

PROCEEDINGS OF THE EASTERN DISTRICT ASSOCIATION

Thursday Morning, October 5, 2023

The Eastern District Association of Primitive Baptists convened in its 171st annual session hosted by Poplar Grove and Willow Chapel Churches (The Kingsport Area Churches) on the grounds of Burke's Union Church in Blackwater, VA.

Poplar Grove

The history of Poplar Grove was originally researched and written by Brother Ellis I. Wallen, Sr., a former clerk of the association, when the church hosted this "grand old body" in 1970. The church felt it suitable to use the same history with added information relative to the present. This being the fifth time that Poplar Grove Church has hosted or co-hosted the Association (1958, 1970, 1988, 2015 and 2023), we felt it needful to recognize and pay tribute to the devoted, faithful, and prayerful members who helped organize the church and have maintained an interest and need to worship God for these 75 years.

It is somewhat difficult to arrive at a definite beginning of Poplar Grove Church. Cottage prayer meetings, singing services, and preaching services had been conducted in the community long before the church became a reality. Elder Milburn Morelock, sometime in early 1948, began to hold regular services in a building in the community known as "the chicken house". Brother Morelock, the first pastor, has now gone to meet his reward in a better land, and "the chicken house" has been torn down. These early meetings displayed a true spirit of Christianity. The attendance and interest shown became more meaningful than ever in the life of the community once there was a permanent meeting place established.

The Poplar Grove church was organized by an arm from Pleasant View, then a Primitive Baptist church in the Eastern District Association in June 1948. Originally, the church received one member by letter and six by experience and baptism. The charter members were Rome Adams, Mrs. Rome Adams, Luna Brown, Mrs. Luna Brown, Maggie Hill, Everett Sims, and Mrs. Everett Sims (all now deceased).

The church grew and flourished for about a year and then moved to its present location, inspired by the scripture Nehemiah 4:6. "So built we the wall, and the wall was joined together unto half thereof, for the people had a mind to work." All are happy and pleased with the present location. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose."

The church was dedicated in 1952 and is presently debt-free. With the passing of the years, Poplar Grove Church has been a haven of escape from the world. Today, this place gives a feeling of the real meaning of Christianity, continuity, prayer, faith, dedication, patience, and obedience. In these surroundings, one captures the sense of the strong, magnificent beauty of a powerful, all-wise, loving, personal Savior. We were honored to have a 75-year celebration in June 2023. God wonderfully blessed with heart-stirring preaching and singing. The message of the entire weekend was if God builds the house, it will stand. The house will stand if built on the doctrine of grace by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

During the past 75 years, the following pastors were dedicated to the calling of God and led many souls to believe in Christ and join the church. Milburn Morelock (1948-1949), Joe Hickman (1950), Joe Hickman and Willard Carter (1951), J.H. Sybert (1952-1953), J.H. Sybert and Leon Lane (1954-1955), Walter Pendergrass (1956-1958), Leon Lane (1959), Leon Lane and Joe McMurray (1960), Joe McMurray (1961), J.H. Sybert (1962-1965), J.L. Hill (1966-1969), J.H. Sybert (1970-1973), Glen Williams (1974-1977), Howard Sybert (1978-1985), Bobby Williams (1986-1992), Gordon Justice (1993-1994), Bobby Williams (1995-1997), Oscar Irvin 1997-Present).

Poplar Grove has been blessed with many faithful and devoted deacons: Luna Brown, Everett Sims, Ellis Wallen, Laney Shipley, Tom Ferguson, Hugh Price, Harold Thomas, Marvin Ketron, Paul Wallen, Ellis "Ikey" Wallen, Bill Poole, Jerry Persinger, Austin Adams, Bill Spurlock, and Carson Sturgill (all now deceased). Our current faithful and devoted deacons are R.B. Louthian, Steve Hunt, and Gary Short.

Our church has had only five clerks during these 75 years. Luna Brown (1948), Delmer Wallen (1949-1950, drafted to military), Eliza Holmes (1951-1976), Jean Wallen (1976-1988), Joyce Greer (1988-1991), Jean Wallen (1991-2022), Priscilla Irvin 2022-Present.

Working with the local churches this past year had been a joy. We have enjoyed good fellowship and new friendships have been made. We are thankful for this opportunity that God made a part of our journey.

Willow Chapel

On June 6, 1953, members of Walnut Chapel Primitive Baptist Church convened for a regular business meeting. During this session, it was moved, seconded, and voted to open a Primitive Baptist Mission in the Tate store building, located in West Carter's Valley, three miles to the west.

