

One Faith
One Hope

150
Years

The History of First Baptist Church
of Fayetteville, Arkansas

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ONE HOPE, ONE FAITH, ONE HUNDRED FIFTY YEARS

INTRODUCTION

My memories of First Baptist Church run throughout my entire life. I recall sitting in the old domed building, noticing the light as it filtered through the magnificent stained glass. Week after week, the service opened with the hymn, “Holy, Holy, Holy.” Unconsciously, I was introduced to an amazing theological foundation as we sang all four verses of that song. About an hour later, a rousing Doxology signaled the close of the service. For years I misunderstood one word and thought we were reminding “all preachers here below” to praise God.

Five of those preachers have offered praise of God during my lifetime. This history naturally unfolds through the names of the 32 ministers who led this congregation, forming the outline of these 150 years. Occasionally, an individual member’s name appears in the context of some ministry performed years ago. The History Committee is well aware of the contributions of current and recent members, but preferred the focus remain on gloryifying God rather than the people who walk among us. And so for that reason, credit was not always given where credit was due, assuming the men and women who have served in this congregation intended to honor God and not themselves.

A few years after the congregation moved from the round auditorium to the more modern facility, I stood before those gathered to acknowledge my own need of a Savior. The evangelist with those coats of many colors delivered a straightforward gospel message on Thursday night, bringing to mind all that I’d been taught. A few days later, in his study, my pastor carefully reviewed my decision. “God so loved the world means God so loved you,” he explained. My third-grade teacher gave me the opportunity to explain it again the day after my baptism. Inviting me to stand before the class and explain what had happened the day before, she encouraged me to carry my newfound faith into everyday life.

Discipleship in the home of my next pastor strengthened my faith through high school and college years. A capable staff offered biblical teaching that was “profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.” We practiced what they preached as they equipped us for service then and now.

When asked about the ministries of former pastors, members often recall the minister who performed a wedding or conducted the funeral of a loved one. Those ties to the past are present in my own life as I recall the minister who prayed at our wedding at First Baptist. I am grateful to the pastor who ministered to my grief at the death of a grandmother who modeled Christian living. Then I appreciated him all the more when we struggled with the death of my father, knowing what a good friend he had been to Daddy. Whether in desperate times of

loss or when striving to live the Christian life, the kindhearted compassion of a godly pastor is remembered long after the pain subsides or the conflict is resolved. I pray that by reading this history you will also get to know the ministers you could not call by name. If you're like me, you'll find their individual stories reminding you of God's grace through the ages.

The first Baptist church in Fayetteville was formed in the homes of pioneer families. When they traveled by wagon to the new state of Arkansas they continued to practice their faith in God. To understand how fortunate we are to worship freely today, it is worth recalling the sacrifice of those nine individuals who persevered through the years of the Civil War and the desolation that followed. In a town overwhelmed by divided loyalties, they maintained their unity in Christ to preserve this church. Their grandparents could remember a time when religious freedom was threatened. That inherited knowledge strengthened their resolve and serves as an example for us to remember why we gather. Not all that transpires in a Baptist church honors God. Some of the details included from the minutes of meetings reveal a struggle to live at peace with one another. From deciding the color of the carpet to finding the money to bail out indebted mission boards to opening the doors to all races, each proposal, no matter how important, tested their fellowship. Every move from one meeting place to the next reminded members to remain focused on worshipping God.

This history records the incidental as well as the monumental acts of service involving a succession of 32 pastors through a century and a half. Add to that the personal contributions of countless individuals and particular ministers of First Baptist Church of Fayetteville in your own life. Collectively, these remembrances point to the faith we have in common and the hope we have in Christ.

Tammi Reed Ledbetter

November 18, 2003

CHAPTER ONE

The story of First Baptist Church of Fayetteville, Arkansas, is a testimony to the faith of nine people who gathered in a home in 1854 to start a new church. More than that, it represents the generations that followed who shared a common faith in Jesus Christ and followed his command to make disciples and teach them to observe all that he commanded. Outside circumstances did not destroy their faith. The Civil War conflict reduced their meeting place to rubble. Several economic crises threatened their ability to give. In a changing culture, some residents cared less about attending church. Whatever the challenge, the congregation determined to place their hope in the certainty of God's faithfulness. It was upon that basis that settlers traveled to the Arkansas frontier, delivering a message of hope.

Arkansas had been a state only 18 years in 1854 when the first Baptist church was organized in Fayetteville. Fifty years earlier the Stars and Stripes had flown for the first time atop the flagpole at Arkansas Post. At that time a Spanish commandant figured the number of white residents at 368. Quapaw, Caddo, Osage, Shawnee, Delaware, and Cherokee had already taken up residence. It was a desolate place and Spanish and French domination prevented public worship by Protestants. Only the most daring Baptists ventured into this wilderness, occasionally delivering a sermon in the hope of seeing some soul saved.

The progress of Baptists was much further developed in the states established prior to the 1800s. Baptists escaping persecution had sailed to the New World by the early 1600s and by mid-century were organizing new churches. During the Great Awakening of the next century their numbers swelled as religious fervor spread south and west. President Thomas Jefferson nearly doubled the land holdings of the country with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. This drew thousands of new residents to the region from which 13 more states would be carved. By 1810 there were 1,062 people in the region to be known as Arkansas. A decade later the population soared to 14,255. Still, northwest Arkansas remained undeveloped. It was 1819 before the first white man viewed those hills.

In 1818 the first Baptist church was organized in Lawrence County. As the state moved from territorial status to statehood the influence of Christianity grew as new settlers, primarily from the states of Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama, introduced mostly Protestant denominations. An educated guess by one historian estimated the number of Baptists in the state growing from a few hundred in 1835 to 810 in 1840 and 11,341 by 1861. The number of churches grew from 37 in 1840 to 321 in 1861.



One of the earliest Baptist churches in the area was a congregation formed near the Black Oak community that eventually became known as Baptist Ford, meeting near Greenland.

Presbyterians were the first to organize in what soon would become Washington County, settling in the Cane Hill area in 1826. Reverend John Buchanan led in starting their first church. Naturally, the advancement of a particular denomination depended on the preferences of those settling that region. Often immigrants would carry a letter from a prior church certifying membership and good standing in that fellowship.

Baptists established churches in Washington County by 1830 and formed the first Baptist association in 1833. Methodists followed in 1832, then Episcopalian and Christian churches in 1848. One of the earliest Baptist churches in the area was a congregation formed near the Black Oak community. Like most early churches in the state, the membership drew from a broad region—as far away as what is now Springdale to the north, West Fork to the south, and Richland to the east. After meeting in homes, a schoolhouse, and a log house, they moved to an area south of Greenland that became known as Baptist Ford with the placement of the Baptist church near a ford of the west fork of White River.¹

The oldest living member of First Baptist Church of Fayetteville, 105-year old Pearl Spyres, recalled attending this church with her parents. Similar churches soon organized near Wedington and War Eagle. A Baptist church established in 1847 drew some of the original Baptist Ford members to a location closer to their homes north of Fayetteville. Known first as The United Baptist Church of Christ,

it is the oldest Southern Baptist church in the local association still operating today, having changed its name to Friendship Baptist Church.² The congregation recently relocated to new facilities on Highway 412 East.

Burford Williams, a longtime member of First Baptist Church of Fayetteville, described the impact of churches like Baptist Ford after interviewing Mrs. Spyres. "Such churches had a telling influence in communities. Life centered around them. Revivals, baptisms, dinners-on-the-grounds, whole families going home with other families for dinner, just shaking hands and 'howdying' with other people filled a great need for a socially hungry people. These were blessings added unto the greater blessings of hearing God's Word preached."³

Soon after the Baptist Ford church was built, women gathered to quilt in the new log church. They raised money for missions by selling eggs for five to ten cents a dozen, often donating a few hens as well. "These, plus many simple tasks were undertaken in Christ's name that he might be glorified at home and around the world," Mrs. Williams explained.⁴

Baptists coming from other more developed states longed for the kind of fellowship and preaching that these early churches provided. However, many areas lacked ministers who would attend to the spiritual needs of the early settlers. As many as half of the early residents of Washington County came from Tennessee, and some of the Baptists among them wrote home, imploring friends and relatives to send missionaries and evangelists to northwest Arkansas to organize and pastor new churches.

"A defining feature of Arkansas Baptists' character was their independence and individualism," explained an Arkansas Baptist historian. Aware that Arkansas was settled by individuals breaking off from the main paths to the west, he said, "The tension has been to maintain the independence of individuals while recognizing that as an individual you can't achieve all you want."⁵

Ministers from nearby states heeded the call for help as the number of Baptists increased in the 1840s. After making this journey, pioneers entered a grassy prairie with timber growing along the branches of the springs. There were no developed thoroughfares; merely paths over which horses and wagons traveled, carrying the new settlers.

One of those ministers who felt compelled to head to Arkansas was 51-year



Pearl Spyres recalled her family attending the church that met in the building used by Baptist Ford nearly a century ago. She celebrated her 105th birthday in 2003, the oldest member of First Baptist Church of Fayetteville.

old Chesley Hood Bootright of east Tennessee, traveling with his wife and six children. He kept a detailed journal of his progress of three to eighteen miles a day. At one point he remained in southern Missouri for several days due to a three-inch snowfall. For five days in early February, he did not travel due to the “bitter, cold day” and his wife’s sickness.⁶ The Baptist minister found opportunities to preach along the way and delivered 178 tracts for distribution in the areas he visited. Elder Bootright settled in the Buckeye Community on Brush Creek in Madison County in 1850. Two years later he was called to pastor Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church, a newly organized congregation meeting between the communities of Black Oak and Sulphur City, about eight miles southeast of Fayetteville. Elder Bootright labored alongside two men—T. B. Van Horne and John Mayes. A few years later they would join him in forming a new church in Fayetteville.

John and Sarah Mayes had settled on land near the middle fork of White River. Born in Tennessee, Mayes was a farmer and carpenter who became a Christian in 1842, moving to Washington County when he was 37 years of age. There he and his wife, along with nine children would invest their lives for the cause of Christ. John Mayes took his spiritual commitment seriously, accepting a leadership role in the organization of the Mount Zion United Baptist Church on October 9, 1848. Both he and Sarah, along with daughter Martha and son “Zebe” are listed among the charter members.

Though growing in number, Baptists remained separated by the distance between settlements. They formed associations to gain encouragement in the work of spreading the gospel in a frontier land. “Associations promoted benevolent work, primarily education and home missions,” explained the authors of a sesquicentennial history of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.⁷ “Associations provided fellowship, an especially crucial feature in the less populous frontier regions, and provided expository models from which aspiring young preachers might learn.”

Out of the larger Mt. Zion Association of Baptist Churches formed in west central Arkansas and southwest Missouri in 1840 emerged a geographically closer fellowship organized in 1853 as the Fayetteville United Baptist Association. The writer of the history of Washington-Madison Baptist Association observed one could not read the history of churches established in the area “without bowing his head with reverence to those stalwart dedicated preachers who pioneered the Christian path in Arkansas. “ He praised early settlers for dedicating their lives to Christian service in a land of danger and hardships “in order that we might inherit a Christian organization and an example to follow in our Christian development.”⁸

By the time that the paths of Bootright, Van Horne and Mayes crossed, co-operating churches were ready to commission Bootright to serve as a missionary in a nearby region they deemed destitute of the gospel. Men like Prof. Van Horne and Elder Mayes supported him in this venture in 1853.⁹ Together they shared a common faith. By planting a church in Fayetteville they united in a hope that it

would transform the community and ultimately the world. This is the story of one faith and one hope that has endured for over 150 years.

NOTES:

¹ Lloyd O. Warren, "The First Baptist Church Organized in Washington County," *Flashback*, August 2000, 2-17. Dr. Warren is a local authority on the early history of Baptists in northwest Arkansas. Many of the original documents used in his research are stored in the Special Collections of the University of Arkansas Library in Fayetteville and Shiloh Museum of Ozark History in Springdale. The author and First Baptist History Committee are especially indebted to his careful study which greatly aided this work.

² Lloyd O. Warren, "Our Baptist Heritage in Northwest Arkansas," *Flashback*, Flashback, August, 1985, 26-32.

³ Mrs. O. T. (Burford) Williams, "A Backward Glance," An unpublished history of First Baptist Church of Fayetteville through 1971, History Room, Library, First Baptist Church Fayetteville, Ark.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "ABSC commemorates 150th Year in 1998 with book, events," *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*, January 22, 1988, p. 3.

⁶ Ruth B. Parker, "Bootright Family in Madison County," *Madison County Record*, November 25, 1986. Early records from White River Baptist Convention and Arkansas Baptist State Convention use the spelling Bootright and sometimes Bootwright, while Boatwright is the preferred spelling for his descendents and ancestors from Virginia. Longfield Baptist Church in Lake City, Tennessee, which he established, uses the spelling of Boatright. This author has chosen to use the spelling that C. H. Bootright apparently used, based on his reports to the *Tennessee Baptist* on March 25, 1854 and the White River Association Convention October 31, 1854 and Mt. Zion Baptist Church minutes from 1852-1866.

⁷ Fred C. Williams, S. Ray Granade, and Kenneth M. Startup, *A System and a Plan* (Franklin: Providence House Publishes 1998) 6.

⁸ *A History of Our Churches*, (Fayetteville: Washington-Madison Baptist Association 1990) 5.

⁹ In his "History of Mt. Zion Baptist Church," Lloyd O. Warren provides the minutes from the church, including mention of Elder Bootright's appointment as an associational missionary in 1853. He received \$4.25 from the church in 1854 for his work as a "riding missionary." The 1852 minutes indicate he was elected unanimously to serve as pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, followed by T. B. Van Horne in March of 1854, then Elder Bootright in 1855. According to the 1860 minutes, Elder Bootright resigned as pastor due to "feeble state of health." Dr. Warren indicated that he lived until May of 1867 with his obituary included in the minutes of Bentonville Baptist Association.

FIRST QUARTER CENTURY 1854 - 1879				
United States		Arkansas	Baptists	First Baptist
1854		Arkansas College established in Fayetteville		Nine people organize the first Baptist church in Fayetteville
1856				
1858		Fayetteville Female Institute established		
1860			Southern Baptist Theological Seminary opens	
1862	Civil War begins	Arkansas secedes, joins Confederacy		
1864				Civil War disrupts services for three years
1866	Civil War ends	First school district opens in Fayetteville		Church meets in Masonic Hall and homes
1868		Arkansas re-admitted to the Union		
1870	First transcontinental railroad opens	Memphis to Little Rock railroad opens		
1872		University of Arkansas opens		
1874		Population of Fayetteville nears 2,000	Lottie Moon joins her missionary sister in China	
1876	Telephone invented			
1879				First church building completed

CHAPTER TWO

T. B. Van Horne, John Mayes, and C. H. Bootright did not appear to have enough in common to work together in any setting. And yet, the cause of advancing the Kingdom of God in Fayetteville, Arkansas, brought them together. Professor Van Horne was a scholar—a teacher of humanities and languages at a local college who was respected in the community and the state for encouraging education. Mayes had been a farmer in Tennessee who proved himself skilled as a carpenter. As a pioneer preacher in Tennessee, Elder Bootright was described as a minister of great prominence, ability and personal force.¹⁰ At a rural Arkansas church they would worship together and consider how their particular abilities could be used to launch a new congregation in Fayetteville.

“Whatever the facts and figures of the settlement of this beautiful, hilly, wooded area that became Fayetteville, Arkansas, those facts and figures were made by individuals,” remarked Mary Jane Haley in her account of the Fayetteville church’s commitment to missions. More than dry statistical information, she described these early members as “families, white and black, free and slave, who chose to leave their homes to the north and east and settle in a new land.”¹¹

Arkansas Baptist leader J. D. Searcy described the challenge these early Baptists faced prior to organization of the Fayetteville church. “[We] have seen something of their struggles against dense forests, want of roads, swollen streams, wild beasts, want of houses in which to worship, capacity of ministers, and strong opposition of the anti-missionary wing of the denomination.” In the 30 years after the first church was started Arkansas Baptists grew sufficiently to form a statewide organization by 1848, three years after the Southern Baptist Convention was established.

Prof. T. B. Van Horne joined with 16 other Baptists throughout the state to gain a charter for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) about a decade later. However, the lack of easily traveled roads and the absence of railroad lines kept most Baptists in the northern half of the state from traveling to ABSC annual meetings. In addition to the local associations begun earlier, the young Fayetteville church enjoyed fellowship with a regional group known as White River Arkansas Baptist Convention. Churches from Fayetteville all the way east to Batesville cooperated to carry the gospel into what they described as “the destitution of this part of God’s moral vineyard.” They were not in competition with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, but recognized that most of their churches simply could not be present for meetings held south of Little Rock.

A nationwide financial crisis and political turmoil prior to the Civil War

disrupted the northern Arkansas fellowship and they did not resume meeting after 1857. By then improvements in transportation allowed access to annual meetings of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention in central locations. As concerned as they were to have a statewide denominational identity, these new settlers continued to depend on more established Baptists in other states. With half of the Washington County residents migrating from Tennessee, the new Baptist settlers sent word home seeking more preachers and missionaries to establish the faith.

Deacon W. S. Campbell of First Baptist Church analyzed the priority early residents gave to starting new churches after arriving in Fayetteville. "Bible, belief, convictions, rode the lumbering vans of stake drivers. The first gestures of necessity made, and feelings of permanence abiding, songs of praise for blessings arose," he said, describing the various churches organized. "Missionaries like Washburne, Hill, Sawyer, and later, preachers like Carhanan, Buchanan, Hunter, Johnson, Graham, Mayes, Scull, Ewing, Smythe, came with their gospel messages, and enthusiasm, and stirred the people to constitute churches, and erect houses of worship," he wrote.

In 1840 the government reported 425 people living in Fayetteville. In 1850, Prof. T. B. Van Horne emerged as a proponent of education for the enlarging population. The Arkansas College professor requested a charter for an institute that would extend educational opportunity to women, including study of theology in the curriculum.

In that same year, Elder Mayes moved closer to Fayetteville, making the distance to his home church of Mt. Zion much further. His family settled on property that was a quarter of a mile south and east of Governor Yell's homestead near the intersection later identified as College Avenue and Seventh Street.¹² While the Yell home is no longer there, a marker designating the spot remains at the intersection. Another account refers to the house as being visible from Judge David Walker's home on East Mountain, describing it as being at the foot of South Mountain.¹³ Elder Mayes and Prof. Van Horne were anxious to see a Baptist congregation established among the churches already begun by Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, and Disciples of Christ. In just a few years, Elder Bootright would join them in the effort, serving as a missionary for the Fayetteville United Baptist Association where Elder Mayes was the clerk and Prof. Van Horne was the moderator.

After 20 years of gaining "profound respect" in several counties and Baptist associations of Tennessee, Elder Bootright resigned the largest church in that state's Northern Baptist Association. His missionary journey through northwest Arkansas carried him from Madison County to as far west as the Cherokee Indian Nation in Oklahoma. After pastoring briefly at Mt. Zion Baptist Church, he became a missionary for the Fayetteville United Baptist Association in Northwest Arkansas under appointment of the White River Arkansas Baptist Convention.

It was during a meeting of White River Baptist Association at Batesville Baptist Church on November 10, 1854 that Elder Bootright provided a summary

of his labors done during the previous seven months. The program, discovered by a local church historian, provided a firm founding date of August 1854, correcting the often cited, but mistaken dates of either 1857 or 1858 recorded in early histories of the Fayetteville church. Referring to churches that he assisted, Elder Bootright described “one in the vicinity of Fayetteville, organized in August 1854 with nine members, 5 males and 4 females.” He listed, “Elder T. B. Van Horne, its minister and member, who is a teacher in the Arkansas College, at Fayetteville, Professor of Languages, and John Mayes, Deacon and Licentiate.”

The 44-year old Mayes and his wife, Sarah, daughter Martha and son W.Z. “Zebe” were among the charter members of a new congregation to be known as Fayetteville Missionary Baptist Church in August of 1854. They offered their house as one of several homes used for meetings of the new congregation. In addition to the Mayes family and educator T. B. Van Horne, other charter members included cabinetmaker John W. Buie, Mrs. Clara A. Watson, carpenter Edward Peer and Peer’s fiancée, Amanda Boyd. The organizational meeting most often is said to have occurred at the home of Mr. Mayes.¹⁴

Elder Bootright’s detailed annual report accounted for his preaching 80 sermons, delivering 15 exhortations and one address, baptizing 17 people, receiving 20 people by letter, praying with 49 families, making 680 family visits, holding “special conversations” with 86 people, visiting seven churches and 14 stations, administering the Lord’s Supper at five churches, organizing one Sabbath school and four churches, as well as noting that 22 persons professed faith in Christ at the meetings he attended. “For the performance of the submitted report, I thank God,” Elder Bootright added. During this time he received \$5.25 “from my people,” gave 91 volumes and 2,521 pages of tracts, and traveled 2,278 miles.

“All the churches organized with my assistance, are in a locality in a hopeful condition, situated in an intelligent community,” he said, describing the region of Fayetteville. Elder Bootright continued, describing “a dense population around them, and where Baptist principles are evidently advancing over the strong holds of Pedo Hierarchy,” referring to the practice of infant baptism. The insistence on a person being old enough to sincerely profess faith in Jesus Christ before being baptized was a peculiar distinction of Baptists when set against the practice of Presbyterians, Methodists, and Episcopalians who preceded them in Fayetteville.

As an example of just how critically Baptists regarded this doctrine, Missionary Bootright expressed concern that a new Baptist church at nearby Evansville (west of Fayetteville) was “in the midst of a Pedo community, who are beginning to prop themselves and [their] cause, fearing that the few Baptist[s] will demolish their strong holds.” Elder Bootright saw the safeguard against such heresy to be a regular diet of “the sincere milk of the word.” He rejoiced “to see the darkness receding, and a greater oneness of mind in the churches and associations,” longing for the day “when the churches will not only admit the propriety of sending out and sustaining Missionaries, but also have a mind to work—all of

them,” he added.¹⁵

“Then, and not til then, can all the destitute in Northwest Arkansas be supplied. For what I have done can scarcely be seen by a common eye, where there is so much want everywhere to be seen. Those who stay about their farms cannot nor will not believe the call is as great on them to preach the Gospel to the destitute as those who mingle in the different neighborhoods, and listen to the many pathetic appeals to come.” Until then, Elder Bootright pledged his willingness to “cover those deficiencies with the veil of charity.”

Elder Bootright said he had been blessed with “an unexpected share of health” during the year that the Fayetteville church was organized, though compelled to “stop and nurse up” after an “attack of summer sickness of about two weeks.” Cognizant of the meager pay he had collected, Elder Bootright closed, “I perhaps, am less disappointed, than others would have been under different circumstances. I have done all that I have done as unto the Lord, not for what was expected by way of remuneration, but to open the way for others, that a greater and more lasting good might be realized. Which I sincerely hope will be.”

In his report on the organization of Fayetteville First Missionary Baptist Church in 1854, Elder Bootright identified **Thomas B. Van Horne** as the pastor. He served for six years and was an active participant in associational and state convention Baptist life. The 33-year old native from Ohio and his wife, Margaret of Indiana, had a son a few years later. At the time of the 1860 census the household also included two teenage Indian girls, as well two adult women, one of whom taught music and the other a teacher of sewing.

Pastor Van Horne served as moderator of Fayetteville United Baptist Association when Elder Mayes was clerk. Elder Bootright’s name also continues to turn up in associational minutes as he moved on to pastor other churches. At the 1860 associational meeting, Pastor Van Horne offered the introductory sermon titled “If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you.” That same year the local association was encouraged to join with Mount Zion Association in forming North-Western Arkansas Missionary Baptist Association.¹⁶

It was in his role as an educator that Pastor Van Horne was better known in the history of Fayetteville. He assisted in the creation of many schools, including Arkansas College and Fayetteville Female Institute.¹⁷ After founder Sophia Sawyer died in 1854, Professor Van Horne secured a legislative charter in 1858 for the Institute.¹⁸ Located on the northwest corner of College and Dickson where First Baptist Church now stands, the two or three-story frame building with a tall spire¹⁹ was described by W.S. Campbell as “a pretentious building.” Another source simply called the building “lovely.” Early Fayetteville resident Marion Tebbetts wrote in her journal about attending the school.

The date given in later references for the constitution of First Missionary Baptist Church is 1859.²⁰ Members met in homes in the valley south of Fayetteville. Associational records for that year report 12 baptisms and three new members received by letter in with a total membership of 43. When the Institute’s charter

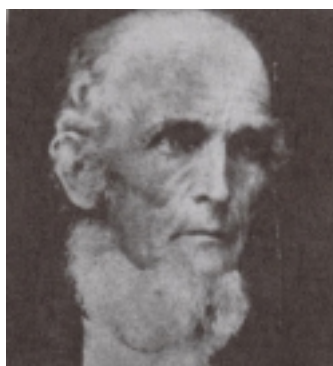
was changed in 1861 to Northwestern Arkansas Baptist Female Institute the act of incorporation included a section that specified it could be used as a church house. The Baptists accepted Educator Van Horne's invitation to worship in the school building.

As an early leader in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, Thomas B. Van Horne joined with other Baptists in the state to sign the convention's official charter in 1859, over a decade after the state convention organized. Pastor Van Horne helped ABSC hone its mission in those early days. Since local Baptist associations had assumed responsibility for domestic missions, the state convention turned to education as a chief priority. Pastor Van Horne argued that Baptist polity required more from individual church members than any other denomination, necessitating education for lay members as well as ministers. All members must be prepared for "the conflict between truth and error, now raging fiercely," he claimed, calling for leadership trained to defend truth. He drew a contrast between the way Baptists and Catholics approached church polity and principles, adding that the two contested for Arkansas.²¹

Pastor Van Horne insisted that learning sustains Baptist beliefs. Therefore, ministers "should be able to render this learning available for the maintenance of our principles." He preferred that young ministers be trained "at home" so that their service would not be lost when they left the state for their education. His argument won the day as the state convention began raising funds for a Baptist college. The endowment for which he lobbied became a casualty of the war to come. Still, his insistence on a biblically literate congregation remained a lasting priority for his Fayetteville parishioners.

In those years the section known as Fayetteville was far smaller than present day boundaries. Using the later street name identifications, College Avenue served as the eastern border with Gregg Street on the west, Dickson on the north, and South Street on the south. When members met in the Institute, they actually were outside the city limits at that time. The 1860 census reported 967 people within the city limits, although other estimates place as many as 2,000 residents in vicinity.

John Mayes began serving as pastor in 1860 and former Pastor Van Horne returned to Ohio where he enlisted in the Union Army as a chaplain.²² When the Union Army moved into northwest Arkansas in February 1862, services at the Institute were disrupted as the facility was taken over for use as a federal military arsenal and cartridge manufactory.²³ "The charming, quiet mountain town with its schools, churches, businesses, town square, and fine homes, built up over three decades by the hard labor of its pioneers, would be destroyed on the first full



John Mayes
1860-1862; 1867-1878

day of the permanent Confederate government,” wrote a Civil War historian in describing the events of February 22, 1862.²⁴ Church records likely were destroyed in the explosion of shells that resulted when the building was torched in a battle for control of the town. Just over a year later on April 18, 1863, the intersection of College Avenue and Dickson Street was the site of fierce fighting between Union and Confederate soldiers. Later accounts described it as Bloody Corner.

During the years of the Civil War, Pastor Mayes was separated from his family. According to W. S. Campbell, he held some type of official position that, when coupled with threats against his life, did not allow him to cross the valley southeast of town to his log home for two years. Instead, his family came to the Square to visit him.²⁵ Pastor Mayes’ daughter later related that her father was stationed in the old Masonic Hall on South Block Street and would go to the hill near the old White Mill on Willow Street, likely the peak at the corner of College and Rock, to observe his family at home. She said he could look over into the valley at the foot of South Mountain and see his children playing in the yard and know they were all right.²⁶

At least three of the four men who served as charter members of the Fayetteville church were sympathetic to the Union. In addition to T. B. Van Horne and John Mayes, another charter member expressed support of the Union. Edward Peer became a Union private during the war, serving in Company D of the First Arkansas Cavalry. They lived among a people who were divided in their loyalties with some of their sons defending the Union while others followed the Confederate call of secession.

When nine members reassembled at the War’s end, Pastor Mayes was a part



The Masonic Hall at South Block and West Rock Streets was used as a meeting place after the Civil War until 1879. Since all of Fayetteville’s churches were burned during the conflict, area churches took turns using the facility. (Photograph courtesy of Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville, Campbell Collection, MC 1427, Box 4, Album 10, p. 25.)

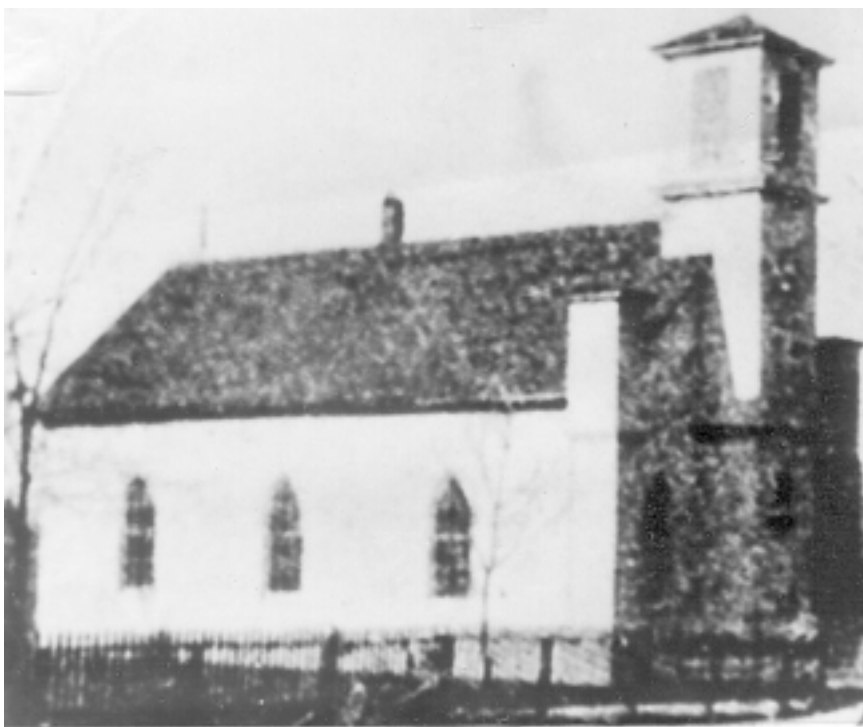
of the congregation of the Baptist church at Fayetteville. In 1866 **James Isaacs** became pastor,²⁷ having served alongside Pastor Mayes in organizing New Prospect Baptist Church that same year. Within a month, 30 more were added to the Fayetteville church. By the time of the report to the North Western Arkansas Missionary Baptist Association that fall, the church reported to have 47 members, having baptized 27, receiving three by letter and six by voucher.²⁸ Apparently Pastor Isaacs had the confidence of the association as well as he was elected moderator of that body in 1866. They returned to their habit of meeting in various homes, but soon took their turn among many denominations meeting in the Masonic Hall at the corner of South Block Street and West Rock Streets until 1879.

John Mayes was again named as pastor from 1867-1878. He represented the church at the organization of Bentonville Baptist Association in 1868, but is not listed among those who were ordained. At that time the associational records reported that Pastor Mayes was paid \$55.25 for the year, a few dollars less than the highest paid minister who was at Pea Ridge. The church baptized nine people that year, bringing the total membership to 68. Associational minutes for 1867 report the death in May of Elder C. H. Bootright, the Tennessee preacher who immigrated to Arkansas in 1850 and helped establish the work at Fayetteville. He was 70 years of age.

It is uncertain at what point the church became known as First Baptist Church, but it may have happened in 1869 when the minutes of the Bentonville Baptist Association include the question being raised, "Shall we be known as Missionary or United Baptists?" After discussion, members present at the associational meeting recommended that the churches within that association simply designate themselves as Baptist."²⁹

Many of these early Southern Baptist churches made use of the term "missionary" in their names as a descriptive term. They wanted to identify themselves as a missionary people. As one Baptist historian explained, "The term distinguished a mission-minded church from a 'Primitive' or 'Hardshell' group which did not believe in such [evangelistic] activity, since according to their belief, everyone's fate was pre-ordained anyway."³⁰ Almost 50 years later, a group of Baptist churches separated to form the State Association of Missionary Baptists in 1902. They differed over organizational methods rather than doctrine. It was not until the 1900s that the use of "Missionary Baptist" in a church's title referred to the group that differed from the Southern Baptists with whom the Fayetteville church identified.³¹

Another interesting reference in the associational minutes of 1869 is the report of a committee chaired by Elder Mayes. He sought to settle a dispute with the Vineyard Church for attempting to exclude one of its elders. Elder Mayes reported that after a prayerful and careful examination, "We feel confident that it is not the prerogative of the Association, nor in its power to do anything further in the premises." He added, 'Baptists acknowledge that each church is independent and has the exclusive right to do all business connected therewith.' In 1871



Pastor John Mayes provided much of the labor in 1879 for the first building of First Baptist Church. When a local man asked how he intended to pay for the project, Pastor Mayes said by faith. That prompted the businessman to donate all of the lumber required for the job. Located at 223 N. College, the 30 x 60 foot structure accomodated the congregation of 100 members.

Pastor Mayes represented the Fayetteville church at the organizational meeting of the Fayetteville Baptist Association where he served as moderator for 18 years.

