents of Coal Branch also included Clinton Owens and wife, D. M. Owens and Ryley Donegan. Their bodies are buried in a small plot sometimes referred to as the Owens Cemetery near Mulberry Creek a short distance from their homesteads. The brother Phillips and his wife were, between 1845-50, among the early church members in the Duck Creek settlement situated one-half mile north of the channel on what is now known as the Tom Phillips place. No other information has come to notice regarding Levi Boggs and wife, Matilda Wilson, Allen Jackson and wife, or any of the other charter members except Elijah Rains and wife.

Elijah Rains was born February 25, 1813 in North Carolina. No clear information has been obtained as to when he arrived at Bald Prairie but he was a strong advocate of good moral living. He was noted for his generosity toward those dependent upon him and toward those living in the community. For example, when the need arose for a plot of land for a cemetery and for a site for a church building which could also be used as a school building for the children on week-days, Rains willingly agreed to contribute a portion of his land for the cause. The actual date of the donation is not known but it is thought by one of his descendants to have been around the year 1855.

Figure 2: Bald Prairie Cemetery—Gate (source: http://www.texasescapes.com /CentralTexasTownsSouth/Bald-Prairie-Texas.htm; photo taken by Barclay Gibson, December 2008)

Following his death on September 19, 1889 at Bald Prairie, the estate was managed by a son, Joshua Rains until sometime in the late 1930s when it was sold to J. C. Taylor, now deceased. The land is presently owned and operated by J. L. Smith of Houston, Texas. However, no record or deed pertaining to the sites of the church building or the adjoining cemetery has ever been found in a search of the records of the Robertson County Clerk's office.

Another bit of information about Joshua Rains, which shows his influence in the communities other than Bald Prairie, is given in an article about the Franklin Church of Christ written by the late R. T. Grant of that congregation:

Figure 3: Bald Prairie Cemetery (source: http://www.texasescapes.com /CentralTexasTownsSouth/Bald-Prairie-Texas.htm; photo taken by Barclay Gibson, December 2008)

> The church of Christ was organized in Franklin, Texas, county seat of Robertson County by Mr. Josh Rains, who moved here from Bald Prairie in 1902, according to the recording of a deed to him for lots 15 & 16, Block 3. He came from the church of Christ at Bald Prairie, but because no organized church of Christ was then in the town of Franklin, he and his family began to worship in his home. After a lapse of several years, some members of the Christian Church living in Franklin joined with Josh Rains in making plans to build a structure for a meeting place for a church of Christ in Franklin.
>
> Within a few years Rains returned to his property at Bald Prairie. He served as a leader in the church of Christ there until his death on June 25, 1934. His body is buried in the cemetery adjacent to the church building.

Of much interest to present members of the Bald Prairie Church of Christ are bits of information gathered from local sources. Some records name members who had been designated as Elders, as church treasurers, as deacons, etc. On page one of a record book dated July 19, 1918, was the notation that J. A. Reagan, Sr., was already serving as treasurer his tenure ended on January 4, 1920 when he moved to Kosse, Texas, over in neighboring Limestone County.

L. H. Massey took charge of the function of treasurer on January 7, 1923. Several other men are listed as having served as treasurer at various times, one of which was G. Travis Reagan, selected as treasurer on September 25, 1949. He later served as an Elder until his death in 1959.

Several outstanding preachers of the Gospel were born in the Bald Prairie community and received their first training and experience in the church services there. Among them was Malcom Smith, a devoted and strong Christian who died in 1975. Another was Luther Blackmon. He later moved to Houston to continue his secular education. He preached there many years and became famous throughout the brotherhood for his moving and inspiring sermons. He died in Indiana and his body was brought back for burial in the family plot in the Bald Prairie cemetery.

An early preacher, a charter member, was Clinton Owens. No record is available which would show if the congregation grew numerically while he was the preacher. He was followed by Samuel Blain but again, no record exists which would show how long he preached at Bald Prairie. The next was a brother Dow. Little is known about him except that he was a strong supporter of Tolbert Fanning's paper, *The Gospel Advocate*. Those in the congregation who were long-time readers of the same publication were also advocates of the idea that the Bible only should be used for church doctrine and practice and NOT the ideas and/or opinions of the people in the churches.

Another preacher was B. P. Sweeney. He served as minister around 1880. G. W. Bonham also preached at Bald Prairie around 1880. Jesse P. Sewell preached in Robertson County and at Bald Prairie during the first years of his ministry. He later became president of what was to become Abilene Christian University and served in that capacity for many years.

A Robertson County product, D. J. "Bill" Hamilton, delivered his first "official" sermon to the congregation at Bald Prairie on March 22, 1948. "Bill," his wife and young son would drive up from Houston each Saturday. Then "Bill" would preach at Franklin, Bald Prairie or Marquez before driving back to Houston to his regular employment. This procedure continued for many months until he went into "full-time" preaching for the next twenty-plus years. In 1972, "Bill" and his wife, Frances, "retired" to the family farm. He began working a "retirement job" with the Cooper Weise Company of Calvert and again became "part-time" preacher for the Bald Prairie congregation continuing until September 1989 when he retired "full-time."

Dan Warden, formerly the preacher for the A&M Church of Christ in College Station, has been working for the congregation twice per month since September of 1989.

Citizens of the Bald Prairie community worked for several years to get the church building designated as an Official State of Texas Landmark because it appeared to be one of the oldest churches of Christ anywhere in the state. Their efforts finally were successful on December 12, 1976. The official commemorative plaque is mounted on a pedestal to the left of the front of the building for residents and visitors alike to be informed of its historical significance and sentimental value to those whose forbearers had worked so hard to bring and keep it in existence.

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2/15/93

REVISION & UPDATE 2012 — BALD PRAIRIE CHURCH

A History of the Bald Prairie Church of Christ

A simple, unadorned white building graces the land twelve miles from the nearest town. This humble symbol of faith bears witness to a community's enduring belief in a higher authority and a heavenly reward that defies mortal imagination. This document chronicles the early history of the Church of Christ, and the congregation which inspired, built, and continues to maintain her cherished house of worship at Bald Prairie.

The origins of this Robertson County, Texas, church are linked to the Restoration Movement in America, empresario Sterling C. Robertson's settlement of a colony in Mexico's Texas, and the Republic of Texas' independence from Mexico. The three events, occurring almost simultaneously, were necessary for the establishment of a Church of Christ in Robertson County in 1847.

The Catholic Church had a monopoly on religion during Spanish control of Texas. Franciscan priests spearheaded the first efforts by Spain to bring control to the vast, unsettled territory to be known as Texas (and to bring Christianity to the Indians). Mexico continued this policy of only allowing Catholicism. After their independence from Spain in 1821, Mexico continued this policy of allowing only Catholicism. John Parker (who died at Fort Parker) attempted to establish a Protestant church in 1828, but was told by Stephen F. Austin that he could not. Establishment of churches other than Catholic would not be authorized until Texas became a nation in 1836.

Figure 4: Bald Prairie Church of Christ Building & Cemetery (September 2011)

The Restoration Movement began with Barton Stone and the Campbells (Thomas and son Alexander) early in the 19th Century. The Stone and Campbell efforts were independent of each other, but held common tenets. These commonly held beliefs included a focus on first century apostolic Christianity based solely on the Bible (the New Testament), the idea that creeds were not necessary (the Bible was clear enough to make creeds useless), acceptance that communion was to be taken on the 1st day of each week, and that congregations were autonomous. The movement avoided congregational labels, believing such to be divisive and misleading. The followers preferred to be called Christians or disciples of Christ. Accordingly, the Restoration churches were called Christian Churches, Disciples of Christ, or Churches of Christ. Members of other churches sometimes derisively referred to them as "Campbellites."

Sterling Clack Robertson eventually received authorization (1834) to settle six hundred families in an area of Texas that lay west of the Navasota River, north of the Camino Real (or Old San Antonio Road), westward to the divide between the Brazos and Colorado Rivers, and northward to the Comanche Trace. Robertson was from Tennessee. He named the company to handle this colonization in Texas, The Nashville Company. The significance here is that most settlers for the colony he was to settle would come from the Tennessee area, with many coming from around Nashville.

The Stone-Campbell/Restoration Movement gained greatest traction in the Tennessee area where Robertson would recruit his settlers. Many of these settlers were born in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama. Most moved to Tennessee and came to Texas from there. They were familiar with the Restoration Movement.

Texas provided religious freedom after independence from Mexico (1836). In Mexican Texas, settlers must profess to be Catholic. Freedom from Mexico meant freedom from Catholicism and the arrival of any religion that settlers might bring.

Early settlement in present day Robertson County was along the Camino Real (Wheelock, Dunn's Fort and Stagger's Point) and northward to Old Franklin. Old Franklin lay ten miles north of the Wheelock Prairie. The area to the north of Old Franklin was a vast timberland. This area was left to survey parties to travel during the early years of the Republic of Texas. Settlers did push forward to the area along Duck Creek after 1840.

