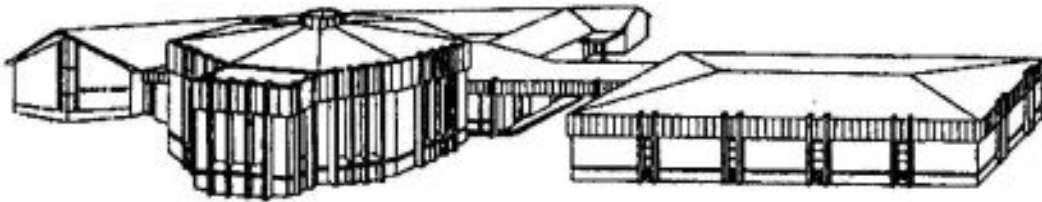


**The History Of  
Killen Church of Christ  
1911 – 1997**



*1986 TO PRESENT*

## The History of Killen Church of Christ 1911 – 1997

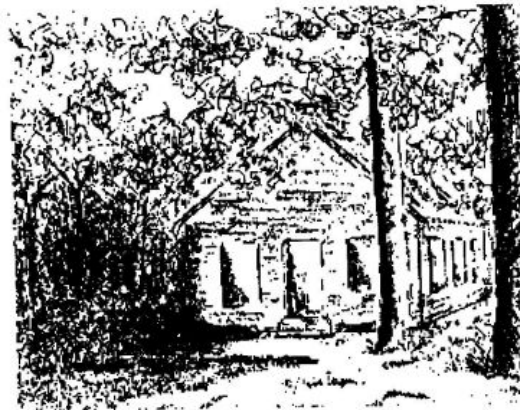
The gospel of Christ was first proclaimed in its purity and simplicity in the area around Killen in the early years of 1900. Brothers E.C. Fuqua, Kay, Will Behel and J.T. Harris were some of the gospel preachers who preached in tent meetings during these years.

Mr. Dwight Holloway, who owned a beautiful home and a large tract of land at Brush Creek, was instrumental in promoting some of the early gospel meetings. Mr. Holloway's mother was a member of the Church of Christ, and he was interested in the establishment of a congregation in the area with whom she might worship. In 1911, brother J.T. Harris preached in a tent meeting on the "Holloway Place" by the Brush Creek Road. This was followed by two or three other meetings. Soon there was a small band of Christians in need of a place where they might worship.

The first meeting place of the Church was in the Poplar Springs log schoolhouse, located near the forks of the new Highway 43 and the Brush Creek Road. While the schoolhouse was used as a tentative place of worship, this small group of Christians began to make plans to construct a building.

Jane Comer gave the Church a lot of land, with beautiful beech trees, just across the road from Brush Creek. The lot was about three miles from Killen. On this lot was built the one room frame building known as Beech Grove.

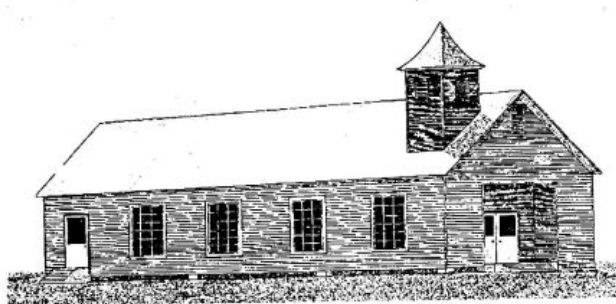
Some of the members and their families who worshipped there were: H. M. Massey, Bud Wisdom, W.L. Cox, Lee Grigsby, Frank Russell, Wiley Grigsby, E.G. Cox, Bob Russell, Abe Underwood, W.M. Harrison, Ray M. Cox, Betty McGee, Noah McGee, Ben F. McGee and Jane Gooch. Brother H. M. Massey served as superintendent of Sunday School. Brother Lee Grigsby directed the singing and was assisted by Noah McGee and others. Later Ray Cox became the song director and continued to be until his death in 1949.



*FIRST BUILDING AT BEECH GROVE*

## The History of Killen Church of Christ 1911 – 1997

During those early years, there was preaching only one Sunday each month and a ten days' meeting in the summer. Because of lack of room in the building, the meetings were held under a tent on the lot by the church building. The service on Sunday morning consisted of singing, Bible reading, prayer, reading of the record of the secretary and treasurer, Sunday School classes, and the observance of



*THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN KILLEN  
1924 - 1961*

the Lord's Supper. The worship hour was usually referred to as Sunday School. Since there were no classrooms, five classes assembled in the small one room building. There were five classes: Card Class, Little Jewels, Elementary Quarterly, Adult Quarterly and Bible Class. There was a confusion of voices and much noise as so many classes were being taught at one time. In spite of the noise, many good lessons, which led to the salvation of souls, were taught by the teachers. As time went on, some of the members wanted to worship in Killen. When the Beech Grove building was sold, the money was applied to a building constructed in Killen on property donated by W.L. Cox. Mr. Cox and his family had moved to the Killen area in 1896 where his son Guy was the owner of the blacksmith shop and he also ran the local grocery store. The Cox family became very instrumental in promoting the Church during the early years. W.L. Cox gave a beautiful 200 x 200 foot lot for the building. It was located in Killen on the corner of what is now known as Orchard and College Streets, about a block from J.C. Mauldin Highway. In 1924, a new building with a seating capacity of about 200 was completed. At this time, no classrooms were built and all classes met in the auditorium.

During the early years of the Church in Killen, some tent meetings were conducted in the "cotton yard" by the Harrison and Cox store. Some of the preachers who preached in these meetings were: E.O. Coffman, Andy Largin and C.E. Holt. As a result of their preaching, many obeyed the gospel. The same methods of lighting, heating and cooling used at Beech Grove were used in the beginning in the new building. Small coal-oil lamps with reflectors were used on the wall. Later one or two Aladdin lamps were used, which greatly improved the lighting. A great improvement was made when the building was wired for electric lights. The electricity was furnished by a Delco plant owned by E.G. and H.R. Cox. When electric current was available from Alabama Power Company, arrangement was

## **The History of Killen Church of Christ 1911 – 1997**

made for electricity from this source. Later power was secured from TVA. The building was first heated by a big iron stove with wood as fuel.

Later a large circulating coal heater was used. When butane gas became available in the community, the building was heated with space butane heaters. The only way of keeping cool in the summer was by open windows and hand fans. The fans were also useful in fanning "bugs" away, which were plentiful at times, especially when the willow flies were out. After electricity was available a big ceiling fan, which was given to the Church by W.H. Rorex, was used. The Church bought some electric fans, which were used in the auditorium, and later in classrooms.

During the worship hour, practices which were followed at Beech Grove were continued at Killen. In observing the Lord's Supper, two large goblets were used to serve the fruit of the vine. Each person contributed of his means by walking up to the Lord's table, lifting the covering and placing his money on the table. A few years after moving to Killen someone suggested two major changes: (1) Use individual cups in serving the Lord's Supper, and (2) Pass a hat, basket or plate so the congregation might contribute while remaining seated. At first some of the members objected to the changes. As time went on and these matters were discussed, they saw the inconsistency of their objections and agreed with others that the changes be made.

After moving to Killen, those who obeyed the gospel were baptized in Six Mile Creek or Shoals Creek. Baptismal services were usually conducted late in the afternoon prior to the evening service.

Some of the preachers who worked with the congregation through the years were: J.T. Harris, E.O. Coffman, J.R. Hottle, Wilburn Quillen, C.C. Burns, Harvey Dodd, Lawrence Williams, and Rayford Henry. Those who conducted meetings at Killen were: John Cox, Gentry Stults, Ermon Bain, A.R. Hill, Sr., C.L. Overturf, Jack Rollins, Paul Keller, Herschel Patton, Rufus Underwood, and Barry Anderson. One of the preachers who worked with the congregation during the mid 1930's was Gilbert Gibbs. Many were baptized and restored because of his efforts. In September, 1938, some of those who were baptized were: Myrtle Briggs, Henrietta Harrison, Helen Stevenson, Edna Stevenson, Pauline Richardson, Ruby Beatrice Peden, Johnnie Myrick, Mary Lynn Mitchell and Kate Kidd.

As the Church grew, additional room for Bible classes became a necessity. Three classrooms were added across the back of the building. In 1949, a preacher's home

**The History of Killen Church of Christ  
1911 – 1997**

was built near the church building. Brother Irvin Lee, then President of Mars Hill Bible School, was the first preacher to live in the new dwelling and work with the congregation. Brother Chester Hunnicutt worked as a regular preacher with the congregation from 1952 to 1956. During this time two more classrooms were added to the church building, a baptistry was built and restrooms were installed.

Albert Hill, Jr. moved to Killen in September, 1958 and began work with the congregation. As the church continued to grow, the old building became inadequate to meet the needs of the congregation. A larger and more modern meeting place was needed. The classroom space was limited so that there could not be the proper division of classes. Plans were first made to remodel the old building, but this was seen to be very impractical, since the remodeling would be expensive and the location of the old building did not provide proper parking space.