As a master mechanic and carpenter, Pastor Mayes was also qualified to lead in the construction of a building that the church could call their own. In 1879 he provided much of the labor for a new facility situated at 223 N. College Avenue (where the Sands Motel once stood; now a paved lot). Built at a cost of just \$1,500, much of the labor and materials were donated. The lot was given to the church, possibly by Pastor Mayes's brother. When the pastor was clearing it for construction, a passerby stopped and inquired as to what he was doing. When told the pastor intended to build a Baptist church building, the man asked how he intended to pay for construction. The pastor explained that he was operating on faith, prompting the man to offer to provide the lumber for the 30 x 60 foot building.³² This small, framed church had a bell tower over the vestibule. Membership numbered about 100 at this time.³³

The long-time president of the Arkansas Baptist Convention, Rev. James P.

Eagle of Lonoke, Arkansas, dedicated the new facility. Later, Eagle served as governor of Arkansas as well as three terms as president of the Southern Baptist Convention. He was a cousin to First Baptist member J. D. Eagle.

Along with a new building, First Baptist Church had a new pastor in 1879, **Thomas Pleasant Boone**, age 48, a well-established leader among Arkansas Baptists and early member of the state convention board. Originally from Alabama, then Mississippi, Rev. Boone had been a school teacher who was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1855. He was described as a fine singer, a good speaker, and a very popular pastor of churches in Jackson and White Counties in Arkansas. He served as chief editor of the *Western Baptist*, a privately owned state Baptist paper.³⁴ He became the corresponding secretary for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention in the northern half of the state, encouraging cooperation among the pastors, associations and ABSC.³⁵

Just before serving First Baptist of Fayetteville, Rev. Boone pastored First Baptist Church of Springdale for a few months. Little is known about his ministry at Fayetteville other than his dates of service from 1879 to 1881, the year in which he died. Once again, members turned to John Mayes to fill the pulpit until another pastor could be found.

When Elder C.H. Bootright assessed the potential of First Baptist Church of Fayetteville, he predicted, "They will no doubt be instrumental in rearing a large church there, to the praise of Christ." After just a quarter of a century, his vision was being realized as diverse individuals from all walks of life worshipped and served together for the cause of Christ.

NOTES:

¹⁰ J. J. Burnett, *Sketches of Tennessee's Pioneer Baptist Preachers* (Nashville: Press of Marshall & Bruce Company 1919) 59-60.

¹¹ Mary Jane Haley, *Our Heritage Years To Treasure, To Pass On, A History of Fayetteville First Baptist WMU*, (Fayetteville: First Baptist Church 1988) 3.

¹² Joe W. Webb, "First Baptist Church Organized Here in 1858, *Northwest Arkansas Times*, August 9, 1947, 2. Webb was clerk of the Washington-Madison Baptist Association and senior deacon of First Baptist Church for more than 40 years at the time when this article was written. Though he inaccurately repeats the date of 1858 for the founding of the church, Mr. Webb was familiar with the location where the church first met. He identified G. W. Epperly as owner in 1947 of the original site where the Mayes family lived and offered the most specific information identifying where it was situated.

¹³ A painting owned by Fayetteville resident Carl Ellis was described in a 1954 issue of *Flashback* as featuring the 260-acre tract of land that was the home of John Mayes and W. Z. Mayes in 1873.

¹⁴ W. S. Campbell, "First Baptist Church Erects New, Modern Educational Building, Great Progress Shown Since Organization in June, 1858," *Northwest Arkansas Times*, January 27, 1950. Some sources do not include Edward Peer in the list of charter members, though he was certainly an active member throughout his life. According to the April 1955 issue of *Flashback* which includes a list of marriages performed in 1854, Edward Peer and Amanda C. Boyd were married by Rev. Thos. B. Van Horne on December 24, 1854,

months after the church was organized. Elder Bootright's report lists "nine members, five males, and four females" with T. B. Van Horne as pastor. He also reported that the church organized in the home of Elder Mayes. Records from August 1854 minutes of Mt. Zion Baptist Church confirm the dismissal of the Mayes family to join a church elsewhere. One source's reference to their organizing in Peer's home is probably inaccurate, although he did live near the Mayes family, south of Fayetteville.

¹⁵ C. H. Bootright, *Proceedings of the Fifth Anniversary of the White River Arkansas Baptist Convention*, November 10, 1854, 15-16.

¹⁶ *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Session of the Fayetteville United Baptist Association*, 1860, 3.

¹⁷ W. S. Campbell, *One Hundred Years of Fayetteville*, (Fayetteville: The Washington County Historical Society, 1977) 55.

¹⁸ *The Arkansian*, March 19, 1859 included an announcement of the second term of the Fayetteville Female Institute with Mr. and Mrs. T. B. Van Horne listed as principals. A rigorous course of study included Evidences of Christianity, Natural Theology, Mental and Moral Philosophy, as well as higher levels of mathematics, science, history, grammar, and fine arts. Pupils were required to attend worship services on Sunday at the church designated by their parents.

¹⁹ Goodspeed's *History of Washington County* describes the Institute as a three-story building although Tebbets remembered it as having two stories when she wrote her journal eighty years after her time as a young student there.

²⁰ Issues of *The Calendar of First Baptist Church* published in 1914 refer to 1859 as the date when the church was constituted. It was common for several years to transpire before a newly organized church actually constituted.

²¹ Williams, C. Fred, 88.

²² According to Union records, Thomas B. Van Horne enlisted July 10, 1862, in Ohio, serving as a chaplain in Company F, 13th Infantry Regiment of Ohio and mustered out July 26, 1864. He continued his ministry as a chaplain in the Regular Army until his retirement in February, 1885, according to the updated introduction to Van Horne's *History of the Army of the Cumberland* published in 1875. He also wrote a biography of Major-General Thomas.

²³ William Baxter, president of Arkansas College, offered an eyewitness account in his book *Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove* published in 1864. The Washington County Historical Society republished the report in a publication titled "Early Colleges and Academies of Washington County" edited by W. J. Lemke.

²⁴ Russell L. Mahan, *Fayetteville, Arkansas in the Civil War*. (Bountiful: Historical Byways and Washington County Historical Society, 2003) 46.

²⁵ Campbell, 72.

²⁶ Historical Records Survey, Arkansas Records, 1935-1942, (MS H62), Box 425, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. Mrs. A. W. Conner, a daughter of John Mayes, provided this account.

²⁷ *Calendar*, First Baptist Church, November 7, 1914, 3. This issue of the church bulletin lists pastors of the church since its organization. T. B. Van Horne's name is missing, however associational minutes confirm he served as the first pastor.

²⁸ Minutes, North Western Arkansas Missionary Baptist Association, 6. This source lists former Pastor Mayes as pastor of Second Baptist, New Prospect and C. H. Bootright as pastor of Second Baptist, Brush Creek.

²⁹ Minutes, Bentonville Baptist Association, Sixth Annual Session, 1869, 2.

³⁰ Paul V. Logan, Jr., *History of the North Arkansas Baptist Association*, (Harrison: North Arkansas Baptist Association, 1978) 4-5.

³¹ Thomas B. Van Horne's leadership in the formation of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and C. H. Bootright's prior service in a Southern Baptist congregation in Tennessee reveal the Fayetteville congregation's early ties to Southern Baptist life. Other references in support of Southern Baptist mission efforts and the use of the denomination's literature appear in later years, as well as participation by pastors in the work of the SBC-related state convention. The history of Washington-Madison Baptist Association includes a reference to the Fayetteville Missionary Baptist Association formed in 1871 as being comprised entirely of churches that supported the work of the Southern Baptist Convention. Thus, when popular histories such as Goodspeed's refer to the Fayetteville church as being a Missionary Baptist church or accounts of early pastors describe these men as Missionary Baptist preachers, it can only be applied in the sense of their priority regarding missions. First Baptist Church of Fayetteville was never a Missionary Baptist church in the sense of aligning with the denomination that formed in 1902.

³² Arkansas Historical Records Survey, 2. Pastor Mayes' daughter speculated that the man was a local resident by the name of Van Winkle.

³³ Like other pastors of that era, he engaged in a secular job to provide income for his family. He and his son, W. Z., built many structures in Fayetteville including the St. Paul Episcopal Church around 1874-1877.

³⁴ Rogers, J. S., *History of Arkansas Baptists*, (Conway: Conway Printing Company, 1948) 196.

³⁵ C. Fred Williams, 125.

SECOND QUARTER CENTURY 1879 - 1904				
	United States	Arkansas	Southern Baptists	First Baptist
1879				
1881				
1883				FBC hosts Arkansas Baptist State Convention
1885	Ten-story Chicago building is first skyscraper			
1887		Bauxite discovered southwest of Little Rock	Woman's Missionary Union organized	
1889	First Kodak box camera sells for \$1			Pastor John Mayes dies
1891	Great Chicago Fire	Railroad cars segregated	Baptist Sunday School Board begins	
1893	Financial Panic of 1893			
1895				
1897		Ouachita College opens		
1899				
1901		State population reaches 1.3 million	SBC annual meeting held in Hot Springs	Father of Graded Sunday Schools in SBC pastors FBC
1903	First silent movie		Arkansawyer James P. Eagle elected SBC president	

CHAPTER THREE

Information about the church is sketchy during these years, with few records available. However, it is clear that the church followed the habit of most Southern Baptist churches in the region by employing pastors for two-year periods. In one description of northern Arkansas Baptist churches, a writer explained, “Preachers were hired by the year. Every October there was consideration of whom to call for the next year. Many churches often changed preachers every year or two.”³⁶ Pastors of this era received very little pay, typically \$10 to \$20 for an entire year’s work.

Baptist Wreothelsey Noel Simms served from 1881 until 1883. A native of Virginia, Simms graduated from Richmond College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and served several Virginia churches before coming to Fayetteville. During this time the trustees credited the “kindness, industry, and zeal” of the newly formed Ladies Aid Society as well as “our beloved pastor” for enabling them to pay off all indebtedness for the building built just three years earlier.³⁷ An infant son died in 1882 and was buried at Evergreen Cemetery. After resigning the pastorate, Simms went on to serve churches in Texas, Missouri, and Louisiana. He became a church evangelist in Louisiana and edited *The Church Evangel* for three years.³⁸



B. W. N. Simms
1881-1883

While serving First Baptist Church of Midland two years after leaving Fayetteville, Simms was described as a passionate preacher with a strong commitment to evangelism. Health problems prevented him from serving the Texas church for more than a year. He lived until 1934 and died in Waxahachie, Texas, at the age of 85. A Texas Baptist Standard obituary read, “For many years he was a very acceptable preacher and one of the gentlest, kindest, best pastors in the Baptist ministry. To know him was to hold him in high esteem for his genuine Christian life and his earnestness in faithfully preaching the Word.”³⁹

In 1883, the Arkansas Baptist State Convention gathered at First Baptist of Fayetteville for their annual meeting. Messengers were challenged to develop a Women’s Missionary Society in their churches to “battle nobly for Christ against darkness in our own and foreign lands.” The report on “Women’s Work” further

stated, "What is being done by our Christian sisters in other States can be accomplished in our own State. We know our sisters in Arkansas are willing to work for Christ, if they are but shown some systematic plan upon which to operate."⁴⁰ State convention messengers also approved plans to establish Ouachita Baptist College, a decision that prompted financial support from many First Baptist members when the school began three years later.

In 1884 the church called **C. W. Callahan** of Eureka Springs. Prior to coming to Fayetteville, he was described as a strong advocate of Sunday School. In a report to the ABSC Executive Board he urged all pastors and missionaries to encourage establishing Sunday Schools in every church. He served First Baptist for just a year until his death in 1885. Elder John Mayes filled the pulpit briefly until the church called 35-year old **Martin L. Ball** later in 1885. A native of Mississippi, he graduated from the University of Mississippi and studied at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Pastor Ball planted churches in South Carolina before answering the call to serve in Arkansas. After two years, he resigned to serve as the first full-time pastor of a Jonesboro congregation for the next three years. His later pastorates were in Kentucky and Tennessee. While pastoring the Fayetteville church, he also pastored Spring Valley Baptist Church in Madison County.⁴¹

B. G. Maynard followed him in 1888 and lived in a parsonage located on the northwest corner of College Avenue and Dickson Street.⁴² He had served as the president of Tazewell and Mossy Creek Colleges in Tennessee.⁴³ At the time of his arrival, the Fayetteville church had a membership of 118. While serving as pastor Dr. Maynard conducted the funeral service of a charter member, 53-year old William Zera "Zebe" Mayes, son of former pastor John Mayes. He was described in the obituary as having lived "an upright honorable life" and "always remained steadfast in the faith."⁴⁴

A year later, John Mayes moderated the October 11, 1889, session of the Fayetteville Baptist Association, an office he had held since the fellowship was formed in 1871. Elder Mayes made a few impressive remarks and prayed a fervent prayer for the cause of Christ and success of the association. Then he asked to be excused, citing poor health. "The hand of Christian fellowship was extended to Mayes and a liberal contribution of money was made to help him in his decline of life," according to association records.⁴⁵ He died two weeks later on October 26, 1889, and was buried in Evergreen Cemetery. During his lifetime the farmer and carpenter pastored nine churches. He organized two of those he pastored as well as two others led by other pastors. His wife of nearly 50 years had died in 1881 and was eulogized for having lived as "a devoted, pious, consecrated Christian."⁴⁶

The November 1, 1889, obituary in the *Fayetteville Democrat* read, "Another of the golden links that bind together two generations is broken. 'Uncle Johnny' is done with life's labors, toils and struggles. He walks no more in our midst. On last Saturday's golden morning he entered his long-sought-for rest."

After recounting his childhood years on a Tennessee farm, Dr. Maynard described John Mayes's conversion to Christ in 1842, stating, "Using his own significant language, it was 'the event of his life.' He was early impressed with the obligation to preach the gospel, but for twelve years fought against such convictions. It was a period of unrest and self-reproof, as he was accustomed to say. From the time he yielded these impressions in 1854 he was notably blessed in his public ministrations. Considering the fact of his limited educational advantage, his power as a preacher was marvelous. The thousands bear witness to this fact. The growth and strength of his denomination in Washington County may be attributed to him."

Described as a Calvinistic preacher, Dr. Maynard said John Mayes emphasized that there was no merit in man, calling himself "a monument of divine good—the evidence of the mercy of God." The pastor wrote, "These thoughts, so personal to himself, he ever emphasized before the people, and with great pungency and unction. He sought conviction and not admiration; the salvation of souls and not numbers. No one was ever more anxious as to the certainty of the people being saved than he." He was said to hold tenaciously to his own views while conceding to others the privilege to think for themselves.

Dr. Maynard described how John Mayes called his loved ones to his side near the end of his life, desiring to offer a final testimony. "I have this day reviewed my whole life and have never shared in such ecstatic joy. All is well with me. The Lord is my God. His goodness in sparing me when a hardened sinner, never appeared so precious before. My soul breaks forth in joyous praise to Him for His marvelous goodness and mercy to me. My work is done. But my hope is steadfast. Be cheerful. Let there be no doubt as to your new birth, all will be well. Dismiss all distress about me. Don't grieve. Go on about your cares. May hope sustain me," he was quoted as saying. Dr. Maynard wrote of the immense audience of all denominations assembling at the church and later the cemetery as "a fitting tribute to so worthy a character," providing "comfort for the bereaved, inspiration for the Christian and a voice to the un-saved."

After serving Fayetteville Missionary Baptist Church for a year, Dr. Maynard accepted a call from the Arkansas Baptist State Convention to minister in the area of evangelism. He also served as historical secretary.

From 1890 to 1892, **John W. Lipsey** pastored the church while in his early 50s. A native of Georgia, Lipsey was educated at Union University. He served in Tennessee and Mississippi before pastoring nine Arkansas churches in small towns. He wrote at least two tracts, including "Temple Simplicity of Salvation" and "This Life and One to Come." Pastor Lipsey was described as having done "an immense amount of missionary work" in northern Mississippi where he was regarded as a leading pastor. "He is a preacher of rare ability, very forcible and earnest in manner, and abounding in argument and strong reason," wrote one biographer. "He is a man of strong convictions and has the courage of his convictions. Boldly preaching from strong convictions of truth of course makes some

bitter enemies as well as strong friends,” the writer stated.⁴⁷

The opportunity for fellowship with other Baptist churches continued to be important for First Baptist Church as they hosted the Fayetteville Missionary Baptist Association meeting in 1891. Information included in First Baptist Church of Springdale’s history describes this association as “a curious organization” with “a definite Southern Baptist flavor” as references are made to “our Southern Baptist Convention, the Orphans Home at Monticello and the Arkansas Baptist” as “our state paper.” The minutes from that year also refer to support of three Southern Baptist colleges—Central, Mountain Home and Ouachita. The association recommended “the enlargement of the theological department of Ouachita College and the education of our young ministers in our own State.”⁴⁸

Jefferson Davis Cook, an Alabama native, pastored from 1893 to 1895. His tenure in Fayetteville followed 12 pastorates in Alabama and Mississippi. After serving those two years in Arkansas, he returned to Alabama.

In the sesquicentennial history of First Baptist Church of Springdale, a comparison of the size the Springdale and Fayetteville churches is included for these years. The membership of First Baptist of Springdale in 1895 was “around the two hundred mark and exceeded that of the First Baptist Church of Fayetteville.” The writer added, “It was not until the period of the First World War that the Fayetteville Church actually moved ahead in membership.”

Thomas O. Harris pastored from 1895 to 1897. During these years, church minutes describe the important role that women played in church life. They were sent out to collect the pastor’s salary of \$50 per month while other women visited delinquent subscribers within the year. When a furnace needed replacing, the Ladies’ Society agreed to underwrite the cost.

Francis Bozeman, pastor from 1897 to 1900, was a native of Tennessee and a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In addition to serving Tennessee churches, he pastored at Forest City, Arkansas, before beginning his ministry at Fayetteville. The church directory in 1898 listed the names of 141 resident members and 58 non-resident members.

In his “First Anniversary Sermon,” the pastor based his message on the brief passage of 1 Sam. 7:12 which read, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” Rev. Bozeman recounted the elements that restored Israel to her ancient strength and glory, including the surrender of idolatry and the restoration of true worship, a national assemblage of the people at Mizpeh, and a penitent confession of sin.

Describing the ways in which the Lord had helped First Baptist Church of Fayetteville, Rev. Bozeman recognized human effort, stating that it would be hard to use words too strong in testimony to the work of some in that household of faith during his first year of ministry there. “How faithful they have been! How constant in devotion, how tireless in service, how Christ-like in character!” Of other members, he said, there is no such record. “Some of them have not so much as lifted the tip of the finger to advance the cause of truth during the past year.”

The pastor went on to recognize divine help, warning, “May our memorials

ever be reared in Jehovah's name to whom we look for continued blessings. In recognizing the need of further work, Rev. Bozeman said, "The past was a guiding star that lighted Israel to new labors and new provisions of divine help. And so it is with us. Whatever may have been our record, it is not yet done—is never done, save with the end of opportunity."

We have no record as to where Rev. Bozeman served next, but in the 1911 associational minutes, he is noted as an ordained minister of First Baptist, apparently having reunited with the church in retirement.

Harvey Beauchamp pastored from 1900 to 1902. The Indiana native graduated from William Jewell College and Moody Bible Institute, and pursued graduate work at New York University. His first pastorate began just two weeks after he arrived in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, to conduct mission work. Upon the death



Harvey Beauchamp
1900-1902

of the pastor of that town's First Baptist Church, the congregation ordained Harvey Beauchamp and called him as their pastor. He later pastored First Baptist Church of Springdale, and then served as secretary of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Mission Board. Other pastorates included Judsonia and Van Buren, Arkansas, as well as churches in Illinois and Missouri. He wrote on the subject of infant baptism as "an unreasonable and unscriptural practice" and supported closing the observance of communion to non-members.

In 1907, Rev. Beauchamp became a field secretary for the Sunday School Board, traveling extensively to observe and study Sunday schools of all grades. By 1910, Rev. Beauchamp authored a book called *The Graded Sunday School* that served as a standard for religious education. The meticulous presentation described organization and management of a Sunday School. "It goes without saying that all members of the church should study the Word of God," he wrote. "They will never be too old nor too well versed in the Scriptures to study the Bible any longer. The church school will be the greatest help to such study." He encouraged regular reporting by the Sunday School, election of officers and teachers, and oversight by the pastor.

Noted Southern Baptist educator J. M. Price devoted a chapter of his book, "Baptist Leaders in Religious Education," to Harvey Beauchamp. "Today in every church in the Southern Baptist Convention there could be carved this inscription, 'Harvey Beauchamp, Father of the Graded Sunday School,'" he wrote in 1943.⁴⁹ No inquiry was made of a person's age, he explained, until Dr. Beauchamp created the first Standard of Excellence adopted by the Sunday School Board, calling for age-segregated classes. According to Dr. Price, Sunday Schools of that era were divided between the adult department and the elementary depart-

ment. “As far back as 1903, preachers and church workers realized that Sunday Schools needed to be graded, but they were all afraid to say so publicly.”⁵⁰

Dr. Beauchamp was described by Arthur Flake as one of “the real pioneers” who “labor for the good of the cause with no desire for personal distinction.” Another Southern Baptist leader described Dr. Beauchamp as “a sage in the Sunday School realm” who “kept several jumps ahead of his companions.”⁵¹

“The graded Sunday school was largely a theory with Southern Baptists until Dr. Harvey Beauchamp gave it a practical emphasis in his book and in the Standard of Excellence designed by him,” Dr. Price wrote. “The fully graded Sunday school as presented by him had a place for every member of the family, from the youngest baby to the oldest adult. It was not only a teaching agency but also a soul-winning agency, with every teacher and officer an evangelist and soul-winner.”⁵²

Another area in which Dr. Beauchamp was a pacesetter involved the design of church buildings. “He found that there was not only a need for a sufficient number of trained men and women to teach and superintend the fully graded Bible school but also a need for adequate church buildings. He, therefore, placed great emphasis on both teacher training and church buildings, devoting much time to drawing plans and helping churches build or remodel,” Dr. Price said, describing the former Fayetteville pastor as “a very practical and effective church architect.”

Later in his life, Dr. Beauchamp devoted time to promoting temperance, prohibition, law observance, and other legislation.⁵³ He wrote a textbook for Bible classes called *Bible Outlines*.

On July 10, 1901, the Fayetteville Democrat reported the death of Edward Peer, probably the last of the church’s charter members. He was described as “one of the best citizens of our county and was highly esteemed by all who knew him.

J. E. Denham pastored from 1903 to 1905 after serving numerous churches in Ohio, Missouri, Kansas, and Colorado. University of Arkansas President Henry Hartzog was a member of the church during this time.

NOTES:

³⁶ Logan, 4-5.

³⁷ Haley, 6.

³⁸ Billy Keith, *To God Be the Glory, A History of First Baptist Church of Midland, Texas* (Midland: First Baptist Church, 1975) 69-71.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Rogers, 557, quoting the first report on “Women’s Work” in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention held in 1883 at Fayetteville.

⁴¹ Tom Feathers, “History of the Spring Valley Baptist Church, 1848-1922,” *Flashback*, April, 1955, 26.

⁴² *The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwestern Arkansas: Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin and Sebastian Counties* (1989; re-

print, Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1978) 314.

⁴³ *History of Washington County*, 311.

⁴⁴ Obituaries of Washington County, Vol. 1, 1841-1892, 291-292. Pastor Mayes is buried in Evergreen Cemetery and identified in a Flashbacks article as having been the builder of Old Main, McIlroy Bank, an Episcopal church, and many other buildings and houses.

⁴⁵ Robert Ashcraft, Editor, *Pioneer Faith, The History of Missionary Baptist Associations and Churches in Arkansas from 1818 to 1920*, (Mabelvale: History and Archives Committee, State association of Missionary Baptist Churches of Arkansas 1994) p. 272-273. Missionary Baptist Churches of Arkansas share the same roots as Southern Baptist churches, separating to form their own State Association of Missionary Baptist Churches in 1902.

⁴⁶ Lloyd O. Warren, "John Mayes, Pioneer Citizen and Religious Leader in Washington County," *Flashback*, August 1996, 21-28. Additional mention is made in this article of Mayes' real estate transactions, service as a justice of the peace, and failed attempts at seeking the positions of country treasurer and clerk. He was an active Mason, serving as a High Priest in 1874, and received tribute from the Washington Masonic Lodge No. 1 on November 15, 1889. That obituary described him as "an honest, upright Christian worker, an exemplary citizen and a good neighbor, spreading his cement of brotherly love and virtue wherever he went."

⁴⁷ L. S. Foster, *Mississippi Baptist Preachers* (St. Louis: National Baptist Printing Company, 1895), 444-445.

⁴⁸ *One Hundred Years, 1870 to 1970, First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark.*, (Springdale: First Baptist Church 1970) 23.

⁴⁹ Price, J. M. *Baptist Leaders in Religious Education* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1943) 16.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 19.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, quoting Sunday School Board Secretary G. S. Hopkins.

⁵² *Ibid*, 20.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 22.

THIRD QUARTER CENTURY 1904 - 1929				
	United States	Arkansas	Baptists	First Baptist
1904				
1906		Diamonds found near Murfreesboro		
1908	Model-T automobile introduced		SBC meets in Hot Springs; Southwestern Seminary opens	George Truett dedicates new building at College and Dickson; Ladies Aid Society raises \$7,000 to help furnish new building
1910		William Jennings Bryan campaign uses FBC auditorium		
1912	Titanic sinks		Christian Life Commission begins	
1914				
1916	U.S. enters World War I		Southern Baptists report 2.6 million members	Choir presents the Oratorio "David, King of Israel" to packed auditorium
1918		Arkansas grants women right to vote	New Orleans Seminary opens	Woman's Missionary Society forms
1920	Prohibition passes		SBC annual meeting held in Hot Springs; Annuity Board & Brotherhood Commission begin	FBC calls for new association; disassociated with Landmark Baptists
1922	Worldwide influenza epidemic kills 22 million	Oil discovered near El Dorado		
1924				
1926			Cooperative Program launched; Baptist Faith & Message adopted	
1928		Teaching of evolution ruled a crime		Total membership reaches 950

CHAPTER FOUR

First Baptist selected a well-educated and widely traveled man for its next pastor. **Walter Andrew Whittle** served from 1906 to 1909 and was described as “a beloved leader and an enthusiastic administrator, as well as a person of deep spiritual power.”⁵⁴ A native of Alabama, Dr. Whittle was educated at Howard College, Toronto College, and one other university before receiving his doctorate from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He was a fellow in the Royal Geographical Society of England and authored *Travels and Adventures in Europe and All Bible Lands*. Prior to serving at Fayetteville, Dr. Whittle pastored in Indiana, Texas, Alabama and Kentucky.



W. A. Whittle
1906-1909

Soon after his arrival, Dr. Whittle “began agitation for erection of a new church,” according to deacon W. S. Campbell. The old building was sold and a new site purchased from Dr. J. P. Hight where First Baptist Church established a lasting presence on the corner of College Avenue and Dickson Street. The 150 members secured a building contract in 1907 for \$38,000, constructing an auditorium and educational space that would stand for 52 years. Dr. George W. Truett, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, traveled to Fayetteville by train to preach the dedicatory sermon. Upon learning that a debt of \$8,000 remained on the building, Dr. Truett made it clear that he disliked preaching in churches that were indebted.

“The hour was tense. Throngs were turned away because of lack of seating capacity—word had been passed that Truett had vowed to lift this debt,” according to Campbell.⁵⁵ “As he arose in the pulpit to intone the prayer of dedication, silence fell upon the people. So profound were his words, so moved were the people, that no sound save sobs and falling tears marred the spiritual fellowship of those unforgettable moments.

“The speaker brushed aside his tears, gave one all-inclusive look of appraisal of the interior and of the people whose heroism and sacrifices had brought it to a climax that would not be denied, and said, ‘Behold what God hath wrought—



Members of First Baptist Church gathered in 1906 for the groundbreaking of the auditorium they built at College Avenue and Dickson Street. The property had been purchased from Dr. Hight.

who can deny Him now? Shall we pay this debt now?' In twenty minutes the sum was pledged and the glory song from that throng all but lifted the great dome!"

Mrs. Williams wrote, "The church had a home, a place of which to be proud, a place in which to honor and serve God," Aware that some had described the exterior architectural design as "rather mixed up and less than beautiful," Mrs. Williams said, "Certainly that church stood firmly on that busy corner speaking to passers-by of dignity, stability, and integrity. To the membership it was a thing of beauty, something they had given sacrificially to build and had dedicated to God."

Murray Smart, a member of First Baptist Church since 1966, recognized the distinctiveness of the new structure. Having taught architecture at the University of Arkansas, he explained the building's design by architect J. E. Flanders of Dallas as reflecting the colonial revival that spread across the country after the Columbian exposition of 1893 in Chicago. "The fair buildings had created a glorious 'white city' of classical buildings featuring domes and numerous colonnades of Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian columns at colossal scale." Adding that the Greeks and Romans never needed buildings like these and thus there were no true classical prototypes for exhibition buildings of the type and size needed at the fair.

The exhibition buildings featured functional modern plan-forms liberally decorated with classical elements and the new structure of First Baptist Church

followed this pattern. A plan popularized in Baptist circles at that time featured an auditorium that took the form of a half or quarter circle with the pulpit and choir in the vertex or center of the straight side, Mr. Smart explained. The congregation surrounded the pulpit in curving pews. “This plan made the sight and sound distance of the congregation from the pastor and choir minimal and fostered the ‘family fellowship’ so desired by Baptist churches.”



An interior view of the domed building shows the pipe organ and balcony.



One of the stained glass panels is featured near the southeast entrance of the present building while another is included in the historical archives display case.

had not used stained glass because a bright, even interior illumination had been desired,” Mr. Smart explained. “With the Gothic revival that characterized the third decade of the nineteenth century, stained glass was reintroduced to church buildings.”

Pictorial windows were further popularized by the developments of the great late nineteenth century American stained-glass studios of Louis Comfort Tiffany and John LaFarge in New York, as well as many less well-known studios established across

Mr. Smart described the auditorium as nearly square with one corner. It was curved on the southeast side at the intersection of Dickson and College. “Above the center of the sanctuary was a circular stained glass ceiling that marked the location of the exterior dome on the interior. Two large arched pictorial stained glass windows decorated the east and south facades of the building. Classical buildings—Greek, Roman, and Renaissance—





This is one of the earliest photographs of the church completed in 1908.

nearly every urban center, Mr. Smart explained. He speculated that the Fayetteville windows were made in St. Louis where a thriving stained-glass studio was located. “Consequently the tradition of using stained glass for church windows was retained in colonial revival buildings long after the Gothic revival had waned.”

The most distinguishing features of the church were the dome and the curved entrance, borrowing directly from the classical tradition, as did the temple pediments that capped the east and south walls and the pedimented doorframes between the Ionic columns of the three entrance doors in the colonnade on the corner. The domed building was often featured on picture postcards of the era as well as other historical publications.

Behind the pulpit were the exposed pipes of the Bennett tubular-pneumatic organ that had been given by philanthropist John D. Rockefeller in 1908. The Grand Bennett tubular-pneumatic organ was built in Chicago and was the largest instrument in the region until an organ was acquired for the U of A Fine Arts.



An oak pew from the domed sanctuary is on display near the History Room.

Mr. Smart related that numerous Protestant churches were built in the first two decades of the twentieth century that were remarkably similar to the Fayetteville First Baptist Church. One occupied by a Methodist church on a

prominent corner of Atoka, Oklahoma, is seen if driving on U.S. Highway 69 between Fayetteville and Dallas. Others can be found in Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas small towns, he added.⁵⁶

Once again, the Arkansas Baptist Convention turned to First Baptist to host their annual meeting in 1908. "And with a new meeting place, members responded to the challenge to reach out and serve God more fully. Organizations for young people were formed," wrote Campbell.

The Ladies Aid Society labored to furnish the church, support the cause of missions and meet specific needs of the congregation. Between 1908 and 1914, the ladies were able to put into the church treasury \$7,000 over and above their personal offerings. One longtime member, Mrs. Bert Lewis, recalled loading her fringe-topped surrey with groceries in order to travel to the Washington County Courthouse where she helped to prepare meals. Mrs. W. E. McWhorter transported her three-burner oil stove to the site, pushing it in a baby carriage. Other women joined in the labor of cooking the food that was sold for a quarter a meal from 10:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. whenever court was in session. They contributed all



The pulpit used in the domed auditorium is in the History Room.



An early photograph of the Ladies Aid Society includes the pastor's wife, Mrs. Whittle, at the far left. The group formed to support the cause of missions and various church needs.



The Ladies Aid Society provided meals on the courthouse lawn to fund furnishings for the domed church building. (Photo courtesy of Washington County Historical Society and Shiloh Museum of Ozark History.)

of the proceeds to continue furnishing the new church building. A local resident remembered hearing her mother tell how she and her twin brother sold homemade hominy out of a red wagon that they pulled to the square. They contributed the money earned to pay for a small window in the church.

Not long after the church was occupied, the famous orator William Jennings Bryan came to Fayetteville while campaigning for the United States presidency. Members of his political party secured permission to use the auditorium for Bryan's speech since it was the largest assembly area in the city.

M. L. Shepherd served as pastor from 1911 to 1912. Apparently there was no pastor in 1910 after Rev. Whittle resigned in 1909 to pastor in Mississippi. During 1910 there were no records reported to the local association, but under Rev. Shepherd's tenure they are provided.