The first service of the mission was held on June 28. After singing songs of Zion, prayer was led by Brother Bob Bishop. Elder Dana Crawford brought the message, using Hebrews 13:8 as the text, and the thought, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday,

today, and forever.” Services were held each Sunday evening until August 1, 1953, when six members from Walnut Chapel organized a Sunday School.

On April 3, 1954, it was agreed for this mission to become an organized church calling for an arm from West View Primitive Baptist Church, and on April 18 of the same year, Willow Chapel Primitive Baptist Church was officially formed. Elder Basil Freeman was elected to be the first pastor, and Henry Powers was elected as the temporary clerk. The first members were Charles and Ruby Culbertson, received by letter from West View, and Walter Powers, J. A. Freeman, Eckle Ford, Henry Powers, Elmo Parks, Fannie Powers, and Bessie Freeman, received by letter from Walnut Chapel. Ann Freeman, Barbara Parks, and Jewel Culbertson were received by experience and were kept under the watch care of the church until they could be baptized. Eckle Ford was set aside to prove himself for the office of deacon. Charles Culbertson and Tom Adams soon joined Brother Ford as deacons.

In June 1954, a building committee was chosen to begin preparations for a church building. The church plans were finalized in July, and construction began soon after. The first services were held in the church basement on October 31, 1954. It was eight years later that the church was completed, and the first services were held in the sanctuary in October of 1962. The debt for the church building was paid in full on September 11, 1967; a dedication and “burning of the note” took place the following Sunday. This original church is still the one used today. A fellowship hall was added in 2009, and the sanctuary was fully remodeled in 2015. Willow Chapel does not have room to host the Association on its own grounds but was blessed to co-host the Association in 2020 with Copper Creek at Copper Creek.

Over the years, several God-fearing men have dedicated themselves to the office of pastor: Basil Freeman, Gerald Hopkins, J. L. Hill, Glen Williams, Gale Derrick, Echol Head, Frank Gilliam, and Carl Smith. Scott Tipton is the current pastor, having served 15 years to date. Their faithful servitude is greatly appreciated by all who have sat under their preaching, church members and visitors alike.

The Lord caused the sun to rise and warm the grounds as God’s children gathered for the 171st annual session of the Eastern District Association of Primitive Baptists on the grounds of Burke’s Union Church. Sister Zula McCullough and Brother Marcel Bledsoe led the congregation in singing joyful praises to the King of Kings. Souls in danger, look above, for Jesus completely saves. He will take you home to Heaven if you will let the Savior in.

Elder Terry Sizemore, as moderator, welcomed everyone to the 171st annual gathering of the Eastern District Association of Primitive Baptists, thanking God for the

good crowd and for the tent also being full of the Lord. He continued, asking for all to obey the Spirit of God and thanking God for our goodly heritage.

Elder Sizemore called attention to two ministers from among us that have left this world in the past year. Elder Lewis Baker and Tony Peters are now absent from the body, but they are present with the Lord.

The moderator reminded everyone to turn in church letters, obituaries, and financial contributions. The Letter Committee for 2023 was appointed beforehand, consisting of Ronnie Johnson(chairman), Dennis Stewart, David Horton, and Clifton Horne (alternate).

The moderator appointed the Committee on Religious Exercises, which consists of Roy Jones (chairman), Steve Hunt and Joe Horton.

Sister Zula McCullough led the congregation in singing the Association's standard song, "Brethren, We Have Met Again." Oh, how sweet in union dear, we have met in council here. The Lord is here, our souls to bless, and our hope and faith increase.

Elder Scott Tipton, the pastor of Willow Chapel, one of the host churches, came forward to welcome everyone on behalf of the host church and thanking Burkes Union for the use of the grounds and the folks from Chestnut Flats and West View that have joined in as part of the host churches. He stated that he is looking for a good time in the Lord and for some lost soul to be saved.

We were blessed with special singing by Jason Robinette. I owe my life to Him; I've got so much to thank Him for.

The Moderator asked all ministers to sign the minister's book, including ministers from other associations and church affiliations.

Spiritual testimonies were shared, and prayer requests were made for the lost, the sick, our churches, Betty Sizemore, a baby facing surgery, Sue Camp, Virgie Grace Hill, Wayne Gibson, Virgie Cross, Kenneth Cross, Greg Hall, Anita Dixon, Brenda Bowlin, Betty and Herschel Baker, Betty Jo Lawson, Jimmy Huff, the upcoming revivals at Valley View and Marion Robinette Memorial, Cora L. Neeley, Clifton Horne, Nell Kendrick, David Gillenwater, Hunter Hensley's dad, papaw, and mom, Vickie Jones, Roger Jones, Mike Johnson, Roger Manring's family, many unspoken requests and several requests the clerk could not hear. Elder David Parsons came to the stand to lead the congregation in prayer, taking the requests to God and thanking Him for the opportunity to be here and the beautiful day.