About three acres of land was bought on the corner of Highway 72 and the Lock Six Road. In the summer of 1960 construction began on a modern design building, consisting of an auditorium with a baptistry, twelve classrooms, library and nursery. The auditorium would seat approximately 400 to 500. The property, building and furnishing were estimated to cost about \$70,000. A \$50,000 bond issue



*NEW CHURCH OF CHRIST BUILDING  
COMPLETED IN 1961*

was floated. About \$35,000 worth of bonds were sold within the congregation in just a few weeks. At the time the land was purchased there was about \$14,000 in the building fund. The old property of the Church was sold at auction and the building converted into an apartment house. In 1961, a beautiful building was completed, modernly equipped in every way. The entire building was centrally heated and air conditioned and a spacious, paved parking lot was made available.

Services were held in the new building for the first time on Sunday, January 1, 1961. On the third Sunday in May, 1961, a "Homecoming and Dedication" service was held with the guest speaker being Brother John Cox.

After moving into the new building, special emphasis was put on improving the Bible Classes. Brother Paul Wilson, one of the deacons, began working with the elders as director of the Bible School. Forty-one teachers taught all age groups,

## **The History of Killen Church of Christ 1911 – 1997**

which were divided into ten classes on Sunday morning and Wednesday night. From the first of the year 1961 to May, 1961, the Sunday morning Bible School attendance average per Sunday was 155. The Wednesday night average was 98. The average attendance for preaching services on Sunday morning was 198. At that time there were about 150 names listed in the membership directory.

Albert Hill, Jr. worked with the congregation until June, 1961. O'Neal Smelser worked from June 1961, until January 1962. Along with preaching regularly, he worked diligently with the Church to improve the singing and encouraged several of the young boys to direct singing. James Coburn and Andrew Hunter were leaders at this time who helped with this endeavor.

The Killen congregation began to expand its mission work during the 1960s. The congregation supported Bruce Tetreau in Canada, , Richard Taylor in Virginia and other works in South Dakota, Georgia and Nigeria. Also, support was given to the Tennessee Children's Home, The Cherokee Reservation, Childhaven and The Herald of Truth.

In January of 1962, Brother Charles Kretzer began work with the Killen congregation. He stayed until September of 1965. During the years from 1958 until this time, a visitation program was started, and much personal work was accomplished. Several Vacation Bible Schools were conducted which were very successful.

Lowell McGuire began work with the Church at Killen in December, 1965 and stayed until June, 1970.

As the congregation grew and attendance for all services increased, it became necessary for another wing of classrooms to be added. The wing, which included ten rooms, was completed in 1966. The Mars Hill Bible School Chorus sang at the dedication service for the completion of this addition and one of brother John Cox's (deceased) sermons on tape was used.



*CHURCH OF CHRIST WITH NEW WING  
COMPLETED IN 1966*

## The History of Killen Church of Christ 1911 – 1997

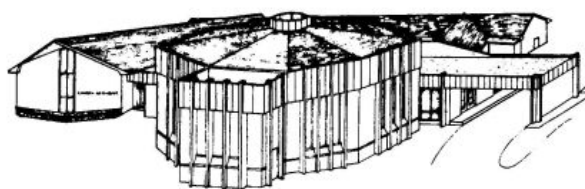
Charles Kretzer returned to Killen in June, 1970 to work with the congregation and stayed until December, 1979.

In the early part of the 1970s, Killen decided to add to its mission effort the support of an International Bible College student by letting he and his family live in the preacher's home. Hayes Grady and his family were the first to do this. In 1974, the Grady family moved to Columbia, Mississippi to do full time mission work (supported by the Killen Congregation) and the Larry Kilpatrick family took their place in the preacher's home. 1974 was also the year that Killen participated in its first ever door knocking campaign in Columbia, Mississippi. This proved to be so successful that a campaign was completed in the community of Killen the same year. Throughout the '70s, campaigns were held in Shelby, North Carolina; Bryson City, North Carolina; Baxley, Georgia and Gaffney, South Carolina.

Norman Berry decided in 1975 to attend International Bible College. Norman was a regular member at Killen and when he decided to train to become a full time preacher, Killen gladly lent a hand.

Vacation Bible School had at one time been successful with the Killen Congregation but had taken a rest for a few years. In 1976, it was revived with an attendance of 198.

1979 brought many exciting things to the Congregation at Killen. Another addition to the building was completed with a 1000 seat auditorium. The old auditorium was divided into eight rooms to be used for classrooms. Homecoming was reintroduced this year and proved to be very successful. It was held on August 12.. The Educational Program was increasing. The Learning Center, a new concept of teaching, was added in October for students second through fifth grades. A Friday School was also introduced to run from September to May for ages 2-1/2 through 5 year olds. All these events pointed to a growing congregation.