Among the members who joined the church in 1911 was Juliette Mather who later served in Japan and Taiwan. She was tapped by WMU for service as young people's secretary of the Southern Baptist auxiliary, launching publications to support missions education for Girls' Auxiliary, Royal Ambassadors, and Sunbeam Band.⁵⁷

From the state convention in 1912 came the recommendation to schedule offerings in certain months for particular causes—education in January and February, missions in March and April, an orphanage in September and December. Ministerial education was to be emphasized “at convenient times.” A Five Year Plan from the Arkansas Baptist State Convention sought to relieve crushing debt at Ouachita and Central colleges, as well as the orphanage at Monticello.

Orlando P. Bishop served as pastor from 1913-1914. In 1913 First Baptist apparently dropped out of the association and in 1915 petitioned to return, according to min-



First Baptist member Juliette Mather served the national WMU, launching publications to support missions education for young people. (Photo courtesy of WMU Library.)

utes. No explanation is given in any church or associational documents.

In 1914 the church was trying to operate within an annual budget of \$3,000, still depending on members to respond to subscription appeals. A desire to reach beyond the church's walls continued as First Baptist Church of Johnson was organized under the guidance of the Fayetteville church. Pastor Bishop later served in Missouri and published a book of poems. He retired in California after 60 years in the ministry.



M. P. Hunt
1914-1916

Marion Palmer Hunt, native of Missouri, pastored from 1914 to 1916. He received his undergraduate degree from William Jewell College, master's degree at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and doctor of divinity from Oklahoma Baptist University. Prior to serving First Baptist he pastored many churches throughout Missouri, Kansas, Kentucky, and Colorado. He also served as Western Field Secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention. In his memoirs written near the end of his 80th year, Dr. Hunt described himself, stating, "Born with one eye and my physiognomy otherwise lacking in attractiveness, I have always suffered a handicap along this line. My get-off, many years ago, that my initials, M. P., stood for 'Mighty Pretty' was so manifestly a joke that I have never felt any

sense of guilt in so putting it."

His ministry at First Baptist often received commendation in the church bulletin. The Finance Committee stated that they were anxious to see the \$3,000 budget met for the year 1914-1915, with \$500 still to be pledged in November. "There are over four hundred members of our church on the roll, and the committee believes that everybody will want to have an interest in the great work the church is doing under the leadership of our consecrated, earnest and able pastor, Brother Hunt," the note read.

Dr. Hunt offered exhortations in each of the newsletters, stating on one occasion, "We are not going to hide it, Wednesday night we had hoped for a large attendance at prayer meeting and lo, on looking over the 40 or 50 that were present, we missed the following from the regular," going on to list the names of eight families. "Perhaps all had good reasons for absence. Anyway, the preacher had a might depressed feeling, and was found asking himself some mighty serious questions. Oh, for a great prayer meeting." He admitted that his "depression" was compounded when some of the young people came for a committee meeting and "did not stay for the meeting of meetings."

Church records are more accessible from this period forward during publication of the Calendar of First Baptist Church. This small four-page leaflet fea-



Zetta McGaugh, Eula Crippin, Mae Liles, and Eugenia Seay were among the members of First Baptist Church who joined between 1911 and 1915, remaining active throughout their lives. This photograph was taken in 1983.

tures a picture of the church on the cover and the listing of deacons, trustees, pastor, and church officers. The phone numbers for the church and the parsonage were simply three-digit numbers, 459 and 137. Giving records of members are included with amounts ranging from fifty cents to \$125.

The schedule of service lists Sunday School beginning at 9:30 followed by an 11 a.m. service which included an organ prelude, invocation, hymn, scripture lesson, another hymn, prayer, announcements, offering, anthem, sermon, closing hymn and benediction. The evening service is similar with Baptist Young People's Union meeting beforehand at 6:30 p.m. The remainder of the inside pages offer exhortations from the pastor, reports on the sick that include very specific descriptions of their ailments, a mention of visitors, progress on various fronts, an occasional listing of those who have paid toward their pledges with the amounts listed. The back page is set aside for a few dozen businesses to offer advertising at \$3 per line. These ads featured banks, dentists, drug stores, grocery stores, abstract companies, hardware stores, a veterinarian, a marble and granite works, plumber, cafe, cleaners, shoe store, clothing stores, and even an eggery that featured "honest fresh eggs."

Worship through music became more prominent in the new building equipped with such a highly valued pipe organ. The Oratorio, "David King of Israel" offered by the choir in 1914 tested the seating capacity of the church. Another program titled "The Eternal City" drew the largest audience to date on a Sunday evening to what was described in the church's newsletter as "the best cantata yet given by our choir."

The church continued participating in an interdenominational gathering of congregations throughout Fayetteville to “join in union services in the observance of the Week of Prayer.” Each pastor was assigned a topic on which he should preach, with particular scriptures, meeting places, leaders, and times announced in the church bulletin.

Debates on various topics were hosted at the church and the pastor often participated. One resolution debated by Dr. Hunt and Deacon W. S. Campbell considered whether “a permanent peace of our nation demands the enlargement of our naval and military forces.” Taking the negative position, the pastor and deacon claimed victory. On other occasions spelling bees were offered, using the Old Blue Back Speller.

In mid-January of 1915 the church held the annual business meeting on a Wednesday night with reports from various organizations. Dr. Hunt said the previous Sunday marked an epoch in the church. “By the grace of God and the liberality of the church, we were enabled to wipe out all indebtedness and to burn the notes and the mortgage.” He credited the sacrificial giving of those who denied themselves and “put themselves out” to get the cash to redeem their pledges. “To one and all who in any way had a part in this glorious consummation, appreciation is voiced.” Once out of debt, the church prepared to attempt the completion of the basement in the new building.

In the January 31, 1915 deacons’ meeting, a motion passed that “no entertainment be given in the church house without consent of the house committee and that the treasurer be instructed to have printed notices for those in arrears. On February 8, 1915, the deacons asked the pastor to explain the crisis in the mission work in the Southern Baptist Convention on the following Sunday. Both

the Foreign Mission Board and the Board of Domestic Missions were experiencing crushing debts. A year later, church members were asked to meet their obligations, the pastor noting that \$100 was past due on mission pledges.

In July of that year the deacons allocated funds in the following manner: seventy-five dollars to be spent for Christian education with twenty-



The Campbell family is pictured passing by the church on their way to a picnic. In 1914 the church purchased a similar rig as the horse and buggy launched their transportation ministry.



After serving in Fayetteville, M. P. Hunt pastored several Kentucky churches, serving into his eighties. He is pictured studying at his desk in Louisville. Near the end of his life he wrote an autobiography, expressing great love for the church at Fayetteville.

five dollars for ministerial education, split between Southern Seminary and Southwestern Seminary, and the remaining fifty dollars for Christian education in Arkansas.

On April 18, 1915, the deacon board unanimously endorsed Pastor Hunt “in his preaching to the people on the streets of Fayetteville.” A few weeks later the pastor was instructed by the deacons to buy a clock for the church. The bulletin explained that this was for the purpose of dismissing services promptly at noon for the sake of transporting dormitory students at the time promised.

In the fall, the church sent a petitionary letter to the meeting of the Fayetteville Baptist Association in Prairie Grove. The moderator extended “the hand of fellowship” to the church. Pastor Hunt is listed as one of three messengers and preached from Eph. 2:10 to the Friday evening service. Sunday School statistics provided to the association for that year list 400 members enrolled in Bible study with 10 officers and teachers. Sunday School literature was described as

Southern Baptist while some other churches in the association are using Landmark or American Baptist curriculum.⁵⁸

Pastor Hunt passionately described the pressing needs beyond the church in an appeal in 1916, stating, “My people, listen – our mission boards are in great distress and are threatened with a crushing debt and our church is behind what it did last year. There is near \$100 past due on mission pledges. I wonder if we cannot have this in before the last day of April. If possible, do so,” he pled.

With growth over the next century, deacons had to decide which 20th century changes to reject as worldly. A line appeared to be drawn between activities deemed worthwhile and those that were pure entertainment. When the domed sanctuary provided a large gathering place for people in the community, those using the basement for social occasions were charged a dollar. If just one room was needed, the price dropped to a quarter. Policies relating to the use of property soon developed with each new edition more specific than the last.

On March 4, 1916, Pastor Hunt called the deacons together to discuss his resignation effective at the end of April. He described First Baptist as having “a luminous future and the making of a truly great church in one of the most strategic centers in the state.” Dr. Hunt went on to pastor two churches in Louisville,

serving well into his eighties at the second church. He was a trustee on the SBC Hospital Commission and western secretary of the SBC. Dr. Hunt authored many booklets drawn from sermons he preached, including *The Exposure of Millennial Dawnism (Jehovah's Witnesses)*, *Christian Science vs. the Bible*, *Is There Any Harm in Dancing? Is a Lie Ever Justifiable?* and *The Hell of the Bible?* Many of these are included in the book, *Paul's Superlatives and Other Sermons*. In one of his sermons he spoke from Phil. 3:10, calling it "A Lodge Sermon or Degrees in the Divine Life." His introduction challenged those who put the lodge above their church, noting, "They were never designed to be rivals of the church." Though himself a Master Mason, Dr. Hunt criticized the Mason or Odd Fellow who gives greater priority to his lodge than to church, noting such a man is often "paid up in his lodge and behind with his church." He delivered a message entitled "The Ideal Layman for the Home Church" before the state men's convention in Little Rock.

In the coming week the church reported a challenge accepted by First Baptist Church of Springdale in a three-month contest in Sunday School attendance. Disappointment was expressed at the failure of First Baptist to surpass the Springdale church's attendance.

At times the church was admonished to care more about the souls of men. "Reader, are you distressed that we are not having conversions? Do you realize that conditions in this line are not satisfactory?" The note urged bringing more of the unsaved into the service, going after them and compelling them to come while also praying that God may be in power at the service. An "attitude of expectancy" was also encouraged.

The church ministered to soldiers serving in the Great War in France, along with their families at home. A Soldiers' Reading Room was created for use by servicemen training at the U of A. Stationery was offered for their use that proclaimed "To the Folks at Home! Your Boys Are Our Boys!" The church lobbied for chaplains to be allowed to minister to soldiers wherever they were stationed. In a "memorial" to the U.S. Congress they protested the prohibition of pastors to preach the gospel and provide ministry in Army camps. At the time, Catholic, Jewish, and YMCA representatives were permitted, so Baptists sought similar access.

During this time, the Ladies Aid Society became known as Woman's Missionary Society. Youth organizations fostered by WMS provided Sunbeam Band for preschoolers and other auxiliaries for juniors, intermediate ages and young women in high school. The development of circles among the women's society had been introduced to First Baptist in 1917, a year before the plan was adopted convention-wide. Individual groups usually scheduled two meetings monthly while the entire Missionary Society met twice a month on Mondays. Leaders followed the program outlined in Royal Service magazine.

Three main objectives of the missions organization were: to become better informed of mission needs at home and abroad and to pray individually and col-

lectively for the work on these fields; to observe three periods of emphasis with prayer, study, and giving to missions (Lottie Moon Offering for Foreign Missions in December, Annie Armstrong Offering for Home Missions at Easter, and Dixie Jackson Offering for state missions in September); and the furthering of young peoples' organizations from Sunbeams to college.

Arkansas native **L. E. Barton** pastored from 1916-1918. He graduated from Union University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in addition to receiving four oratorical awards. Dr. Barton pastored in Georgia, Mississippi, Virginia, Alabama, and Hope, Arkansas, prior to serving in Fayetteville. In 1918 he was elected president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, serving two terms. One long-time member recalled that Dr. Barton drew some criticism for having a daughter who participated in local dances at a time when Baptists criticized the activity.

The 46-year old pastor was described as coming from "rugged, honest mountaineer, pure-blooded Anglo-Saxon stock," in one biography. "He knows no fear, neither of men or devils, and no man has risen so high that Dr. Barton's arrows of rebuke cannot reach him, if his life and conduct are dishonest or misleading to the public mind and conscience." He was further described as "a kingdom builder," a "champion of Foreign Missions," and one who led "many sin-scarred souls" from the brink of despair up to Calvary.⁵⁹



L. E. Barton
1916-1918

The state convention selected him to serve as general secretary, leading Arkansas Baptists from 1920 to 1921 through a difficult time of indebtedness. From there he returned to pastoring, serving in Virginia and Alabama. He was named executive secretary of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, leading them for five years during financial turmoil prompted by the stock market crash in 1929. He also served as a trustee to the Home Mission Board, vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and parliamentarian for a series of SBC presidents. He chaired a committee that revised the SBC constitution, and assisted other state conventions, associations, and churches in writing official documents. He wrote *The Gentleman from Tarsus*, *Three Dimensions of Love*, *Take Heed*, *Helps for Soul-winners* and *Amazing Grace*.

Charles Hillman Brough, an economics professor at the U of A since 1903 and deacon chairman of First Baptist was elected governor, serving from 1917 to 1921. While a member of the Fayetteville church, he taught the Young Men's Sunday School Class numbering 125 men. He was often the subject of prayer support in deacons' meetings and church services during this time. Brough refused the Arkansas Baptist State Convention's demand for a state law against the

teaching of evolution in the public schools. Described as a theistic evolutionist, he stood on one side of the argument against the *Baptist Advance* editor and ABSC General Secretary J. S. Rogers.

Also a member during this era was Judge John N. Tillman, circuit judge for the northwest district. He was named president of the U of A and then served five terms in Congress.

First Baptist Church issued a call to form Washington County Baptist Association in 1918, as a way of disassociating from Landmark views that had arisen in the existing association as early as the late 1800s. Division grew over methods of support of mission work and representation in associations. When the long-standing association met August 30, 1918, a majority of the messengers voted to make membership composed of churches rather than messengers of churches.

The Fayetteville church sharply disagreed with this change, voting unanimously to report, "Dear Brethren and Sisters: At the recent meeting of the Fayetteville Association the messengers present on Saturday afternoon voted, twenty-three to sixteen, to change the Constitution of that body. In our judgment, the Fayetteville Baptist Association has ceased to exist as a Baptist body because its constitution reads, 'The Association shall be composed of Messengers of Churches,' and not, 'This Association shall be composed of Churches.'"



The deacons and pastor of First Baptist Church in 1917 included (top row, left to right) F. W. Pigkel, biology professor; Bert Lewis, banker and hardware merchant; W. M. Briscoe, Germanic languages professor; (middle row) A. D. Weir, farmer and evangelist; James R. Grant, psychology professor; W. S. Campbell, businessman and church treasurer; H. J. Deyer, grocer; R. E. Wages, contractor; Henry Bossmeyer, decorator; (bottom row) J. E. Vaughan, liveryman; John R. Harris, banker and capitalist; L. E. Barton, pastor; Homer L. Pearson, lawyer and deacon board chairman; and G. H. Brough, economics professor and governor-elect of Arkansas.

“We believe that Baptist Associations are justified in the New Testament solely on the principle of co-operation. We believe that persons sent to such bodies are ‘the Messengers of the Churches, the glory of Christ,’ and not delegates who have legislative and ecclesiastical powers. We believe that Baptist Churches cannot delegate their authority to anybody, and that the functions and prerogatives of a Baptist Church cannot possibly be exercised except in assembled Church Capacity. The Fayetteville Baptist Association has violated this Scriptural principal of the freedom of New Testament Churches.”

“We believe that the Arkansas Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention are scriptural in principal, sound in practice and efficient in management, and constitute, therefore, the best and most economical agencies through which Southern Baptist Churches can do Co-operative work for Missions.”⁶⁰

Churches that agreed with this stance were invited to send messengers to a meeting in late October “for the purpose of organizing a Baptist Association through which we can Scripturally Co-operate for the building up of our Master’s Kingdom throughout the whole earth.” While the epidemic of influenza delayed that meeting for a month, messengers responded representing churches of First Baptist of Springdale, First Baptist of Prairie Grove, and Friendship Baptist of Springdale, and organized Washington County Baptist Association on November 26, 1918. Other Southern Baptist churches left the older association within the next year, joining the new group.⁶¹

The next year, messengers from 10 churches attended the 1919 meeting where First Baptist of Fayetteville made a strong appeal for churches to maintain mission programs for women and children in keeping with Southern Baptist priorities.

H. H. Burton served as pastor only one year, from 1919 to 1920, leaving to pastor First Baptist Church of Springdale. The report of the church treasurer showed total contributions amounting to \$9,279 of which \$3,797 was for missions and benevolence. Woman’s Missionary Union reported an enrollment of 86 with an average attendance of 40. “Their rather meticulous financial statement included contributions toward church expenses to Foreign, Home, and State Missions, and to French orphans.”⁶² The active membership of the church at the time was reported at 373 with 37 people received by letter, 36 baptized, and four restored to fellowship.

In 1920 the entire Southern Baptist Convention was challenged to participate in the Seventy-Five Million Campaign intended to celebrate the denomination’s seventy-fifth anniversary by raising \$75 million for their various organizations. If raised, this would eliminate ongoing debt in the SBC and launch a post-war outreach effort. However, in the depressed economy following WWI, little was paid on First Baptist’s pledge of \$20,000. More than 25 years elapsed before this debt was absolved with an overpayment of several thousand dollars. Final collections in the convention surpassed \$58 million. Though short of the goal, one historian said, “Given the larger financial environment impacting South-

ern Baptists, the miracle may have been the record shattering amount actually realized.”⁶³

B. L. Ayers pastored from 1921 to 1923 and the deacons’ minutes reveal their great appreciation for his ministry. The church’s budget in 1921 was \$6,250, providing an increase in the pastor’s salary to \$2,500. During that year many members continued to pay toward pledges to the Seventy-Five Million Campaign. In a commitment noted in a local newspaper article, the church announced, “Except in the case of an emergency of some special relief work, no public collections will be taken during the current year.” A house located west of the church was purchased from Dr. J. P. Hight for use as a parsonage.

On November 7, 1921 the deacons passed a resolution of thanks and congratulations for Pastor Ayres’ first year of service, stating, “He has by, and with the Lord’s omnipotent direction, added one hundred new members to this church body, given great spiritual vision to our membership, been an earnest, zealous contender for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, and made himself all things to all men to the end that God is honored in our midst.” The members were encouraged to extend to Ayers and “his good wife who has so faithfully aided him their gratitude and assurance of loyal devotion, first to the eternal truth and then to our pastor and his leadership.” A similar resolution passed a year later, assuring the pastor of their unflinching support. The pastor served as moderator of the Washington County Baptist Association in 1921 and 1922.



B. L. Ayers
1921-1923

In December of 1922 the church hosted the Arkansas Baptist State Convention meeting. At the time, the congregation numbered 600 with a Sunday School average attendance of 370. “With a thoroughly modern plant, having classrooms and basement adequate for all needs, the church specializes in ministering to the Baptist student body in the University of Arkansas,” read a local newspaper account.

The deacons received a report of a woman resigning as choir director due to health conditions and other “arduous duties.” The board authorized two men to visit with her and see if she would reconsider. Apparently, she did not relent because deacons discussed “the need, plan, and expectation” for an assistant pastor to lead the music.

In a four-page handwritten set of what appear to be minutes from a September 17, 1922 church conference, Rev. Ayres is listed as the moderator. These pages report a motion by Brother Mullinix to organize an Independent Baptist



A children's Sunbeam band gathered on the steps of the church in the 1912. (Photograph courtesy of Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville, Campbell Collection, MC 1427, Box 1, Folder 2, Album 2, #78)

Church. The minutes read, "Motion Defeated 5 to 11 in favor of Mission Church."

A Men's Bible Class offered at Victory Theater in Fayetteville drew more than 100 men each week by the middle of 1923. Taught by Pastor Ayers, the outreach effort yielded frequent conversions. Of the 390 attending Sunday School on May 6, 1925, 125 were enrolled in the extension class at the theater.

On May 28, 1923 the deacons affirmed the pastor's appeal to church

members to assist in the endowment of Ouachita Baptist College. A few months later their discussion addressed the problem of collecting contributions to the Ouachita Endowment and the Seventy-Five Million Fund.

Charles Estes Wilbanks came on February 10, 1924, preaching his first message to the congregation on Psalm 90:2. A native of Louisiana, Rev. Wilbanks graduated from Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He served until 1926, and later ministered in Oklahoma, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alaska, and Canada. In both California and Mississippi he served as the evangelism secretary for the state Baptist conventions, establishing that departmental emphasis. Later, he became director of evangelism for the Home Mission Board of the SBC. Rev. Wilbanks wrote at least one book and many evangelistic tracts. He returned in the 1940s to serve First Baptist Church of Springdale as pastor.



Charles E. Wilbanks
1924 -1925

First Baptist offered their facilities for use by the American Legion state convention meeting in 1924. "Although sobered by misgivings as to the propriety of lending the use of a place dedicated solely to the worship of God and the work of His Kingdom for any other purpose," the deacon board

recommended the action due to their being “so impressed with the opportunity to serve the community.”

At the January 12, 1925 deacons’ meeting, a resolution was drafted condemning horse racing as outlined in pending legislation. The development of gambling in Hot Springs became a concern for which Baptists throughout the state rallied opposition. A few years later, Deacon W. S. Campbell sent a telegram to the governor seeking his veto of a divorce bill. “It viciously contravenes moral standards, marital ideals, and besmirches the name of Arkansas,” he wrote, describing himself as Sunday School teacher of a class of 50 University young men.

The 1925 church budget was recommended in the amount of \$14,000 to be divided sixty-five percent for use at home and thirty-five percent for benevolence. By December 19, 1924, only \$9,000 had been subscribed and the finance chairman was directed to “advise with those who had not seemed to comprehend that we were adopting [a] Unified Budget and get them to go at least as far toward this budget as they had gone for all causes in 1924.”

The Southern Baptist Convention designed a new strategy in 1925 known as the Cooperative Program as a means of helping churches apportion funds more equitably to Southern Baptist causes. Over time, FBC would become a leading contributor in the state to the Cooperative Program. The church was already making regular contributions to missions offerings promoted primarily by the women of the congregation.

In August of 1925 a Workers’ Council of the County Sunday School Association drew participation from First Baptist Church, Central United Methodist Church, plus several other congregations in the county. Pastor Wilbanks made the case for having a Sunday School, emphasizing the importance of teaching the Bible. “The book is the text for religious instruction,” he said, adding that Bible teaching needed special emphasis at a time when it is so greatly neglected in the schools.” The reporter covering the event wrote of the pastor’s second reason as being “to win lost people.” He wrote that Pastor Wilbanks “gave a striking example of a young lady Sunday School teacher that brought all of the 13 rough boys into the Kingdom.”

In an address to the Laymen’s and Pastors’ meeting held at Prairie Grove in early November of 1925, Pastor Wilbanks asked, “Shall our missionaries be called home? Shall the heathen have the gospel? Shall the sick be ministered to? Shall we fail our Lord, who gave His Son for us? We can answer these questions by encircling the earth with our dollars,” he declared.

Frank W. Carnett preached his first sermon on February 28, 1926, from Romans 12:1. Having received the unanimous recommendation from the Board of Deacons, Carnett was asked by the congregation to serve as pastor. He came from First Baptist Church of Hope, Arkansas. The Missouri native also pastored in Oklahoma and South Carolina. The church found it difficult to meet the budget during this time. In early 1927, the pastor reduced his own salary by ten



The Men's Victory Class in 1928 was taught by W. S. Campbell.

percent and eliminated a portion of the clerical assistance in order to bring the budget in line with anticipated receipts.

One illustrative note recorded in the minutes of the May deacons' meeting in 1927 gave attention to the "habit of young people of loitering in cars outside during services." It was agreed that several deacons would speak to them about the matter.

By 1928 the membership was reported to be at 950. Annual church budget ranged from \$10,000 to \$12,000. In what is described as a custom of the church, the annual business meeting was held at the close of that year on New Year's Eve, beginning at 8 o'clock with a devotional. Reports were given by various church organizations of officers elected for the coming year. A social hour followed until 11:30 p.m. when the congregation reassembled in the auditorium for a watch-night service closing a few minutes after midnight. Some 200 people attended the service in 1928.

Throughout these years mission support remained a priority. The creative fund-raising efforts of the WMU are seen in their sponsorship of a Frigidaire demonstration in 1928. By drawing participation from 15 people, the WMU received a \$6 contribution and an "ice-box" was given to a family with the Fayetteville Ice Com-



Frank W. Carnett
1926 - 1929

pany donating ice. Other demonstrations featured H&K Coffee and a “Musical Fantasy” presented by a Chicago performer, all yielding contributions along with the regular dues paid monthly by WMU members.

“One ingenious money-making scheme was called the Missionary Traveling Bag,” according to Mary Jane Haley. “A container with two priced items in it was started out. Each woman upon receiving the bag bought one item and placed her payment for it in a little bank. She then added an item to the one that remained, put a price on it, and sent the bag on its way to the next person.” Contributions yielded funds for 180 yards of carpeting priced at \$3.25 per yard, a nursery worker for church services, and furnishing the kitchen with dishes, silver flatware, and a new coal-fired stove.

In 1928, W. S. Campbell described Fayetteville as one of the best church-going towns in the state. “No matter how prejudiced men and women may be about Christianity, they recognize its force in life, and prefer to own property in a God-fearing town, and certainly will not advise their offspring to go into a God-less community to make a home. Soon after the University came here whiskey and saloons were voted out of town. There are no segregated districts. We are not prudish, but we are decent, and strive for ideals if we never attain them.”

The church mourned the loss of Dr. Carnett and his wife in 1929 when they were killed in a car accident. Carnett’s brother-in-law, Rev. Montgomery, served briefly as interim. The church maintained an interest in the Carnett family, inviting son Albert Carnett to lead revival services many years later.

NOTES:

⁵⁴ Mrs. O. T. Williams, 7.

⁵⁵ Campell, 74.

⁵⁶ Murray Smart, chairman of the Sesquicentennial Celebration Committee of First Baptist Church, Fayetteville, provided the description of the domed building.

⁵⁷ Alma Hunt, *History of Woman’s Missionary Union*, (Nashville: Convention Press, 1964) 111-113.

⁵⁸ Minutes, Fayetteville Baptist Association, September 3-5, 1915, 2.

⁵⁹ B. J. W. Graham, Editor, *Baptist Biography* (Atlanta: Index Printing, 1917), 12-15.

⁶⁰ Campbell, 26.

⁶¹ *A History of Our Churches*, Washington-Madison Baptist Association, 13-14.

⁶² Haley, 13.

⁶³ Fletcher, Jesse C., *The Southern Baptist Convention, A Sesquicentennial History* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994) 134.

FOURTH QUARTER CENTURY 1929 - 1954				
	United States	Arkansas	Baptists	First Baptist
1929	Stock market crashes; Great Depression commences	Drought ruins cotton crop	SBC ministries struggle to survive debt; missionary appointments on hold	Jo Scaggs joins First Baptist Church
1931				
1933			Baptist Hundred Thousand Club seeks to eliminate debt.	
1935	Congress passes Social Security Act	Hot Springs mobster arrested	SBC reports 4.3 million members	
1937				
1939			Broadman Hymnal introduced	Jo Scaggs appointed as Southern Baptist missionary
1941	U.S. enters World War II		SBC supports 1,200 military chaplains	Radio broadcast of services begins
1943			Golden Gate Seminary opens	Church supports Anti-Saloon League
1945			SBC centennial; Radio & TV Commission begins	
1947	United Nations established	UofA becomes first public university in South to integrate	Southern Baptists move toward north and west	Church library opens
1949				
1951			Southeastern Seminary opens; SBC registered 10,000 messengers for first time	
1953	Half of homes own television set	Deadliest tornado kills 111 in state		176 members and pastor leave to start University Baptist

CHAPTER FIVE

James Thornwell Gillespie was called on April 7, 1929, preaching His first sermon from 2 Corinthians 6:17. With degrees from Wake Forest College and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Dr. Gillespie taught Bible and Greek at Oklahoma Baptist University. OBU's student newspaper described Gillespie as "a strong preacher and highly efficient teacher." The Gillespies and their seven children lived next door to the church in a parsonage located where the educational building now stands. Associational records show his annual salary at \$3,217.



J. T. Gillespie
1929-1935

An October 1, 1932, entry in a Sunday School ledger revealed how seriously teachers and directors accepted their roles. "I gave up my class of sixteen-year old girls to take Mrs. Butler's place as superintendent of intermediate Sunday School," the teacher wrote. She described the classes by their names of Sheaf Gatherers, True Blues, Radiants, Agoga Cadets, and Loyal Legions. New teachers were assigned to the classes of Gideons, Obedient Servants, Sons of Truth, and Life Savers. The notes indicate that teachers visited 28 pupils that month. By the end of the school year, the superintendent described a meeting of teachers held at her house, adding, "never a finer group of workers, all enthusiastic and encouraging." A few weeks later, she wrote, "The Business Women's Class being determined to have Mrs. Clinehens as their teacher, persuaded Bro. Gillespie that it was the right thing to do...therefore we had to let her go and Mrs. Baker was put in her place. I hope it the Lord's will!" Detailed notes appear with listings of those students recently converted and reference any not yet baptized.

Each week teachers received a Weekly Absentee Report with the instruction to make a personal visit to those whose names were on the sheet. "Do it all in the name of the Sunday School and church. Show them that we are interested in them. If you fail, then the Sunday School and church fail. We are depending absolutely on you to represent the Church and School. Find out why they were not present and urge them to come next Sunday." A closing reminder to be faithful draws from Nehemiah 4:6, "And so build we because the people had a mind to work."

Notes from a Sunday School clinic provide an acrostic to describe the characteristics of a teacher: T – take time to be holy; E – employ the latest and most successful methods of teaching; A – acquire a personal knowledge of each pupil; C – cultivate patience, sympathy, self-control; H – hold yourself to your main task of teaching the Bible; E – enlist every available prospect possible; and R – reclaim the lost for Jesus. When it came time for students to promote to the next class, the superintendent issued diplomas, expressed pride in their achievements and eagerness to hear of their experiences. “God has given each of you a will and you must choose the road you wish to travel,” she stated in her notes for the occasion. “To will to do God’s will gives victory. Never feel sorry for yourself. Be a leader of the best and not a follower of weak indifferent people. Take hold and work with God. He is trying to get certain things done. Go and find what these are. Then get into line and help.”

The most well known missionary to come out of First Baptist Church of Fayetteville was Josephine Scaggs. On February 24, 1929, she moved her letter to the church and a relationship began that lasted until her death. At the age of 12 she was called by God to go to Africa as a missionary. Her parents dismissed this as a “childish whim,” but they never underestimated their daughter’s determination.

While working at Southwestern Gas & Electric Company, she was saving



Josephine Scaggs is pictured (third woman from the left) among the Southern Baptist missionaries appointed in 1939.



This Junior Department from 1932 posed during Sunday School. Students were expected to develop the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, prayer, and giving, as well as regular attendance of worship. Certificates were issued upon promotion from each department and teachers were expected to achieve a standard of excellence.



The Baraca and Philathea classes of 1930 are pictured outside the church.

money to begin college studies required for appointment as a missionary. Mrs. W. E. McWhorter supported Miss Scagg's desire to serve as a missionary and encouraged her to take a step of faith by enrolling in the two-year Central Baptist College in Conway. After completing the program, she returned to Fayetteville and Dr. Gillespie arranged for her to serve part-time at the Baptist Student Union directing student ministry while completing her education in three years.

Following theological studies at Southwestern Seminary, she was appointed as a missionary by the Foreign Mission Board in 1939, first doing evangelistic and educational work in Benin. Next, she taught in the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbonoshos before moving to Joinkrama. During each of her furloughs to Fayetteville, the WMU hosted showers to equip her for her return to Africa.

Pastor Gillespie resigned in 1935, moving on to pastor in Maine and New York, direct associational missions, and assist the Home Mission Board. In 1959 he wrote a fictional account of the life of an associational missionary. Through this creative style, *Reaching Rural Churches* described the value of urban and rural churches uniting for the cause of Christ. He explained that all mission work should be church-centered. Associations offer assistance by surveying a region to locate needs and enlist churches to help. Dr. Gillespie said that consideration must be given to neighboring churches when new work is planted.



Pastor and Mrs. Gillespie spent a lifetime planting churches among Southern Baptists after leaving Fayetteville.

The pastor's attitude toward the organization of programs within a church is reflected in this later publication. "The main business of every Sunday school class is to take its list of prospects and never rest until the last one of them is enlisted in the class, or is removed from its responsibility," Dr. Gillespie said. "The Sunday school should thus keep a constant stream of lost people flowing toward salvation. Until the last one is reached, the class has opportunity to practice what it learns."⁶⁴ Through every other organization of a typical Southern Baptist, Dr. Gillespie described an evangelistic function, addressing Training Union, Brotherhood, Woman's Missionary Union, and music.

In the closing chapter of his book, Dr. Gillespie described a "temptation to go all out for community de-

velopment with the emphasis on material and social improvements rather than a spiritual emphasis.”

Through the fictional pastor of whom he wrote, Dr. Gillespie said, “The ‘foolishness of preaching’ the gospel must continue to be uppermost in the church program.”⁶⁵ He closed with what was likely an expression of his own mixed feelings about moving from one church to another, then directing associational missions and eventually working at the Home Mission Board. The central figure of his book is asked to leave behind the people he loved to take on a new assignment at the HMB. “When God speaks it’s time for them to move on,” he wrote, describing a hope of returning to visit his old friends some day.

Dr. Gillespie eventually retired after a lifetime of following God’s call to many diverse cultures within the United States. Upon his 86th birthday, he returned to Fayetteville and enjoyed the celebration with friends from his former pastorate.