Several families settled along Duck Creek and built a house for worship and other meetings around 1847. Early settlements in Texas usually followed the streams (reliable sources of water). A ford on Duck Creek called Chamblee Crossing (named for a John Chamblee who is listed on the 1850 census for Pct. 5) in the northeast part of Robertson County was the site of the original meeting house and cemetery. This meeting house provided a place of worship for what would become the Bald Prairie Church of Christ. Benton P. Sweeney, in an article published in the *Firm Foundation* weekly newsletter in 1893 (*Firm Foundation*, 16 May 1893), stated the congregation began in 1849 with sixteen members. (Sweeney's date may reflect the year the sixteen members began to worship separately.) These sixteen members and children would worship in the log structure along Duck Creek.

Richard B. Hicks (born 1877) stated in his *History of the Bald Prairie Church of Christ* (1953) "the first community meeting place was built of logs cut on the location and located about one-half mile downstream from Chamblee crossing and about one-half mile north of the channel on what is known as the Tom Phillips place." This would place the original building in the vicinity of the FM 2096 crossing of Duck Creek (some three miles south of the present location of Bald Prairie Church of Christ). Hicks also stated some evidence of the old structure still existed in 1953.

The original sixteen members given by the Bald Prairie minister (B. P. Sweeney) in his *Firm Foundation* article in 1893 were Elijah Rains and wife, Levi Bogges and wife, Clinton Owens and wife, D. M. Owens, Shelby Jones, W. A. Bedford and wife, Allen Jackson and wife, Matilda Wilson, Ryley Donegan, and a Bro. Phillips and wife. B. P. Sweeney stated in his 1893 newsletter that all had "passed away by 1893 except W. A. Bedford, Ryley Donegan, and M. E. Jones who still linger on the shores of time awaiting the master's call." Sweeney said he was "dependent on information from the above survivors and others who were associated with the church at that time, as no record was kept."

According to Sweeney, "the Baptist and Church of Christ congregated together for about two years with the understanding that each should enjoy the privilege of retaining his own peculiar faith." The Church of Christ was "set in order" with the sixteen members listed above between 1848 and 1850.

"The first preacher who labored among them was C. Owen" according to Sweeney (likely the Clinton Owen listed above). Clinton C. Owen is shown on the 1850 census (Pct. 5) as a 43 year old male born in South Carolina with a 36 year old wife named Orka who was born in Virginia. They

had five children born in Indiana and one 5 year old born in Texas (indicating they had lived in Texas for at least five years). Clinton Owen is buried in a family plot known as the Owen Cemetery near Mulberry Creek.

Sweeney said the next preacher was Samuel Blain. He did not know how long Blain stayed or what happened to him. After Blain was "old Bro. Dow." Sweeney continued that "I know little of him except he was a strong supporter of Tolbert Fannin's paper, *The Gospel Advocate* (the G. A. now published by L. S.); and I have found those who have been readers of the paper all along are generally in favor of the Bible, and the Bible alone."

Between 1850 and 1860, settlers moved into the prairies north of Duck Creek. The initial reluctance to settle northward was likely due to the hostile Indians who hunted the area (Maj. G. W. Heard, a Ranger, was scalped at what is now Heards Prairie as he led eight Rangers from Old Franklin to the Fort Parker area [*A History of Robertson County Texas* by J. W. Baker]). Richard Hicks and others have stated settlers were initially reluctant to move to the highlands, or prairies, because they believed the hill land to be nonproductive (Hicks, 1953). Hicks and others have also said the settlers left Duck Creek bottom because of health problems and because of floods. For these reasons and others (such as the possible arrival of one proficient in completion of water wells and maybe a reduced hostile Indian threat), settlers moved northward. By the time of the 1860 census, there were considerable listings for the Willow Creek Post Office census in the area north of Duck Creek.

The Church of Christ at Chamblee Crossing moved to the present site of the Bald Prairie Church of Christ. Elijah Rains gave the land for the church and cemetery near the present intersection of FM 2096 and FM 979. Since Rains "gave" the land and no deed was recorded, the exact date is unknown. Early church members have said the move occurred about 1855. The first structure was made of logs and served as both a school and church. Hicks further stated there were no Baptist or Methodist meeting houses until the latter 1880s.

Figure 5: Bald Prairie Church of Christ Building (Submitted by Zelda Turner; pre-1967)

Members of the Bald Prairie Church who worshipped there in the first half of the last century stated construction began on the present building in 1880. The new structure replaced the log church that was built around 1855. The location was near the center of the community, placing it within walking distance for most. Elijah Rains also gave land for a community cemetery next to the church. The earliest marked grave in the cemetery is dated 1872. Most residents ceased to use Duck Creek Cemetery in the 1870s. The cemetery at Duck Creek continued to exist until the mid-twentieth century (when it was lost).

Members of the Coal Branch Church of Christ elected to close their church and join with Bald Prairie sometime after 1930. Many of the Coal Branch members had moved from the area. The remaining members (L. D. Hager family, Cal Reagan family, and Travis Reagan family) began to worship at Bald Prairie.

Identities of the designers and constructors of the current building are unknown. A best guess is that members considered the needs and designed a simple structure to accommodate

them. Those members who were carpenters likely built the structure. The building is unadorned and characteristic of the period. The building also reflects the religious customs of the church members.

The building has changed little during its years. The church added classrooms to the south end in 1940. A covered porch went on the front in 1967. The present pews went into the church building about 1930. W. A. Arnold (local cotton ginner) and B. S. Tallant (plus possibly others) constructed the pews of pine. Garland Bellah renewed the building with a façade of Hardy Plank, a leveling of the foundation, and a new floor in 2009. Sanchez Enterprises added a new roof.

Some of the preachers at Bald Prairie in the nineteenth century (in addition to those mentioned earlier) were Tom Sweeney, Speirs, A. J. McCarty, Hardin, Jesse Sewell (became president of what was to become Abilene Christian University), G. W. Bonham, and G. H. P. Showalter (who became editor of the *Firm Foundation* newsletter in the 20th Century).

T. M. Sweeney wrote a letter to *The Gospel Advocate* dated 22 Nov 1869 that read "Bro Lipscomb: I have just closed a meeting at Ball Prairie, with 5 accessions to the army of the faithful." "The members seem to be determined to cultivate the Christian graces, that they may gain an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ." "May Heaven's richest blessings be conferred upon them." s/T. M. Sweeney (extract from *The Gospel Advocate* dated 22 Nov 1869).

Preachers of the gospel who worked at Bald Prairie during the 20th Century include D. J. Williams, Malcolm Smith, Luther Blackmon (interred in the nearby cemetery), D. J. Hamilton, Dan Warden and Jim Smith.

Currently serving as ministers in the 21st Century at Bald Prairie are Al Jolly and Will Smith.

Early church records aren't available. Elders and deacons have included Elijah Rains, Josh Rains, Dow Hager, J. A. Reagan, Cal Reagan, L. C. Reagan, Travis Reagan, Jack Lincecum, Joe Blackmon, and Lester Massey. A list of song leaders will include Neil Milstead, Jeff Kennedy, and J. C. Reagan Jr.

Churches survive for more than 150 years only with many pillars of faith and support. Three I will mention for Bald Prairie are Eula Weir, Helen Milstead, and Alta Reagan. I mention these three, as they are pictured in press coverage of the 1976 Historical Marker dedication. These three ladies were instrumental in documenting church history.

Several Church of Christ congregations will claim to be the oldest congregation to meet continuously in Texas. A lack of a central authority and loss of records from earlier years make all claims difficult to defend. Those at Bald Prairie (and Chamblee Crossing) continue to meet, just as every other Sunday since about 1847. A Texas Historical Marker placed at the church front in 1976 reads as follows:

Submitted by Jim Reagan

May 2, 2011

Bald Prairie Church of Christ

Organized in 1847, this fellowship worshipped with members of the Baptist Church until the groups separated in 1849. A log structure served the 15 charter members of the congregation as a church and school. Elijah Rains (1813-1889) donated land for the church and community cemetery. The present building, erected in the 1880s, doubled as a school for over 20 years. It also served as a funeral chapel and social and cultural center for the community. The classrooms were added in 1940. Descendants of early members still worship here. (1976)

Figure 6: Bald Prairie Church of Christ Historical Marker (source: http://www.texasescapes.com/CentralTexasTownsSouth/Bald-Prairie-Texas.htm; photo taken by Barclay Gibson, December 2008)

Bald Prairie Cemetery

A leading citizen, Elijah Rains (1813-1889), who came to Texas from Tennessee in 1848, gave this burial ground to the public. Duck Creek people soon joined the prairie people in its use. The earliest known burial was Walter Pirtle, date uncertain. The grave of Samuel E. Lightsey (1827-1872) has the oldest marker. Veterans of the Civil War and later conflicts are buried here. The Cemetery Association was formed in 1928. In 1957, Gilbert Sterling Ross added a donation of one acre to the original five-acre plot. Annual Memorial Day services honor some 600 marked graves. (1976)

The annual memorial service and cemetery association meeting continues to the present on the first Saturday June.—RW

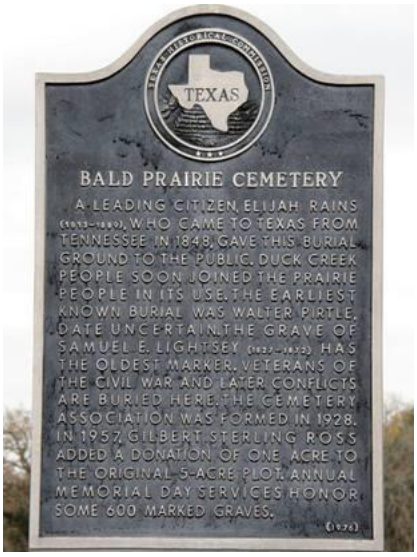

Figure 7: Bald Prairie Cemetery Historical Marker (source: http://www.texasescapes.com/CentralTexasTownsSouth/Bald-Prairie-Texas.htm; photo taken by Barclay Gibson, December 2008)

BUILDING RESTORATION NEARS COMPLETION

The upgrade and restoration of the Bald Prairie Church of Christ building is nearing completion. The building is located in northern Robertson County at the intersection of FM 979 and FM 2096. This historic building was constructed in the 1880s. The building and adjoining cemetery are marked by official Texas Historical Marker plaques. Descendants of the early settlers of Bald Prairie still worship there today.

