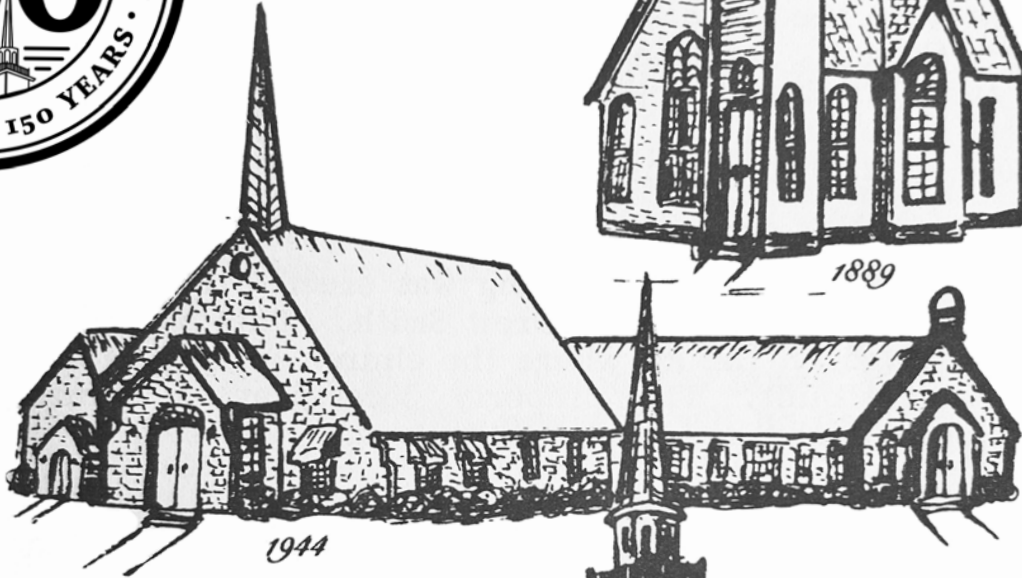
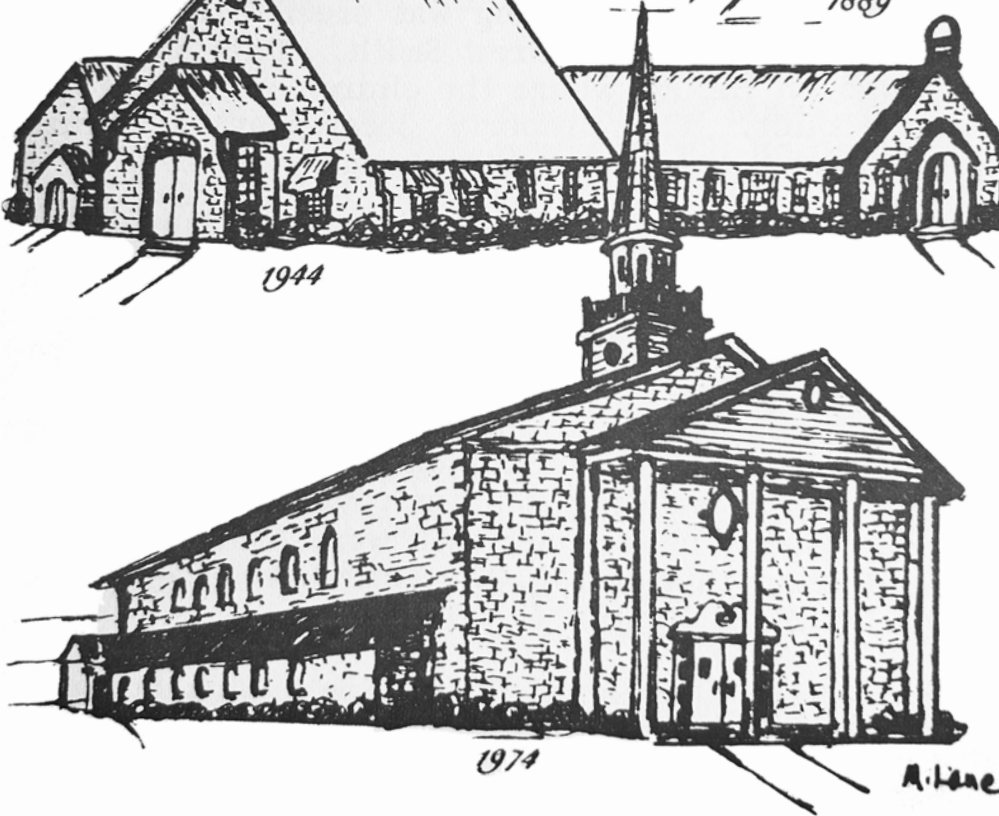




1889



1944



1974

A. Lane

Celebrating 150 Years

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Published by First Baptist Church Lindale

103 East Van Street

Lindale, TX 75771

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

South Main Street

Phone TU 2-3396

Lindale, Texas 75771



1966 Membership Directory

Dear Members of FIRST Baptist Church:

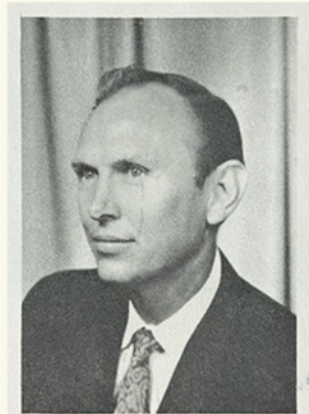
Great is the joy of being a Christian, and wonderful is the fellowship of those of like faith in Jesus Christ. I count it a high privilege to be a part of this great Church and my greatest honor to be your pastor.

