



HISTORICAL SKETCH OF ORA ASSOCIATE REFORMED PREBYTERIAN CHURCH

Homecoming Committee Note:

The following Historical Sketch was written for the 175th anniversary by Miss Bessie Byrd in 1965. The original sketch includes Rev. Guy Smith, Jr.'s remarks on The Compiler, Miss Bessie Byrd.

Minor corrections have been made to this original sketch. Photos have been added for the 225th anniversary.

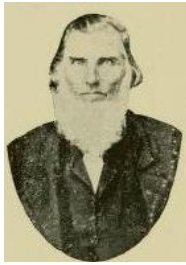
It is a matter of regret that the earliest records of the Ora Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church seem to have been lost. The facts given in this sketch have been gleaned from the History of the Associate Reformed Synod of the South (and of the A. R. P. Churches) by the Rev. Robert Lathan, D. D. Facts have also been gathered from the 1803-1903 Centennial History of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, the later records of the Church, and from some of the older members of the Church. The oldest records now in possession of the elders of the Church date back to 1847. The minutes of the General Synod, the highest Church body, go farther back.

The name by which the early church was known was "Madole's Old Field", because the site on which the church was built belonged to a Mr. Madole. He later gave several acres of land surrounding the church for a community cemetery, which is still in use. The first building was constructed of logs and was not heated.

By 1809 the name was changed to Warrior Creek, the name of a stream about two miles northwest of the church. In 1836 the name was again changed to Bethel, the name it has kept until the present day. Only by custom is it now called Ora, the name of the little town in which it is located. The old records use the name Bethel. Ora was the name given to the community. The naming occurred in 1885 when the surveyor for the railroad asked that he be allowed to suggest a name for the depot to be located in the community and since he had fallen in love with one of the pretty young ladies of the community, he chose to call it "Ora", her name. He was later married to her and descendants of the family still live in the community today. The church at this time was ninety-five years old.

The Ora Church is among the oldest in the Synod. When the Associate Reformed Presbytery of the Carolinas and Georgia was organized at Long Cane (near Greenwood), S. C., on February 24, 1790, what is now the Ora Church was reported as a vacancy. (See 1 in Sources at end of Sketch). The Presbytery was organized with four ministers and forty-four churches, one of which was Ora (then called Warrior Creek); though there was no settled pastor at the time. Ten years later when the Presbytery was divided into First and Second, Ora became a member of the Second and has remained within its bounds until the present.

In 1812, Rev. John Renwick, Jr., who was pastor of a church in Newberry County, was called to become pastor of the Ora Church. He accepted the work, and thus became the first pastor on record, though he continued to live in Newberry County, going back and forth to the two churches for many years. In 1825 Rev. Renwick resigned the Ora pastorate. From 1825 to 1836 the church had no regular pastor but was supplied by Rev.



J. L. YOUNG

John Renwick, Dr. John T. Pressly, Rev. Henry Bryson, Drs. E. E. and J. P. Pressly. According to the minutes of Synod, the meeting of Synod was held at Ora in 1832. In 1836 Rev. J. L. Young became the pastor of the Bethel Church, together with the Laurens Court House Church, Providence and Head Springs. These were probably the only organized churches in Laurens County at the time. He served the church until 1851, when at his own request, the pastoral relationship was dissolved and he moved to Mississippi, taking with him most of the members of the Providence Church.

It is about this time that there began to be an element in the church wishing to make some changes in ordinances of the church, as it is recorded in the sessional book, which eventually led to the withdrawal of some of the members and organization of the Presbyterian (Southern) Church. The church building was later sold. This was the third church building and was jointly owned by the two groups. There is in the record an action affecting both groups. The A. R. P.'s were to use the building three Sabbaths a month and the Presbyterians one Sabbath a month, the second one, and this arrangement was followed until the A. R. P.'s erected their own building, the present one. This division weakened the original church as to membership and yet the congregation was rather large, being made up of both whites and blacks. The list of slaves and their owners is in the old record book.

Rev. J. L. Young was pastor at this time and was servicing three other churches, so it was thought wise to have an assistant pastor. Rev. D. F. Haddon was chosen to fill this place. He was born, reared and trained in Due West, S. C. In 1854 Rev. Haddon was installed as pastor of four Churches—Bethel, Providence, Head Springs and Laurens. The Laurens Church was organized in 1830 and built by Dr. Samuel Todd. After the Civil War the Laurens Church was sold and the work discontinued. The bell in the Ora Church tower is the bell once used in the Laurens Church. Rev. Haddon was the preacher at Ora for fifty years and her pastor for forty-two years; though during the last years of his life he was unable to preach regularly. He died in 1896 but his influence still



D. L. Haddon

lives on. He is buried in the Ora Cemetery. Though few figures are given, in 1871 the record shows 130 members, 80 whites and 50 blacks. Many of these blacks remained in the church until they died; others left as soon as they were freed. The slave cemetery joins the community cemetery but is badly neglected now.

About 1870 three members from Providence—Mrs. Sarah Bryson, Mr. E. B. Anderson, and Mr. Newton Anderson---moved to Woodruff. From Bethel seven members, Brysons, Pearsons and Wrights, also moved to Woodruff. Rev. E. P. McClintock from Ora preached for them some. In 1879, Presbytery sent two elders from Bethel, Mr. A. Y. Thompson and Mr. W. A. McClintock, to help organize a church at Woodruff. The Church has never been strong but is still in the Presbytery.



H. Rabb Rev. Horace Rabb followed Rev. Haddon, becoming pastor of Bethel, Head Springs and Providence in 1896. He remained pastor for less than two years, but during that time the present church building was constructed. The church was built by Mr. J. J. Dodd of Anderson, the stepfather of Dr. C. H. Nabors of Greenville. Mr. T. P. Byrd and his brother, Bill, got the timber off the church property, sawed and prepared it for the building. The land from which it came was later sold to T. P. Byrd in 1896. This was the fourth building used by the congregation. The first two were simple log buildings, with no heating systems and rough planks with no backs for support, and stood near the present location. The session house stood near the church and for many years was the community schoolhouse. The third building was jointly owned and used by the A. R. P.'s and Presbyterians.

The Bethel Church now felt it was strong enough to have a full time pastor so in 1896 Bethel sold her interest in the joint building and constructed the present structure.

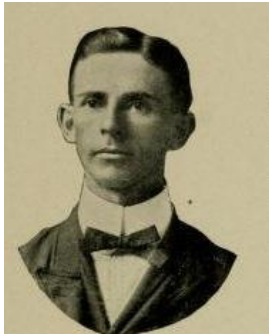
Rev. Rabb left in 1897 and the church was supplied by Rev. W. A. M. Plaxco until 1901. Rev. B. H. Grier then became pastor of Bethel and served until 1910. For one year he was both preacher and teacher, having charge of the community school. The membership at this time was about 100, some being lost to nearby churches. The records show that during Rev. Grier's pastorate there was a splendid Sabbath School and Young People's Christian Union with a membership of 25. There was also a weekly Bible class and a mid-week service.



W. A. M.
Plaxco

Dating back to 1874, the Woman's work was organized under Rev. Haddon and "Cousin Nancy" Lindsay, wife of E. E. Lindsay and sister of Margaret Taylor, the first wife of Rev. Haddon. This organization had about 30 charter members. It was called for many the Bethel Benevolent Female Society. It has been a vital part of the Ora Church since that time. The original minute book with the charter members listed is still in a good state of preservation. This society, like the church, is one of the oldest in the Synod.

Rev. I. N. Kennedy became pastor of the Ora Church in 1912 and remained until 1924. During the first period of his pastorate the church was very active and growing. During



I. N. Kennedy

the latter part of his ministry here, heavy losses were sustained in the death of three of the most influential elders. Both from a financial and a spiritual standpoint the church was weakened. It was also weakened by the removal of several families to other churches, especially to Laurens. It was thought wise to open a mission in Laurens, so largely by contributions from the Ora Church, and the removal of several Ora families to Laurens, a nice church home was built in Laurens. For a short time the outlook was bright, but within the next few years, the mission suffered heavily from removals and deaths so was abandoned. The church building was sold for use as a home by a Presbytery committee.

From 1925 to 1929, Rev. P. L. Grier was pastor of the Ora Church. Being the only resident minister in the community, he was called upon to serve the entire community, which he did most acceptably. His ministry was short in years but fruitful in service. He was admired and loved by all. For several years after Rev. Grier left, the church was served by different ministers, most of them seminary students—W. L. Pressly, J. G. Brawely; two ministers—Rev. G. L. Kerr and Rev. R. Dale White.



P.L. Grier



J. . C.

In 1933 Rev. J. C. Smith became pastor. While he was here the outlook was very bright. There was a fine spirit of co-operation between the A. R. P. and Presbyterian churches. The Presbyterians worshipped with the A. R. P.'s three Sabbaths a month and the A. R. P.'s with the Presbyterians once a month. The young people of the two churches worked together in one organization. Rev. Smith was the community pastor and was loved by all. His musical talent was a great help to the church. While here he married a local girl, Hattie Mae Blakely, who has been a fine pastor's wife. The membership was now 88. There was an active Sabbath School, a mid-week service, a large young people's organization and a very active Woman's Society.

Rev. W. C. Alexander became the pastor of the Ora Church in 1937. The church made progress under his ministry. He was interested in all community efforts and attended the Rural Minister's Conference at Clemson College each summer. The church made improvements in the physical side of the work. The manse was remodeled both inside and outside; a gas heating system was put in the church; the inside of the church was redecorated; and four new



W. C.



rooms were added for educational purposes. In the latter part of Mr. Alexander's pastorate new carpet, new pulpit furniture, new organ, new blinds, underpinning and painting and improvements to the grounds were done. The cemetery

was enlarged and the women successfully sponsored a drive for the cemetery and \$700.00 was raised. Plans were also made to surface the cemetery drive and do other landscaping.