Figure 8: Bald Prairie Church of Christ building during renovatation (October 2009)

This building was built using the "Box and Strip Construction" technique that was popular back in the 1800s (see article of the same title from Texas State Historical Association online at http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/cbb01). The first step in the restoration was the leveling of the foundation. Over the years the footings had settled as much as six inches in some places. Once the building was leveled, the plastic exterior that had been installed about twenty years ago was removed revealing the original horizontal wood siding. This siding was repaired as required and then covered by a style of "Hardy Plank" that matched the look of the original siding. The interior of the building received a similar treatment. The paneling installed about 1950 was removed to reveal the original interior horizontal and vertical wood planks. A portion of the original surface was left in tact and the upper horizontal plank section was covered with wood that matches the look of the original wall. New paint was added inside and out and the wheelchair ramp was repaired and re-decked. The overall appearance of the building is now very similar to the appearance of the building when it was built over one hundred years ago.

Thanks go to the contractor Garland Bellah of Kosse, Texas, for the excellent work being done. Thanks also go to Dick Milstead and Joe Orban of Milstead Environmental for taking care of the extensive clean-up portion of the project.

Submitted by Jeff Kennedy

May 3, 2011

Figure 9: Bald Prairie Church of Christ building during renovation (December 2009)

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

WALNUT CREEK CHURCH OF CHRIST

1850 – 1900

(Believed to have been located near the junction of Robertson County Roads 438 and 439 near town of Bremond.)

The Walnut Creek community was established in the 1850s with the arrival of several farming families.

About 1871 J. Grant Taylor donated two acres for a burial ground, union meeting house and school building. Since area students attended Stump Toe School (three miles north) a structure was not built until 1888. Baptist, Church of Christ and Methodist congregations held services here, constructing brush arbors on the grounds in the summers. **

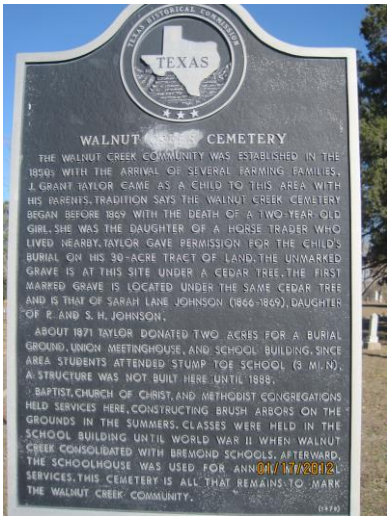

Figure 10: Walnut Creek Cemetery Historical Marker (January 2012)

** This information was taken from the Texas Historical Commission's Historical Marker erected at the site of the Walnut Creek Cemetery in 1979 and is the only evidence presently available that early members of the church of Christ did indeed meet at Walnut Creek from about 1850 until the early part of the 1900s.

2/15/93

Figure 11: Walnut Cemetery (January 2012)

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

BOONE PRAIRIE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1880 – JULY 7, 1974

(Located on Texas Farm Road 979 at junction of Robertson County Road 379)

On October 8, 1880 a deed for ten acres of land from G. M. Dishman on Boone Prairie in the James Feris Survey was filed in the Robertson County courthouse in Book 15, page 619, with J. D. Grant and J. H. Carter listed as trustees.

This land was to be used as the site for a church of Christ building. Before the building was constructed, the church of Christ did as many other groups did... meet in the local school building.

Figure 12: Boone Prairie Church of Christ Building (January 2012)

In 1891 the church building was completed and the congregation met there for about thirty-two years until a windstorm destroyed the structure in 1923. The next year the building as it appears today was constructed on the same site.

The earliest preacher, as nearly as can be determined, was B. P. Sweeney who traveled by horseback from his home many miles away. Other men preaching during the years at Boone Prairie included E. G. Sewell, Jesse P. Sewell, (who later became president of what is now known as Abilene Christian University), Ed Kelly, a brother Pringle, a brother Black, Eric Beason, D. C. Williams, Luther Blackmon, Charles Moser, Edward Brown, J. S. Newman, A. E. Finley, John T. Pole, Harold Thomas, John W. Hedge, Dan Drew, Ward Stephens and Royce Ingersoll but not necessarily in that order.

Families and individuals remembered as having regularly attended at various times include the following: Ed & Sophie Baker w/Lucindy & Clara Mae, Robert Bush, Alexander Calvert, Ernest Carter, Frank Carter, J. H. Carter, J. M. Carter, Ola Carter, Eddie Carter Dowdy, J. D. Grant, Benjamin Green, Richard Hicks, Ben Johnson, Joe Johnson, Polly Johnson, Tris McDaniel, H. L. Mitchell, Howard Mitchell, Lafayette Mitchell, Joe H. Mitchell, Minnie Mitchell, Benjamin G. O'Banion, James Randolph, George Redden, Will Redden, Fletcher Rhodes, Mrs. A. C. (Estelle Mitchell) Rogers, Will Shipper, Brinton W. Snider, Mrs. Margaret Thomas w/Ellen & Bryan, Fortune Whittington, Loyd Williams, and James Randolph Wood.

In the early 1900s E. G. Sewell came from his home in or near Corsicana, Texas, to conduct a gospel meeting. This nightly meeting continued for several weeks because of the interest generated in the community. The local leaders wanted it to continue but because of exhaustion and a prior engagement elsewhere, E. G. Sewell called upon his son, Jesse P. Sewell, to come and carry on with it. Even though it was the very first meeting that the young Jesse P. Sewell had ever conducted, he was very successful with the effort and added many more baptisms to the number his father had

already performed. When the meeting finally ended, nearly everyone in the community round about had been converted and "added" to the Lord's church.

Figure 13: West Boone Cemetery (January 2012)

For many more years the congregation continued to meet at Boone Prairie, an active and loving congregation. But by the end of World War II, the number of people living in the community had dwindled considerably. Though it was easier to reach the meeting place by car than by horse and buggy or wagon as in earlier years, the membership decreased to the point where only a few members were left. In mid-1974, for economic, fellowship, and other practical reasons, the remaining members decided to merge with the congregation in Franklin about eleven miles away. Today, the congregation in Franklin is composed of and has been greatly strengthened by the presence and activity of the former members of the Boone Prairie congregation and others who grew up in that community.

Although religious services are no longer conducted, former members and their families gather from far and wide for "dinner on the grounds", fellowship, reunions and to honor the dead buried in the adjacent cemetery on the third Saturday of June each year... weather permitting. Although the meeting house is in need of repair and restoration, it still stands on the site.

NOTE: Although never having a musical instrument or espousing any such doctrine or beliefs, the Boone Prairie congregation has been referred to on several occasions in newspaper articles, etc., as "The Christian Church."

3/5/93

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

ROCKY RIDGE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1900 – 1920

When the congregation ceased meeting in the Walnut Creek community, some of the members started meeting with the Rocky Ridge group.

The location of the meeting house was about three miles NE of the town of Bremond on what was called the "Low Road"... now designated as Texas Farm Road 2954.

O. R. Rasco, who lived in Thornton, Texas, Limestone County, a few miles away would come and conduct summer revival meetings.

Little is known about the congregation other than that the following individuals and/or their families attended during the period of its existence:

Dale Evans
Sam Johnson
Simpson Kornegay
W. E. Kornegay
Tris McDaniel
Ollie Massey
Will Massey

3/5/93

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN FRANKLIN, TEXAS

Inasmuch as the Church of Christ in Franklin had roots in the Christian Church in Franklin, a brief history of it is included.

The Christian Church was organized after a tent meeting in 1892, according to deed records Lot 4 of Block 78 in Franklin, Texas. The transfer of ownership was from Judge I. B. Ellison and dated January 26, 1893.