From 1936 to 1940, **Blake Smith** served as pastor, delivering his first sermon from Numbers 13:30-33. He was born into a poor family in Jasper, Arkansas. A man who saw potential in Smith decided to finance his education. Dr. Smith chose Yale Divinity School, believing he would receive a much broader, more comprehensive education there. After completing his studies, he pastored in Missouri. He then came to First Baptist of Fayetteville with his wife, Alberta, and their four boys. The youngest, Bennie, died on March 13, 1936. He expressed his appreciation to the church for their expressions of sympathy. “Mrs. Smith and I will never be able to express to the members of the church our deep appreciation of the kindness and love which you have extended to us in our great sorrow. We pray you to bear with us patiently for a little while. The blow came



A group of University students gathered at the pastor’s study which also served as the Student Center.



Blake Smith
1936 - 1940

so suddenly that it has almost overwhelmed us. We want you to know that there is no bitterness in our souls, and we have confidence that in time God's purpose will be revealed, though we can not see it now."

A former member recalled being baptized by Smith and the powerful influence he had on her life. "He was dynamic, intellectual, a caring pastor, and very personable." She recalled church services under his tenure as being very formal with Dr. Smith wearing a clerical robe or a frock-tail coat with gray striped trousers. "His sermons were fast-paced, intellectually challenging, with great spiritual depth. He was appealing to college students and University faculty and they attended in large numbers," she added.⁶⁶

Dr. Smith was said to have spent one hour preparing for every minute he preached, closely following his notes. He was described as being especially popular among the membership with ties to the University. Smith spoke during the school's Religious Focus Week. He is listed as moderator of Washington County Baptist Association in 1936.

Dr. Smith resigned in 1940 to accept a call to First Baptist Church of Conway, Arkansas. His next move was to the University Baptist Church of Austin, Texas, where he retired after serving 30 years. Under his leadership, the Austin congregation was the first Southern Baptist church to racially integrate. He died in Ithaca, New York, in 1973.

Oscar Lee Gibson served from 1940 until 1947, offering a message on Acts 2:40 when he first came to the church. Born in Kansas, he had been a circuit rider pastor in both Kansas and Indiana. He also



Dr. Smith and his family are shown in Fayetteville, along with their dog.

pastored in Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. Dr. Gibson was educated at Oklahoma Baptist University and received his master's and doctor's degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

After beginning his ministry at Fayetteville at age 53, he proposed many changes. He supported broadcasting the church's services on the radio, raising funds for a new educational building, hiring an education director, and developing a mission on the south side. He was named a trustee of the Baptist Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention from 1940 to 1947 and wrote often for their publications. While pastor, Dr. Gibson served on a Radio Commission of the state convention, exploring how best to utilize radio as a spiritual resource.



O. L. Gibson
1940 - 1947

As Fayetteville saw an influx of soldiers training prior to deployment, the church sought opportunities to minister to these young people. Many of the student leaders who were active in the Baptist Student Center enlisted. Mrs. Gibson led a group of women who placed New Testaments in the hands of soldiers departing on the train. A few years later a deacon asked that attention be given to the habit of adding stars to the service flag to represent those from the church



Vacation Bible School children gather during the summer of 1940 for a two-week session.



Photos taken in the 1940s show the church from the northeast corner (above) and driving north on College (below). The tree-lined College Avenue provided on-the-street parking outside the auditorium. During the years when Dr. Gibson pastored, he encouraged the church to set aside funds for an educational building as Sunday School attendance grew beyond 300 people.



who were serving in the armed forces. Blue stars represented each service member and were replaced by gold stars when a soldier was killed in action. The church's compassion for those recovering in war-torn lands was evident through offerings collected in 1945, including \$10 for the Red Cross, \$4.40 for the White Cross, \$18 for Chinese Relief, \$52 for European relief and \$233.94 to stock Italian Relief boxes.

In anticipation of a Peace Conference in San Francisco, the pastor encouraged First Baptist to join with "churches all over the south" in submitting a resolution asking that religious liberty be advanced. The statement as approved by the church read: "Whereas, you meet in conference looking to permanent international peace, and whereas, you will doubtless formulate and adopt an agreement which will serve as a basis of cooperation in international relationships; and whereas, complete religious freedom of all nations of the earth will make a substantial contribution toward permanent peace, therefore, be it resolved, that we approximately 1,000 members of the First Baptist Church of Fayetteville, Arkansas, United States of America, do hereby earnestly petition your august body to incorporate into such world agreement, an article guaranteeing religious freedom for all people of all nations."

Throughout the years that Dr. Gibson pastored, he advised the deacons regularly of solicitations he received by mail that ranged from a man trying to start a church in California, the work of a missionary in Indian Territory, kits being purchased for Russians, a traveling man distributing tracts and pamphlets among students and soldiers. Occasionally these bits of information led to the deacons sending a few dollars to the individual, but usually the information was recorded in the minutes and discussion moved on to another matter. Sometimes the pastor carried these appeals on to the business meeting where a freewill offering for the particular cause often resulted.

At the same time, Dr. Gibson was a strong advocate of the Cooperative Program. Years later he wrote a column describing the adoption of the Cooperative Program as "the greatest step forward" by Southern Baptists. He told of receiving 52 letters from individuals asking for contributions, or for the privilege of presenting their appeals to financial causes they represented. "This was both confusing and discouraging; discouraging because it meant that some worthy causes would receive support while others did not. The Cooperative Program provided a means by which all causes included in the budget received what was considered their proportionate share of the annual contributions. That was a great relief to the harassed pastors, churches, and denominational agencies and it meant the dawning of a new and better day for all."⁶⁷ The WMU fully embraced the Cooperative Program as a superior method of funding Southern Baptist missions.

Adjustments were made to the worship schedule as a result of a special committee's study. They proposed "the morning song service begin earlier instead of using the longer period between teaching and preaching services for gossip and fellowship." Over several months a deacon reported Sunday School

attendance averaging between 282 and 304 in the summer with somewhere between a third and a half of those people remaining for preaching. Various adjustments to the order of service were proposed, including observance of the Lord's Supper at the beginning. At one point it was suggested the baptismal service come at the beginning of the service instead of the close. "This suggestion was tried. The women objected because it caused women candidates to sit though the service with wet hair."

In 1940 Gladys Sonneman began playing the organ for First Baptist Church. From her teenage years, she had been playing the organ in various public settings. At the Apollo Theater in Springdale she provided background music for the silent movies. Later she played at Victory Theater on the east side of the Square in Fayetteville, and eventually the Palace Theater and U-Ark Theater, also in Fayetteville. From 1948 to 1952, she teamed with Richard Greer as soloist to broadcast a thirty-minute morning program daily over the forerunner to KHOG from her home on College Avenue. At the time Greer was serving as choir director for First Baptist.

During these years there was discussion about the condition of the cabin owned by First Baptist Church at the state assembly grounds in Siloam Springs. The church had been renting space to other congregations at a rate of \$2.50 per child, but eventually only one group of girls from First Baptist used it during a summer because of the poor condition. Women sent to inspect the facility came back with several suggestions. First, they asked for new mattress covers. Then, they sought modifications to food preparation. They proposed having a cook serve meals so that the girls would be properly fed. The deacons agreed and the women implemented the changes.

Dr. Gibson led in establishing a Baptist Student Center for University students. After several failed attempts to hire a man for the job in 1943, the pastor reported to the deacons, "There is no chance for a man as student secretary." Apparently funding was insufficient to support the head of a household. He anticipated that the Sunday School Board would allocate \$300 and the state board would contribute \$400, and suggested the church contribute \$600. The minutes record, "He thought [the church] ought to secure a woman. He recommended that we do that – we secure a woman." They apparently enlisted the pastor's secretary, Mary Jane Redwine, to serve as BSU secretary as well.

Several years later, Dr. Gibson directed the attention of the state convention to a residence at 944 West Maple that he recommended as a suitable location for Baptist Student Union ministry. State mission funds were used to purchase the property for \$6,000 with the ground floor remodeled for the student program and the director's family using the upper floor. First Baptist Church led in contributing \$14,000 to the effort. The next year the church transferred control of the BSU to the state convention. Dr. Gibson led the effort to secure a full-time student secretary, expressing his long-range hope "that we may have a teacher of Bible who will indoctrinate our youth in the fundamentals of the faith as we Baptists

believe and practice.”

Dr. Gibson took a lead role in teaching theology to the older teenagers and young adults. In December of 1944 church leaders discussed the need to hire additional staff to relate to youth. “In view of the fact that an increasing and alarming number of our young people absent themselves from the various church services, we, the Training Union [leaders], submit the following recommendation – that Mrs. Margaret Suttle be employed by the church as Young Peoples leader or Educational Director for a period of six months. We feel Mrs. Suttle is a consecrated and capable leader with a charming personality that would appeal to young people. A great concern is felt by the entire membership of the church and especially, we who have young people in our homes. In the past we had a large number of students and other young folk, attending the mid-week prayer services, as well as the Sunday Services. Now we have none on Wednesday night, few on Sunday morning and fewer still Sunday evening. We feel this is a grave loss and may seriously affect the future of our church,” the committee stated, urging the church to approve Mrs. Suttle’s leadership and suggesting her title as “Promotor of the Young Peoples Activities of the Church.”

She graciously committed to help in any way the church saw fit, but declined to be paid, preferring to volunteer her time. Her work turned a declining enrollment around as the church began to see an increase in the attendance of those aged 16 to 24.

In 1941 the WMU reorganized with new leadership and a Royal Ambassadors group offered for boys. When Baptist Brotherhood was organized a few years later, RAs were transferred to their charge. The church heard from Pedro Hernandez, pastor of Mexican Baptist Church in Houston, during a series of lectures on work among Mexicans in the U.S.

The church contributed to the campaign of the Anti-Saloon League that arose when a liquor referendum was proposed in 1942. A few years later the church opposed the city’s granting a license to a liquor store at 523 W. Dickson. Dr. Gibson was particularly interested in opposing the liquor industry, having written his doctoral thesis on “The Anti-Liquor Agitation As a Social Movement.”

A complaint was heard that the organist’s salary had been raised to a level commensurate with the music director. The deacons adjusted the director’s salary by \$10 a month to keep it higher than the organist. They also saw to it that the “suit for the pastor’s use in the baptismal services” was replaced because “the one in use leaks.”

In 1942 Josephine Scaggs made her first trip to West Africa and returned a year later to hold a Bible school for children at Joinkrama. By 1945 she moved there as a career missionary appointed by the Southern Baptist Convention and supported financially through Cooperative Program gifts received from local churches like First Baptist of Fayetteville.

A city missionary proposed conducting a Vacation Bible School in the southwest region of the city in 1945 with the support of First Baptist. Classes were

offered under the shade trees in the yard of Mr. and Mrs. V.D. Mitchell at Stone Street.⁶⁸ Frequently, the church funded special evangelistic events conducted by the local missionary, with a Sunday School class helping raise money for his salary or benefits at various times.

In April of 1946 the deacons recommended designating May 26 as Memorial Day and providing a suitable program to pay tribute to members of the church who had lost their lives in the recent war with a special offering taken that would contribute to the building fund.

Elisabeth Thomas began serving as organist, receiving \$15 per month for three services a week, in addition to accompanying the choir rehearsal. A citywide celebration of Victory in Europe was held at First Baptist May 7, 1945, drawing a capacity crowd. Miss Thomas provided a half-hour organ prelude, prompting a standing ovation to "Variations on America."⁶⁹ Dr. Gibson offered the scripture reading.

On December 9, 1946, the deacons learned of the pastor's decision to resign. Dr. Gibson read a letter with five recommendations that included delaying the calling of an educational director, encouraging pledges to the Ouachita College campaign, raising a support staff member's salary, and delaying a decision on the manner in which pledges to the budget would be subscribed. He told of his intention to resign effective January 15 after returning from Nashville. "Much discussion followed regarding the financial obligations of this termination, however it was agreed that perhaps the best plan would be the taking of a love offering for Brother Gibson on his last Sunday in our employ."

A week later, Dr. Gibson described his unfulfilled dreams in a letter written to church members. These included hiring an educational director, erecting an educational plant, expanding student ministry at the U of A, and planting a mission on the southwest side of town. "These are dreams which I had hoped to realize but which may be and, no doubt, will be accomplished under the leadership of my successor. It is rather generally known that there has been criticism of, and agitation against the pastor and his leadership for some time. The pastor has not knowingly contributed to this by word or deed, but has sincerely sought to treat all with fairness and Christian courtesy in the hope that greater unanimity might be realized in the prosecution of our work." Feeling "that his hands were, in a measure, tied," he decided to present his resignation. It was another five months before his ministry was concluded and on May 11, 1947, a freewill offering was taken to assist his move to Yukon, Oklahoma. After several months of supply preaching, then a few years pastoring an Oklahoma church, Gibson served until retirement as a hospital chaplain.

As he predicted, every one of Dr. Gibson's dreams were realized within a few years. A mission in the area of Jefferson School was begun, but the effort was discontinued when workers went home on summer vacations. Near the end of Dr. Gibson's tenure a westside mission developed at the corner of Duncan and West Rock. Plans were made for a revival meeting under an open-air tent. By

1948 lots were purchased and a building begun. By 1950, the mission became a church under the name of Immanuel Baptist Church. And by 1951 a full-time director of the BSU was hired as Jamie Jones began his ministry here.

During the 1940s the church made greater use of Southern Baptist resources in the areas of stewardship, mission education, and evangelism. The SBC celebrated its centennial anniversary in 1945 and First Baptist followed a recommended emphasis with continuous season of prayer before a spring revival was held. Associational Sunday School training was followed by a Sunday School rally at the church. The church revived the "cradle roll," enrolling newborns of church members in Sunday School and visiting the parents to encourage their continued participation in church life. Attention was also given to training workers and "provision for a revival in the colored church."

Several significant and long-lasting steps were taken in 1947 prior to acquiring a new pastor. A Brotherhood organization was formed to involve men in mission action. A motion was made recommending cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention on a plan for tithing. Evidence of this was seen in the shift from subscriptions to pledges for the coming year's budget.

In October of 1947 the 46-year old **Walter L. Johnson** preached his first sermon from Colossians 1:18 and received a unanimous call to pastor First Baptist Church. Born and reared in London, Kentucky, Dr. Johnson was educated at Georgetown College and received a master of theology and doctor of philosophy degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was student assistant to Dr. A. T. Robertson, a well-known Greek scholar. He held several pastorates in Kentucky, North Carolina, and Mississippi, in addition to serving as a professor in the Mexican Baptist Theological Seminary at El Paso under Foreign Mission Board appointment. He was hired at a salary of \$6,000, a sixty-five percent increase over what the previous pastor was paid. Several members confirmed that he had requested a contract that would ensure his employment as pastor for five years. In addition, he received a car allowance of \$600. His secretary from his previous pastorate consented to move to Fayetteville in order to continue assisting him. She was paid \$1,920 annually.

In recommending Dr. Johnson to the Fayetteville church, an American Baptist leader called him one of the greatest New Testament scholars of the South and one of the top three scholars in Southern Baptist pulpits. Garvin Shipley chaired the pulpits committee that recommended him. During his years in Fayetteville he moderated the Washington-Madison Baptist Association, served



Walter Johnson
1947 - 1953

on the SBC Coordination and Correlation Committee, SBC Evangelism Committee, Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board and was elected recording secretary. He often wrote for Sunday School Board publications, as well as the North Carolina and Arkansas state Baptist papers. His radio messages and newspaper editorials addressed current issues such as alcohol, communism, divorce, and racial integration.

Within months of Dr. Johnson arriving, the deacons and church agreed to his request to hire a director of religious education. Herbert W. McGlamery was hired to lead in this area and his wife served as music director. Later, A.D. Bates ministered to students. Other goals of the former pastor were soon accomplished as the church built an educational building and began offering classes in Old and New Testament taught by Dr. Johnson on campus in the BSU building.

Various indications of community outreach are indicated in the events sponsored by the church. Students performing in a University of Arkansas musical were allowed to use the church for a presentation in 1948. Noted Memphis preacher R. G. Lee's sermon "Pay-Day Someday" was offered on a "sound-moving picture" the following year.

After the St. James Missionary Baptist Church burned in 1944, First Baptist Church of Fayetteville took responsibility for having it rebuilt and contributed half of the cost. Other churches contributed liberally and the entire cost of \$7,532.09 was raised in time for the building dedication on September 2, 1948. Dr. Johnson was listed as one of several speakers and those listed on the Finance Committee for the Negro Church included W. G. Shipley, James R. Greer, and Frank Suttle. The deacons also approved paying the necessary insurance premium "to take care of the colored church's need."

In 1948 the deacons discussed the value of the rotational system that had been implemented a few years earlier, allowing a period of rest between years of service. Each member remained convinced that "the present system though it had its faults was really the only sound system to have." Another item that often appears is the attention deacons gave in approving individuals who had requested membership. Notes reflect their consideration of prior church experience or testimony of conversion. At one time the deacons reviewed a request for membership by a man who had been sued for divorce by his wife. Three deacons had been assigned to investigate the matter and shared court testimony indicating that the wife "had lacked correct family fidelity in her relations with other men." After a thorough discussion based on information given by the Baptist church where the couple had been excluded from membership, the deacons agreed that the man would be accepted by statement for membership if he so desired. A final note stated, "This action not to come before our church unless necessary."

Many of the deacon meetings addressed the importance of an upcoming revival, including cottage prayer meetings, publicity, a pre-revival study course and a note afterward expressing appreciation to the pastor for the work he had done throughout this time of spiritual emphasis. At one meeting the pastor re-



Members of First Baptist Church rallied to help St. James Missionary Baptist Church recover from a fire in 1944. (Photograph courtesy of Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville, Campbell Collection, MC 1427, Box 4, Album 10, p. 53.)

ceived support for his desire to erect “an appropriate neon sign.” Later, time was given to encouraging Church Training with a testimony from a member about the value of training received.

Discussion was given to guiding the church’s representation on the City Hospital Board in regard to administration and consideration of relocating. The opinion was advanced that this was such a controversial issue in the community that any church action might involve the church in a detrimental way. The deacons took no action.” After a service station opened across from the church, the Lion Oil Company was asked to close the business on Sundays.

At one meeting it was noted that the pastor and his wife would be “dedicating their home to the work of the Lord,” adding that deacons’ wives would be “needed to serve and usher people around.” Another meeting included a report from the pastor on the progress of the church, “stating the future looked bright since we at last have a well rounded force, and are well organized.” A July 5, 1948, report on Sunday School attendance expressed optimism at “running consistently ahead of the quotas set,” praising the work of good teachers. A goal of 650 was encouraged for July 15 Sunday School attendance. An earlier report spoke of the church reaching an enrollment of 1,000, the highest number since the pastor had arrived on the field. “Good attendance and talented teachers” were commended in an earlier report on Vacation Bible School with the pastor

stating, "A great good was done for the children in this school."

The budget of the church between 1940 and 1950 grew tenfold with the amount dedicated to local expenses increasing from \$9,728 in 1940 to \$96,857 in 1949. All gifts to missions and benevolence grew from \$1,416 to \$109,910 with the portion dedicated to the Cooperative Program increasing from \$600 to \$7,292. Most other categories such as Sunday School enrollment and average attendance doubled from 592 to 1,084 in enrollment and 240 to 532 in average attendance. Total membership grew from 1,228 to a high of 1,948 in 1948 and 1,717 in 1949. About half of those people were resident members. Ten baptisms were reported in 1940 with a high of 54 in 1948 and 42 in 1949.

This was also the decade in which the church shifted from "membership canvassing and endless bell-ringing," according to Deacon W. S. Campbell who updated the church's history for a Northwest Arkansas Times article.⁷⁰ By 1943 an appeal was made to the membership to file by a table in front of the pulpit and deposit pledges or cash into a miniature ark. "The church entered into a solemn conference and concluded that from that point on financial support of the church would be upon a voluntary basis. Personal solicitations and house-to-house canvassing would end," Campbell wrote in 1950.⁷¹

The change occurred gradually as the church utilized suggestions offered by Southern Baptist Convention stewardship programs. Calling the day of turning in pledges Loyalty Day, church minutes indicate, "A noon meal would be served to those who would contact members who were absent at the morning service." During this meal, a committee of clerks and secretaries checked the names of pledges turned in during the morning service so that the absent resident members could be determined. The "contact members" would visit the absentees during the afternoon to secure their pledges.

The chairman of the finance committee informed deacons of his concern that designated funds were being overdrawn to the point of using over draft and not allowing the money designated to the building fund to go in it. Over the years the deacons gave greater attention to auditing financial records and conducting business in a more professional manner.

The church opened a library in March of 1949 with 979 books and an average circulation of 50 books per month. That same month the church began an Extension Department with 24 members who would deliver Sunday School literature to those unable to attend church. Initially, visits would be made monthly with a goal of weekly visits.

Like many other years, the minutes from deacons' meetings in 1949 often addressed needed repairs. They handled the cost of repairing the baptistry and assigned a member to investigate the cost "to completely repair our organ, to replace all worn parts and put it in tiptop shape." They later concluded that the cost of repairing the organ was too great to handle at that time. During the previous year several deacons had studied the cost of broadcasting church services over a local station. Soon this was accomplished and continued into the 1980s,

utilizing different local stations.

In another meeting the deacons approved letting a Methodist minister fill the pulpit of First Baptist during a Methodist convention, adding that church approval would be needed. Concern was expressed for the “emergency” at Ouachita College, encouraging each member to contribute to this cause over the span of three Sundays.

Former Pastor O.L. Gibson had encouraged the church to put aside a sum of money into a building fund each year, raising \$17,000 by the time of his retirement. By 1948 the account had grown to \$32,000. At one point Dr. Johnson told the deacons he planned to approach the Arkansas Baptist State Convention to solicit \$30,000 for the building fund instead of the \$25,000 already approved by the ABC Steering Committee. Brother Bossemeyer questioned whether the ABSC would respond favorably to such a request in light of the church failing to meet its pledge to the Baptist college in the state. “If we had stuck to our agreement and paid the \$6,000 we subscribed to Ouachita College, we would have an easier time receiving funds from Arkansas Baptists,” he stated, according to church minutes.

The need was great for more Sunday school rooms, department assembly areas, office space, a kitchen and dining area. Dr. Johnson directed what may have been the largest committee ever conceived at First Baptist Church. The 81-member committee was asked to address the need for a new education building. By May of 1949 ground was broken. W. F. Thomas chaired the building committee, serving with Henry Bossmeyer, Everett Skelton, Ernest Ward and G. C. Hilton. Several of these men were retired, devoting almost their full attention to the building. Thomas recalled spending all but four days of eleven months in full-time work on the building. Mr. Bossmeyer hired workmen and purchased material. In 1949 the church had taken out a loan to cover the \$40,000 that had not been raised. At a cost of \$126,667, the new education building was completed. Just before the dedicatory services were held in the main sanctuary on January 29, 1950, a final payment of \$15,000 cleared the balance owed. Oklahoma Baptist University President John W. Raley delivered the message prior to the open house.

Members were pleased to make use of the three-story building for classes serving preschoolers to college students. The Fellowship Hall provided seating for banquets and other events serviced by the new kitchen across the hallway. Down in the basement, the church-sponsored Boy Scout troop had a room to call their own. In the local newspaper, the building was praised for being “modern in every respect,” with reference to the accordion-style folding doors that provided flexibility in the second floor assembly room, four hot air furnaces, washrooms and a drinking fountain on each floor.

In 1950 the church sponsored a new work known as Garland Heights Baptist Chapel with several college students who felt called to ministry serving as mission pastors. Several lots were purchased at a cost of \$2,250 in order to build a meeting place in 1952 which the church began using that summer. The church merged with Bethel Baptist Church in 1959 and became known as Bethel Heights



The education building was completed in 1950, providing space for a kitchen, fellowship hall, Sunday School classrooms, and assembly areas for departments.

Baptist Church, meeting northeast of Garland Street and Wedington Drive. In 1970 the church disbanded and gave the property to the Washington-Madison Baptist Association, using proceeds to start a new church in the northwest section of Fayetteville.

By May 31, 1950, a test of the congregation's confidence in the pastor arose in business meeting. Parker Rushing made a motion to "reaffirm loyalty to Christ, our church and our pastor," with a majority of the membership voting affirmatively.

At the same time the recently hired associate staff member resigned, along with his wife who had served as music director. Soon after, the music committee determined that the church needed a full-time minister of music and designated an annual salary of \$3,000, as well as allowing the person hired to teach voice or piano using church instruments. James Griggs served in this capacity for two years before enrolling in seminary.

In 1951, Jamie Jones was hired as secretary of the Baptist Student Union. He led students to be involved in local ministry projects, establishing preaching points throughout the city. As an active member of First Baptist, Mr. Jones regularly shared details of student ministry on the U of A campus. Minutes from a November business session include the note, "Brother Jamie Jones expressed his deep appreciation for the concern of the church and their financial assistance to the B.S.U. He said that the B.S.U. had four regular mission points which they served. They go to the Veterans Hospital every Thursday evening, to the jail once a month, to the County Home twice a month, and to the County Hospital once a month. The B.S.U. continues to grow. They now have 50 to 73 for vespers and

would have more if they only had the room.” Many FBC students were active in the BSU, some of them serving as summer missionaries across the United States and in foreign countries. After the BSU was transferred to state convention supervision, First Baptist remained the largest supporter of the ministry.

When St. James Missionary Baptist Church lost its pastor, the deacons recommended “that we pay \$5.00 per week to the colored pastor of the city until the colored church is on its feet again. This \$5.00 per week is to be paid when a new pastor is secured as the church has no pastor at this time.”

The church opposed allowing liquor sales in the county, contributing to a campaign of a coalition known as the “United Drys.” Opposition to the United States sending a representative to the Vatican was also expressed the same year.

In spite of the excitement of a growing congregation requiring expanded facilities, discord arose and efforts to resolve differences failed. Some of the members felt that once the five-year contract that Dr. Johnson had negotiated had expired in the fall of 1952, he would seek a new place of service, but that did not happen. Giving a pastor of a Baptist church a contract was very much out of the norm, and thus, entertaining the renewal of a contract was equally novel. On August 6, 1952, Dr. Johnson announced to the congregation that he would ascertain by late September whether he felt it was God’s will for him to continue as pastor and, if so led, would give the church a week to consider whether to affirm



The students and faculty of the 1952 Vacation Bible School fill the steps outside the domed building.

his call.

On September 26, 1952, in a letter written jointly with the church clerk and deacon chairman, Dr. Johnson wrote to members, "Your pastor has a deep conviction that God who has called him here, and has blessed his ministry so marvelously, would have him continue in this position until He tells him to go elsewhere. Hundreds of others share this conviction too. Regardless of what some may say or do, your pastor has one task—to live within the circle of God's will."

In light of this, he called for a special business meeting the morning of October 5, 1952, for members to vote by secret ballot whether he should continue as pastor. "Your pastor does this on his own desire, for his term of service has no definite expiration date; your call five years ago was indefinite as to expiration date, but was for a minimum of five years."

A majority of those present October 5, 1952, approved the motion allowing Dr. Johnson to continue as pastor. An entry in the minutes dated October 12, 1952 includes approval of a motion from the associate pastor "that it be inserted in the agreement with our pastor, Dr. Walter L. Johnson, that no vote can be taken on his dismissal as pastor until the church at a Sunday morning worship hour, by majority action, calls a special business session at a morning worship hour within not less than sixty days, for a vote on such dismissal."

Within a few months, Dr. Johnson was considered for the pastorate of a church in Victoria, Texas; however, upon seeking recommendations the church concluded that the Fayetteville pastor was not worthy. The pulpit committee chairman sent Dr. Johnson a letter explaining the Texas church's decision which he read in a January 4, 1953, business meeting. In response, a member of First Baptist Church of Fayetteville, gained approval of a motion, stating, "Inasmuch as it has been told that our pastor 'is not sincere nor humble in the Lord's work,' and 'that his character and credit would not stand investigating,' I move that this congregation repudiate such statements as slanderous lies, that we also express our great displeasure toward those who told them, that we express our deep conviction of the genuineness of our pastor's sincerity, humility, character, and credit, and that we further express our confidence in our pastor and commend the genuineness of his Christ-like life and service to all men."

At the following month's February 4 business meeting it was determined that no further business would be considered at Sunday worship services unless called for by the deacons. The action was not to supercede the previously approved process to be used in considering the pastor's call. Another motion passed calling for a vote within 60 days to consider terminating the pastor. At the following Sunday service the date for discussing termination was set for April 12, 1953.

The pastor's secretary opened her home on February 18 to a group of members who had been praying for several weeks about establishing a new church body. "Each individual knew that such a move would take courage and sacrifice as they would be leaving a large, long-established church to start from nothing...no

building, no chairs, no hymn books, and few resources of their own,” stated University Baptist Church’s account of their history.⁷² Miss Chism wrote in her notes of that meeting, “It was agreed that we would go out to organize a new church . . . cards were signed by those pledging to go and the amount which they could give during the year,” recording sixty-one pledges.

The group secured a meeting place at the former vocational shop of Fayetteville High School at 108 N. West Street and began worshipping together in March. The church contacted First Baptist seeking various items of church equipment, a request that the membership declined to consider.

Before the scheduled vote of First Baptist on the pastor’s termination, Dr. Johnson informed the church of his resignation in a March 29, 1953, telegram from Wytheville, Va., to Dr. J. C. Atherton. Describing the call to UBC as “a great opportunity,” Dr. Johnson thanked the members of First Baptist for “all friendship and kindnesses and for all cooperation in the work of the Savior during these five and one-half years.” He continued, “We are vitally interested in your progress and shall continue to be your friends and to pray for heaven’s rich blessings upon you and that the two churches shall enjoy the privilege and the right of harmoniously and lovingly working for the glory of God and the salvation of men.”

In March and April, 176 members of First Baptist left to unite with the new congregation, including the minister of music, Richard Greer, as well as the chairman of deacons. Dr. Johnson served UBC for 12 years before accepting a position as professor of religion at Bluefield College in Virginia where he remained until retirement.

Longtime member Mary Evelyn Duncan described the aftermath of the resulting division, stating, “Both groups must bear the responsibility for the division and both groups have suffered because of it, but it is well known that God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform, and that He can, and does, use the mistakes of men for His glory.”⁷³

Both First Baptist and University Baptist have thrived and gone forward in their ministries in spite of the division that produced two strong churches out of one. “Who knows? Could the Lord have permitted such a thing to fulfill his purpose?” concluded one writer who experienced this difficult phase of the church’s history.⁷⁴

Members who were present in 1953 when the pastor and 176 members departed to form a new church describe it as a sad time in the church’s history. Every active member knew someone who had left over the struggle between pastor and people. Longtime friends who enjoyed serving alongside one another separated, but still lived in the same town.

NOTES:

⁶⁴ J. T. Gillespie, *Reaching Rural Churches* (Atlanta: The Home Mission Board, 1959), 64.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 73-74.

⁶⁶ Christina Thour letter.

⁶⁷ Gibson, O. L., "Denominationalism is Co-operative Effort," *Oklahoma Baptist Messenger*, June 21, 1971.

⁶⁸ *A History of Our Churches, Washington-Madison Baptist Association*, 92.

⁶⁹ Donalson, Sam, Interview of local organ society member who recalled this concert.

⁷⁰ W. S. Campbell, "History of First Baptist Church of Fayetteville, Ark.," *Northwest Arkansas Times*, January 21, 1950.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² History of University Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ark., www.ubcfayetteville.org/history.html, accessed: August 11, 2003.

⁷³ Mary Evelyn Duncan, unpublished history of First Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1954-1980, 1, History Room, First Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ark.

⁷⁴ Mrs. Williams, 7.



FIFTH QUARTER CENTURY 1954 - 1979				
	United States	Arkansas	Baptists	First Baptist
1954	Supreme Court ends racial segregation	National Guard troops provide blacks access to Little Rock school.	Baptist Hymnal introduced	Ridgeview Baptist mission begins
1956	Civil Rights Movement begins		Midwestern Seminary opens	
1958			Arkansawyer Brooks Hayes serves two terms as SBC president	New Baptist Student Center dedicated with FBC support
1960			Twenty-nine state conventions	New auditorium and educational space dedicated
1962		First Wal-Mart opens	1,803 missionaries overseas	
1964	President Kennedy assassinated			Church receives first black member
1966				
1968				
1970	Apollo moon landing			
1972		Urban Renewal begins in Fayetteville		First Canada mission trip; Play Learn begins
1974	Watergate controversy			
1976			New Baptist Hymnal	Andrew Club visitation begins
1979		Razorbacks win Orange Bowl	Bold Mission Thrust introduced	

CHAPTER SIX

The pulpit committee chaired by Ray Adams moved quickly to find a replacement. They had been encouraged by a Pine Bluff minister to consider a 32-year old native Arkansan he had heard preach while visiting a Florida church. Similar affirmations came from a Springdale pastor, a Little Rock chaplain, and a visitor to the Fayetteville church who knew the candidate. **Andrew M. Hall** had pastored in Arkansas while attending Ouachita Baptist University, completed his master's and doctor of theology degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and served four years at First Baptist Church of Lake Wales, Florida.

