

Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle

Celebrating God's Blessings Since 1956



Pictured are members of the original Salem congregation. The JESUS lettering was duplicated by a Brooklyn artist for the Smithtown sanctuary.

Shortly after World War II, there was an exodus from New York City to the suburbs of Long Island. Joining this migration were families from Salem Gospel Tabernacle, a church established in 1926 in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn. The congregation was comprised primarily of first and second-generation Norwegians.

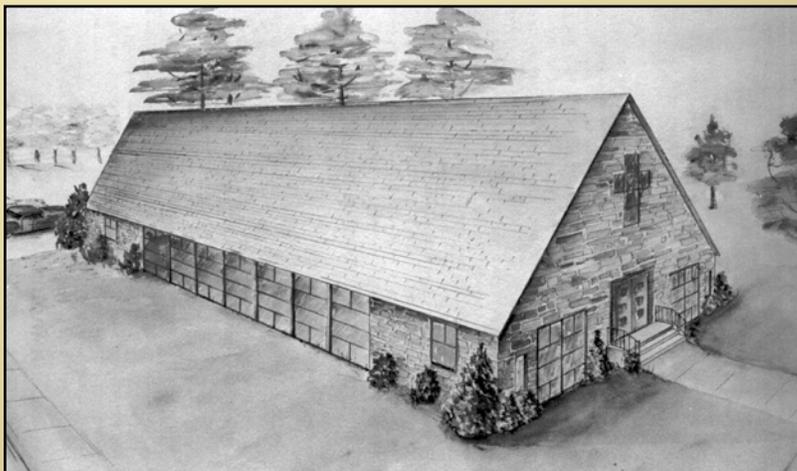
Several of these families settled in the Smithtown area. At first they met in their homes for prayer meetings. By 1950 they had added Bible studies and a Sunday School. When it became

necessary to find a larger meeting place, they rented the Hauppauge Village Hall and held their first Sunday morning service and Sunday School on the Sunday before Thanksgiving Day 1951. Hauppauge Village Hall, which has now been taken down, was located at the intersection of Veterans Highway and the Smithtown By-Pass. This small, laymen-led church family was not the only group to use the building. The Sunday morning routine for these hardy churchgoers was first to sweep out the empty beer cans left from parties held the night before.



Hauppauge Village Hall

Thanks to door-to-door canvassing, their numbers grew rapidly. By the mid-fifties, with no larger rental space available, they purchased a 110' x 160' plot of land in Smithtown on the corner of New York Avenue and Colonial Road. On April 6, 1956, they broke ground and construction of a 200-seat sanctuary with full basement for Sunday School began. The group, now called Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle, did almost all the work themselves, completing it by December of the same year. Wesley Braaten served as their first Pastor, in a part-time capacity.



An artist's rendering of first church on New York Avenue in 1956

Maurice V. Anderson was the full-time Senior Pastor from 1958 to 1976. With God's continued blessings, the facilities had to be expanded to accommodate the growing ministry - first with an educational wing in 1960, and then in 1971, with a 600-seat sanctuary with full basement for Sunday School. Two homes adjacent to the church property were purchased to serve as parsonages. Today, all of these facilities are owned by YWAM.



An artist's rendering of the expanded facility on New York Avenue in 1971

Following Pastor Anderson's tenure, Youth Pastor Carl Johnson served as the interim Pastor until 1977, when Robert C. Forseth was installed as Senior Pastor. The SGT family continued to grow, and in July of 1978, purchased the 16-acre Smithtown Sweetbriar Elementary School complex on Higbie Drive. It added the ministry of the Smithtown Christian School at that time. The dedication ceremony was held July 2, 1978.

With funds raised through the "Everyone in '81" and "Breaking Through in '82" campaigns, SGT completed the construction of a new 1800-seat sanctuary in the center court of the new school complex. The dedication ceremony was held on September 17, 1983.

With the funds raised through the 1994 Facility Expansion Program, we upgraded and expanded the gym and cafeteria, creating a facility that would serve both as a Fellowship Center and a regulation-size high school gym.

Gary Zarlengo became Senior Pastor in 1999. God has continued to bless SGT during his tenure. By 2007, having outgrown the facilities once again, the church responded by moving to three Sunday morning services and embarking on a massive expanse of its ministry space, including many new classrooms, a new youth center, four new conference rooms, and a dedicated prayer room. Ministry has expanded as well with a total of nine pastors on staff and over one hundred ministries! As it continues to grow, Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle continues to be led by the Spirit as it reaches the world for Christ!



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SGT