The membership of the Ora Church on March 31, 1952 was 76 communicants and a number of children. During 1952, the Presbyterian Church standing only a few yards



Old Fields

from the A. R. P. Church decided to disband since there were so few members and the church had not had a pastor for several years. On April 19, 1953, the entire membership, 19 communicants and 2 baptized children, were received by transfer from their presbytery, the entire group with the church property, becoming a part of the Ora Church to 96. We feel that this resulted in making a fine church for there has always been a good spirit of co-operation between the two churches. Another accomplishment of this same year was the organization of a young woman's society which began with 5 charter members.

The Ora Community has always been a lover of education so has put most emphasis on her schools until the last few years, when a radical change of educational policy in South Carolina made it necessary to discontinue the three teacher school in Ora. This was a matter of great regret to all the people. The school building has been purchased by the community and is now being used by the Community Club.



Due to the emphasis on Christian Education the community has been fortunate in that most of the citizens have been trained in denominational colleges. This has been a great asset to the church. The Ora Church can justly and proudly claim a number of ministers, some of whom spent their early life here and went to school here. The ministers native to Ora are: E. P. McClintock, J. M. Todd, E. E. Todd, H B. Blakely, Sr., W. A. Blakely, C. H. Nabors, R. D. Byrd, W. F. Blakely. Those here during the early years of life were: M. R. Plaxco, R. C. Kennedy, J. L. Grier, M. C. Grier, Neil Tingle. At least five women have married ministers: Margaret Taylor (first baby baptized by Rev. Haddon) later became his first wife, after her death Rev. Haddon married Eliza Thompson; Miss Emma McDill became the wife of Rev. J. S. A. Hunter, and A. R. P. missionary to Mexico; Emma Blakely married Rev. R. A. Young; Hattie Mae Blakely married Rev. J. C. Smith. One woman from the Ora Church, Miss Bessie Byrd, taught in Erskine College, the A. R. P. College at Due West, S. C. for about thirty years (1913-1944). Her teaching of Bible was perhaps her greatest contribution. After leaving Erskine she taught Bible in the Ora Church and others in the surrounding area until recently.



R. J.

In 1959 Rev. Alexander left to become pastor of the Ebenezer Church in Virginia. In 1960 a new pastor was chosen by the Ora Church, Rev. R. J. Robinson, who completed his seminary work that year. He and Mrs. Robinson, with their two children, did a fine work at Ora. A new manse was built costing about \$13,000 and is now paid for. A membership of 84 was reported. Landscaping was done on the

cemetery and some redecorating was done on the church. Rev. Robinson served at Ora for about three years. He felt the call to a larger field, New Sterling in North Carolina, so he gave up the Ora charge. For about a year after this Dr. P. L. Grier, retired and living in Laurens, supplied the church two Sabbaths and seminary students fill the pulpit on the other Sabbaths. In June the church unanimously called Mr. Guy H. Smith, Jr. of York, S. C. who had completed his seminary work in May 1964. He accepted the call and with his wife, Betsy, they began their work at Ora. Mr. Smith was installed by a commission of Second Presbytery on June 28, 1964. The commission was composed of Dr. P. L. Grier, Rev. G. L. Leitze, and Hon. Joseph R. Moss of Catawba Presbytery and the York Church. Though here for only one year they have done a fine work. Both are loved and respected by all members of the church. He is a fine pastor and his sermons are deeply spiritual. Every department of the church is well-organized and functions co-operatively. The mid-week prayer service is well attended and the time is given to Bible Study. His work with the young people is outstanding. His pastoral visitation is regular. The membership is now reported as 91.



G. H.

The church has put in new pews and plans are being made to add four new rooms for the educational needs of the church. Some work has been done in the cemetery, surveying and laying off plots and more is to be done. The Women's Missionary Society, organized in 1874, is still functioning actively. Plans are being made for celebrating the 175th Anniversary of the organization of the church at Ora. The name given the church, Bethel, has not been changed but is generally thought of as the Ora Church.

Not boastful of what the Ora Church has done in the 175 years of its existence, for it is all too little, but grateful for the many blessings God has showered upon it and the community, and the new life that seems to be permeating our membership, as we try to take our part in the plans synod sets before us, it is our prayer that in the years ahead, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, "Paul's prayer for the Philippian Christians may be fully realized in the Bethel Church: "and this I pray, that your love may abound yet and more in the knowledge and in all judgement; that ye may approve things that are excellent; That ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." (Philippians 1:9-11)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

1. History of the Associate Reformed Synod of the South. (and of the A.R.P. Churches) Rev. Robert Lathan, p.286.
2. Minutes of the A.R.P. Church, from its organization.
3. Centennial History of A.R.P. Church, 1803-1903, p. 420.
4. Sesquicentennial History of A.R.P. Church, 1903-1951, p. 350, 506. Do not know why two records under different names and disagreement of two.
5. Sessional records of Bethel (Ora) Church from about 1841 to the present.
6. Several members of the Church still living at this time.

THE COMPILER

The compiler of this history, Miss Bessie Byrd, is still an active and beloved member of this church of which she has been a lifelong member. "Miss Bessie", as she is known by all, was born in 1884. In her early life she taught public school and from 1913 to 1944, she faithfully served her Lord and Church as a professor of Bible at Erskine College. After retiring from teaching, she taught Bible Classes in the surrounding churches until just a few years ago. She is still living in Ora with her brother and remains an active and dedicated member of the church. It was said of her by Dr. R.C. Grier, President –emeritus of Erskine College, "....she was an invariable constant; at all times dutiful, industrious and exemplary. By living example as well as in class room instruction she represented a faithful and loyal servant to her college and the cause of the Great Teacher." Miss Bessie is in every sense a sincere and dedicated Christian.

The Homecoming Committee wishes to express its thanks to her for her untiring work in preparing this history.

-Rev. Guy H. Smith, Jr.

Homecoming Committee Note:

The Historical Sketch was updated from 1965 through 2000 by members of our Church. Some additions have been made for the 225th anniversary history.

With Rev. Guy Smith as pastor, the Ora Church continues to grow and serve. On July 18, 1965 the Ora Church celebrated its 175th anniversary with Homecoming Day. Dr. W.R. Echols, pastor of Neely's Creek A.R.P. Church, Rock Hill, S.C., brought the message at the 11:15 A.M. service. Former pastors participated along with the pastor, the Rev. Guy H. Smith. After the service a picnic dinner was served at the Community Center.

On May 1, 1966 the session asked Presbytery to make the name of the church "Ora A.R.P." as its official name since it was called that by common practice.



Also in May of 1966 a new educational building had been completed and was dedicated.

In December of 1967 the issue of using Bible Songs along with the Hymns in worship was voted on by the congregation and passed.

In 1974 a new steeple was added to the church to replace the one damaged by lightning.



In March 1975 the study was built onto the manse.

After twelve years of faithful and dedicated service to the church and community, Rev. Guy Smith resigned on May 23, 1976, to accept a call to the Unity A.R.P. Church in Lancaster, S.C.

The Session and congregation accepted this resignation regretfully. The Ora Church grew in many ways during the time Rev. Guy Smith and his family was here.

From June 1976 until May 1977, Dr. J. Calvin Smith served the Ora Church as the supply pastor. Dr. Smith has returned to Ora to live after his retirement. Ora was very fortunate to have him supply during this time.

In 1977 the Women of the Church planned a bazaar to be held in October of that year. The bazaar was a time of work teamed with fun and fellowship for the ladies. It was very successful with the funds raised going to the new educational building fund.



Rev. Allen Larson was called by the Ora Church, in May 1977, after completing Erskine Seminary. He accepted the call and moved with his wife, Margaret and son, Pat, to Ora. After faithfully serving the church for two years, he resigned on April 11, 1979, to accept a call to Bethel A.R.P. Church in Vidette, Ga.

A. During July of 1978 the church held dedication services for the new education building. The new building would house three classrooms and a nice new assembly room. There is also a basement with ample room for get-togethers with a kitchen in one end.

In November of 1978 the Women of the Church held a bazaar with the funds going into an account for purchasing of flooring for the basement of the new education building. In preparing for this bazaar during the year, the ladies enjoyed the fellowship as well as the challenge of working toward a unified goal. The bazaar was very successful with growth in togetherness for everyone.

On May 27, 1979 the Ora A.R.P. Church extended a call to Mr. Gary Fravel. He had just completed his training at Erskine Theological Seminary. Mr. Fravel accepted and began his work here in June of 1979. We felt blessed to have Rev. Fravel and his wife, Debbie, son, Cory, and daughter, Mayme at Ora. Rev. Fravel left after faithfully serving as minister and pastor for 27 months.



G Fravel



In 1982, Richard C. Lewis, Jr. was called to be our pastor. Following his graduation from Erskine Theological Seminary, his ordination and marriage to Belinda Sellers, they moved into the manse. During his tenure, our first adult choir was organized and choir chairs were purchased.

During 1985, the first women deacons began serving at Ora.

R. C.

In 1980 and 1985 two groups of young people went to visit the missionary fields in Mexico

In 1989, Rev. Lewis accepted a call to a mission church, Scots Kirk in Summerville, South Carolina. Rev. Lewis had given Ora seven faithful years as minister and pastor. The church then called Rev. James A. Loughner to be its new pastor. Following his graduation from Erskine Theological Seminary and his ordination in Virginia, he and his wife, Vicki, and children, Christina and Benjamin, moved into the manse. There were 88 active members at this time. In 1996, Rev. Loughner accepted a call to help establish a mission church in Mauldin, South Carolina after faithfully serving seven years as pastor of the Ora Church.



