**The History of First Baptist Church 1838-2023** 185 Years

**Baptist Home Missionary Society**

The BHMS began to arrive in Indiana in 1833.

Among the early appointees was William M. Pratt. He established a school in Crawfordsville

to support himself. Early history of the church was lost due to a fire.

12 members organized the church in 1838.

**Buildings**

It is possible the first building was a log cabin built by the Primitive Baptist Church in 1823.

It stood on North Washington, overlooking Sugar Creek. In 1842, land was donated by Wm.

Nicholson, a Crawfordsville pioneer. The land was at the corner of Pike and Walnut

Streets. The first building was later moved to 812 S. Washington Street.

**More Growth: New Building**

Due to the exponential growth of members, members voted to sell the church building

They began fundraising for the new building and it was built in the same location and

dedicated on October 1, 1893. Cost was $9000. The brick building was nearly outgrown by the time the mortgage was burned in 1901. Plans were then made to build a new building.

**Brick Building Construction**

By 1914, the current building size was inadequate.

Pastor BE Antrobus conferred with officers and older members of the congregation

to put a proposition before the church to begin plans for the new building.

By fall of 1917, $25,000 had been spent on the demolition of old building and the efforts toward new construction. WWI stopped construction, and a roof was placed over the basement.

1924: Moller Pipe Organ donated by the Whittington sisters.

1925: debt of $35,000 to complete the building as it stands today. March 22,1925: marked the first service held in the new sanctuary.

**Educational Wing Needed**

1950s: the young couples of the church desired a new wing for Christian education.

Older congregants who struggled and sacrificed to pay off mortgage were not enthusiastic.

1958: Long range planning committee formed but church was not in agreement to build

new building yet.

1968: Planning committee to seek land formed.

1974: New building erected in current location.

1975: 132 years in old building ended.

**Building 1975-1991**

1975: First Service in new building at 1905 Lebanon Rd.

1986: Mortgage was burned.

1988: 150 Year Sesquicentennial Celebration

1990: Family Life Center built

1991: Family Life Center dedicated

Unsure of dates: Bus Barn built, and Sanctuary ($9500) repainted, and paneling cleaned and restored.

**Membership Growth**

1839: membership grew to 32

1845: membership grew to 55

1865: membership grew to 135

1888-1899: membership was 384

1918: membership stood at 870

**Ministers at FBC**

1838-1844 William H. Pratt

1845-E.T. Manning

1852 J. Kirkendall

1862 J.A. Todd

1863 J.B. Austin

1863 William Lyon

1864-65 T.G. Stewart

1864-65 William Haw

1865-66 S.A. Beauchamp

1867 Reese Davis

1867-70 R. Moore

1870 W.A. Robertson

1871 T.N. Robertson

1871-72 D.S. French

1873-77 C.J. Bowles (died 1889)

1880-84 Wesley E. Bates

1884-85 Sandford Smith

1886-87 James Foster

1888-95 G.P. Fuson

1898-1903 A.W. Runyan

1904-06 F.A. Risner

1906-08 G.D. Harger

1908-10 J.F. Rake

1911-16 Barney E. Antrobus

1916-18 Dr. G.M. Shott

1918-20 H.H. Elmore

1920-22 D.P. Odell

1923-27 Daniel Heitmyer

1927-1939 Barney E. Antrobus

1940-45 Ralph Gronseth

1945-55 George T. King, Jr.

1956-64 Carlton G. Christenson

1964-69 Milo Riggs

1970-74 John Carter

1974-97 James Ranard

1999-2006 Michael Wren

2007-2022 Isaac Zull

**Interesting Facts: 1800s**

First building cost $9000.

Largest pay for first minister was $2.00.

Overriding problem of 2nd Qtr history was money. A committee was formed to collect delinquent “pledges.” Voted that a weekly offering be taken in 1864. Pastors often were part-time.

because could not afford to pay a full-time minister. One pastor received his back pay 6 months after he resigned. First choir director received $1.50 for a morning and evening service.

**1860-1888**

Nonattendance, neglect of duty, “un-Christian conduct”, dancing, and drunkenness got

you excluded from fellowship in the 1860s. One brother was worked on for 6 years before he was finally

excluded for not mending his ways. The church was not at peace; two trustees had difficulties.

One resigned his position, but records do not indicate that he was reconciled. He died in

good standing, however. Women’s mission work was first mentioned in 1877.

In 1888, 27 new members were acquired mostly due to baptisms. People presented themselves to

become members at a church business meeting.

**1896-1918**

First woman clerk in 1896; first woman treasurer 1899.

