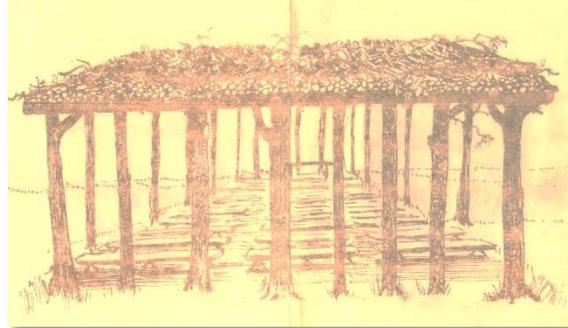


Austin Grove Missionary Baptist Church was organized October 2, 1914, on Old Burnt House Road, now known as Austin Grove Church Road. Two acres of land were deeded to Austin Grove Church on the twenty-second day of October, 1914 by Wesley M. Austin and his wife, Jennie House Austin, to be the permanent property of the church. The only condition was that the land be used as a place of public worship of God by the Missionary Baptist. Thus the name of Austin Grove was given to the church.

The first meetings were held under a brush arbor until a church building could be constructed. A brush arbor is simply a frame built with poles. Tree limbs and brush are laid across the top to provide shade and shelter overhead with very little protection from the cold.



The church began with forty-eight members, seventeen men and thirty-one women. Thirty-six members were present for the first service. Charter members recalled that services were not rained out nor was the weather so cold to necessitate calling off a single meeting that first winter.

Organization of the church was mainly through the efforts of Rev. W.B. Holmes, Rev. A. Marsh, Rev. J.A. Bivens, Rev. T.P. Little, Rev. E.C. Snyder, and Rev. R.M. Haigler. Rev. Holmes, the first pastor, served 1914-1915. "Preacher Holmes", as he was known, died July 6, 1970.



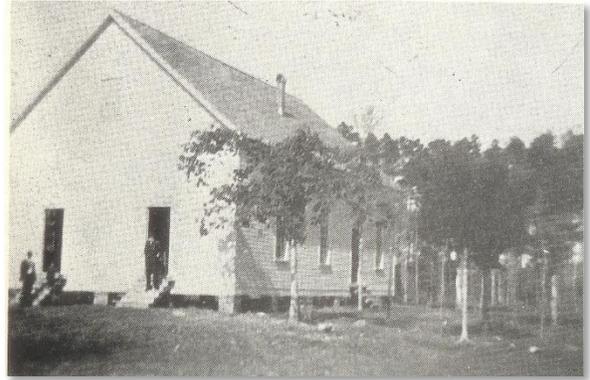
Rev. Wade Holmes  
1914-1915

Following is an exact copy of the minutes of the first church:

*Austin Grove Baptist Church  
Saturday, October 10, 1914  
The church met, preaching by Rev. W.B. Holmes.  
In conference, the church elected John B. Little church clerk.  
J.W. Traywick was elected treasurer of the church and building fund.  
S.D. Mills was elected as Sunday school Superintendent.  
Z.T. Traywick was received as deacon having been ordained.  
Lanson Phifer, R.C. Tarlton and G.W. Haigler were also elected as  
deacons of the church.  
Received Sister Dora Phifer on certificate from Rev. J.W. Little.  
Lanson Phifer, Z.T. Traywick, G.W. Haigler, W.M. Austin and B.R Mills  
were elected as a building committee.  
There being no further business of importance, conference adjourned.  
W. B. Holmes, Moderator John B. Little, Church Clerk*

Minutes of the early church conferences are still in good condition.

Construction on the church building was started soon after its organization. Church members did most of the work on the building. Hartsell Nash was paid one dollar per day as foreman over construction. On December 16, 1914, a group of church members went on wagons to Pageland, South Carolina, to get shingles for the roof. Among those who went were Milton Austin, Lanson Phifer, and Claude Haigler. The day was so cold and icy that they had to walk alongside the wagon to keep up their circulation to prevent freezing. The exact date of the trip was recalled because Wade Phifer was born that day.

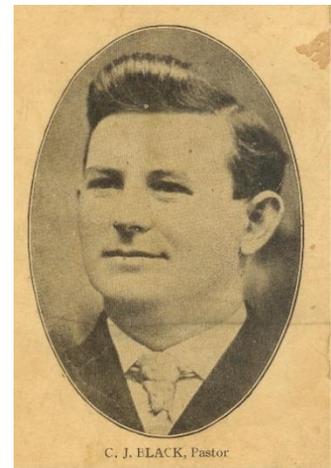


Austin Grove's first building,  
with separate doors for men and women

Services were held in the new building before it was floored. The congregation sat on pine slabs laid across blocks. Someone recalled that Bruce Phifer, a small boy at the time, was jumping from sleeper to sleeper and fell. He cut his leg very badly and his father, Lanson Phifer, carried him to the doctor for treatment. Then on December 4, 1915, a committee was appointed to get lumber for the ceiling of the church.

The dedication sermon for the church building was preached on the first Sunday in July, 1916, by Rev. C.J. Black, whose theme was "My Church." The scripture passages he used were Matthew 16:15-20, Acts 2:1-28, and Colossians 1:24 with the main text being Matthew 16:18-19:

*"And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*



Rev. C.J. Black  
1916-1918

On November 4, 1916, W.M. Austin and Tim Lingle were appointed to raise money to buy paint for the church. Records show that \$54.80 was collected. In March 1917, money was raised to buy carpeting for the church. A note in the minutes states that no service was held in February, 1918, due to bad weather. On August 3, 1918, B. L. Medlin was appointed to get latches for the church windows. The first mention of a Thanksgiving offering in the amount of \$22.10 to the orphanage appeared in the minutes of November 30, 1918.

According to the treasurer's report on January 4, 1919, there was a balance of forty-three cents shown for the previous year. An organ for the church was ordered in June, 1919. A motion was made in conference on December 13, 1919, to change preaching services from two o'clock on Sunday afternoon to eleven o'clock Sunday morning, but the motion did not carry.

Edgar Jordan and Lilla Staton, Mrs. Belle Haigler's sister, were married at Austin Grove, the first couple to be married in the new church. Rev. A. Marsh, who served as pastor from 1919 to 1920, performed the marriage ceremony.

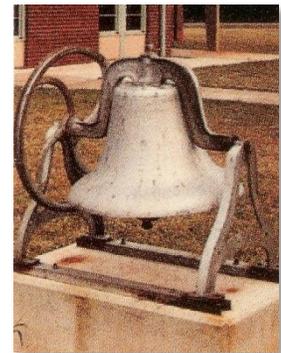


Nora Phifer (center), with husband Lanson (to her right) and family

Mrs. Nora Bailey Phifer (November 26, 1876 - February 19, 1920) was the first person to be buried at Austin Grove. Mr. George W. Haigler (May 7, 1856 – December 7, 1920) was the second. Four years later on June 14, 1924, conference minutes state that the church bought one-half acre of land from W.M. Austin to be used for the cemetery.

A spring located on the northeast side of the church property furnished water for the church until 1955, when the church parsonage was built and a well was dug to provide water for the parsonage and the church. Until this day, this spring has never been known to be dry. In the dry summer months, people of the community hauled water from this spring in barrels for home use and family washing (laundry). Many older adults can remember being carried to the spring by their parents to get water during preaching service and sometimes to be served a little "hickory tea" if they had been misbehaving. (In the spring of 2014, the area around the spring has been cleared and a path has again been created.)

Money was collected on December 13, 1924, to purchase lamps for the church. In April, 1925, M.C. Austin, L.T. Phifer, and R.C. Tarlton were appointed to buy a bell for the church, which was bought and placed on the ground in front of the church. Later a brick stand was built for the bell and later the bell and stand were moved to the right rear of the church. (As of 2014, the bell sits in the church's west side yard.)



In February, 1926, the church voted to give one-third of all money collected to missions and two-thirds to the preacher.

A decision was made on February 11, 1928, to put up a sign in the grove in front of the church displaying the name and date the church was organized. Shades for the pulpit were purchased that same month. At that time, the Sunday school rooms had not been built and the new pulpit jutted out from the church in a bay window fashion.

Sunday school was graded, three new classes were added, the six-point record system was implemented, and rooms were curtained off for classes in March, 1929.

In November, 1929, the church voted to let sexton (custodian) Neal Edwards buy heater wood for the church, and on January 18, 1930, it was reported that Eula Marsh gave the wood. Neal Edwards hauled it, and S.D. Mills sawed it with no charge from either party.

A resolution dated May 26, 1930, expressed sympathy of the church members to the family of Rev. A.I. Honeycutt at his death. He had served as pastor of Austin Grove from 1925 to 1929.

The Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) was organized on September 20, 1931. Charter members were Miss Verona Austin, Mrs. Emma Edwards, Mrs. Flonnie Traywick, Mrs. Ida Mae James, Mrs. Nettie Tarlton, Mrs. Lessie Phifer, Mrs. Mary Lee Phifer, Mrs. Letha James, Mrs. Cora Hill, and Mrs. Musetta Griffin.



