

From: Danny G. Lane

To: Beechland Baptist Church

Dear friends,

Having recently completed a study of Beechland Baptist Church and its history, I felt it would be appropriate to alert you to some things. I have just completed a survey of Beechland's minutes from 1860 - 1936. In addition, I have compiled a topical history of Beechland concerning such subjects as: the Articles of Faith, the Rules of Decorum, discipline, restoration, doctrinal concerns, pastors, pastor's salary, missions, Sunday School, women, music, and a biographical sketch of a famed Beechland member and historian, J. H. Spencer. The survey is in no way complete, but does cover what I considered to be the overriding concerns of the church during those years.

I am providing the church with a copy of this study to facilitate further study into Beechland's rich and varied heritage. One thing I have discovered is a deep appreciation for the records possessed by Beechland. One needs only to read a few pages of the minutes from the early years of Beechland's history to gain a better understanding of where our church has been. I urge the church ~~the church~~ to consider taking some measures to preserve these records with greater care. At the present the minutes are kept in a file drawer, seldom if ever seen by Beechland's members to remind them of their church heritage. Some of you know members who have been instrumental in the growth and development of Beechland, and regret perhaps their names being forgotten. I have discovered such people as far back as 1860.

May I suggest a couple of ideas for the church to consider. First, why not provide a glass display case to show some of these priceless records, pictures, articles of historical wealth, etc.? As they are, no one hardly knows they exist, much less what is contained in them. Second, having had a conversation with Dr. George Jones, President of the Kentucky Historical Commission, he urged me to urge Beechland to consider having these records microfilmed by Southern Baptist historical collections in Nashville. The expense would be a couple of cents per page, the church is provided with a copy of the microfilm and another is kept on file in Nashville with copies available at any time, and in case of fire or theft there is still a record of Beechland's important records, minutes, etc. Third, may I suggest the possibility of looking into an ongoing church committee of history. Not only with responsibilities to care for some of the suggestions above, but also to maintain an interest in collecting and compiling a more thorough and on-going history of Beechland.

Finally, I would request that a motion be made that there has been a partial history compiled by me, and this entered upon the church minutes. I request this for a record of what has been done to facilitate any further efforts of this sort in the future.

I extend my appreciation to the church in its cooperation during this study. Having studied Beechland's history, I have gained a richer understanding in the life of my home church, and a new awareness of what history can mean for the present.

Respectfully,

  
Danny G. Lane

A  
Survey of the History  
of  
Beechland Baptist Church  
1860 - 1936

Presented  
to  
Dr. Walter B. Shurden  
in  
Fulfillment of Baptist History

By  
Danny G. Lane  
Box 1010

### An Overview

Beechland Baptist Church was born in 1860 as a result of the missionary outreach exerted by the Long Run Association of Baptists. The impetus behind the formation of Beechland was a missionary for Long Run named W. E. Powers. He came into the area in April 1860 recognizing the need for a Baptist Church in the area. With the assistance of Dr. Sidney A. Foss (a community physician), J. H. Spencer (a recognized Kentucky Baptist historian), Rev. Thomas Gray and 12 charter members, Beechland Baptist Church was constituted. By July 26, 1860, the Church was organized with W. E. Powers serving as the first pastor, in what would culminate in a 23 year pastorate.

Immediately after the church was begun, a 12 day revival was held resulting in 14 additions by baptism. The name of the church was derived by Powers, from the abundance of Beech trees found on the Jane Kennedy Ashby farm where the church was first located. Meetings were held in a small cabin constructed by the members. On September 7, 1860 the Beechland Baptist Church became a part of the Long Run Association. The following is an excerpt taken from the minutes of the Long Run Association on that particular day:

"An opportunity was then given to churches to unite with the Association, whereupon a letter from Beechland Church, Jefferson County, constituted in 1860, was presented, accompanied with Articles of Faith, as held by the United Baptists; and after the reading of the letters, she was unanimously voted a member of the body."<sup>1</sup>

During the first eight years of the life of the church, there was enough growth to warrant the construction of a new building. In 1868, the church relocated at a site on Greenwood Road which was donated by Mr. Henry Payne. A larger house of worship was constructed and would serve the purposes for the next forty years. A new building was constructed in 1909, educational facilities were added in 1935, the present sanctuary was constructed in 1951,

and another educational building was added in 1956.

There is evidence to suggest a Sunday School in operation as early as 1868. It is also reported that a library consisting of 150 volumes in 1868, increased to 200 volumes by 1887. The first recorded Sunday School Superintendent was Bro. J. N. Bennett, elected to his position in 1867,

Over the years, the church has taken an active role in establishing missions Sunday Schools (voted in the minutes of 1901 and 1911), and new mission works which have resulted in the formation of Beth Haven and Ridgewood Baptist Churches. Beechland also cooperated with two other churches in the establishing of Shively Baptist Church. The missionary thrust and evangelistic fervor has always been a commendable trait of Beechland. There is record of a Ladies' Aid functioning in the church in 1885. In the early days of the church, and over a period of many years, the missionary concern of Beechland was epitomized in the person of Mrs. Belle Moreman. Mrs. Moreman served as chairman of the Missions Committee of Beechland in 1895 and as Vice President of the Central Committee of the Woman's Missionary Society of Kentucky in 1897. Interest in youth has always been a priority of Beechland, as indicated by the establishment of a program for young people in 1894. This could have been the B. Y. P. U. organization, a forerunner of the Baptist Training Union.