Dr. Hall recalled the initial interview conducted in Little Rock when he was visiting his parents. "We had a wonderful visit. There was an immediate chemistry between the committee and Harriet and me." He remembered bringing small sacks of Florida fruit for each of the committee members. "I suppose that was a little PR going on," he said, adding that they asked him to return a week later to preach in view of a call at Fayetteville.⁷⁵



Andrew M. Hall
1953 - 1970

But in a telephone call to Dr. Hall, the chairman explained with embarrassment that the process had been put on hold. A committee member had heard a pastor in Oklahoma and invited him to come to this church in view of a call unbeknownst to the others. One member later described the favorable vote as unenthusiastic and the candidate turned them down. Meanwhile, Dr. Hall had returned to Florida thinking it was "a lost call," he remembered. Several weeks later while attending Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center with some of his Florida members, an announcement was made over the loud-speaker that Andrew Hall had a telephone call from Fayetteville, Arkansas. He was asked to come to Fayetteville as soon as possible to preach in view of a call. In order to keep his members from knowing of his absence, he left North Carolina on a Friday night, preached on Sunday morning, and returned in time for Monday conferences.

Once the unanimous call was conveyed, Dr. Hall prepared to move to Fayetteville, beginning his ministry on August 16, 1953, with a sermon from I Corinthians 13. "I suppose that sermon on love was what the people needed to

hear on that day.” He was warned by area pastors of the church’s troubled past related to the departure of members to form UBC. He recalled their telling him, “‘We’re going to put you on the top of our prayer list.’” However, Dr. Hall remembered the transition going smoothly with attendance picking up quickly. “They wanted somebody to love and didn’t have any trouble giving their affection to us.”

Within a short time, the church also hired Dr. Hall’s assistant at First Baptist of Lake Wales, Florida, Russell Oldham. He directed the music and education for the next six years. With patience and a sense of priorities, Dr. Hall guided the church through the difficulties that resulted from the departure of the former pastor and many members. “The people were just as eager to put that behind them as I was, and that was my strategy,” he said.⁷⁶

Dr. Hall’s wife, Harriet, was the daughter of Dr. J.R. Grant, former president of Ouachita Baptist University. She later wrote a column titled “Feminine Intuition” for the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine and served as president of the Southern Baptist Pastors’ Wives Conference. Within a year of arriving in Fayetteville the young family moved into a parsonage that the church purchased on Mount Sequoyah.

At the beginning of his ministry, Sunday School enrollment numbered 893 with 267 in Training Union. In 1954 student membership was reported at slightly over 200, growing to 450 in 1956 and 500 in 1957. It was not uncommon for 50



Members are shown caring for children in the church nursery in 1953.



Certificates were issued to Sunday School teachers in recognition of completing training offered by First Baptist Church.



Enrollment in the University Department soared in the late 1950s.

students to join on a Sunday following the start of U of A classes.⁷⁷ Long-stemmed red roses were delivered to every freshman girl while boys received a ballpoint pen with the name of the church imprinted. Mrs. Hall would meet the freshman girls staying at the old Washington Hotel which was being leased by the U of A as a temporary dormitory. She provided homemade chocolate chip cookies to the young women. When the average Sunday School attendance of college students reached 200, partitions were used to separate a dozen classes in the department that Mrs. Hall directed. Dr. Hall's frequent connection with college students made him a popular choice for the religious focus weeks at Baptist colleges, including Baylor, Samford, William Jewell, Southwest Missouri Baptist, and Georgetown.

One young man with whom the church developed a special relationship was Shing Faan Lee, a Chinese engineering student whose father was a Baptist school-master in Kow Loon, across the bay from Hong Kong. First Baptist agreed to sponsor him, assisting with his tuition and other expenses for two years. Dr. Hall described the effort as "one way to bring foreign missions to our door." The church mourned the loss of this gifted international student when a car accident claimed his life.

In 1957 the church selected Martha Smith, a daughter of the well-known



A 1954 wedding provides a view of the organ pipes and pulpit area.

evangelist J. Harold Smith, to lead ministry to the young people. The Ouachita alumnus was pursuing graduate studies at the U of A and refused pay for the job.

The addition of a coke machine in 1957 upset an older Sunday School class who appealed for its removal. Members protested to the deacons in 1965 that the youth were drinking cokes during opening exercises and class periods. "The noise, confusion, and crowded lobby make it difficult for older adults to get to class," they wrote. "We do not believe coke machines are conducive to Sunday School attendance." Apparently, no action was taken beyond raising the price from a nickel to a dime a year later.

Growth in every age group necessitated adding a second worship service at 8:30 a.m. by the fall of 1955. The Phillips house directly north of the church had been obtained for \$6,000 prior to Dr. Hall's pastorate. Planning for further expansion, consideration was given to purchasing the Lawson property located southeast of the church where the Court House Annex now is situated. Deacons approved the matter by a vote of 14-11, however, Dr. Hall felt the vote was too divided at a time of great debt and discouraged the action. Instead, expanding property holdings to the north proved more helpful. W. C. Whitfield convinced a retired Methodist minister who owned a house directly north of the church to sell the property over the course of seven years. The Hankins house was purchased at cost of \$35,000 which was paid at the rate of \$5,000 per year with no interest. The church also received the deed to the Skaggs home on Highland that was purchased by Mr. Whitfield for \$12,000. In 1959 the membership committee reported on a yearlong study of the church roll, recommending the moving of 545 names to the category of unknown and unaccounted for, some of them dating back as far as 25 years.



Missionary Jo Scaggs received an award from Queen Elizabeth II.



First Baptist Church sponsored Chinese student Shing Faan Lee.

Support for Southern Baptist missionary Josephine Scaggs in Nigeria continued with the church purchasing a jeep and a boat for her use in Africa. Years later they provided a bright red motor scooter that allowed her to travel over bush roads, drawing crowds of onlookers. Harriet Hall wrote of Miss Scaggs's life as a missionary in the book *Please, Mah*. Later, the missionary's work was featured on CBS in a documentary film called "Lamp Unto My Feet" produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission. In 1956 Miss Scaggs re-



First Baptist Church provided Jo Scaggs with a jeep to provide transportation in Nigeria. She is pictured with fellow missionaries in Nigeria.

ceived the Member of the British Empire Award from the hands of Queen Elizabeth II. She was honored for her contribution to the development of a remote area at a time when Nigeria was a British colony. Because she was unprepared for the elegant event, friends fashioned a slip from a pink sheet to be worn under her gown.

After furloughing in Fayetteville, Miss Scaggs prepared for her return by filling barrels with supplies that would last her many years. Members of the church helped gather the items in the basement of J.C. Penney department store where member George Tharel was store manager. In order to give herself hair permanents, she would include dozens of the home kits. Once packed to capacity, the barrels were shipped by boat. Miss Scaggs typically preferred to travel by ocean freighter in order to have time to be physically prepared for the transition.

As members of First Baptist of Fayetteville continued to receive reports of the gospel being shared by missionaries around the world, they increased gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering from \$400 to \$1,100. Locally, they started several new churches, including Ridgeview Baptist Mission in July 1956 two miles east on Highway 16 East. The pastor located the parcel of land and enlisted



Bethel Heights Baptist Church merged with Garland Heights Baptist Mission in 1959. Both congregations were sponsored as missions of First Baptist.

the assistance of the state convention to cover the \$1,200 cost. Through the volunteer labors and donated materials of many members, the brick building was completed at a cost of just \$8,156. Seven members of the volunteer crew were past seventy years of age, including a few in their eighties. By February 5, 1961, the church constituted as an independent church with 61 members representing 30 families.

The Baptist Student Union dedicated a new student center on March 11, 1958, with both Dr. Hall and Dr. Johnson participating in the service. Construction of the facility was a cooperative funding effort of area churches, the local association, and state convention. However, director Jamie Jones repeatedly thanked First Baptist for taking the initiative in launching and encouraging student ministry on the U of A campus. "I don't know of any church in the Southern Baptist Convention that has been more supportive of Baptist Student Union work. This church is really generous."⁷⁸

First Baptist Church enjoyed rapid growth in the years after World War II. The city was growing, due in part to the many returning servicemen enrolling at the University of Arkansas to take advantage of the G.I. Bill. Sunday audiences could not be comfortably seated in the 50-year old building. From overflow areas in adjacent Sunday school rooms, people could hear, but could not see the preacher or choir. Aisles were packed with chairs each Sunday until the Fayetteville Fire Department warned of creating a hazard.

"It was a time of churchgoing," Dr. Hall remembered. "You could have an after-church gathering and serve pink lemonade and soggy cake and have 200 kids show up." The church and city had quadrupled in size since the domed building was erected in 1908. At a May 9, 1956, business meeting the building committee proposed constructing a new worship center. The church stipulated that at least a third of the estimated cost of \$400,000 be raised before construction was set to begin in September of 1957.

A site for a new building became available to the north and west. The church was able to break ground earlier than expected on June 23, 1958. Dr. Hall offered a challenge to the members. "The gigantic opportunity of our sanctuary project challenges my faith and inspires my spirit. We, as His people, can most certainly 'rise up and build.' The heritage so beautifully bequeathed to us by the loyal people of yesterday leaves us no alternative. We must meet the needs of today." He encouraged each member to respond enthusiastically with "loyalty, unity, desire, consecration, and liberality" in order to celebrate "a joyous victory."

Paul Young, Jr., AIA, a local architect who was the first to be licensed in the state, designed the building to face College Avenue while adjoining the 10-year old educational building on the west side. Yellow brick was chosen for its exterior material in order to coordinate with the existing three-story educational building. "Inasmuch as the education building to which the sanctuary was joined was a utilitarian building of no identifiable style, in order for the two buildings to



This illustration represents the 1960 building adjoining the educational facility built a decade earlier.

compliment each other, the new sanctuary could not be designed in a traditional ecclesiastical style,” explained Mr. Smart. Consequently, he said, the church opted for one of the few contemporary Baptist buildings constructed in Arkansas, or elsewhere in the south for that matter, during the first three decades after the war.

The new sanctuary tripled the size of the congregation that could be seated at a single service. Including the balcony, the new building accommodated 1,250 people comfortably, with the possibility of another 200 if necessary. The rectangular configuration makes the sanctuary almost twice as long as it is wide, with three banks of pews—a center section with a flanking section on either side. A raised chancel accommodates a choir of 54 persons. A central pulpit is located on the platform behind a large brick planter. For many years, a member who was a local florist, along with women of the church, cared for live plants under grow lights in this area. Eventually, artificial plants were substituted, requiring much less care.

The interior of the church uses exposed brick of an unusual soft pink color on all wall surfaces except in the chancel. The pews and the woodwork in the chancel area are bleached oak. The most unusual feature of the design is the use of sidewalls that are arranged in a sawtooth configuration, Mr. Smart said. “The walls are constructed of alternating splayed brick panels connected by tall slender stained glass windows. The stained glass is a Modrian-like pattern of rectangular pieces of glass in various sizes. The color scheme of the glass features predominantly blue tones set off by contrasting areas of amber, taupe, and red. A large area of similar stained glass fills the upper wall of the east facade at the entrance.” Originally the lower portion of this facade had four sets of double doors. However, the widening of College Avenue encroached so near the build-

ing that it made the use of the doors impractical, and they were replaced by fixed glass panels.

As a crane hoisted the new steeple atop the tower, Dr. Hall stood at the lofty site to observe the positioning of the cross that would be seen from many parts of the city. The associate pastor considered joining him in this venture, but thought better of the idea after observing the height involved. The copper-coated roof was the first of its type to be used in the United States. Manufactured in France, it was considered to be highly durable. Installation involved first placing a fiberglass sheet reinforced with bieteum roofing material, followed by the copper protection. At the end of 1959, the building was completed. With the purchase of property for parking and new furnishings the total cost reached \$500,000. The congregation moved into the new building on February 14, 1960.

Dr. W. O. Vaught, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, delivered the dedicatory sermon titled "As the Glory of the Lord" at a May 1, 1960,

service. Russell Oldham led the Chancel Choir in "Almighty, God of Our Fathers" with Gladys Sonneman offering accompaniment on the new French Canadian Casavant organ. Secured at somewhere between \$40,000 and \$50,000, replacement cost was estimated at well over half a million dollars a few decades later. The lot across Dickson Street on the south was purchased from McIlroy Bank for \$18,000 to provide additional parking.

The new building also provided more educational space below the auditorium. The church library moved into new space along the



The steeple for the new building was set in place with a crane.

hallway connecting the worship center with the Educational Building, providing convenient access for members as they moved from Sunday School to the worship service.

Dr. Hall and members of the deacons patiently considered the proper time to raze the old domed building. Having already concluded that its restoration would have required more than the cost of a new, larger facility, they estimated \$3,000 would be needed each year for maintenance of the old building. Some deacons suggested continued use of the basement, but \$30,000 was needed to make it habitable. Retaining just a portion of the old building would detract from the appearance of the new, more modern structure, they concluded, recommending that the older facility be razed. In spite of the many tears shed as members recalled weddings, baptisms, funerals, and various spiritual decisions that were made inside those walls, the removal in 1961 of the deteriorating structure allowed a better view of the new building.

The pictorial stained glass windows representing biblical scenes were offered to several members. One of the windows featuring Jesus as the Shepherd was given to the Baptist Children's Hospital in Little Rock where it is displayed prominently. Another is at the Arkansas Baptist Village, depicting angels. Several panels were returned to the church years later in order to be redisplayed during the sesquicentennial celebration, including a 6'x6' window depicting Jesus in the Temple, as well as a set of panels.⁷⁹ Seven of the pipes from the old organ are displayed in the History Room, recovered and donated from a salvage yard south of Fayetteville, with a smaller one given by a local organ historian.⁸⁰ Also in the library is the old wooden pulpit from which 14 pastors had delivered sermons. It had been used for many years by Ridgeview Baptist Church. A church at Combs acquired the wooden pews, later selling some to Western Hills Baptist Church in Fayetteville. Members of that church on Fayetteville's west side agreed to donate one of the pews for display at First Baptist near the history room. An arch that once stood at the church entrance and some of the cobblestone steps were carefully moved to the driveway of a church member who was in charge of the project. They can still be seen in the 400 block of North Street near Lakeshore Drive. Total cost to raze the old building was \$5,000.

As the church entered a new era in a larger facility, Dr. Hall offered to the deacons some of his goals for the years to come. They included: "better preaching, church enlisting by visitation, facilitating parking of cars, evangelism, and cultivation of membership." New staff members assisted with these priorities.



Items placed in the cornerstone of the 1908 building were removed when the 1960 building was dedicated. The tin box included this Bible belonging to Annie Mayes, a daughter of charter member and early pastor John Mayes.

Ray Connor was hired as minister of music, replacing Russell Oldham who resigned to serve a Little Rock church. Wayne Smith assumed responsibility for the educational ministry a few years later.

With an associate giving his full attention to music, the choir was strengthened to offer more musical presentations, including Handel's "Messiah." A church orchestra was organized during this time under the direction of Bill Martin. The minister of music cultivated relationships with University of Arkansas music faculty who, in turn, encouraged students to share their talents at First Baptist Church. Among those participating as a choir member and featured soloist was Miss Donna Axum, named Miss America from Arkansas in 1964. Members celebrated her selection and welcomed her home to sing a solo soon after the pageant was held. When she greeted Dr. Hall with a kiss on his cheek, he remarked, "Not many pastors have been kissed by Miss America!"

The church began showing Billy Graham Evangelistic Association films about this time, offering a creative means of sharing the gospel. Through a ministry to the deaf, First Baptist touched the lives of another segment of the population that had not been reached. At first a U of A student offered sign interpretation of the worship services, as well as classes to teach sign language. Later, John Robinson assumed responsibility for this ministry, having witnessed the effectiveness of a Dallas church with deaf members.

Older adult Sunday school classes provided an important connection between members and the church. In addition to their regular Sunday class time, members met in various homes, sometimes studying a particular book, exchanging Christmas gifts, and enjoying each other's company. Notes from the long-lasting Lydia Class describe their selection of colors and a flower. Gifts were



A Baptist Women's group gathered at the home of a member in 1962.

distributed to the ill and donations received for various needs—from a Chinese boy at Ouachita who received a package of clothing to a girl at the Baptist Children's Home who was given a homemade dress. In that year alone, \$1,067.45 was collected from the class members. The local newspaper included the minutes of these meetings in the society pages.

In an October of 1961 deacons' meeting, a member expressed concern over repeatedly observing young boys roaming the halls during the early part of church services. He did not find clear evidence of "pilfering," but "indications were that such could easily be the case." Deacons were asked to "discreetly and with tact cooperate in patrolling the halls of the education building to note any attempts at pilferage and apprehend any who were, and to create conditions unfavorable to the act of pilferage."

Among the goals that Dr. Hall shared with deacons in the following year were starting new missions, enlarging the church staff, purchasing more property, and allocating funds to improve the parsonage.

First Baptist Church took advantage of the high traffic area in front of the church, promoting ministries and offering inspiration through the church's sign. Dr. Hall took personal responsibility for the message, often showing creativity in connecting with those who passed by. On October 16, 1961, he displayed, "Football is only a game, eternal things are spiritual, nevertheless, beat Texas." The sign's message was displayed in the local newspaper and picked up by the Associated Press and featured locally in *Southwestern Scene*. When the 1964 national football championship was at stake, the message declaring the Hogs' victory was carried in national magazines, including *Stars and Stripes* for overseas military personnel, as well as being read on NBC's *Today Show*. In the 1965 rivalry, it read, "Attention Darrell Royal: Do Not Cast Your Steers Before Swine," referring to the University of Texas coach of the Longhorns. Royal saw the sign displayed in a front-page photo of the *Austin American-Statesman* and quipped back to the Fayetteville pastor, "Do not invoke the Divine in these games."

When Baylor was the opponent, the sign read, "Beat Those Baylor Baptists—Ever So Gently." Following a 21-20 victory, it was announced that all Baptist students would be fed at the parsonage of First Baptist Church. Men of the church had to go after meat three times in order to feed the 260 students who arrived for dinner. Razorback football players were encouraged to come to church as a group, often filling the area under the balcony. With so many students joining at the beginning of the school year, the new members would stretch from one side of the auditorium around to the other, forming a semi-circle.

Racial issues were beginning to receive attention within the Southern Baptist Convention as all-white churches began considering an end to segregated worship. Missionary Jo Scaggs was invited to speak before the Southern Baptist Convention in 1961. She departed from her prepared remarks, pleading, "Don't just give your millions to send your missionaries with the gospel to the black men in Africa with the message of the same Savior who died for them as He died for us



Southern Baptist Missionary Josephine Scaggs is shown (above) among a camp of refugees in Nigeria. Her cook and his family pose with her (below).

and then not be willing to worship with them the same Savior in your church in America.”

A former member who had grown up in First Baptist Church in the 1940s and attended Fayetteville High School in 1954 remembered when that school was integrated. He recalled being aware that



the church supported foreign missionaries to preach the gospel in Africa while there were no blacks who worshipped in the congregation at Fayetteville.⁸¹

Fayetteville schools were the first to integrate students from Caucasian and Negro races in Arkansas. Some sources indicated they were the first school system south of the Mason-Dixon Line to achieve this transition, serving as a model for other southern cities. A member of First Baptist Church served as president of the Fayetteville School Board during those years when segregation was a major issue. He and the Fayetteville School System superintendent helped introduce an integrated system. Several other members of First Baptist served on the school board over the years, providing strong Christian influence and leadership.

In the fall of 1962, Dr. Hall advised the deacons of the need for “a policy concerning Negroes petitioning for membership.” A long discussion was held concerning the subject, with two deacons suggesting: “If colored people come to attend our worship services, they will be seated by the ushers. But if they partition [sic] for membership or any other activity, they will be referred to a membership committee or a special committee.” A majority of the deacons opposed such a policy and soon after agreed to appoint a committee “to study methods of handling racial problems generally expected to occur in church in near future.” During this time, adult Sunday School classes were informed of blacks visiting the service. Members were encouraged to sit with the visitors in the service so they would feel welcome.

In August of 1963, an amendment to Section 1 of the Bylaws was offered which read, “In general, the reception, exclusion and restoration of members shall be in accordance with the accepted practice and discipline of Southern Baptist churches. All persons received into the membership of the church shall be received at any regular or called service by the unanimous vote of the members present. If anyone opposes the reception of a person, the matter shall thereupon be referred to the deacons, which may act thereon as a committee of the whole or refer the same to a standing committee constituted for that purpose; and as soon as possible there after, deacons or such committee if it be referred thereto, shall report thereon to the church. If at the church service at which time such report is made, a majority shall vote to approve the same, such report shall be final and the person received into the membership of the church or rejected, according to recommendation contained therein. If such report be not acted upon, the matter shall thereupon be referred back for further consideration and report until it is finally disposed of by a report and recommendation satisfactory to and approved by the church.” Instead of recommending the proposed amendment, the Committee on Membership Problems was asked to make further study.

A more affirming approach came out of the committee with the following statement. “We believe that God created man in his own image and endowed him with freedom to respond to His redemptive love; That man is responsible to God for his religious belief and practice; That religious faith and participation must be voluntary in order to be real; That God is concerned with the lives and souls of all men; That as Christians we should foster the spirit of brotherhood among all men and should do nothing that will hinder the work of evangelism and Christian worship and witness. We recommend: that we who are Christians and members of this church shall set an example of Christian love by welcoming into our fellowship all persons who sincerely desire to worship God.”

A counter proposal by two deacons moved “that at the present time colored people will be given the privilege of attending the eleven o’clock morning and seven o’clock evening services on Sunday, but not be eligible for membership.” Neither motion appears to have gained support so the question of whether a policy was needed remained unsettled as the deacons repeatedly voted in favor of ta-

bling. By February of 1964, the church approved a recommendation similar to the language initially proposed by a few deacons a year and a half earlier. The motion as approved by the church read, "In the event Negroes present themselves for membership that their appeals be referred to the Membership Committee for study and referral back to deacons for recommendation to the church."

The new policy was short-lived however, as the church rescinded the action a month later. They agreed with a deacon's suggestion "that our church membership be requested to earnestly seek the Lord's will in this whole area until further action is taken by the church." At the next deacons' meeting, one deacon warned against rescinding previous actions because it weakened the effect of the deacons. Instead of adopting a motion establishing a policy toward a particular race, the church approved a bylaw change as a part of an updated constitution.

The change made in May of 1966 read, "Any person professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and giving evidence of a change of heart, and accepting our views of faith and practice as set forth in our Articles of Faith, may upon baptism be received into membership of said church; members from other churches who have the same beliefs as outlined in this constitution and have been scripturally baptized, may be received by letter of recommendation and dismission from their respective churches; those who have once been members of Baptist churches, and in consequence of any peculiar circumstances have no regular letter of dismission, may be received by giving satisfactory evidence of a change of heart, Christian conduct, and scriptural faith; excluded members may be restored to membership on confession of their errors and giving evidence of repentance."

By the 1960s, blacks felt more comfortable attending services, especially students from the University of Arkansas. Nat Thomas, a member of First Baptist Church who recalled joining in the fall of 1967, responded to the offer of a free ride. At a time when most college students lacked transportation, Mr. Thomas appreciated seeing the pastor drive up to his dormitory to load the car with students. He doesn't remember how the predominantly white congregation received him, but assumes it went well since he kept returning.

Mr. Thomas credited his parents with raising him "to focus on the positive" during years of civil unrest. Reared in a southern Arkansas town, he attended an all-black school and a segregated Baptist church. Within a week of settling in as a college freshman, Mr. Thomas began searching for a church to attend and noticed the bulletin board flyer offering transportation to First Baptist. "One Sunday morning Dr. Hall picked me up, along with a couple of my friends, and off we went." He never considered sleeping in, knowing his mother would ask him on Monday where he went to church the previous Sunday. Although aware of a smaller, all-black congregation in Fayetteville, Mr. Thomas intentionally selected the larger church, determined to make an effort to be an active member.

When he and his family moved to Washington, D.C. in 1974, Dr. Paige Patterson gave him the names of several churches to consider joining and he settled on a congregation that he found similar to First Baptist, though much

larger. Upon retiring from the Central Intelligence Agency, Mr. Thomas and his family moved back to Fayetteville where he began teaching math at a junior high school.

Gradually, First Baptist Church drew members from a variety of races. Joint services with St. James Baptist Church began in 1968 and the pastor and choir led worship at First Baptist in the early 1970s.

Over the course of Dr. Hall's tenure, many guest speakers were invited to preach, conduct revivals, or lead Bible studies. These included SBC President Brooks Hays who had been a member while a student at the University of Arkansas and later served as a U.S. congressman, Charles Jolly, Sterling Price, Wade Armstrong, James Pleitz, James Landes, Stanley Jordan, Duke McCall, Luther Joe Thompson, Millard Berquist, Blake Smith, A. L. Gillespie, W. Hall Preston, Paul M. Stevens, Jack Noffsinger, Kenneth Chafin, David Garland, Lofton Hudson, Clyde Francisco, Charles Trantham, E. F. Hallock, Nathan Porter, Don Brandise, J. P. Allen, Bob Bennett, Harvey Elledge, Frank Norfleet, John Newport, Milton Dupriest, and Angel Martinez, who led revivals on three occasions. The church supported the association-wide evangelistic campaign by J. Harold Smith.

Dr. Hall participated in the Baptist World Alliance meeting in London, an evangelistic crusade in Jamaica, and traveled with three other members on a mission trip to Mexico. He was elected by the Southern Baptist Convention to serve on the Radio and Television Commission, serving as chairman for two years. He recommended Jim Davis as the soloist for the Baptist Hour for several months. Dr. Hall was chosen by RTVC to deliver a sermon over CBS radio in 1963. His message entitled "Where Is God?" described God as the creator of life and the author of morality and divine purpose. Ten years after beginning his ministry at Fayetteville, offerings had tripled to average \$3,000 per week. Within that decade, 575 baptisms were recorded and 3,370 members received by letter. By 1965 the church's budget had risen to \$84,000 and by 1971 it was \$140,545.



The ministerial staff in 1965 included (pictured top to bottom) Wayne Smith, Jim Davis, and Andrew Hall, shown with some family members.



The Sanctuary Choir presented *Behold the Lamb* under the direction of Jim Davis.

By 1964, changes in staff brought Bill Halbert from Louisville, Kentucky, to serve as education minister and Jim Davis from Sand Springs, Oklahoma, to serve as minister of music. With his Wagnerian tenor voice, Mr. Davis offered frequent solos during worship services. The youth choir was given increasing priority, often taking summer tours to perform at churches. In 1965 a nine-foot Baldwin concert piano was purchased for use in the auditorium as George Tharel continued serving as church pianist. Mr. Tharel had majored in music education at the University of Oklahoma and even played as accompanist to Baptist hymn writer B. B. McKinney during Student Week at Ridgecrest.

At various times the church voiced its concern over issues in the community and state, such as the proposed sale of alcoholic beverages in grocery stores, teaching on the campus of the U of A advocating pre-marital sexual relations, encouraging severe penalties for driving under influence of alcohol, opposition to proposed amendment legalizing casino gambling in Garland County. Members were encouraged to remember to pay their poll tax, a requirement that qualified adults to have voting privileges.

Attendance by young people in discipleship programs began to dwindle as other activities competed for their attention. The Church Training programs that replaced BYPU experienced great decline nationwide. A concerned deacon wrote a letter to Dr. Blake Smith, a former pastor then serving a church at the edge of the sprawling University of Texas campus. He sought advice on how to engage young people of the church when their interest was waning. In his response, Dr. Smith empathized with the deacon's desire for the kind of commitment their generation had enjoyed through BYPU. "The problem of reaching a large number of prospective students in the activities of the church is one with which all of us are wrestling." He warned against discouragement, adding, "The most effective

method of reaching young people is through personal contacts, not by the students themselves so much as by resident members.” Dr. Smith also encouraged developing relationships with young people, recognizing that these might be smaller groups of more motivated students.⁸² He wrote of his joy at meeting with six to eight students weekly “to contem-



Music minister Jim Davis rehearsed with pianist George Tharel and organist Gladys Sonneman.

plate in depth our Christian faith,” adding that the group soon tripled in size. “The time has passed when we need to emphasize a programmatic approach to students. Now we must center on a moral and spiritual approach.”

Strong support for student ministry on the University campus continued. On the occasion of his 15th anniversary as BSU director, the Arkansas Baptist praised Jamie Jones’s ministry, stating, “In these days of mobility and rapid change, for one to stay in one state or one section of the country for fifteen years, is most unusual. Such tenure of service as that of Mr. Jones is especially remarkable for one engaged in his calling, a calling that up to now has not been noted for long engagements.” Prior to Mr. Jones’s service, the position had been filled by short term workers. The article continued, “Mr. Jones not only has served long, but well in one of the most strategic posts Baptists have in Arkansas. Operating on a shoestring budget, he has gone on to achieve great things in a ministry that has touched the lives of thousands of Baptist young people receiving their education on the grounds of a state institution.”

At the encouragement of associational missionary Alexander Best, the church began planting a new work at Greenland in 1967, purchasing a portable building that would accommodate nearly 100 people. Members of area Southern Baptist churches cooperated by regularly contributing to a New Work Foundation. This generated funds for use at Greenland and other sites. Since First Baptist still had a large debt from the new building, some members complained that the church should not engage in a new ministry. That didn’t stop First Baptist from sponsoring the Greenland mission that soon outgrew the temporary facility. A new building was dedicated a year later on April 3, 1968. After selling the portable building to the association for half the original cost, it was used by a mission at Elkins that had been begun by Ridgeview Baptist Church, an earlier mission of First Baptist.

In 1967 the church helped sponsor speaker Evelyn Duvall who offered pro-

abstinence messages in the secondary public schools. Also that year consideration was given by the deacons to starting a daycare at the church. Some members offered the rationale that many professionally trained women would re-enter the work force if they had affordable childcare. Others said the focus should be placed on helping the needy and underprivileged. Unable to arrive at a consensus, the matter was dropped. A year later a committee studied whether to start a kindergarten, deciding there was insufficient interest.

The music ministry featured a new director, Don Edmondson. Efforts to involve more young people continued as choirs planned tours that included side trips to amusement areas. The purchase of a used 40-person school bus provided transportation for choir excursions as well as other groups. Chimes were added to the tower, allowing inspirational music to be heard outside the building. Throughout the 1960s the church offered a wide range of music opportunities. Graded choirs rehearsed on Wednesday afternoon after school dismissed. The youngsters were encouraged to memorize hymns throughout the week and recite them prior to rehearsals. A child reared in First Baptist Church during this era is likely to be able to sing many familiar hymns today without the use of a hymnal.

Memory work was a key element of the entire ministry to children. Youngsters attending the two-week Vacation Bible School were challenged by the pastor to memorize all of the books of the Bible. Some especially clever students succeeded in reciting the books in one extended breath. Dr. Hall rewarded them with Peanuts cartoon illustrations from one of his favorite philosophers, Charles Shultz. In addition to the expected Bible stories, crafts, red Kool-Aid and cookies, VBS participants learned the names of Southern Baptist entities like the Home Mission Board or the Baptist Sunday School Board. They were taught the importance of the Cooperative Program as a way that a portion of their pennies, nickels, and dimes when pooled together in their offerings would fund missionaries like Josephine Scaggs on the other side of the globe.

Mission organizations reinforced these traditional mission priorities, offering Wednesday night classes for children as young as three. These Sunbeams learned the simple concept of sharing and praying so that others would hear of God's love. Elementary age girls attended Girls' Auxiliary, participating in simple mission projects. They looked ahead to the day when they would be Acteens, studying missions as teenagers. There they would advance through stages to earn recog-



Memory work was emphasized in teaching children. Don Carter, Bobby Mayes, and Cheryl Clinehens were recognized for Bible Drill achievements in 1968.



A 1964 elementary choir provided music during the worship service.

dition in a regal coronation service at the end of the school year. Dressed in gowns, they were escorted by sometimes less than enthusiastic boys of the church and recounted the mission activities that led to their selection as a queen, queen regent, lady in waiting, princess, or maid.

Sunday School and Church Training classes were also organized according to the standards recommended by the Southern Baptist Convention. Children were expected to learn their memory verse and study the lesson from a quarterly before arriving—even if it meant a quick reading in the car on the way to church. Success in accomplishing basic spiritual disciplines was recorded on the offering envelope in boxes indicating whether the student read the Bible daily, brought an offering, contacted others to encourage attendance, and studied the lesson. Just showing up earned at least one check mark and “being on time” received further commendation. Efficient class secretaries would gather these statistics, recording the average record of students. This allowed grades to be issued from week to week based on the percentage of students fulfilling expectations. From the cradle roll to the oldest aged class, these numbers were tallied and displayed on a board. The Sunday School superintendent or his courier carried the updated information into the church after the service had begun, setting it along the wall for all to read whether more people were in Sunday School than on the previous Sunday.

Upon the occasion of his fifteenth anniversary as pastor, Dr. Hall provided a historical review of his years of ministry at First Baptist. He referred to Joshua 4, stating, “For years Israel had known that God would eventually deliver them to the Promised Land, but what a struggle!” Recalling God’s plan to enlist 12 men from 12 tribes to lead the way, Dr. Hall said, “Every one must do his part! No church could have achieved what we have done except by great strides of harmony. You do not baptize and grow and build, and demolish old buildings

and purchase new property and pour thousands into the BSU program and raise gifts to world causes without harmony. We've had our days of anxiety, but the mass of our people have crossed over."

More staff changes came in the late 1960s with Bob Reno called to serve as minister of education and Ed Coulter assuming part-time responsibility for the youth.

The continued relationship with missionary Josephine Scaggs provided a reminder of the priority First Baptist Church of Fayetteville placed on mission outreach around the world. "I am a bush missionary by nature and by choice," Miss Scaggs said after 20 years in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, West Africa. By then she was serving as advisor for the Ekpey-Ogbogolo and Abua Baptist Association. Stationed at the village of Aboada, she traveled by Land Rover and canoe to visit the 46 churches and preaching points in the associations. She camped in churches on a folding cot, using mosquito netting, a one-burner kerosene stove, and a few other items sufficing for the conveniences of home. She held special services, worked with church organizations and traveled with pastors to witness to the lost.