An early group of WMU ladies and their children, circa 1940

The church voted in October, 1931, to give ten percent of all money collected to the Cooperative Program. The pastor began receiving his salary monthly instead of quarterly in 1931.

Timber on the church yard was cut on a Wednesday in mid-December, 1935.

A finance committee was appointed in January, 1936, to canvas every church member to raise money to build Sunday school rooms. The church authorized the building committee to buy a heater for the Sunday school rooms in November, 1936, which must have been completed during that year.

In March, 1937, the church voted to give Wingate College (now Wingate University) two and one-half percent of the regular offering.

It was decided in June, 1937, to discontinue Saturday services and hold preaching services twice each month on the first and third Sundays. The next year, insurance was bought for the church. Also later that year, plans were made to add two more Sunday school classrooms.

In 1942 during World War II, a flag was presented to the church. Members serving in the armed forces were represented by stars on the flag.



Rev. N.C. Coggins  
1930-1933

In November, 1943, plans were made to underpin the church, hang sheetrock, and heat the sanctuary. Almost two years later, September, 1945, a building committee recommended another addition to the Sunday school rooms. Austin Grove was host to the Union Baptist Association in 1944.

Another change in services was noted in 1946. There were three services a month: the first Sunday morning at 10 o'clock, the second Sunday night at 6:30, and the fourth Sunday morning at 11 o'clock. The deacons recommended on February 10, 1952, that a Training Union be organized.

A gift of timber to be used to build a parsonage was accepted from Milton Austin in May, 1953. That same month plans were underway to sand the floor of the sanctuary, to paint the pulpit furniture, to repaint the piano, to sand the pews, and to fix the baseboard to match the floor and pews.

Both sides of the grounds were graded in 1954 to improve the parking area. Also that year, the church was painted on the inside and outside. In addition, the Brotherhood was organized that same year. In July of 1954, Milton Austin's plans to improve and enlarge the cemetery were presented to the church, and a committee was appointed to carry out these plans.

Another mention was made in December, 1954, of Milton Austin's offer of lumber and for the new parsonium. The deacons recommended that it be built across the road in front of the church. That plan was not decided on at that time, but was accepted the next month. At that

time, finance and building committees were appointed. Those serving on the building committee were Lee Edwards, Marvin Phifer, and Arthur Davis. The finance committee consisted of Bill Edwards, Bert Barnhardt, C.M. James, Claude Haigler, and Mrs. Melvin (Minnie) Helms.

On November 6, 1955, a special conference was called by Rev. B.L. Connell. The church voted to adopt the note and deed of trust to complete payment of the parsonium. The dedication service for the parsonage was on April 1, 1956. Rev. N.S. Joyner brought the message. At the time it was dedicated, the six-room, brick structure on five acres of land was valued at twelve thousand dollars. It is believed that Theodore Griffin and



Rev. Ivory Couch  
1944-1952



Theodore and Beatrice Griffin  
exchange vows in the parsonage

Beatrice Presson Dobbin were the first couple married in the new parsonage on May 25, 1956.

A carport and storage room were added to the parsonage in 1957. In 1962, the storage room was finished and a heater installed to make a pastor's study. Two years later a small barn with a shed was built. Yard work and bulldozer work were done at that time.

Austin Grove's first full-time pastor was Rev. Brady L. Connell. Preaching services every Sunday morning began in November, 1957.

Plans for a fellowship hall were presented in April, 1958. They detailed a building 28' by 50' with a kitchen 10' by 20' and two restrooms 5' by 10'. Block construction was used for the building. After its completion, rules were adopted to limit its use to church groups and their activities. The church building was again painted inside and outside and screens were installed on the windows in 1960.



Rev. B.L. Connell  
1954-1961

Reverend Alfred Wright was pastor from 1961-1963. Their son, Joel, was the only baby born to a pastor and his wife, while residing in the parsonage. Youth Director Rocky Rushing and his wife Laura currently live in the parsonage and their daughter, Leah, was born in 2014. Reverend Wright is the keynote speaker for the



Rev. Alfred Wright  
1961-1963

100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration on October 5, 2014.

Near the middle of 1962, plans were presented to beautify, enlarge, and brick veneer the church, but the following November a planning and survey committee was appointed to investigate further to find out exactly the needs of the church and the cost before proceeding with the remodeling plans.

Austin Grove observed its fiftieth anniversary with homecoming on August 9, 1964. Previous pastors and former members were invited. Rev. W.B. Holmes, the organizer and first pastor of Austin Grove, was present. He made a very interesting talk concerning his memories of the early days of the church.



Austin Grove's first Fellowship Hall

On December 13, 1964, a motion was brought before the church to build a new church instead of remodeling the present structure. About a month later, on January 10, 1965, the church voted to build the new church at the top of the hill across the road from the cemetery. The land was donated by Milton Austin. As of that date, the total amount of land owned by Austin Grove Baptist Church was 14.15 acres.

About seventy church members drove to Hickory, North Carolina, on February 28, 1965, to see the Lakeview Baptist Mission, a mission of First Baptist Church of Hickory. Portions of their sanctuary plans were used in planning the new church building. Heath Marsh, who served on the Mission Committee of the First Baptist Church of Hickory, assisted the building committee in securing the information about the plans.

The revised planning and survey committee was made up of Bryant Griffin, Arthur Davis, Melvin Helms, Clifford Helms, and Earl James. Earl James, Arthur Davis, and Bryant Griffin served as the building committee. Finance committee members were Theodore Griffin, Robert Ansley, J.C. Griffin, Lee Edwards, and Marvin Phifer. Three trustees – Earl James, Theodore Griffin, and Robert Ansley – were appointed April 25, 1965.

Ground breaking services for the new church were conducted by the pastor, Rev. Robert Byrd, on May 23, 1965. His sermon was based on Exodus 3. Arthur Davis moved the first shovel of dirt. The first building material, steel and wire mesh, was delivered to the new church site on June 1, 1965. Actual construction began on June 7, 1965.

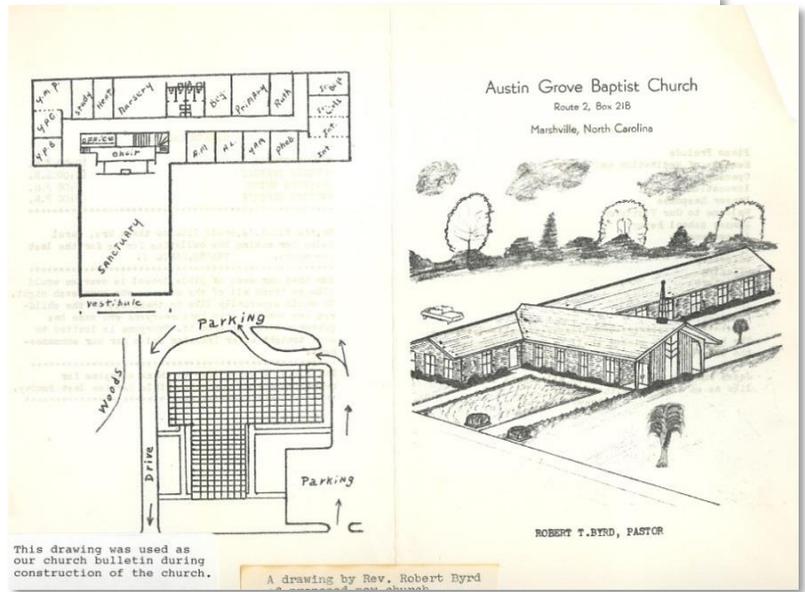


Breaking ground for Austin Grove's new building,  
May 23, 1965

Red flashed, sand finished brick from Stanly Shale Products of Norwood, North Carolina, was used to construct the outside walls of the entire church building and the inside walls of the sanctuary. Exposed beams were used overhead in the sanctuary. The entire sanctuary, pulpit and choir loft were carpeted. The baptismal pool was concealed by a removable panel in back of the pulpit and choir. All pulpit furniture, the piano, and pews were finished in a light natural tone. Green stained glass was used for the windows in the sanctuary, and glass of various colors was used on the front entrance of the church. Concrete blocks were used for the inside walls of the educational plant. Fully departmentalized Sunday school rooms, the secretary's desk with library space, and the pastor's study made up the educational plant. The floors in this area were tiled, with the exception of the pastor's study, which was carpeted. The church building was completely heated and air-conditioned. The grounds were landscaped and sowed. The driveways and parking area were graveled, and cement walks were poured. Much of the work on the church and grounds was done by church members.

Rev. Robert Byrd brought the first message in the new church on January 23, 1966. His sermon was based on the entire fourth chapter of Joshua using verse 7c as his text: *“These stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel forever.”* On the first Sunday in the new church, 157 attended Sunday school, and around 209 were present for the worship service.

Those in charge of disposing of the old church building were Bryant Griffin, Earl James and Arthur Davis.