After W. W. II, the rural area of Pleasure Ridge Park became increasingly urbanized. The city was moving out to Beechland and subdivisions began to spring up all around. As a result, the membership of Beechland began to climb so that two Sunday morning services were needed by 1956. It was then that Beechland formed the Beth Haven missions which constituted into a church in May of 1958, and the Ridgewood mission which constituted in May of 1962. Today Beechland is thriving in an area which is virtually saturated with Baptist

churches, not to mention a large number of Catholic parishes and churches of other denominations. With the constant influx of new businesses, restaurants, and shopping centers, the area is becoming more and more absorbed into the city type of environment. Consequently, the ministry of the church is adapting with the realization of the changing scene. In the next two years, the largest mall in the state of Kentucky will be built less than a mile from Beechland Baptist Church. At the present the main thoroughfare for access to the mall runs right by Beechland. No doubt, this will be a new kind of change, side by side with a community virtually saturated with all the homes it can support. The church has repeatedly demonstrated the ability to manage in the face of rapid change. At the time of this writing, the church is numbering approximately 300 in Sunday School and 370-400 in the morning worship. The staff now consists of Pastor (Rev. R. Dean Moore), Min. of Education and Youth (Gene Elliot), and part-time Min. of Music (Ken Gray).

#### Articles of Faith

In the earliest minutes of Beechland Baptist Church, the Articles of Faith are recorded at the very beginning, followed by the Rules of Decorum. Prefacing the articles is a brief description of the "Elders" present. (From what can be discovered, the term 'elder' was applied to leaders of the church.) It is interesting that 'brethren' was initially put into the minutes. Only later was 'Elders' added.

"Agreeable to an appointment the following brethren (Elders) J. H. Spencer, W. E. Powers, and Thomas M. Gray assembled and after an interesting sermon by Elder Spencer, he was called to the chair and Thomas M. Gray chosen to act as clerk. Bro. Powers proceeded to read the articles of faith, and rules of decorum which are herein recorded."<sup>2</sup>

There were five articles in all, The first affirmed their faith in the Holy Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments: "...only infallible

rule of faith and practice containing everything needful for us to know on, believe on, do in the service of God..." I am reminded of an old girlfriend who wanted to take odds with me that any book other than the Bible should be needed. I do not think the writers intended to sound so exclusive and quite so narrow as that first article might be interpreted. The second article dealt with the nature of God as Creator, Preserver, and Designer. The article quotes Paul from Acts 17, who just happened to be quoting Epimenides, a Greek philosopher: "In whom we live and move and have our being..." The third article using K. J. V. 'Holy Ghost' sets forth the Trinity as three persons, the same in substance, power, and eternity. At first glimpse, I was bothered by what this might imply. But this view of the Trinity seems a perfectly legitimate view. That is if it can coexist with the following statement made by Dale Moody: "It seems very important to emphasize that the three persons are three infinite persons in interpenetration, not three finite persons as separate centers of consciousness."<sup>3</sup> The danger, it seemed, was in sounding almost tri-theistic. The fourth article contends that Jesus Christ took upon himself a human body, a "real" human body. The "real" was probably a counter to the age-old problem of Docetism (Jesus as phantom, ghostly, because all flesh was evil). But the idea that Jesus pre-existed is according to Dr. Moody, reading more into the scripture than is there. "Christ" took upon himself a human body, and manifest himself through Jesus of Nazareth. The fifth and final article affirms the belief in Justification by imparted righteousness, pardon by his all-atoning blood, baptism by immersion, resurrection from the dead, eternal judgement, and (from the influence of Calvinism) the final perseverance of the Saints.

These articles were maintained for a good many years. How many we cannot be certain, but they are rewritten verbatim in the 1873 minutes.

Beechland later expanded their articles of Faith from five to eighteen articles. Attention will not be given to them at this time. Although, I am convinced after careful scrutiny that the church would do well to review their articles with great care.

#### Rules of Decorum

The Rules became very prominent as we will see in the disciplinary measures taken by the church. The first rule speaks of receiving new members by 'opening a door' for their reception. This phrase recurs throughout the minutes in the early history of Beechland each time a new member is received. The rule also states that new members shall be received by unanimous vote. We're not sure whether this implies that a person may be blackballed by a single opposing vote. But Rule #6 reinforces that conclusion, although it is not clear what is meant by the last phrase concerning the minority: "It is agreed that all matters of business except in the reception of members shall be decided by a majority if a minority cannot be had."

Several of the rules speak to the expected behavior of members at business meetings. Rule #7 states that members may not leave their seats without liberty from the moderator. Rule #8 states that when addressing the moderator, the person should rise to their feet. It further explains that a person can only speak twice without church permission. This was later interpreted as meaning on any one given subject. Rule #11 states: "The church believes agreeably to the word of God it is the duty of all her members to fill their seats on days of business and on days of public worship unless providentially hindered." Failure to do either could and did result in church discipline being taken toward a peripheral member. Rule #13 explains that the moderator may speak on a subject only if he removes himself from the chair and is replaced. He may then resume the chair. One final rule with relevance here is #10, concerned with relations between church members. "The church deems it

disorder in aggrieved members deferring to deal with his or her brother or sister until the day of church business unless providentially hindered."

However stringent one may consider the rules to have been, there is an abiding concern for peace among the members. Rule #5 states, "The moderator shall inquire for the peace of the church; if grievances appear they shall be attended to." Rule #10 mentioned above seems to imbue the mind with the biblical command to not allow the sun to go down while harboring anger toward a brother. There is however a strange mixture in the application of these rules. While used on the one hand to maintain peace, and also maintain members, the rules were used for discipline, to the severity of excluding members from fellowship. What is meant by the moderator inquiring for peace is not elaborated. But the history of Beechland reveals that this could result in the appointing of investigatory committees. (See section on Discipline).

The Rules of Decorum were to be read if called for by any member. In March of 1869 they were called for to be read. It seems that there was particular interest in the moderator inquiring for peace. After a reading of the Rules in June 1914, a Committee was appointed to revise them. A motion carried in 1895 that the rules of church be read every 6 months, and all the absent members be looked up, and all of those not heard from in next 6 months that the church withdraw from.