Our Lord has done marvelous things for First Baptist across the years...May the blessings of the past be the inspiration needed to cause us to look to the future with a vision for progress and achievement for our Saviour.

In Christian Love,

Harry G. LaGrone

Harry G. LaGrone

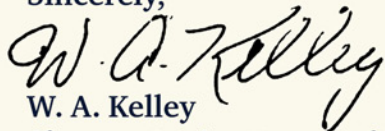


Rev. Harry LaGrone
(1963-1966)

Never a day passes, but that we recall the rich and rewarding association and fellowship so abundantly bestowed on us in times past. In this time we came to know you are a 'Great People' set for the defense of the Gospel, and ministering to mankind. Richer has been our life because you shared with us in these days, so characteristic of your spirit to others, but more, to our Divine Father in Heaven. Because of the memories, we can but say we are the richer in life for having passed your way and having received of your spirit, now exemplified in the rising up to greater undertakings and the realization more fully, God's purpose for you and the extension of your ministry to your community and beyond.

In this, YOUR DAY, may you find satisfaction in realization, and challenge in renewed vision. We send greetings, and assure you of our prayerful thoughts for the occasion.

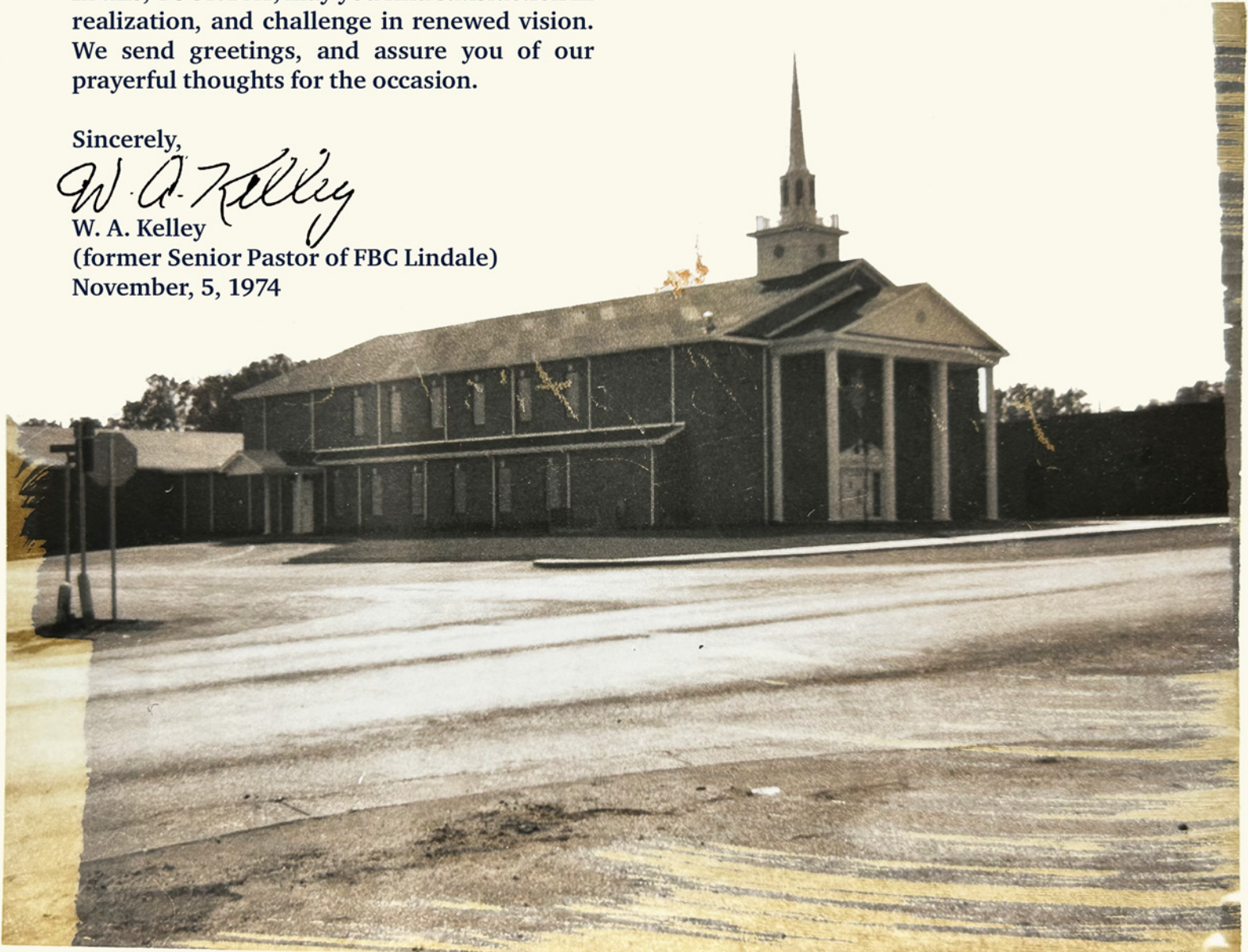
Sincerely,



W. A. Kelley

(former Senior Pastor of FBC Lindale)

November, 5, 1974



God has richly blessed First Baptist Church of Lindale for more than 125 years. We gratefully recognize how our heritage contributes to the resources we have today. The majority of the history available to us pertains to buildings, organizations, and the periodic name of a congregant or leader. However, we recognize that these facts are only a backdrop to the real importance of our heritage: a faithful congregation sharing God's love and His gospel in its community. Our history reminds us that God works through all sorts of people to accomplish his will. We thank Him for his faithfulness to FBC Lindale, which sets the stage for ministry that we aim to accomplish today.