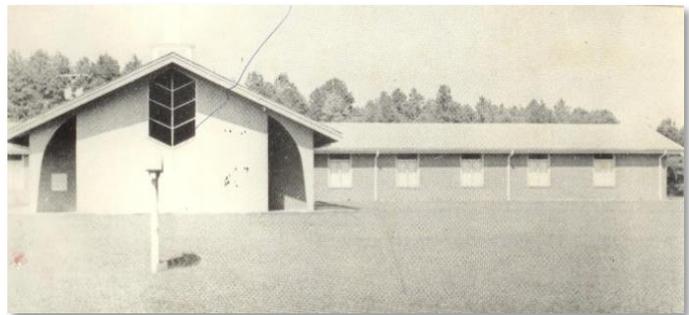


Drawings of the new building, used on bulletins during construction

A church library was established in February, 1966, and in March a decision was made to remove all shrubbery and vines from the cemetery and to beautify the grounds. Only low bronze markers were to be used in the west section.

The building fund treasurer reported on April 3, 1966, that the old church building was sold to Kenneth Horne for \$700.00. The church voted to keep the sanctuary windows, the pulpit furniture, pews, chairs, tables, heating plant, etc. These items were sold at an auction on the old church grounds on Saturday, April 23, 1966.

Homecoming and Dedication Day services for the new church were held on May 1, 1966. Rev. Robert Byrd, pastor, brought the morning message, and Dr. Carl E. Bates preached at the afternoon service. This service was concluded in front of the church where the laying of the cornerstone ceremony was held.



Austin Grove's new facility, 1966

The Church Clerk, Theodore Griffin, placed the following mementos in a receptacle that was then set behind the cornerstone:

1. Booklet of the pastorium dedication on April 1, 1956.
2. Program for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on August 6, 1964.
3. Copy of special minutes of May 2, 1965, concerning the loan for the construction of the new church building.
4. Booklet of the Homecoming and Dedication Day service on May 1, 1966.

5. Marshville Home Newspaper with write-up and History of Austin Grove, dated April 27, 1966.
6. Roll of membership of Austin Grove as of May 1, 1966.
7. Roll of Charter Members of Austin Grove.
8. Copy of Minutes for Union Association for 1964-65.
9. Copy of Conference Minutes about loan for new building.
10. Copy of By-Laws.
11. Copy of latest Associational Minutes.
12. Copy of Officers and Teachers and Budget for 1965-66.
13. Updated Church History.

Work was started in May, 1966, to convert the breezeway and carport at the parsonage into a den and bathroom and to add a metal carport at the east end of the house.

The church voted on October 2, 1966, to have the pastor and chairman of deacons and their successors to serve as a membership committee to discuss beliefs and faiths of all prospective members.

Donald Ray Helms was granted a license to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the morning service on October 9, 1966, and that afternoon an ordination service was held to ordain Frank Barwig into the ministry.

Mr. W.O. Haigler died on October 22, 1966. His was the first funeral service to be held in the new church.

On April 23, 1967, the W.B. Griffin family gave the steeple to the church as a memorial to Mrs. Musetta Phifer Griffin, a charter member.

Marine Sergeant Steven Walker and Miss Brenda Mills were the first couple to be married in the new church. Their wedding took place on January 16, 1968. An ice and snow storm forced regular church services to be called off for the day. However the wedding was held as planned, since the groom only had one week of leave before returning to base.

An organ for the church was purchased at the cost of \$2,595.00 in June of 1968.

All of the church minutes were taken to Monroe in July of 1968 to



Austin Grove's new steeple, 1967



Steven and Brenda Walker

be microfilmed by the North Carolina Department of Archives of History in order that a permanent record be kept in Raleigh.

In May, 1969, a planning and survey committee was appointed to plan an expansion of the church. More Sunday school rooms and a larger pastor's study were planned. Milton Austin gave the church approximately 200' of land on the east side of the church's current property and 600' to the north. It was agreed that Mr. Austin would have access to this land until his death or until such time that the church saw fit to use it.

A gift of the painting of the Jordan River scene on the wall behind the baptistery pool was given in June of 1969 in memory of Mr. Claude Haigler by his family.

The curb was removed from the old spring in August of 1969. The nursery was carpeted in March, 1970. In May of that same year the church voted to leave the church bell at the old church site as a memorial. It has since been moved to the new church location. The next month, the church voted to erect a sign in front of the church stating the name of the church and pastor.



Austin Grove's baptistery mural

In September, 1970, the church voted to pay Rev. Byrd's way to and from Anchorage, Alaska, to hold revival services in the Alaskan Crusade from March 21 to April 4, 1971.

In December of 1970 the church decided to make the Watch Night Service an annual event each New Year's Eve, and in April, 1971, the Easter Sunrise Service was declared an annual event.

The church voted in March, 1972, to grant a license to Tony Medlin to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A new well was punched in the upper northeast portion of the church property on October 25, 1972.

On January 7, 1973, permission was granted to Dixie Printing Company and Mack Price Studios to proceed with making pictures of families of the church and to publish a church directory.



Rev. Tony  
Medlin

Rev. Robert Byrd read his letter of resignation on February 4, 1973, to become effective March 11, 1973. A pulpit committee was elected. Rev. Brady L. Connell served as supply pastor until a new pastor could be secured.

A committee was named to see that necessary repairs be made at the pastorium. Approximately \$3,000.00 was spent for this purpose.

Rev. Robert Howard of Elizabethton, Tennessee, preached on April 1, 1973, and the church voted unanimously to call him as the new pastor. He preached his first sermon as pastor on June 17, 1973.



Rev. Robert Howard  
1973-1988

The Planning and Survey Committee recommended on April 27, 1974, that the church build additional Sunday school rooms. That recommendation was accepted. The new Sunday school addition was used first on October 5, 1975. There were 242 present.

The church voted on August 3, 1975, to observe Milton Austin Day on August 17, 1975.

On February 1, 1976, the church voted to install signs at several points in the community to direct visitors to our church and also to erect entrance and exit signs at the church and cemetery. In May of the same year, it was voted to install a sound system in the church.



Austin Grove's new Fellowship Hall, 1979

On October 2, 1977, the church voted to accept floor plans for a new fellowship hall to be built behind the church. A service was held on June 24, 1979, to dedicate this beautiful new building.

On July 13, 1980, the church voted to enlarge the existing sanctuary, add sixteen more pews, redesign the choir loft by bringing it three feet forward and cover the entire sanctuary with new carpet. Coy Broome was the building contractor. Actual construction began on November 10, 1980. Preaching services were held in the Fellowship Hall during the construction of the addition.



Sanctuary expansion, 1980

Groups of volunteer church members from Austin Grove went to West Virginia to help build church buildings in 1982, 1983, and 1984. Twenty-five hundred dollars was given to each of the churches to help purchase building materials.

On January 2, 1983, the church voted to purchase 11.87 acres of land adjoining the church



Site of West Virginia mission trips, 1982-1984

property. This included 9.1 acres adjacent to the tract containing the ball field and the old Fellowship Hall and 2.77 acres adjacent to the cemetery. In February 1983, during conference, the church voted to enlarge the cemetery to double its present size approximately.

Austin Grove observed Brady Connell Day on April 24, 1983, to honor his devoted service to the church as its first full-time pastor.

On September 4, 1983, the church voted to install a new sound system.

In the April 7, 1985 conference, the church voted to send Rev. Robert Howard to Chile in October as one of eighteen evangelists from our country. Also, in that conference, the church voted to pad the church pews.

On July 7, 1985, the purchase of a fifteen-passenger church van was approved.

On July 3, 1988, it was voted to send \$2,500 to begin with and then \$1,000 per year for the next four years toward the purchase of land for a new church in the Weddington area.

Rev. Howard read his letter of resignation on July 3, 1988. Rev. Spurgeon Dorton was called as supply pastor.

In 1988, the Women's Missionary Union members created a quilt commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of WMU in the Southern Baptist Convention. Individuals designed twenty-nine squares reflecting the various facets of WMU. The four borders contain quotations or phrases significant to WMU programs. WMU began in historic Richmond, Virginia in 1888. The organization's watchword is "We are laborers together with God."



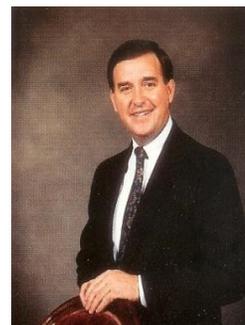
WMU Quilt, on display in the church's welcome center

On August 9, 1989 the church voted to accept a donation to blacktop roads into the cemetery and to the parsonage and to purchase a new Yamaha piano and an Allen organ, with the church paying the balance on the organ.

Rev. Jerry Ensley was called as new pastor on June 11, 1989. Rev. Ensley assumed the pastorate on September 3, 1989.

The love and guidance of Rev. and Mrs. Dorton over the previous year was celebrated with a dinner on July 27, 1989.

On October 1, 1989, Austin Grove marked its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration with a special observance during the Sunday morning service and a booklet detailing the history of the church.