Revival meetings were an important part in the church, especially after the turn of the

20th century. In 1906, monthly communion was established. Financial problems continued for the

church.

March 1917, Easter Sunday, first service in basement unit. A lack of financial and spiritual responsibility may have caused the minister to resign in April of 1918.

**1920-1938**

1920 great stress was placed on the pledging of contributions to the church and letters of dismissal by

many members desiring to unite with other churches were not granted for failure to fulfill their pledges.

Regular business meetings were held, and a deacon declared that there had been no secret meetings of the deacons or trustees of the church.

1938: First Baptist Church celebrated 100 years. Celebrated with a week of anniversary services.

**1938-1945**

Many young people had answered the call to ministry including Louis Bean, Merle Sparger, Kenneth,

Franklin, and Dwight Dodson, Esmond Elliot, Orville Yeager, Augusta Hartung (1933), Gordon Wray,

Austin Elmore, and Charles and Francis McCarty.

1939: Doctrinal and denomination concerns brought serious trouble. A change in the constitution was

nearly passed that would have required a vote of confidence in the pastor each year. The pastor

resigned and took with him 53 members and united with East Side Baptist Church.

Gloom and heartache prevailed, but the moderator implored the members to “pull together.”

**1945-1953**

Then, many new and exciting things began including a watchnight service, where members sat in a circle praying for those who had gone to war.

1945: George King Sr. encouraged the church to participate in the World Mission Program. The church voted to join the Indiana Baptist and American Baptist Conventions. Support was given to Miss Augusta Hartung serving in Africa.

1952: Affiliated with Freedom Baptist Association.

Church services were broadcast over the radio and then the church purchased the radio transmitter in

1953. WBBS-FM 106.3. The radio station was then sold to Wabash College in 1964.

**1960s**

1960: Church hosted the state Baptist Youth Convention of 1000 participants and was able to pay off the existing mortgage and put $50,000 in savings for a new building when the need arose.

1960: Joyce Fry was hired as chorister. Under her enthusiastic and energetic leadership, 7 church choirs

were formed including Chancel Choir, children’s choirs, Belles of Joy handbell choir, the Carpenter’s Tools, and the New Life Singers.

1961: Augusta Hartung had to leave the Congo. She was hired by the church as the Church

Missionary. In 1963, Children’s Church was established in the church basement with Miss

Hartung leading the lessons.

1964: Milo Riggs called as Minister.

**1970s**

$11,000 was given toward launching the University of the Dominican Republic, a drive led by Tony

Campolo.

1970: John Carter was called as Minister.

1971: Joy Lowe called to be Minister of Education.

1973: Church borrowed $530,000 for the new present building. A final cost of $667,117. Old

building was sold to the First United Pentecostal Church for $60,000.

1974: Jim Ranard called as Minister.

Dec 1974: Sandy Porter Phelps was the last baptism in the old building.

June 1975: Pastor Ranard preaches first service in new building.

February 1976: Month long missions’ emphasis and a surprise celebration in honor of Augusta Hartung.

Church decided to look into every aspect of church family and renew a vitality for Christ.

Average membership was 875.

**1980s**

1981 Voted John Dunaway licensed to preach.

1982: New Life Singers were invited to lead a mission work project at the National Baptist Church in Washington DC. Their success earned a return trip in 1983.

1983: John Parsley called as Minister of Youth and Christian Ed.

1985: Grand Piano and new van donated.

1985: Ken Mattocks called as Minister of Youth and Christian Ed.

1985: Mike Kincaid ordained.

1986: Burning of the mortgage and Long-Range Planning Committee formed to recommend programs, building improvements, and future action.

1987: Church ranked 5th in the state in giving to the American Baptist churches and 2nd in

contributions to the World Mission Offering.

1989: After School Kids program began with Pat Snow as director.

Average membership was 1100.

**1990s**

1990-91: Family Life Center built and dedicated and viewed as a great asset by church

family and the community.

Todd Randles, John Dunaway, Mike Kincaid and John Parsley returned as preaching guests

for a series of inspirational services.

Organ was repaired.

Floyd Padgitt and Jim Keys named honorary deacons for their service of 20 years.

1994: Guiding Light Day Care became part of the ministry of FBC.

1996: Joanie Menard called as Children’s Ministry Director.

1997: Pastor Jim Ranard retires.

1999: Mike Wren called as Minister.

Average membership of 1200.

**2000-2009**

161 Baptisms over the course of this decade.

2000: Several new ministries begun including Bakers and Takers, Men’s fellowship/luncheon, Keepers of the Hearth, and Lighthouses of Hope.