Tom Buck



From the FBC Member Directory, 2010



1876–1888

“The Founding”

In the spring of 1876, when Lindale was fragrant with the smell of peach, plum, and blackberry blossoms, Reverend Jackie Bledsoe, an area evangelist, gathered twelve families:

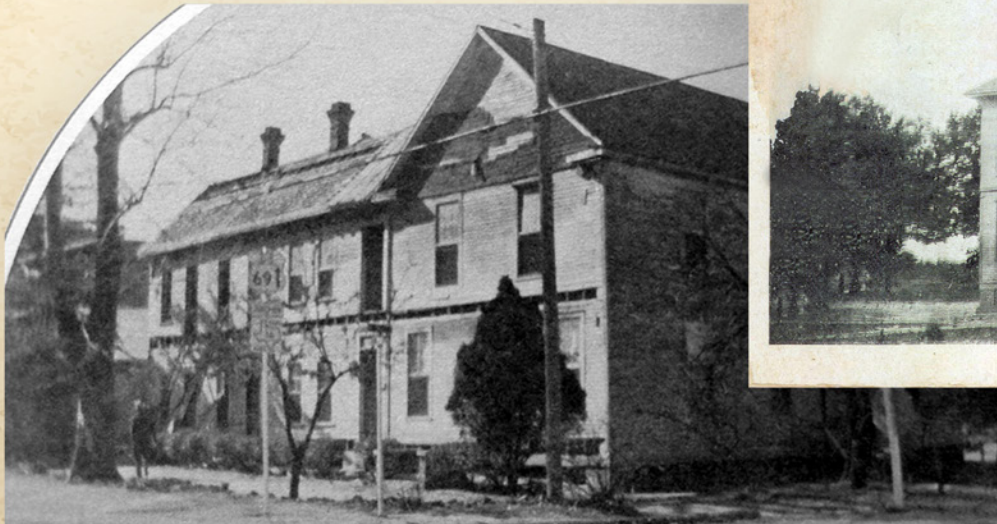
The Drew Smiths, Thomas Barrons, Sarah Barron, Elizabeth Starnes, Martin Starnes, Marth Morris, Annie Tucker, George Pattersons, and Billy Gowens, to enter into a sacred covenant:

“Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour... we do now, in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.”

These 25 to 30 believers gathered in a two-story, 40-by-120-foot building at the corner of North Main and Valley Streets.



School Group - Limerick Hotel



PUBLIC SCHOOL, LINDALE, TEXAS.

The same building that housed their worship also served the community as a public school, spelling bee venue, and debating society—a gathering place for the entire town. They were the only Baptist church in the area, a testimony to God’s leading in this small farming community.



STREET SCENE, LINDALE, TEXAS.

Photo circa 1900, looking west. Notice the red brick Ogburn building on the right, which stands to this day.

Yet in this shared space, these families planted a church with nothing but faith and five foundational goals:

Evangelism, Bible study, singing spiritual hymns, missions, and charitable work.

That simple vision, born in faith, would prove as enduring as the fruit trees that gave Lindale its fragrance.



METHODIST CHURCH, LINDALE, TEXAS.

1889–1904

“Taking Root”

As Lindale grew and the church prospered, the need for their own building became clear. In 1889, members constructed their first dedicated house of worship on land generously donated by Mr. and Mrs. Drew Smith, located at the corner of West South and Henry Streets, where the church has continued to be for many generations.



**“Woodmen of the World”
Funeral Services for Leslie Sykes**

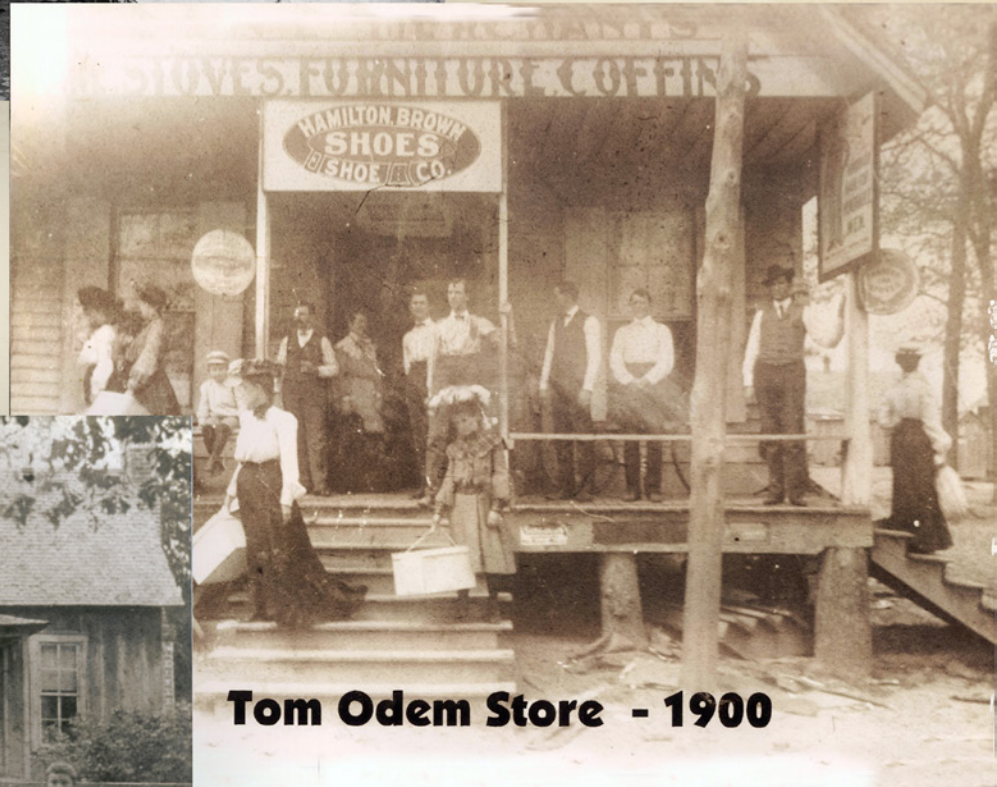
Around the same time, divisions within the larger Baptist movement led to the formation of a second congregation at North College and West Hubbard Streets, called “Central Baptist Church.”