The tent meeting was conducted by an evangelist of the Christian church by the name of Barber. By this evidence, it is concluded the Christian Church was organized prior to January 26, 1893.

Figure 14: Christian Church in Franklin (damaged by storm; ca. 1913)

The charter members were as follows:

Judge I. B. Ellison
Mr. & Mrs. T. T. Easter
Mrs. Tennie Grant
Mr. & Mrs. W. T. Grant
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Hays
Mrs. Tobe Hays
Mrs. Tom Hillier
Mr. & Mrs. C. C. Langford
Mr. Ely Reynolds
Mr. & Mrs. W. R. Scott
Mr. & Mrs. W. P. Tally

A building was erected at the location of the present Church of Christ. In February of 1913, the Christian Church building was damaged so severely by a storm that the members elected not to rebuild. The existing membership elected to unite with the Church of Christ.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST IN FRANKLIN, TEXAS

1902 TO ...

The Church of Christ was organized in Franklin, Texas, in 1902 by Mr. Josh Rains who moved there from Bald Prairie according to deed records for Lots 15 & 16 of Block 3. Bald Prairie is a small community in the northern part of Robertson County.

He came from the Church of Christ at Bald Prairie and began worshipping in his home. The following persons, formerly of the Christian Church began to meet and worship with Mr. Rains and his family:

Mrs. Sallie Dilleshaw
Miss Carrie Dilleshaw
Mrs. Overall and brother
Mrs. M. E. Slawson

By 1905 Mr. Rains had moved his family back to the Bald Prairie area according to Mrs. Minnie Mae (Rains) Smith a current member of the Franklin Church of Christ.

Indications are that the Church did not meet for a short time after the departure of the Rains family.

Later, three women started meeting together and took turns leading the worship services. They were:

Mrs. George (Edna Mitchell) Brown
Mrs. Overall
Mrs. M. E. Slawson
(And the children of these ladies)

In 1901, the Methodist Church constructed a new building and left the old one standing. The previously named families began meeting in the one-room building formerly occupied by the Methodist Church in about 1905. It was located at the southeast corner of North Center and Englewood Streets.

Later, Mrs. Brown's brother, John H. Mitchell, of the Boone Prairie Community moved into Franklin to attend high school and met with them and directed the services. The three Storie sisters began attending about a year later.

On rare occasions a preacher would come by and volunteer his services and several gospel meetings were conducted. Mr. Ed Kelly and a Mr. Lawrence were two of these men.

Mr. J. K. Bentley related that he conducted a gospel meeting in Bremond, Texas, when the Tris McDaniel family was living there. Alice McDaniel was a sister of Mrs. Edna Brown. Mr. Bentley was contacted and asked to come to Franklin to conduct a meeting there also for the Franklin group.

In the late 1930s the Church of Christ decided to build a larger building in which to worship. The Christian Church lot was vacant. Inasmuch as Mr. Arthur Hays was the last living Elder of the Christian Church, he was contacted and asked if he would deed the lot over to the Church of Christ and he readily consented. By this time, he had united with the Church of Christ himself.

Plans were then made to construct a building near where the present one now stands. Some lumber was salvaged from the previous building and with some money

Figure 15: Building of the Church of Christ in Franklin, 517 Bremond St. (pre-1980)

($500.00) from the sale of a building at New Baden (which had been donated), some other donations, and a loan from the bank, the building was erected and occupied in about 1937.

By the mid-1970s that building was wholly inadequate so yet another building was constructed immediately adjacent to the one constructed in the 1930s. Because of continued growth, even that building has been inadequate and has been added onto in 1988 and remodeled in 1991 to accommodate the congregation and its activities.

Currently, the congregation has a directory membership of approximately 205 members with an average attendance of 140-150 for Sunday AM services. This average attendance includes children of all ages and visitors.

Figure 16: Building of the Church of Christ in Franklin (source: http://www.franklintexas.com /galleryphotos/historygallery/pages /histpic%2009_jpg.htm; pre-1980)

Men who have preached full-time include the following:

Malcolm Smith	1949-50	Jay Tyree	1993-99
Weldon Hamil	1950-52	James Sterling	1999-00
Gene Sutphen	1955-56	Britt Farmer	2001-07
Lawrence Nolan	1956-57	Les Lierman (Youth)	2001-07
Jessie Buffington	1957-58	Joe Squiers (Youth)	2007-10
Mont Whitson	1959-60	Al Jolly (Seniors)	2005-18
Mike Beaumont	1964-66	Rocky Whitely	2008-12
Boyd Denman	1967-74	Coby Whitehead (Youth)	2011-12
Roy Drewett	1974-77	Matt Parker (Youth)	2012-
Gary Matthews	1977-78	Blan Chrane	2012-21
Wm. J. Hart	1980-87	Jonny Royal	2021-
Tommy N. Qualls	1987-93		

Men who have conducted gospel meetings and/or special studies include the following:

G. H. P. Showalter	George D. Tipps
John W. Hedge	Roy Deaver
Jesse Powell	Jimmy Brewer
Wyatt Sawyer	Bill J. Humble, Ph. D.
Joe Malone	Robert D. Bankes
Clifton Rogers	Paul Richardson
Calvin Prince	Jimmy Allen
Trine Starnes	Dan Manuel
Wendell Winkler	Stafford North
Douglas Dean	

Men who serve or have served the Franklin Church of Christ as Elders include the following:

Wendell Hall
Leonard Hill
Leon Meek
Bobby E. Sullivan
Loyd Williams
Jack Rainey
Joe Mitchell
Coleman Rhodes
Louis Drennan
Nick Johnson
Carl Wylie
Les Lierman
Al Jolly
Rex Neff
Doug Watts
Jerry Paceley
Terry Smitherman
Kim Squiers

Men who serve or have served the Franklin Church of Christ as Deacons include the following:

Bobby Bonner
Rondal Brewer
Bob Gordon
David Hall
James Hall
Lyndell "Nick" Johnson
Johnnie Redden
Coleman Rhodes
J. W. Stalcup
Randy Sullivan
Raymond Hutto
Jerry Paceley
Jerry Stover
Les Lierman
Ross Mitchell
Tim Neff
Billy Wallingford
Doug Watts
Dale Vann
John Shelton
Terry Smitherman
Hal Dumas
Wyman Poe
Joe Squiers
Don Feauto
Troy Mitchell
Will Smith
Joe Mask
Britt Lively
Jeff Januse
Scott Squiers
Coby Whitehead
Steve Beasley
Ross Bush
Shelby Skorupinski
Cole Montgomery

In addition to the local work, the Church of Christ in Franklin has contributed to other works as follows:

Missionary work in India
Sunset School of Preaching
Missionary work in Nottingham, England
Eastern European Missions
British Bible School, Corby, England
Personal support of A. C. Styles, Director of BBS
Herald of Truth
Personal support of Doyle D. Gilliam, Dean of Students at Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, Texas
Cherokee Children's Home
Medina Children's Home
Foster Children's Home
Sunny Glen Children's Home
Central Texas Children's Home

The Franklin Elders also act as custodians of funds for the publishing of literature authored by Roy Deaver, prominent preacher, teacher and writer.

The Franklin Elders also act as sponsors and custodians for funds collected for the British Bible School and its current Director, A. C. "Tony" Styles, as well as partial support for Graham Fisher, evangelist, in Aylesbury, England.

An area-wide singing held annually since 1982 on the last Friday evening in April usually has an attendance of over five hundred. The events include both congregational singing and groups, such as the Gospelaires, Sounds of Glory, Revival, McCoy Family and our local group, the Lamplighters. Two singings were conducted the first year.

The Lamplighters singing group began around 1990 and discontinued in 2006. Members of the group included:

<u>Founding members:</u>
Johnny Brantner (organizer)
Tommy Qualls
Randy Sullivan
Jerry Stover
Jerry Paceley

<u>Later members:</u>
Jay Tyree
Louis Drennan
Britt Farmer

UPDATE 2012 — FRANKLIN CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Franklin church has made some physical changes adding about 4,600 sq. ft. to the building in 2010. This doubled the size of the fellowship and kitchen area and added four class rooms, a library, a teachers' resource room, and enlarged two rest rooms.

Figure 17: Franklin Church of Christ Building (September 2011)

Present membership is 235 with an average Sunday morning attendance of about 150-170. It now employs a part-time seniors minister, a part-time youth minister and a full-time minister.

The church's mission focus has changed somewhat with the phasing out of support for individual national preachers in India and moving that support to American missionaries traveling in that area who can give us better accountability of resources and results. The mission work in England has ceased with closing of the British Bible School in Corby, England in 2009 and the retirement of Tony Styles. With the death of Roy Deaver and the completion of support for Doyle Gilliam of the Sunset School of Preaching, these works have also ceased. A notable short-time mission work sponsored in part by the Franklin church was in Homer, Alaska by a very dedicated young missionary Jorge Del Bosque. Though he had a host of physical disabilities, he refused to let anything hinder his work for the Lord. Jorge died of cancer in 2009 while serving his Lord in Alaska.