"I praise God for the penetration of the light of his love into many lives," she wrote. "Recently a juju priest confessed faith in Christ and burned the hut and objects he had used in juju worship. From the smoldering remains, we took a few metal pieces for me to show people in America."⁸³ The University of Arkansas honored Miss Scaggs in 1966 as a distinguished alumna.

The Yellow Brick House opened February 10, 1969, as a joint project of First United Presbyterian and First Baptist. It was operated out of a house to the northwest of the church that was purchased for \$15,000. The after-school program for children whose parents were working and unable to care for them until 5 p.m. ministered to first through third graders at Washington Elementary School. Other churches in Fayetteville followed the same model by cooperating in meeting the needs of children in other areas of the city. The ministry at First Baptist continued for five years.

The organization of the Leisure Club was a joint effort on the part of Dr. and Mrs. Hall as a ministry to people who are 50 years of age or older. Offered as an opportunity for senior adults in the community to enjoy food, fun, and fellowship, the group began meeting monthly on the fourth Tuesday.

During the 1950s and 1960s, two women provided secretarial support to the staff, each serving 20 years or more. Margaret Roberts served as the pastor's secretary and kept financial records while Golda Spicer served as the educational pastor's secretary. Both were active members of the church and their husbands served as deacons.

Early in 1970, Dr. Hall announced his resignation after being called to serve as pastor of First Baptist Church of Delray Beach, Florida. On Sunday, February 8, 1970, the church celebrated ten years of meeting in the new sanctuary and Dr. Hall preached a morning message entitled "A Love That Lasts." His evening

sermon was titled “I Thank My God Upon Every Remembrance of You.”

Deacon chairman Billy Bryan wrote, “Our people are deeply conscious of our Lord’s leadership and guidance through the service which Dr. and Mrs. Hall have provided over the past 16 1/2 years. We are deeply appreciative of the service which they have rendered our church and our community. The growth and development of our physical facilities are only a small part of the evidence. Their many kindnesses and helpful personal acts will always be remembered.”

In 1984 the Halls returned to Fayetteville to retire, although he continued serving interim pastorates 18 times for congregations in Arkansas, Florida, and even the Grand Cayman Island. His wife of nearly 59 years died September 16, 2001, after a battle with cancer. In a column for the *Times* he wrote, “I am not sure how I’ll make it without her, but I am discovering that the promises of God—with which I often comforted others—hold true for me as well.”

A 26-member pulpit committee chaired by Ray Adams divided into smaller groups to travel in various directions to hear prospective candidates. The committee recommended Leighton Paige Patterson, a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, who was serving Bethany Baptist Church in New Orleans. He had completed his master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and was pursuing doctoral studies. After visiting with him and hearing him preach at the Louisiana church, “they retired for the night in an undecided frame of mind,” according to one account.⁸⁴



The Halls returned to Fayetteville in 1984 where they retired.

“By morning each member was convinced that the Holy Spirit was leading him to cast his vote for a call to the pastorate of our church.”

Leighton Paige Patterson began his ministry at First Baptist Church of Fayetteville on July 26, 1970. He preached in view of a call from I Peter 5:1 on the morning of July 25, and then offered an exegesis of Hebrews 12 during the evening service. In her description of the young 27-year old pastor, Mary Evelyn Duncan wrote, “Paige was grounded in biblical truths which gave him a wisdom beyond his years.” She praised his total commitment to missions, adding that he said he would never preach a sermon that did not fully cover the plan of salvation. She predicted that his influence would be felt worldwide, noting the number of young people who responded to the call for dedicated service during his pastorate.

“He encouraged us to use our Bibles by making notes and underlining passages studied,” explained another member. Through studies on eschatology, “he enlightened us and increased our understanding of the teachings of the Bible con-

cerning ‘last things,’” she added. Within the year he received his doctorate in theology from the New Orleans Seminary.

The church voted to sell the parsonage located on Mount Sequoyah, citing the cost of repairs and remodeling. A four-bedroom home was purchased in a housing addition off of Cross-over Road on Manor Drive where the Pattersons and later, the Bakers, lived. The home served as a center for hospitality with members of athletic squads from Fayetteville High School, Woodland Junior High, and Ramay Junior High invited to breakfast on several occasions. A Thursday night youth meeting for high school and college students provided intense study of biblical texts. Participants who often included unsaved friends of the students were encouraged to debate matters of interest with Dr. Patterson who referred to the session as the “Lion’s Den.”

Dr. Patterson’s wife, Dorothy, had completed a master’s degree while at seminary. Their second child was born just prior to the young family’s move to Fayetteville. The rearing of Armour, an active two-year old boy and Carmen, their infant girl, called for a major adjustment. In describing this period of her life, she later wrote, “In the midst of this frustrating time, I turned to the Lord. I determined to read through the Bible systematically with a new purpose in my daily quiet time: I committed myself to finding God’s message for me personally as a woman, as a wife, and as a mother. This experience became the catalyst for my life and ministry.” Out of that experience she wrote, “The Bible Speaks on Being a Woman,” a series of messages she has shared with women in seminary classes and women’s conferences. While devoting her primary energies to her home and family, Dorothy’s gift of hospitality was in evidence as the Pattersons opened their home frequently to various groups in the church.

The Play Learn School for preschoolers began in May of 1971 with Baptist Women providing financial support, supervision, and volunteer help. First called a Mother’s Day Out, it was designed to give mothers an opportunity to leave their children in a learning environment while they shopped, ran errands, or simply took the day off. The children enjoyed creative play, music, and crafts. Directors of this ministry during the 1970s included Lavern Nelson, Bettie Blew, and Edith Griffin. The School eventually offered women the option of enrolling their children for two, three, or five days with four to six hours per day. Mothers who were returning to school to complete college requirements found the program especially helpful. The ministry employed Christian teachers, most of whom were active members of First Baptist Church.

Dana Whitfield became minister of education on September 23, 1971. He had previously pastored in Texas. One of the ministries he supervised was the



Paige Patterson
1970 - 1975



Paige and Dorothy Patterson in 1970.

discipleship program known as Institute of Christian Ministries. ICM offered classes on biblical ethics, Old and New Testament overviews, an introduction to the study of Greek, and many other classes.

For the first time since members of First Baptist had departed to form University Baptist Church in 1953, a joint evangelistic service was held at First Baptist with UBC. As the service closed, the pastor encouraged members from each church to repent of any unchristian

attitudes held toward members of the other congregation due to the split that occurred 18 years earlier. After several stanzas of the invitation hymn were played, a prominent deacon of First Baptist began weeping and walked over to a member from University Baptist to express a desire for reconciliation. Gradually, others followed his example and the longstanding disagreement was laid to rest. In his weekly column for the church newspaper, Dr. Patterson wrote, "The community image of our two sister congregations was much enhanced." He described the basis of a cooperative effort to proclaim Christ in Fayetteville and reminded, "When you speak of your sister Baptist churches, speak well."

Under the direction of Tom Biller, associate pastor for youth, the church opened a coffeehouse ministry on June 10, 1971, at West Dickson Street and West Street in the basement of Ruble Transfer and Storage Company. Known as the "Ear" for Entering Another Realm, the reference also reiterated the evangelistic imperative, "He that hath an ear, let him hear." The young people of First Baptist were trained to share their faith throughout the evening during individual conversations and from the microphone. They volunteered their time converting the storage facility into an area that would appeal to other teenagers and college students. At a time when an assortment of unsaved individuals wandered along Dickson Street, the music and food drew the curious down the stairs on Friday and Saturday evenings.

Over the previous year, teenagers were encouraged to gain experience in street witnessing. Paired with Dr. Patterson or another adult, they walked along Dickson Street from the church building westward, engaging others in conversation and sharing gospel tracts. Fellowship and training opportunities were provided to teenagers in a basement room of the educational building known as "The Cellar." Weeknight Bible studies were offered in the youth minister's home.

During the years when the Jesus Movement was spreading from the coasts of California and New York City to the central regions of America, churches like First Baptist adapted their evangelistic outreach to reach young people through

folk musicals like “Tell It Like It Is” and “Natural High.” In 1970 the youth choirs of First Baptist Church and First United Methodist Church traveled together to rehearse during a week in Pensacola, Florida. Drums and guitars accompanied the singers and a joint performance was scheduled upon their return. Quite a few of the Methodist teenagers were among the youth professing faith in Christ following the trip, with some requesting baptism and membership.

Beginning in 1971, the youth choir shifted from performing in worship services to taking mission trips that utilized music as a means of delivering the gospel in outdoor park settings as well as mission sites. Various adults accompanied them, along with the pastor, minister of music, and youth minister. They made the long journey to Saskatchewan, Canada, assisting churches at Prince Albert, North Battlefield, and Regina begun under the ministry of Henry Blackaby at Faith Baptist Church in Saskatoon. Concerts were scheduled en route in Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Missouri under the direction of Don Edmondson. Around 150 people accepted Christ during the mission trip.

New York City was the destination in 1972, with the presentation of Otis Skillings’s folk musical “LIFE” under the direction of Bart Neal who had become minister of music. He and his wife, Edith, frequently sang duets for the church.

Greg Hochstetler was called to serve as minister of music on March 19, 1973. Under his leadership instrumental accompaniment expanded beyond the use of piano, drums, and guitar to include brass, keyboard, and additional percussion. The youth choir became known as The One Accord and returned to Canada two more years, serving in the provinces of Manitoba and Alberta presenting “Love” and “A New World.” To transport them and other members on long distance trips, the church purchased a used Continental bus. Throughout the year, the One Accord used the bus to travel to local churches in Oklahoma, Missouri, and Arkansas, presenting concerts.

Three-screen multimedia, stage lighting, and choreography enhanced the visual presentation. All of this required a greater time commitment as rehearsals expanded to include Monday nights. Youth participants developed a teamwork approach to handle the job of setting up equip-



The youth choir traveled to mission sites on a bus purchased by the church.



Greg Hochstetler offered an opportunity for the audience to respond to the gospel message presented by the One Accord during a mission trip to Canada.

ment and “tearing it down” for travel and performances. With such diverse skills required, even teenagers with little musical talent found a place of service in operating multi-media equipment or supervising sound and lighting. Many youth from outside the church were attracted to the opportunity to be involved in such projects. Ultimately, the gospel message they heard sung and shared transformed their lives.

Dr. Patterson wrote of the evangelistic and church-planting opportunities where the youth would serve, stating in the First Baptist *VOICE*, “God has graciously opened us a door of opportunity . . . participating in the beginning ministry of what will some day be one of the finest works of our Lord anywhere on earth.”

The church received a letter of appreciation from Dr. Blackaby in which he stated, “The work of God’s kingdom knows no boundary. At this crucial moment in Canada’s history, God has made you a co-laborer with us in bringing Christ to this people.” He spoke of between 100 and 125 people finding the Lord as a result of the work done by the teenagers. Some 20 years later, Blackaby would write in his book, *Experiencing God*, of the supernatural movement of God in the churches where the Fayetteville youth ministered.

The culture of the 1970s drew the focus of teenagers away from their faith, a concern that had been considered by the pulpit committee in selecting Dr. Patterson as pastor. Through such extensive opportunities for ministry, the youth became grounded in their faith, preparing them for the transition to Christian leadership as adults. Over 40 young people committed their lives to full-time church vocation during Dr. Patterson’s ministry, many of whom serve in Southern Baptist churches and ministries today.

Ministry to children expanded to offer a children's church in the early 1970s. Long-time member Judy Robertson directed ministry to elementary aged children, having sensed a call to ministry. Vacation Bible School continued to be an effective outreach tool, often drawing as many as 300 participants. All of these programs emphasized a clear presentation of the gospel on a level that children could understand, while continuing to disciple those who had already professed faith in Christ. Jane Renfro assumed responsibility for this area after Miss Robertson began seminary preparation for mission service in Taiwan.⁸⁵

Dan McKee became the church administrator in 1973, coming from First Baptist church of Denton, Texas. He served until 1977, devoting a great deal of energy to organizing the church's business. "We tried many things," McKee recalled, "but what was accomplished was worthwhile. Setting up productive office procedures, initiating an effective bookkeeping system, cleaning up the grounds, getting old houses moved and new parking in place, installing a new air conditioning system and working with Greg [Hochstetler] to improve the sound system in the auditorium were some things I remember. He recalled his work with senior adults as "a pleasant and rewarding experience," describing their lives as "a testimony to the gospel and the love of their church."⁸⁶

A year into Dr. Patterson's ministry, the church voted to accept the following goals: winning the lost to Christ; teaching the biblical revelation to gain knowledge about God and His plan; insure the highest type of discipleship and Christian living; enable as many as possible to bear witness to Christ; counseling for those in sickness, sorrow, decision, and agonizing problems; challenge a weakened moral fiber and speak a prophetic word; and instruction in skills of various kinds by producing helpful programs. The church set high goals for baptisms, Sunday School enrollment, average attendance, and mission giving.

In order to move closer to accomplishing these priorities, qualifications and responsibilities of Sunday School teachers were outlined. They were expected to have professed faith in Christ, hold membership in First Baptist Church, be free from immoral habits, demonstrate faithfulness in Sunday School and on Wednesday night if possible, have a willingness to learn, a love of pupils, doctrinal solidarity, teaching of the biblical revelation, visit prospects and members regularly, witness, and come prepared to teach.

A variety of evangelistic programs were introduced in 1974 including the Witness Involvement Now (WIN) Institute, an area wide crusade with evangelist James Robison, and six Backyard Bible Clubs in area neighborhoods led by the youth. Training for various church programs was offered through a Sunday School Revival led by Leon Kilbraith and conferences at Glorieta, New Mexico. Visitation was expanded to include hospital and shut-in contacts, Sunday School departmental visits, evangelistic outreach, and contact with newcomers to the community. Individuals listening to the worship service by radio were given an opportunity to respond to the invitation by phone and receive immediate counseling.



First Baptist began offering a Children's Church service in the early 1970s under the direction of Judy Robertson who directed ministry to elementary aged children.

In 1973, the pastor introduced a discipleship program called the Apollos Project. Each new member was paired with a member who was more mature in the faith, providing spiritual guidance over a three to six-month period. Individuals seeking membership in the church first received counseling about the decision before being presented for church action a week later. New members were taught about the church, doctrine, witnessing, and stewardship, and were given an opportunity to share their faith.

A committee of the church explored the possibility of broadcasting services on television, but decided that the cost was prohibitive. A long-range planning committee addressed a plan for a family activities center, but no action was taken. The church provided seed money to explore starting a new work on Sang Avenue meeting at Asbell Elementary School. Members of the Leisure Club organized an effort to purchase Bibles to set alongside hymnals in the pews. In order to raise those funds, they compiled and sold a collection of recipes entitled *Loaves and Fishes*.

Special recognitions were scheduled throughout the early 1970s to honor particular individuals such as missionary Jo Scaggs, music accompanists Gladys Sonneman and George Tharel, and deaf interpreter John Robinson. Among the guests invited to speak in the early 1970s were V. L. Stanfield, Charles Ashcraft, William Mueller, Paul Pressler, Chuck Kelley, Richard Land, Leo Humphrey, Clebe McClary, Bill Bennett, Anis Shirrosh, John Bisagno, Abner McCall, Rosalind Rinker, Josh McDowell, E. F. "Preacher" Hallock, Jimmy Hester, Lofton Hudson, and Wayne Ward. WMU leaders from across the state joined in the annual meet-

ing of the Arkansas Woman's Missionary Union held at First Baptist March 18-19, 1975, as member Nathalie Tharel served as state WMU president.

Dr. Patterson resigned on February 16, 1975 to become president of Criswell Bible Institute in Dallas (and now known as The Criswell College). Patterson led the school for 17

years before accepting a call to serve as president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1992 to 2003. He was elected Southern Baptist Convention president in 1999 and 2000, making him the second former member of First Baptist Church of Fayetteville to hold the highest elective office in the SBC, the other being Brooks Hayes. In June of 2003 Dr. Patterson was elected president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Mrs. Patterson continued her writing and speaking ministry among women, ultimately launching a master of divinity in women's studies program at Southeastern Seminary.

During the pastor's last meeting with the deacons, he encouraged them to become thoroughly familiar with the qualifications for a pastor found in I Tim. 3 and Titus 1. He expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve and the support he had received from the deacons. He praised the consistency of their attendance at meetings, adding that the vast majority are deeply spiritual men. Dr. Patterson suggested future deacons' meetings involve less business with more attention to spiritual matters. The job of a deacon should be less of a job of caring for the church and more a matter of formal ministry, he expressed. He said deacons who publicly discouraged criticism and encouraged prayer would help the next pastor.

The One Accord recorded an album at a studio in Fort Smith, selling over 900 copies by the time of a spring trip to Nashville. There they participated in PraiSing for the premier of a new Baptist hymnal. Choirs from around the country were invited to sing through the hymnal as each group presented a few songs around the clock until all selections had been sung. The One Accord was the only choir with college-aged members that was invited to participate.

A pulpit committee chaired by Murray Smart recommended **Nathan Larry**



Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Jones (at right and center) and the Pattersons accompanied Miss Judy Robertson to her missionary appointment service in Richmond.

Baker, an assistant professor of Christian ethics and pastoral ministry at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. He began his ministry at First Baptist of Fayetteville at the age of 38 on July 20, 1975. Previously he had pastored churches in Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas as well as directing the BSU at Texas Women's University. He had received his theological training at Southwestern Seminary, receiving Th.M. and Th.D. degrees.

In her updated history of the church during these years, Mrs. Duncan wrote, "Sartorially correct, a bit shy, but with empathy for all, Dr. Baker had a vision of what our church needed in the way of construction to make the Educational Annex fit for housekeeping in the house of God." She referred to the plans he outlined for a total reconditioning, adding, "The church body was not then ready to accept the cost of the operation."



Larry Baker
1975 - 1978

Jim Herrington joined the staff as youth minister soon after Dr. Baker's arrival, having worked with him in Monroe, Louisiana. Mark Short III soon was named minister of music. Worship services featured a more formal style, incorporating responsive readings written by the pastor. The church bulletin often included inspirational prose and poetry on which members meditated before the service began.

Dr. Baker's wife, Wanda, encouraged further development of the international ministry to university students from many lands. Her gift of hospitality opened their home to deacons, the Leisure Club, university students attending Post-B.A.S.I.C. on Thursday nights, and other special occasions. The Bakers had three children, Anne, Angela, and Andrew.

With the country celebrating the bicentennial in 1976, the pastor led the church to join other Arkansas Baptists to adopt a yearlong emphasis in seeing that "all Arkansas have the good news of Jesus Christ shared with them." The effort began with a prayer vigil involving 200 participants, enlistment of 250 pastor's prayer partners, and planning for a weeklong revival in April. With at least sixty-five percent of Washington County residents living within a 10-mile radius of the church, that area was designated the church's mission field.

The April revival known as Life and Liberty Week featured musicians including the BSU Players, Martha Branham, the One Accord, and Dean Wilder. Dr. Baker preached during the revival and testimonies were offered by Arkansas Razorback Mike Kirkland and Shirley Cothram, the 1975 Miss America. The staff produced a television special funded through the gifts of church members.

Afterward, Dr. Baker praised increased participation by the church and renewed involvement by many inactive members. "Our church was introduced to a large number of people who were not active in any church and a great deal of

renewing took place,” the deacon secretary recorded the pastor as saying. “Life and Liberty was a beginning point for our church.” Other guests speaking during the years that Dr. Baker served as pastor include Clyde Fant, Milt Hughes, John Howell, Milton Ferguson, William Hendricks, Grady Cothen, T. B. Maston, Charles Roselle, and C. W. Brister. The church participated in a World Missions Conference in November of 1976, providing missionary testimonies of the movement of God around the world through Southern Baptists.

Dr. Baker sought to strengthen the church’s ties to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. He wrote a series of articles on the pastor’s ministry and a series on the ministry of the deacon. He served on the steering committee of the Third Century Campaign for BSU ministries, spoke at Siloam Springs Baptist Assembly, and was certified as a deacon trainer.

John McCallum began serving as youth minister in 1977. He was followed by George Adams who served as youth and college minister until February of 1987 when he became a Navy chaplain. Preschool coordination was assumed by Clementine Hembree who served until 1981, later returning to the position again. In 1978 Pete Ramsey joined the staff as minister of education.

One of the most enduring aspects of Dr. Baker’s ministry was a visitation outreach known as Andrew Club. Based on John 1:41-42, he described the example of the disciple Andrew bringing people to Jesus. The purpose of the club was “to go to unenlisted people in the community in the name of Christ and the church to encourage them in the faith and to become identified with Christ and the church.” Each of the four groups included eight or nine couples. They met once a month in the various homes of group members. After sharing a covered dish meal, participants visited contacts for about an hour and then returned to share their experiences and enjoy dessert. Many lasting friendships were formed through these groups that crossed generational lines.

At a summer deacons’ retreat, Dr. Baker explained four opportunities for ministry through visitation, including hospitals, homes where a death had oc-



The International Friends met for a fellowship at the church parsonage in 1978.

curred, and among new members and prospects. Later that year he introduced a Deacons of the Week ministry whereby the 36 active deacons were divided into six groups with responsibility on a given week in greeting those attending Sunday School, assisting with hospital and emergency visitation, distributing new member packets, joining in a season of prayer before worship services, and assisting with the invitation at the end of the service. The Baptist Men's Group was reorganized under Dr. Baker's tenure and the children's ministries were expanded.

Dr. Baker introduced observance of the Lord's Supper on Thursday preceding Easter as well as Christmas Eve. Over the years these services have been enhanced with special music to provide worshipful occasions to consider the meaning of Christ's death. Relatives visiting their families at Christmas often attend the December 24 candlelight service.

In the fall of 1976 the Church Council recommended a committee be established to study and make recommendations concerning renovation of educational space. By 1978 the church approved refurbishing the sanctuary, replacing the carpet, pew cushions, lighting, and adding the stained glass window above the baptistry. "We had lots of committee work during that time and even with a direction made and goals set, the people didn't move," explained one longtime member. "Some of our people wanted to buy property and move out," she said, adding that others held strong views about remaining near the downtown area. "After making plans to stay and refurbish the sanctuary, we got down to choosing the shade of carpet. I think Larry just got tired of dealing with all these kinds of things that some people make a big issue over. It was just not his idea of what should go on in a church."⁷⁵

Having served on the search committee that called Dr. Baker, she remembered his desire to know more about life inside the local church in order to better serve in his teaching field. "But he had had enough and the evening we were voting on the carpet he came down and surprised us all by offering his resignation." Having been invited to serve as professor of Christian ethics at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, his resignation was effective November 15, 1978. Later, he served as academic dean of Midwestern, and then headed the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, Tennessee. Following a pastorate at First Baptist Church in Pineville, Louisiana, he moved to Sun City West, Arizona, where he pastors First Baptist Church. He authored *Combating Moral Problems*, a mission action guide for WMU, and contributed chapters to several books on preaching, pastoral ministry, salvation, and ethical issues.

NOTES:

⁷⁵ Andrew M. Hall, Interview, History Committee videotape, First Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ark.

⁷⁶ Tresa McBee Riha, "Pastor still behind the pulpit after 60 years," *Northwest Arkansas Times*, May 27, 2000, 9.

⁷⁷ First Baptist *VOICE*, September 20, 1953, listing 50 students joining the church.

⁷⁸ Jamie Jones, Interview, History Committee videotape, First Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ark.

⁷⁹ The window depicting Jesus in the Temple was moved from Washington Regional Medical Center after the hospital relocated further north. It had been given to WRMC by Ray Adams and displayed in the hospital chapel. The series of panels that had been displayed in the home of Frank Suttle was donated in 2003 by his family.

⁸⁰ Charles Stewart donated the pipes founds in his salvage yard. Organ society member Sam Donelson provided the smaller pipe, having played the organ as a young man.

⁸¹ Julianne Lewis Adams and Thomas DeBlack, "An Oral History of School Desegregation in Fayetteville, Ark., 1954-1965, 119, quoting Glenn Sowder.

⁸² Blake Smith, letter to George Tharel, January 14, 1966.

⁸³ Biography of Josephine Scaggs, Foreign Mission Board, SBC, 1965.

⁸⁴ Mrs. Duncan, 2.

⁸⁵ Judy Robertson was commissioned by the Foreign Mission Board October 8, 1974. A group from First Baptist traveled to the appointment service in Richmond, Virginia, celebrating over dinner with former Pastor Andrew Hall, an FMB trustee at the time. After serving for six years in Taiwan, Miss Robertson became an associate area director for East Asia until her retirement in 1994.

⁸⁶ Dan McKee, Interview, October 1, 2003.

⁸⁷ Feriba McNair, Interview, September 21, 2003.

SIXTH QUARTER CENTURY 1979 - 2004				
	United States	Arkansas	Baptists	First Baptist
1979				
1981	IBM introduces personal computer	UofA enrollment at 15,600		Long-range Planning Committee begins property expansion
1983				
1985				
1987			Record-setting 45,531 messengers attend Dallas SBC annual meeting	Sunday School Eagle Award given to church
1989				
1991	World Wide Web available for home use	Arkansas Gazette closes its doors after 172 years		
1993				
1995	Oklahoma City federal building bombed	Razorbacks win NCAA basketball championship	Billy Graham addresses SBC sesquicentennial meeting	New addition to church building dedicated
1997				
1999				
2001	Terrorists fly planes into World Trade Center	State population hits 2.67 million; Washington County at 157,715; Fayetteville 58,047	75th anniversary of Cooperative Program, nearly \$10 billion given since 1925	\$183,652 given to Cooperative Program by FBC
2003				Resident membership 1,030

CHAPTER SEVEN

On November 11, 1979, **Jere D. Mitchell** began serving as pastor, recommended by a committee chaired by Dr. Clayton Brunson. A native of Oklahoma, Mitchell was educated at Oklahoma Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, then received his doctor of ministry degree from The Graduate Seminary of Phillips University in Enid, Oklahoma. His background in student ministry in Oklahoma gave him an appreciation for a university town and the longstanding relationship First Baptist shared with the BSU. He had pastored four churches in Oklahoma prior to coming to Fayetteville at the age of 41. He and his wife, Royce Ann, raised two daughters, Mary and Julie. He served until his retirement in 2000, making him the longest tenured among the 32 pastors thus far.

Having described Dr. Hall's work with the church and community as legendary, Dr. Patterson as having a missions focus and evangelistic zeal, and Dr. Baker as being empathetic, Mary Evelyn Duncan offered this assessment of Dr. Mitchell. "His own man, well-versed in the Scriptures, with an uncanny ability to remember names and voices, Dr. Mitchell is already firmly ensconced as our pastor, in every sense of the word. The church is moving forward. The Jordan has been crossed and we are now in the Hallelujah Hills."



Jere D. Mitchell
1979 - 2000

After Dr. Mitchell's first year at First Baptist, the deacons passed a resolution expressing "our sincere appreciation to you for the outstanding leadership you have provided us and our church family in this, your first year. Your spiritual leadership through your sermons, Bible teaching, and prayer has been valuable in shaping our own Christian lives to a deeper commitment to Christ and His church."

The deacon body praised the growth of the church "materially and spiritually," noting that \$400,000 had been pledged toward "Growing By the Master's Plan." The resolution further stated, "As you continue to preach, teach, and counsel we shall share and undergird you with our prayers. As the lost find Christ as personal Savior and as you baptize new believers, we will rejoice greatly with

God, you and the angels. As you evaluate God's program through us and our church, we shall determine to improve."

"Growing By the Master's Plan" provided funds for renovation of the educational building. A long-range analysis of the church's needs began in 1980 with consideration given to a number of options. One member said, "The trend at that time across the country was for churches to move out to the suburbs where the people were. Some of our people wanted to do that and as a church we spent much time in earnest prayer, studying, and evaluation of our situation."⁸⁸ As a result, she said, no decision was made to move from the College and Dickson location. Instead, the recommendation was made and approved by the church to establish a standing Property Acquisitions Committee of three people⁸⁹ to seek and move on opportunities to buy property along Highland Avenue. The house on the corner of Dickson and Highland was purchased in 1984. All but the last house on the east side of Highland were bought with some used for temporary classroom space, youth activities, a clothing ministry, and missionary housing. Eventually, all except 354 N. Highland were torn down or sold to provide much needed space for parking. This remaining house is now used as a residence for furloughing missionary families.

In the early 1980s, a Sunday School class of First United Presbyterian Church imagined providing a place in Fayetteville where prospective retirees would remain so they would not have to leave friends and churches. They proposed forming a non-profit corporation that would create a Life Care retirement community. First Baptist of Fayetteville, along with Central United Methodist, First Christian, and St. Paul's Episcopal supported First United Presbyterian's efforts to launch Butterfield Trail Village. Through its operation, the governing board sought to reflect a mission of love, respect, dignity, and freedom for its residents. In less than 20 years it exceeded founders' expectations, drawing 332 residents ranging in age from 62 to 105 living in apartments, cottages, Village Homes, and the Health Care Center. Members of First Baptist Church have served on the governing board.

First Baptist was a founding member of the Community Emergency Outreach in Fayetteville. Local churches from various denominations banded to-



Ministry to internationals continued as a priority during Dr. Mitchell's tenure.



Three-year olds (above) and two-year olds (below) enjoy Sunday School.

gether to help those in the community who were in need, offering assistance in the name of Christ. Over 100 volunteers from 20 member churches staff the facility at 419 W. Rock Street where they dispense food, clothing, and money for rent stipends, utilities, gasoline, and medication.



Churches provide food and funding for this community ministry that assists approximately 4,000 clients annually.

At the celebration of the church's 125th anniversary, the congregation agreed to a covenant, stating, "We of First Baptist Church, Fayetteville, are not afraid of hard tasks. We are ready to work to make our church mean what we feel it can and should mean. We know that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore; and that if we truly seek the Leadership of His Spirit, we will have the kind of church that will meet the needs of tomorrow's world."

Over a two-month period from May to June of 1983, special guests preaching at the church included Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Director



Children learn a Bible story from their teacher.

Don Moore, former pastors Andrew Hall, Paige Patterson, and Larry Baker, soloist Beverly Terrell, musical ensemble Chara, and the local BSU share team. Other special guests throughout the year included contemporary Christian musicians Weston and Davis, the Ware Triplets, Ken Medema, and Pete Butler, music department chairman of Midwestern Seminary. New Orleans Seminary preaching Professor Harold Bryson led the June Bible Week.

At this stage of the church's history, the programs and activities included morning and evening worship services each Sunday,

Sunday School, training on Sunday evenings, in addition to Wednesday Family Night featuring dinner, Bible study, Sunday School worker preparation, children's choir rehearsals and mission education, youth ministry, praise and prayer service, and adult choir rehearsal. Other ministry opportunities included women's weekday Bible study and mission meetings, nursing home outreach, weekday Play Learn School for preschoolers, and regular meetings for international students.



Older children gather with their teachers for Sunday School.



Volunteers care for babies and preschoolers each Sunday in the nursery.

Outreach to university students featured Bible study, fellowship, visitation, and retreats. Bible study, small group meetings, retreats, fellowship, and choir were provided for youth. Additional music ministry utilized handbells and vocal ensembles.

Among the “spiritual directions goals” the church sought to accomplish by September of 1983 were: winning 52 people to Christ and bringing them into fellowship, training 100 people to witness, and reaching an enrollment of 1,000 with an average attendance of 560 in Bible study.

Pastor Mitchell’s ministry here was built around a strong family emphasis, a deep evangelistic fervor, and a very evident love for all people,” stated Bill Rose who served with him as education director. “He had a gift for remembering the names of everyone he met.” At various times, Dr. Mitchell taught the Woman’s Missionary Union Bible study, taught a Pastor’s Class, a New Member’s class



Kris Lamle traveled with the youth to a mission site in 1988.



Play Learn School students share a song with the congregation.



Edith Griffin served First Baptist for over 31 years in various roles, including preschool coordinator, Play Learn director, and teacher.

She coordinates all of the church's ministry to children, as well as planning VBS,

and offered "Just for Children" lessons on Sunday mornings.

The pastor's wife, Royce Ann, assumed responsibility for the Play Learn Nursery School during 1980 until she began teaching in Springdale public schools in September of that year. Later she taught in Fayetteville. She often used her gifts as a children's worker in the church.

Edith Griffin returned to direct Play Learn School, also serving as preschool director. She served for 13 years in that capacity until her retirement in 1993. She was followed by Sherry Purtle. Sisters Tammy and Lisa Wheat jointly directed children's ministry beginning in September of 1993. In 1994 Lisa Wheat assumed full responsibility as minister of childhood education.

Kingdom Kids, Fall Harvest Festival, a summer club for preschoolers and their parents, and parent/child dedication services in which the church guides parents in their responsibility to instruct their children “to grow in wisdom and stature” through their relationships with God and people.

Mike Sandlin had joined the staff in August of 1979, serving throughout the school year as minister to university students. Kris Lamle served as youth and university minister beginning in 1987. After the church hired a minister for university students, he focused strictly on youth ministry. In 1994 he accepted a call to serve another church as minister of education. In 1983 J. Lowell Ponder, a retired pastor, began assisting the pastor in ministering to older adults. From March of 1990 to November of 1992 Jeff Bennett served as minister of music from March 1990 thru the end of 1992, offering added talent as a pianist and arranger. Clementine Hembree returned as preschool coordinator in April of 1989, serving thru June of 1997 at which time the Fayetteville City Council passed a resolution designating June 29, 1997, as Clementine Hembree Day. Lisa Wheat assumed overall supervision of children from birth through fifth grade and Lola Harris coordinated preschool ministry.