Two Baptist churches now existed in this small town, sharing the same Articles of Faith, the same gospel passion—yet separated by denominational preference.



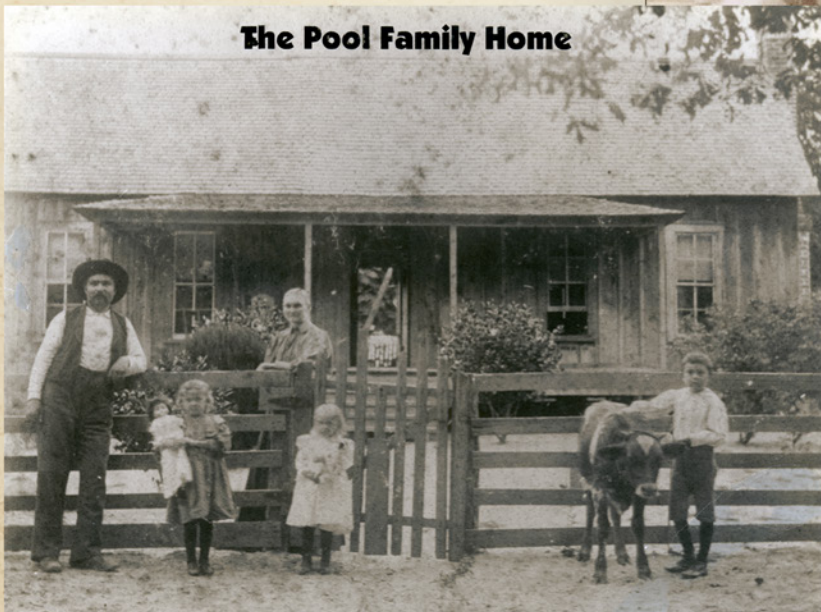
Meanwhile, Lindale itself flourished. Cotton gins dotted the landscape. Canning factories sprang up. The railroad hummed with commerce.

In these decades of growth, two Baptist churches took root side by side, each faithful to its calling, both waiting for a day when they might become one.



Tom Odem Store - 1900

The Pool Family Home



1905–1922

“A Growing Church”

As the twentieth century dawned, Lindale prospered. In 1902, a magazine called Lindale the “Beautiful Little Berry Queen.” Peaches, plums, strawberries, and blackberries filled the orchards.

Refrigeration cars—sometimes seventy-five to one hundred per summer—carried these fruits to markets across the nation. The Lindale Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, organized in 1898, coordinated shipments. Cotton gins operated at full capacity. The Star Canning Company processed the harvest.