Figure 18: Franklin Church of Christ Building (September 2011)

Ben and Karen Jenkins worked from 2006 to 2011 as part of a church planting mission team in Cuernavaca, Mexico. The Franklin Church served as their , sponsoring congregation. At present there is about fifty members of that first church, growing and maturing into a self sustaining congregation.

The Franklin Church assisted Haley Edmiston when she went to Phayao, Thailand as a team member in a church planting.

The church continues to support Eastern European Mission, as well as the children's homes with the exception of Foster and has added Christ Haven and Sandy Creek (India). The additional mission works presently being supported by the Franklin church are:

- Assisting in support of Russel Bell and Joe Don Brymer traveling in India and other countries in that area, helping with constructing church buildings, developing leadership, strengthen churches, assisting children's homes, and training preachers.
- Assisting in support of David Hamrick (Bear Creek) helping develop preachers' schools and plant churches throughout the world.
- Carrie McAnally, working with a humanitarian team and strengthening the churches in Africa.

Nick Johnson
January 2011

UPDATE 2022– FRANKLIN CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Franklin Church of Christ has not made any physical changes in its outside appearance in the last 10 years, however it has remodeled the auditorium somewhat, removing all paneling, the ceiling's blown in texture that was beginning to crumble, updating the dressing rooms for the baptism area, removing the indirect lighting as well as the hanging light fixtures. Installing sheetrock walls, wood ceiling and LED lighting.

The current membership is listed at 213, however the attendance is down at present due to the pandemic caused from a virus (COVID-19) that has swept not only our nation, but the entire world for the last year killing over 500,000 people in the US alone. The Church has and still is at present broadcasting on Facebook and our own website and many of our members are joining in virtually. We hope to be totally back in house worshiping soon with the success of the vaccine now being given.

The Franklin church's mission work is changing somewhat, due to declining membership resulting in less available funds. Our focus is more toward our youth, in training, youth camps and at home projects. We continue to employ a fulltime preacher, as well as youth ministers (I use plural term as husband and wife are both very active and involved in that work). The church continues to support Eastern European Mission and the Medina Children's Home, Cherokee Home for Children, and Local Food Bank.

Central Texas, Christ Haven, Sandy Creek, and Sunny Glen are no longer on our financial support list, though we do still collect items for them throughout the list.

Russel Bell has retired.

Joe Don Brymer is deceased.

David Hamrick is no longer supported but we do still provide Bibles and books to him from time to time.

Carrie McAnally completed her work and is home.

Ben and Karen Jenkins came home in 2001.

Haley Edmiston came home from Thailand in 2004.

Also, very sorry to report that the Bremond church, one of the four active churches of Christ in Robertson County, closed in 2004

Nick Johnson

April 2021

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

LITTLE FLOCK CHURCH OF CHRIST

1905 – 1912

This congregation of Christians met from 1905 until sometime in 1912 in the Camp Creek School building near Kury Lake in an area east of the town of Franklin, probably on or near what is now designated as Robertson County Road 336.

Individuals and/or families remembered as having met there include the following:

Jim Anderson
Tom Day
William Falkner
John McBride
Matt McBride
* Ray McMillan, Sr.
Walter Thorpe

Only one gospel preacher is remembered as having preached there:

J. W. Chism

* It should be noted that Ray McMillan, Sr. may have been a relative of E. W. McMillan, who was born in Robertson County on September 27, 1889 and spent his early life in this same area. Although having had very humble roots, E. W. McMillan went on to become known world-wide as a gospel preacher, teacher, educator, author and editor.

"Brother E. W. McMillan died on February 15, 1991 at the Christian Care Center at Mesquite, Texas, where he continued to lead Bible classes until his final illness. He was 101 years of age and had been a minister, author, and editor among Churches of Christ for more than 80 years." (Quoted from the obituary used at the funeral for E. W. McMillan on February 21, 1991 at the Skillman Avenue Church of Christ building in Dallas, Texas.)

3/5/93

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

PETTEWAY CHURCH OF CHRIST

1910 – 1925

The Petteway Church of Christ met from approximately 1910 to 1925 in a building located on a dirt road now designated as Robertson County Road 448 east of the town of Bremond. The site was across from the Petteway Cemetery on what is now designated as Texas Farm Road 2293.

Families and individuals remembered as having attended there include the following:

Mrs. Dora Jenkins
Wilburn Massey, Sr.
Lula Mae Petteway
Mrs. A. C. (Estelle Mitchell) Rogers
Mrs. Margaret Thomas w/Ellen and Bruce
Clifton Whittington
Mose Whittington

After the group ceased meeting there, Mrs. Rogers moved her membership back to Boone Prairie, a few miles to the south and east, where her father, H. L. Mitchell and his family still attended. It is not known for sure but some other members may have done the same because of family ties and convenience, etc.

Acuff Rasco of Thornton, Texas, in Limestone County as well as John W. Hedge, Charles Moser and J. S. Newman are remembered as having preached at Petteway at one time or another though not on a regular basis.

3/5/93

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

COAL BRANCH CHURCH OF CHRIST

1910 – 1930S

Sometime in the year of 1910, L. D. Hager and R. A. Reagan and their families, who were worshipping with the Bald Prairie Church of Christ, decided to meet at the Coal Branch School house because it was more convenient to their homes. They were joined by the Jim Sutter family, the George Dewveall family, Mrs. Julia Davis and others.

Preachers serving the congregation were a brother Poe, H. E. Kelly, a brother Burk, D. J. Williams and others.

During warm weather the congregation worshipped under a large mulberry tree covered with grapevines. In cooler or inclement weather, the worship was conducted in the school building nearby.

An old picture taken during the period showed about seventy faces, of which about half were children.

Among the families and individuals known to have fellowshipped over the years were the following:

Charlie Autrey
Delma Autrey
Pete Bedford
Dave Bumpurs
Will Henry
Ben Johnston
Mrs. Dovie Johnston
Tommy Johnston
Henry Maddox
Lee Maddox
Rex Pitman
Mrs. Sis Pitman
Will Prichard
J. C. Reagan, Sr.
Travis Reagan
Rufus Roberts
George Weir
Zeal Weir
Mrs. Sallie Williams

Many people moved into the community and though not associated with the church of Christ, sent their children to Bible School and worship.

In the 1930s, many people had moved away leaving only the L. D. Hagers, the Cal Reagans and the Travis Reagans who chose to resume fellowship with the Bald Prairie Church of Christ a few miles away.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

HOLLY CHURCH OF CHRIST

1910 – 1978

The Holly congregation first began its meetings in a temporary building used for a school in the little community known as Holly-Ridge in about the year of 1910. In 1913 a parcel of land was donated by Jeff and Carrie Hurley. This land was to be used for a more permanent site for a school building and would also serve as a meeting place for the church of Christ.

At times the attendance would dwindle and the congregation would meet in private homes for worship. At other times when attendance would increase, the congregation would again meet in the school building. The area where the members would meet in their homes was known as The Sand Hills, now a part of the Camp Cooley Ranch.

Some of the early family members who were instrumental in starting and continuing the Holly congregation were Henry and Emma Boring and their children, Ollie, Oda, Eric, Holland, and Ernest. Henry Boring's parents, Mark and Charlotta Boring along with his brothers, Joe, Amos and Frank Boring and their respective families were also included in the early membership.

Emma Boring died just as the congregation was getting started after which Henry married a widow-lady, Ollie Bishop, with one son, Ferman Bishop. Henry and Ollie (Bishop) Boring later had three children, Ruth, Florine and Ray.

Other families associated with the Holly congregation in the early days included the Allen Cudes, the Elledges, the Ansleys, the Holders, the Reeveses and Calvin Martin and his daughters Deslay and Pauline. At the time this history is being written in March of 1993, these daughters Deslay (Martin) Miller and Pauline (Martin) Tullous are members of the Franklin, Texas, congregation.

Calvin Martin was the one member, who after many of the other members moved away, kept the church going in the Holly community. He would prepare the bread and fruit of the vine and carry it in a bucket, usually on foot, the two miles to the meeting house each Lord's Day. There he would teach the Bible class, preside at the table, lead the public prayers and the singing and anything else that needed to be done. He carried on thusly for a number of years.

Most of the formal preaching in the early years of the Holly congregation was in the form of "meetings" conducted during the summer months after the crops were "laid by." Some meetings lasted several weeks and were usually at night under brush arbors.

Early preachers included Henry Kelly and Lee Falkner. Henry Kelly lived at North Zulch and usually rode a train coming in on Fridays and returning late Sunday because of the irregular and unreliable schedules. Lee Falkner lived in the Gourd Neck community southeast of Easterly and preached mainly in the summer months after crops had been planted. His son, Maurice "Jack" Falkner, was a member of the Franklin congregation at the time his death on January 24, 1992 at the age of 82 years. "Jack" Falkner had lived in Colorado for a number of years but had returned to the area following his retirement.

Preachers during the 1920s, the 1930s, and 1940s included D. C. Hartsell, a brother Ledlow from Austin, Texas, Holland Boring, then principal of the Camp Creek School, a brother Redding from Oakwood, Texas, K. C. Moser, Elwyn Snow, and D. J. "Bill" Hamilton from Houston.