In Jan. 1913 the motion was made at the business meeting, that the covenant be read at each meeting. In the meeting of March 1914, by motion and second a committee was to be appointed to have printed a sufficient number of church covenants to supply each member with a copy. "Said covenant to be made in form for signing and a letter to be mailed with each covenant."<sup>4</sup> As the church moved more toward enforcing the 'letter of the law', and in maintaining church discipline, the covenant seemed to emerge with renewed interest. The minutes do not reveal whether the covenant was to be signed and then returned to the church. But measures were taken to make the covenant unequivocally a rule for bridge of breach of fellowship. As a result of the March meeting a committee was appointed in May 1914 after

some discussion concerning discipline. The committee was to be concerned with the covenant relationship of members to the church.

In June of 1914 the Committee On Covenant reported to the church. They recommended an alternative to the distribution of individual copies of the covenant for signing. The option proposed was that the fourth Sunday in June be set aside as 'Roll Call Sunday'. "That the clerk prepare a list of the members and that same shall be called and as each name is called that the Brother or Sister rise or hold up the hand, and or answer that this act of theirs shall be recorded as their willingness to re-covenant, and their names to be entered upon the new roster of the church."<sup>5</sup> The said committee was composed of W. L. Napier, Frank and Owen Smith, Mrs. Laura Kennedy and Mrs. Laura Hollis. This Committee made an important decision. They recognized that a true covenant was not by written statement. They allowed for more flexibility than such a rigid demand for signing would allow. Interesting to note is that the action taken on Roll Call Day was actually a purging of the rolls. Roll Call Day was held on June 28, 1914. Fifty answered to the call wishing their names to be placed upon the revised list. Others were added by request afterwards. The idea of purging the rolls (my interpretation - not theirs) did not go uncontested. In July of 1914 the motion was made that members refusing to recovenant should have their names stricken from the list of members and place the same on a list to be known as the "Silent List", as inactive members. "After a brief but spirited discussion, motion carried."<sup>6</sup> In August of 1914 the Committee on Covenant was discharged.

The Covenant does not resurface in the church minutes until August 12, 1934. The church voted unanimously to adopt the Baptist Church Covenant found on page 305 of the third book of church minutes. The present covenant found in the constitution of the church is identical to the covenant of 1934 with a few changes. The phrase, ". . . in the presence of God, Angels, and this assembly", is deleted. Another phrase also deleted was, ". . . to forsake the paths of sin, and to walk in the ways of holiness all the days of our lives."

#### Discipline

(October - 1870) - "That whereas it has come to the knowledge of this church that John Lee a former member of this church, has recently united himself with the Methodist Society, it is therefore resolved, that he be, and is hereby excluded from the fellowship of this church."<sup>7</sup>

The exclusion of John Lee is the first such disciplinary action taken by Beechland, as recorded in the minutes. It was only the beginning of what was to become a common action in the life of the church. Between the exclusion of John Lee in 1870, and the exclusion of Robert Livingston in 1914 (the last recorded exclusion), there were approximately seventy-two people who were excluded from fellowship. Put another way, fellowship was withdrawn, names were scratched off the Church Roll, and they were kicked out of the church.

Floyd Patterson points out in an article for the Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists that church discipline intended to preserve conformity in doctrine and practice, while fostering the spiritual well-being of members individually and corporately.<sup>8</sup> The principals were the maintenance of the purity of its doctrine, the unity of its fellowship, and the holiness of its members. There were books of discipline widely dispersed and widely used among Baptists of America. In these books there were three degrees of discipline put forth which might be implemented. The first was "Rebuke", the lowest censure administered for such things as inattendance at business meetings or church services. The second was "Suspension". This was administered for such causes as gossip, backbiting, ignoring church rebuke, or slothful behavior with regard to one's home or civic responsibilities. The result was exclusion from the Lord's Table and from voting on church issues. The final was "excommunication" a censure of the highest degree. Here a person was cut off entirely from union and communion with the church. All rights and privileges were taken away. Excommunication was administered for violating "...the letter of the Ten Commandments, all civil crimes which called for severe corporal punishments, and all scandalous actions which exposed the church to contempt."<sup>9</sup>

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Patterson informs us that Baptists have traditionally practiced church discipline. But then tradition has never constituted the "rightness" of any action. A member of Beechland Baptist Church today is appalled to hear of such disciplinary actions. But then we must see that they have grown up with a different tradition. My first reaction was one of shock, disappointment, and a judgmental attitude toward the church. But having considered the mentality of that day and time, with regard to church mores and social taboos, my attitude has mellowed somewhat. Though Beechland, like so many churches of that time, went to extreme measures of discipline, the church in general has perhaps become too lenient today. Lest someone interpret these words as suggesting some disciplinary form of action by contemporary churches, the problem arises as to what needs discipline. To paraphrase a voice of authority familiar to all, it is difficult to justify one's criticism for the speck in the brother's eye, while in their own they tolerate a beam.

It is interesting that the minutes of Beechland never reveal anything about 'Suspension'. Though not mentioned explicitly, it is implied that 'Rebuke' was made to individuals at times, but not nearly in every case. In the early reports of discipline, there is little knowledge revealed as to the express problem which necessitated the disciplinary action. Often we are told that the discipline followed upon 'disorderly conduct'. "The committee has this day reported the following members for disorderly conduct . . . . (March 1874)."<sup>10</sup> The action was swift and seemingly merciless as eleven were excluded from fellowship in this particular case. Patterson states that excommunication did not however forbid attendance on the ministry of the word. We are not told whether that was the case at Beechland or not. Exclusion was the norm for disciplinary action at Beechland.