Rev. G. E. Ellis (1910–1914)
and his wife



Henry Pool Home circa 1900

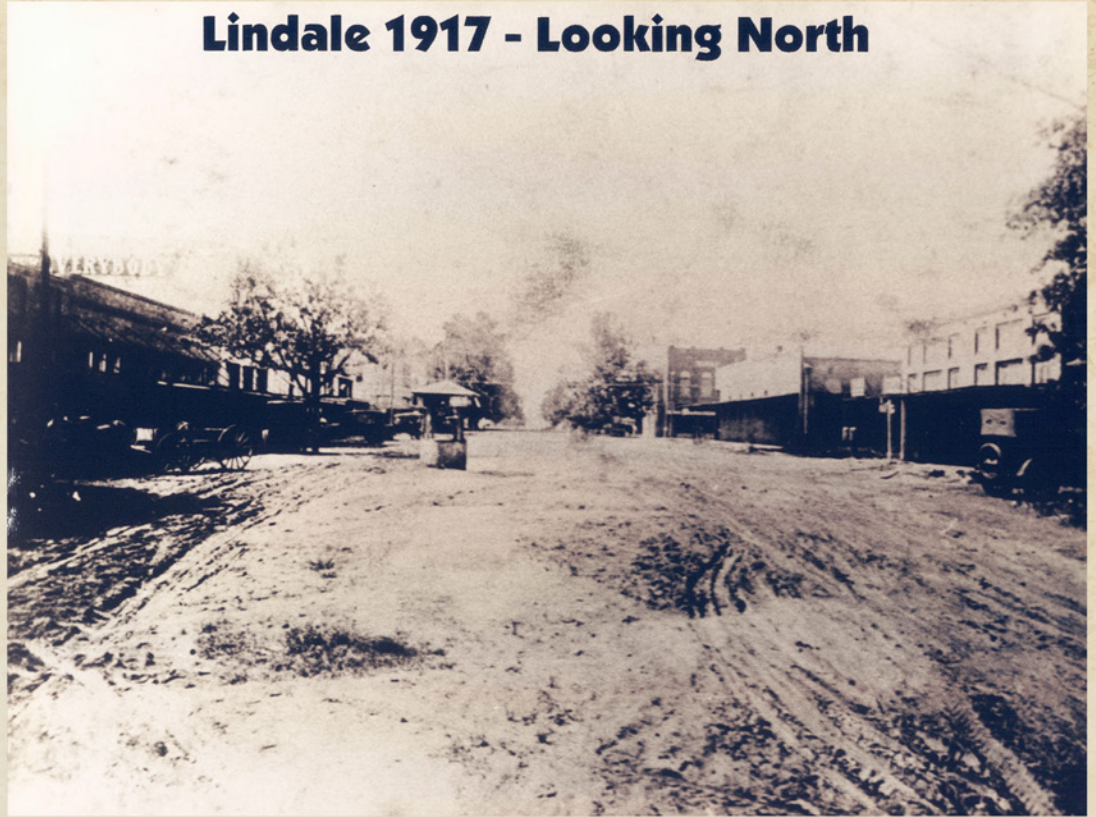


Waiting for Train - 1909

Lindale 1917 - Looking North

In 1905, First Baptist Church built a new sanctuary—a larger structure with tall Gothic spires.

This represented not just growth in numbers, but confidence in the future. From 1910 to 1914, Rev. G.E. Ellis provided faithful pastoral leadership, guiding the church through this dynamic period of expansion and spiritual vitality. By 1920, the building was remodeled and updated, refreshed for the generations pressing forward.



Dr. Richard Kirgan, a pastor in later years, observed that the founding families came from rural and small-town backgrounds, and they had planted a church with roots as deep as the cotton fields themselves.

Yet Central Baptist Church, across town, continued its own ministry—two congregations in unresolved tension, united in faith, separated by circumstance.

1923

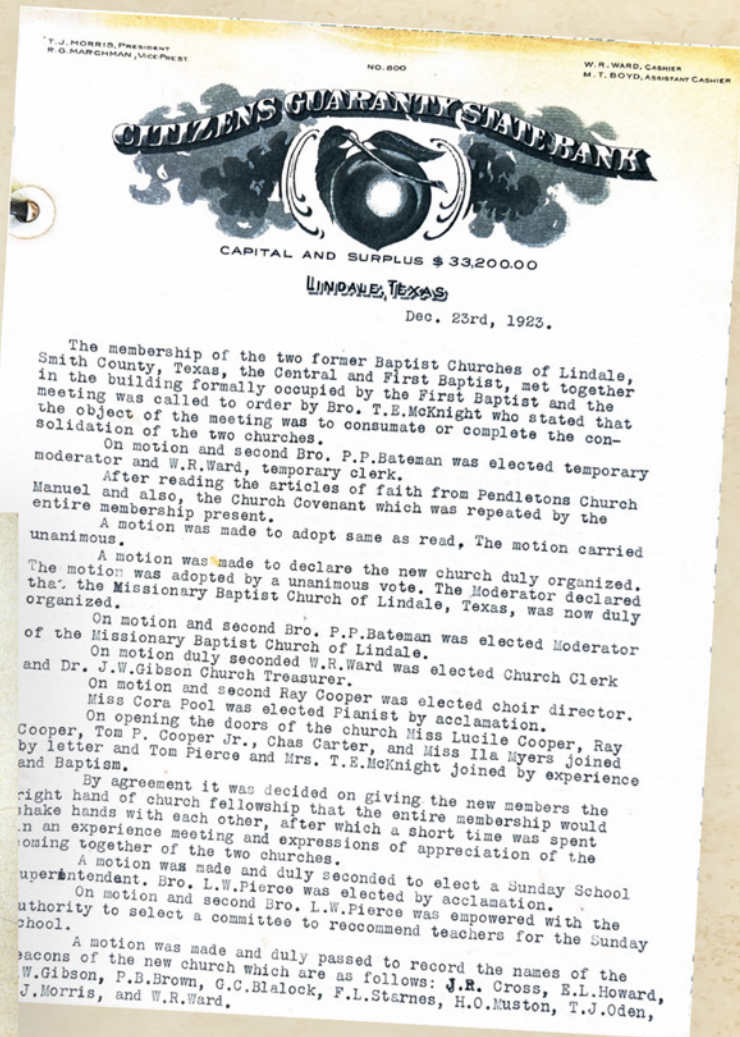
“Two Become One”

In 1923, something remarkable happened. The two Baptist churches passed resolutions to consolidate—not a merger imposed by necessity, but a reconciliation born of prayer. The resolution stated plainly:

“The cause which brought about the separation of Lindale Baptists into these two said organized churches were not personal, neither a difference of faith nor doctrines, but merely a preference in General Bodies.”



CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH, LINDALE, TEXAS.



The motion was made by Lenis Pierce, superintendent of FBC's Sunday School and owner of the Star Canning Company, seconded by W.T. Biles.

Tom Harvin credited Pierce with holding the church together through heated discussions, “Boy you talk about good, he knew how to hold a meeting. I’ve gotten up and walked out of meetings. I didn’t know Christian people talked to one another like that. The two factions, boy, they got at it.”