Bill Hamilton with his wife, Frances and son, Tom, would drive to Franklin from Houston on Saturdays, spend the night with his parents, Tom and Ethal (Easterly) Hamilton, and then preach on a "circuit" the first Sunday morning of each month at Bald Prairie, the second Sunday at Marquez in Leon County, the third Sunday at Holly/Ridge and the fourth Sunday at Franklin. Inasmuch as the Franklin congregation was the only one meeting on Sunday evenings, he preached there before returning to Houston.

Sometimes he was paid enough by the local congregations to offset the cost of his gasoline from Franklin, usually from 25¢ to 50¢ per visit. At this writing, "Bill" is an active member of the Franklin congregation although semi-retired.

James Miller, son of Deslay (Martin) Miller and grandson of Calvin Martin, preached for the Holly group during the 1970s, driving from his home in Rockdale, Texas, each Sunday.

The school building where the congregation met was destroyed by a windstorm on April 3, 1975. The building was replaced on the same site later that year. They continued to meet there until 1978 at which time the congregation was disbanded with some members going to Franklin and others to the congregation in Marquez, Texas, in adjoining Leon County, a few miles away.

3/1/93

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

WILLOW CREEK CHURCH OF CHRIST

1915(?) – 1968

The exact date of when the Church of Christ at Willow Creek began meeting is not known. However, one former member of the congregation remembered that Ed Kelley held a summer meeting there in 1917 and that summer meetings had been conducted there for several years prior to that date.

Preachers that conducted summer meetings were J. H. Redwine, Malcolm Smith, Ward Stephens, Walter Stephens, Ed Kelley and probably others.

The congregation met in the school building like so many of the congregations scattered over the county did. They met there until 1968 when the group became so small (only two or three families meeting regularly) that they decided to disband and start meeting with the Bald Prairie congregation a few miles away. By that time roads had been improved and most families had suitable vehicles for more distant travel.

Some of the people known to have worshipped at Willow Creek were:

Elmo Dickey family
H. D. Dickey family
L. E. Doss family
Herman Hill family
Cecil and Mamie Bell Johnson family
Cook Johnson family
Bob Prichard family
Frank Shipper family
Bill Starks family
Ott Starks family
John and Addie Wylie family

Addie Wylie is a member of the Franklin Congregation at this writing.

3/1/93

Additional names submitted by Sharon Carrigan and her mother, Zelda Turner.

Elmer and Stelma Black family
Dick and Dorothy Wylie family
Floyd and Pearl Pace
Ola Stem
The Sorrells family
Lillie Mae King
Doake Stark
Mrs. Dollie Stem
Johnny B. Cunningham
Helen Cunningham

Submitted by Sharon Carrigan

January 24, 2012

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST IN BREMOND, TEXAS

1917 TO 2013

Figure 19: Building for the Church of Christ in Bremond (January 2012)

Sometime in 1917, the Tris McDaniel family (consisting of Tris McDaniel, Alice Mitchell McDaniel and daughters, Ollie and Clara Mae) moved to Bremond and established a cafe. They first went to worship with the Kornegay family, Simpson and Bessie, three miles east of Bremond in the small community of Rocky Ridge which was on the road now designated as Farm Road 2954. (See Rocky Ridge Church of Christ, page 25)

A few years later, in the early 1920s, the group began meeting on Main Street in a vacant building. J. K. Bentley, then of Georgetown, Texas, conducted a meeting for them in 1923. John W. Hedge, the son-in-law of the McDaniels, also conducted a meeting for the group along in the same period. Another family that was also remembered as having worshipped there was a Mr. Love and his wife Hester, and a young daughter.

It has been reported that the congregation failed to meet for varying periods of time through the years because of families moving elsewhere for employment and other reasons. The few remaining members either did not meet or worshipped with other neighboring congregations in the same vicinity.

The congregation has occupied two different buildings since the downtown store-building was abandoned. The present building at the corner of North Burnett and West Titus Streets was built about 1983 and has been enlarged on one occasion. The structure is small but adequate for their needs at present. The attendance ranges from 15-20 persons each Sunday. Men from the Franklin congregation frequently go over to assist with leading the singing and other duties as needed and/or requested.

During the summers of 1990 and 1991 groups of The Sojourners Organization came and assisted with services, "door knocking" to locate delinquent members, to invite outsiders to services to investigate the Church of Christ and to conduct home Bible studies, etc. (The Sojourners are a group of retired or semi-retired Christians who travel about over the country in their recreational vehicles doing a variety of tasks to assist small local congregations in special projects, drives and efforts.)

In addition to the men previously named, the following men have preached for the Bremond congregation at various times through the years: John Featherston, B. C. Ballard, Tom Ketchings, Paul Garlitos, Jim Sims, Frank Stark, Leon Meek, and others.

Frank Downes of Marlin began preaching for the congregation in about 1978 and continues on a full-time basis to this writing after moving to Bremond from Marlin.

3/3/93

UPDATE 2012— BREMOND CHURCH OF CHRIST

Rocky Whitely, minister at the Franklin Church, interviewed Brother Frank Downes in his home at Marlin, Texas, on June 15, 2011, concerning the status of the Bremond church. Brother Downes, now in his 80s, continues to preach for the Bremond church. Having lost his wife recently, he travels to Bremond for the Sunday morning service each Lord's Day. There are only ten to twelve members meeting for worship each week. This congregation is primarily made up of elderly people. They continue to do what they can to serve the Lord, supporting *In Search of the Lord's Way*, Foster's Home for Children and helped the Cement, Oklahoma church of Christ to build a building. They maintain a presence in the community as the Lord's servants there.

Rocky Whitely

November 1, 2011

Near the end of 2013 Bremond Church Ceased to exist.

Frank Downs, minister, was in his 80's and not able to continue. At that time, there were 6 members in the congregation and they relocated to other congregations.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

NEW BADEN CHURCH OF CHRIST

1926 – 1936

The New Baden congregation began meeting sometime between 1926 and 1928. The exact date is unknown. They built a small meeting-house on land donated by Mr. Paul Schultz, a local rancher and business man. The land was donated with the understanding that should the congregation discontinue meeting in New Baden that the site would revert back to him or his heirs.

A small building was constructed on the site by Ralph Prestridge at the expense of George E. Brown, whose wife and children attended there.

Families known to have met in New Baden were:

Mrs. George (Edna Mitchell) Brown
Sid and Olivia "Ollie" Browning
Willie Cazey
Tom Day
William Falkner
Mrs. Fred Hurley
W. A. Hurley
Mozelle Thorpe McBride
Carlton McCloud
Ray McMillan
Bill Merryman
Ralph Prestridge
Gus Turman
Joe A. Whittington

Men remembered as preaching there at various times were:

Lee Falkner
Willard Falkner
Ed Kelley of Madisonville (conducted at least two meetings)
J. H. Redwine

When the congregation decided to disband and start meeting with the one in Franklin in 1936 or 37, the building was sold to the New Baden School for $500.00 and the land was returned to Mr. Paul Schultz as agreed. The proceeds were donated to the Franklin congregation to be applied to a new building being constructed there.

A number of descendants of the above-named group still attend the Franklin Church of Christ.

NOTE: Although 1926-1936 are given as the dates of the existence of the New Baden congregation there is strong evidence that an earlier congregation existed there prior to or early in the 1900s. Below is the transcription of part of a taped interview with the late E. W. McMillan in his quarters at the Christian Care Center in Mesquite, Texas, in the summer of 1955:

> "Stock ran wild in the woods. There was no stock law. And the farmer, if he didn't want the neighbor's hogs to root up his potato patch, he'd better build a good fence against them!
>
> "Those were days when my father would tell us at night about the Indians who were in those territories and the many conflicts that came up. He would describe to us children, sit-

ting out on the front porch, about the wild animals out in the woods: cougars, wildcats, and many other such animals.

"I remember vividly, one night as he was telling us one of those stories, a wildcat screamed outside the yard and jumped on the yard fence and our dogs gave it chase. He ran that fence until he got near a tree. The dogs were gaining the race so he jumped off and climbed that tree just in time to save his life.

"My brothers took the lantern and the dogs already were there. They shined the light up the tree. They could see his eyes and they wanted the dogs to have the pleasure of killing that wildcat. But he wasn't about to jump out on the ground unless he had to.

"As I said a moment ago, this wildcat had no intention of coming down unless he had to. But my father and my brother, one of them climbed up into the tree. There was a big grapevine that clung to the tree in places and when that varmint saw him coming, he let out a big growl and jumped at my brother, but he swung toward the tree and the wildcat barely brushed his sack as he went down.

"The dogs were waiting and the fight was on. There were three big dogs and then we had a little dog that we children loved. I believe his name was Fidel; he was around behind my brothers just barking and growling just as if to say, 'If you can't handle him, turn him over to me. I will!'

