

HISTORY OF THE FINCH HILL BAPTIST CHURCH

Before 1930, known as:
THE GREENFIELD FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH

The Greenfield Free Will Baptist Church was organized on August 11, 1805 by Rev. Epaphras Thompson of Mount Pleasant, PA at the house of Benjamin Bucklin in Clifford Township. Twenty-eight brethren and sisters declared themselves established as Free Communion Baptists.

The church soon joined the General Meeting of Free Communion Baptists and sent Deacon Gideon Lewis to that meeting to be ordained as their first pastor. He was duly ordained on September 20, 1805.

The Church met for worship and covenant meeting during the first years in members' homes in Greenfield and was known as the FREE BAPTIST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN GREENFIELD. The General Meeting met here in 1818 and 1820. In August 1821, the beloved pastor Elder Gideon Lewis died.

William E. Robinson, one of the original members, was called to fill his place, but was not ordained until December 1826. In 1822, the church numbered 35 members and on August 31, 1822, the church entered into the organization of the Gibson Quarterly Meeting of Free Will Baptists and was connected with that organization for many years. By 1831, the church had increased to 50 members.

Elder Robinson continued preaching to the church and meeting in the members' homes until 1835, when he moved to New York State and was succeeded by Elder Gurley Dodge (1835 - 1835), Elder William McKown (1836 - 1838), and Elder Alson Haynes (1836 - 1839).

About this time, John Henry Clinton Tompkins (son of the first settler in Tompkinsville) joined the church and was soon elected clerk.

Reuben Whitney of Gibson was called as pastor and ordained in December 1840. A revival followed, when many joined, and John H. C. Tompkins was licensed to preach.

The church began meeting in the Burdick Schoolhouse in 1840. Elder Charles Vail (1842 - 1844) and Elder Reuben Whitney (1844 - 1848) served as pastors.

The records show frequent cases of discipline and often excluded members for unrighteous living. In 1848, only 13 members were found in full fellowship. Bro. John H. C. Tompkins was called as pastor at this time and ordained at the Gibson Quarterly Meeting in June 1850. The young minister began preaching the Gospel in earnest and a revival soon followed. Additional meetings were begun at the Carpenter School House at Amasa in 1851 and 17 new converts were baptized that year.

The Gibson Quarterly Meeting was held in June of that year in Homer Davison's barn near Tompkinsville and was held many times thereafter with the Greenfield Church.

In 1852, the church reported in prosperity and was enjoying refreshing seasons. Meetings were regularly held at the Burdick and White Schoolhouses and 13 more were baptized. Six more were received in 1853, making a total of 46 members.

However, in spite of all the good work he had done, the pastor, Elder Tompkins got carried away with spiritualism and it became the painful duty of the church to exclude him and five of his followers in that error in 1855.

In 1856 and 1857, the church reported in a low state, but a faithful few carried on. In time, Elder Tompkins saw the error of his ways and came back to the church begging forgiveness. He was restored to fellowship in 1858. The next year, the church revised its rolls and found 29 in fellowship.

In 1860, three were baptized and Brothers Robert Broadfoot and Elijah Tarbox were licensed to preach. The civil war years were a low time spiritually and the church was in a cold condition.

In 1865, Elder Tompkins resigned and moved to Sullivan County, PA. The church called Elder John Tillinghast, who came and served faithfully until 1869.

In that year, Rev. Halloway H. Clancy came to the church from the Methodists. He was ordained pastor by the Gibson Quarterly Meeting in February 1870 and under his active labors 23 new members were received by baptism. The church now rose with one accord to meet a long felt need and erected a house of worship (the present one) at Finch Hill Corners on a lot purchased from James Keesler. It was dedicated to the glory of God on the first Sunday in September 1870 with appropriate services conducted by Elders Halloway Clancy, Alva H. Fish, John Tompkins, George Stone, and D. Brown. Joseph Avery and George Burdick were elected deacons to serve with Solomon Finch, who had been a deacon since 1833.

Elder Clancy left in the fall of 1871 and was followed by Elder John H. Green, who was pastor until December 1873. He was succeeded by Elder Alvah H. Fish, who was the beloved pastor for three years and built the church up to 60 members.

Among prominent members at this time were John and Joseph Avery, George Dorrance, Lawrence Burdick, Peter and Eben Matthews, Stephen Carpenter, Theodore and Melvin Pierce, Nathaniel Goodrich, their wives and families. Later also: Walter Burdick, Anthony Briggs, Will Ogden, Joseph Lee, and their wives and others.

Elder Fish was succeeded by Elder George Stone in 1878. He served acceptably for three years and Elder C.M. Prescott two years after him.

