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Historical Sketch
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Historical Sketch

• of the •

Presbyterian Church,

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PELZER, S. C.

BY THE PASTOR,

© Rev. C. L. Stewart. ©

Delivered Sunday, Jan. 10, 1897.

Printed by order of the Session for distribution
among the Congregation.

"Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness"—Psalms 65 :11.

ONE year ago today we had the pleasure of occupying this house of worship for the first time. On that day we committed our ways unto the Lord for the new year and began our first work as Pastor and people. Hence it is highly appropriate for us to spend an hour of this our first anniversary in reviewing the goodness of God toward us as a Church during the past year. As no previous review has been made, the officers of this Church have requested that a brief historical sketch of the work of the Presbyterian Church in this town be now given.

To do this we go back to the Spring of 1881; and we find that the family of the President of the Pelzer Co. was the first Presbyterian family to take up their abode upon these, then barren, hills. During that year they were joined by other Presbyterian families from Williamston, Piedmont and surrounding country. During the Summer of 1881 these few Presbyterians, together with the Baptist and Methodist brethren, organized a Union Sabbath School which met every Sabbath in the hall over the store now occupied by Brown, Williams & Co. In that hall was delivered by your Pastor, the first ser-

mon ever preached in this town, the date of which was Nov. 20, 1881. The text used was: "Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel." (Phil. 1:27.) That sermon was preached by special request of Mr. Ellison A. Smyth, President of Pelzer Co. During that year and the year 1882 these Presbyterians secured occasional preaching as they could, and sent up a petition to the Spring meeting of Presbytery (1883) to be organized as a Church.

On the 29th of October, 1883, they were organized as a Church by a Commission of S. C. Presbytery, consisting of Rev. J. B. Adger, D. D., Rev. J. O. Lindsay, D. D., and Rev. J. L. Martin, D. D., with Elders Carver Randal and Thos. F. Anderson.

The organization consisted of the following persons: Mr. Ellison A. Smyth, Mrs. Julia G. Smyth, Mr. J. W. Williams and Mrs. Williams, Mr. B. F. Guy and Mrs. Guy, Mr. A. B. Carpenter, Mr. Thos. Seddon and Mr. Walter Cameron. Of this number Mr. B. F. Guy and Mr. J. W. Williams were made Elders, and Mr. Walter Cameron, Mr. Thos. Seddon and Mr. A. B. Carpenter, Deacons.

The newly organized Church then employed your present pastor as stated supply for one-fourth of his time on a salary of \$65.00. This Church was then grouped with the Piedmont, Williamston and Honea Path Presbyterian Churches. The group paying an annual salary of \$365.00. At the expiration of six months your stated supply resigned, leaving this Church vacant. During the years of 1884 and 1885 we do not find any record of the Church having had any regular supply, but it was able to secure

occasional preaching from Rev. J. B. Adger, D. D., Dr. F. P. Mulally, Dr. J. L. Martin, Rev. J. H. Colton, Rev. J. L. Brownlee, and myself.

In January, 1886, I was called back to this Church as stated supply for half my time on a salary of \$300.00. This arrangement was continued until the close of 1895. At the beginning of 1886 the membership of this Church numbered 22.

During 1886 there were 13 additions.

"	1887	"	"	16	"
"	1888	"	"	23	"
"	1889	"	"	20	"
"	1890	"	"	2	"
"	1891	"	"	0	"
"	1892	"	"	16	"
"	1893	"	"	23	"
"	1894	"	"	8	"
"	1895	"	"	16	"

During 1885 Mr. Thos. McElroy was made a Deacon, and Mr. W. A. Blake an Elder in Aug. 1886. The Eldership was again increased in 1890 by the election of Mr. W. B. Dickson, and the Board of Deacons by the election of Mr. Thos. Carpenter, Mr. Wm. Ivester and Mr. A. L. Blake.

In 1895 Mr. Ellison A. Smyth, who had returned to Pelzer to live, Mr. W. S. Ramsay and Mr. J. L. Blair were made Elders, and Mr. J. B. Bonner, Mr. P. D. Wade, Mr. T. M. Jenkins and Mr. J. Adger Smyth, Jr. were made Deacons.

During the nine years of the stated supply system there were 126 additions to the Church. 68 were given certificates of dismissal and one was excommunicated.

The average annual contributions of the Church (including salary) during these nine years was about \$400.00. Yet in this, as in membership, there was a steady increase. For example, the salary increased from \$300 to \$600, and other contributions increased at about the same ratio.

While these statistics do not show any marked or rapid increase, yet they do show a steady, healthy development, and shows conclusively that the Lord has crowned all these past years with His goodness. Especially has the year just past (1896) been abundantly crowned with His goodness. In His good providence He persuaded and enabled His people here to complete this beautiful house of worship, which was dedicated to God's service without one dollar of debt. It was dedicated by the Rev. G. R. Brackett, D. D., on the first Sabbath of February, 1896. Although I was called to be your Pastor in September, 1895, to give you my entire time and services, yet we did not begin our work as Pastor and people until the second Sabbath of January, 1896. And the Pastor's formal installation did not take place until the third Sabbath in February, 1896, which was done by the following commission from S. C. Presbytery, viz: Rev. J. Lowrie Wilson, D. D., Rev. D. E. Frierson, D. D., Rev. B. P. Reid, with Elders W. P. Nesbitt and A. Sadler.