Rev. Jerry Ensley  
1989-1995

In the business meeting of April 7, 1991, the lowest of three bids, the one submitted by Coy Broome in the amount of \$73,000.00 (excluding cabinets), was approved by the church for the new preschool and nursery wing. During the next month's business meeting, an additional cost of \$9050.00 was requested to meet building code requirements and was approved.

In the May 5, 1991 business session, a recommendation from the deacons that the church hire a part-time secretary for the church office was passed. In a called business meeting, September 15, 1991, a decision was made to put partitions in several Sunday school rooms to create more classrooms.

At the November 10, 1991 business meeting, the deacons recommended that the church purchase a new tape duplicator to produce tapes for shut-ins at a cost of \$1,000.00. The motion was carried.

Motions were made and passed on June 7, 1992 to replace the original air conditioning unit and to accept a monetary gift to pave additional parking lot. In a special business session on August 26, 1992, the church voted to contribute \$200.00 toward the effort against liquor by the drink.

On September 6, 1992, deacons recommended that beginning the first Sunday in October, Sunday school would begin at 9:45 AM and morning worship at 10:45 AM. In the same meeting, it was recommended that the church have a meal once a month prior to Wednesday evening services with cooking by volunteers and the cost of the meal paid by those attending. Both recommendations were accepted.

Additional bathrooms were built during 1993.

During the March 6, 1994 business meeting, it was decided to build a 40' by 60' picnic shelter behind the fellowship hall with donations of money and labor from church members. Earl James, Billy Tarleton, Theodore Griffin, and Coy Broome were designated as the committee to plan and oversee the picnic shelter project.

William R. Coleman was approved as Christian Education Director on June 26, 1994, to begin duties on August 1.

On August 7, 1994, a new brick church sign with brass letters was authorized to be constructed. In the next month's business meeting, the church approved the use of the old fellowship building for an after-school program to be self-supporting.

Rev. Jerry Ensley tendered his resignation on April 14, 1996, to be effective May 1, 1996. Rev. Spurgeon Dorton was named interim pastor during the April 21, 1996 business meeting. Chad and Jennifer Whitley were voted on to become youth directors. In the July business session, use of the new fellowship building was approved for family reunions if there is no conflict with church functions.

Rev. David Kessler began his pastorate at Austin Grove on October 14, 1996.

According to the November 3, 1996 business meeting, Austin Grove had been named as the recipient of twenty acres of land by the J.B. and Agnes Liles estate.



Rev. David Kessler  
1996-1997

Rev. Robert Byrd began serving as interim pastor in August, 1997.

The church approved the use of our facilities on May 22-23 for the North Carolina Disaster Relief and Recovery Team for the purpose of training and certification of those wishing to go out in time of disaster to assist with recovery and rebuilding.



On May 31, 1998, the church voted in favor to call Rev. Jeffrey Wayne Whitecotton to serve as pastor beginning in July.

During the July 5, 1998 business meeting, the church agreed to honor an invitation by Piney Grove East Baptist Church to share with its congregation its weeklong dedication services on Wednesday, July 8, 1998. The choir sang and the pastor brought a message for this service. In addition, the church voted to participate in a "Traveling Revival," sponsored by the "God's Men on Mission" group. Midway Baptist, Mount Pleasant Baptist, Turner Grove AME Zion, and Chambers Grove AME Zion also participated in this event.



Rev. Jeff Whitecotton  
1998-2000

During the September 7, 1998 business meeting, the church approved the purchase of a phone tree to enable the broadcast of reminders, prayer requests, etc., to the church family.

In the December meeting, the deacons recommended the purchase of a complete videotaping system to begin a videotape ministry for the sick or homebound. The motion passed.

January 3, 1999, the church voted to engage Olan Mills Studio to prepare a new church directory.

The church voted to purchase a new 29-passenger Chevrolet bus during its February 14, 1999 business meeting.

In the next month's business session, the church approved the planting of a community vegetable garden with the produce going to the needy and the homeless shelter.

The church voted to give \$2,500.00 each to Community Baptist Church in Indian Trail and El Buen Pastor (Spanish) Church in Monroe to assist in building their facilities during the

April 11, 1999 business meeting. In addition, efforts were made to hook up the church with a county water line, with a donation from Tom Faulkenberry in memory of his mother to cover the costs of connection.

On August 29, 1999, the church fellowship hall was approved as a safe haven for the community in the event of a damaging storm.

Rev. Whitecotton was approved to go with a group of pastors from North Carolina on an evangelistic mission to South Africa from September 6-21, 1999.

New playground equipment replaced unsafe items in the spring of 2000. The Building and Grounds Committee began work on a long list of repairs at the church, fellowship hall, and parsonage in the summer of 2000.

Rev. Jeffrey Whitecotton read his letter of resignation on July 30, 2000, effective September 1. Various available ministers filled the pulpit until Rev. John Wood was called as interim pastor on May 13, 2001.



Rev. John Wood  
2002-2008

On December 3, 2000, six thousand dollars of surplus treasury funds were approved to be divided evenly between El Buen Pastor and the seminary in South Africa.

In its May 6, 2001 business meeting, the church voted to establish a scholarship fund for those church members pursuing education to enter full-time Christian service and to be overseen by a committee.

Children's church began July 8, 2001.

Chad Whitley announced his call into the ministry on December 9, 2001, and was licensed on December 30, 2001 during the morning worship service. Chad and his wife, Jennifer Griffin Whitley, served as youth directors also.



Chad and Jennifer  
Whitley

In the January 6, 2002 business meeting, the following items were approved. The copier in the Sunday school office was replaced. In addition, the children's wing was equipped with audio/visual capabilities to allow nursery workers and overflow congregation to watch and hear the services. Also, the Finance Committee recommended that the following gifts be made with the abundance of funds of the past year: \$10,000.00 to the Scholarship Fund, \$3,000.00 to the Cape Town, South Africa, Seminary, \$2,000.00 (which would be paid as \$500.00 quarterly) to Rev. Edsom Magoloi, an African minister, and an additional \$1,000.00 to the Lottie Moon International Missions Offering.

In a special business meeting on January 13, 2002, the church voted to call Rev. Leon Whitley as pastor.

At the next month's meeting, the church authorized the Building and Grounds Committee to carry out the necessary repairs at the parsonage. On February 24, 2002, Rev. John Wood was called as the church's first associate pastor.

Pine trees were planted behind the fellowship hall by the National Forestry Service in 2002. That same year a new pictorial directory was created.

The choir loft was extended forward by 22 inches to accommodate a larger choir in 2003.

In a special business meeting on February 2, 2003, Austin Grove voted to install a video/projection system. In another special meeting that month, the church approved a request from Union Park Nursing Facility in Monroe to use the church fellowship hall, church building, and church bus in case of evacuation.

The Union Baptist Association held its summer session at Austin Grove on July 22, 2003.

Austin Grove observed Heritage or Old-Fashioned Day on Sunday, June 8, 2003. Many came dressed in costumes of the past: bonnets, bib overalls, work shoes, straw hats, etc. Two presentations were made. In the first one, Joe and Carolyn James Haigler presented to the church a quilt that had first been given to the church on February 23, 1932. The double-ring patterned quilt had more than two hundred names stitched on it. It was quilted by the WMU as part of a mission project. In order to stitch an adult's name on the quilt, he or she had to contribute twenty-five cents, a child, ten cents, as best as can be recollected. The quilt then was auctioned off and bought by Homer James with the proceeds of the same donated to missions. The quilt remained in the James family for seventy-one years, being passed down from generation to generation. Homer was Carolyn's grandfather. The quilt has been enclosed in a glass showcase for display in the welcome center. Many of the names are of ancestors of current members.

In the second presentation of the day, Beatrice Griffin, the unofficial church historian, donated two bulging scrapbooks of Austin Grove history, photos, newspaper clippings, etc., to the church. She had taken it upon herself to preserve the heritage of the church.



Rev. Leon Whitley  
2002-2005, 2009-



1932 Quilt

On October 5, 2003, Clara Davis, Sarah Traywick, and Kristina Deese were recognized for their beautiful work in creating an Austin Grove flag to be used during the Union Baptist Association's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

Austin Grove hosted a communitywide Thanksgiving service with Marshville First Baptist, Marshville United Methodist, and Marshville Presbyterian churches on Sunday, November 23, 2003. The tradition has carried on at Thanksgiving and Lent to the present time with a different church hosting each year.

Two new stoves were installed in the fellowship hall shortly before Christmas in 2003.

In the March 23, 2004 business meeting, the congregation voted to supply a floral arrangement in the amount of \$50.00 or a donation to a charity in that amount at the family's request at the death of a church member.

Ten adults spent July 1-11, 2004 in Anchorage, Alaska, assisting in repairs of Calvary Baptist Church there as part of the Alaska/North Carolina Baptist Partnership. Twenty-six youth and their chaperones spent the week of July 3-10 in Anchorage also as part of the World Changer's organization. Work sites were assigned by the Anchorage Housing Authority where teams of youth from all over North Carolina did roofing, deck repairs, house painting, siding installation, fence building, and backyard Bible clubs.