Unknown Worker - Lindale Canning



**l/r Dr. C.E. Hall & Thomas Jefferson Morris
Morris Drug Store on E. Hubbard**



Loading Produce - Star Canning Company

Pierce's leadership transformed potential division into unity. That Sunday, the merger passed with harmony. Esther Pierce recalled: "There were some in the church kind of set in their ways, but that Sunday the merger passed, they were so harmonious."

The consolidated congregation took the name "Missionary Baptist Church of Lindale, Texas."

Under deacons J. Cross, E.L. Howard, Dr. Wali Gibson, P.B. Brown, G.C. Blaylock, F. Starnes, H.O. Muston, Tom Oden, Tom Morris, and W.R. Ward, one people gathered in one place.

1923–1944

“Through the Fire”

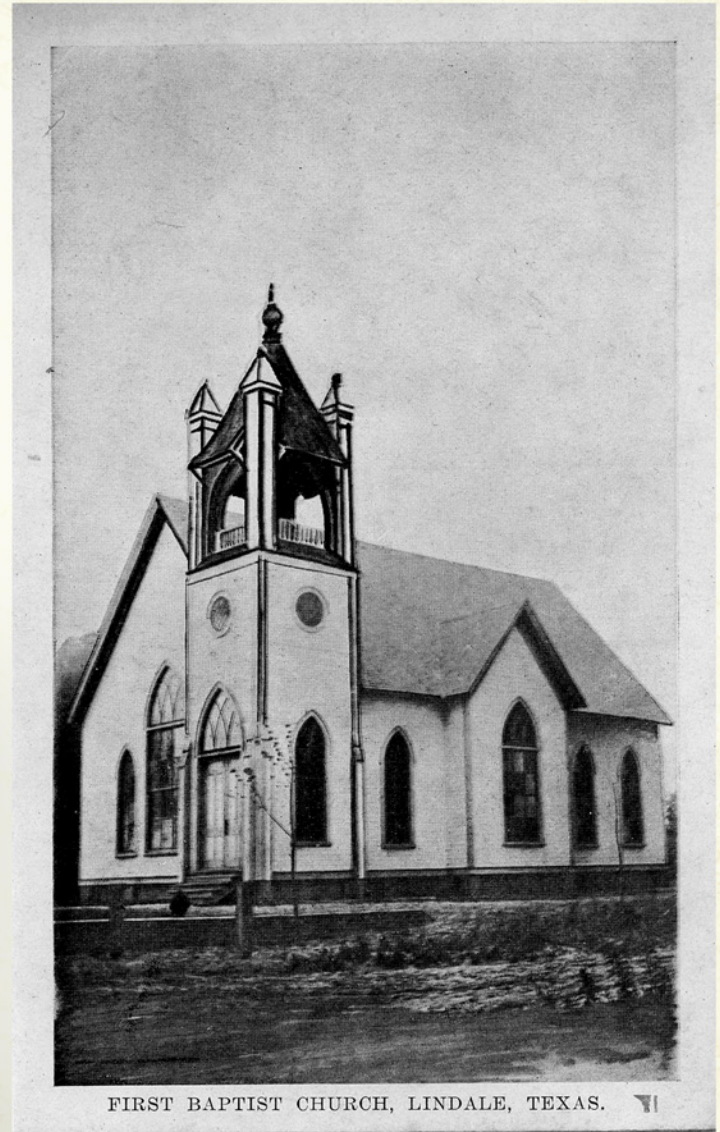
In November 1942, as the nation reeled from Pearl Harbor, the church building on Henry Street caught fire.

“I had a friend named Royce Brazeale, and we were big bird hunters,” Tom Harvin recalled. “We were both fixin’ to go in the service. Bird season didn’t open till the first of December, but a friend in the country said, ‘I know you boys are going in the service, so if you want to hunt some birds out here, have at it.’ It was on a Sunday afternoon.”

Later, when they got into town, they saw the fire. Struck in his conscience for hunting on a Sunday, Harvin cried, ‘My God, Royce, we’ve burned up the Baptist church for bird hunting on Sunday!’



Lindale High School Basketball Team, 1930



Tom Harvin watched in horror as the flames consumed the structure that had sheltered his congregation for nearly twenty years. “I mean, it went to the ground. We didn't have a fire department then. Everybody grabbed a bucket, but there was no way.”

Yet the congregation did not scatter. While smoke rose from the ashes and sons of Lindale boarded trains for distant battlefields, the Missionary Baptist Church moved to Lindale High School. For almost two years, they worshiped in hallways.



Lindale Train Depot - 1940



PRESENTED BY THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS
OF THE 1949 CLASS:

HARLAN HALL
PAULINE BLOW
DOROTHY BOYNTON
BILL BROWN

TOM BREWSTER HAROLD LOVING
SUE BROWN JOYCE BAILEY
MARTHA LYON BENJIE HOLBROOK
WAYNE GILBERT

BETTY FLEMING
JOYCE VEIGHT
ARLISS MALLORY
JAMES MCCLENNY

In 1943, they affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and reclaimed the name “First Baptist Church of Lindale.”

December 1944 brought a new building—brown brick, sturdy, hopeful—built on land purchased from Forest Jarman, a gift that enabled the congregation’s future. In a nation at war, in a town that had lost much, this congregation declared: We will build. We will worship. We will endure.

