



**HISTORY OF  
WEE KIRK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
LINVILLE, N.C.**

Organized 1891-1895  
Folded 1973  
Reorganized May 30, 1993

## Pioneer Ministers



John A. Harris  
Synod's Evangelist, Yancey County  
1905-1924



Robert P. Pell  
Evanagelist, Mitchell County  
1891-1894



J. Edgar Tuffs  
Evangelist and Developer,  
Avery County, 1902-1923



Joseph P. Hall  
Evangelist, Banner Elk and  
Plumtree, 1904-1925



Theo. W. Clapp  
Teacher and Pastor  
Plumtree Area, 1922-1963



W. Ernest Wilson  
Home Missionary and Pastor  
Mayland Area, 1940-47, 1970-78

F. M. Fox, First Installed Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Burnsville, 1897-1898

C. A. Monroe, Evangelist for Concord Presbytery "Western Field", 1882-1884

James I. Williams, Stated Supply and Branch Stations in Yancey County, 1899-1902

Laughlin A. McLauren, Evangelist and Pastor, Mitchell County, 1896-1901

Victor C. Detty, Pastor and Youth Programming, Burnsville and Group, 1926-1930



WEE KIRK  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

Organized - 1941

It was on April 9, 1891, that the Home Mission Committee recommended to Concord Presbytery "that ways and means be devised of supplying our destitute territory with the Gospel as we understand it." Resulting from this action the Home Mission Committee was instructed to elect one or more evangelists for the Presbytery as soon as funds might be secured to finance them.

On November 12th of the same year Rev. Robert Payne Pell was received by Presbytery to answer the call and to become Evangelist in Watauga and Mitchell Counties. (Avery had not yet been established.) Synod came to join with the Presbytery to finance Mr. Pell's ministry.

It was in the heights and the beauty of these Blue Ridge mountains that Mr. Pell established his headquarters. His early concentration of ministry was in the area of Linville, where he lived, and in Elk Park and Banner Elk.

Great vision was expressed by Mr. Pell for this territory which, to him, was "a field that had promise and one of the most interesting and important in our Synod." That vision included evangelism, education and a ministry to the needs of young and old through the Presbyterian Church. This was something new in Mitchell county which had no Presbyterian church.

No time was wasted in undertaking the task. Doors began to open for preaching, Sunday Schools and prayer groups. A church was organized that first year. When this vision and enthusiasm caught the attention of Presbytery, their official action was to commend the work being done, appropriate \$500 toward the building of a church at Linville and endorse Mr. Pell's "concocted plan for the establishment of an Industrial Normal School of high school grades for girls at Linville City." Linville apparently did not get such a school but instead the Education Committee a year later recommended that such a school be established at Blowing Rock.

Even though neither Linville nor Blowing Rock got the school, it was later realized at Banner Elk as a part of Lees McRae Institute. However, a committee from Concord Presbytery was sent to Linville to "secure proper deeds from the Linville Land Improvement Company for a church and a school."

The church building was begun but not finished until 1895. Edgar Tufts, a student at Hampton-Sydney and a summer worker in the Banner Elk field, supplied the Linville preaching point in 1895.

Rev. Laughlin Alexander McLauren was called by the Presbytery to assist Mr. Pell in the overload of work he was trying to do. Designated as Evangelist for Mitchell County, he lived at Elk

Park. He was made Stated Supply for Elk Park, Linville and Spruce Pine along with responsibilities in the broader area of the county.

Beginning in 1902 Rev. Edgar Tufts, along with his work at Banner Elk and Lees McRae Institute, was made Stated Supply for Pineola and Linville where he served for many years.

Presbyterians were scarce in Linville, and its leadership limited. Pineola shared their ministers with Linville and helped sponsor them as a chapel for a number of years.

In 1915 all Presbyterian churches and chapels of the Mayland group with their ministers were transferred to Holston Presbytery. This made them a part of the newly established mountain Synod of Appalachia.

Linville struggled along as the smaller of a three church field until 1941 when they petitioned Holston Presbytery to organize them as a church. The Presbytery, acting cautiously, set up a commission with power to act if they felt the organization was wise.

With Home Mission Committee approval on May 14, 1941, the commission, composed of Revs. J. P. Hall, John I. Rhea and Frank Camp and Elders Fred Burleson and Charles Hughes, carried out their assignment and organized the church with 20 members. Five additional members were received before the year's end.

Rev. Frank Camp, then pastor of Newland, Pineola and Linville Chapel, was called to another field in 1942. This left the now 35 member church without a pastor for two years due to the scarcity of ministers.

Ministers were scarce because there were so many who answered the call to the armed services as chaplains during World War II. These mountain counties were hit hardest in finding replacements when pulpits became vacant.

During the next ten years, three of which left Linville without a pastor and two more with only short term supplies, the membership dropped to 5 with no Sunday School. In 1951 Rev. J. Arthur Sanders came to help them as a part of a three church field. Over his six-year pastorate he helped the church climb back to their membership of 35, a good summer congregation and a Sunday School.

Rev. Edward Renegar, their pastor 1964-1967, reporting to this writer, had praise for the faithfulness of this small congregation. The McGrath family and the Hartley family were commended for their leadership and for providing the four young people of the congregation.

When the "Highland Games" group had their business meetings in Linville Church, the Scotch folks suggested that the church be called "Wee Kirk." Presbytery approved this name, and it continues to be called by this name today.

This congregation regularly had a Fall Festival and parade in honor of the summer people who had given them a swelled congregation from April to October each year.

The time came when some of the older members of this congregation bought summer homes elsewhere, the children grew up and followed their vocations and others completed their earthly pilgrimage toward our heavenly home. These natural happenings reduced vital leadership.

It was not long after Appalachia Synod was dissolved in 1973, and the North Carolina churches were returned to the Synod of North Carolina and to Concord Presbytery, that the congregation dwindled to inactivity and the doors of the beautiful light oak trimmed sanctuary were closed.

This brief history is not finished without mentioning a Presbytery plan to open this sanctuary to a summer ministry on June 6, 1993.