In August, 2004, the church parking lot was resurfaced and the asphalt in the cemetery and parsonage were resealed. Also, the church voted to sell the 1985 church van due to costly upkeep.

On Sunday, October 3, 2004, Austin Grove celebrated its ninetieth anniversary with special music and Rev. Robert Byrd, a former pastor, bringing the message during the morning worship hour. Afterwards, a covered dish luncheon was held in the fellowship hall. Special music followed in the sanctuary after lunch.

On Sunday, October 8, 2004 recommendations were made to purchase a new copier and that the main church building be re-roofed. Some donated and discount materials and labor had already been obtained and specific donations were requested in order to keep the church from going into debt.

Rev. Leon Whitley tendered his resignation as pastor on January 9, 2005 and served through February 6, 2005. On February 13, 2005 a Pastor Search Committee (Teddy Griffin, Earl James, Brenda Lee, Rob Palmer and Tim Simpson) was elected. Associate Pastor John Wood asked for those who would support the committee to stand and he led in prayer for God's guidance.

On April 17, 2005, the church approved replacing the guttering and awning that connects the back of the church with the Fellowship Building. The church received \$7,800 in insurance

and the cost of replacing the awning to code was \$8,700. The Church paid the difference. Additionally, the Church approved re-roofing and re-siding the outbuilding behind the Parsonage. Robert Palmer, representing the Pastor Search Committee, reported that the committee had narrowed the search to one primary candidate.

On July 17, 2005 Earl James, representing the Building and Grounds Committee reported that the church and parsonage repairs were complete except for one small roofing project, painting, guttering, fascia boards and yard work at the parsonage. Rev. Wood mentioned the blessing of donations to cover the roofing and windows. He made motion that the Building and Grounds Committee be given authority to go forward with the additional repairs. Rev. Wood also stated that a \$16,000 donation from the Estate of Melvin Helms had been left to the church and asked for motion to approve using those funds for the needed church and parsonage repairs. The church approved the recommendation

At a special business meeting on August 11, 2005, Robert Palmer, representing the Pastor Search Committee, stated that the Committee unanimously recommended Rev. Richard Tuttle as the next Pastor for Austin Grove Baptist Church. On October 2, 2005, Mrs. Sandy Norris, long-time church secretary was recognized for her unselfish service and high quality work. She was presented with a gift from the church. There was a standing ovation by the congregation. Sandy had recently resigned her position as church secretary to obtain full-time work.



Rev. Richard Tuttle  
2005-2008

At a special business meeting on December 9, 2005, the deacons presented a recommendation that the finance committee had approved \$50 per week to be paid to Michael Anderson and Stuart Richardson to serve as youth leaders until they finished the spring session at Wingate College. The deacons also recommended that the Sunday evening service begin at 6pm effective January 2006 and continue until Daylight Saving Time.



Michael Anderson  
Youth Minister

At a special business meeting on December 18, 2005, the deacons recommended that the church participate in a Hurricane Katrina Relief mission trip to Gulfport, Mississippi during the second week of July 2006. The trip was for youth and adults with at least one adult for each five youth. The focus was carpentry work, backyard Bible schools and recreational activities with the children. The church sent the \$300 reservation fee for the trip. A mission trip to Vermont in August also was considered.

On February 26, 2006 a special business meeting was called to approve deacon recommendations that the church purchase a defibrillator in case of heart attack by a church member. Chris and Janelle Griffin supplied the training. In preparation for the youth mission trip

to Gulfport Mississippi, Pastor Tuttle and Youth Pastor Michael Anderson took an advance trip to Gulfport on March 6 and 7. Church paid their airfare. Rob Palmer, representing the finance committee, made a recommendation that funds left to the church by the Melvin Helms Estate be granted to the Rod Davis family to be used to support their mission work in Mali, Africa.



Rodney & Julie Davis  
and family

At a special business meeting on July 22, 2006, it was recommended that the church approve replacing the oldest AC unit in the Fellowship hall. The deacons recommended that the remaining funds left in the Melvin Helms estate donation be used toward building expenses incurred on the Vermont mission trip to take place in August.

On August 6, 2006 the Building & Grounds Committee recommended church-wide capital improvement projects including painting, flooring, bathroom upgrades, electrical, installation of a fire alarm system, fencing around the playground and parking curbs, and replacement of bathroom tub and tile in the Parsonage. These proposed projects were expected to cost approximately \$54,000.

At a special business meeting on April 29, 2007, the Finance Committee recommended that the salary of the Youth Director, Michael Anderson, be increased from \$100 per week to \$200 per week. Approved.

On August 7, 2007, a recommendation was made that RAs and GAs be redirected to the Awana Program. The change was approved.

On October 7, 2007, the church approved \$5000 for the Sportsman's Banquet expenses, and \$4000 for start-up costs for the Awana Program.

At a special business meeting on January 20, 2008, the Scholarship Committee recommended and the church approved extending a one-time scholarship to Rev Richard Tuttle to defray the cost of tuition for his Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary online program.

At a special business meeting on March 9, 2008, the Audio Visual Committee recommended that church purchase an upgraded video system to include an additional camera installed near the choir. Two 42 in. plasma flat screen monitors for the choir to view, upgrade of control systems, 5 disc DVD recorders. Estimated cost of \$10,000 would include installation and set-up. A recommendation was made by Building & Grounds Committee to install commercial grade carpet and prime and paint the interior of the Youth Building. These recommendations were approved.

On April 6, 2008, the church voted to reinstate the monthly Family Night Meal that had previously been cancelled due to the conflict in time/facilities incurred with the Awana Program.

The meals were reinstated on the 3rd Wednesday night of each month. As information, it was noted that the bids for the work on the Youth Building were inadequate and once the Building & Grounds Committee had an adequate bid, they would bring it back to the church.

In June 2008 eight members participated in a second mission trip to Vermont to build an outdoor utility building for the church which was renovated by the 2007 mission team.

On September 8, 2008 the church approved a recommendation to upgrade the sign in front of the church. The church name is visible at the top of the sign and is backlit for announcement of church activities. Four inch letters are included. The panel is locked with a vandal-proof shield. Since the Griffin family donated the original sign, the Committee checked with them and they were in agreement with the upgrade. The original brickwork remained intact. The Vernon Haigler family donated the upgrade in Vernon's memory to the Glory of God.

On October 19, 2008, the Church voted to withdraw \$5000 from savings to support Shay and Gwyn Griffin's transition move to the Dominican Republic to work with Restoration Ranch. A love offering for the couple was taken on Sunday, October 26.



Shay and Gwyn Griffin

On December 21, 2008, a meeting was called to announce that Rev Richard Tuttle had resigned on December 14, effective immediately. The deacons recommended that his salary continue for a period of 90 days unless he accepted a call to another church or other employment prior to that time. This is in compliance with the Church's Constitution and By-Laws.

On January 11, 2009, the church approved a recommendation that the UBA's Association Church Training Team, consisting of Clyde Hawkins and Tony Medlin, come to our church in transition and give guidance and make suggestions for a period of 6 weeks. There was no cost to the church. These two pastors preached on Sunday mornings and evenings for the 6 week period. Selection of a Pastor Search Committee was put on hold for those 6 weeks. The team began on January 18.

The Church met in a called business meeting on March 22, 2009 for the purpose of voting on a Pastor Search Committee. The deacons also recommended that Leon Whitley serve as Interim Pastor. On March 29, 2009, he was approved as interim pastor.

At a special business meeting on December 13, 2009, the church voted to use \$3000 left in the mission budget to purchase food for area school children during the Christmas Holidays, when no free school meals are available.

From February 12-20, 2010, a group from Austin Grove traveled to Bani, Dominican Republic to assist in the building of Christian-based children's homes at Restoration Ranch. Seven church members participated.



On June 6, 2010 the church gave \$2400 to the Kentucky mission team to buy materials for home repairs for a member of Corn Creek Baptist Church in Annville KY who had broken his back in an accident 3 years before. The funds came from the church savings account.

On January 2, 2011, Chris Griffin presented a report from the Pastor Search Committee. After 20 months, traveling many miles and considering numerous candidates the Committee spoke again with Rev Leon Whitley, who agreed to serve as pastor of Austin Grove. On January 9, 2011, the church voted to call Rev. Whitley to serve as pastor.



Restoration Ranch

On February 20, 2011 the church approved a gift of \$2500 towards another mission trip to the Dominican Republic. In February 2011, Austin Grove sponsored a third trip to Restoration Ranch. Nine church members participated. The deacons also recommended starting a pre-school program for 3 & 4 year olds from 9-1 Monday thru Friday beginning on the Tuesday after Labor Day 2011. The church approved start-up funds of approximately \$5000.

On May 15, 2011, the deacons recommended that since the parsonage is vacant, the church allow youth director, Rocky Rushing, to live there with his wife Laura following their marriage in September, with the Rushings paying their own utilities. The recommendation was approved. On November 25, 2012, Rocky was ordained into the ministry.