Having been chosen to preach the introductory sermon, Elder Oscar Irvin came to the stand, stating it is a joy and privilege to be here among so great a people. Elder Irvin read from the 8th chapter of Romans, beginning at the 18th verse, and continuing through the end of the chapter, using the 32nd verse as his text. "He that spared not his own Son,

but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" All things were made by God and for His Glory. He created the Earth, and He created Adam from the clay and breathed the breath of life into him. Death reigned from Adam to Moses. Grace and truth came by Jesus for us to escape the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son. He has given us everything, as we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus, and we are made alive in Christ and alive forevermore. By His abundant mercy, He has begotten us again unto a lively hope that's incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. The only way to heaven is through and by Jesus, by believing on the death, burial, and resurrection.

Elder Scott Tipton, chosen as the alternate, followed, preaching from the same thought and text. God is a spirit and seeketh such to worship him in spirit and in truth. We got part of God when he breathed the breath of life into Adam. He loved him, communed with him, talked with him. He didn't hold anything back. Spiritual death came to Adam, and the bond that he had existed no more, as he was separated and alienated from God. But the power of God is on hand. The power came through Jesus. We cannot be good enough, but there is something on the inside that is. What Jesus Christ freely gave makes us worthy. He gave it *all* to us, and not even death can take it away. But, if you don't have Jesus, you have nothing. You can be saved wherever you are, whenever you answer the Lord's call.

We were adjourned for lunch with fellowship and a song of praise.

Thursday Afternoon, October 5, 2023

The congregation began singing hymns as we all gathered back to the tent for the afternoon service. Built by Jesus on high, there we never shall die. That land is fairer than day. Brother Bradley Brown stayed at the stand for a testimony following the congregational singing. Sister Savannah Harkleroad sang about our Good Shepard, how wonderfully he cares for each of us, and how rich we are in Christ and His treasure. Special songs from Sister Aubra Hill and Elder Terry Sizemore followed. Elder Hunter Hensley came to the stand to speak his heart and beg some lost soul to answer the call of the Lord.

Prayer requests were made for the lost, Tommy Meade's lost brother and sister-in-law, Roger VanHoose's great-grandson and father-in-law, Daniel Van Hoose, David Van Hoose, Nick Andrews, Sherrie Brown, Frank Gilliam, Darcy Lawson, August Robinette's five sisters, Sharon Rogers, and many unspoken requests and ones the clerk couldn't hear, along with several wonderful testimonies. Brother Ralph Baker humbly bowed to thank the Lord for forgiveness and for salvation and asking God to Bless this Association meeting.

Brother Ronnie Johnson, Chairman of the Committee on Church Letters, came forward stating it is a privilege to serve the Association and to give the report of our state and standing. Three church letters have not been received, those being Flower Gap, Osbornes Chapel, and Shelby Creek. Flower Gap's letter is complete and is expected to be here tomorrow. With 33 churches total, it was motioned, seconded, and voted to accept the recommendations of the committee and seat those delegates duly elected or appointed by their respective churches as the voting body of the association.

The moderator asked for nominations to serve as moderator pro-tem during the election of the association officials. Elder Roger VanHoose was nominated. No other nominations were made. It was motioned, seconded, and voted for nominations to cease. Elder VanHoose came forward to serve during the election.

The moderator asked for nominations to serve as clerk and treasurer of the association. Brother Kevin Hale was nominated, and it was seconded for him to serve as clerk and treasurer. It was motioned and seconded for nominations to cease. Through the vote, he will serve for the ensuing year.

The moderator asked for nominations to serve as moderator of the association. Elder Terry Sizemore was nominated, and it was seconded for him to serve as moderator of the association. Elder Jason Robinette was nominated to serve as moderator, but the nomination failed due to lack of a second. It was motioned and seconded for nominations to cease. Through the vote, Elder Sizemore will serve as moderator for the ensuing year.

Elder Sizemore humbly thanked the delegation for the honor and privilege to serve and for their vote of confidence. We pray the Good Lord will help us to be obedient to the Holy Spirit in fulfilling our duties to the Association.

The moderator asked for a motion and second to allow him to appoint all committees necessary to carry on the business of the association. It was motioned, seconded, and voted to allow the moderator to appoint any and all such committees.

The moderator then appointed the following committees:

Committee on Electrical and PA System: Delmer McPherson (chairman), Scott Mellons, Eric McPherson, Clifford Bledsoe, Danny Lawson, Adam Lawson, and Curtis Hale.

Committee on Newly Constituted Churches: Ministers: Mike Fullington (chairman), Carter Hagar, Jerry Johnson; Deacons: Doug Willis, Rodney Dodson; Laymen, Richard Carter, Doyle O'Dell.