J. A.



In 1997, the church hired Mr. Robert D. Turner, an Erskine Seminary student, to be the stated supply. He and his wife, Rachel, moved into the manse. After his graduation from Erskine Seminary in January 1998, the church called Rob as their pastor. He was ordained and installed at the Ora Church on March 22, 1998. On November 29, 1999, a son, Daniel, was born to the Turners. Rob, Rachel and Daniel are loved by all and Rev. Turner faithfully preaches the Word of God.

R. D.

The church has an active Sunday School with classes from nursery through adult, with a total of 58 members. We have Prayer Meeting, two active youth groups, ages pre-school through teenage with a total of 22 members. The church also has two circles of the Women of the Church for a total membership of 21. The Ora Church also has a Men's Club, which has a prayer breakfast each quarter.

The Ora Church is active in Home Missions and in Foreign Missions, helping support Ali & Tara Mitchell, Jim & Gala Coad and Jane Blakely Jennings (who was raised in Ora).

The total membership of the church is 110, at this time. We look forward to God working out His plans in the life of the Ora Church as we celebrate our 211th anniversary and begin the 21st century.

Today you will find the photographs of former pastors of the church from 1836 to present and 7 pictures of former pastors of the Old Fields Presbyterian Church from 1895 to 1953 in the assembly room. This was begun in 1972 and is updated as necessary. As you look over this group you come to realize that Ora has been greatly blessed with leaders that are dedicated men of God.

Homecoming Committee Note:

The Historical Sketch was updated from 2000 through 2015 by Jean Blakely.

Robert D. Turner was the pastor at the Ora A. R. P. Church from August 1997 until March 2003. During the years the Turner's were here they had two sons: Daniel Patrick and Michael Douglas. Upon leaving the pastorate at the Ora Church, Rob and Rachel and their two sons went to Turkey in October of 2003 to take up mission work in that country.

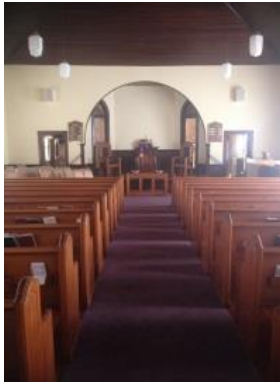
During the years when our church was without a pastor the church was supplied by students from Erskine Theological Seminary as well as other ministers. On November 6, 2005 Samuel F. Roper, a senior student at Erskine Seminary began serving as our student supply. Sam, his wife Pam and sons, Joey and Michael moved into the church manse in December 2005. Upon completing his seminary training Sam was ordained and installed as the pastor of the Ora A. R. P. Church on January 6, 2006.



S. F.

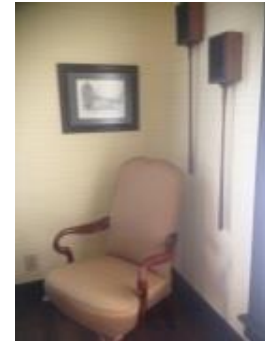
For many years our youth have participated in the denominational Bible School which takes place in July in the Appalachia area of Tennessee, Virginia and Kentucky. Leaders of this group have been faithful in taking these young people to the Appalachia area for the week of Bible Schools in various churches. Youth leaders who have accompanied the young people over the years to Appalachia and to Bonclarken for youth retreats are: Leslie and Amy Blakely, Lucy Gibson, Abby Hope, Zelda McClintock, Sam and Pam Roper.

Our music director Sharon McAuley has planned and presented special music with the adult choir as well as the youth choir. The music has been a special addition to the worship.



During 2009 the church was refurbished. The two rooms at the entrance of the church were brought back to their appearance when the church was built in the late 1800s. In November 2009 the carpet in the sanctuary was removed and the original pine floors were sanded and varnished. Carpet runners, pew cushions and pulpit furniture cushions were put in the sanctuary. Since then improvements have also been done in the Bethel Building. New carpet has been put in the Assembly Room and Sunday School rooms upstairs. The Fel-

lowship Hall and kitchen in the basement have been repainted. In October 2014 new wider steps and railings were installed at the front of the church leading into the sanctuary to replace the older steps that had become unsafe.



In the fall of 2014 work began to restore the slave cemetery which is located down the hill from the Ora Cemetery. A trail was cleared into the slave cemetery area and fieldstones marking the graves were noted. The Cemetery Committee recommended to the session to put up metal posts joined by a chain around the slave cemetery. A

marker identifying the slave cemetery was directed at the start of the trail leading down the hill to the cemetery. The slave cemetery will be dedicated in July 2015.



MEMORIES OF ORA AND OUR CHURCH
AS SHARED WITH US BY SOME OF OUR MEMBERS

Homecoming Committee Note:

The first five memories were supplied by our members for the 175th anniversary in 1965.

First impressions are not always lasting ones but I well remember what I thought the first time I was ever in the Ora Church building. I can't remember ever having been in another A.R.P. Church without a choir loft.

I remember the heaters that used to be in the sanctuary. At the back on each side there were a few rows of pews and then space for the two heaters, there was a flue in the center and the stove pipes came down so far to a T and then divided for each stove.

I remember with only two classrooms off the vestibule, we had a men's class, a women's class, and a young peoples' class all meeting for Sabbath School in the sanctuary.

When I came to Ora in 1933, for the offering, instead of plates the two boxes with handles were used with a deacon in the outside aisle and one in the center aisle, everyone on the pew could be reached.

What I especially remember is that my salary for the four years I was Ora's pastor, 1933-1937, was \$60 a month. At that time that amount went further but it was the lowest salary being paid in the denomination. We were determined to tithe so we lived on \$54 a month. We went the first two years without owning a car and when we moved we were supporting a wife and a baby on that amount. Isn't it wonderful that now the pastor's salary is almost twenty times that much?

Dr. J. Calvin Smith – 1965

When I was church treasurer, I well recall that we paid Rev. W. C. Alexander \$90 per month. During the time he was here he taught school to supplement his wages, but that was pretty low also. The thing that I think of often is that Mr. Alex. never complained-at least not to me. Oh, this inflation!

I would rate the Anniversary Celebration, our 175th, the biggest event in my memory. The building of the present manse would rate pretty high also.

Jake League – 1965

In June 1925, I drove up to the Ora A.R.P. Church to become its' pastor. I had just attended the funeral of my uncle Boyce Grier, who had also been a pastor of this church. This was my first charge since finishing the Seminary the month before. I had no wife. Most Seminary students at that time waited until they finished schooling before taking on the responsibilities of supporting a wife. But I had a car, a model T Ford. It was the first

vehicle of which I was the sole owner. On level ground it would go 15 miles an hour. It sounded like a hay baler.

Since I was a bachelor, I looked for a place to room and board. Another bachelor from Ora, George Blakely, found a room for me in Laurens and meals at a friendly boarding house, along with a dozen or more unattached men and women. Much of my time was spent traveling the dusty or muddy road between Laurens and Ora.

I had received the call to become pastor of the church shortly before finishing Princeton Seminary. The salary offered was \$1200 total. No car allowance or health insurance was considered necessary. The church building was the same white frame structure we have today. There was no educational building. The two rooms at the front of the church for the children and the two on either side of the pulpit were for the ladies and youth.

There was an active Y.P.C.U. Each year there was a state convention for young people, which lasted two days. Young people's conferences were not yet held at Bonclarken.

The Ora young people had a good time going on hay rides, having ice cream suppers and picnics at the river.

The older people knew and loved the Scriptures and I spent much time studying to bring them challenging messages.

The families depended almost entirely on the farm crops for their income. One year an almost complete failure of the crops made payment of the \$1200 impossible, making it necessary for me to move to another church.

Dr. Paul L. Grier – 1965

Bill was the first baby Rev. W. C. Alexander baptized when he came to Ora.

Cousin Mamie Byrd taught the real young children; sometimes holding 2 little ones on her lap while teaching. We had no “nursery” in those days.

I remember Prayer Meeting in the little room on the left at the front, when Mr. Alexander, Aunt Nannie Blakely, Milton, Jake & Rosabelle, & sometimes Betty Blakely, and I would be the only ones to attend.

When Jane was 5 years old and Bill 3 ½, Fleming returned to teaching and we began our “years of moving” – what a joy it was to come home to Ora each summer!

Louise Blakely – 1965

The Presbyterian and A.R.P. young people all belonged to the Y.P.C.U. We would have “socials” at someone's home where we'd play games and eat. In the summer we had picnics on the rocks at Yarborough's Mill or Curry's Lake. In June we went to Bonclarken to the conference, once or twice in the Ora bus.

When it got cold, two or three men would carry the crowd on a “possum hunt”. We'd carry parched peanuts and marshmallows to roast. Often we found muscadines or some watermelons, which tasted extra delicious. We didn't always catch a ‘possum, but ask some of the older ones if we had a “good time”!

Unknown – 1965

Homecoming Committee Note:

The following memories are for our 211th anniversary.

Some of my memories go back to 1949-1950. It was a job of mine to go turn the cows loose early on Sunday morning and let them graze for a time before tying them up in a fresh spot for some afternoon grazing on the fresh summer grass. The back side of our farm is not more than a mile as the crow would fly from the Ora Church although it was several miles as the roads would go. On clear summer Sunday mornings many a time I would hear the pealing of the bell at 9:45 a.m. That would tell me that I had only 30 minutes to get the cows tied up and get to the house to get ready to go to Sabbath School. The custodian, who was named Pink Hunter, would go down to the church each Sunday to open it up in summer and to build the fires in the big stoves in the winter and to ring the bell half hour before services to summon the community to Worship. When I hear that bell on Sunday mornings now, at times my mind goes back and I think how different things are now. And yet I also reflect on how much stays the same.