Rev. Rocky Rushing  
Youth Minister

On August 14, 2011, the church approved replacement of the Fellowship Hall AC unit which had been struck by lightning. Cost of replacement was \$9500, of which \$5000 was covered by insurance and the additional \$4500 came from savings.

In August 2011, a group of 12 of our church members joined the NC Baptist Men and Women as well as other volunteers from other denominations and states in the repair of a mobile home park in Raleigh that had much damage and loss of life from tornadoes.

In September 2011, the church voted to provide "Back Packs of Hope" to about 15 students at Wingate Elementary School. At a cost of about \$30 per student per month, these

backpacks provide food for those students on the weekends when they are not fed at school. The backpacks are packed on Wednesday nights and are taken to the school for distribution on Fridays. An anonymous donor funded the project for the 3 remaining months of 2011 and church picked up and budgeted for this expense beginning in January 2012.

In other mission news for 2011, Albert Ikerd felt called to make several trips to the Dominican Republic to work at Restoration Ranch. Chris and Janel Griffin have made several trips to Haiti following an earthquake to work with medical teams from Samaritan's Purse.

For over 15 years, the Couples 4 Sunday school Class has taken Thanksgiving Dinner to South Carolina to a group of recovering addicts at Samaritan's Colony. During the Christmas season, they take gifts to each resident. In 2011, this class also began to feed Sunday lunch to those in need at the Monroe Homeless Shelter once monthly.



Albert Ikerd and friends  
at Restoration Ranch

On February 19, 2012, the deacons recommended that church contract with Life Touch to create a new church membership directory. This recommendation was approved.

On August 5, 2012, the Church approved an upgrade of the AV system in the sanctuary and fellowship hall in the amount of \$17,982. An anonymous donation had been made to cover all costs. The church also approved recommendation from Building & Grounds Committee to replace the two front entrance doors and two side entrance doors. An anonymous donation had been made to cover costs of new doors and \$3000 installation costs came from the budget. In September, 2012, it was approved to also replace the Fellowship Hall AC at a cost of \$5400.

On October 2, 2011, the church approved remodeling the pastor's study with a new desk, carpet and cabinetry costing approximately \$4500.

At a called Business Meeting on December 2, 2012, the deacons and Building & Grounds Committee presented a recommendation that the church contract with Phifer Brothers to repair and repaint the exterior of the Church buildings for approximately \$13,000. The recommendation was approved.

At a called Business Meeting on January 20, 2013, the church approved a recommendation that chairs in the Fellowship Hall be replaced at a cost of \$20 each and we also purchase 5 rolling racks which hold 160 chairs. 160 chairs were placed in Fellowship Hall and 40 in the Choir Room for a total of 200. Approximately \$5000 was donated for this purchase. Fifty of the old chairs are being stored to be used as needed. Remaining old chairs were offered to church members. The B&G Committee also recommended replacing the flag pole in front of

the church with a new 25 ft. pole to accommodate up to a 5'x 8' flag. A private donation covered the cost.

In 2013, Austin Grove joined with the churches of the Union Baptist Association to build a Habitat home for “Mrs. Claudia”, an elderly lady from the Unionville area whose home was in disrepair. In March that year another trip was made to Restoration Ranch and then in June and August, a group worked with the North Carolina Baptist Men to help with the hurricane Sandy damage on the New Jersey shore.

On June 9, 2013, the Church approved a recommendation from B&G Committee that 16 commodes be replaced (which included 10 handicapped with handrails). A new mirror and door closures were added for the ladies room off the main hallway. New signage was also added in the hallway. A new mirror was added in the Choir Room which is used as a dressing room for weddings. The church received a \$5000 donation for this project. A recommendation that driveways and parking areas around the church and Fellowship Hall be repaired, sealed, restriped and new entrance and exit signs be added at the road was also approved. The project cost was approximately \$12,000. \$6000 was donated for this project.

On January 26, 2014, the Church approved sale of a parcel of land off Old Highway 74 to Chuck Helms for the appraised value of \$55,300. The property had been donated to the Church several years prior from the estate of charter member Minnie Liles.

On March 9, 2014, the Church approved non-monetary support to Rev. Rocky Rushing as he pursues his BA Degree at Clear Creek Baptist College.

On March 30, 2014, the Church approved expenditure of \$16,450 requested by the Centennial Committee for expenses for the Church’s 100th Anniversary on October 5, 2014. Church also approved expenditures for replacement of the ceiling in the Fellowship Hall, and stripping and waxing floors in the Fellowship Hall. This work was done before Union Baptist Association quarterly meeting, which was held at Austin Grove on April 22, 2014.

During the spring of 2014, Janel and Tyler Griffin traveled to Haiti to participate in a medical mission there after the earthquake disaster. The Mission Committee planned a trip to the coast of North Carolina, but was diverted to Newton, North Carolina to do home repairs there because of an early hurricane at the coast. In August, a group went to Washington NC to do tornado relief.

During the month of July 2014, there was a special emphasis called “More than a Monday”. During that month, the church did not have Sunday evening services, allowing families the opportunity to share time together.



Tyler Griffin helps prepare medications

Instead there was a service each Monday evening led by a different speaker/preacher and special music.

Valentine's Day is celebrated each year with a Sweetheart Banquet, followed by an evening of entertainment, including some very talented (and some very funny) participants.

Since the mid-1960s, Austin Grove has celebrated Labor Day with a picnic and outdoor games. It has become a community event, with many of the men of the church barbecuing chickens in the pit that was built at the west end of the picnic shelter, while many families bring freezers of homemade ice cream for an afternoon treat before the meal. The evening usually is topped off by "The Strings". This ever changing group includes guitars, mandolins, a dobro, a double bass, a harmonica, often a banjo, as well as good country singing.



Preparing chicken for Labor Day Picnic

In recent years, Trunk or Treat has become a fall festival for the whole community. Usually celebrated on the last Wednesday night of October, everyone comes in costume to enjoy the fun, including hayrides, outdoor games, a meal and a traditional cakewalk.



OCC work night

For several years, our church has participated in Operation Christmas Child. Our children decorate the plastic shoe boxes during VBS each summer and then the boxes are distributed to our church families to fill. The added bonus of living near a distribution center in Charlotte is the opportunity to go help process boxes one night each Christmas season. In recent years, 30-40 people of all ages have given one night each December to help prepare the boxes to be sent to children around the world.



Lots of hard work goes into our annual Christmas Pageant

One of the highlights of each Christmas is the annual pageant presented by the children, with many hours of hard work by the directors and workers. Our church family has watched the children grow up through these yearly events.

The music program at Austin Grove has evolved over these 100 years. We have gone from no accompaniment to piano, to organ, to guitars and more. Special thanks are in order for the choir director and the accompanists over the years. Current organist, Pat (Mrs. Wade) Haigler has been serving for over 50 years first as assistant pianist and then as organist. She noted that she has accompanied over 14 different choir



Organist Pat Haigler

directors through the years. Current pianist, Susan (Mrs. Donald) Griffin has begun a children's "bell" (xylophone) choir. The children are a wonderful addition to our services.

In honor of our 100 years as a church, a memorial has been placed at the edge of the grove of trees between the cemetery and the parsonage. A monument in the shape of an "A" is constructed on a base of brick pavers. In front of the monument are the pavers including the names of our church's charter members. Surrounding these are the pavers of some current members and those they wanted to be remembered. On each side of the memorial are benches and beyond the "A" is a low wall containing the cornerstone with the commemorative items that have been included. Behind the wall are flagpoles, displaying our United States, North Carolina, and Christian flags. Electricity has been run to the memorial from the parsonage, so that lights and sound can be used for services held in the area.

Through the efforts of Carolyn Haigler and many members of the church, a cookbook celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Austin Grove is being made available. Over 800 recipes have been collected and collated for this book. Many of the recipes that have been included are favorites from family and friends from the past. The book was sold on a pre-order basis, but there are a few copies still available.

October 5, 2014 is to be our day of centennial celebration for Austin Grove. Plans for the day include a service in the cemetery to dedicate the memorial and to place the items in the cornerstone. The services in the sanctuary will include recognition of descendants of the charter members, recognition of previous pastors, sermon by Rev. Alfred Wright, pastor from 1961-1963, and special music. A complimentary catered lunch is to be served afterwards, with plenty of time for visiting and reminiscing.

**Through the years,  
activities for our seniors have been a source of joy and fellowship.**



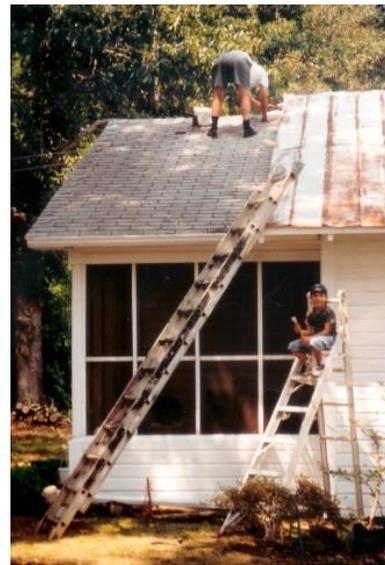
## Old Timey (Heritage) Day Celebration

Old Timey Day has been observed several times over the years. Weather permitting, services were sometimes held under the picnic shelter behind the church.