Committee on Obituaries: Robert Brown (chairman), Gary Hall, and Joseph Robinette.

Committee on Arrangements and/or Queries: Ministers: Harmon Willis (chairman), Curtis Hale, Burnice Sybert, Oscar Irvin, Johns Banks, Roger Van Hoose, and Kevin Cross.

The Moderator stated the need to appoint a new trustee for Ohio due to Joe Pitzer leaving the association. Jake Fairchild, a deacon at Fairview (Bellbrook), was appointed to take over that duty.

Brother Roy Jones, chairman of the Religious Exercises Committee, came forward to give the committee's report.

- Thursday night at Willow Chapel: Joseph Robinette and Robert Brown
- Friday Morning in Stand: Mike Fullington and John Banks
- Friday night at Marion Robinette: Tyler Stapleton and Roger VanHoose
- Saturday morning in Stand: Daniel Hurd, Burnice Sybert, and Terry Sizemore
- Sunday morning in Stand: Kevin Cross and David Parsons
- Sunday morning in Copper Creek: Hunter Hensley

The moderator reminded the delegation that Excused Absence forms are available at the clerk's desk, as well as a Community Service form.

Brother Delmer McPherson, chairman of the Electrical and PA System Committee, came forward to give the report. Brother McPherson began by thanking the Lord for saving his soul and begging the lost to not leave without accepting Jesus. He also thanked the other members and all the help in preparation and during the association. He reported the new computer was purchased and is working well.

It was motioned, seconded, and voted to allow the clerk to pay fees and replenish the necessary forms and supplies to properly perform his duties.

It was motioned, seconded, and voted to have all things which are standard printed in the minutes.

It was motioned, seconded, and voted to allow the clerk \$2,000 in appreciation for his services.

It was motioned, seconded, and voted to allow the moderator \$1,000 in appreciation for his services.

Elder Scott Tipton, of the host church, came forward to discuss some rotting wood found around the doors on the mobile cookhouse. The price for new fiberglass doors

with composite frames will cost \$1,020 for the double doors and \$520 for the single door. Elder Tipton will take care of installation with help from others in the association. It was motioned, seconded, and voted to purchase the doors.

Elder Irvin mentioned that the Friday offering could be used to help cover the cost of the doors. He also stated the cookhouse has plenty of to-go meals available.

The clerk reported all financial transactions of the year to the delegation. It was motioned, seconded, and voted to accept the financial report as read.

The business being concluded, the delegation was dismissed in prayer by Elder Burnice Sybert until Friday morning, October 6, 2023.

Friday Morning, October 6, 2023

The second day of the 171st Association began as Sister Zula McCullough and Marcel Bledsoe led the congregation in singing songs of Zion. I have found a friend in Jesus. He's everything to me. How Great Thou Art!

Elder Sizemore welcomed everyone to today's service, thanking God for salvation and praising God for us being included in the roll that will be called on that day.

We were blessed with spiritual testimony and singing from Null Lawson, then the host churches. I'll shout with victory as I'm leaving here. What a journey this journey has been. There's a happy land of promise where the saved of earth shall soon the glory share. When the storms of doubt against me roll, I ask the Lord to take control. Rock of Ages, keep my soul! Elder Kevin Cross obeyed the Spirit, preaching as the congregation stood and sang "What a Day That Will Be." Certainly, we have received an earthly taste of how that day will be when we shed this old clay and get on a cloud to go home. Elder Sizemore invited the lost to take part in God's healing of the soul.

Testimonies and prayer requests were made for the lost, the sick, Tee Osborne, June Sybert, Tommy Meade's lost family members, Earl Dodson, Cora L. Neeley's daughter and friends, Tyler Blakely, Donald Ray Bledsoe, Sue Clark, our young people, upcoming revivals at Valley View and Marion Robinette Memorial, our churches, Jack and Travis Willis, Kaden Sizemore, Cadie Britt, Larry Russell, Ty, Harley, Laney, our preachers, Raylynn and her step-father, and many unspoken requests. Brother Cory King came to the stand, thanking God for all He has done and asking God to touch the prayer requests and to save the lost.

The delegation was called to order to transact the business.

It was motioned, seconded and voted to adopt the business proceedings of yesterday as read.

The Moderator reminded all ministers to sign the minister's book, including ministers from other associations and church affiliations.