The allusion to a committee above raises another interesting point. In October 1871 the minutes read: "A motion was made and seconded that a committee of investigation be appointed to inquire into the Peace and dignity of the church."<sup>11</sup> The said committee was composed of James O. Smith, James M. Bennett, John W. Waller (who was himself ironically enough, excluded from fellowship in 1880), G. M. Waller (also excluded along with J. W. Waller), and W. T. Kennedy. What developed in April of the following year is truly amazing. "Motion made and carried that the present investigating committee be discharged and that each and every member of the church be appointed as a committee, the former committee (members) included."<sup>12</sup> Now the discipline action is dispersed throughout the church and the 'witch hunt' is on. The church had to have been desperate for purity of doctrine, because it did anything but provide for unity of its fellowship and the holiness of its members. The committee of five must have done a fairly good job because they were reappointed in December 1872, with the exception of Smith who was deleted. Again, an investigating committee was appointed in 1878 with the Waller boys reappointed along with James Bennett. It is curious that J. W. Waller and G. M. Waller appear repeatedly as members of this committee. Especially when realizing their own exclusion for attempting to have the church take action against its pastor W. E. Powers.

In March 1879 J. C. Waller, a relative to J. W. Waller and G. M. Waller, resigned as assistant church clerk <sup>and</sup> was licensed to preach the gospel. This was central to the trouble brewing later between J. W. Waller and W. E. Powers. The minutes record in November 1880 Jonathan C. Waller and his wife asking for removal of letters. Whether this was done in dissatisfaction by them is not known. But the action taken in <sup>the</sup> next monthly business meeting may reflect something of such discontentment. In December of 1880, J. W. Waller called for

an investigation of troubles existing in the church. A meeting was to be held Thursday before the 4th Sunday at 11 o'clock. It being the annual time to recall the pastor, since the status of the pastor's employment was annually considered, the pastor was recalled. But not without a remonstrance from W. E. Waller and others, who requested that it be recorded. As a result of the growing disharmony, the church adopted the following:

"Whereas there is now among the membership of this church a growing enmity and dissatisfaction, inconsistent with Christian character and a proper church relation . . . and, as the acting agencies directing the origin of a disturbance so detrimental to the harmony of the church ought, and of right should be known, that the causes may be removed. It is therefore resolved by this church, that a full and thorough investigation be had, by the call of witnesses and the right of any member to interrogate the witnesses, so as to arrive as near as possible at the source of the disturbance."<sup>13</sup>

The investigation took place on December 23, 1880 with "Elder" J. H. Spencer presiding. Charges were brought against J. M. Bennett by J. W. Waller, J. W. Hope, and G. M. Waller, alleging that Bennett had propagated the lie that they wanted to make J. C. Waller pastor of the church on the first Sunday and third Sunday of each month. The charges were investigated and dismissed. Charges were then brought against W. E. Powers (pastor of twenty years) by J. W. Waller. He accused Powers of having " . . . brought about strife and division in the church by a systematic course of slights to our Brother J. C. Waller as a minister."<sup>14</sup> Waller alleged that Bro. Powers had failed to extend to W. C. Waller usual courtesies due to a brother minister, that he filled the pulpit with others to the exclusion of J. C. Waller, and that he had demonstrated a persistent course of opposition to J. C. Waller and his friends. We do not know whether J. W. Waller was justified or not in his criticism of Powers. But he failed to take into account that the pulpit belongs to the pastor to offer or withhold invitations. Powers may have withheld the pulpit from J. C. Waller. But whether for jealousy or because he found

something lacking in the man we simply cannot say.

W. E. Powers was exonerated, and he then accepted the call to pastor for the coming year. A resolution was offered to exclude J. W. Waller, J. W. Hope, and G. M. Waller and motion carried. A motion later made in February 1881 to reconsider the action of excluding these men was defeated. A resolution was offered and read by J. H. Spencer after their exclusion, setting forth the successful labors of Br. W. E. Powers as pastor of this church for twenty years. Also included was an expression of the confidence and esteem with which the members of the church held for their pastor. It was revealed in the resolution that :

- 1) W. E. Powers came into the neighborhood in 1860.
- 2) With the assistance of T. M. Gray and J. H. Spencer constituted Beechland Church of eleven members on July 26, 1860.
- 3) On August 21st, Powers, Spencer, and Deacon Thomas Kelly also established Knob Creek in Bullit County of 8 members. (Powers pastored both for a time.)
- 4) For 20 years Powers has annually been called without a dissenting vote.
- 5) At this time (Dec. 1880) = 127 members.

A Copy was sent to the Western Recorder for public acknowledgement of <sup>the</sup> church's appreciation toward pastor.

Before leaving the subject of disciplinary committees, it should be mentioned that the Deacon body was sometimes considered a disciplinary branch. This is reflected in the minutes of November 1887 where it is stated that sanction against delinquent contributors for the pastor's salary will be read quarterly. Also, in November 1888 the Deacons report on a case of disorderly conduct. The Bylaws of 1873 reveal the following about the Duty of Deacons:

" . . . in connection with any members they may choose to take cognizance of the unchristian conduct of any member, to gather all the evidence

pro and con in the case, and before their body have a commitment trial of the conduct of said persons and report the result of their action to the church for final action."

Committees for investigation and discipline were still appointed as in August 1896, May 1900, and January 1913. Committees often visited the members reportedly walking disorderly. "Discipline Committee reports that some members were visited who had been walking disorderly, and promised to come forward and make acknowledgement."<sup>16</sup> At least there was rebuke with an effort to restore to fellowship before exclusion (see Restoration Section).

What then of the reasons for "excommunication" or exclusion? "W. W. Sweet lists over a hundred offenses dealt with by local Baptist churches on the American frontier."<sup>17</sup> In the bylaws of 1873 the duties of members are given, shedding light on areas of possible discipline.