"Well, I grew up in that kind of atmosphere. When I was older, I entered school. It was the Elm Grove school, a mile across the creek from where we lived and sometimes it would be a man teaching and another year it would be a girl. The girl couldn't last with us boys more than a year. The man would have his way and any boy that had a paddling from him would say to the other boys, 'You'd better not take a chance.' Fortunately, I never had a paddling. I wasn't a mean boy, I was just mischievous and sometimes I would run foot over on the other side, but I managed to get out.

"Anyhow, in that place when it was raining and cold, the hogs would come running out of the woods and crawl under the house and pile up together to keep each other warm. They would bite each other, squeal, and bump the floor while we boys were on the top of the floor trying to learn a little. We managed school three or four years there when we moved to New Baden. Bridging the details, I remember there was one store there in New Baden.

"There was no church building there at all. Back in Elm Grove, occasionally there would come through a preacher. Usually, he was one of the Sewell preachers, the father of Brother Jesse P. Sewell or some older brother. They would get us all worked up and baptize a few and warm up those who grew cold and had quit meeting. And we would go along for a few months and then it would cool down and stop meeting. In New Baden it was no better, but we did meet in a school house. That is, as long as we stayed warm spiritually.

"And then we moved down to Easterly, three miles back toward New Baden, toward where I was born. Down there, there was a store that had everything, I suppose, that people on a farm would want. The Easterly boys owned it and I don't remember the man's name but Mr. John Easterly was a leading Baptist and they met in the school house.

"I was always a little religiously inclined; so I joined Miss Maud Easterly's Bible class of boys. She gave me a little white-covered New Testament as a prize for her best pupil. She later was baptized. We had a meeting held by a man named Speers. He came over from Leon County beyond the Navasota River. About twelve or fifteen of us young people were baptized. We thought we were just doing great. And we were for those times. Oxen still dragged the wagons along. Occasionally, you would hear about someone who had an automobile but most of our traveling was done by wagon or afoot or in a buggy. We got along fairly well for a year or two there in the church but again, the church died out."

(From this point on, brother McMillan related how he became a minister or preacher over in Milam County to the southwest of Robertson County. This portion is not relevant to this history in any way.)

3/5/93

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

HEARNE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1929 TO ...

The Church of Christ in Hearne, Texas, was organized in May of 1929 when a small group of Christians met in a downtown business building on Third Street.

The members that composed the charter group included:

Mrs. G. H. Blackmon
Mr. & Mrs. J. W. Blackmon
Mr. & Mrs. E. C. Cobb
Mr. Oxsheer Cobb
Mrs. Melton McNair
Mrs. D. R. Melton
Mr. John Henry Reagan
Mrs. Harvey Spillers
Mrs. J. T. White
Mr. & Mrs. Mike Yankie

Others who contributed to the early-day organization were:

Mr. & Mrs. I. E. Ewing
Mr. & Mrs. W. W. McIlroy
Mr. Melton McNair
Mr. & Mrs. J. F. Mathews
Mr. D. R. Melton
Mrs. C. K. Oden
Mr. & Mrs. Jess Reagan
Mr. J. T. White

After the congregation was organized in the business building located on Third Street in the downtown section, services were held regularly at that location. Later, the congregation moved to the Hostrasser building on Magnolia Street and remained at that location until the first building of their own was constructed at the corner of East Evans and San Felipe Streets. The first service was held there on November 5, 1939. Shortly thereafter, A. D. Martin was hired as the first full-time preacher for the congregation.

Other preachers who served during the early years of the congregation included, but not in the order shown:

Joe Burton
Lewis Case
Charles Garner
John Haygood
M. L. T. Jackson
Bill Manning
R. L. Nolen
F. B. Shepherd
H. I. Taylor
Raymond Whittington
Syd Wyatt
Calvin Wylie

In 1955 the congregation constructed a building on the corner of Live Oak and Barton Streets. The structure was completed during the time Joe Burton was the local preacher and the first services were conducted in the new building on November 6, 1955.

The following preachers have served the congregation since 1955, but not in the order shown:

Steve Bishop
David Bynum
Sandy Doggett
Carter Geer

Dan Goodwin
Lynn Huff
Leon Meek
Bernard Neville
Jim Talbert

The following men have served as Elders of the congregation since its organization:

E. M. Boyd, M.D.
Leonard Brown
Oliver Burns
Finis Carter
J. H. Huddleston
M. L. T. Jackson
Wayne H. Shaw

Serving as Elders at this writing are:

Pete Brien
Ronald H. Huddleston, M.D.
Ken Kennamer, M.D.

In 1977 an annex was constructed adjoining the original structure. This building is home for monthly luncheons, game nights, parties and other functions. Community groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, the Beautification Committee and other civic groups have utilized the structure from time to time. The annex has been a great aid in carrying on the work of the Lord in the city and community.

Figure 20: Hearne Church of Christ Building (January 2012)

In 1984 a new educational building was constructed adjacent to the existing structures. This new building provided six new classrooms, two offices, a teachers' work and resource room, a nursery and an Early Childhood Center for use in teaching. This new building has proved a valuable asset in the Vacation Bible School ministry by providing enough space to allow continued growth for several years. The Early Childhood Center and nursery have been a tremendous help in caring for children of the MOPS (Mothers Of Pre-Schoolers) group as well as providing a place for caring for young children during special events at the building. The structure stands as a symbol of this congregation's vision and commitment to serve the city and community.

Vacation Bible School has been the most consistent and the best received ministry in the city and community. Each year many hours are spent by many individuals to insure its success. There has been a growth in the attendance at VBS each succeeding year. On the last night of VBS each year a special program is conducted to allow parents to view the classrooms, talk with the teachers and to see their child involved with the rest of their class in some sort of skit, song or recitation representative of what has been learned during the preceding five days.

The Hearne congregation has always been involved in mission work and other outreach programs throughout the world. For many years the Hearne congregation has been contributing to the Chimala Mission Hospital in Tanzania, Africa. It is the center for evangelism in the Chimala area.

Other mission outreach includes:

Brazil
Canada
State of Colorado
New Guinea

Financial aid has been or is accorded to the following:

Boles (Children's) Home, Quinlan, Texas
Cherokee Children's Home, Cherokee, Texas
Sunny Glen Children's Home, San Benito, Texas
Tipton Children's Home, Tipton, OK

The ladies of the Hearne congregation enjoy meeting on Wednesday mornings throughout the year for study, spiritual growth and fellowship. Various Biblical topics and subjects are discussed along with having entertaining guest speakers and missionaries that they have helped to support in the field.

A small dedicated group of ladies make weekly visits to Leisure Lodge, a local nursing facility, where they wash, style and dry the hair of the aged residents.

The Mothers Of Pre-Schoolers (MOPS) is another ministry of the younger women of the congregation and which meets the first and third Mondays of the months of October through April.

Current membership of the Church of Christ in Hearne is approximately 150.

3/4/93

REVISION & UPDATE — HEARNE CHURCH OF CHRIST

A Brief History of the

HEARNE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1929 – ...

The Church of Christ in Hearne, Texas, was organized in May of 1929 when a small group of Christians met in a downtown business building on Third Street.

The members who composed the charter group included:

Mrs. G. H. Blackmon
M/M J. W. Blackmon
M/M E. C. Cobb
Mr. Oxsheer Cobb
Mrs. Melton McNair
Mrs. D. R. Melton
Mr. John Henry Reagan
Mrs. Harvey Spillers
Mrs. J. T. White
M/M Mike Yankie

Others who contributed to the early day organization were:

M/M L. E. Ewing
M/M W. W. McIlroy
Mr. Melton McNair
M/M J. F. Mathews
Mr. D. R. Melton
Mrs. C. K. Oden
M/M Jess Reagan
Mr. J. T. White

After the congregation was organized in the business building located on Third Street in the downtown section, services were held regularly at that location. Later, the congregation moved to the Hostrasser building on Magnolia Street and remained at that location until the first building of their own was constructed at the corner of East Evans and San Felipe Streets. The first service was held there on November 5, 1939. Shortly thereafter, A. D. Martin was hired as the first full-time preacher for the congregation.

Other preachers who served during the early years of the congregation are listed below in alphabetical order rather than chronologically.

Joe Burton
Lewis Case
Charles Garner
John Haygood
M. L. T. Jackson
Bill Manning
R. L. Nolen
F. B. Shepherd
H. I. Taylor
Raymond Whittington
Syd Wyatt
Calvin Wylie

In 1955 the congregation constructed a building on the corner of Live Oak and Barton Streets. The structure was completed during the time Joe Burton was the local preacher, and the first services were conducted in the new building on November 6, 1955.