Elder Mike Fullington, having been chosen by the Committee on Religious Exercises, came forward to preach the first half of the service, expounding on how much he loves the Association and has enjoyed the meeting thus far and testifying to the many gifts from God that he is glad of. Elder Fullington read from the 13th chapter of the book of Hebrews, beginning at the first verse and reading through the 15th verse, using the 8th verse as his text, and his thought, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." People have changed, but the Great High Priest has not changed. In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth, and He's still the same today. The God that answered Elijah by fire is still the same God that will still answer today. From before the foundation of the world, God knew we'd need a Redeemer. He's still the same and still willing and able to save the lost. If we don't live until tomorrow, God will still be the same. We're only here for a few days, and we'll find trouble, but we can look to God, believe the report of Christ's resurrection, and be victorious over death, hell, and the grave.

Elder John Banks came forward to take the second half of the preaching service, preaching from the same text, stating that God was still the same today as when he started preaching. We're still holding to His unchanging hand. Elisha picked up the mantle of Elijah and was able to separate the waters. He's the same God now. His word doesn't change for anyone. It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this, the judgement. We all must stand before God, and our righteousness is as filthy rags. But Jesus made us able to stand before the throne of God with our sins covered under the blood of Christ. We were lost without any hope, blinded by the enemy, which is sin. Those that die without knowing Him, without the blood of Christ, will be cast into outer darkness. There's no other name whereby we must be saved. Jesus said no man cometh unto the Father but by me. Give your heart to Him, and He will change you, give you a new heart, and make you ready to stand before God.

The Moderator made a plea to the lost, then we were dismissed for lunch with song and fellowship.

Friday Afternoon, October 6, 2023

Much fellowship was shared as the host churches provided a delicious lunch.

Brothers Bradley Brown and Marcel Bledsoe led the congregation by singing the praises of God. When my soul is resting in the presence of the Lord, I'll be satisfied, washed like snow, and free from all sin. I know I have another building, not made with hands.

The moderator welcomed the congregation back from lunch, thanking the host churches for the wonderful lunch and thanking God for the blessing of both a natural meal and a spiritual meal.

The Holy Spirit moved as we were blessed with special singing from Millie Jade Hale, Camryn Rae Hale, Walker Bales, Neil Castle, Dennis and Karen Stewart with Roger VanHoose and Scott Tipton, Billy Marcum, Penny VanHoose, and Margaret Whitt. Of all God's miracles, the most incredible must be the miracle that rescued me. Jesus loved me, this I know! For on the cross, my burden gladly bearing, the sinless Savior died, and God, the just, is satisfied to look on Him and pardon me. He's the fountain of living water that never runs dry. I'll be planted in some graveyard, but thank God that not's the end. When Jesus comes that morning, I'll be going Home. My faith will end in sight. Face to face, I shall behold Jesus who saved me by His Grace. We'll join our loved ones and crown Christ forever, and I'll have just began to live.

The Holy Spirit moved during the singing, and the shouts were so loud that one couldn't tell when the singing had ended. Some sang, some raised hands, some stood, some shouted, some preached, some did a combination of those, but everyone seemed to enjoy the touch from on High. What a wonderful blessing to sit together in Heavenly places.

Testimonies were shared thanking God for salvation and the wonderful Spirit about this place. Prayer requests were made for the lost, the shut-ins, the previous prayer requests, Elder Carter Hagar, Elder Jim Emery, Chandler Johnson, Keith Holt's brothers, Carl, Keith, Clifton Horne, Nell Kendrick, Flo Minton, Joe and Emma Jean Robinette, Penny VanHoose, and many unspoken requests. Elder Chris Salley came forward to testify and to lead us to the Throne of Grace, thanking God for His Love, for sending Jesus for our salvation, for the Holy Spirit, and for this gathering.

The delegation was seated in order to transact the business.

Brother Ronnie Johnson, Chairman of the Committee on Church Letters, came forward stating the letters for Flower Gap and Osborne's Chapel were received and reported on their state and standing. It was motioned, seconded, and voted to accept the recommendation of the committee and seat those two churches into the voting body of the association.

It was motioned, seconded, and voted to accept the letter from Shelby Creek after the conference and include it in the minutes after it be examined by the clerk and determined to be in good standing.

The Letter Committee for 2024 was appointed: Dennis Stewart (chairman), David Horton, Clifton Horne, and Casey Breeding (alternate).

Brother Roy Jones came to the stand with testimony. He then read the report from the Committee on Religious Exercises and gave details on upcoming revivals.

- Friday night at Marion Robinette Memorial: Tyler Stapleton and Roger VanHoose
- Saturday morning in Stand: Daniel Hurd, Burnice Sybert, and Terry Sizemore
- Saturday evening at Rollers Chapel: Billy Marcum
- Sunday morning in Stand: Kevin Cross and David Parsons
- Sunday morning at Copper Creek: Hunter Hensley

The clerk read the Resolution of Thanks that he had prepared. It was motioned, seconded, and voted to print it in the minutes as read.