1944–1963

“The Brown Brick Years”

For nearly two decades, the brown brick sanctuary became the heart of First Baptist Church. The building that opened in December 1944 was elegant in simplicity—a larger sanctuary at the north end of the lot, a fellowship hall at the south end, both facing west, connected by a passage with Sunday school rooms and a kitchen. The fellowship hall was constructed on land that was bought from Forest Jarman, where his hog pen used to be.



Rev. Harry LaGrone
(1963–1966)





James B. Rutledge
(1966–1971)

These were the years when families returned from war, when babies were born by the dozens, when Sunday school rooms filled with children's energy. The congregation grew, and Tom Harvin recalled that "if we had 225 back then, we had a big day."

Pastors like W.A. Kelley, Harry LaGrone, and James Rutledge became fixtures in the community. A parsonage rose where the old Henry Street building had burned. Life was woven into these walls. Sunday mornings brought the faithful. The fellowship hall hosted church dinners.

By 1964, as the building neared its twentieth year, it was renovated and redecored, refreshed for the next generation pressing toward the future.



1964–1974

“Together We Build”

As the congregation continued to grow, the need for more educational and recreational space became urgent. In 1969, the church purchased Aubrey Starnes’ “Tater House”—a potato shed—and transformed it into a vital education center. Over the next several years, the church acquired additional properties and expanded its footprint on the Lindale landscape. By the early 1970s, the congregation had outgrown the brown brick sanctuary. The Sunday school was packed. Something had to change.



Pastor Bob Roberts (1971–1974) and the Long Range Planning Committee brought a bold recommendation. The October 1972 newsletter captured the moment: “The members...voted this past Wednesday night to build a new auditorium.” The vote was unanimous. Not a single dissent. Roberts reflected with gratitude: “Only the spirit of God could have enabled the church to have such a spirit of unity in making such a decision.”





First Baptist raised all the money before breaking ground. Members gave sacrificially. The community rallied. Under architect Adam Bliss from Dallas, a new sanctuary took shape—red brick with a white steeple and columns, facing East Hubbard Street.

On February 28, 1974, a significant and memorable moment occurred when the steeple was finally raised—a symbol of the congregation's faithful labor.

As the Lindale News observed that winter, "Neither rain, nor fog, nor sleet, nor ice—all of which were in the local weather picture this past week—could stop work on the new Auditorium of the First Baptist Church of Lindale."



1975–1985

“Beyond These Walls”



The new sanctuary was dedicated in November 1974, but the congregation’s vision extended far beyond its doors. Under Dr. Richard Kirgan—who arrived in 1979 as the 39th pastor and served until 1987—the church began to reach into the community in new ways.

In 1982, a two-story education building rose, representing a strategic commitment to children’s ministry and spiritual formation. During these formative years, the church invested deeply in shaping the next generation through vital youth ministries.

ACTEENS brought missions education and discipleship to teen girls in grades 7–12, earning them a crown, scepter, cape, and pin as tangible symbols of their dedication. Royal Ambassadors equipped boys for spiritual leadership. Girls in Action provided additional avenues for young women to grow in faith and service. These programs were living expressions of the church’s covenant commitment to the rising generation.





In 1985, the church purchased three storefront buildings facing East Hubbard Street—the Priest Buildings—where the old Morris Drug Store, Durham Mallory’s Grocery Store, and Pierce’s Clothing Store had served the community. These buildings became ministry spaces for young people.

That same year, the church acquired the Star Canning Company property. The plans called for youth ministry, but circumstances led elsewhere. The property was traded to the Lindale Fire Department for the old fire station building across from the main sanctuary. What had been a place of emergency response became a place of spiritual ministry and mission work. This building also housed “Friendship Company,” and eventually became home to the Texas Baptist Men ministry. The walls of the sanctuary were alive with worship, but the heart of the church extended into the streets of Lindale.



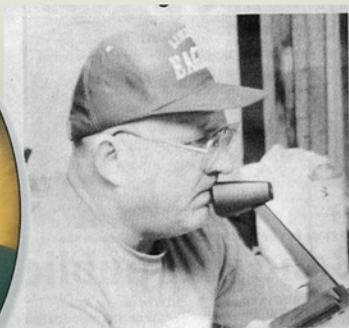
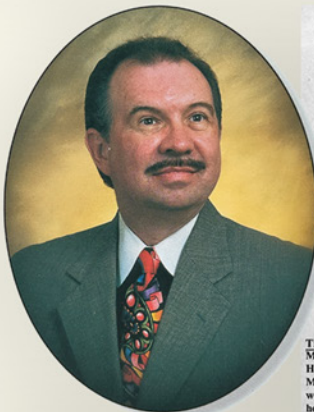
1986–1998

“Reaching the Community”

The 1990s brought new pastoral leadership and fresh vision. In 1995, the congregation mourned the sudden loss of beloved youth minister Tom Morman—a grief that touched the whole community and drew the church closer.

The following year, in 1996, Dr. Denny Autrey became pastor with a powerful message of grace: *“God is good all the time, and that all the time, God is good.”*

Under his leadership, the church launched a financial faith program called “Revealing God’s Glory,” deepening the congregation’s trust in God’s provision.



THE LINDALE TIMES SALUTE-OF-THE-WEEK: TOM MORMAN
Morman is the longtime voice of Lindale football to the fans in the stands. His love for Lindale and its youth can be seen through his career as Minister of Youth at First Baptist Church in Lindale, and his volunteer work as past president of the Athletic Booster club as well as announcing home football games.