The following preachers have served the congregation since 1955:

Lynn Huff – 1955-1960
S. J. "Sandy" Doggett – 1961-1963

Bernard Neville – 1964-1967
Jim Talbert – 1968-1969

Don Goodwin – 1970-mid 1972
Jim Talbert (2nd term) – mid 1972-1974
Leon Meek – 1975-early 1982
Carter Geer – six months before mission work in Africa
Steve Bishop – mid 1982-1988
David Bynum – 1989-1994
Martin Miller – 1996-1998
Keith Stowe – Youth Minister from 1996-1998
Geron Bryan – 1999-2004
James Beam – November 2004-March 2009
Eli Borden – November 2010-November 2011
Joey Peacher – December 2011–

The following men have served as Elders of the congregation since its organization:

E. M. Boyd, M.D.
Leonard Brown
Oliver Burns
Finis Carter
J. H. Huddleston
M. L. T. Jackson
Wayne H. Shaw

In the 1990s, the Elders for Hearne Church of Christ were:

Pete Brien
Ron Huddleston, M.D.
Ken Kennamer, M.D.

Elders who have served since 1999 have been:

Pete Brien
Jeff Henson
Ron Huddleston
Paul McAnally
Ronnie Swaner
Tracy Varvel

Current Elders of Hearne Church of Christ are:

Pete Brien
Paul McAnally
Ronnie Swaner

The following men have served as Deacons since 1955. In the 1960s:

Oliver Burns
Ken Kennamer
R. L. Riggs
W. R. Springer

In the 1970s:

Larry Bossler
Bryan Browning
Oliver Burns
Fred Forstoff
Dr. Ken Kennamer
Dan Moses
John Shaw
Billy Vinton

In the 1980s and 1990s:

Pete Brien
Jeff Henson
Paul McAnally
Tracy Varvel

In 1977 an annex was constructed adjoining the original structure. This building is home for monthly luncheons, game nights, parties, and other functions. Community groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, the Beautification Committee, and other groups have utilized the structure from time to time. The annex has been a great aid in carrying on the work of the Lord in the city and in the area.

In 1984 a new educational building was constructed adjacent to the existing structures. This new building provided six new classrooms, two offices, a teachers' work and resource room, a nursery, and an Early Childhood Center for use in teaching. This building has proved a valuable asset in the Vacation Bible School ministry by providing enough space to allow continued growth for several years. The Early Childhood Center and nursery have been a tremendous help in caring for children of the MOPS (Mothers of Pre-Schoolers) group as well as providing a place for caring for young children during special events at the building. The structure stands as a symbol of the congregation's vision and commitment to serve the city and community.

Vacation Bible School has been the most consistent and the best received ministry in the area. Each year many hours are spent by many individuals to insure its success. On the last night of V.B.S. each year a special program is conducted to allow parents to view the classrooms, talk with the teachers, and to see their child involved with the rest of their class in some sort of skit, song, or recitation representative of the material learned the preceding five days.

Figure 21: Hearne Church of Christ Building (January 2012)

The ladies of the church enjoy meeting together once a week throughout the school year for spiritual growth and fellowship. Various Biblical topics are discussed along with entertaining speakers from other congregations and with missionaries they have helped support. The ladies are greatly involved in financial aid to needy missions and missionaries. A few years ago the ladies rolled bandages and sent "care packages" of various food items to brethren. During the past thirty-five years, a small, dedicated group of our number visits the local nursing home, Hearne Healthcare Center, to wash and style some of the ladies' hair who reside there. Much is accomplished; thanks to all of these women, many of the "behind the scenes" jobs are accomplished for the glory of God.

Hearne Church of Christ has been concerned for those in need; it has supported five children's homes through the years: Medina Children's Home, Sunny Glen Children's Home, Boles Children's Home, and Foster's Home for Children. In addition to supporting these four homes, the congregation works with Camp of the Hills, a ministry to reach underprivileged children.

The church has also been instrumental in the ministry of "Call for Help," an interdenominational ministry to the needy of our community that David Bynum began in 1993. Through the church's support, "Call for Help" has moved into a permanent location in a downtown building. Several ladies have been diligent to see that this ministry continues to work in the name of Jesus to all those who "Call for Help."

Anne Swaner and Kris Dye have led a campaign to reach families living in Columbus Village. They teach a Bible class on Sunday afternoon for the children, and the congregation involves the children with the sport of the season once a month. The church often supplies snacks, sandwiches, and drinks for those who come to the activities.

Hearne Church of Christ has also been mission-minded, believing the Great Commission applies to the church today. Early mission efforts were conducted in Brazil, Canada, New Guinea, and the state of Colorado. For many years the Church of Christ contributed to the Chimala Mission schools and hospital in Tanzania, Africa. Ron Huddleston was supported as a medical missionary in the Chimala Mission Hospital, and the church also supported Carter and Ruth Geer in their work at Chimala from 1982 until their return to the states in 1993. The church began the support of Rex and Marion Earhart in 1992 and continues to support Eastern European Missions (E.E.M.), since 1988. In 1993, the congregation was the sponsoring church for Kathy Peyton in the Philippines. The church currently supports Joe "Lolo" Inungaray in Mexico as he trains preachers and establishes churches. One of the congregation's young ladies, Carrie McAnally, has received clearance to do mission work in Botswana, Africa and will begin her work in May of 2011.

Current membership of the Hearne Church of Christ is approximately one hundred.

Eli Borden

April 14, 2011

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

PRAIRIE GROVE COMMUNITY SCHOOL AND CHURCH

1930S

This farming and ranching area in the north central part of Robertson County, Texas, was populated with a large number of farm families who sent their children to the Prairie Grove School during the week near what is now designated as County Roads 458 and 477.

On Sundays church services were conducted in either the school building or if the weather was too warm, under a "brush arbor" adjacent to it.

There were several different faiths represented among the families, Baptists, Methodists and members of churches of Christ.

In the summer months, the different churches represented would invite preachers of their own faith to hold so-called "protracted meetings" of two or more weeks.

One of those men was a young preacher-student of what was then known as Abilene Christian College by the name of Harold Thomas. He later became a well-known and loved gospel preacher for the churches of Christ. Only one other man, J. H. Redwine, was remembered as having preached at Prairie Grove for the Church of Christ.

This community was very isolated from the main roads of the county and only a few people owned automobiles at the time. Hence, they either rode in wagons, on horseback, or walked to church services and to school.

Several members of the present Franklin congregation were among those reared in this community.

No information is available as to when the group ceased meeting and/or disbanded.

3/4/93

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

CALVERT CHURCH OF CHRIST

1940S AND 1980S

In the 1940s there was a small congregation of the church of Christ meeting in the City Library at Calvert on Sunday afternoons at 2 p.m. The preacher from the Hearne congregation, eight miles south, would come over to preach. Oxsheer Cobb, also from Hearne, would come and lead the singing.

The following were some of the members attending:

Mrs. Lige Stewart
Alice Reagan
Lois Gregory
Leonard and Pearl McCrary
Oliver and Dale Burns and two sons
Bobby and Marjorie Sullivan

Near the end of the 1940s the congregation ceased to meet in Calvert. Mrs. Stewart and the Burns family went to Hearne, Alice Reagan and Lois Gregory moved away. The McCrarys and the Sullivans went to Franklin.

The Sullivans moved to Franklin in 1947 and through the course of their lives became pillars of the church there. Bobby served as an Elder for a number of years. At eighty plus years of age he is regular in attendance and is the source of information for this article. Marjorie passed away in 2005. The McCrarys have both passed away, but some of their descendents still attend services in Franklin.

Some 35 years later, in the mid 1980s, there was an effort made to reach out to the black community in Calvert by planting a church of Christ there. This work was under the oversight of the Franklin Eldership. Since no permanent records were kept, the information was obtained from former members and people of the Franklin congregation who were knowledgeable of this work at the time.

In 1984 J. W. and Evelyn Stalcup were residents of Calvert, having moved there after retirement from the Magnolia area. They were worshiping with the Hearne congregation as the church was being planted in Calvert. Then they began to worship with the new church there. Also, Clois Carter, another resident of Calvert who was attending at Hearne, began worshipping in Calvert.

Wesley Payton, District Attorney of Robertson County, living in Benchley, came to worship in Calvert and served as song leader.

Bro. O. S. Scranton was employed as the minister. He lived in Mexia and drove to Calvert each Lord's Day to preach.

Bro. Meechem, also of Mexia, conducted a gospel meeting in Calvert in 1984 or 1985. Raymond and Julie Ramirez were residents of Calvert and became members of the Calvert congregation as a result of this missionary effort.

The church met at a Cedar St. building owned by Altha Purified. It was located behind the City Garage. She attended church but was not a member.

Other residents attending, although not necessarily members were:

The Simpson family
Roy and June Felcher
Mr. Riley
Mr. and Mrs. Barnes of Hearne

According to Julie Ramirez and Evelyn Stalcup, this effort lasted for two or three years. As interest and attendance declined to sometimes two or three families, the Elders at Franklin decided to cease this missionary effort. The Ramirez family went to Hearne to worship. The Stalcup family and Clois Carter began worshipping in Franklin. J. W. Stalcup became a deacon there and served until his death in 2000. Evelyn moved back to Magnolia to be near her children.

Information submitted by Bobby Sullivan, Evelyn Stalcup and Julie Ramirez. Bobby provided information for the 1940s. Evelyn and Julie gave an account of names of members, preachers, song leaders as well as workers coming from other congregations for the 1980s.

2012