The moderator reported that there were \$6,070 in receipts for the year. We thank each church as they generously give to the Association year after year.

Elder Mike Fullington, on behalf of the Committee on Newly Constituted Churches, reported that none had been received this year.

Elder Robert Brown reported on behalf of the Committee on Obituaries that 25 have been received at this time. A reminder was given to turn in any remaining obituaries within two weeks if it is desired to be included in the 2023 minutes.

Elder Harmon Willis, on behalf of the Committee on Arrangements and/or Queries, reported that none have been received.

The moderator noted that all committees are dismissed upon delivering their final report.

Elder Oscar Irvin came forward on behalf of the host churches to extend thanks to the many area businesses that donated to our association and to David Horton and Jennifer Horton for securing those donations.

The men chosen to write the circular letter for 2023 were Brother Joe Horton and Deacons Roy Jones and Rodney Dodson. The three men came forward, and Brother Joe Horton began by testifying as to how the letter came about and how the Lord blessed throughout. Brother Roy Jones read their letter. Its message was one of Love, and was

intended to be of comfort and hope to those that hear and read it. It was motioned, seconded, and voted to print the letter in our minutes as it was read.

The moderator appointed the Committee on Circular Letters for 2024 which includes: Elder Jason Robinette, Elder David Parsons, and Danny Lawson.

Ralph Lawson, Jr. led the congregation in singing "Are You Washed in the Blood?" as several volunteers took up an offering to be used to help cover the cost of purchasing new doors for the cookhouse. A generous donation of \$1,560 was received.

The moderator reminded the delegation that only those chosen or appointed by their respective churches as delegates were allowed to vote, and the maximum number of votes per church was 4, if all delegates are present. Likewise, if only one delegate was present, then the church would only have one vote.

There were two churches that asked for the association to meet with them next year. These are Burke's Union and Fairview (Bellbrook).

Brother Daniel Osborne made the initial plea on behalf of Burke's Union. Shannon Payne delivered the first plea on behalf of Fairview Church. Elder David Parsons stood to bring the second plea for Burke's Union to host the next Association. The last speaker was Elder Joseph Robinette who pled for the Association to be sent to Bellbrook, OH.

Through the vote, the Association was sent to Burke's Union, where, the Good Lord willing, we will convene on the Thursday morning (October 3, 2024) before the first Saturday in October 2024 for the 172nd annual gathering. The introductory and alternate sermons will be preached by Elders Curtis Hale and David Parsons, respectively.

Elder Justin Winstead dismissed the congregation in a word of prayer, thanking the Lord for His wonderful Spirit and asking that He continue to bless us greatly.

We were adjourned until Saturday morning, October 7, 2023.

Saturday Morning, October 7, 2023

It was a cool, brisk morning, but that did not stop God's children from gathering under the tent for our Saturday service. Brother Marcel Bledsoe led the congregation sings praises to our omnipotent God. Just one glimpse of Him in Glory will the toils of life repay. What a joyful thought that my Lord I'll see. Those gone before me I shall meet. Some happy day I'll live with Christ for aye. Happy praise to the King, through eternity sing.

Elder Terry Sizemore welcomed everyone to our Saturday morning memorial service and thanking God for his presence at this place. It might be cool weather, but there is a fire and a light in God's people. The world will never match what God is.

Special singing and testimony were shared by David and Wanda Parsons with Kim Robinette, Clifton Horne, Roger VanHoose, Scott Tipton, Dennis and Karen Stewart, and Carl Osborne. Some day we can go there through His marvelous grace. I can almost see the lights of Home. Beyond the sunset is that Better Home. In Heaven with Jesus I'll be. I've placed my trust in Jesus, and when He calls, I will answer. I'm so glad I've got a better place to go. I gave to him nothing, but He gave me everything. I have tasted the goodness of the Lord. How I long for that day when he calls me to meet Him far away from this old troublesome world. We'll rise in His likeness, then we'll all be satisfied. There will be no graves on that bright shore.

Testimonies and answered prayers were shared to glorify God and prayer requests were made for the lost, the sick, our youth, Earica and Monica Marshall, David Gillenwater, August Robinette's sisters, children, and grandchildren, Tommy Johnson, Sharon Rogers, Hunter Hensley's dad and papaw, the upcoming revivals, our churches, and many unnamed and unspoken requests. Brother Steve Hunt led us to the throne of grace, thanking the Lord for allowing us to be here, the Holy Spirit, and the preaching of the Gospel and asking Him to bless the prayer request and to save the lost.

The delegation was seated in order to transact the business.

It was motioned, seconded, and voted to adopt the business proceedings of yesterday as read, adding the list of area businesses that made donations.

Brother Roy Jones provided the final report of the Religious Exercises Committee and provided details around upcoming revivals.