Bill Blakely

One evening at prayer meeting, we had had the opening song and scripture and Mr. Calvin Smith, our minister, stepped down from the podium and prepared to sing a solo. Just as he started the first notes, Mrs. Pearl Byrd entered her seat. She started singing with Mr. Smith, as the song was a familiar one. It dawned on her that she and Mr. Smith were the only ones singing and she sat down with smiles around the congregation. Mr. Smith had a great sense of humor and had a hard time finishing the song.

Mr. Smith told a story about Congressman Joe Bryson when he was in Washington. Someone asked him, "Who are those A.R.P.'s from your area"? Mr. Bryson was reported to have said, "They are about 20,000 people from my district who keep the Sabbath Day and everything they can get their hands on."

I hope someone will write about "Pink" Hunter, the village blacksmith who lived and had his shop between Sam Byrd's store and my grandfather's house. I understand he was the janitor of the church and I remember he and his wife sitting in chairs at the back of the sanctuary during the service...He made a wagon for my brother, Edward, to be pulled by a goat that somehow we had gotten. I don't think the goat or the wagon lasted long. The wagon cost one dollar.

James Blakely

In former years, music was not our forte. About music, I knew nothing. I did wonder why Dr. Bryson couldn't sing like the others did. Nobody told me that he read music, and that he was singing bass.

When Dr. P. L. Grier was here, he was young himself and took much interest in the bigger boys. He would get Carl Smith to show his strength by having him move rotten logs around in Enoree River. They were using a seine in fishing.

Also, Dr. Greer loved baseball. In the yard at the schoolhouse, he would bat left-handed and knock the ball over onto the railroad and laugh himself silly watching the boys go over for the ball. It was clearly deliberate-he could just as easily hit it straight to center field.

Roger Blakely

My life began in 1928-the year my parents with their sons and a daughter had moved from Greene County, Georgia to the Ora Community. The first people they met were the pastor and members of the Ora ARP Church. Daddy picked a community for his family to live in that had a church, a school, at least two stores, and a post office.

The earliest memory at four or five years old would be of Miss Mamie Byrd and her Sunday School class in the room on the right as you go into the church. I remember the little chairs in a circle, the pretty little cards with a picture on one side and story on the other. When she taught me that GOD IS LOVE it was the beginning of never being without God in my heart.

My second Sunday School teacher was Mrs. Jake (Rosabelle) League. She was always a living lesson to me in being gracious, hospitable, kind and non-judgmental. She was a mentor to me as long as she lived. (One Christmas she gave me a Coty face powder compact that I treasured for a long, long time.)

When I was eleven or twelve years old, Mrs. Ludy (Edwardina) Blakely was my Sunday School teacher and we studied and memorized the Catechism as well as memorizing lots of Bible verses.

Around that time, Rev. W. C. Alexander accepted the call to Ora and he stayed and stayed and stayed. He was a confirmed bachelor, had a brilliant mind, and was a very sloppy dresser, liked to use his camera to record life in the church, and he liked to visit at mealtime. He was interested in activities of the church, community and county. He would take us to YPCU out-of-town meetings, etc. As the once-a-month preacher at the Mountville ARP Church, he would take a car full of YPCU members with him. He introduced us to families of the church and I remember the names of Bishop, Jones, and McKittrick.

Preacher Alexander really enjoyed going to the Women's Society monthly meetings (especially enjoying the refreshments). Until his death, he remembered with a card the birthdays of past members and students. The scrapbooks he so diligently kept during his stay at Ora tell of the young people and children and their activities as well as other happenings. The scrapbooks still remain at our church.

Preacher Alexander was here when the next-door neighbor Presbyterians joined with the ARP Church. Before they joined, I can remember their church and their worship services. After going to our Sunday School we would walk over to their church.

One issue kept coming up-the need to adopt the use of the Hymnal to be used along with the Bible Songs-very upsetting to us ARP's who were set in our ways. WOW!! Preacher Alexander really put his foot in his mouth during a congregational meeting when he pointed out that our Bible Songs were made up of Psalms, and therefore were

Biblical. Mrs. Ben Hunter, Sr. (Marie), a wonderful, sweet, gracious and strong Christian, got up and in a strong voice said to the effect that she believed hymns were Biblical also. Not long after that time, we began using the Hymnal-alternating with the Bible Songs as we still do today. Singing and learning songs based on Psalms from the Bible certainly gave me a lasting love for Psalms. (Bible Song #242 has been used as long as I can remember for Communion).

I remember the hot summer time with the windows all raised, fanning with the cardboard fans-and in cold weather-trying to keep warm huddled close to the two very large coal burning heaters.

I remember World War II times and the heartache of the boys going off to serve, and of E.T. Blakely not coming back.

Memories in the life of our church would write my life history. I remember all the people who have gone before me-each one an inspiration and an influence in my life. The people have been the life of our church-each person an important part. Looking back over the years, I'm in awe of the way people, families and pastors have come into the church life and were or are a part of our church.

Addie Tingle Good

We have been blessed to be able to visit and worship with you many times for over 50 years. Since moving away from the area in 1955, we have come back often to visit Mrs. Marie P. Hunter, Mrs. Louise Hughes, and her son Buddy. Since Louise died in 1990, we have visited and cared for the Hunter and Hughes home place. We have appreciated the good messages and music that have been provided over the years-and, of course, the fellowship with many other kinfolk and long-time friends. For the past 35 years, it has been especially meaningful to enjoy the music under the direction of our sister-in-law Kathryn Hill. (She even let visitors be in the choir, at times.)

Edna has many wonderful memories-even from her early childhood-about this church. Although she belonged to the neighboring church, Old Fields Presbyterian, (which was next door-and shared the same cemetery), there were many times of worshipping jointly. Their minister, who lived in Goldville, (now Joanna) was shared by 3 small churches. He came to Ora to preach one Sunday per month-and on other occasions as needed. Each Sunday after Sunday School, (if their Pastor was not there), the Old Fields Church congregation would walk over to worship at your church. When their Pastor was there, your congregation would come over to worship with them. Revivals were attended by all in both congregations. (They shared the custodian, Pink Hunter, who sat in the rear of the church). The differences youngsters noticed were the use of the word "Sabbath", and the singing of Psalms instead of their familiar hymns. They loved being included in Y. P. C. U. every Sunday afternoon, and the frequent outings for the group. They attended the Youth Sunday afternoon, and the frequent outings for the group. They attended the youth Weeks at Bonclarken, and shared your love for it. Miss Betty Blakely worked for years with the Y.P.C.U. and helped organize fellowship times. There were parties in homes with parlor games such as: "Spin the top", "Pass the ring", "Turn over the fruit basket", and "musical chairs". There were cookouts at Yarborough's Mill, ice cream suppers, picnics, and even Possum hunting in the Hunter woods (with parched peanuts, pop corn, and hot cocoa to take off the chill). There were also hayrides and treasure hunts. Much fun! Both congregations met for big Christmas socials at Ora Community House. This

was also where they met for monthly suppers that included speakers or entertainment. The A.R.P. pastors were really ministers to the Presbyterians, also, one of them, Reverend Calvin Smith, married Hattie Mae Blakely (an Ora girl). It was always a treat to hear him as he returned to preach and to sing. Rev. Craig Alexander was a friend to all. He was from West Virginia, and remained a bachelor. At first, he had no car-and walked to do his visiting. When he decided to go visit the Hunters, he asked Mrs. Nannie Blakely for directions. She told him it was “about a mile”. By the time he arrived after 3 miles, he declared that it was the longest mile he had ever walked!

As most of you know, this community was settled by Scotch-Irish in 1766. It was named “Scuffletown” on old maps; but was renamed by Robert Tyler McDonald who surveyed for the CWC Railroad. He fell in love with Leora (“Ora”) Hunter, and named the train stop for her. They married in 1886. Their son, Tyler, later returned to Ora with his wife, Marie. They bought and lived in the home that now is the residence of our sister-in-law, Kathryn Hill.

In our growing-up years (depression time), there was only one general store in Ora. It was owned and operated by Mr. Sam Byrd. Most of the farm families raised all of their own animals and crops for food. All neighbors worked hard all week, and worshipped together on Sundays. The social and spiritual life revolved around our churches.

In the 1950’s, soon after we married, the small Old Fields congregation asked to join the A.R.P. Church-and left their old church building empty for years. It was later relocated behind Tommy and Jenny Blakely’s home. Since then, the entire area has been one big churchyard and cemetery. The two-church community was finally united under one roof to worship and work together. The men no longer sit only on the right side, with ladies and children only on the left. Hymns and Psalms both praise God! New families have come to enrich the fellowships, also with-thankfully-many of the same ones that have remained faithful through the years!

I remember thinking, as a child, that the A.R.P. Church is so “beautiful”. It still is, and we love to visit and worship with you. Thank you for allowing us to do so!

Harold and Edna Hill

During the second world war I worked in ballistics research for Aberdeen Proving Ground and I worked with and became friends of two South Carolina girls—Edna Carlisle of Whitmire (sister of Charles Carlisle) and Jean Wood (niece of Rev. John Carson). They told me about their church where they sang only Bible songs and I just could not imagine never singing hymns in church.

Then in 1960 my husband, Harry Ingraham, our five children, and I moved to a farm about five miles from Ora ARP Church. Since there was no Presbyterian church near, we visited the Ora Church and soon transferred our memberships. When I joined the Women’s Society, a very active organization, I was told by Rosabelle League it is my organization now and to feel free to contribute my ideas too.

Gary Fravel and his son Cory enjoyed making cranberry bread together at Christmas and giving it to friends.

Bob Robinson’s first wedding was that of our oldest daughter, Liane Ingraham, to Roger Hill July 8, 1961.

