

Richland Presbyterian Church

est. 1834



Richland Church, located on Poplar Springs Road between Richland and West Union, was organized in 1834, enrolled by South Carolina Presbytery at Midway Church March 22, 1834, subscribed by James O. Lewis, Esquire, Mrs. Mary Lewis, Mr. James Hogan Dendy, Mrs. Elizabeth Knox Dendy, Mrs. Eliza F. Dupree, Mr. Francis Jenkins, Mrs. Mary Jenkins, Miss Sally (Allie) Jenkins, Mr. John McWhorter, Miss Mary McWhorter and Miss Sally L. McWhorter. Reverend B.D. Dupree served as first supply with Francis Jenkins and John McWhorter as ruling elders.

Richland Presbyterian Church began in 1834 with eleven charter members; the first elders were from Bethel Presbyterian Church — Francis Jenkins and John McWhorter.

According to an article published in "Names in South Carolina" in the winter of 1967, the Richland Community is located between Westminster and Seneca, and was named for the fertile land found in the area. James Hogan Dendy's homestead was one of the earliest to be settled in the region. According to Shelor's history of the church, some of the inhabitants of the Pickens District, "living in a country granting toleration to every system of religion not subversive to social order and civil liberty, have, jointly and severally, agreed to constitute ourselves into a regularly organized Church. We call our-selves Presbyterians." The result was the organization of Richland Church in 1834 on land provided by Dendy. (Dendy, who was an original member of the church, later became an elder. He died in 1846.)

A building committee consisting of James O. Lewis, Richard Harris and Rev. Benjamin Dupree was appointed to take up subscriptions for a church building, "of such dimensions and after such style as in their wisdom may be deemed expedient and necessary." This log house was built on land (1-1/8 acres) owned by James H. Dendy and deeded to Richland Trustees by his wife, Elizabeth Dendy, including one acre for a graveyard. Rev. Dupree was called as stated supply, a post he filled until 1841; during this period the church maintained a membership of around thirty-nine.

Soon a large log church covered by "riven" boards was built. According to Shelor, "The house was large and commodious, and was approached by a door on the east side and one in the south end; one window on the west side and probably a smaller window over the pulpit; the shutters for windows were made of plank. The pulpit stood in the north end under the small window. There were two long, narrow tables for the communion service. The communicants were required to seat themselves at the table and when served gave place to others."

In 1841, Reverend Joseph Hillhouse supplied the church with James H. Dendy and Simpson Dickson elected to the eldership. Joseph Hillhouse was again supplying the church in 1842, and membership stood at twenty members. Hillhouse was also supplying Retreat as a mission station, and working as a missionary in Anderson and Pickens. Other ministers who assisted with services and protracted meetings were the Reverends David Humphreys, J. Leland Kennedy, Anthony W. Ross, and T.L. McBride. The land on which the church stood was eventually deeded to the church by Dendy's widow in 1850. Some of its deacons and members were dismissed in 1851 to organize Retreat church.

Rev. William McWhorter was supplying Richland Presbyterian Church in 1852, but membership following the organization of Retreat had fallen to eighteen members. McWhorter was to serve as pastor from 1851-65, and later as stated supply from 1874-77.

Around 1859 the **Richland** congregation began to consider building a new church. According to Shelor, “The noble response given by members of every denomination in the county, and by the business men also, and liberal contribution of her own members” enabled them to hire Thomas and William Bibb as contractors in March of 1860. A condition of the contract was that the building be completed by September of that year, which it was.

The new church building was begun and completed by September 1. The total cost was \$825.48. “It was intended by the Committee to be a plain, neat and substantial building without ornamentation, and the test of time has shown the wisdom of the Committee in their plans and the faithfulness of the contractors in executing them.” The old log house was sold to William Jaynes for \$14.25. On September 22, 1860, the new church building was solemnly dedicated to God and His service.

During the years 1918–19, under the inspiration of the pastor, the Reverend I.E. Wallace, the church was remodeled, the same building being used with six Sunday School rooms, a choir loft, and a dome added. The remodeled church was dedicated in the summer of 1921. This was a great occasion for Richland Church.