- Saturday evening at Rollers Chapel: Billy Marcum
- Sunday morning in Stand: Kevin Cross and David Parsons
- Sunday morning at Copper Creek: Hunter Hensley

- Revival at Valley View will begin October 16, 2023, at Valley View, at 7pm nightly. Elders Oscar Irvin, Wally Berry, and Chris Salley will be preaching.
- Rolling revival beginning November 5, 2023, holding 2 nights each at Davis Chapel, Wallens Creek, and Blue Springs (Duffield) at 7pm nightly. Elders Jason Robinette and Joseph Robinette will be preaching.
- Revival at Marion Robinette Memorial will begin November 12, 2023, at 6pm on Sunday night and then 7pm nightly. Elders Oscar Irvin and Jason Robinette will be preaching.

The moderator passed on that the church at Little Cowan appreciated the prayers and donation from others in the association.

It was stated that the Electrical and PA system, primarily Adam Lawson, could help get announcements on the website, if desired.

For many years, the Saturday morning service has been dedicated as a memorial service for those saints who have already moved to a better land. The moderator read the names of those saints that have gained their eternal reward in the past year. What a joy to know where we go when we leave this world! It was then asked that Elder Roger VanHoose sing "Letters to My Father."

Elder Daniel Hurd, who was chosen to take the first part of the preaching service by the Committee on Religious Exercises, began by reading from Joshua chapter four, verses six and seven, using the thought, "These stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever."

We have something to remember. It is the blood shed that was on Calvary's cross. This same Jesus that has gone away will come again in like manner. The Eastern sky will be split wide open, and we will see the Glory of God. He's an amazing God in what he has done, what He is doing, and what he's going to do. He knew we would need a Savior. His table is spread, and it has everything we need to get through this life. We can't lose it. No one can pluck us from His hand. He took out the stony heart and put in a heart of love and left no scar. Because of him, we have a better place to go. Our souls will soar above the clouds, all because Jesus Christ loved us and died on the cross. We have something to look forward to. We will be reunited when we depart this old world. We are already set free, but the best is yet to come.

Elder Burnice Sybert came to the stand to preach the next part of the memorial service, stating it is a wonderful place to be. Looking back over the years, the Lord has met with us many times. Since his first association in 1948 at Ida, it is a different generation of people, but the power of the Lord is still manifested during the meetings of the Association. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and the power of God felt back then is the same one now. The Children of Israel left the memorial after crossing Jordan, though it's probably been torn down. Satan has tried to tear this memorial down. How foolish it is to be divided over the simple things. In 1954, there were 99 churches. A third left. In 2011, another third left. By the grace of God, we are still the same people with the same beliefs. We are still original Primitive Baptists, proclaiming the same Gospel as the New Testament. Almost all those people from 1948 are gone Home. A lot of the next generation are now gone. Another generation is here, and there will still be faith when the Lord returns. Otherwise, the apostle Paul would not have said, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Amos said, "Prepare to

meet thy God.” We need to let people know how important it is for them to be prepared. We will have to give an answer to what we’ve done with our salvation. Elder Sybert closed by telling everyone that he loved them and telling us to ask ourselves, “Am I doing everything that God would have me to do?” Ask the Lord to help, and He will.

Elder Terry Sizemore was chosen to take the final portion of the memorial service, using the same scripture. There will be a transition from where we are to where we are going. Children of Israel stirred around in the wilderness for 40 years due to unbelief, and when it came time to move into the land of promise. Moses had to step aside. God told Joshua when the peoples of God have gone across, have men from each tribe take a stone from where the priests stood, carry it out, and stack them as a memorial. Their children will ask “what meanest these stones?” and they would testify that they came through that way. We have left the troubles and trials of sin behind. Pick up the stone and leave a memorial. The world should see something in us that will make them ask, “what meaneth this stone?” What a pleasure to tell people of that Country and how when this body is laid aside, we can go there through the blood that was shed on Calvary, where Jesus died in your place. Use your life as a witness that you came through Jordan. When this clay is set aside, we have a better country in which to go. Show that you have a stone stacked.

Another beckoning call for the lost to come to repentance was made, also inviting anyone who needs prayer to do so.

There has been such a sweet peace this morning and all week, and the Holy Spirit has certainly been present. He is good, and we are thankful for His blessings.

We were dismissed with a song from Elder Jason Robinette as we were adjourned until Sunday morning, October 8, 2023.

Sunday Morning, October 8, 2023

Expecting a large crowd, as the host churches and several other churches dismissed their own services to attend the Sunday morning Association service, it was decided to leave the tent up for the final service of the 171st annual meeting of the Eastern District Association of Primitive Baptists.