Purchase of new van and bus.

2000: Joyce Fry celebrated 40 years of Music Ministry.

2000: Mission trip to Hopi Indian Reservation.

2001: Mike Rotman hired as Youth Minister.

2002: Mission trip to Mexicali, Mexico.

2002: Operation Christmas Child Shoebox mission project began.

2003: Isaac Zull hired as Minister of Family Life Center Ministries.

2003: Outreach ministry through FBC TV commercials.

2003: Gift of the Carrilon by Dwight and Doris Williams.

2004: Remodeling of the front kitchen.

2004: Cordova, Alaska mission trip, Brian Holt went to Romania.

2005: Youth sold strawberry slush at the Strawberry Festival for the last time.

2005: Enlarged the restrooms on the west side and took out the conference room.

2006: Mike Wren resigned as Minister and Joanie Menard resigned as Director of Children’s Ministry.

2007: Isaac Zull called as Minister.

October 2007: Joyce retired as Minister of Music after 47 years of dedicated service.

2006-7: Elder Board established.

2007: Search committee formed for Minister of Music and Associate Pastor of Christian Education and Leadership.

2008: Jeff Strickland called as Associate Pastor.

2009: Linda Wilson called as Director of Music.

2009: Jeff Strickland and Brian Holt are licensed.

**2010-2014**

2010-11: Elders discuss mission statement of FBC.

Pruett Estate paid off loan and put in money market for new roof on main building.

2011: 598 people removed from membership due to death, request, or by the church.

2012-13: Mission trip to Henryville for tornado relief and first trip to Cambodia.

2013: Jeff Strickland resigned to pursue his PhD.

2014: Discovered missing funds from Guiding Light Daycare. Director resigned and we voted to close the daycare.

2014: Jon Welsch hired as Associate Pastor of Family Ministries. He resigned from his position 7 months later.

2014: Short term mission trip to Cambodia.

2014: Main roof over sanctuary replaced with gutters, downspouts, and insulation by Hardhats & Hammers ($30,125).

**2015-2019**

Aug 2015: CACHE began using our facilities for school classrooms and other activities.

Sept 2015: Pastor James Ranard called to his Heavenly Home with his Lord and Savior.

2015: Dan Boeck called as Associate Pastor of Youth and Family Ministries.

2015: Kevin Freischlag called as Youth Leader Intern.

2015: Hired Ranier Research to provide consultation services.

2016: Ranier report results recommended 10 things to implement.

2016: Mission trip to Tbilisi, Georgia.

2017: Voted to leave the American Baptist denomination.

2019: Attendance had increased 30% over the past 5 years.

2019: Kevin Freischlag married and accepted new job in West Lafayette.

Jan 2019: Mission trip to Ethiopia.

2019: Joyce Fry called to her Heavenly Home with her Lord and Savior.

**2020-2022**

2020: Covid invaded our country, causing heartache, illness, deaths, closings of schools, businesses, places of worship. FBC closed its doors and didn’t hold a worship service for 12 weeks; the first in its 182-year history.

First ever Worship Services online thru Facebook Watch and YouTube.

2020: Dan Boeck resigned as Associate Pastor.

Cathy Robbins retired as Office Manager and changed title of the position to Administrative Assistant.

2021: Peter Simmon called as Minister of Youth.

2022: Pastor Isaac resigned as Minister after almost 15 years of service as Pastor.

2022: New Roof on educational wing.

July 2022: Pastor Alan Stover called as Interim Minister through IPM.

2022: Operation Christmas Child Collection 20-year anniversary for FBC.

Marilyn Peterman has been attending FBC since 1951(72 years). She became a member in August 1958. Her grandparents first attended Eastside Baptist then came to FBC. She has had 6 generations of her family attending FBC.

**Missions Emphasis**

World mission emphasis: Congo, Canada, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Georgia, Ukraine, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Operation Christmas Child (worldwide).

Many individuals and groups are attributed to beginning missions and getting FBC involved in community ministry support such as Jail Ministry, Crop Walk, FISH, Women’s Resource Center, Trinity

Mission, mission trips by our youth and adults (Joyce Fry, John Parsley, and Ken Mattocks). Some others were Blanket Sunday (Marjorie Henry), Golden Friendship Guild (Mary Jane Porter), and the Community Christmas Dinner (Mildred Thompson)

New missionaries and ministers have been commissioned (For example: Don Long, Mike Kincaid, Mitch Toler, Jeff Strickland, Alysa Wray, John Dunaway, Garrett and Brian Holt, Don Hopper, and Ken Green.