

Calvary Baptist Church

3200 Kingston Pike
Knoxville, Tennessee

- Denomination/Affiliation: Southern Baptist Convention
- Year Established: 1911
- Worship Style: Blended

Calvary Baptist Church is a Christ-centered congregation located in Knoxville, Tennessee. We are committed to the authority of Scripture, the proclamation of the Gospel, and the spiritual growth of believers. Our church family values biblical preaching and teaching, missions and meaningful fellowship and connection across generations. We are a commuter church whose members come from throughout Knox County as well as surrounding counties.

Our Mission & Objectives

Mission Statement:

To lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ by sharing in a relevant way the message of the Gospel and creating a vibrant environment of authentic worship while encouraging genuine community with one another.

Theme Word: Connect

“And he (Jesus) is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be the preeminent.”—Colossians 1:18

Objectives:

- To be a dynamic spiritual organism empowered by the Holy Spirit to share Christ with as many people as possible in our church, community, and throughout the world.
- To be a worshiping fellowship, experiencing an awareness of God, recognizing His person, and responding in obedience to His leadership.
- To experience an increasingly meaningful fellowship with God and fellow believers.
- To help people experience a growing knowledge of God and man.
- To be a church that ministers unselfishly to people in the community and the world in Jesus' name.
- To be a church with the purpose of being Christ-like in our daily living by emphasizing total commitment of life, personality, and possessions to the lordship of Christ.

What We Believe

Calvary Baptist Church affirms:

- The Bible as the inspired, inerrant Word of God
- Salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ
- The Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20)
- Believer's baptism by immersion
- The autonomy of the local church

(For more information on what we believe visit our webpage <https://knoxcalvary.com/welcome/what-we-believe> .)

Our Community

Knoxville is a growing city in East Tennessee, home to families, university students, retirees, and professionals. The area offers a mix of suburban neighborhoods, historic districts, and expanding developments. Our community presents both tremendous ministry opportunities and spiritual need.

We are committed to engaging our neighbors with the Gospel and serving the community through outreach and missions..

Here are our community demographics within a 3 mile radius [web address]

Here are our community demographics within a 5 mile radius [web address]

For more information about Knoxville, go to <https://www.visitknoxville.com/>

Church Ministries

Current ministries include:

- Sunday School
- Small Groups
- Children's Ministry
- Youth Ministry
- College Ministry
- Impact Ministry (adults with intellectual development disabilities)
- Music & Worship Ministry

- Marriage Builder's Ministry
- Men's and Women's Ministries
- Community Outreach
- Missions (local, national, international)

Congregational Strengths

- Commitment to biblical preaching and teaching
- Faithful, supportive membership
- Strong volunteer involvement
- Healthy financial stewardship
- Multi-generational church family

Areas for Continued Growth

- Increased outreach and evangelism
- Deeper discipleship pathways
- Engaging with young families and young adults
- Expanding community presence

Church Governance & Leadership

Calvary Baptist Church is pastor led, deacon served, and congregation approved. The pastor works alongside deacons, other ministry leaders, and committees to shepherd and lead the church effectively.

A Brief History of Calvary

Rose Avenue School (Staub school)



The Rose Avenue School, later renamed Staub School, stood on what is now Andy Holt Avenue near today's tennis courts. Visionary leaders met there to discuss forming a church for the growing neighborhood, and a non-denominational congregation soon began meeting in the school. Concerns about church-state separation led the group to relocate to a rented house on Cornell Avenue, near the present-day Phi Sigma Kappa house.

Established 1911

Seeing west Knoxville as a mission field, First Baptist Church offered support to the young congregation. With mostly Baptist members, the church reorganized as Calvary Baptist Church on January 1, 1911. This support enabled the calling of its first full-time pastor, Rev. Cates, and the construction of its first building on 11th Street (later 19th Street).

Growing West Knoxville

West Knoxville developed into a diverse neighborhood, with prominent homes on its main avenues and more modest houses for professors, working people, and railroad families. By 1920, Calvary had outgrown its building and purchased land for a larger church. Members raised funds in creative ways, from a 50-cent gift by the pastor's son to plays, sales, and "measuring socials." When construction began, members also provided much of the labor themselves, with men working on the building and women serving meals at the site.

