

HISTORY OF URIEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

By ANNE COLLINS

Uriel Presbyterian Church had its beginnings more than a hundred years ago when it was established as an outpost or preaching post of a sister church, Fishing Creek.

Old church records say "the house or place known as Uriel is situated on or near the old Saluda road six

miles northeast of the town of Chester, and near Lewis Turn Out," a stagecoach stop on the old Columbia and Charlotte road.

The house was built and became a place of worship while the Rev. A. W. Miller, D. D., was pastor of Fishing Creek congregation. Records state "he was settled as pastor of the united congregations of Fishing Creek and Cedar Shoals in the year 1849."

Some of the officers and members of Fishing Creek Church who owned a considerable number of servants, it is recorded, "desired to have the gospel preached near their homes for the benefit of these servants."

Soon after the request was made, Dr. Miller began regular services at Uriel. He gave up Cedar Shoals in order to devote his entire time to Fishing Creek and "the important station at Uriel."

The house of worship was so constructed that the gallery or second story afforded as much sitting room as the first story which was occupied by the white. The Negroes had the entire room of the gallery.

Historians say "The Congregation prospered all the time Dr. Miller served it." He left about the end of 1856 and was succeeded by the Rev. B. L. Bell who served the church for three years.

Rev. James A. Saye early in the year 1860 was invited by the Session of Fishing Creek and Cedar Shoals to take charge of these congregations as "stated supply." He accepted and began serving the churches in March, 1860. Rev. Saye from Charleston built the big Charleston type house near Rodman that is still occupied by the Saye family.

The arrangement made by the Session with Rev. Saye was that his Sabbath Day services should be equally divided between the three houses of worship, Fishing Creek, Cedar Shoals, and Uriel. So he began, and continued for 28 years.

Before the Rev. Saye came, all three congregations "had greatly weakened by emigration to new states, which continued

the first year of his labor here."

Some of the people "were greatly discouraged by these removals and besides the community was left in a state of excitement by the Politics of the time."

Volunteer companies of soldiers were being organized in the county and state generally. In April, 1861, the War Between the States began and several of the companies were ordered to Charleston.

This development almost deprived the community of young men and "was accompanied by all the excitement which seemed

to grow out of a state of war."

War and disease quickly began to take their toll. Records state that "the war had only begun when bodies began to be returned to their families and friends for burial."

"Disease was doing its work before much of the fruit of battle was seen, but the battle came on in earnest and many of our promising young men were the victims. Many bade farewell who never returned. We bore the calamities as best we could."

During the war, most of the ministers of the Presbytery entered the service as chaplains, but Uriel's minister did not. He "had labor enough by effort to aid the congregations destitute by the absence of their pastors."

The Rev. Saye served the surrounding congregations and "afforded the evidence of the bereavement and sorrow among the people." A historian of the day records "the habiliments of mourning seemed universal, and tears of widows and orphans filled the land."

Later "in the process of time, the war ended, but did not end our excitement and distress. We were the conquered party and other men dictated the terms" of peace.

An interesting incident was part of the aftermath of war. "One Sabbath in the summer of 1865 when a large congregation was assembled at Uriel of both

racess, some disturbances were noted from the pulpit."

It was afterward known that a squad of U. S. soldiers had been at the place and mixed among the colored people during the service and commanded them not to hear the old preacher any more. But, it is recorded, "the ordinances had been sustained at Uriel and the divine blessing had been their experience."

Rev. Saye ceased in April, 1888, to attempt to keep up regular worship at Uriel or elsewhere, "on account of his frequent infirmities, but still loved the cause of the Redeemer with the fervor of his first love."

The increase of members around Uriel and distance to the Fishing Creek "seemed to call for separate congregations and organizations. In accordance with a petition sent to Presbytery the Commission was appointed and Uriel Church was organized as a separate Church on October 28, 1888, with forty-one charter members.

Bethel Presbytery, at its Session at Pleasant Grove Church, recorded the following:

A Commission met at the house of worship known as Uriel on October 28, 1888. The Commission consisted of the Rev.

George Summey, the Rev. James M. Saye, and the Rev. W. M. Anderson."

"Testimonials of membership and dismission for organization at this place and time were presented by 49 persons from Fishing Creek and Purity Churches."

Officers elected to serve the new congregation were, "Ruling Elder: Mr. J. J. Lewis; Dr. G. W. Jordan, Mr. T. N. Triplett, and Mr. A. H. Wherry. To the office of Deacon: Mr. John Caldwell and Mr. Robert McCants."

The Commission proceeded at once "to set apart by prayer and the laying on of hands" these officers and "declared Uriel a regularly organized church and invoked the blessing of God upon it now and in all time to come."

The Uriel Church property was deeded by A. P. Wylie and Narcissa Lewis, witnessed by William H. Gill and E. T. Gill before Notary Public C. D. Melton. The price paid was \$20 per acre.

In the spring of 1889 the Women of Uriel Church organized the Ladies Aid Society in the home of Mrs. S. J. Eagle with Mrs. Nannie Neely as first president. There were 12 charter members. Circles were organized in 1926.

On May 15, 1949 new Sunday School rooms were dedicated. Rev. W. G. Sommerville of Cross Hill preached the dedicatory sermon.

In August, 1952, Mrs. W. T. McCandless and Miss Margaret



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Susan McCandless donated a lot on which to build a manse. The manse at a cost of \$12,250 was completed in July, 1953, and was paid for in full on completion.

The Rev. E. T. Severs is now serving as minister of the church. Additional rooms are presently being added to the educational building.

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