"Any person guilty of repeated drunkenness, extortion, covetousness, and lasciviousness of whatever kind, we believe it our duty in accordance with the New Testament command ( I Corin. 5:13 ) to put away such persons from among ourselves and 'separate ourselves from them' . . . . This we do obeying as near as we understood the teaching of our Saviour."

Gambling, dancing, card playing are such like we condemn because in them is found none of the spirit of our Master but rather a tendency to demoralization."<sup>18</sup>

In the early discipline cases of the church, the nature of the offenses are usually not revealed. Often they are referred to under the guise of 'disorderly conduct'. The first time that a reason is recorded is in the exclusion of John Eckman, Mary Stewart, and Charles Lee in August 1879: ". . . for failure to procure a letter of dismissal in violation of rules of church, which says they shall procure a letter within six months after their departure."<sup>19</sup> Rivalry was particularly strong between different denominations during that time. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] These were the days of public

debate between ministers of different churches (i.e. Baptist and Methodist). So the rule was intended to urge the member to maintain participation in some Baptist church. However, in March 1897, there is no apprehension in making the offenses known.

"According to the report of the Discipline Committee the Church withdrew fellowship from the following members: Robert Browning (Profanity and drunkenness), Mrs. Herman Miller ( Non-Attendance and neglect of Christian Duty), Lewis Bell (Non-Attendance, drunkenness, dancing), Thomas Raggard and Mrs. Bettie Slack (for joining another denomination), Miss Mollie Hollis (Non-Attendance and neglect of Christian duty), and Mrs. B. Walker (Non-Attendance and neglect of Christian duty)."

One of the unique cases of discipline involved the decision of the church to revoke the license of Robert Livingston and exclude him from the church for unchristian conduct. He had previously been licensed to preach the gospel. Robert Kennedy's exclusion from the church reveals either the severity of his offense, or being strongly disliked by the church clerk. Not only "Ex" is found beside his name, indicating he had been excluded, but his name was scratched out.

One may wonder what happened to those excluded. The only clue we have is that some joined other denominations, and some began their own church. Greenwood Baptist Church, otherwise known as Waller Church, emerged as a result of excluded members. Beechland did not recognize the church as legally organized, and ostracized it as of a different faith and order, refusing to grant letters of "dismission". There was an effort to contact the members of that church by Bro. John Terry who was appointed by Beechland. The minutes of January 1902 record, "Dr. T. T. Eaton's Church asking an investigation of the reported irregularities of Greenwood Church."<sup>20</sup> Dr. Eaton was a powerful individual, pastor of Walnut Street Baptist Church, and at this time also editor of the Western Recorder. Beechland

did appoint a committee to investigate the church, but they found nothing to warrant charges of any kind. "Beechland voted to write Eaton stating they no longer wish to engage in <sup>the</sup> matter. Beechland had Brother Lowell assure Willie Waller that Beechland had no charge to make against Greenwood Church."<sup>21</sup> It would seem that as the church became more involved in administration problems, committee reports, and related functions, that less and less time is given to problem members or church discipline. That has both positive and negative repercussions. Positive, in that the 'witch hunt' ends, but negative in the sense that less attention is given to peripheral members. The minutes of August 1913 reveal a new entry into the monthly minutes. Ironically, after all of the expulsions, and nearing the end of such related action by the church, the minutes read: "Closed in sweet peace and harmony."

## Restoration

The church made some effort to restore straying members, though less than it probably should. Restoration became more prominent due to the large number of people who were excluded from fellowship. The first suggestion of a possible restoration comes in the minutes more than a year after the first exclusion. "Possible" because the case of Sarah Bess was "indefinitely postponed" in January of 1872, and nothing more is said about it. At the same time, Samuel Hollis' case was carried repeatedly from meeting to meeting for five months. Finally his case was also indefinitely postponed.

When a person wished to acknowledge their wrong before the church, and repent of their sin, they would be restored to full fellowship. In October of 1874, Sister Rebecca Hixton, "...presented herself to the church and acknowledged that she had been guilty of disorder, and asked the church that she might be restored. After a vote was taken her request was granted."<sup>22</sup> Several such cases appear in the minutes. In June of 1878, Bro. Watson made confession for his disorderly conduct through Bro. Waller as a proxy. A proxy was used again by Bro. Moran as he made acknowledgement and repentance to the church through Bro. Taylor (Jan. 1897). Eventually the church came to the conclusion that such acknowledgements should be made in person unless for extenuating circumstances. "The church made an amendment to the Rule--no acknowledgement by proxy would be received, that in cases where they were away out of the neighborhood and could not come to the church to make acknowledgement personally, that it would be received by proxy, and no other."<sup>23</sup>

A unique circumstance arises in Mar. 1901 with a certain man seeking to become a member of Beechland, but who seemingly had been excluded from his former church. Consequently, Beechland intervened and wrote asking the church (Walnut Street Baptist Church--Owensboro, Ky.) to restore Charles Donahue to

fellowship, and then grant him a letter of dismissal to unite with Beechland. Although the count for exclusions was 72, an estimated 52 were restored. Thirty-three of those were restored in one protracted meeting led by Bro. Wayts, while nine were restored in another.