During this past, first, year of your Pastor's work he has preached 90 sermons, delivered 48 lectures, conducted 50 prayer services, conducted 21 burial services, married 22 couples, baptized 3 adults and 10 infants. He has made 373 Pastoral visits, 130 visits to the sick, 133

calls on strangers and visitors in town.

There have been 57 additions to the membership during the year. Three have been given certificates of dismissal. Our membership now numbers 142. During the year the angel of death has taken from our numbers one father, one mother, and two little ones; while we mourn their loss, yet we recognize these sad dispensations of Providence as being a part of God's goodness which has not only crowned the departing year but also crowned our departed loved ones in glory. Take any view of the past year you may and you cannot fail to be impressed with the idea that the Lord has crowned it with His goodness.

It has been suggested that our text represents the old year as a victorious athlete who has finished the race, won the prize, and now stands before the judge to receive the crown of reward. The crown placed upon the brow of the past year is the golden circle of God's goodness. And examining this crown of goodness we find it richly studded with many bright and precious gems of grace, such as divine favor and loving kindness, divine guidance and divine mercy. The gem that attracts our attention most in this crown is:

1. *God's favor, which to us has been life, and His loving kindness, which has been better than life.*

Truly His favor and loving kindness have cheered and animated us during the whole year in every department of His service.

1. For example: What prompted these few Presbyterians to build this beautiful house of worship at so great a sacrifice? Was it not their grateful remembrances of His past favors

and loving kindness? Yes, the goodness of God not only leads to repentance but when duly appreciated it inspires the soul with love and energizes the will with new zeal.

2. Why was the whole project of building executed so promptly without accident or loss of time, life, or means? Humanly speaking this is all attributable to the superior energy and wisdom of the committee to whom the work was entrusted. But whence had they that superior energy and wisdom? Was not that energy a ray of life from the Divine will, and that wisdom a ray of light from the Divine mind? In all their efforts they were crowned with Divine favor and goodness which not only gave them wisdom to direct, but energy to execute.

3. Why did all our people respond so liberally of their means to this call of Providence? That was but the cheerful response of gratitude for God's past favors and loving kindness towards them.

4. Why have our Sabbath School, and our ladies and children societies been so harmonious and progressive during the past year? Again we point to the gem of Divine favor which has been the life of our schools and societies, and to that loving kindness which has been to them better than life.

Look at this gracious circle of Divine goodness as you may, and you cannot but be attracted by the gem of God's favor and loving kindness.

II. *Another gem that adorned this crown of goodness was God's constant guiding care of us both as a Church and as individuals.*

Had that kind care and guidance been withdrawn for a single day of the 365 not one of us would have been here today to recount His goodness and mercy toward us.

One after another the days have come and gone, and we have gone about our daily duties and pleasures, often unmindful of the unseen hand that was disposing our lot, guiding all our affairs and aiding in all our feeble efforts. If we have accomplished anything worthy of record, it was because our Father's kind hand guided and upheld us.

The precious souls who have been brought within the fold during the year were not brought in by us, but by the good Shepherd through the agency of the Holy Spirit using us as instruments.

With deep contrition we confess that we have been unprofitable servant. But now is the time to seek and obtain forgiveness. Now is the time to behold and appreciate that other lovely gem in the crown of the departing year, viz:

III. *God's forbearing mercy toward us.*

Let us look at and admire this gem for a moment.

1. As we review the year, and gratefully recount the abundant goodness with which it has been crowned, it is with sadness that we see that the beautiful picture is greatly marred and blotted with the ugly stains of our sins and shortcomings. But we look again and behold when, like sheep, we went astray, like the good Shepherd, Divine mercy has followed us in all our wanderings, and brought us back to the fold again and again.

When, like prodigals, we absented ourselves from Our Father's house, and went into the far off country of worldliness in search of self-interest, worldly gain and pleasures, Our Father has not only borne with our indifference and carelessness toward Him and His service, but in mercy He often sent His messengers to bring us home again; and upon our every return we have found Our Father waiting with outstretched arms to receive us back. Bretheren "what shall we render unto the Lord for all His goodness to us?"

Oh, that we could praise Him as we ought for all His loving kindnesses and tender mercies toward us ! For as we look over the past and see the goodness and success with which God has crowned our united, feeble efforts, we would not presume to claim the crown for ourselves, but gladly and gratefully do we see Him crown his own work with success. And when we remember that His favor, His guiding care, and His forbearing mercy make up and adorn the crown of His goodness, with the Psalmist we exclaim: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be all the glory." "For *Thou* crownest the year with *Thy* goodness."

My christian friends, I desire in conclusion to thank you most sincerely for your confidence, kindness and liberality to me and mine during the past year.

And while I feel my personal unworthiness of your confidence, and know my inability to requite your generous liberality, yet my heart's desire and prayer to God is that He will reward you, and bless you and yours, in the future, even more abundantly than He has in the past.





BRUXELLES. Fontaine de la Salamandre.

