

Kyle Lodge No. 422 and Whitesburg Baptist Church

An idea was born before July 18, 1871. The person who thought of it is unknown, and how the idea spread is lost. As this idea blossomed, it united a new Masonic Lodge, Kyle Lodge No. 422, and a very old church, Bent Creek Baptist Church, under one roof. This unity, under one roof, brought two complimentary entities together and their history flowed in unison for eleven decades.

The Master Masons of Whitesburg, Tennessee, had petitioned the Grand Lodge of Tennessee for a Disposition, and being in the jurisdiction of Morristown Lodge No. 231, the petition was read in that Lodge on May 4, 1871. Morristown Lodge No. 231 approved the petition and so advised the Grand Master. Kyle Lodge No. 422, F. & A.M., came into being on June 14, 1871, when Most Worshipful John C. Brown, Grand Master of Tennessee, granted a Disposition.

Bent Creek Baptist Church was constituted on June 11, 1785, in the "Bent Creek Settlement," located in the lost State of Franklin. How long the people had been worshipping together before their constitution is unknown. Until 1773, the community was located in the section called Green County, North Carolina, and it was located, in what was called, Washington County in the Territory South of the Ohio River. It was known as Jefferson County by 1792, and it became a part of the newborn state of Tennessee in 1796.

Except for the fact of sharing and maintaining a building and cooperating on a calendar for scheduling events, this one hundred twenty-five year old story applies as well to area churches in their history: Baptist churches include Bulls Gap, Catherine, Nenny, Cedar Creek, Highland, Midtown, Robertson Creek, Russellville, and others. Methodist churches include Bulls Gap, Creeches Chapel, Russellville, St. Claire, Talleys Chapel, Whitesburg (now extinct), and others, and Russellville Presbyterian Church (now extinct) and Whitesburg Presbyterian Church. All these churches have provided leadership for Kyle Lodge, and much leadership and membership in the named churches have been members of Kyle Lodge. Two of the first officers were ministers: Reverend John J. Carroll, Senior Deacon, and Reverend Philip Mulkey, Chaplain, and there are at least nine ministers who are members at present. As expected, and by universal rule, there has been an historical complimentary relationship between the Lodge and the churches.

On December 19, 1871, Bent Creek Baptist Church voted to move to Whitesburg.

Only two known printed documents exist between the Lodge and the Church: A joint purchase of property for building in 1872 and the deed made from the Church to the Lodge in 1886. An enquiry with Whitesburg's mature historian and member of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Eva Ruth Russell, revealed: She had never heard of any written contract or document of any kind. In fact, she said, she had never thought of it. It had always been understood that the Lodge was upstairs and the Church downstairs, and they shared the building and the expenses for maintaining it.

On October 9, 1872, these two parties purchased a lot on Church Street in Whitesburg for \$75.00 from Mr. and Mrs. William Caswell Kyle. Church trustees were William H. Coffman, Joel Haun, George C. Pangle, P.M. Kirkpatrick, and Rufus Calvin Horner; and the Lodge trustees were Fredrick Pangle, Samuel Smith, and Ephraim J. Hyatt. They selected William A. Dean, a Union Army veteran

to build the nice two-story building. He mined red clay and burned the bricks on the farm of Joseph Long, south of Whitesburg.

Bent Creek Baptist Church changed its name to Whitesburg Baptist Church in 1875, and hereafter will be referred to by that name.

"The sword with the scabbard keep,

And let mankind agree." John Dryden.

Something more than paper united Kyle Lodge No. 422 and Whitesburg Baptist Church. As Samuel Goldwyn said: "A verbal contract is not worth the paper it's written on." True! True! But here, spirit made a difference. An explosive question: How can two parties live together in the same house for one hundred and twelve years without written contracts? For the twentieth century, this is an unheard of arrangement; but it worked. It worked because of the spirit of the two parties. Parties were made up of numerous individuals who shared, and still share a philosophy that we've heard existed in times of yore: "a man's word was his bond" and "a handshake was enough." Such was the partnership between Kyle Lodge No. 422 and Whitesburg Baptist Church, and with pride, we can report that the fraternity is the greatest ally churches have and historically encourages church attendance and activity.

By 1982, Whitesburg Baptist Church was contemplating a move. The deed of 1872 posed a problem, "...said church when unoccupied by said Baptist Church, to be free for all ministers, of other Christian denominations to preach in but not for church organization..." The Church trustees, Robert Bush, Fred Jackson, Harvey Dalton, Grant Green, Timothy Marshall, and Frank Everhart Jr., met with the Lodge's stationed officers (trustees), Charles R. Vermillion, Walter Boyd Brookshire, and Kenneth Braxton, to plan. The same met with Gary E. Brewer, Attorney, and it was decided that he would draw the necessary papers and petition the judge to give Whitesburg Baptist Church full ownership to one half of the property. The reason being to longevity of tenure and the ambiguous nature of the original deed. The petition was later granted. On May 24, 1986, the Church made a deed to the Lodge. The Lodge paid \$5,000.00 plus recording fees. Lodge officers were Perry Wolf, Kerry Livesay, and Ronnie Lawson. The Church trustees were Grant Green, Harvey Dalton, Roe Eldridge, Frank Everhart, Timothy Marshall, and C.W. Lowery. This transaction brought an end to a compatible partnership of one hundred and fourteen years, but a complimentary relationship continues, and the future is bright.

Whitesburg Baptist Church broke ground for a new building on June 23, 1984, and held their first worship service in the new building on December 9, 1984. The Lodge moved downstairs and began renovation which will not be completed until some future date.