One summer night when Bob Robinson was preaching, a bat got into the sanctuary and after it flew back and forth for some time, Bob gave up trying to preach and dismissed the service.

Rob Turner's first baptism was of Samantha Elaine Godfrey, daughter of Mark and Donna Ingraham Godfrey, on May 31, 1998.

Frances Louise Hughes and I planned and hosted the first senior adult covered-dish luncheon at the church in 1983. At that meeting, the group became The Happy Seniors and has continued to meet quarterly with about 25 attending.

Laura Ingraham

My father, Dr. I. N. Kennedy, was the pastor of the Ora Church. I was born at Ora and I was baptized in the Ora Church by Rev. J. M. Garrison, a good friend of my father's who was holding a meeting in the church.

I have many wonderful memories of childhood at Ora and the church. I remember babies crying in the church and my father said that it didn't bother him for it meant that the parents were attending church. Another vivid memory is of children being taken out of church for misbehaving and given a spanking. I heard them crying but they returned to church and were good the remainder of the service.

I remember that the two little rooms at the front of the church were Sabbath School rooms and I was in one when Miss Margaret Byrd was the teacher.

The church was heated by a big iron stove with wood. It stood at the front of the church where the piano is today.

The Ora Church members were good to the minister and his family and they gave them a "pounding" every year about Thanksgiving time. The church members brought sacks of flour, sacks of sugar, cakes, and many other things. I remember Dr. Bryson and Milton's uncle, Ewell Blakely, always gave a tremendous barrel of apples that we put in our back hall. I still remember the smell of the apples.

The "manse" is still there across the road from Kathryn Hill's home. There was a dirt road with many members of the church living on it. It left the church and crossed the railroad track in front of the W. B. Blakely house. Next door was the John Hunter McClintock house and on down the road was the Blakely house where Mary, Charles, Ralph, Fleming and others lived. Next was the Martin house, the George Blakely home, the W. J. Fleming house, the manse and the Bryson home. All these families had lots of children. The road crossed the railroad and up the road was the Will McClintock house where the school teachers lived, the Ludy Blakely home, and the Thompson home. There was a road to the left and on it was Miss Eliza McDill's, the Smiths (Abe's Ike's) and on down the road was the Oscar Hunter home and the Ben Hunter home.

Mr. Ben Hunter was good to our family. He gave my two oldest brothers a summer job on his farm and they lived with the Hunters. It was too far to walk.

One day Mr. George Blakely came to my father and asked to borrow his car which was an unheard of request but my father let him have it. Mr. George came home with a brand new car—a gift from the church. Wonderful!

Across the street were the McClintocks. Further on down toward the church were the David McClintocks. They had daughter my age named Grace. She and I played together and were in the same grade at school. I spent the night with her several times. She had a sister named Augusta and two brothers named Bruce and Harold. They owned a pony

named "Billy" and had a pony cart. Mrs. McClintock took us children to ride in the pony cart many times. And on down the road were the Wallaces and the Tingles.

In 1924 my father received a call to go to Mooresville. My parents began to pack. I remember big barrels with books packed in them. My Grandma Carlisle from Newberry came and helped my mother pack. In February of 1924, one Sabbath morning my father got up early, built a fire in the fireplace for it was cold and went out to milk the cow. He looked up and saw that the house was on fire. He returned to the house and waked us and told us to get up and dress fully with shoes and stockings to go out, for the house was on fire. He sent my brother, Leon, to the Fleming's next door to ask Fleming Blakely to go with him down to the church to ring the church bell. He told my sister and me to go next door and wake up the Bryson's and to ask George Bryson to go to the Will McClintocks to wake them. Soon, the church members began to arrive. They formed a bucket brigade and put up ladders to go to the roof. My mother gave them quilts and blankets to wet, also. Some other members began to move the furniture into the front yard. Just as the fire was put out, it began to rain and the furniture had to be put back into the house. The house was saved. Later a new roof had to be put on but there was one tragedy. My father couldn't find his sermon and my grandmother couldn't find her false teeth. But we went to church and my father preached. Later, the teeth were found.

My father rented a railroad box car and put all the furniture on it-even the chickens in chicken coops. He gave or sold the five Jersey cows to Dr. James Pressly of Due West. We moved to Mooresville, N.C. but we came back on frequent visits or to funerals of the Ora people.

I came back to Ora in 1960 when I married Milton Blakely, and I joined the Ora Church. I remembered the collection boxes and I asked Mrs. Blakely where they were. She said she didn't know but she was sure they had not been destroyed. We searched the closets and couldn't find them. About a year later, I crawled up under the church and there they were on a stack of lumber. I took them into town and had the wood refinished and I relined them with blue velvet from one of my dresses. Today they stand on the pulpit behind the altar.

I started a children's choir and there were 8-12 children in it. My aunt made choir robes for them. I remember that one Christmas the children wore the white robes with big red ribbons around their necks.

I began to work on raising money to buy an organ for the church. Milton's mother, Mrs. Nannie Blakely, gave \$500 and when we thought we had enough, Kathryn Hill and I drove to Spartanburg to Case Brothers and bought it. We used it for 25-30 years.

Kathryn and Charles Hill had joined our church and she was the "Life of Music" in our church for 30 or more years.

I wrote my brothers and sisters to donate money for us to buy a new piano. They did and again, I went to Case Brothers in Spartanburg and bought a Yamaha piano and we gave it to the Ora Church in honor and memory of our parents, Dr. and Mrs. I. N. Kennedy, and we still use it today.

When my brother Bill (Dr. W. M. Kennedy) died, he left me some money and I took the tithe of it and added a little more and had the two little rooms at the front of the church paneled. Then, I bought three bookcases and some curtains for both rooms.

Elizabeth Hunter and I bought some little rugs for the rooms.

When I first came to Ora, Mrs. Edwardina Blakely was the pianist and after she died or retired, I began to play the piano for Sabbath School. I did this for 30 years. Louise

Sellars joined our church and she was a gifted organist and sometimes she and Kathryn Hill would play a duet. I also taught the Ladies SS Class for 30 years.

The Ora Church has always been special to me and when the Bethel Building was built, I made 6 or 8 pictures of former ministers. I got most of the pictures out of the Sesquicentennial History of the ARP Church but I couldn't find one of the earliest ministers. He was my great great uncle John Renwick, brother of my great great grandfather.

In 1968 the Blakely brothers, Milton, Tommy and Roger had the sign of the church installed.

When I married and moved to the Ora church, I donated our living room table to the church and it is in the room to the right of the pulpit and is used today for the Communion Services.

In 1990 the Ora Church had a big celebration honoring its 200th birthday with a huge gathering of former members and we had dinner at the Ora schoolhouse. I had a cake made and the icing was in the shape of the Ora church.

About 1965 I bought a little tree and decorated it with Chrismons. I gave patterns to many women in the church and they make some of the Chrismons. I put the tree up in the church for about 25 years. My sister, Elizabeth, made an advent wreath and I gave her \$25 for the expense of the materials that she had bought. We donated this to the church and every year we bought 4 purple candles and one large white candle for advent.

In November of 1993, my husband, Milton Y. Blakely died. He had been an active loyal member all his life. He taught the SS lesson, was an elder, Trustee of the church, clerk of the session and delegate to Synod for most of the years. I took the money of the memorials sent to me at his death and built a playground at the back of the church.

I named the playground "The Milton Blakely Playground." Mr. Clarence Walker cut down the trees and cleared the land. Then I had a fence put around it. Next, I bought playground equipment and a cement table and some benches for the mothers to use. I bought some shrubbery and plants to put in front. Don Kennedy helped me plant them. The children enjoy it.

Margaret Kennedy Blakely

In my nearly 40 years of association with the Ora church I have met and loved many wonderful people, many of whom are no longer with us. When I teach the Ladies Class, as I have off and on for many years, I sometimes can almost see Mrs. Martha Hunter, Mrs. Frances Louise Hughes, and Mrs. Rosabelle League. These ladies of faith were a great encouragement to me over the years in many ways.

One of my first memories of Ora shortly after coming here was the day Mrs. Edwardina Blakely let me know that a lady really should wear a hat to church. (Remember this was the early 60s.)

I remember so many happy times, with weddings and new babies, so many sad times with illnesses and deaths, all part of God's plan for this little congregation. So many special times, such as Easter sunrise services, times when the choir sang their hearts out, special sermons that touched my heart.

I remember Bud Pennell sitting in front of us in church every Sunday, frequently nodding off during the sermon and being nudged by Mrs. Punkie. He often asked David, from the time he was 10 or 11, whether or not he was engaged yet. When David did get engaged, Mr. Bud was one of the first people he called.

I remember the bazaar we had years ago, bake sales, auctions, sending our children to Mexico and Bonclarken. I remember working with Cub Scouts and having pinewood derby races and making crafts and earning awards. The bridal showers and baby showers and anniversary parties were all a part of the fabric that makes up Ora.

Most of all, I think of the faith that has kept this congregation together and the unity we share as Christians. We may not always agree, but we manage to work out our differences and keep on going.

Sara Robertson

We arrived in Ora mid-week, mid-winter of 1986. We had moved clear across the United States from Washington State to South Carolina. We had twins less than two years old and a nearly four-year-old. The day after we arrived, there was a knock at the door and we were greeted by Milton Blakely with a broom. I don't remember why he gave us the broom, but he was my first contact with the Ora congregation. He invited us to Community Club and officially welcomed us to Ora. We suddenly had connections to the local hardware store (Robertsons), the library (Peggy Kennedy), the dentist (Zelda McClintock), the preschool (again, Zelda McClintock), the hospital (Virginia McClintock), and the school system (Jean Blakely). All of those connections came in very handy a few years later when I broke my elbow while roller-skating with the Ora A.R.P. youth group.