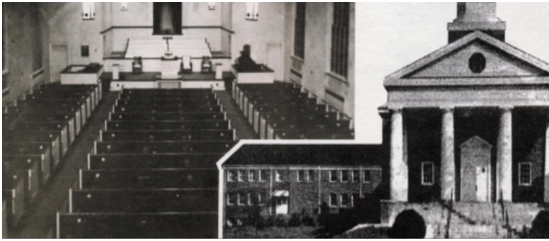


Built on the Rock

In 1921, 130 members moved into a new brick building at 18th Street and Yale Avenue, on the former site of the "campus rock." The church featured a sanctuary with a small balcony, classrooms, and its first bathroom.

Calvary became both the spiritual and social center of the neighborhood, hosting home socials, "tacky parties," ice cream socials, and churchyard gatherings lit by a train headlight so children could play after dark.

As the neighborhood grew, so did Calvary, reaching 310 members by 1941. To accommodate this growth, a classroom addition was completed at the rear of the sanctuary in July 1942.



Birthday Expansion

Members contributed through a “birthday offering” and purchased an adjoining lot for expansion. With a bank loan, construction began on a new sanctuary seating 750 and additional educational space. The building was dedicated in 1951. Curiously, the 30-year-old old sanctuary was torn down and replaced with an open yard.

Reaching University Students

In the 1950s, Calvary remained a neighborhood church while building a strong mission outreach to the University of Tennessee. Each fall, new students—especially Baptists—often joined by transferring membership letters from home churches. Students became integral to Calvary life, teaching, singing in the choir, leading summer camps, pursuing ministry, and forming lifelong families.

(Right) Aerial view of the old West Knoxville neighborhood, home to many early Calvary members, including railroad workers and a boarding house for railroad men at the L&N yard (bottom right).



Campus Expansion

Calvary’s growth came to a halt in the early 1960s when the University of Tennessee expanded westward, acquiring by eminent domain 131 acres of homes, stores, a school, and Calvary’s 13-year-old sanctuary. The neighborhood vanished almost overnight, scattering most of Calvary’s members.

(Left) Calvary during demolition, the last building in the neighborhood to be torn down.

A New Location

Calvary had one main goal in relocating: stay as close as possible to the University of Tennessee to continue its ministry to students. Though some suggested moving to the growing suburbs of Bearden and west Knox County, Calvary remained committed to staying near campus.

The church purchased property at 3200 Kingston Pike, where a small group of families began again in a smaller building. From there, Calvary grew, welcoming new families and UT students, becoming more metropolitan than neighborhood in character.



Building Expansion

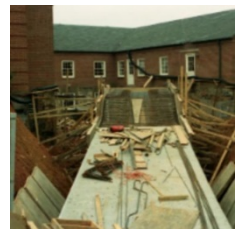
By the mid-1970s, Calvary once again faced space limitations, with two Sunday morning services filled. Trusting God's provision, the church chose to build debt-free rather than take out a loan—just as members had done in 1921.

In 1980, the *Together We Build* program launched with a banquet and 24-hour prayer chapel. The highest fundraising goal—nicknamed the “Hallelujah Goal”—was \$350,000, which consultants believed was the maximum possible. Yet over the course of the project, nearly \$3 million was given. Members sacrificially sold jewelry, boats, and cars, and God provided—often just in time to keep construction moving.

The Calvary Tunnel

Even with the new 1,200-seat sanctuary and fellowship hall, educational space quickly became limited. During this time, Calvary was blessed with rent-free use of the nearby Dulin and Taylor Houses—formerly part of the Dulin Gallery of Art. Dulin House served single adults, while Taylor House housed the youth ministry. These properties also provided much-needed parking.

Because on-site parking was scarce, six buses ran continuously each Sunday from remote lots at Western Plaza and the UT Agricultural Campus. To help solve the problem, Calvary purchased three houses and a vacant lot across Kingston Pike. In 1988, new parking lots were developed, and a tunnel was constructed beneath Kingston Pike—completed in 1991—connecting the north and south campuses and adding 200 parking spaces.



Calvary's history is so much more than buildings and tunnels and other material milestones. Calvary's real and enduring history is about people and worship and service to God. So much has been left out of this abbreviated history – so many names of pastors and deacons and teachers and members who have served faithfully over the years. So many ministry outreaches to neighborhood, city, country and world! So many people who have come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ! So many children who have grown up at Calvary! So many who have matured in the faith here! So many who have sent and supported missionaries – and gone to the mission field themselves! So many who have been called into ministry while at Calvary and been recommended for seminary by Calvary! And legions of students who have grown, served, made friends and even met their spouses here. They are Calvary's true history - Calvary's legacy in the faith! And Calvary's future as well.