A large fellowship hall was built in 1958 by Galloway Construction in back of the church and is fully equipped for social events. Also, wall-to-wall carpet has been placed throughout the church, together with attractive light features, and a beautiful electric organ.

Probably the greatest occasion in the history of the church was the centennial celebration on Sunday, August 5, 1934. Nearly 500 members, former members and friends gathered for this memorable celebration. A large stone centennial marker was unveiled and presented. Homecoming services were held in the afternoon.

Although Bethel Church, which was organized in 1805, is the oldest Presbyterian Church in Oconee County, Richland Church can truly be called the mother of Presbyterianism in Oconee County, for it has several times given of its loyal members to organize new churches.

On March 9, 1851, the following persons were dismissed, at their own request, to be organized into a church at Retreat: Elder Simpson Dickson, Mrs. Sabret Dickson, Mrs. Sarah Towers, Mrs. Margaret Fullerton, Mrs. Kittie Lee, Mrs. Mary Bolden, Joseph R. Shelor, Mrs. Rebecca Shelor, Samuel Verner, Mrs. Malinda Verner, Mrs. E.C.S. Verner, Miss Hepsy Terrell, and Elder L.H. Verner.

On October 26, 1875, the following persons were dismissed by letter for the formation of Seneca Presbyterian Church: Thomas A. McElroy, Mrs. R.J. McElroy, Mrs. M.E. McElroy, Mrs. M.E. Bibb, Mrs. N.E. Myers, and Mrs. Lou Christian.

On June 25, 1882, the following members were dismissed to enter into the organization of the Westminster Presbyterian Church: Elder H.R. Gaston, Mrs. Mary J. Gaston, and Miss M.A. and H.M. Gaston, W.S. Gaston, J.L. Hudgens, Mrs. L.E. Hudgens, D.S. Hull, Mrs. R.C. Hall, Miss Susan Steel, Miss Scott Steel, Miss Alice Steel, and Mrs. Laura Zimmerman.

Richland Church has also furnished a number of members and officers for the Walhalla Church and one member for the Fair Play Church, who served among her first elders. For over a half-century, Richland Church received spiritual oversight from stated supplies, the first pastor being called in 1891. Even after that, there were several supplies.

The following are the names of the supplies. The Reverend Messrs. Benjamin D. Dupree (1834–39), Joseph Hillhouse (1841–___), William McWhorter (1851–1865), William P. Grady (1865–69), McNeil Turner (1869–70), E.F. Hyde (1871–74), J.M. Seabrook (1884–88), I.P. Marion (1889–90), G.S. Cook (1890–91), G.G. Mayes (1895–1897), L.W. Brown (1906–08), and John G. Law (1911–12).

The following have served as pastors: The Reverend Messrs. T.C. Ligon (the first pastor, 1891–95), R.L. Rogers (1897–1905), George M. Wilcox (1909–11), F.D. Vaughn, only resident pastor (1912–13), I.E. Wallace (1913–23), T.D. Cartledge (1923–25), J.S. Crowley (1927–32), and Wm. C. Frierson, Ph.D. (1933–49), W.A. Brown (1950–56), Henry Mooney (1958–63), Stuart Nickles (1964–66), Robert Horel (1967–72), James A. Burgess (1974–76), Robert Burch (1977–79), Seminary Students supplied (1979–80), Jack L. Stevenson (1981–83), Nancy Blakely (1993–94), Charles Reichenbach (1984–2004). Richland only had one full-time minister, but has been grouped with Bethel, Walhalla, Seneca, or Westminster. January 1995, Charles Reichenbach was called as the second full-time minister.

On February 11, 1877, a Sunday School was organized and has been successfully functioning ever since. It has contributed a great deal to the life of the church. In the year 1896, there was organized a Ladies' Aid Society, later a Missionary and Aid Society, and still later, the Woman's Auxiliary, the Women of the Church, and lastly the Presbyterian Women (Sources: *Richland Presbyterian Church* by Bessie May Stribling). (For more information on the early history of Richland Church, see John W. Shelor, *The Richland Church: Early Presbyterianism in Upper South Carolina*. Walhalla: Keowee Courier Presses, 1915. Additional information came from Doris S. Foster's sketch of the church in *Heritage of Oconee County*).

Source: SCGenWeb/RichlandPresbyterianChurch