Several years followed when the church was in a low condition, but Elder Stephen Carpenter of Benton, a member of the church, kept up the covenant meetings with great faithfulness. Delegates were also appointed regularly to attend the Gibson Quarterly Meeting.

In September 1888, Elder H. Payne came to hold a revival. He baptized 14 new members and remained pastor two years.

Elder Stephen Carpenter again supplied the church for a time until 1893 when Rev. E.F. Lyon was called. He did a good work for two years and was succeeded by Rev. Charles Wilson, who remained but one year. He was followed by Rev. Joseph B. Huntley who was here from 1897 - 1899.

In 1901, Elder George Stone came back to the church and continued faithfully for many years. At this time the church numbered 48 members. However, as time passed, the older members died and the younger ones either moved away or became indifferent and the population of the township was changing.

After Elder Stone was unable to come anymore, regular services ceased and in time the church was closed altogether. The church building became very much out of repair and the land almost reverted to the original grantees.

But in the darkest hour, the grace of God shone through. In 1928, interest was awakened in the old church through the determined efforts of Mrs. Annie Gardner, Raymond Pierce, Jamin Goodrich, and a few others.

Rev. C.M. Butler of Thompson began holding regular services again and the church was reorganized. Eleven new members received. In 1929, \$1,000 was left to the church by the will of Mr. Steven Whitmore and with these funds the church was thoroughly renovated and repaired. A new roof and floor, new doors, windows, and seats were installed. The walls were re-plastered, painted, and electric lights were installed.

Jamin Goodrich was elected Deacon and Sunday School Superintendent, and Sunday School has been conducted regularly since. During the 1930's, services were held from time to time by Rev. Butler and other ministers.

In December 1940, Rev. George Ellen of Berean Baptist Church, Carbondale began holding evangelistic services, which resulted in the conversion of 24 souls who were baptized by him into the fellowship of the church. The church building was again repaired and the basement added in 1941.

Rev. Albert Whitehead of the Worth Baptist Church was called as pastor in July 1941 and continued until December 1944.

He was followed by Rev. Joseph Coogan of Carbondale, who began in February 1945, was ordained June 12, 1945, and served the church very faithfully as long as he was able. He was called to his eternal reward in April 1951. Mr. Norton Vail supplied 2 years.

Pastor Rev. Joseph Harrison began his labors in December 1948, served 8 years, was faithful in the work of the Lord and was called to his eternal reward in Nov. 1957.

(The preceding history of the church was taken directly from a history, in the church records, prepared by Mabel Grosvenor.)

In 1957, James Reese became pastor and would faithfully lead the body of believers for the next 34 years.

A parsonage, located on Hickory Ridge Road was purchased in 1959. Many physical changes in the church building took place during Pastor Reese's tenure. In 1979, a cellar was dug under the main church and much needed room for Sunday School classes and meeting was added. The vacant lot adjoining the church was purchased. In 1985, the sanctuary was remodeled. In 1989, an addition to the rear of the building was built adding bathrooms and two more rooms.

In Sept 1991, Pastor Glenn Borne assumed the responsibilities of leading the church. In 1992, the parsonage was sold and another parsonage was bought at 14 High Street in Carbondale. The church at Finch Hill Corners continues to preach the Gospel as it did through those that have gone on before us did.

Finch Hill Baptist Church Pastors

Pastor	Tenure
Gideon Lewis	1805 - 1821
William E. Robinson	1821 - 1835
Gurley Dodge	1835 - 1836
William Mc Kown	1836 - 1838
Alson Hayes	1838 - 1839
Reuben Whitney	1840 - 1842
Charles L. Vail	1842 - 1844
Reuben Whitney	1844 - 1848
John H. C. Tompkins	1848 - 1855
Alva H. Fish	1855 - 1856
John H. C. Tompkins	1858 - 1865
John Tallinghast	1865 - 1869
Halloway H. Clancy	1869 - 1871
John H. Green	1872 - 1873
Alva H. Fish	1875 - 1878
Chester M. Prescott	1881 - 1883
Stephen Carpenter	1883 - 1888
A. Payne	1888 - 1890
Stephen Carpenter	1890 - 1893
E. F. Lyon	1893 - 1894
F. A. Janes	1894 - 1895
Charles Wilson	1895 - 1896
Joseph B. Huntley	1897 - 1899
George Stone	1901 -
C. M. Butler	1928 -

George Ellen	1940 - 1941
Albert Whitehead	1941 - 1944
Joseph Coogan	1945 - 1948
Joseph Harrison	1948 - 1957
James Reese	1957 - 1991
Glenn Borne	1991 - 1999
Emory Weeks (interim)	1999 - 1999
Daniel Henwood	1999 - 2011
Christopher Seavey (interim)	2011 - 2013
Brian Nichols	2013 - 2016
Joseph LaCava	2017 - 2019
John May	2019 -