ABNER BAPTIST CHURCH · ESTABLISHED 1867

# Our Church History

A story of faith, perseverance, and generations of service in Glen Allen, Virginia.

## The Beginnings

After being freed from slavery, a group of Christians worshiped in the balconies of Berea and Ground Squirrel Baptist Churches, which had been opened to serve the white population in the community. They wanted to do more than listen: they wanted to take part in worship. Inspired by God, they began gathering in the woods to pray freely and sing praises. In 1867, that congregation organized Abner Baptist Church, with the Rev. Burrell Toler as its first pastor.

## Early Growth

The Rev. John Clarke, Abner’s second pastor, led the building of the first log church. As membership grew quickly, a larger log church was built. The Rev. Thomas Edwards, the third pastor, served for 27 years; during his ministry, Abner’s first frame building was erected.

The Rev. Charlie Brown, Abner’s fourth pastor, served for six years, and construction began on the present building. The Rev. Sylvanius Jones, the fifth pastor, served for approximately 19 years. During his leadership, the main sanctuary was completed, a choir stand was built, and Abner’s first choir was organized.

## A Season of Lasting Improvements

Abner’s sixth pastor, Dr. I. H. Hines, served for 28 years. Improvements during his ministry included redecorating the church inside and out, adding hardwood floors, electric lights, and central heat, and organizing the Usher Board, Missionary Circle, and Youth Church. After Dr. Hines’ years of service, God called him home.

## Expanding Worship and Ministry

After a year and a half without a pastor, Abner called its seventh pastor, the Rev. Leroy Jones, in February 1963. During his leadership, services increased to twice each month and the membership grew. The church added an annex and purchased a bus. A youth choir, junior ushers, Junior Mission Girls, the I. H. Hines Memorial Chorus, and Vacation Bible School were also organized.

Nine months after the Rev. Jones left in 1969, the Rev. D. W. Crump was called to Abner. During his ministry, services increased to four each month, and the Willing Workers Club and Three Score and Ten were organized.

In April 1973, the Rev. Warren J. Lewis was called to pastor Abner Baptist Church. Under the Rev. Lewis, Abner installed air conditioning, purchased land, added new pew cushions, remodeled the choir stand with padded chairs, and extended the annex. The Young Adult Christian Club and Young Adult Choir were organized; the choir later became known as the Abner Gospel Choir.

## New Ministries and Traditions

In 1994, ten women were installed as members of Abner's first Deaconess Ministry, and the Women's Choir was organized. The Combined Choir was fully established in 1995. Abner held its first Family Day Worship Service at Goode's Pool. The Sunbeam Choir grew to lead music during Youth Sunday services, and the Abner Gospel Choir and I. H. Hines Memorial Chorus combined to form the Hines Gospel Chorus.

Abner continued to grow in membership and improve its facilities. The parking lot was blacktopped, the sanctuary was completely remodeled, the foyer was enlarged and bricked, and a shelter and playground were added. In 2000, after years without a bus, the church purchased a van.

## The Ministry of Rev. Jaimal C. Hayes

The Rev. Jaimal C. Hayes was installed as Abner's tenth pastor in August 2002. Even before his installation, he worked diligently to secure a new sound system. Under his ministry of preaching and teaching, additional ministries have been added, more deacons, male and female, have been installed, female Associate Ministers have been licensed and added, the old church was bricked, and a new church addition was planned and constructed.

Pastor Hayes also worked with church and ministry leaders to develop a vision for Abner, grounded in Habakkuk 2:2: "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that

readeth it.”

## A Legacy of Ministry

Abner is grateful for the ministers who got their start in the church:

- Rev. Louis Harris
- Rev. Herbert Mallory
- Rev. Sam White
- Rev. Darrell Peyton
- Rev. Norris Lewis
- Rev. Myron “Rock” Davis
- Rev. John E. Gordon Sr.
- Rev. Louise Faulkner

## Our Vision

> “To be a Holy Spirit empowered church growing a strong family by offering a wholistic ministry which meets the spiritual, physical and social needs of the community, one member at a time.”

We are still on a mission for the King, pressing toward the future with greater determination to serve as an instrument of God’s will. Our prayer is that Abner will always be a church where people can find what the world cannot provide.

## To God be the glory for the great things He has done!