Our first Community Club was such a wonderful experience. We got a full dose of Ora A.R.P. hospitality from everyone. Everybody already knew where we lived (good news apparently traveled fast) and told us where they lived. I remember the children bounced from one lap to another, sampling the food as they went. Ebony, now 18 years old and in college in Boston, still has fond memories of Miss Jane Parsons cream cheese pears and Miss Carolyn Blakely's pepper and onion sandwiches. We attended church and Sunday school the very next Sunday and had a wonderful time. I had a hard time switching from the Hymn Book to the Bible Song book, but I just tried to follow Calvin Robertson's lead. Only later did I learn that he had no idea what he was doing most of the time. The following Sunday one of the girls was a bit under the weather (I say that because I learned in Ora that being "ill" is not the same as being sick) so we stayed home from church. BIG MISTAKE...I had no less than 17 phone calls and 5 visitors inquiring about why we didn't come back to church. Believe you me, I didn't miss another Sunday. I even showed up an hour early every year when we changed to daylight savings time.

I soon found out from Miss Jean Blakely the reason that you all were so concerned about us: to the members of the Ora A.R.P. Church we were an answer to a prayer, a prayer for children to come to the church. I have never felt so important or useful as an instrument of God as I did when Miss Jean spoke those words to me.

We soon got into a bidding war with Amy and Lesslie Blakely over who could come up with the most answers to Miss Jean's and other's prayers. John Blakely arrived about three weeks before Kelsey Nicolas in the fall of 1988. They were baptized on the

same day by Rick Lewis. Lesslie and Amy had to have the last word and added another daughter a few years later. We decided to hold at 4.

Our children had a wonderful time at every church event they attended, from community club to Bible school to youth groups to going to Camp Bonclarken. Ebony was confirmed by Jim Loughner. The day of the confirmation, Ebony wore slip-on shoes to church. Miss Imogene Wilson taught my girls that it was perfectly acceptable to slip your shoes off during the church service, especially on hot summer days when the sermon was apparently going to last forever; Ebony had slipped off her shoes, and unknown to her, her youngest sister Kelsey had decided to slip them on her own feet. Pastor Jim approached Ebony to have her walk down the aisle to the rear of the church. The mad panic began as she looked over and saw Kelsey admiring her new footwear. There were some looks and words exchanged, and somehow the shoes and Ebony made it to the back of the church at the same time as the Pastor.

The Bible School sessions over the years, the community club suppers, the special services every year which meant special words from God, but also special food from the talented hands. Chicken stew made by the men of the church and Mr. Bud Pennell's hot and sassy hash, are particularly fond memories. The people of the A.R.P. Church of Ora repeatedly warmed our hearts and our home in times of happiness as well as times of sadness. The food and friendship only got better as we went through various illnesses, downturns in the apple growing business, and eventually as we had to leave Ora for Maine.

I will NEVER forget the friendships we made there in Ora at the A.R.P. Church. God led us there, unbeknownst to us at the time, but now as I look back from a distance it all makes sense. We are building more memories here in Maine, and may well end up somewhere else before we are finished; God only knows.

Thank you for being a wonderful congregation of believers, not afraid to carry on your faith with all your hearts in a world that does not always publicize or recognize good hearted people. Your homecomings will keep your faith alive in all of you there, and it will keep the faith alive in all of us who have been lucky enough to have passed by the Ora A.R.P. Church on our life voyage. Thank you all very much for the memories.

p.s. A note to Zelda McClintock: I never told you, but the oyster pie you brought over on New Years day in 1989....the dog ate it. I couldn't bear to tell you at the time. I figured now was as good of time as any to confess.

Bonita Nicolas

As a child, I remember that we had revival (big meeting) in the summer time. The services were always conducted at night. It was before the church was air- conditioned, and the church was extremely hot. The windows would be raised and fans running, but the church still hot. The pews we had at that time were made out of pine and it would get so hot that the rosin would seep from the wood and your clothes would stick to the pew.

During our morning services, two fans would be in the back of the church running on "high". Most of the ladies wore hats then, and they would have to hold their hats on as they passed the fans. The windows would be up, and it never failed, the train would pass during the "morning prayer". The train made so much noise; you would have to "peek" to see if the minister had finished praying.

Before the furnace was installed, there were gas heaters along the outside aisles. If you sat next to the heater, you would burn up. If you sat further down the pew, you would freeze.

And when we had visitors at our service, Sam Fleming, Tommy Blakely and Jake League would always shake their hand, thank them for coming and ask them to come back. Ora has always been a very friendly church.

I would not take anything for having grown up in this church.

Harold W. McClintock, Jr.

In addition to sharing many memories of big events at the Ora church with other members, Amy and I have a few memories which are special to us. I remember at age 12 being asked to ring the church bell on the afternoon of July 4, 1976 which the country's leaders had asked churches to do as part of the bicentennial celebration for our country. Fleming (my brother, not to be confused with my grandfather who was also called Fleming) drove me down during a thunderstorm at 2:00 pm and we rang the bell. I don't remember if it was the same occasion or not, but I also remember Fleming and I rang the bell too hard on one occasion and it came out of its cradle. We had to climb up in the bell tower and put it back on track.

Amy remembers that our middle child, John, and Kelsey Nicholas were baptized on the same day by Rick Lewis on one of the last Sabbaths that he served as our pastor. She also remembers an occasion when she and Vickie Loughner were collecting for the American Cancer Society from some of the church members at their homes. They went to the home of Billy and Cheryl Dover, went in to their garage and pushed what they thought was the doorbell button. It was the automatic garage door switch instead, and the door closed, trapping them in the garage with nobody at home. They ended up managing to crawl under the garage door, but had to share a good laugh afterward.

Amy and Lesslie Blakely

The Ora Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church has ministered to four generations of my family, anchoring us to the Ora community even when not living in the area. As a child, I remember visiting for Vacation Bible School and other activities of the church and community; and today, many of those same teachers, leaders and fellow students are members of the church. When my parents, Kathryn and Charles Hill, moved to closer proximity in the late 1960's, the church became a vital part of their lives. When my children were growing up, they enjoyed Vacation Bible School at Ora ARP and visiting the church with my parents. They now find a home with the church, along with their own daughters. Every time I visit the church it is truly "coming home", and I am thankful for the ways the church continues to minister to the varying age groups of the members while also extending a warm welcome to visitors.

The word "picturesque" describes the outward appearance of the church, but its people are even more beautiful than the building and the grounds. They are dedicated to God

and each other. They are warm, loving and caring—always have been and always will be.
May God’s continued blessings be with each of you and your church.

Nancy Hill Nieman

Presbytery met at Ora when I was about eight years old (mid 1920’s). My father provided barbecue for the delegates and they ate outside at the old schoolhouse.

When I was a teenager, we had “pound” parties. Everybody brought a pound of candy or fruit to eat.

I was in Mr. Sam Byrd’s Sunday School class. It met over in the corner where the organ is now.

Alice Smith Robertson

Mrs. Nannie Blakely (Roger’s mother) was my Sunday School teacher when I first came to Ora.

Elizabeth Hunter

I write this as no stranger to the Ora ARP Church. My fond association with all of you as part of the body of Christ began as early as about 1951. I lost my mother at the age of 7, and my father, Luther Bolton, married Miss Martha Blakely, daughter of Ludy and Edwardina Blakely. My sister, Martha Pinckney Bolton, (now known as “Marcie”) was born in 1952.

One of our summer traditions was to visit my new mom’s family in Laurens, Ora, Gray Court, Easley, etc. for a couple of weeks. We always came to the church on Sundays and sometimes for extra church “potlucks”, etc. The people were always warm, gracious and full of southern hospitality.

As I grew up and married and had a family of my own—husband Steve McLaughlin of Winchester, VA, daughters Tracy, Amy and Rachel and my son Daniel, I treasured even more the stability, firm roots and Christian love which I saw exhibited at Ora ARP. My children, all of whom are now grown, have asked me to express how much they have also appreciated the church. It was part of their tradition, too, as we came on family vacations to visit “Grandmama” when she returned to the area with Marcie after the death of our father.

It has always been very evident to me that Mom treasured her relationships with each of you here and that her life was truly enriched by being part of Ora ARP. I was always reassured and thankful to know that she had her church family for support and Christian fellowship. That support and love was no more graciously expressed than at Mom’s passing on November 15, 1997.

Even though we do not visit you as frequently now, my memories are crystal clear, and I thank God for all of you. Thank you so much for giving my family and me the opportunity to be included in your booklet of memories.

Valerie Bolton McLaughlin and Family

My first memory of the Ora church was how friendly the people were and how welcome they made me feel. I also remember fondly the bazaar we had and how the women had a workshop and made things to sell.

I remember Mr. Tommy Blakely giving out chewing gum to all of the children. Rev. Guy Smith baptized all three of our children in this church.

Diane Robertson

I remember Mr. Jake League and David Kennedy greeting us at the door the first Sunday we came to Ora. David Kennedy taught the men's class that day and died the following week.

Connie McKittrick

Many of my memories come from a time when I lived on "Main Street" in Ora, which is now called Branch Drive. This road is where Sam Byrd had his general store and where the Post Office was located at one time. I lived across from the store. The house is still standing, but hid behind brush and trees.

Rev. Alexander came to visit the first week Joe and I were married. We had a wood stove with the legs off that sat in a box of sand. We invited Rev. Alexander to stay for supper and he came back to the kitchen and ate with us. After that, he would often come and eat with us. I remember one day I heard singing coming down the road and I looked and there was Preacher Alexander with his thumbs in his overalls, just a-singing coming to the store. The spot where the store was located belonged to Joe Martin's Uncle Robert and it still remains in the Martin family today. I could just walk across and get my groceries.