#### Doctrinal Concerns

In October 1876 a resolution in reference to Dr. Burrows' act of open communion was offered by J. W. Waller and unanimously adopted. Beechland was concerned that Dr. Burrows, pastor of Broadway Church, had participated in open communion with a society known as Disciples of Christ located in Richmond, Va. Feeling this action would be a damaging reflection on fellow Baptists, Beechland resolved to, "...hereby express our disapproval and condemnation of the course of Dr. Burrows' aforesaid; and as an expression of our settled views of the Lord's Supper as a church ordinance and to stand as a warning to others, be it further resolved, by this church, that this resolution be spread upon our record, and a copy sent to the Western Recorder, and the Baptist, with the request to publish it."<sup>24</sup> The idea of reacting against open communion reeks with the smell of Landmarkism. It follows logically because W. E. Powers, as a contemporary of Alexander Campbell, is believed to have done as much as any other preacher of his day to stem the tide of Campbellism.<sup>25</sup>

The blow however, which did much to free Beechland from Landmarkist tendencies, came in the business meeting of May 1879. "Motion made and recorded that the communion of this church be restricted to Beechland Baptist Church, and after a vote was taken the motion lost."<sup>26</sup> This was one of the greater moments in the history of Beechland. Had the motion passed the development of Beechland Baptist Church could well have taken a different turn in history.

The Lord's Supper was practiced bi-monthly in 1914. In Jan. of 1921, discussion arose concerning the sanitation of the goblet method (common cup) of serving the Lord's Supper. "A motion was made and carried that 100 paper cups be bought for use as individual serving cups."<sup>27</sup>

It was not uncommon for the church to hold baptismal services outdoors. The minutes record that in April 1896, on the 4th Sunday in April, the church met in the afternoon at Dr. Foss' pond and administered the ordinance of Baptism to five individuals. The same is recorded for May 1897 with the baptism of R. E. Johnson. In October of 1927, the minutes record: "Dr. Shacklette volunteered to see if it was possible to heat the water in the Baptistry with an electric current."<sup>28</sup>

In August of 1933, the first incident of a request for being re-baptized is found in the minutes. Tommy Waller felt he did not understand the full meaning of the nature of salvation and baptism when as a child he came into the church. "Having experienced a newness of life by reconsecration in October 1932, he desired to be baptized and set forth the truth of his newness of life by baptism. Therefore, he was also baptized."<sup>29</sup> He was also licensed to preach that same evening.

Of interest also is a charge made in the Constitution concerning the article of faith dealing with baptism. As a further blow to Landmarkism (which is still prevalent today even in many Southern Baptist Churches) Beechland made the following addition:

"We will accept Christian Baptism by other faiths as valid, and we will not insist that individuals who have received Christian baptism be rebaptized in order to join our church fellowship."

Again, a commendable action is taken by Beechland.

#### Pastors

Through the years, Beechland has had thirty-six different men serve as

pastor of the church. (See the list for names and length of terms).

W. E. Powers served Beechland as its first pastor, and as its longest. Born in Shelby County, Ky., June 24, 1824; he was converted under the preaching of John Dale and E. G. Berry, baptized by Berry on October 17, 1839, ordained by the Long Run Church in 1859, and came to the area to launch the Beechland Baptist Church in 1860.<sup>30</sup>

Powers was an influential man of his day. He served as moderator of the Long Run Association for thirty years. He was a successful advocate of the cause of temperance and attracted favorable comment. During the Civil War he continued to preach once a month to both Beechland and Knob Creek churches. He pastored Beechland for twenty-two years, and then resigned to pastor King's Church.

Powers was a popular preacher, who as mentioned earlier, was re-elected annually for many years without a dissenting vote. Of course he met his difficulties as most pastors do, when he was confronted with the allegations made against him by W. W. Waller (See Discipline). In July of 1880, he asked the church to release him from pastoral duties one Sunday in each month. The minutes show that he withdrew that motion the next meeting, perhaps because he was aware of the trouble brewing, and as an effort to cut his pastoral duties in half by supposedly having J. C. Waller pastor two Sundays out of each month.

Powers returned to the church in May of 1886 to preach for one Sunday. Ironically, he returned in July 1913 for a 'Debttication' service, given responsibility for sharing the history of the church. Again he was called back in April 1914 to preach the morning service after which the ordination of Frank Smith as deacon took place. W. E. Powers died in November of 1916.

It was determined in December 1885, afer a speech by W. T. Kennedy, that

there were many disadvantages in calling a pastor annually. "It was moved and seconded that the church call our Pastor indefinitely and by a vote of the house the motion carried."<sup>31</sup> One might assume that the decision endured since this is the church's method in calling a pastor even today. But it nearly did not. In January 1932, discontentment with the pastor, B. H. Bush, came to the surface. Mrs. Harvey Gary made a motion that a vote be taken whether the church keep the present pastor. She settled for another approach. "Mrs. Gary withdrew her motion in favor of a motion made by Frank Murphy-- that the office of the Pastor be vacated March 1st, and a pastor be called on a yearly basis hereafter."<sup>32</sup> A vote was taken and the outcome was a tie. The vote taken again, the motion lost. Bush, as moderator, presented a list of resolutions which were adopted at the February business meeting. In March, the Deacons recommended that the resolutions adopted and passed in the last meeting be stricken from the minutes. Evidently they were, because I could not locate them in the minutes. Bro. Bush then proposed to offer his resignation not later than July 1, to take effect 90 days after July 1. The proposal was accepted. He accepted a call to Middletown Baptist Church and resigned in May 1932.

In response to Bush's efforts in having the resolutions adopted while he was moderator, Paul Baugh made a motion that the pastor of Beechland Church never act as moderator. The motion carried, but then the church turned right around in October and appointed Bro. Linger moderator in the absence of Mr. Hollis. The same occurred in November. Consequently, Mr. Baugh asked that his earlier motion of July be rescinded, and an amendment be added that Bro. Linger act as moderator.