In 1988 representatives of First Baptist Church joined in the tribute to BSU Director Jamie Jones as he retired after 37 years of ministry. Former students, co-workers, area ministers, and other friends and family gathered to honor his commitment to discipling young Baptist students and others touched by the campus ministry. During his tenure he oversaw the establishment of a new BSU center, led in purchasing three houses north of the facility that provided space for additional ministry, and joined with state BSU leader Tom Logue in raising \$350,000 for a BSU Endowment Fund for student work statewide. Mr. Jones was honored for his work by Ouachita Baptist University when they granted him a doctor of divinity degree. His successor, Lynn Lloyd, also joined First Baptist Church, continuing the vital link between the church and the outreach renamed Baptist Collegiate Ministry.

Building upon a strong, missionary heritage of the church, Dr. Mitchell encouraged sending mission volunteers to Mexico, Honduras, Italy, Singapore, Brazil, Guatemala, Bolivia, Interlochen, Norway, and various home mission projects in Iowa, Indiana, South Dakota, and Kansas. “He doesn’t just ask you to do things, he shows you how and he goes with you to do them,” remarked one member who joined six or seven mission trips and whose husband James participated in 21 such trips.⁹⁰ Additional volunteers ministered on various trips to Australia, Belize, Greenland, Honduras, Israel, Netherlands, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, and Switzerland.



Lisa Wheat began ministering to children in 1993.



Members of an adult Sunday School class enjoy Bible study together.

Evangelistic outreach remained important at home as well. First Baptist served as the pilot church in Arkansas for the Continuing Witness Training program and later was one of the first churches to utilize the F.A.I.T.H. evangelism program. “When Southern Baptists brought together evangelistic outreach with Sunday School and made a strong effort to put the two together, I think it was a stroke of genius and something of God,” Dr. Mitchell said. “You not only have an opportunity to reach people for Christ, but to do some very intense ministry to people in your Sunday School which you have to do if you’re going to be a people who care.” He taught the congregation that it was not only the job of the staff, but also the members to serve as ministers. The Sunday School Board awarded the church the Church Growth “Eagle” for its outstanding work in 1986.

The musical accompaniment by Gladys Sonneman as organist and George Tharel as pianist enhanced all of the worship services, in addition to special programs, weddings, and funerals. A collection of many favorite hymns featuring the two musicians was produced in 1984 and widely distributed. After 55 years of playing the organ for First Baptist Church, Mrs. Sonneman resigned March 19, 1986, due to the long rehabilitation anticipated following a stroke. “Thank you for allowing me to be there so long,” she wrote. The Gladys Sonneman Music Scholarship was established for students attending Ouachita Baptist University pursuing studies in church music. “I have heard countless numbers of people talk about what her music ministry meant to them during their undergraduate or graduate study days at the University of Arkansas and as a member of your church,” responded Ouachita President Daniel Grant in a letter of appreciation.⁹¹



Bill Rose served as minister of education.

The church began the Sierra Baptist Chapel on December 18, 1988, by ministering to children and families in the Sierra Mobile Home Park at Christmastime. Retired minister Homer Albright served as pastor.



Adult 9
Sunday
School
Classes
meeting in
1988 pose
for
photographs.





Mrs. Nathalie Tharel's Sunday School class ministered to women.

The work continued until the mission closed five years later following a storm that caused extensive damage to the chapel. Four other churches had begun ministering in the park by that time.

Dr. Mitchell led the congregation to maintain a strong presence in the Washington-Madison Baptist Association and the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, serving on committees for both organizations. He presided over the ABSC executive committee on two occasions, and served on the search committee that called Dr. Emil Turner as ABSC executive director. In 1983 he served on the Credentials Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention.

A memorial elevator tower was added to the church and dedicated October 2, 1988, making all areas of the building accessible to all members. In 1991 the church authorized a building committee to begin plans for a multi-purpose building and prepare recommendations for modifications of released space in the existing building. The church approved the committee's proposal and a steering committee was enlisted to begin preparation for a capital funds campaign to pay for the project.

"Cornerstone of Faith" involved a large number of members enlisting and hosting home



A special singles class gathered in 1988.



Construction completed in 1995 provided another 17,950 square feet for a commercial kitchen, choir suite, administrative offices, new space for youth, and a multi-purpose space that would seat 350 to 400 people for a meal or could be used for basketball, volleyball, and children's activities. (Below) David Moore and Jere Mitchell led in the dedication service.

meetings, planning for a leadership rally, presenting information and spiritual emphases. On Celebration Sunday, April 25, 1993, testimonies were given by several members as to God's faithfulness in providing the resources to carry out His work. Dr.

Mitchell offered a message entitled "I Will Build My Church" from Matt. 16:18. This campaign generated \$863,826 given or pledged over a three-year period to expand facilities to the west, adding improved access from the southwest corner. Dedicated on June 4, 1995, the new build-





First Baptist church assisted with funding for the Tommy Jones Memorial Home in West Fork for children at risk of abuse or neglect.

ing housed an administrative office suite, a choir suite, new space for youth, a commercial kitchen, and a multi-purpose space that would seat 350 to 400 people for a meal or could be used for basketball, volleyball, and children's activities. The library was relocated to the lower floor near the southwest entry in a larger space that allowed for a History Room to be included. The library's variety of books, tapes, and other materials enhances the education of members.

The fellowship area was later renamed Mitchell Hall on the occasion of the pastor's twentieth anniversary. A total of 17,950 square feet of new space was provided with 18,434 square feet renovated. "Find Us Faithful" culminated in April 1996 with \$888,716 given over the next three-year period to pay on the remaining debt.



Gordon Rowell began serving on the church staff in 1997, later assuming responsibility for church administration.

On October 17, 1993, Dr. Mitchell offered the dedicatory prayer for the sixth emergency receiving home of Arkansas Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministry. The 3,500 square-foot facility provides a home for children who have been or are in danger of being abused, abandoned, or neglected. First Baptist member Tommy Jones had served on the ABCH&FM board of trustees and chaired a long-range planning committee that studied the needs of children in the region. After Mr. Jones's death, a decision was made to name the facility to honor his memory. Individuals and churches from Washington-Madison Baptist Association, including First Baptist, funded construction and furnishing of the Tommy Jones Memorial Home, with volunteers from a Tyler, Texas, church completing construction. First Baptist continues to provide clothing, furnishings, outdoor equipment, and birthday gifts for children.

Mike Paslay began serving as minister of music in 1993. He described the mission of the church's music ministry as being "to pursue excellence as we use God's great gift of music for His glory, the good of His church, and the gain of lost souls." His experience as a pianist, writer and arranger of hymns, in addition



For nine years Jim Thomas (top, left) led First Baptist youth, discipling them through Bible study, mission trips, retreats, and camps. Participants in the 1994 Jesus Fest are shown here.

to his ability as a soloist broadened the church's focus on worship. As an adult Sunday School teacher he interacts with another facet of the church's ministry through the study of God's Word.

Jim Thomas began leading youth ministry in 1994, serving through 2003. His oversight of middle school, junior high, and high school students included many opportunities for discipleship and evangelistic outreach, utilizing retreats, camps, mission trips, and weekly Bible studies.

Bruce Salsman led the university ministry from 1993 to 1997, followed by David Mason who served until 1999 when he resigned to become a full-time associate pastor in Benton, Arkansas. Bo Lee served in this role next until he was appointed to serve with the International Mission Board. He was followed by Andrew Skinner during the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003



Mike Paslay emphasizes using the gift of music for God's glory. He utilizes music in worship as a means of communicating biblical truth.



A Sunday morning children's sermon (above), a class for elementary aged children (left), and summer youth camp (below) were among ministries offered to children in the 1990s.



school years. Bob Hopkins served from 1997 to 1999 as minister of education, and then returned to First Baptist Church of Midland as associate pastor. Bill Rose came out of retirement to serve again as interim adult specialist. Gordon Rowell began serving as financial secretary in 1997, with the position later expanded to include church administration.

“Great is Thy Faithfulness” established a goal of paying off all debt in two years, including the notes consolidated from the purchase of nearby houses and the building addition. The campaign generated \$500,000 with a final payment on all church indebtedness made December 11, 2000. Church property was extended to the north with the purchase of the Goff-McNair auto dealership building and parking lots in late 2000. “Giving With a Willing Heart” set a goal of \$600,000 to be paid over a three-year period. With budget reserves available, this note was paid early. Funds still being received on pledges will be applied to the next building project.

“In order to meet the needs of the families moving into our area, we will need to have our finances in order,” advised Dr. Mitchell. Recalling the church’s mission to ‘Love God, love one another, and to love all people,’ the pastor explained it as a call to love, worship, obey and serve God. “It calls us to love and serve one another and faithfully evangelize and disciple all people.” With the



Missions education for boys is offered through Royal Ambassadors and Challengers on Wednesday evenings. This group of RA's were recognized in a 1990 service. Preschoolers learn about missions in Mission Friends.



Missions education has remained a priority for First Baptist Church. Elementary aged GA's (above) were recognized in a 1989 service and Acteens are shown (below) from a 1990 program.



success of the latest campaign, Mitchell predicted future generations would look back and say members were faithful, and because of that faithfulness, they were able to come to know the Lord.

Every time the church raised funds for building renovation and expansion, mission outreach remained a priority. On July 11, 1999, the church sponsored another mission as nine people formed Shiloh Community Church, partnering with the association, state convention, and North American Mission Board. Within a year and a half the membership had grown to 46 with Joe Jones serving as pastor. The church constituted in July of 2003 with a celebration under a tent on their new debt-free land.

Ministry to Chinese families who lived in Fayetteville was begun by a couple in the church, later assisted by two couples who had recently retired as Southern Baptist missionaries serving Asian people groups. They served this ethnic group through a Wednesday night English Bible study. Other outreach activities included the Lighthouse Ministry to street people on Dickson Street, ministry to inmates in the local jail, residents of local health care facilities, and a weekly outreach to students at Fayetteville High School through The Underground.

A marker commemorating the church's history was erected on the Dickson Street side of the property in August of 2001. The description notes that the Northwest Arkansas Baptist Female Institute once stood at the corner of College and Dickson, housing a federal arsenal which was destroyed by the Confederate Army in 1862.

Upon his retirement from the pastorate, Dr. Mitchell and his wife were honored with a trip to Europe to see the Passion Play in Oberammergau, Germany. He told the *Northwest Arkansas Times* that he considers "a heart for God" to be the most important quality for a pastor. "Second, only to that, is that they have to have a servant's heart. Jesus said, 'Whoever wants to be first is going to have to be last.' If a man expects to lead a church, then he's going to have to be willing to serve."⁹² Dr. Mitchell continues to serve interim pastorates in the area.



Jere and Royce Ann Mitchell

Thirty-four year old **Douglas Falknor** was named pastor in July of 2001 upon the unanimous recommendation of a pulpit committee chaired by David Moore. Coming from Ardmore, Oklahoma, where he pastored Southwest Baptist Church, Falknor had served other churches in Oklahoma and Texas and ministered in Alaska as a summer missionary. He is a graduate of East Texas Baptist University in Marshall, Texas, and received a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. He is completing a dissertation for a doctor of ministry degree from Southwestern. His first morning

sermon was drawn from Gal. 5:22 and he began an evening series about joy from the Book of Philippians.

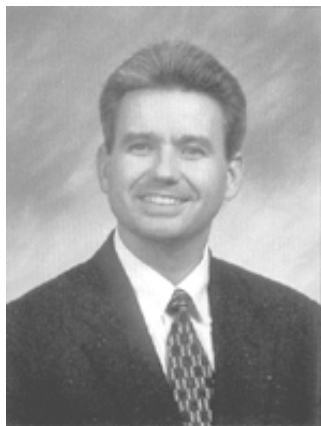
He has maintained the church's evangelistic priority, implementing what is known as the GROW outreach plan. Members commit to attend one night a month and are divided into teams in order to visit, write letters, or make phone calls to prospects and inactive members.

With a large portion of the budget devoted to mission support and ministries around the world, the church remains committed to maintaining existing ministries while also looking forward to new opportunities. In an interview with the Northwest Arkansas Times, Pastor Falknor referred to local ministry to inmates, outreach on Dickson Street, as well as support for Habitat for Humanity and Cooperative Emergency Outreach as examples. "It's important for us to reach the community." Through involvement with the Washington-Madison Baptist Association he continues to encourage the church's participation in joint ministry by local churches and enjoys the fellowship with other pastors. He continues to challenge the church to be on mission with God locally and around the world. Recent mission trips have featured ministry in South Dakota, Mexico, and China.

Early in his ministry Pastor Falknor emphasized the priority of making disciples. "One of the great joys of pastoring is the opportunity to be a part of the baptism of each person who is publicly professing Jesus as Lord and Savior. Hearing the saved confess how God has redeemed them, and watching them obediently submit to believer's baptism thrills my heart," he wrote. "Yet I am aware that this is neither the beginning of a Christian walk nor the end of it. The baptism is one step, though an important one, in the process of an individual becoming a disciple of Christ. After salvation, many others will be involved in guiding the person to become more Christ-like. It is a lifelong process of God at work to draw each one to Himself, but He allows me to be a part of it!"

He observed that people in the community are invited to Christ and to His church through outreach opportunities such as FAITH teams and Andrew Clubs. "During Sunday School and worship, we unashamedly present the need for Christ and His love for all people. Christ's life-changing power is demonstrated by our loving, joyful actions as we interact with one another in class and the hallways and the sanctuary. We preach Christ and we live Christ," he stated.⁹³ He considers Sunday School and Discipleship Training the backbone of the local church, encouraging and preparing disciples of Jesus Christ.

In addition to raising their three young children, Lisa Falknor is involved in the women's ministry of the church, has served as a pianist for "Sons of Jubal," a



Douglas Falknor
2001 -

men's ensemble, and organized a ministry to moms and preschoolers. The Falknors have three children, Rachel, Joel, and Sarah.

Special programs during Christmas and Easter as well as Vacation Bible School in the summer continue to provide outreach to the community. Church members participate in mission trips each year and the youth join in an annual ski trip. Long-established ministry to internationals continues with work among Korean students as well as Chinese/English Bible study and language classes. Many of those who came to the English as a Second Language Bible study have become active members of adult Sunday School classes. Several Kenyan families have enjoyed worshipping at First Baptist in recent years, participating in Sunday School classes as well. The Korean congregation meeting in the north building is another joint venture of First Baptist, the association, state convention, and North American Mission Board. Partnership in Korean, Chinese, and Hispanic ministries continues as a priority of Pastor Falknor.

Women have been ministering to one another throughout the church's history, particularly through the WMU. One member felt God's calling to unify the



A Korean ministry begun as a joint venture of First Baptist, the association, state convention, and North American Mission Board meets in the north building. The congregation is pastored by Dr. Chang Keun Park.

women of the church through a retreat, and later, a Baptist Women's Day. Both events provide opportunities for women of all ages to come together for fellowship, spiritual growth, and unity. The church responded by developing a Women's Ministry Team as a standing committee with this purpose: "to glorify God while promoting growth and unity among the women of our church through Bible study, missions, and fellowships." They have implemented new approaches to women's ministry drawn from a LifeWay-sponsored conference as well as input received from women regarding Bible study, prayer, missions, and fellowship opportunities.

On November 22, 2001, the single most inspiring example of missionary commitment, Josephine Scaggs, died at the age of 90. She had served as a Southern Baptist missionary from 1939 to 1976, retiring at that time to care for her father. In addition to being named an honorary alumnus of the U of A, Miss Scaggs was honored by Southern Baptist College at Walnut Ridge as a Distinguished Baptist Lady. She was living in a Baptist retirement home in San Angelo when she died.

Through the years the church supported her with prayers, money, and care packages. They received much more in return, Pastor Falknor shared—an individual and corporate commitment to be involved in missions. "Her impact on missions and on First Baptist Church will continue to benefit the Kingdom of God," he said in announcing a scholarship fund in her honor for the training of future Southern Baptist missionaries. "This will allow her missions impact on First Baptist Church to grow through the years by preparing men and women to go to all the world with the message of Jesus."

Music has been an important part of the heritage of First Baptist Church. Utilizing the original pipe organ donated for the domed building on College and Dickson and later the Baldwin piano and Casavant organ in the new sanctuary, gifted accompanists have enjoyed playing well-crafted instruments. At various times the use of many other instruments complemented the worship experience. In 2001 the church established a fund to refurbish the existing Baldwin piano or purchase a new instrument. With a goal of \$75,000, the music ministry made a seed gift of \$2,000 and many others within the church, as well as some from outside, contributed additional funds. Through the generosity of another donor, the goal was met, providing the congregation with years of worship accompaniment on a Steinway piano.

Travis Wollenberg joined the staff in the summer of 2002 as minister of adults. He coordinates Sunday School, Discipleship Training, and senior adult



Josephine Scaggs spent her adult life serving as a Southern Baptist missionary to Nigeria.



Travis Wollenberg began ministering to adults in 2002.

ministries, develops leadership for mission efforts, and works with various women's ministries to coordinate planning and responsibilities.

First Baptist Church provides a variety of avenues for every member to develop a deeper prayer life. The Prayer Brigade is a continuous prayer chain as individuals sign up to pray for a specific period of time each week. The long-standing tradition of emphasizing corporate prayer on Wednesday evening has continued throughout the church's history. Men of the church gather in prayer early on Monday mornings before heading off to work, school, or other activities. The Women's Ministry encourages intercessory prayer by pairing interested ladies.

NOTES:

⁹³ Doug Falknor, *First Baptist Voice*, September 10, 2001.

⁸⁸ Feriba McNair, testimony presented to First Baptist Church of Fayetteville, Ark., at beginning of "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" campaign, 1998.

⁸⁹ The three members serving from 1980 and on beyond two decades are Leroy Duell, Feriba McNair, and Keith Robbins.

⁹⁰ Michelle Parks, "Longtime Pastor leaves post at Fayetteville Church," *Morning News*, December 8, 2000, 3F, quoting Patsy Sugg.

⁹¹ Jennie Riggs served as organist after Mrs. Sonneman's retirement and Rita Savage followed George Tharel as pianist.

⁹² *Ibid.*



CHAPTER EIGHT

The eight-year old youngster who sits across from the pastor of First Baptist Church sharing her childlike understanding of faith and the middle aged man walking down the aisle confessing his need for a Savior have a lot in common. Based on their professions of faith in Jesus Christ, each is ready to make that decision public by being baptized. By being immersed into the water and lifted out, all who follow Jesus's instruction to be baptized symbolize his death and resurrection, testifying to the death of an old way of life, raised to walk in a new way.

Through the years thousands of boys and girls, men and women who sincerely professed faith in Christ before the Fayetteville congregation were granted membership. They came from sister churches of similar faith and practice or expressed a conversion to faith in Christ before the membership. For 150 years generations of baptized believers have gathered as a local family of faith. Some, like the evangelist Chesley Hood Bootright, were involved briefly. Nonetheless, his sacrifice in traveling a long distance by horse-drawn wagon to join with local citizens in starting the church is significant. Leaders like Thomas B. Van Horne established a strong foundation before returning to homes far away. And men and women like John and Sarah Mayes remained on the scene until they passed on, always ready to lend a hand to keep the church on track.

Many, many others joined the local Baptist church upon arriving in Fayetteville and reared families with descendants who remain involved to this day. A great number enjoyed worshipping at First Baptist during their college years then moved on to apply the training they received. And many more passed through for only a year or so. Short of eternity, the church will never know the vast number of lives transformed in those brief contacts nor the influence those people had as they went into all the world.

What makes it possible for a church to endure for over 150 years? Obviously, it takes people to make a church. They must work together and interact as if joined to a hand that reaches out to a world in need of a Savior. Only through faithfulness to the priorities that God values is there any hope of a lasting ministry. Without them, the church becomes little more than a social club and eventually dies or becomes irrelevant.

The priorities of First Baptist Church of Fayetteville are discovered in reading through the church's history. Doctrine, worship, missions and evangelism, fellowship, education and stewardship rise to the top of the list. Doctrine defines the basis upon which a church is established. Evangelism and missions provide

the motivation for sharing those beliefs beyond the walls of the church. And the need for worship and fellowship is what brought doctrinally united and mission-minded believers together in the first place. Education and stewardship are given priority from the beginning of the church's organization in 1854. Without these, the members would not grow in their faith and under gird the other priorities.

DOCTRINE

Christians distinguish themselves from each other through denominational affiliation. Early members encouraged a new church start in Fayetteville "where Baptist principles are evidently advancing over the strong holds" of hierarchical denominations.⁹⁴ As Southern Baptists they insisted the membership be made up of those who were old enough to understand what is meant by a profession of faith in Christ rather than being baptized as infants.⁹⁵

Soon after the Fayetteville Missionary Baptist Church was organized, the Baptist churches of the area joined for the first meeting of Fayetteville United Baptist Association. It was hosted by Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church – the congregation from which Bootright, Van Horne, and Mayes all had come.⁹⁶ As Elder Bootright and other Baptists rode across Washington County establishing churches like the one at Fayetteville, he recognized the period as "the most important era in the history of this part of Arkansas." Always encouraging other Baptists to follow his lead in sharing the gospel, he stated, "The ice is now broken—Baptist principles are just up before the public mind, and a spirit for investigating Bible truth is manifest almost everywhere I go, and my travels are not few." Clearly, doctrinal truth mattered to these early Baptists and motivated their organization of the congregation that was first known as Fayetteville Missionary Baptist Church.

The inclusion of the term "missionary" in the name of the church was a general reference to the priority of mission activity. Locally, the church immediately affiliated with a Baptist association in which its leadership had been involved while serving other nearby congregations. With several different associations arising during the first 50 years of the church's ministry, First Baptist moved its affiliations from one fellowship to another based on proximity, common interests, or the merger of associations.

Since its founding, the church has cooperated with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, now a fellowship of 1,394 churches. "There are some things you can count on being true of Arkansas Baptists," stated ABSC Executive Director Emil Turner in anticipation of the sesquicentennial celebration of the state convention in 1998. "We will be people who are committed to God's Word...to reach lost people and we will be people who cooperate willingly and joyfully...We can expect these things to be true in the future just as they've been true in the past."⁹⁷

Beyond the state borders, the church supported the Southern Baptist Convention, sending funds that would be used to take the gospel to the uttermost

parts of the world. This cooperation with other Southern Baptists provided missionaries to China, India, and Africa. Like every other Southern Baptist church, members have an opportunity to direct how the association, state convention, and SBC make use of contributions, by sending messengers to annual meetings held in October, November, and June. The church at Fayetteville remains autonomous, making its own decisions, calling its own pastor, determining its own budget, and its contribution to cooperative Southern Baptist causes, obligated to no one but God.

The degree to which First Baptist participates in each of these groups has been largely dependent on the pastor's leadership, with associational and state meetings often given greater priority. However, even when travel was limited to train, church records indicate that the pastor and some of the members attended the annual meetings of the SBC. A 1916 announcement in the church bulletin advertises a round trip rate of \$30.25 to attend the May 17 SBC meeting in Asheville, offering tickets to interested members. Pastors attending the convention in different years made a point to offer reports summarizing actions taken.

Most recently, the 2003 annual meeting inspired Pastor Douglas Falknor to preach on "Why I Am a Southern Baptist." In the June 22 sermon he praised Southern Baptists for declaring with boldness the message that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. He commended the denomination's promotion of religious liberty. As examples of making clear statements against immorality, Dr. Falknor said Southern Baptists expressed opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage through recent resolutions. He spoke of the vast array of ministries in which Southern Baptists cooperate to offer to people who suffer. "No local church or individual can do everything all the time, but together we can reach into the crevices all around our society and to the uttermost parts of the world."

Finally, he commended Southern Baptists as a missionary people, supporting 5,607 representatives overseas in 2003 and over 5,100 in North America. Locally, he said, First Baptist commits 21.5 percent of its budget to mission outreach with 15 percent given to the Cooperative Program, 2.5 percent to the Washington-Madison Baptist Association, and two percent each to Baptist Collegiate Ministry and local mission work. The missions priority is reflected in the staff and congregation, he said. "We give and go and pray." Furthermore, at a time when many churches have abandoned teaching children about missions, First Baptist has kept this priority.

The church's articles of incorporation describe this priority of leading others to Christ. The document described the church's purpose as being "to promote the worship and service of God among men." The church "seeks the salvation of all people through Jesus Christ the Lord. It works to propagate the highest truths and to develop the finest character through its programs of teaching, preaching, and benevolence. It promotes the attainment of the finest spiritual, moral, social, and civic values among all classes and races of men, both locally and throughout the earth. The New Testament is its rule of faith and practice."⁹⁸

Dependence on the New Testament for faith and practice distinguishes the Fayetteville church as a Southern Baptist congregation. Following the instruction in Titus 1:9, the church expects its pastors to “hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.” A significant role of the pastor is to teach sound doctrine to the congregation through the delivery of sermons.

Nearing the sesquicentennial anniversary of the church, Pastor Douglas Falknor explained the necessity of convictions being rooted in God’s Word, revealing his own priority in preaching. “All that we proclaim emanates from our belief that the Bible is God’s inspired Word and is essential for our spiritual development.” Warning against cultural standards, personal experiences, and political correctness taking priority over biblical teaching, he taught, “As you form your beliefs and grow them into convictions, stand firm on God’s Word. He will always prove to be a faithful Guide for our uncertain day.”⁹⁹

The church’s constitution specifies cooperation with denominational causes sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention, the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, and the Washington-Madison County Baptist Association “so far as may be consistent with the principles and teaching of God’s Word.”¹⁰⁰ Insistence on conforming polity to the teaching of scripture is evident throughout the constitution. A further reference to cooperation states, “We shall cooperate with various Christian denominations when the end to be attained is self-justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.”

Membership in the church is based on a person professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, giving evidence of a change of heart, and accepting the church’s views of faith as stated in the Church Covenant and Articles of Faith. The Church Covenant summarizes the meaning of membership in First Baptist Church, and states:

“Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, 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.

“We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness and comfort, to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

“We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting and



Dr. Charles Oxford has moderated business meetings for 36 years. No other person served in this capacity after the constitution was changed to allow someone other than the pastor to lead business sessions.

New Testament. Like most Southern Baptist congregations, the church has a congregational form of governance. Business sessions are held each month as members hear reports and recommendations from various committees, deacons, or staff. In the minutes of 1915 there is an indication that members met on New Year's Eve for an annual business meeting, but there's no evidence of a lengthy departure from a monthly assembly.

A moderator elected from within the membership officiates, allowing the pastor the freedom to speak to motions. Committees are crucial to the church's decision-making process. A staff member serves as a liaison to each committee. Most tend to a certain area of responsibility and seldom report to the church until they have a recommendation for which church approval is needed. One exception is the stewardship committee which makes monthly reports. A recent change implemented by the current pastor involves an annual church conference in November when each committee presents a summary of their activities for the year, stating plans or goals for the next.

The articles of incorporation note, "Membership is composed of those who from time to time are members of the First Baptist Church of Fayetteville, Arkansas. The government of this corporation is a pure democracy, in which matters of business are determined by a majority of those voting at its regular or called business sessions, every member having equal privileges of voting."

The church's mission of promoting worship and service while seeking the

excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Saviour.

"We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Saviour, to secure it without delay.

"We moreover engage, that when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible, unite with some other church, where we can carry out the Spirit of the Covenant and the principles of God's Word."

The church's polity—manner of doing business—arises from its doctrine, following a pattern established in the

salvation of all has remained consistent, even when expressing it through newer statements. During the 1980s, First Baptist described its purpose as being “to know Him and to make Him known.” In 1998, the mission was restated as being “to love God, love one another, and to love all people. Under the leadership and in the power of the Holy Spirit in obedience to our Lord, members agreed to express their love for God by worship and service in His name; express love for fellow believers by caring for their physical and spiritual needs, including their need to grow as disciples of Jesus, as well as emo-

tional needs. The expression of love for all people is demonstrated by ministering to their physical and spiritual needs, including, first of all, their need for salvation through Jesus Christ, as well as showing concern for their emotional needs. These goals are accomplished through outreach, worship, fellowship, discipleship, and service.

Though stated in various ways over the years, these goals depend on God’s empowerment of individual members. Many fall in the shadows of anonymity, faithfully exercising their spiritual gifts for the benefit of others without a regard for receiving credit. Year after year, they heed the Apostle Paul’s instruction to “not grow weary in well doing,” offering their service as an act of worship of the God who granted them salvation. Among that number are Sunday School teachers, mission educators, nursery workers, greeters, and youth chaperones. They are the folks who are on hand to collect the discarded garments after a baptism is performed. Some take note of absentees in Sunday School class in order to mail a postcard expressing concern. Others carry in food to serve a family grieving the loss of a loved one. Another repeatedly agrees to serve on a committee requiring long hours with attention to details that others take for granted. When such folks



Members of the church are stationed at the entrances to greet those who enter each Sunday morning.



These men served as deacons of First Baptist Church in 1995.

pass from the scene their obituaries simply list “a member of First Baptist Church of Fayetteville.” But to every child for whom they expressed care, the widow whom they served, and the minister whom they quietly encouraged, their faithful service was gratefully received.

Many members are asked to serve in leadership roles, directing programs, chairing committees, ministering as deacons. Because their activities are the ones more often recorded in church minutes and deacons’ records, much of the history of First Baptist Church is reported through the work of these leaders. Still, it is important to remember that a host of others played supporting roles.

In the earliest years of the church’s formation, the congregation is described as being led by both elders and deacons. Elders assumed a pastor/teacher role in those days and were responsible for observing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Probably, the elders joined with the deacons in tending to the business of the church. In time, the reference to elder gave way to the title of “reverend” which is how every early pastor of the church was identified in a history written in 1906. Since there are no detailed records available for the first third of the church’s history, it is uncertain when members began electing deacons instead of elders, but a board of deacons is referenced in an article written in 1906.

The role of deacons changed over the course of 150 years, usually depending on how they interacted with the pastor. In the 1900s, deacons made many decisions that were simply reported to the church after the fact. From getting the furnace fixed to allocating funds received, deacons kept a close watch on the

affairs of the church in consultation with the pastor. As in most Southern Baptist churches deacons were the business managers of the church or even an executive board that shaped the church's ministries.

By the 1950s several modifications were made to the process of electing deacons, most of which were incorporated in a revised constitution in 1966. A screening committee that included the pastor, Sunday School superintendent, discipleship leader, WMU president as well as deacon leaders ensured candidates were qualified according to scripture. A time of testing was implemented to allow men who had served as deacons in other churches to prove themselves worthy in their conduct

By the late 1960s, the spiritual and pastoral role of deacons received greater attention in the Southern Baptist Convention and at First Baptist Church of Fayetteville as paid staff members assumed administrative functions. Deacons were assigned a particular number of church families to whom they provided ministry and kept in contact. For several decades a church council assumed the task of planning the church year with input from staff and leaders of various ministries. The revised constitution clarified that a moderator elected from among the membership would preside over meetings. A member of the church with parliamentary skills proved so helpful in this area that he has served continuously in this role since 1966, freeing the pastor from a difficult task of overseeing the conduct of business.

In the early 1970s, several new assignments were put before the deaconate by the pastor. Each deacon was asked to sign a covenant agreeing to maintain a devotional life, attend evangelistic outreach, seek to win at least two people to Christ as the Holy Spirit directed, and train another individual in soul winning. Letters were sent to them with the salutation of "evangelist," describing the training they would receive in order to be prepared to visit prospects for the church. Scripture passages were assigned as they prepared to lead others to faith in Jesus Christ. They served as counselors during the invitation at the close of the service. By the 1980s deacons were encouraged by the pastor to promote harmony in the church by being available to answer any concerns that arose and discouraging criticism that might divide the fellowship.

WORSHIP

The nine people who gathered in a south Fayetteville home recognized that the promotion of worship was a freedom secured at a high cost as Baptists coming to America fought for freedom of religion. Seven years after organizing, they, too were kept from worshipping as the Civil War conflict overtook the corner of College and Dickson Streets.

Since those earliest of years Sunday morning and evening services have included the same elements of worship—singing, giving, praying, and sharing of opportunities for service, with preaching of God's Word being the focal point. Children were a part of the church from its inception with attention given to their

biblical education. Eventually, separate study was offered for different age groups prior to the morning worship hour. A mid-week prayer service brought the faithful back to the house of God.

With few manuscripts available from preachers who filled the pulpit prior to 1953, it would be difficult to characterize their styles. A printed “souvenir” copy of an 1898 sermon delivered by Francis Bozeman reveals an expository study of an Old Testament passage to explain applicable habits that restored the nation of Israel to a position of strength. Dr. M. P. Hunt preached well into his 80s at one of the churches he served years later, continuing his practice of spending his mornings in careful study of God’s Word in order to prepare the sermons he would deliver. He wrote several hymns for the congregations he served, a common practice among theologically trained ministers for centuries as they sought to teach sound doctrine through song. Pastor L. E. Barton is also known to have written a hymn emphasizing dependence on God during war times.

Yale Divinity School graduate Blake Smith offered sermons said to have appealed to an intellectual crowd, though less educated members shared admiration for the many hours he spent preparing. Several of Dr. Andrew Hall’s sermons are available in printed form and feature his explanation of a biblical text, followed by his application of lessons learned to modern day questions. Dr. Paige Patterson often preached through books of the Bible, using an expositional style that drew heavily upon his study of Greek and Hebrew texts. Several members recall Dr. Larry Baker’s messages as reflecting his skill as a seminary professor with frequent attention to ethical issues. Dr. Jere Mitchell also selected books of the Bible for extended study through a series of expository sermons. “The Bible teaching of the church is most significant,” Dr. Mitchell stated. “I tried to keep that as a priority because I believe that people come to know the Lord through the Word of God. They grow spiritually through the Word of God and their own families are helped by the reading, study, meditation, and application of the Word of God. This church has had, through the years, a significant Bible and teaching ministry.”¹⁰¹ This priority continues with the current



Jennie Riggs serves as organist at First Baptist.