*CHURCH OF CHRIST AT KILLEN WITH  
NEW AUDITORIUM COMPLETED IN 1979*

In 1980, the Friday School became the Tuesday School. This was a good outreach effort in the community and averaged 51 in attendance and with the Elementary

## The History of Killen Church of Christ 1911 – 1997

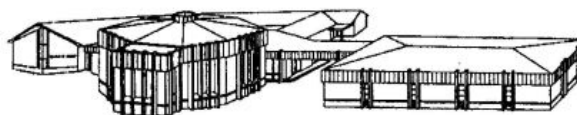
Learning Center doing so well, a Junior Learning Center was begun in October. This served grades 6 through 8. The first quarter it had 84% attendance and 15 out of 28 perfect attendances. The Bible Correspondence Course Program that had begun in 1974 as a result of the Columbia, Mississippi campaign, had a reorganization in 1980 and was extended worldwide. Myrtle Briggs accepted responsibility for this effort and managed it to a great success. For the first eight months of this year, Killen was without a regular preacher. Basil Overton filled in until August of 1980 when Alton Hayes came to fill the pulpit. He and his family moved from Munford, Alabama to begin work at Killen and stayed until November, 1982. In the spring of '82, Ralph Casey came and held a Singing Emphasis Workshop. This helped the worship in song tremendously.

January, 1983 brought another new face to the family at Killen. Lamar Plunket became the full time preacher and continues until this time. He is now in his 15th year with the Killen Congregation. Not only did Killen start out the new year with a new preacher, but a couple of new events were added. The 39ers were formed. This group is made up of those members 55 years and older. They meet regularly and plan activities that include all ages. A devotional is always the center of their activities because they strive to keep the Lord first in all their endeavors. In April of 1983, the first "Family Day" was held. There were 782 in attendance.

In 1984, Killen continued with its successful campaigns. Door knocking was done in Cleveland, Mississippi. The Congregation assisted in an area wide Teacher's Workshop held on the campus of Mars Hill Bible School and in September, '84 Killen purchased 13 acres of land behind their building for future development. But with all the success and happiness Killen was experiencing in 1984, there was a sad note, too. After 34 years of service, Fred Hamm retired as treasurer of the Congregation due to poor health. He served from 1950 to 1984.

1986 brought another building project. This provided the Congregation with a new annex. This not only provides a great place for fellowship among the Congregation but also has been made available for community activities.

Two events at Killen Church of Christ had record breaking attendances in 1987. "Family Day" brought in 793 while Vacation Bible School averaged 437 per day.



1986 TO PRESENT



## **The History of Killen Church of Christ 1911 – 1997**

Later in the '80s, door knocking campaigns were held in Monroe, North Carolina, Georgetown, Kentucky and Killen, Alabama. In addition, early in the '90s, the Town of Killen was again included in this effort.

In 1990, the Congregation began to participate in a new campaign called "One Nation Under God". This campaign took the Gospel into every home in the United States in 1991. Stemming from a special, first contribution, Killen gave \$8,200 to this cause. Vacation Bible School broke a record again by having an average attendance of 441 per day.

Another new program was introduced to Killen in 1996. It is called "Lads to Leaders-Leaderettes". This is a training program for young people to better learn to serve in the Church. There are around 30 to 40 young people participating in this program and approximately that many adults serving as Mentors. The first Sunday in January of 1997 marked the official starting point of this program with Jack Zorn, founder of the National "Lads to Leaders-Leaderettes", speaking to the Congregation. This program is proving to be an inspiration not only to the young people but the older members as well.

Homecoming in times past has always been on the second Sunday of August. In 1997, Homecoming has been changed to the fourth Sunday of August to coincide with the Town of Killen's First Founder's Day activities. This should prove to be a very exciting weekend.

Killen Church of Christ had its humble beginning in 1924 in the shining, new, white, one room building at the corner of Orchard and College Street. Now, sitting on a hill on the corner of Lock Six Road and 72 Highway with a complex that includes a 1,000 seat auditorium, 27 classrooms, a library, preacher's study, secretary's office, conference room, supply room, Bible Correspondence room, baptistry, nursery, seven bathrooms and an annex for fellowship activities shows that the Church at Killen has been greatly blessed. The Church's contribution started out at less than \$10 a Sunday and has increased to over \$6,000 a Sunday. Its attendance began in the teens and today, averages over 325 for worship service. In the late 40s, three Elders were chosen to oversee the flock. They were Willie Kidd, Bill Rorex and Herbert Cox. Since that time, nine others have served as Elders at one time or another. They are: Lawrence Ezell, Andrew Hunter, Mailon Wilson, Paul Wilson, Billy Alexander, Charles Tays, Jim Smith, Jerry Mitchell and

**The History of Killen Church of Christ  
1911 – 1997**

Manson Behel. Those presently serving are: Mailon Wilson, Paul Wilson, Billy Alexander, Jerry Mitchell and Manson Behel.



***1986 TO PRESENT***