## Mission Opportunities

Austin Grove has always followed the lead of Southern Baptists in their dedication to missions. Many opportunities have been explored both locally, throughout North Carolina, the eastern United States, Alaska, the Dominican Republic and Haiti.



# Labor Day 2013



## Sunday School Classes from 1955-1956



Nursery – Teachers Mrs. Charles (Carole) Helms and Mrs. Earl (Janice) James



Beginners – Teacher Mrs. Arthur (Clara) Davis



Primary – Teachers Mrs. Horace (Alma) Webb and Mrs. Homer (Ruth) Trull



Junior Boys – Teacher Melvin Helms



Intermediate Girls –  
Teacher Mrs. Curtis (Lottie) Deese



Intermediate Boys –Teacher Arthur Davis



Young Men – Teacher Cecil M. James



Young Ladies –  
Teacher Mrs. C.E.(Ida Mae) James



Young Adult Ladies – Teacher Mrs. Bill  
(Dorothy) Edwards



Young Adult Men – Teacher T. Edgar Traywick



Adult Ladies – Teacher Mrs.T.E. (Flonnie) Traywick



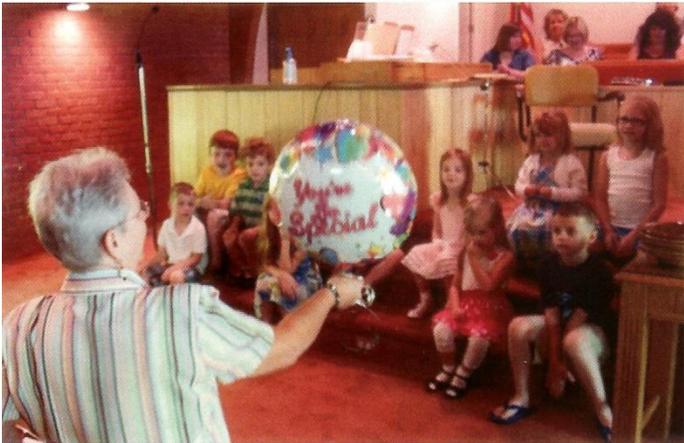
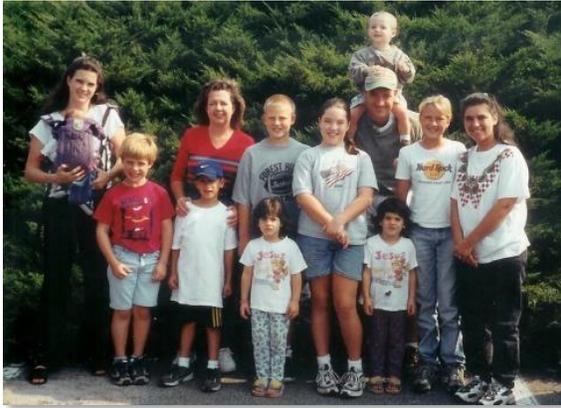
Adult Men – Teacher Homer Helms

## A Very Early Baptism Service



## Youth Activities through the Years





## A Commemorative Poem by Mrs. Freddy (Rita) Griffin August 2014

100 years have quickly passed  
And today we celebrate  
The many years of worship  
And service in this Holy place

From the very start  
God had a purpose and a plan  
He planted in His children's hearts  
That together for their Lord they would forever stand

A community united  
To answer God's call  
To worship their Lord and Savior  
To tell anyone that would listen  
That Jesus died for them all

Putting feet to their prayers  
A brush arbor was assembled on donated land  
October 1914 Austin Grove Missionary Baptist  
Church  
Was the fulfillment of God's plan

Following the leading of the Holy Spirit  
They wanted an enclosed space  
A church building was needed  
So in early 1915 a white wood church took the  
arbor's place

God was leading and blessing  
And the congregation grew

Years were passing and needs were changing  
But the message was God's word and stays forever  
true

A new church building was the vision  
In 1965 a brick building was built on adjoining land  
God's children still serving and reaching our world  
through missions  
But not forgetting to seek all of God's divine plans

Now it's been 100 years, it's October of 2014  
The years have quickly passed  
Today as then our prayers are that we succeed  
In doing all that God has asked

The building is different  
But the call is the same  
To share the wonderful story  
To declare Jesus' Holy name

To sow seeds for salvation  
To tell of His mercy, grace and love  
To be busy in His fields of souls  
For His harvest in Heaven above

Just as at the start our God has a purpose and a plan  
It grows in our hearts  
And together for our Lord and Savior  
Austin Grove Baptist Church will forever stand

*In honor and loving memory of all the men and women of Austin Grove Baptist Church who have served in these buildings or on the mission fields near or far. Whether in the community or nation or in a foreign land, telling the wonderful story of Jesus and His love. My prayer is that this will still be true on the day our Lord and Savior comes to take His children home. This is my forty fifth year as a member at this wonderful, loving, giving, serving church. I thank God that He has blessed me to worship and serve in this place, among some of the sweetest Christian people I have ever known. This is my humble and heart felt way of trying to say THANK YOU to my church family and my God.*

*In Christ,  
Mrs. Freddy (Rita) Griffin, Centennial Committee Member*

## The Significance of the Memorial

The boulder is in the shape of an “A” to recognize and memorialize the generosity of the Austin family who donated all the land for the church.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Boulder faces due east as if watching for the return of Jesus.

“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Matthew 24:27

\*\*\*\*\*

The Boulder appears to be rising up from the ground in anticipation of the events that will occur at the Rapture when the dead in Christ shall rise.

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” I Thes. 4:16

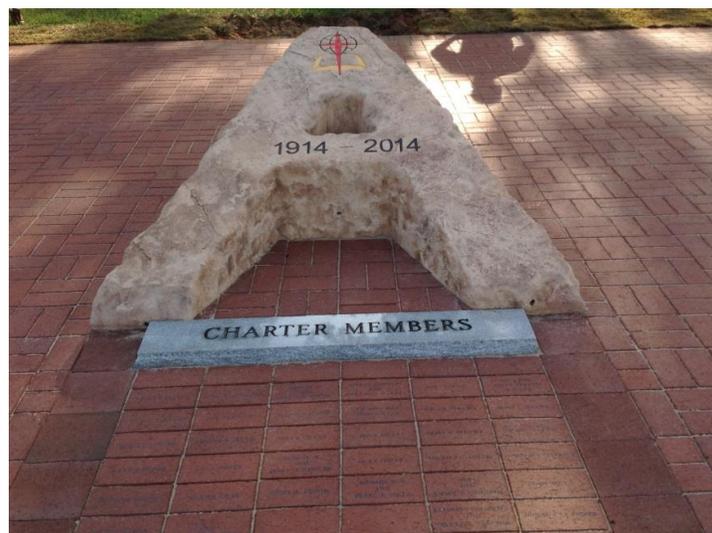
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The Boulder appears to be a “ROCK” in remembrance of all the references in the Bible describing Jesus as our “ROCK”

“May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.” Psalm 19:14

\*\*\*\*\*

The logos on the boulder recognize a century of service to God in alliance with the Southern Baptist Convention.



## Wesley M. Austin

Wesley M. Austin was the son of Bryant E. Austin and Rhoda Parker Austin. He was born April 15, 1848, in Union County, the youngest of eight children: Charlotte, Julia, Rillia, George P., James, Love, Marcus, and Wesley. Sometimes he was referred to as W. M. Austin.

He was not old enough to enlist during the War Between the States. Four sons in this family, George, James, Love and Marcus, served in the Confederate Army in the North Carolina Divisions. James, Love, and Marcus all died in battle. George received serious wounds from which he never entirely recovered, even though he lived to be elderly and reared a family in North Carolina. Wesley was the only brother left at home during the war.

Wesley married Jennie House Austin, daughter of John Wiley House and Elizabeth Parker House. Jennie was born in Cabarrus County, North Carolina, on January 9, 1860. Wesley and Jennie married February 7, 1879.

Their children were Charles, Verona, Menora, Emma, Vernon, Mary, Milton C., Pauline, Myrtle, James, Ruth, and Nell. Verona and Menora were twins. Some of the children did not live to be adults. Charles died at the age of four, Menora at nine, and Vernon and James both in infancy.

Wesley and Jennie lived on the farm in Union County where generations of Austins had lived. The land had been in the hands of the Austins for more than 150 years. It was first owned by the Griffins, then by Mark Austin, who sold it to Bryant E. Austin, who willed it to his son, Wesley Austin.

At Wesley's death, the land was inherited by Milton. Verona, who never married, and Mary Austin Phifer (after her husband, Lanson Phifer died) lived with Milton at the old home place, just east of Austin Grove Baptist Church. The home place served as the center for all the brothers and sisters who had many family get-togethers there.

On October 22, 1914, Wesley and Jennie deeded two acres of land to Austin Grove Baptist Church to be the permanent property of the church. The only condition was that the land was to be used as a place of public worship by the Missionary Baptists. Thus the name Austin Grove was given to the church.

