

Churches in the Shenandoah Valley

**Wakemans Grove Church of the Brethren
668 Wakeman's Grove Rd
Edinburg, VA 22824**



A brief History

The Wakemans Grove Church of the Brethren traces its beginning to September 22, 1900, when Pleasant View Council appointed J. Ozias Wakeman to solicit funds to build a church house on his land. At the August 10, 1901 Council, Mr. Wakeman stated they had contracted with P. Lindamood and R.M. Lantz to build the new structure for \$1,020.00 and that they lacked about \$250 to pay for it. However, progress was made, and on September 18, 1901, the contractors reported the walls finished at a cost of \$67.37. The benches, window frames and sashes were

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built by a Mr. Holler, at Hollingsworth Mill, east of Edinburg. The church was finished and dedicated the same year, 1901, with elder Henry C. Early preaching the dedicatory sermon. The service was held on Sunday and many people attended with much enthusiasm and interest.

J. Ozias Wakeman, who donated the land for the church and adjoining cemetery, was the prime mover to have the church built and was often spoken of as its founder. Mr. Wakeman, son of Elder and Mrs. Jonas Wakeman, was united with the Church of the Brethren October 26, 1879 at Fishers Hill, Virginia. Several years after his baptism, he purchased a farm of several hundred acres about one mile west of Lantz Mill. Part of this tract was to be the sight of the present edifice.

Two years later, in 1903, Lemuel D. Wakeman and wife, who were Brethren members, purchased a farm nearby. They, too, were very much interested in the growth of the church, Mr. Wakeman being ordained as its first minister on September 6, 1904. Two of their sons also were advanced to the ministry.

Although contracted, church records reveal dedicated people who were very much interested in establishing a church in their community donated many hours of free labor. Included on the list of such laborers were: Henry B. Cook, Simon Holler, James Coffman, Charles Cook, William Holler, Charles Wolverton, John J. Gochenour, Carsey Estep and others.

Before 1900, the Brethren held services at Oak Ridge Church, about two miles north of Columbia Furnace. On February 15, 1900, this building was sold and \$125.00 derived from the sale was added towards the payment of a church house at Wakemans Grove. Among various preachers serving at Oak Ridge were D.P. Wine, B.W. Neff and John H. Garber.

Prior to the building of Wakemans Grove Church, revival meetings were conducted in the woods near the church. John F. Driver of Timberville was usually the evangelist. Large crowds would gather night after night to hear the evangelist with much enthusiasm in gospel preaching. Likely these meetings stimulated the idea of building a church house. D.C. Flory conducted the first revival in the new building. Some of the early members of the church were the Cooks, Coffmans and Wakemans, with the Cooks and Coffmans united with the Church of the Brethren in the late 1890s.

Since the building of the house at Wakemans Grove the pulpit has been supplied by a number of ministers, among whom are: B.W. Neff, D.P. Wine, John H. Garber.

The first Sunday School was organized at Wakemans Grove about 1905, with Frank Coffman being the first superintendent who served until 1908. Frank L. Wakeman superseded. Replacing him was Galen F. Wakeman, who also served over 20 years in this capacity. Both Mr. Wakemans, who were adult class teachers for many years, always looked to the future needs of the church with high ideals and confidence. The first

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trustees were J.O. Wakeman, R.C. Bauserman and Frank Coffman. B.W. Neff, D.P. Wine and J. Carson Miller were the earliest Elders.

First mention of Love Feast was in 1905. As many as 300 communicants are said to have taken part in early communion services. Surrounding area homes were opened to the people, each accommodating as many as 25 or 30 overnight guests. The graveyard was started in 1909 with the first funeral service being held for Mary Elizabeth Wakeman. Originally, Wakemans Grove was part of the Flat Rock Congregation, the latter being founded by Elder John Garber. Elder Garber was the first minister of the Church of the Brethren to locate in the Valley of Virginia., moving to Shenandoah County in 1775. From 1902 until 1909 a study was made on the advisability of dividing the congregation. There was much opposition and a definite line could not be decided upon. Finally, on November 12, 1901, Flat Rock announced that the division would go into effect. The old church was remodeled in 1928, and periodically thereafter, to accommodate the growing education program. The first effort was made by the lowering of the floor at one end of the church, where the raised seats were, and curtaining off classrooms.

Then in 1936 the Sunday School rooms were built and the first heating plant installed. Frank L. Wakeman donated the frame lumber for this new educational unit.

In June 1951, Wakemans Grove entered into a joint pastoral program with Pleasant View and Walkers Chapel, employing its first pastor, Stanley R. Wampler, 1951-1956

This new pastoral program under the leadership of Rev. Wampler prompted the development of a strong youth organization. Two years before, in 1949, the youth felt the need to buy a piano, thus leading to the purchase of the first musical instrument in the church. Then in 1954, offering envelopes were first used on a voluntary basis.

After exploring the need of a house for the pastor in the Congregation, Wakemans Grove joined with Pleasant View and Walkers Chapel to build the first parsonage in 1957, on a lot donated by Cletus R. Lindamood, Sr.

Wakemans Grove was organized as an independent congregation at District Conference on August 4, 1961, following a study of congregational status. That same year the Grove felt God's leading to further building expansion. A fund-raising campaign began with twelve dedicated men canvassing the congregation. After many meetings and decisions, the new church building became a reality and on January 21, 1962, the first worship service was held.

Since 1963 the Congregation has continued to grow. Additional land was needed for expansion. In June 1964, Henry O. Wakeman donated the land on which most of the current parking lot is located. Additional real estate was purchased in January 1980 from Melvin and Grace Minnick to expand the northeast boundaries. In the same year

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Galen F. and Maude Wakeman donated land to enlarge the cemetery.

On January 1, 1976, the church moved forward into a full time pastoral program with Rev. Jimmy Robinson serving as the church's first full time pastor.

In 1979 the parking lot was enlarged and black-topped and a storm entrance was added.

In April 1984 construction of the current sanctuary and Sunday School rooms were completed and a Dedication Service for the new facilities was held on May 20, 1984. The church library was completed in 1987 and central air conditioning was installed in the sanctuary and Sunday School area in 1989. The next renovation was completed in 1991.

The project included a new pastor's study and secretary's office, completely remodeled restrooms, crib and toddler nurseries, and stairway. The finishing touch was the addition of a steeple over the front entrance of the church. With continued growth and the need for more parking, the parking lot was expanded in 2001. The last renovation was completed in 2005. A whole new two story north wing was added making more Sunday School rooms, a new library, new bathrooms, and a new crib room.

Contributed by Gary Wakeman, June 2012