The ministry of C. L. Berry from January 1891-February 1893 is a mystery. During his ministry the minutes reveal a steady flow of members

leaving and being granted letters of dismission. Throughout this time the minutes are kept irregularly. They skip from July 1881, to November 1881, to April 1892, to September 1892. Then suddenly, Berry resigns in February 1893. The clue which further reinforces the feeling that there were existing problems is found in the minutes. "Bro. C. L. Berry handed in his resignation to take effect at once."<sup>33</sup> Bro. Tanner followed Berry for the briefest pastorate on record of three months. In April of 1894, the church appointed a committee to write a letter to Bro. Tanner. His reply was read in May stating that he would leave the matter to the church as to whether they owe him anything or not.

A. Y. Napier was called as pastor and ordained in 1899. Participating and serving over the examining council was Dr. J. W. McGlothlin. He taught at Southern Seminary, later became president of Furman University, and ultimately president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Also present was Dr. J. E. Gwatkin. He was a well-known writer for teaching resources, a pastor, and later a professor of the first faculty of the Baptist Bible Institute, New Orleans, La.<sup>34</sup> We are told that Bro. Napier became a missionary to China in the minutes of February 1921.

S. M. Sowell followed Napier as pastor. Though he only pastored Beechland for about a year, it was probably due to his sense of call to the mission field. He was 17 years old when he dedicated his life, "...in a letter to God, deposited in a hollow stump."<sup>35</sup> Appointed May 5, 1903, he became the first Southern Baptist missionary to Argentina. He became president of the River Plate Seminary from 1918-1942.

N. W. Cox, who served as pastor from January 1915 to April 1916, was thought of very highly. The minutes record a resolution sent to Beechmont Baptist: "Resolved: that we commend him to Beechmont brethren as a Christian gentleman of the highest order, a scholar of no mean ability, a strong and earnest

preacher of the Gospel, a sound Baptist and a good and wise pastor."

#### Pastor's Salary

In the beginning, the pastor's salary was received through subscriptions made and contracted with the members. In 1877, the deacons were directed to investigate the financial conditions of the church, and also to use their diligence in collecting the pastor's salary for the last year. In 1897, when the church fell behind on the pastor's salary by \$80.00, the Ladies' Entertainment contributed \$17.25 and Ladies' Aid Supper at the church contributed \$22.75.

The bylaws of 1873 record the following: "...so we believe it is the absolute duty of every child of God who has been 'bought with a price' to give of his or her means to the support of the Gospel and inculcate such as a duty taught by our Lord and His apostles.

"No member who has never paid anything to the support of the church, if he or she is able, can receive a recommendation in full fellowship from the church. They are not living in accordance with the teaching of the New Testament and we cannot recommend them as co-laborers to any sister church unless they be living where the church is inaccessible and by repentance show a willing spirit henceforth to labor in any part of the vineyard of the Lord."

#### Missions

Beechland has always been a mission-minded church. In 1876, W. E. Powers pledged Beechland to \$33.00 for missionary purposes in the Long Run Association. A committee was appointed to raise it. It is reported that \$92.00 was collected for state missions in 1877. In 1878, the church received a special collection for Bro. Holt, a visiting missionary. In 1879, the first record of a collection for the Louisville Orphan's Home is preserved. This became an annual collection. The church also contributed to a Seminary Student's Fund.

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The minutes record that Bro. Whitsitt (the famed president of Southern Seminary, who was unjustly harassed for his anti-Successionist views of Baptist history) was paid \$5.00 from the church. In April of 1895, committees on both Home and Foreign Missions were appointed. Mrs. Belle Moreman emerged as the heart-beat for missions within Beechland. She became chairman of the Missionary Society in 1896. In 1899 she was given full charge of mission work in the church.

In April 1897, the church moved and adopted that there be an all day meeting on the fourth Sunday in the month. There were to have been two Missionary sermons and dinner at the church. In 1913, \$107.00 was subscribed for benevolence. The Ladies' Missionary Society supplied the pews as a gift to the church in 1915. They also had concrete steps put in. The church has had part in a number of mission churches and Sunday Schools.

#### Sunday School

In 1885, the church provided their facilities and invited the Long Run Sunday School Convention to meet with Beechland. This was repeated in March 1900. On February 8, 1915, Bro. Price from the city was invited to occupy the time for Sunday School one morning in explaining and grading the Sunday School. The minutes of October 1915 show 151 enrolled in main Sunday School, with 50 in the Home Department. This probably implies that Beechland was holding Sunday School elsewhere as well. In 1927, crowded conditions of the Sunday School were discussed and <sup>the</sup> church decided the solution would be to build a basement under the church for more room.

There is reflected in the minutes a possible tension between the Sunday School as a separate entity from the church. "Bro. Smith made the motion that we rescind the action of the last business meeting of uniting Sunday

School and church Treasurers. As there was no second, the motion lost."37  
Frank Murphy then moved that the church create a Sunday School treasury.  
George Baugh seconded, but the motion lost 18 to 11. Dr. Shacklette had  
made the original motion, seconded by Henry Raggard that the church and  
Sunday School treasuries be combined. August 1933 marked some real movement. The  
Church decided to have a Standard Sunday School operating by September.  
Furthermore, a course of study using the Sunday School manual as a text would  
be pursued, and, beginning August 14th, a relative census of the community  
would be made to discover prospects for Sunday School. The deacons acknow-  
ledged the achievement of a Standard Sunday School in December 1933, and  
requested specific books be purchased for training teachers and officers.  
The first weekly teacher's meetings were begun on Wednesdays from 7-7:50 P. M.,  
in 1934. The primary motive was to teach the lesson for the following  
Sunday, work out plans for better all around teaching methods and study, and  
also to help in adequate preparation.