Wesley died June 4, 1931 and his wife, Jennie, May 31, 1947. Both are buried in the Austin Grove Cemetery. According to Wesley obituary, "Mr. Austin was a faithful member of the Austin Grove Baptist Church and was highly esteemed by all who knew him.



Deed.

W.M.Austin and wife To Trustees of Austin Grove Baptist Church.

North Carolina, Union County.

THIS DEED made this 22nd day of Oct 1914 between W.M.Austin and Jennie Austin his wife of the County of Union and State of North Carolina, and L.T.Phifer, G.W.Hagler, Z.T.Traywick and R.C.Tarlton and their successors, Trustees of Austin Grove Church of the State of North Carolina and the County of Union.

WITNESSETH, that the said W.M.Austin and Jennie Austin for and in the consideration of the sum of Fifty Dollars, the payment of which is hereby acknowledged, have bargained and sold, conveyed and confirmed, and by these presents do bargain sell convey and confirm unto the said AUSTIN GROVE CHURCH, a piece or lot of land (subject to the conditions mentioned hereinafter) lying and being in the State and County before named and lying and being in Marshville Township and BEGINNING at a stone East side of a spring, Wh ). red O S.G pointers, and runs S.19 W.4.50 chs to a stone N.edge of burmt house road ; thence with road N.71 W.4.50 chs to a stone N.edge said road by a hickory ; thence N.22-3/4 E. 4.50 chs to a stake by P.O. & R.O.; thence S.71 E.4.25 chs to the Beginning, containing two acres more or less.

To have and to hold the same with all the hereditaments and appurtenances thereto appertaining to the said Trustees of AUSTIN GROVE CHURCH, and their successors, and the said W.M.Austin

and Jennie Austin covenant with the said CHURCH TRUSTEES and their successors as follows:-

That they are the lawful owners and seized of said premises, That they have good right to convey the same, that same are free all incumbrances whatsoever, and that they will warrant and defend the title to the same against all lawful claims.

PROVIDED NEVERTHELESS that if the land herein conveyed ever ceases to be used as a place of pf PUBLIC worship of God, by the MISSIONARY BAPTIST, this Deed is to be null and void, and the land herein conveyed is to REVERT to W.M.Austin and Jennie Austin or their heirs.

In witness whereof the said W.M.Austin and Jennie Austin hereto sets their hand and seals, the day and year above written.

W.M.Austin (Seal)

Jennie Austin (Seal)

Witness -----

North Carolina Union County.

I Zeb M.Little a Justice of the Peace in and for said County, do certify that W.M.Austin and Jennie Austin his wife personally appeared before me this day and acknowledged the due execution the annexed Deed, and the said Jennie Austin being by me privately examined separate and apart from her said husband touching her voluntary execution of the same, doth state that she signed the same freely and voluntarily without fear or compulsion of her said husband, or any other person, and that she doth still voluntarily assent thereto.

Witness my hand and private seal, this 23rd day of Oct 1914.

Zeb M.Little J.P. (Seal)

North Carolina Union County. Th

The foregoing certificate of Zeb M.Little a J.P of Union County is adjudged to be correct.

Let the instrument with the certificate be registered. this 3rd day of December . 1914.

R.W.Lemmond, C.S.C.

Filed for registration on the 3rd day of December, 1914 at 12.10 O'clock P.M.

M.C.Long. Register of Deeds.

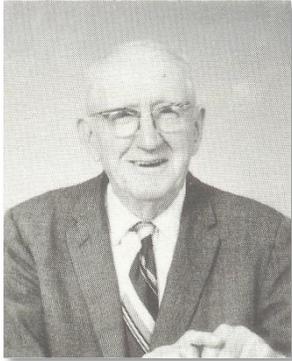
## PASTORS OF AUSTIN GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH

1914-1915 .....	Rev. W. B. Holmes
1916-1918 .....	Rev. C. J. Black
1919-1920 .....	Rev. A. Marsh
1919-1921 .....	Rev. E. C. Snyder
1922-1924 .....	Rev. E. J. Hutchinson
1925-1929 .....	Rev. I. B. Little
1930-1933 .....	Rev. N. C. Coggins
1934-1936 .....	Rev. O. W. Funderburk
1937-1940 .....	Rev. J. C. Bennette
1941-1943 .....	Rev. J. C. Meigs
1944-1952 .....	Rev. Ivory Couch
1953.....	Rev. Leonard Hendrix
1954-1961 .....	Rev. Brady L. Connell
1961-1963 .....	Rev. Alfred Wright
1964-1973 .....	Rev. Robert Byrd
1973-1988 .....	Rev. Robert Howard
1989-1995 .....	Rev. Jerry Ensley
1996-1997 .....	Rev. David Kessler
1998-2000 .....	Rev. Jeffrey Whitecotton
2002-2005 .....	Rev Leon Whitley
2002-2008 .....	Rev. John Wood (Associate)
2005-2008 .....	Rev. Richard D. Tuttle
2009-2011 .....	Rev. Leon Whitley (Interim)
2011-Present .....	Rev. Leon Whitley

**Charter Members of Austin Grove Missionary Baptist Church**



Mary Austin (Phifer)



Milton Austin



Wesley M. and Jennie House Austin



Neal & Emma Traywick Edwards



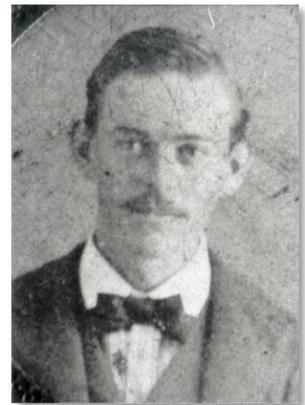
Belle Staton Haigler  
(wife of Joe)



George W. & Mary Helms Haigler



Joe S. Haigler  
(husband of Belle)



Calvin Wilson Helms



Minnie Liles



Alma Mills (Griffin)



Nora Rushing Mills  
(wife of Simeon)



Rommie "Bud" & Pearl Mills



Simeon Douglas Mills  
(husband of Nora)



Henrietta Phifer



Lanson T. & Nora  
Bailey Phifer



Lula Griffin Phifer



Musetta Phifer  
(Griffin)



Watt Phifer



Hallie Strawn (James)



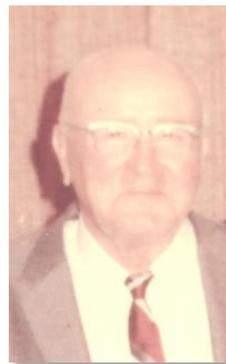
Jessie Strawn  
(Edwards)



Mary E. Strawn  
(Hamilton Griffin)



Mary J. Strawn  
(Hargett)



Carl Van Strawn



Atlas Tarlton



Raymond Caldwell &  
Nettie Stegall Tarlton



Sallie Tarlton



Beddie Traywick  
(wife of Zack)



Dee Traywick



Jessie Traywick



Zack T. Traywick  
(husband of Beddie)

**NOT PICTURED:**

Emma A. Austin (Faulkner)

Myrtle Austin

Pauline Austin

Verona Belle Austin

Girtie Lingle

Lawrence Lingle

John Little

Daisy Mills

Dora Phifer

Martha Tadlock

## Notes from the Centennial Committee:

This centennial history of Austin Grove Baptist Church has been a “work-in-progress” for nearly 50 years. The church history included in the 1956 dedication of the parsonage was one short page. In preparation for a history to include in the cornerstone of the new church building in 1966, Beatrice Griffin became a self-appointed church historian and with her husband, Theodore, Church Clerk at the time, went through all the church minutes and composed a four page history covering 1914 to 1966. She continued to collect information and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklet included the history with the updates through 1989. When it was time to celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Brenda Lee joined the group that updated the information through 2004.

With our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration this year, the Centennial Committee has worked diligently to make this celebration a memorable one. With access to modern computers and scanners, we have been able to bring our information up to date and include additional information and photographs. Committee members, under the lead of Earl James, have taken on the task of finding photographs of as many of the original members as possible. Though we have not been able to find photos of all the charter members at this time, many of them are included at the end of the history. The photographs are of these people at various stages of their lives.

We have not yet been able to verify the photograph that we believe to be of Wesley M. Austin and his wife, Jennie, who donated the property for Austin Grove Church and later the cemetery. Their son, Milton, continued the generosity by donating land and lumber for the parsonage, land for the “new” church on the hill and later, more land for the church and cemetery.

Knowing that we are all human and subject to mistakes, please forgive any omissions or oversights that we may have made. Please feel free to let us know of any corrections that we should make, so that the next history may be even more complete and interesting.

### Centennial Committee:

Jimmy Haigler, Chairman	Brenda Lee
Arthur Davis	Carolyn Haigler
Earl and Janice James	Dottie Craiglow
Sarah Traywick	Rita Griffin
Polly Marsh	Leon Whitley, Pastor
Phyllis Simpson	

A HISTORY OF  
AUSTIN GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH  
1914 – 2014

