

Courtesy of the Tishomingo County Historical & Genealogical Society
Original files are housed in the John Marshall Stone Research Library

Tishomingo County Archives & History Museum

203 East Quitman Street

Iuka, MS 38852

Phone: 662-423-3500

E-mail: tcarchives@nadata.net

URL: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~mstchgs/>

TCHGS COPYRIGHT NOTICE: In keeping with our policy of providing free information on the Internet, materials may be freely used by non-commercial entities, as long as this message remains on all copied material, AND permission is obtained from the contributor of the file.

These electronic pages may NOT be reproduced in any format for profit or presentation by other organizations. Persons or organizations desiring to use this material for non-commercial purposes MUST obtain the written consent of the contributor OR the legal representative of the submitter and contact the listed Tishomingo County Archives & Historical Society (TCHGS) with proof of this consent.

Iuka Baptist Church

105 W. Eastport, Iuka, Mississippi 38852

The information below was compiled by Rev. Carmon Savell for The Vidette (Iuka, Mississippi), Centennial Edition, July 4, 1957, page 1. It was transcribed by RaNae Smith Vaughn in June 2006.

In 1857, from a wilderness of trees, early settlers founded a town in the hills of northeast Mississippi and named it after the famous Chickasaw Indian Chief, Iuka. These men and women were of a basic Anglo-Saxon heritage, and they carried with them a deep feeling for the protestant religion. Therefore, it followed that they started a church of the Baptist faith two years later and called it the Iuka Baptist Church. The church was built on the log road from Tuscumbia, Alabama, to Corinth, Mississippi, and its exact location is believed to be on Highway 72 and Pearl Street. Early travel was difficult and the congregation sparse, so it was natural that the church was operated on a part-time basis. The first known pastor was the Reverend James Burgess.



The original church was in Tishomingo County, Mississippi, and this County at one time included the territory now known as Alcorn and Prentiss Counties. The church first belonged to the Bear Creek Baptist Association, a name derived from the actual creek that borders the eastern side of Tishomingo County. Later, associational affiliation formed it with the Tishomingo Baptist Association and then the Tishomingo-Alcorn Baptist Association. These are now dissolved, and the Iuka Baptist Church is affiliated with the Tishomingo County Baptist Association, the Mississippi Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Baptists built the first church building in the new town of Iuka in 1859. This building was located where Mr. Hiram Jones was living in 1957. Rev. James Burgess was pastor at that time. This was a very small building, and the congregation soon grew beyond its capacity, thus

demanding a larger building. A new site was chosen for the new building, and that site is where the present auditorium now stands.

The second building was erected in 1870. It was a two-story frame building. The Baptist Church used the first floor for Sunday School and worship, but the second floor was used as the Masonic Hall. This church stood and was so used until 1912 when it was destroyed by fire. Most of the church records and those of the Masonic Order were destroyed by the fire.

The present church building was finished in 1915 at a cost of approximately \$6,000. It was used for the activities of the church including Sunday School, worship, and later for the Training Union until in 1953, the present educational building was built at a cost of \$47,850.

The first pastor and congregation were blessed with many converts as they did the Lord's will in spreading the gospel. This soon necessitated a new building, and a second one was constructed at the corner of Eastport and Pearl Streets, that being the present location as well. This second building was destroyed by fire in 1912. However, a third building was erected in 1915, at a cost of \$6,000. This building housed all the church activities such as Sunday School, Training Union, W.M.U., Brotherhood, nursery, and worship.

A small frame house next to the church on Eastport Street was acquired and used as a pastor's home. It was later used as a church annex after another parsonage was acquired on Highway 72 West.

The church called its first full-time ministering 1928. This call was to the Reverend Clarence Palmer. Rev. Brooks was the first pastor to live in a church-owned pastor's home which was purchased in 1917; since then a new pastor's home was built on Highway 72 West in 1947.

In 1951, a large "Irishman," named Thurman (Dutch) Booth from Louisiana, became the pastor of the Iuka Baptist Church. This pastor, an evangelist by nature, brought enthusiasm and activity to the church and it began to grow. One project put forth by Reverend Booth was to sponsor and build the church's present educational building in 1953. The building cost \$47,850 and Reverend Booth pledged the first \$1,000. The church raised \$10,000, and then began to build. The three-story building serves today the many needs of a modern church.

Church membership in 1953 was about 400—one revival saw over 100 people converted and baptized, and growth continued for several years, until a new sanctuary was needed. This was built in 1965. The old building was torn down and the new sanctuary erected. It seats 650 people and has a full basement. The pastor under whom this was done was Reverend B. N. Burress.

The Iuka Baptist Church at varied times employed choir directors, ministers of youth and music, and associate pastors. One of the most interesting people was Jerry Swimmer, a converted Jew, who did much for the youth of the church as director of youth and music.

The location of the Iuka Baptist Church afforded it a wonderful opportunity for a lake ministry. This was brought about during the pastorship of Reverend Harris Counce, and is still continued at several lake locations each weekend during the summer months by the church.

A radio ministry was also begun by Reverend Counce. A portion of this is still continued through A.M. and F.M. broadcasts of all Sunday services.

The Iuka Baptist Church maintains a parsonage on Martha Lane for its pastor. It also owns property near the church on Eastport Street which is a building used for Sunday School classes. It also owns a parking lot behind the church which fronts on Front Street.

The church began a kindergarten program under Reverend Charles Dampeer in 1974, and this was later expanded to include a daycare operation. These children's programs are housed in the Willie Hiatt home on Eastport Street which the church inherited in 1980.

As of May 1, 1982, the church's resident membership totaled approximately 1,000. Pastors who have served the church are listed below:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. James Burgess | 17. Henderson |
| 2. J. A. Wheelock | 18. W. M. Ford |
| 3. Malone Matthews | 19. Landers |
| 4. Seagood | 20. Clarence Palmer |
| 5. J. H. Taylor | 21. W. C. McGill |
| 6. W. G. Skinner | 22. Raymond Pate |
| 7. Shackelford | 23. Jack Cranford |
| 8. Turnage | 24. Luke Mohon |
| 9. L. R. Burress | 25. Thurman Boothe |
| 10. Ware | 26. Carmon Savell |
| 11. C. L. Wilson | 27. R. J. Cooper |
| 12. W. J. Epting | 28. B. N. Burress |
| 13. J. D. Franks | 29. Harris K. Counce, Jr. |
| 14. J. P. Randolph | 30. Charles R. Dampeer |
| 15. J. H. Turner | 31. Kenneth M. Murphy |
| 16. Brooks | 32. Jim Holcomb |

Source: Byrom, Harmon A. "History of the Iuka Baptist Church." In: Down Memory Lane: A History of Iuka, Mississippi, 1915-1983: Vol. II.