#### Women

Without women, one wonders where Beechland might have been. Already  
we have seen how they bailed the church out on more than one occasion with the  
pastor's salary. Women took an active role in business meetings as reflected  
by Mrs. Gary's motion to dismiss Bro. Bush. Women have been the essence of  
the Mission movement in Beechland from its beginnings. Eventually, the  
Mission's Committee was composed of women alone. The Covenant Committee  
which at that time was extremely important, was made up of two women and two  
men. The women had their own building fund, without which one might question  
how much building would have been done. Mrs. Harvey Gary was recommended by the  
Deacon Board to serve as song leader and did for several years. Beechland owes

a grave debt of gratitude to its women.

### Music

Music has been a strong tradition at Beechland, and has always played a vital role in the life of the church. The organ was adopted as a part of worship in March 1885. From what is known, Edith Erskine served as the first church organist. She was extended the position as long as she would have it. She resigned in July 1896 after a long-term service to the church. Miss Jessee Alsop succeeded her as church organist. On June 5, 1921, instead of the regular evening preaching services, a "Musical Entertainment" was rendered by the entire church. R. L. Dye assumed responsibilities of choir leader in January 1922. He served for seven years, followed by Mrs. Harvey Gary. Mildred Gazel is recorded as organist in 1933.

There is an interesting story about how the church nearly purchased a pipe organ in 1934. Rev. Linger had an organ expert (Father Pfeiffer from St. Helens) go up to Cannellton, Ind. After checking the organ he discouraged Bro. Linger from buying it, since it was not found as specified. The salesman then went to see Father Pfeiffer, and Pfeiffer came back to Bro. Linger saying he had made a mistake and considered it a good buy after all. Bro. Linger by this time, had become skeptical, and so discouraged the church from buying it.

### J. H. Spencer

The church has throughout its history had connections with some very prominent and famed individuals: W. E. Powers, S. M. Sowell, A. Y. Napier, W. O. Carver, W. H. Whitsitt, E. Y. Mullins, G. B. Eager, J. W. McGlothlin, T. T. Eaton, etc. But none as intricately a part (with the exception of Powers) of the church, none more respected as a writer and historian than J. H. Spencer.

Spencer's name appears throughout the first 30 years of Beechland's minutes. He was a pastor, missionary, evangelist, teacher, author, and historian. Spencer was converted at 23 years of age, licensed at 27 and ordained in the year he turned 28 years of age. He later felt that he was more inclined toward missionary and evangelistic type work rather than the pastorate. Under the auspices of Nelson Association (1861), Long Run Association (1864), and the Kentucky General Association (1870), Spencer organized new churches, revived dead churches, strengthened weak ones and assisted in revivals in at least 5 states.<sup>38</sup> Spencer married the daughter of a steamboat captain named G. W. Everhart, also a member of Beechland. The death of Spencer's wife, Alice, is recorded in the Beechland minutes as having occurred August 19, 1872. He remarried three years later to Miss Burilla Burton Waller.

Spencer was a highly respected writer and historian. This accounts for the esteem with which he was held at Beechland. He was appointed to work with a committee in 1865 to make plans for writing a history of Kentucky Baptists. The task was later given entirely over to Spencer. He spent better than nine years on a two volume work which was submitted to the publishers in April 1885. It has been reprinted and still serves as a vital resource with regard to Kentucky Baptist history.

J. H. Spencer was an active member in Beechland. Frequently he preached at business meetings. The passing from this life of Beechland members was occasionally recorded in the minutes of the church, as in the case of his wife Alice. Spencer made a motion that the death of Bro. Swearingen (April 3, 1869) be placed upon the records. Spencer was frequently called upon to prepare the annual letter submitted to the Association. In 1879, he joined with W. E. Powers in leading a protracted meeting at Beechland which resulted in 14 baptisms. Spencer was the neutralizing factor in the Waller - Powers

controversy, and the one who urged the resolution reaffirming Beechland's love and affection for Powers. He was chosen as Beechland's delegate to the General Association of Baptists in 1885. The minutes last mention Spencer in 1889 when he preached at Beechland. He died December 21, 1897 with no mention of his death in Beechland minutes.

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The minutes reviewed for this survey of Beechland Baptist Church span only those years from 1860 - 1936. To my knowledge, the church is unable to locate the minutes from roughly 1936 - 1957. So there is still much to be discovered in the history of Beechland. I have intentionally dwelled upon the earlier history however, to make Beechland aware of its heritage, particularly from the forgotten past. The past reveals both things which embarrass me as a product of Beechland, and some things which make me proud of my church heritage. But God willing, we will learn something from the past and live more equipped for the present and the future.

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Centennial Publication - Long Run Association Excerpt.
- <sup>2</sup> Beechland Baptist Minutes (Book I).
- <sup>3</sup> Moody, Dale, The Word of Truth. (Unpublished - copyright pending September 27, 1979), p.76.
- <sup>4</sup> Beechland Baptist Minutes (Book III).
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid. (Book II).
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid. (Book I).
- <sup>8</sup> Woolley, Davis Collier, Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists (Vol. I-III) Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958, p. 365.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 365-366.
- <sup>10</sup> Beechland Minutes (Book II).
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid. (Book I).
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid. (Book II).
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, P.366.
- <sup>18</sup> Beechland Minutes (Book II).
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.

- <sup>24</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup>Encyc. of Southern Baptists, P.1102 (Vol. 2).
- <sup>26</sup>Beechland Minutes (Book II).
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid. (Book III).
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>29</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup>Encyc. of Southern Baptists, p. 1101 (Vol. 2).
- <sup>31</sup>Beechland Minutes (Book II).
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid. (Book III).
- <sup>33</sup>Ibid. (Book II).
- <sup>34</sup>Encyc. of Southern Baptists, p. 594 (Vol. I).
- <sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 1287 (Vol II).
- <sup>36</sup>Beechland Minutes (Vol. III).
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid. (Book III).
- <sup>38</sup>Encyc. of Southern Baptists, p. 1290 (Vol. II).

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