Sister Zula McCullough and Brothers Andy Wallen and Ronnie Johnson, along with several of God’s children gathered at the stand, led the congregation in singing songs of praise to Jesus and of the Joys of Heaven. What have I to fear when I’m leaning on the everlasting arms of Jesus. He speaks in a still, small voice that dispels all fear. O, the

joy of that glad meeting with the saints who for us wait. What a blessed happy meeting just inside the Eastern Gate. When the dead in Christ shall rise, and the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there praising Christ the Savior for His redeeming grace and love. Why should I long for the world and its sorrows, for Heaven holds all to me.

Elder Oscar Irvin welcomed the crowd in the tent to the Sunday morning service, thanking God for each soul present and thanking Him for the wonderful Spirit during this sitting of the Association. He asked each one in attendance to take time to worship the Lord and give Him glory, and he asked any that are lost to answer the drawing of God.

We were blessed by special singing and testimony from Brenda Horton, David, Leslie, Katelyn, and Jack Roller, Billy Marcum, Millie Jade Hale and Larsyn Bledsoe, and Jason H. Robinette, Shannon Payne, and Carl Osborne. I'm headed for Heaven, and I'm well on my way. Jesus Christ, the Rock, is a firm foundation. Jesus will never forsake you! The only fire I'll ever feel is burning in my heart. My Savior's precious blood will comfort and protect you, and it will take you to Heaven. I've got so much to thank Him for; He has been so good to me! There's something about the name of Jesus!

Spirit-filled testimonies were shared, praising God for His love and good Holy Spirit, and prayer requests were made for the lost, the sick, Joe and Emma Jean Robinette, Palmer Robinette, Tommy Robinette, Kevin Cross's family, Tee Osborne, Danny Lawson, Deion Talbott, our co-workers, Gracie Wallen, Missy and Cathy Walton, the upcoming revivals, Ada's lost family and a special situation, Wanda and her family, Jennifer Horton, Clear Springs church, Boyd Osborne, Roger and Penny VanHoose, our children and grandchildren, Joe Horton's family, and many special unspoken requests. Jason H. Robinette announced his calling to preach, so be much in prayer for him as he begins his journey. Brother Billy Marcum came to lead us in singing "Amazing Grace" as crying, shouts, and praises to God came from around the tent. Brother Marcum then led us to the Lord in prayer. Thanking God for the privilege and honor to call upon Him as our Father and King and asking God to help us worship in spirit and truth, for open ears to hear, and for Him to lead us and draw the lost to repentance.

Elder Kevin Cross sang as he came to the stand to preach the first part of the service, stating it was a joy to hear the testimonies and requests from all those of the royal priesthood of God. Elder Cross read from Mark Chapter 7, verses 31-37, using a portion of the last verse as his text, "He hath done all things well." Jesus took the deaf man aside and put His fingers in his ears. It was the same finger that wrote upon the tablets on Mount Sinai. It was the same finger that wrote the law to be the schoolmaster to Christ. We have a deaf ear to the Word of God until the finger of God lets us hear. We are able to hear of Christ and His great compassion. Jesus healed and loosed the man's tongue, and the man spoke plainly. The man couldn't tell the world enough about his healing, and we should do the same regarding our salvation. All of creation praises His omnipotence and His sovereignty. Surely, He's done all things well.

Elder David Parsons came forward for the second part of the service, stating we needed to take the message of the goodness of God home with us from the Association and preaching a similar thought to the previous text. Jesus spit on the ground and mixed up the mud to put on the eyes of the blind man and told him to go wash. Follow what God told you to do. The people could see something was different about the man after he received his sight, and there should be something different about us. He told them about a man called Jesus opening his eyes. It took the touch to open the deaf ears and loose his tongue. It takes a touch from His Hand to open a blinded eye and to reveal that one's lost. Touched with a hand of Love, God spared not His Son. It takes His touch to heal your heart, to pull you out of the mire, and set your feet upon the solid Rock, which is Jesus Christ. Tell people what God has done in your life. Show people what God has done in your life.

Elder Parsons closed by testifying about a young man that was under conviction when he went home after church and about him getting saved that day. We long for some lost soul to accept Jesus unto salvation. It can still happen after we leave here. Please pray for and witness to the lost.

Elder Scott Tipton led singing while we fellowshiped followed by a number of testimonies. Elder Parsons thanked each one for their attendance today and this week. Brother Danny Lawson dismissed this service with a prayer of thanksgiving and praise.

I have thoroughly enjoyed God's blessings throughout this year's gathering, and I've seen and heard the Spirit bless so many others this week. I pray that God will continue to bless us throughout the year and again when we return to the same location for the third year to join Burke's Union Church for the 172nd annual session of this Grand Ol' Body.