During these years, ACTEENS continued to flourish, attending IMPACT at Baylor University annually and leading Vacation Bible School at Pool Park in 1986. The church's ministry continued to expand in compassion and reach.

The Texas Baptist Men ministry, operating from the properties on Hubbard Street, engaged church members in work projects and mission endeavors. These years demonstrated that a growing church must grow not only in numbers but in the breadth of its heart for those the world might overlook.

The congregation began to dream: a Multi-Ministry Center that would consolidate worship, ministry, fellowship, and outreach. By faith and faithfulness, by 1999, the dream would become reality.



1999–2009

“New Century, New Facilities”

In November 1999, the Multi-Ministry Center was dedicated—a magnificent building with a gym, professional kitchen, office space, youth center, walking track, and classrooms. The cost: \$2.2 million, paid in full by 2007. Most remarkably, this new facility was built on the former site of the old brown brick building—the very ground where the congregation had worshiped since 1944.

The Fleming Feed and Seed property became a 200-car parking lot. The congregation added a second Sunday service. The sanctuary was extensively renovated. The Spanish mission continued to grow. In 2004, Dr. Denny Autrey left to lead the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Houston.



Tom & Jennifer Buck,
Dallas, Madison & Jackson





In March 2006, Tom Buck arrived from Riverside Baptist Fellowship in Florida, where he had served as senior pastor for twelve years. Buck brought a conviction that would shape the next era:

“Although many churches experiment with countless models...I believe that the Gospel must be what shapes and evaluates everything the church does. Faithfulness to the Gospel is the ultimate measure of success.”



“A successful church is one that is Christ-centered to the core and Word-driven in everything it does.”



2010–2019

“Committed to the Word”

Under Pastor Tom Buck’s leadership, First Baptist Church deepened its commitment to expository preaching and biblical teaching. A new two-story addition to the children’s education building created a comprehensive Education Center. New adult Sunday school classrooms were filled with groups studying the Bible seriously. An expanded nursery signaled commitment to young families.

This vision extended into worship itself. Songs were chosen not for musical style but for theological truth. The two worship services were united around a commitment to multi-generational worship and no longer divided by style.

The church’s identity was increasingly shaped by a Word-centered vision and a conviction that Christ is revealed through careful, faithful exposition of Scripture.

The church covenant was renewed around four pillars: *Worship, Fellowship, Serve, and Impact*—all flowing from a deep love for God’s Word and God’s kingdom.



WORSHIP



FELLOWSHIP



SERVE



IMPACT



More uniquely, First Baptist Church became a destination for pastors and church leaders across the region. The church began hosting Expository Workshops—two-day gatherings where pastors learned to “rightly handle the word of truth” by studying specific books of Scripture. These workshops dug into hermeneutics, exegesis, and sermon preparation. Participants came to understand the importance of faithful interpretation.



2020–2026

“150 Years and Counting”



In 2021, First Baptist Church undertook another renovation. The Worship Center—the sanctuary serving since 1974—was stripped to the studs. Every wall came down. Every system was replaced. The building was reborn.

On the rededication day in 2022, something remarkable happened. Bob Roberts Sr., the man who had overseen the sanctuary’s original construction nearly fifty years before, stood in the renovated space. Having lived a lifetime of ministry, he witnessed the fruits of his faithfulness come full circle. The building was renewed and ready for another generation.

First Baptist Church of Lindale approaches its 150th anniversary shaped by faithfulness. The covenant spoken in spring 1876 echoes still.



Jackie Bledsoe and his twelve families planted a church without knowing they were planting for the ages. Through fire and rebuilding, through mergers and missions, through war and change, the gospel remained central. From the fragrant spring of 1876, when a church that began with 25-30 people, now numbering nearly 900 members, the five goals remain: evangelism, Bible study, singing spiritual hymns, missions, and charitable work.

Our same gospel conviction remains. First Baptist enters its next 150 years Christ-centered to the core, Word-driven in everything.



The Next 150 Years

In the spring of 1876, twelve families could not have imagined us. They simply made a covenant and kept it. They gathered. They gave. They planted what they would never see harvested.

That is the most sobering truth of our 150th anniversary: almost every gift we now enjoy was planted by someone who would not live to use it. The Drew Smiths donated land for a building they would scarcely worship in. Forest Jarmin sold the lot for a sanctuary he would not see filled for long. Bob Roberts and a unanimous congregation in 1972 raised every dollar of a new auditorium before breaking ground — then handed the keys to generations not yet born.

The question facing us in 2026 is not whether First Baptist Church of Lindale will celebrate its 300th anniversary. That is in God's hands. The question is whether the people now sitting in these pews will live the way our founders lived — planting trees whose shade we will never sit in.



What might that look like?

It looks like teaching our children the Word so deeply that they teach it to children we will never meet. It looks like giving sacrificially now — to retire debt, fund missions, and free a future congregation from burdens we could have carried. It looks like walking across the room to disciple one young believer, because in the year 2176, that person's great-grandchildren may be the deacons of this church. It looks like reaching the new neighbors of Lindale, whatever language they speak, with the same gospel that bound twelve families together under one covenant. It looks like marriages that endure, families that pray, and faith that is handed down on purpose.

Jackie Bledsoe planted a church without knowing he was planting for the ages. Our task is harder — because we know. We have read the story. We have seen the fruit. We have no excuse for small dreams or shallow faith.

So here is the challenge: live this year and this Sunday as if the next 150 years depended on it. Because, by God's grace, they just might.

