

# When We Walked In, **WE KNEW** Mount Ed Baptist Church



Les and Zae Fink

**W**hat would cause Les and Zae Fink to travel some 30 minutes through the valley of western Albemarle

County every Sunday? This Lyndhurst couple testifies, “When we walked in the doors of **Mount Ed Baptist Church** in Batesville, we knew this is where the Lord wanted us. We sensed His presence here and experienced a sweet fellowship.”

Betty Clayton, a resident of Crozet and a member for several years, agrees, “The experience here is worth the short drive.”

Jack and Donna Brown, new members from Waynesboro, affirm: “Pastor Ron is one of the best preachers [we] have ever heard preach. But not only is he good in the pulpit, he is a caring pastor. He is genuine, real, and relational.”

Pastor Ron Nickell, who succeeded his father at this church that dates back to 1788, had a model pastor in his dad. For many churches, this transition would be considered a succession plan, but Nickell explains, “Being the senior pastor was not my intention. I was content being a lay leader until I prayed and until the Lord made it clear to me.” He adds, “There is no way I can fill the



Jack and Donna Brown

shoes of my dad. I can only build upon the foundation that has been laid.”

## **What are some of the ministry practices you have continued?**

*A time of shaking hands and greeting one another during the worship service. I believe that this practice has become an art form at our church. We hear this comment all the time: “I’ve never been in a friendlier or more welcoming church!” There is a genuine love openly expressed for anyone who walks through our church doors. The style of music continues to be a blend of praise and worship and classic hymns, which seems to work for us. But more importantly—and a core value of our church—is our stand on the inerrant, infallible Word of God. My father left a legacy of consistent adherence to the doctrines of the faith, and we have not wavered from that.*

## **What are some of the things you have changed since becoming pastor?**

*The very first thing God led me to try and change was the attitude and spirit of the*



Betty Clayton



Passing the mantle of leadership—former pastor, Ron Nickell Sr., and his wife, Mary



Pastor Ron Nickell Jr., and his wife, Patty

congregation. For the first few months, our main focus was personal revival. I realized that if we were going to be an evangelistic body of believers, we had to recommit ourselves to a closer, more personal relationship with our Lord. We had to stop meandering through the stagnant waters of complacency and begin to pray for the Holy Spirit to rekindle our passion to grow in Christ and to get excited about His church again. We also changed the way we view Sunday School classes. They are not just for children, so we now call it “Adult Bible Study.” Studies centered on personal revival and personal issues, and as the participants started to recommit themselves to the Lord, the temperature of the church began to change.

Other visible additions that have taken place at Mount Ed Baptist Church include a children’s worship time, an outreach team, service greeters, visitor welcome packets, a mission opportunities board, a renewed emphasis on missions, and partnerships with other local Christian organizations.

Building on the foundation and core values and implementing some new ministry ideas have led to monumental growth at Mount Ed. In just three years, attendance and giving have increased by 250% and the number visiting the church by 200%. In the same time period, Mount Ed has received 43 new members and baptized 25.

#### Why do you think the church has grown?

I believe the growth is directly connected to obedience. I have constantly taught and preached that obedience must come before the blessing, and when God’s people begin to obey Him, there is a renewed sense of urgency for the lost, an injection of vitality, and a strengthened bond of unity, which brings about the blessing of growth.

#### Where does Mount Ed Baptist Church go from here?

I asked God to give us a mission statement for the church. One that, in a few words, would embody all that we stand for as believers. I found it in Ephesians 4:15—“Standing On Truth, Speaking It In Love, Living It In Life. That sums it up.”

Pastor Nickell’s heart’s desire is to see the church become even bolder witnessing for Christ, further evangelize the community through outreach, have a greater urgency to reach youth with the Gospel, and have a strengthened commitment to serve the Lord.

No wonder when people walk into Mount Ed Baptist Church, they “know”—the Lord is present through His Holy Spirit, and visitors experience the love and warmth of His people.