Reenactment of the birth of Jesus was a part of a Christmas program involving the Sanctuary Choir.

pastor who also uses an expositional approach to sermon preparation and delivery.

Throughout the 1900s there is evidence that First Baptist Church has valued a high level of quality in the ministry of music. An American philanthropist's generosity in providing a pipe organ for the domed building in 1908 may have



These students participated in youth choir in 1995.

elevated the level of music offered in praise of God. An oratorio by Handel and various cantata performances are praised in the church bulletins in the years that followed. Members of First Baptist Church enjoyed singing from a Baptist hymnal as they assembled for Sunday School. Children from the age of two are taught to sing songs of praise. Instrumentalists offer accompaniment to enhance worship.

In the 1950s it was decided that the church needed a full time minister of music in order to provide more choir programs. As more attention was given to developing a relationship with the music faculty of the University, many talented music students participated in opportunities for service. Piano and organ accompaniment received greater attention in the expansive worship center built in 1960 as higher quality instruments were installed. A half century after the first full-time music director came to First Baptist Church the ministerial role of this position has grown in recognition of the significant contribution of a musician called to serve the church. The worship leader follows a steady course, avoiding extremes, yet embracing some new styles along with older selections. From gospel to Bach, with a variety of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in between, worship through music glorifies God.

MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM

Having settled its doctrinal convictions early on, then establishing a New Testament pattern of leadership, First Baptist Church has kept as its focus the Great Commission mandate found in Matt. 28:19-20 to “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Southern Baptists lead all Protestant denominations in the size of its missions force at home and abroad and First Baptist Church has been a part of that missionary enterprise throughout its history. With few records available, it is impossible to know the names of members who went out from among the congregation in the mid to late 1800s to serve other churches and mission stations. However, we can tell from the letters of early leaders that evangelism was important to these early Baptists. “One professed faith, and another, and another, til eight more professed faith that night. The lowering cloud of mercy bursted with heavenly joy to the believing penitents, and just such a shout of joy for converting grace I have not heard since in Arkansas.”¹⁰²

Such exciting reports always led to an appeal for more missionaries and evangelists. “Now, brother ministers of a pioneering spirit, come to Arkansas, here is a fruitful soil that will richly pay you for its tillage, and what time you have to labor, you will be abundantly repaid; besides, the gospel harvest is great, and the laborers are few. Come all who are in pressed circumstances, and enter into the ripe harvest as gospel readers, and partake with me, as you have done once in Tennessee, the fat of the land, so to speak.”¹⁰³

By the 20th century we begin to learn the names of young adults responding to God's call to service, many of them in foreign lands. Juliette Mather was selected in 1921 by WMU to promote missions education among young people. Josephine Scaggs personified missions for several generations of First Baptist members as she gave her life for service in Africa. Many other members of First Baptist Church served as Southern Baptist missionaries in various parts of the world, including some accepting calls to plant churches throughout North America.

First Baptist actively sponsored student ministry on the U of A campus from its inception, generously funding the work for several decades until the state convention assumed supervisory responsibility. The church continues to provide for the Baptist Collegiate Ministry in its budget and has had a close relationship through members who have served as directors.

By the middle of the 20th century, the church recognized the need to start new churches in Fayetteville in order to reach a growing and expanding population. This commitment led to the start of Immanuel Baptist Church in 1950, Bethel Heights Baptist Church in 1959, Ridgeview Baptist Church in 1961, First Baptist Church of Greenland in 1972, Sierra Baptist Chapel in 1989. Many other congregations received assistance from First Baptist, including Johnson Baptist Church in 1912, St. James Missionary Baptist Church throughout the 1950s, Sang Avenue Baptist Church in 1977, Shiloh Community Church in 1999. Birthing new churches was at times difficult, often threatening harmony in the church fellowship. Sometimes members were hesitant to invest in other missions when finances were stretched at the home church. And yet, the advocates of mission outreach always won the day, insisting that the church honor its priorities.

Until the 1970's, the involvement of members of First Baptist Church in missions and evangelism was primarily a supportive role, generating an interest in contributing resources, money, and skills to spread the gospel. Individuals shared their faith by the manner in which they lived, demonstrating a life-changing commitment to honor and follow God. Challenges to Christianity become more common in the 1960s, holding particular interest in a university environment. Gradually, Baptists became more articulate in personally sharing their faith with those who did not know Jesus Christ in a personal relationship. First Baptist Church offered evangelistic training through the Witness Involvement Now (WIN) Institute, counselor preparation for area wide evangelistic crusades, the successful FAITH evangelistic strategy implemented through the Sunday School in 1999, and most recently Share Jesus Without Fear.

As members became more comfortable with sharing their faith with friends and co-workers, many more responded to opportunities to spread the gospel abroad. Between 1980 and 2000, 44 members traveled to 19 states and 12 countries to build churches, canvass neighborhoods to ascertain interest in spiritual matters, and share personal testimonies of faith in Christ.

In the year that First Baptist was started, the local missionary expressed a desire for churches that "will not only admit the propriety of sending out and

sustaining missionaries, but also have a mind to work.” The legacy of the church he helped start would satisfy his longing for an evangelistic, missionary-minded people in the heart of Fayetteville.

FELLOWSHIP

Just as the need for fellowship among like-minded believers encouraged charter members to organize in 1854, the 600 or more who gather for worship in 2004 value time spent together. When Arkansas was still a frontier, the cooperating Baptists were described by one member as a “socially hungry people” and made the church the center of their lives. Associational meetings drew large crowds of Baptists who traveled by horse and wagon to enjoy preaching and singing on a grander scale than their small congregations provided. Now that schedules and responsibilities compete for any available time, members of all ages still enjoy an ice cream social at the church or fellowship at Agri Park.

The unity of a fellowship is centered around the person of Jesus Christ. This unity is preserved as individual believers “walk in a manner worthy of the calling,” according to Eph. 4:1. Thus, a part of maintaining this fellowship at times meant disciplining members who went astray. This was especially apparent in the early half of the church’s ministry when annual reports included references to the number of members “restored to fellowship” in the past year.¹⁰⁴

Among those who have been a part of the fellowship of First Baptist are community leaders, including two University of Arkansas presidents, Henry Hartzog and John W. Tillman. At the time of his election as governor, Charles H. Brough was teaching a men’s Sunday School class attended by over 125. Brooks Hayes, an Arkansas congressman and Southern Baptist Convention president was a member during his college days. Several members have been elected to the state legislature, including the first woman to serve there. A Fayetteville mayor and many city councilmen held membership at First Baptist. U of A student body presidents and a reigning Miss America called First Baptist their church home. Over the years, members have served on the Fayetteville School Board with several elected as president.

First Baptist Church has long been known for the variety of people who are members. They represent every social and economic classification, multiple races and nationalities, and range



Young adults gathered in Mitchell Hall for a fellowship.

in age from birth to over 100. As they serve on committees, swing hammers to build new churches, and sing with one another in choirs, those distinctions fade away. The university student standing in line to receive a meal may never know that his dishes were washed by an administrator at the U of A. The manager of a depart-



Youth and senior adults gathered for an ice cream social in 1995.

ment store is just as likely to visit a prospect for Sunday school as an hourly employee who is a part of his Sunday School class. An interim pastor who described the church's influence as strategic, recalled his impression of the membership. "I found the church to be a cross-section of society and a highly interesting congregation with which to work. Elderly members are as alert and full of feeling for peers as well as the younger set."

University students respond to homemade cookies and family meals. New residents from other nationalities appreciate the chance to learn English and develop basic skills. Young parents flock to the safe environment where their chil-



Members visited during a churchwide fellowship in 1995.

dren enjoy Vacation Bible School, nursery school, choirs, and many other opportunities. Mentally and physically challenged single adults feel welcome in a department called Special Singles. Senior adults enjoy gathering for social activities. Many of those responding to the fellowship available at a variety of ministries of First Baptist Church discover a more important relationship with Jesus Christ.

Small groups gather each week to study the Bible, adding another important opportunity for fellowship in the course of educating students. Time is allotted for sharing prayer requests and praises. Leaders develop opportunities to draw members together outside of class to build relationships and offer support. The church's longest-tenured pastor guided the church to understand that loving one another requires knowing one another, making time spent together especially worthwhile. Another indication of the people's desire to be together is found in observing how long it takes for the congregation to disperse after services. People linger for a long time in conversation with one another.

When various pastors and members reflected on the fellowship experienced at First Baptist Church, a common theme emerges. In spite of members coming from different backgrounds, working in a variety of fields, and representing many cultures, races, and nationalities, they blend their efforts effectively to serve God. Pastor M. P. Hunt described the situation he experienced 90 years ago. "Fayetteville, an attractive county seat town in the heart of the Ozark Mountains, the seat of the State University, was made up of those of large culture and mountain natives who had enjoyed the most limited privileges. However, they worshipped and labored together in a fellowship that made no distinction," he recalled.¹⁰⁵

"In the membership of the church were five or six of the University professors. Three or more of them were deacons. Then there were two bankers, two or three physicians, lawyers, teachers, the University YMCA Secretary, and others. How would I fit into this somewhat new environment? I do not recall ever stopping to ask, but busied with my work. As to how many of them suffered embarrassment because of my limitations along educational and cultural lines I do not know, but I do know I never had more loyal support. Christians who put kingdom interests first often for the kingdom's sake endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ."



Jake Kitchens helped out with clean-up after a 1995 fellowship.

EDUCATION

Education has been important to First Baptist Church since the tenure of its first pastor, T. B. Van Horne, who affirmed an educated congregation when he fought for funds to develop a Baptist college in the state. “Van Horne proceeded from the proposition that Baptist polity ‘individualizes’ members more than that of any other denomination, making education for lay members as important as that of ministers,” stated the authors of a history of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. “All must be prepared for the ‘conflict between truth and error, now raging fiercely,’ prepared for ‘leadership in defence [sic] of Truth.’” Biblical literacy was central to the early Sabbath School that was later called Sunday School. Many other ministries encourage a biblical education, including discipleship classes, Bible studies, choir, and missions education. Dr. O. L. Gibson sought “teachers of the faith who will indoctrinate our youth with the fundamentals of the faith.” He gave of his time teaching theology to the young people and encouraged their discipleship through Baptist Young People’s Union. In these Sunday night meetings teenagers took turns delivering parts they had been assigned, gaining experience in leadership.

Some of the youth of the church were awakened to a call to vocational ministry through the direct encouragement of pastors. One ministerial student described the pastor’s request that he preach a sermon during Youth Week as a catalyst for considering a call to ministry. After a yearlong struggle, he found assurance while attending Student Week at a Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly where the pastor was preaching. He was ordained to the gospel ministry and given an



First Baptist has provided opportunities for Bible study since its founding in 1854. Pictured is a women’s Sunday School class in 1993.



Youth Week in 1963 featured teenagers from the church who provided leadership for a special worship service.

opportunity to serve as a mission pastor during his college years.¹⁰⁶

Other approaches to mentoring were utilized through the years, including one pastor's "Table Talk" sessions on Saturday mornings for young men considering a call to ministry. While diverse large-group activities continue to draw teenagers to First Baptist Church, the personal investment many of the staff and other youth leaders made through Bible study, informal counseling, and leadership opportunities yielded a harvest of committed Christian adults influencing their world wherever they live. The late Josephine Scaggs spoke for many of those who were sent out from First Baptist Church, paying tribute to the missions teacher who had funded her college education, inspired her to remain faithful to her calling, and supported her ministry for 36 years as she traveled to the ends of the earth. "Never for one moment did I doubt after I got to Nigeria that this was the place God intended for me to fill," she said, thanking members of First Baptist for the dependence upon God they encouraged her to find.

STEWARDSHIP

Like Jo Scaggs, many missionaries benefited directly from the generosity of First Baptist Church, and countless thousands have been supported through coordinated efforts with other Southern Baptist churches. Since its inception in 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention has always had one mission—the Great Commission. A "societal" approach first compelled local churches to contribute to mission endeavors. However, this led to "severe financial deficits, competition among entities, overlapping pledge campaigns, and frequent emergency ap-

peals that greatly hampered the expanding ministry opportunities God was giving Southern Baptists.”¹⁰⁷

Like every other church, First Baptist endured a steady stream of requests for money to fund home and foreign mission efforts, educational institutions, and social ministries, often responding favorably. First Baptist Church made the membership aware of these various efforts and cooperated by pledging the amounts collectively promised by interested members. To some degree these fundraising appeals taxed a membership that proved to be generous with local mission causes while attempting to maintain a new building. In the economic crisis that followed, members found it nearly impossible to make good on commitments. More than 25 years elapsed before a \$20,000 commitment was paid.

Though a convention-wide Seventy-Five Million Campaign fell far short of its goal, the enthusiasm it generated for cooperative giving among local churches in Arkansas set the stage for a more effective stewardship plan that First Baptist Church ultimately embraced—the Cooperative Program. Just as the Southern Baptist Convention and the Arkansas Baptist State Convention needed a system whereby they could anticipate regular giving on the part of local churches, First Baptist Church recognized the value of setting aside a portion of its budget to fund state, national, and international needs. This transition reduced the number of appeals competing for attention within the congregation.

Each year the church prayerfully develops a budget, deciding how much of its undesignated gifts will be committed to reaching people in Arkansas and around the world through the Cooperative Program. This amount is then forwarded to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. During the annual ABSC meeting held each fall, messengers elected from First Baptist and other churches across the state, decide what percentage of Cooperative Program mission gifts contributed by local congregations remains in state to support local missions and ministries.

These in-state funds are used to help start new churches; provide training in Bible teaching, discipleship, evangelism, and missions education; offer conferences directed at singles, senior adults, couples, parents, men, and women; support a network of collegiate ministers on campuses in Arkansas; send college students on mission each summer; enable disaster relief and building construction; facilitate missions partnerships in other countries and states; provide con-



Carol and Bill Brunner offered testimonies as leaders of the Cornerstone of Faith campaign.

tinuing education opportunities; develop staff leadership and offer crisis support; and assist in stewardship, annuity, and capital fundraising.

The remaining percentage to be forwarded to the SBC for North American and international missions and ministries is also set at this time. In 2004 the undesignated Cooperative Program mission gifts sent through ABSC are divided between 58.23 percent for state work and 41.77 sent for distribution to SBC causes. How that money is allocated is decided in another annual meeting to which the church is eligible to send messengers.

Presently, half of the funds received from all the state Baptist conventions and those churches contributing directly to the SBC are committed to the International Mission Board. Through the IMB, Southern Baptists support over 5,100 missionaries engaging more than 1,200 different people groups around the world. Their involvement in a church planting movement saw 5,700 new churches started in 2001. The North American Mission Board receives 22.79 percent of the Cooperative Program receipts, supporting over 5,100 missionaries and helping start more than 1,700 new churches each year. Six Southern Baptist seminaries (Southern, Southeastern, Midwestern, Southwestern, Golden Gate, and New Orleans) educate over 14,500 ministers, missionaries, and future church leaders each year, dividing the 21.40 percent of Cooperative Program gifts assigned to theological education. The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission addresses social, moral, and ethical concerns, with particular attention to their impact on American families and their faith. Receiving 1.49 percent of Cooperative Program funds, ERLC provides printed and video resources that offer scriptural responses to the moral and ethical problems of our culture.

Other recipients of Cooperative Program funding maintain historical archives, provide investment management, encourage fellowship with Baptists worldwide, and assist retired ministers lacking a pension. Less than three percent goes toward operating denominational offices. With 16 million members in over 42,000 Southern Baptist churches, the Cooperative Program gives coordination to their outreach.

Like most other Southern Baptist churches, it took time for the Fayetteville congregation to embrace the concept of the Cooperative Program and include it in its budget. And yet, the priority of missions remained at center stage. Despite meager resources, women of the church demonstrated tremendous creativity in raising funds for missions with tickets to programs that featured musical entertainment, appliance demonstrations, and even a Missionary Traveling bag from which participants purchased then replaced donated items. A decade later their call for mission support took a personal turn as a member began a lifelong commitment to serve in Africa. Putting a familiar face on missions encouraged even greater generosity for state, home, and international mission offerings. Eventually, these offerings were combined into a December world missions emphasis, distinguishing First Baptist Church among other churches in the state for its mission support. And by intentionally allocating a portion of each year's budget to

the Cooperative Program, the church was free to attend to local ministry according to the needs that arose.

Deacons' records and Sunday School reports give repeated examples of members quietly responding to needs when they became known—whether it involved the care of an aging widow of a former pastor, assistance to a homeless family, or shoring up the Baptist Student Union when finances were tight. A note from the minutes of 1947 expresses a typical response, "Motion was made by Greer and second by Shipley that the church reimburse Brother Stutheit in the amount of \$27.50 for some charity work done in the name of the Church for a widow with several children who was destitute near Springdale." The church was often generous with its resources, allowing music students time to practice on instruments that were not readily available at school or giving space to Boy Scouts in the church basement.

Often it is through a Sunday School class, a missions group, or in the midst of joint ministry that a few members learn of a person's need and discreetly see that it is met. Offerings given by members at the end of the Lord's Supper observance are used to minister to those within the church membership who may have need of emergency financial help. Institutions as diverse as children's homes, retirement centers, hospitals, Baptist colleges, and seminaries have received the church's financial support. Individuals and groups that "rescue the perishing" and "care for the dying" have captivated the church's heart as volunteers serve in the community.

Every time the church incurred a debt, someone rose up to encourage it to be erased quickly. One longtime member who brought his family to Fayetteville in 1935 joined the church on the first Sunday after arriving. He found the church with indebtedness and said, "You never can go forward until you pay your debts."¹⁰⁸ In practically every case, long term debt has been avoided. Servicing the debt on the new worship center proved difficult as the surge of new members from the 1950s and early 1960s plateaued by the 1970s. Still, that never stopped the church from being generous in planting new work at Ridgeview, Garland Heights, Greenland, and eventually extending to Canadian provinces. Existing facilities were renovated in the 1980s and 1990s with additional property acquired as members were asked to give over and above their regular tithes and offerings.

Seventy-five years earlier the church heeded the advice of a local business leader in the church who warned against debt. As the challenge was issued to pay off all debt in 2000, his daughter retraced God's blessing for past accomplishments. "As we move out of this century wouldn't it be great to be debt-free." She asked members to pray for direction as to how God wanted them to be a part of the effort and "to be ready to move as God leads us into the next century." The church accepted that challenge and on December 11, 2000, finished paying the approximately one and a half million dollar debt incurred by the building expansion and remaining notes on Highland Avenue property purchases.

The emphasis during all of the campaigns in the 1990s was on informing the

people and challenging them to meet the need. No individuals were approached directly with appeals to give. Instead, individuals and families were contacted, encouraged to be present for the informational meetings and spiritual emphases, and to seek God's guidance in what they should contribute. The chairman of one of those efforts testified to his confidence of God's blessing on those who honor and obey him through giving. "In fifty years I have never found anyone who, having done what God wanted him to do, has not experienced financial rewards and even greater spiritual blessings."¹⁰⁹

While taking care of its facilities and planning for growth, giving to missions also increased. The church was honored as one of 15 Arkansas Baptist churches among the top 250 nationwide in giving to the 2002 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. Statewide, the church ranked eleventh in giving to the designated fund.

"Because we have experienced God's blessings in the past, it gives us assurance of His presence in the future." This testimony of a longtime member speaking before the congregation sounded very much like the expressions of gratitude by C. H. Bootright, Thomas B. Van Horne, and John Mayes 150 years ago. Missionary Bootright felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to make the long journey to Arkansas to spread the gospel. Educator Van Horne stood ready to shepherd the Fayetteville congregation, urging them to study God's Word in order to defend the faith. And Elder John Mayes proved his faithfulness time and again as the church turned to him for help during its first quarter century.

Like the "great cloud of witnesses" described by the writer of Hebrews,¹¹⁰ the saints who testified to the grace of God during the last 150 years serve as an example for those who worship the same Lord today. We who remain and those who come after "run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." And "therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe."

NOTES:

⁹⁴ Minutes, Fifth Annual Meeting, White River Arkansas Convention, Batesville, Ark., November 10, 1854.

⁹⁵ C. H. Bootright, *Tennessee Baptist*, letter to editor. In a letter written in the year that the Fayetteville church was founded he speaks of the conversion of a Campbellite. He carefully examined the candidate to ascertain "a very clear and satisfactory profession of his passage from death unto life." Bootright questioned the scriptural basis for the doctrinal emphases of some types of Baptists, also. On the one hand, he objected to the "Anti-effort Baptists" who carried the sovereignty of God to an extreme and on the other side, the Freewill Baptists whom he said "have just done as they pleased here." For "the few Baptists of the right stamp emigrated from the older states, mostly from Tennessee," Bootright is thankful. "They have made a humble effort to develop the truth, and it has taken effect

mightily during the last year, particularly in Benton and Washington Counties.”

⁹⁶ Ibid. Bootright stayed on to hold a revival at Mt. Zion with assistance of a man named Lewis Heath. Thirty conversions were reported, 12 of those people being baptized while the meeting was in progress and another 12 the next night, then three after that. Among the remaining three still to be baptized, Bootright explained the mother of one young lady “would not suffer her daughter to be baptized, saying, that as we did not make baptism salvation, and as the water was getting cool the first of November, if her daughter died before spring and the water became warm, she would go to heaven any how.” Describing her as a “Pedo” based on her belief in baptismal regeneration, he added, “she did not want to lose her [daughter’s] labor during the winter” as a result of allowing her to be “baptized and getting sick therefrom.”

⁹⁷ ABSC Commemorates 150th Year in 1998 with Book, Events,” Ibid.

⁹⁸ Articles of Incorporation, First Baptist Church, 1959.

⁹⁹ Faulknor, Doug, *First Baptist Voice*, July 28, 2003.

¹⁰⁰ Constitution of First Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

¹⁰¹ Jere Mitchell, Interview, History Committee videotape, First Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ark.

¹⁰² Bootright, Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Logan, Ibid, 4-5. This account of the types of meetings held by sister churches to the west describes members gathering monthly over a two-day period. Preaching began on Saturday morning, followed by dinner and a business meeting. The first order of business was to call for the “peace of the church” during which time any disagreements were settled. “If the conduct of any of them was not what those present thought it should be charges would be brought at the meeting and a committee of two or three appointed to visit the erring one. The committee would visit the accused and if a good explanation was not forthcoming they would recommend exclusion from the fellowship at the next meeting.

¹⁰⁵ Hunt, M. P., “The Story of My Life,” (Herald, 1941) 100.

¹⁰⁶ Testimony of Jon Stubblefield in a letter written while he was in seminary in the early 1970s.

¹⁰⁷ “The Cooperative Program—How it Came About,” <http://www.cpmissions.net>, accessed: August 11, 2003.

¹⁰⁸ Mrs. Williams, notes from unpublished history of First Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ark., quoting W. F. Thomas.

¹⁰⁹ Clayton Brunson, testimony presented to First Baptist Church of Fayetteville, Ark., at beginning of “Growing by the Master’s Plan,” 1980.

¹¹⁰ Hebrews 12.

MINISTERS, STAFF, AND MISSIONARIES

Pastors

T. B. Van Horne, 1854-1860
John Mayes, 1860-1863
James Isaacs 1866
John Mayes, 1867-1878
Thomas P. Boone, 1879
B.W.N. Simms, 1881-1883
C. W. Callahan, 1884-1885
Martin L. Ball, 1886-1888
B. G. Maynard, 1888-1889
John W. Lipsey, 1890-1892
Jefferson Davis Cook, 1893-1895
Thomas O. Harris, 1895-1897
Francis Bozeman, 1897-1900
Harvey Beauchamp, 1900-1902
J. E. Denham, 1903-1906
Walter A. Whittle, 1906-1909
M. L. Shepherd, 1911-1912
O. P. Bishop, 1913-1914
M. P. Hunt, 1914-1916
L. E. Barton, 1916-1918
H. H. Burton, 1919-1920
B. L. Ayers, 1921-1923
C. E. Wilbanks, 1924-1926
Frank W. Carnett, 1926-1929
J. T. Gillespie, 1929-1935
Blake Smith, 1936-1940
O. L. Gibson, 1940-1947
Walter N. Johnson, 1947-1953
Andrew M. Hall, 1953-1970
Paige Patterson, 1970-1975
Larry Baker, 1975-1978
Jere D. Mitchell, 1979-2000
Douglas Falknor, 2001-

Full-Time Ministers of Music

James Griggs
Richard Greer
Russell Oldham (also education)
Ray Conner
Jim Davis

Don Edmondson
Bart Neal
Greg Hochstetler (also youth)
Mark Short III
Jeff Bennett
Mike Paslay

Full-time Ministers of Education and/or Administration and/or Adults

Herbert W. McGlamery
Wayne Smith
Bill Halbert
Bob Reno
Dana Whitfield
Dan McKee
Pete Ramsey
Bill Rose
Lowell Ponder
Bob Hopkins
Gordon Rowell
Travis Wollenburg

Senior Adults

Lowell Ponder

Youth and College Ministers

Ed Coulter
Tom Biller
Jim Herrington
Julia Phelps Robinson
John McCallum
George Adams
Kris Lamle
Jim Thomas
Bruce Salsman
David Mason
Bo Lee
Andrew Skinner

Children's Ministers

Judy Robertson
Jane Renfro
Tammy Wheat
Lisa Wheat (supervises ministry
to newborns through 5th grade)

Preschool Coordinator

Edith Griffin
Clementine Hembree
Peggy Gray
Lola Harris

Play Learn Directors

Lavern Nelson
Bettie Blew
Edith Griffin
Royce Ann Mitchell
Sherry Purtle

Secretaries

Reba Parrish
Lillian M. Gray
Mary Jane Redwine
Maxine Chism
Margaret Roberts
Golda Spicer
Jeannean Arquette
Cora Davidson
Fern Younkin
Lois Ferguson
Delores Sharp
Karen Jones
Janie Donahue
Julie Pendley
Linda Townsend
Jane Jones
Donna Needham
Deyann Corbin
Shirley Norman
Terri Johnston
Sheila Smith

**Members Appointed as Southern Baptist
International Missionaries**

Josephine Scaggs
Judy Robertson
Calvin and Margaret Fox
Darrell and Judy Garner
Curtis and Debbie Sergeant
Renee Gaines

**Members Appointed as short-term Southern
Baptist International Missionaries**

Byron and Cari Humphry
Jane Jones
Bo Lee
Berta Seitz
Stacy and Karen Smith

**Missionaries Who Have Lived in Mission
House**

Bob and Cheryl Headrick
Bill and Laveta Sergeant
Curtis and Debbie Sergeant
Mark and Geneva Weiler
Jim and Mary Lou Wooten

Many other members of First Baptist Church
committed their lives to ministry. They serve in
churches, associations, state conventions, and
other North American missions assignments.
This list is based on available records.

EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE

This book would not have been possible without **Juanita Duncan**. It was through her persistence that 1854 was established as the date of the church's organization, correcting references to 1857 and 1858. Her broad understanding of the church's history made possible the research that followed. My first memory of learning to write occurred in her third grade classroom at Leverett Elementary. After turning in a dozen or more reports that I copied out of the World Book Encyclopedia for extra credit, she patiently taught me the meaning of plagiarism before I could spell the word.

Feriba McNair chaired the History Committee of First Baptist Church and facilitated the preparation and publication of this history. As my junior high Sunday School teacher, she welcomed our class into her home, taught us Bible lessons, and reminded me not to stand on the church furniture in order to draw on the chalkboard.

The genealogical expertise of History Committee member **Edith Griffin** proved helpful in chasing down details from the lives of Thomas B. Van Horne, John Mayes, Chesley Hood Bootright, and many of the people who have walked through the doors of First Baptist Church. She also selected photographs to be included for publication. As a parent of two of my friends from youth group days, she endured many late night intrusions into her home.

Other members of the History Committee offered their time reviewing rough drafts, including **Imogene Delap, Andrew Hall, Mike Paslay, Bill Rose, Jonathan Story, Sue Thompson, and Britt Windham**. All four previous pastors, **Andrew Hall, Paige Patterson, Larry Baker, and Jere Mitchell**, along with the current pastor, **Doug Falknor**, offered recollections of the years they have served. Terri Johnston assisted in relaying rough drafts for review by staff and committee members, and also scanned the photographs, proving once again that no church can function properly without competent, dedicated secretarial help. Several other members of First Baptist provided information about particular eras, including **Bill Rose, Charles Oxford, Nat Thomas, Murray Smart, and Barbara Moore**, as well as those who have recorded oral histories of the church. Former member **James Griffin** gave his time in documenting the church's history, preparing an audio-visual account.

The **Special Collections Division of the University of Arkansas Library** at Fayetteville filled in many of the gaps in the church's history with their newspaper clippings and historical records. The **Genealogy section of Fayetteville Public Library** provided helpful resources of local history involving many of

the early church leaders. *FLASHBACKS* magazine of the **Washington County Historical Society** and the frequent contributions from **Lloyd Warren** addressed the history of area Baptists. When so many others asked whether I regretted agreeing to this project, he was the only one who remarked with a sense of understanding, “I bet you’re having fun.”

Along with Dr. Warren, several others gave their time to proofread this material, including my eleventh grade English teacher, **Onita Copeland**. My high school P.E. teacher, **Carol Brunner**, switched gears and returned to her English training to give countless hours of counsel on grammar. Her involvement in more than four decades of the church’s history, along with her appreciation for our denomination, proved especially helpful as she offered feedback by e-mail over the course of four months. My junior high through college debate partner, **Rhonda Keen Payne**, continues to challenge my thinking as we enjoy a renewed friendship over lunches at a Fort Worth Panera restaurant, discussing Arkansas history, denominational distinctions, and the children we’re still parenting. Her review of the manuscript from the perspective of a Church of Christ turned Presbyterian improved the finished product.

The **Southern Baptist Historical Archives** in Nashville under the direction of **Bill Sumners** provided many church histories, state convention records, and biographical files relating to former ministers of First Baptist Church. **Wendy Richter** of **Ouachita Baptist University’s Riley-Hickingbotham Library** assisted the church repeatedly with requests for information in their files on Arkansas Baptist churches. The **Arkansas Baptist State Convention** granted use of the photographs of L.E. Burton and Blake Smith from J. S. Rogers’ *History of Arkansas Baptists*.

Other repositories of Baptist history located information on ministers from their regions, including the **Mississippi Baptist Historical Society**, the **Oklahoma Baptist Messenger**, **Woman’s Missionary Union Library**, and the **Texas Baptist Historical Collection**. **Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Library** in Fort Worth and **Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary** in Wake Forest house many of the books written by former pastors and assisted with these.

Craig Pierce of Fayetteville, a great-great-great grandson of Chesley Howard Bootright, shared genealogical information on his ancestors. Earlier published accounts of the church’s history provided much information included in this book, including the work of **W. S. Campbell**, **Andrew Hall**, and **Mary Jane Haley**. **C. W. Walker**, **Mrs. O. T. (Burford) Williams**, and **Mrs. Talmadge (Mary Evelyn) Duncan** updated the church’s history at various times and their unpublished material from the History Room files of First Baptist Church was cited often.

Finally, I am ever grateful for my parents, **John Penn and Frances Reed**. They instilled the habit of corporate worship they had learned long before my grandmother, **Frankie Reed**, joined First Baptist Church in 1953. Sunday morning began as Daddy turned on a 33 1/3 r.p.m. high fidelity recording of Tennessee



The Reeds pose before church while Mother takes a picture on Easter Sunday 1958.

Ernie Ford singing “What A Friend We Have in Jesus.” After he washed the car (while wearing his suit), we headed for church. His circuitous routes provided plenty of time for a quick read of the lesson from our Sunday School quarterlies. Throughout their lives they demonstrated that once the doctrine has been established and the minister secured, it takes a commitment of time by individual members for a church to function effectively. May the generation that follows

take hold of their own responsibility to serve the body of Christ. “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” (Gal. 6:9-10, NIV)

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

Becoming a Christian is a personal, deliberate choice. No one can make that decision for you.

It doesn't happen by joining a church or deciding to start living a good life. You don't become a Christian by mentally accepting the teachings of Jesus Christ, or by hanging around Christians and attending Christian meetings.

The "ABC's" of salvation are as follows:

Admit that you have sinned. To become a Christian you must recognize that you are separated from God because of your sins. Without acknowledging your sin, you will die in it. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life."* (Romans 6:23)

You must admit your sinfulness to God, ask His forgiveness and turn from that sin. (This is called repentance.) God has provided forgiveness through His Son, Jesus Christ. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but shall have eternal life."* (John 3:16)

Believe that Jesus died for your sins. Becoming a Christian is receiving Christ into your life and turning your life over to His direction and control. *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* (Romans 10:13)

Confess that Jesus is Lord. The final step involves telling the world that you believe in Jesus. *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."* (Romans 10:9-10)

Would you like to make this choice? If you sense God leading you, you can do so right now. Throughout the history of First Baptist Church, this is the single most important decision any individual has ever made. It is the reason we exist. I invite you to call me, a Sunday School teacher, or a trusted Christian friend about this decision. We stand ready to help with your spiritual needs.

Doug Falknor
Pastor

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