One time Joe told me about his Aunt Lou,(who helped to raise Joe and his sister Elizabeth) sending Elizabeth to go out and find Joe and Fleming Blakely. They had been out to the store and bought a plug of tobacco. Elizabeth found them hidden under the two big spirea bushes on each side of the house sick as a dog from the chewing tobacco.

Sam and Pearl Byrd lived next to us on the side going toward the church. This is where Milton and Iris Spooone live now. The old house where the Byrds lived was destroyed by fire. Next to the Byrds, at one time lived the Woods family. The father, Frank Woods, came down with cancer. I was a nurse and got the medicine he needed so he could get his shots when he needed them. I told them anytime he needed a shot to come and get me. When he needed a shot at night, his son Carl would come and knock on the wall near where Joe and I slept and I would go down and give him his shot. The house still stands.

The John Blakelys lived in the old house in front of where Jean and Bill Blakely live now. They would keep migrant workers who came up from Florida going north, who came to pick peaches over at the Craig Orchard, owned by Lizzie and Belle Craig and their brother. Mr. John Blakely drove a school bus for some time.

I remember Joe telling me about going to Dr. Bryson when he was sick. He always knew that when he had to go to the doctor that meant he would be getting some castor oil.

Dr. Bryson's office was located close to where Jake and Rosabelle League's old house stands. Dr. Bryson was Rosabelle and Sam Fleming's uncle.

Mr. Will McClintock and his wife lived in the house that was located below where Kathryn Hill lives now. The house is no longer there. Mr. Will had a peach orchard. One day he was out and got tangled up in the briar patch. Dr. B. Dale White lived above him. He hollered out, "Neighbor, Neighbor, get me out of here!" Dr. White finally heard him and came to his rescue.

Nell Cheek Martin

As told to Jane Parsons

There are many fond memories of the Ora ARP Church and the Ora community to recall, starting in my childhood. I remember sitting in the two little classrooms in the front of the church for Sunday School. Later we would learn the different catechisms, as we grew older. A special time during my childhood was when we would have Vacation Bible School. This was always held during the summer months in the morning and lasted a week. Each day concluded with different ladies bringing us refreshments, which consisted of homemade lemonade, cookies and the little vanilla ice cream cups with the little wooden spoon to eat it with. I remember one year, Bible School concluded with a picnic along Max Hunter's creek near his house. Two Bible Songs we would always sing during Bible school were no. 52 "Remember Me" and No. 72 "Precepts for Childhood". One year that especially stands out in my mind during Bible School, was a class I was in that Mrs. Virginia McClintock taught. We made bookends that year and I still have those. When Bible School was over, I went home and cried because I would not be going back and I would miss "Miss Virginia". I remember we had a Junior Union that "Miss Virginia" led, which we all enjoyed. Later as teenagers, we joined the YPCU (Young Peoples Christian Union). We would always participate in the Christmas tree at the schoolhouse. A shuffleboard and badminton games were installed for the young people to enjoy. Another event I enjoyed as a child was going to the Missionary Meeting, as I called it, with my Mama. This meeting is what we now call the Women of the Church meeting. I was too young to stay by myself, so I would go along with Mama to these meetings. I didn't mind though, because I knew the ladies would serve some good refreshments. Talking about refreshments, back then, at the Missionary Meetings, the ladies would go all out on their refreshments, often having home-made chicken salad sandwiches and I remember the home-made Russian Tea.

I remember all the good picnics we would have at the schoolhouse. We would eat out under the old trees when the weather was warm. There was always fried chicken, that had been cooked at home, deviled eggs, potato salad and pimento cheese sandwiches, and of course the ice cold tea that was always kept in the old tub with the dippers in it.

I remember faithfully the ladies preparing the big Christmas supper in December at the schoolhouse. A couple of the ladies would cook turkeys, make the dressing and gravy, and then assign other ladies to bring certain dishes. The turkey was always rationed out on wax paper to be sure everybody got some and none was wasted.

After Guy Smith married Jimmy and me, we got involved in the youth groups. We remember Lesslie Blakely, Dale Blakely, Barbara Blakely, Thomas Baughman, Billy Hunter, Elizabeth Good, Carole Hunter, Eddie and Ken Sizemore and others I'm sure I've

forgotten in my old age. In the younger group we had Chip Smith and Ann Marie Hunter. Jimmy would take them outside the door and ask them their catechism questions.

When it was time to take the offering, Chip would just grin when he came over to “Mr. Dimmy” because Jimmy would always pretend he was taking some money out. I remember fondly the Sunday School class I taught when Rick Lewis was here. That class consisted of Kim, Lance, and Tom Robertson, Cindy Good, Ande Kennedy, Wayne Luciani, Kevin Wallace, Jeannie Blakely and David Robertson.

Those years were very meaningful and rewarding. It now is so good to see these young people leading productive lives in the communities where they live and so many now still a part of the Ora Church, and who do so much in the work of the church.

I remember going to “Big Meeting” as we called it back then. This is what we now call Special Services. Big Meeting was always held in the hot summer for a week. Having the preacher back then was really something--a big meal, which usually consisted of home-cooked fried chicken, and everything else you can imagine.

How thankful I am for all the memories of the Ora ARP Church that I have, for all the memories of the dear ones who have gone on, for all the dear friends that remain, for all the faithful men of God that have been sent to be the pastors of the Ora ARP Church over the years and for God’s faithfulness and work in the Ora ARP Church.

May we look back and be thankful that God has seen fit to use us in accomplishing His will in the work of the church and may we always be eager instruments in the hands of God to accomplish what He has planned in the rest of the life of the Ora ARP Church.

Jane Parsons

Our memories of the Ora Church go back to the fall of 1996 when Rob began preaching here as a second year student at Erskine seminary. We always enjoyed our trips from Greenwood to Ora—although we seemed to find ourselves constantly running late—even without Daniel. We remember one Sunday we arrived and Lesslie Blakely was already leading the service, but was kind enough to let Rob finish. We also fondly remember those who hosted us for lunch during that time—the Blakelys, Stockmans, Hairstons, McClintocks, Robertsons and others who always made us feel so welcome. We thoroughly enjoyed that time of getting to know the people of Ora and we knew that the people of Ora were a very special group of people.

Our memories of the youth of the Ora Church are very fond as well. From the first Sunday when John Marion McClintock (then about age 3) voted “No” to receive Rob as Ora’s pastor, until now, we have greatly enjoyed our fellowship with the youth of the church. We have special memories of the rafting trip on the Nantahala, the hayrides in the Fall, and the Christmas pageant the youth of the church presented during the Christmas of 1999.

We still often think of the commissioning service for Dr. Jane Jennings here at Ora on March 18, 2001. Dr. Jennings spoke that day the realized dream of her serving in Pakistan was the result of the support she received as a child at the Ora Church.

We thank God for the many memories He has given us here at Ora and we look forward to the new memories and His continued compassions that are new every morning.

Rob, Rachel, and Daniel Turner

In 1928 the W.B. Tingle, Sr. family came from Georgia to make our home in Ora S.C. People were friendly and we were invited to Sabbath School at the A.R.P. Church. Miss Rosabelle taught us the catechism and later I was baptized by Dr. Grier, and the little Georgia Baptist lad was redeemed as a Presbyterian. I have been in that faith ever since—73 years. In 1946 I brought Joan and our baby Nicky to Ora to live.

W. B. “Bill” Tingle

I was a stranger and you took me in. Nicky and Stephen started S.S. and church at the Ora A.R.P. Church. David was christened there and baby Anne is buried there. I have poignant memories of your church.

Joan K. Tingle

From our very first day of visiting Ora ARP Church, we felt drawn by the warmth and inviting friendliness of the people. Soon we had our membership transferred and became members. David and I, as well as Lyn and Richard, always looked forward to the covered-dish suppers, which were highlights for good company and delicious, home-cooked goodies. Remembering Rosabelle League’s recitation of “The Gingham Dog and The Calico Cat” is yet a fond memory.. That is such a long poem, and not once did she falter. David and I taught the Juniors and Seniors Sunday School Class and have an unforgettable memory of hiking with them, as well as with Diane and Calvin, in to see the 800 foot water fall drop at Raven Cliff Falls. After much ‘ado’ about being cautious on the rocks, only our son, Richard, slipped and gave us a huge ‘scare’! We had a great time and all returned ‘safe and sound’! Spending time as part of the Ora Church family gave our family many blessings. How nice to be returning for Homecoming.

Marj and David Craig

My favorite memories are very eclectic:

The church filled with music on Sunday mornings with Mrs. Kathryn Hill at the organ and Mrs. Louise Sellars at the piano.

A spaghetti supper the youth group put on to raise money for the 1980 trip to Mexico.

Dressing in a toga to play a ‘tare’ (weed) in a Bible School skit performed in front of the entire congregation. (I still haven’t figured out why weeds wear togas!)

Mrs. Grier’s Sunday School class in the basement of the sanctuary.

Mr. Tommy Blakely always having a stick of chewing gum for any kid who asked for it.

Mr. Jake League ringing the bell every Sunday morning.

Hearing the choir sing “Ring The Bells” each Christmas!

Richard Robertson

The twelve years we spent at Ora were all special to us. Many memories are still treasured as we recall our first pastorate and the people we were privileged to know. There are several special memories that come to mind.

We remember how all children were special to Tommy Blakely. Every Sunday following church Tommy, or “Mr. Tommy”, as he was often called, would have candy or gum for all the children who were at church, even visitors. He would greet each child with a smile and a special gleam in his eye. Even though he and Jenny had no children of their own, it seemed as if all children were in a sense his.

We also remember Sam Byrd who served so faithfully as treasurer for many years. Sam to my knowledge never owned an adding machine—he did not need one. He could take his pencil, go down a column of figures and add them almost as fast as a person could have put them in an adding machine. He always seemed to have them added correctly.

Another memory is of the faithfulness of Kathleen Hunter—another who had no children of her own but saw all children as special. She showed this when our son, Chip, was pre-school age. He was the only one in his age group in Sunday School and for a year she taught him in a class by himself. He gained many lifelong truths from her commitment to see him be part of Sunday School and to see him learn.

Christmases were also special at Ora as the whole community looked forward to the annual Christmas dinner at the Community House with turkey and dressing and all the trimmings. It was a very festive occasion with a very wonderful and bountiful meal—typical of all meals at Ora.

One humorous memory we have is of a time when Betsy was keeping the nursery. Jane Parsons had told her if she needed help to send Chip, who was about 4 at the time, to get her and she would come. That Sunday there were quite a few in the nursery and several began crying at the same time. Betsy told Chip to go and get “Miss Jane” and to go out and go around and come through the front door. Chip went—but instead of going to the front door, he came in the door beside the pulpit. He opened the door and loud enough for all to hear said, “My mama needs help!” Quite a few, including Jane, quickly jumped up to go and help.

Another humorous story was told to me by Dr. Paul Grier, who supplied the church some just before we came in 1964. Dr. Grier was conducting prayer meeting one night in the sanctuary when a black snake stuck its head through one of the holes in the ceiling. He said that after that he thought more people were concerned with where the snake was and where it may fall if it came out than they were with listening to him.

Another memory is of the time lightning struck the old steeple which had an old spire made of cedar. There was much damage to the steeple and pieces of the steeple were widely scattered. It was quite an event when the new steeple came and a large crane was brought in to lift it and set it in place.

One final memory is when the outside speakers connected to the organ were placed in the steeple. The speakers were full voiced when the installer first tested them. He was testing them by playing familiar hymns. John Hunter McClintock happened to be at his farm some distance from the church when he heard these hymns that seemed to come out of nowhere. He later told me that when he heard them and could not figure out where they were coming from and that he thought it must be the end of time.

Memories come from special people who make them and Ora and all the good people at Ora will always have a special place in our hearts and the hearts of our family.

Homecoming Committee Note:

The following memories are for our 225th anniversary

Ora was a special place especially for a young minister fresh out of seminary. The people were very understanding and forgiving of mistakes I may have made as I began to try to grasp the true concept of what it meant to be a minister and a pastor. I recall the people being very helpful and willing to give a new minister a chance to learn and helping where they could

I also remember on occasion how humbling it was to be stranding in the pulpit and looking out at the congregation and seeing people like Dr. Paul L. Grier, Rev. W. C. Alexander, Dr. J. Calvin Smith, Rev. William F. Blakely, Rev. Robert B. Elliott, Jr. and Rev. Earl Linderman and then looking to the side and seeing Miss Bessie Byrd who was a student of the Bible and taught at Erskine College for many years and then others like Mrs. Nannie Blakely who knew her Bible so well and thinking to myself, "And I am supposed to preach to all these knowledgeable people!" An interesting thing was that not just one of them was there but often several of them at one time. It was indeed very humbling.

Another memory is when the outside speakers connected to the organ were placed in the steeple. The speakers were full voiced when the installer first tested them. He was testing them by playing familiar hymns. John Hunter McClintock happened to be at his farm some distance from the Church when he heard these hymns that seemed to come out of nowhere. He later told me that when he heard them, he looked up in the sky and could not figure out where they were coming from and that he thought it must be the end of time.

We remember also how all children were special to Tommy Blakely. Every Sunday following church Tommy, or "Mr. Tommy", as he was often called would have candy or gum for all the children. He would greet each child with a smile and a special gleam in his eye. Anytime they might go in his store, he would teasingly pull out his paddle.....he did so with a gleam in his eye. When our son, Chip, first began getting off the school bus at Tommy's store he would go around the outside to avoid that paddle. He soon learned that the paddle was only a joke and that he usually ended up with a piece of candy or a cookie. Even though Tommy and Jenny had no children of their own, it seemed as if all children of the church and community were in a sense their children.

Another memory is of the time there was a break-in at the Church. The only thing missing was an old projector and a heavy metal box. I am sure the thieves thought they had something great.....but it was only the box that contained the letters that went on the

sign out front. Memories come from special people who make them and Ora and all the good people at Ora will always have a special place in our hearts and the hearts of our family.

Guy & Betsy Smith

"Every summer when Suzanne and I were growing up, we spent lots of time at Ora visiting Granny (Mrs. Nannie Blakely) and family. We took part in all the activities of the Ora church. At that time Mr. Alexander was the pastor. We had such good times with the children and young people of the Ora church. Ora was like a second home to us."

Harriet Smith Linderman

Homecoming Committee Note:

This memory was discovered in a scrapbook as a copy of a letter published in the April 14, 1915 Associate Reformed Presbyterian periodical.

People are good to ministers. I suppose every A.R.P. minister will endorse that statement. I have had good reason for saying that for the twenty years of my ministry. Now there are some pleasant mysteries in life. When I came to Ora nearly 3 years ago and preached my first sermon, the congregation sent a big wagon load of provisions up to the parsonage, and the treasurer turned over to the new pastor \$193.00 as advance pay. There was some mystery to that, but was partly explained by the fact that the congregation had been without a pastor for some time, and they were hungry to make up for the lost time. But on April 7 of this year of the war when cotton has been to the bottom, and provisions have gone to the top, something happened that "got by me." Just think of it, an A. R. P. preacher with two barrels of flour and a whole barrel of sugar and everything else that's good to eat in his house at one time. I don't understand it, but I am feeling mighty comfortable. If I did not know that such a treat's characteristic of the Ora people, I might conclude that Dr. Stevenson's three day's preaching for us had something to do with it. And Dr. Stevenson did take two meals at the parsonage. Well, the parsonage family are embarrassed by all this bounty. There is abundant room for improvement in my preaching, so I will try to do better.

We enjoy Dr. Stephenson's preaching and visit. We had a have a communion service on the Sabbath. There was one addition to the church. We have recently elected and installed three new elders. We are expecting to have a communion and a dedication service in our chapel in Laurens on the fourth Sabbath of this month.

I.N. Kennedy

Immediately after retiring from South Florida and getting settled into our new home in beautiful downtown Enoree, we knew it was time to look for a new church home. We had sort of been putting this off because we had been so happy with our church in Florida and we hated the prospect of trying out new churches here in South Carolina. Just like Goldilocks, we had tried some churches but they were either too hot or too cold - until we came to Ora, that is. Ora was just right!

Right from, the very beginning, on our first Sunday visit, we noticed two things right away. First, the people were friendly and welcoming. It's always a bit awkward visiting a new church for the first time but the people at Ora were very friendly to us right away and made us feel right away that our presence there was very welcome. The second thing we noticed right away was the quality of the ministry itself. The minister, Sam Roper, preached right from the Bible, clearly understood his Biblical doctrine and explained things in a way that was easy to understand. What's not to like about a church like this?

Coming from a completely different area of the country it was natural for us to wonder if we would fit in at a church South Carolina. The people at Ora made sure we did. The first Sunday we were there, we were invited to a potluck supper the next day. Hey, that's all it took, right? Who can turn down free food?

It's been a busy three years since we formally joined the Ora ARP congregation. From first wondering if they would welcome us, a couple of outsiders, into the life of the church we have been involved in virtually every aspect of church in one way or another. We have taught Sunday school, served as leaders in both the church and Women's Ministries, played music in the services and been involved in a whole range of activities. In short, they have kept us busy and at the same time made us feel both loved and useful.

We really love our "new" church family!

John and Debbie Cothrane

I grew up in a larger city church, Centennial in Columbia, and I was a little unsure of what a small country church would be like. The first Sunday we attended church at Ora on a hot summer day in 1973 the air conditioning was not working, I was 6 months pregnant with Mac and very uncomfortable. I really wasn't sure that I wanted to return. I went to get Ande, who was not quite 3, from the nursery and found out she had gotten sick and thrown up on Jenny Blakely. I wasn't sure the church would want us to come back. We came back, the church let us in and we have remained here for over 40 years.

To me one of the strengths of the church is how it supports the children. Whether they are running down the aisle being chased by an older brother, adding to the minister's sermon with their vocalizing or saying "yay" after the choir sings, there are no disapproving looks only smiles. This support continues as the children grow older. Both of my children have had individual opportunities because of people in the church.

Although they now live a long way away, most Sundays and at other activities someone asks about them.

The majority of memories I have cannot be put down in words. They are pictures and sounds and feelings, good and not so good sometimes, that make up the whole of what Ora is to me.

Peggy Kennedy

The Choir

When we moved to Ora in 1973, the Ora A. R. P. Church did not have a choir. The congregation seemed to enjoy music. I remember that my mother (Sara Boyce Lesslie) told me she used to visit the Ora A. R. P. Church when her sister (Mary Alice Boyce Brawley) was the teaching principal at the Ora School in the mid 1920's. She and her sister would always be asked to sing a duet at church. When Reverend Richard C. Lewis became pastor of the Ora Church in 1982, he set about to organize a choir. Our organist/piano player, Kathryn Hill, was happy to organize a choir. The first choir sat on the front pews on the right side of the sanctuary facing the pulpit. When time for the special came, the choir stood up and faced the congregation. Later, chairs were purchased and placed behind the piano which was on the left side of the sanctuary facing the pulpit. That area of the sanctuary became the place for the choir. When the current organist/pianist, Sharon McCauley, became the music director of the Ora Church, the piano was moved to the right side of the sanctuary facing the pulpit. Since the organ was on that side of the sanctuary, having the piano next to it made moving from organ to piano easier. New chairs have been obtained for the choir. New members have been added to the choir. The choir has become an important part of the music of the church.

Jean L. Blakely
