

“The Called Out”
History of First Baptist Church

Not until 1917 had St. Marys accumulated a sufficient number of Baptists to attract the attention and consideration of the State Mission Board and it was then that the Rev. W.C. Floyd was sent here to organize a church.

On September 19, 1919 a site for a church was purchased on the NW corner of Block #24, the lot being 40' x 100'. A church organization was formed but funds for a building were not available. In 1922, the State Mission board, because of shortage of funds, was compelled to discontinue the aid to this mission and the organization was abandoned or disbanded.

In the latter part of 1936, a group of dedicated Christians began holding Cottage Prayer Meetings in their homes and the desire of a church was felt.

On March 7, 1937, the St. Marys Baptist Church was organized with nine members. They were Mr. And Mrs. R.V. Alford, Sr., Mr. And Mrs. W.W. Davis, Miss Beulah Davis, Mr. And Mrs. W.C. Jones and Mr. And Mrs. J.E. Holliman. Rev. W.C. DeLoach served as pastor, conducting services in the old courthouse, where it was organized, and later in the school auditorium and the Episcopal Church.

The newly organized church was accepted into the Piedmont Baptist Association in October 1937. By the end of the year ther was a membership of fifteen.

On June 5, 1938 the St. Marys Baptist Church named a Building Committee that was composed R.V. Alford, G.H. Sandiford, L.H. Jones, Mrs. Rufus Lovell and Mrs. W.C. Jones. On July 17, they elected a Financial Committee that was composed of W.W. Davis, W.C. Jones, R.V. Alford and W.C. Jones.

The State Mission Board donated \$200 toward a building fund for a new church building. On the 10th of September 1938 work was started on the church building. It was made of concrete block construction and in twenty-one working days the building was finished. Dr. Roy McCullom of Kingsland was the contractor. Mr. G.E. Holliman, a Deacon, loaned the church the money to pay the balance. Debt for the building was paid in full June 1941.

The first services were held in the new building on October 9, 1938 with Rev. E.H. Campbell serving as pastor. Worship services were held each month on the first Sunday. Sunday School was held on each Sunday afternoon during the first year. Mrs. R.W. Waterman, wife of Kingsland Baptist Church's pastor, helped organize the Woman's Missionary Society with Mrs. Dena Arnold as President.

In 1939, Training Union was organized with Mrs. Wesley Bosman as Director.

In 1940, Sunbeams were organized under the leadership of Mrs. Rufus Lovell and Mrs. W.R. Briggs.

In 1941, worship services were held twice each month. Rev. Carl Milton, Sr. was pastor at this time.

Girls Auxiliary was established at the church in 1943 with Mrs. Rufus Lovell, as Director.

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The church began having services every Sunday in 1944 with Rev. J.H. Bland as pastor; and in 1948 the Church purchased the home of Mr. And Mrs. Wray, on the corner of Wheeler and Conyers Streets, to be used as Pastorium. The home was then renovated and enlarged soon after being purchased.

By 1948, the membership of the church had greatly increased. Realizing the need for more teaching space the church purchased additional land. A lot 15' x 100' to the South and a lot 100' x 100' to the East. A two story Sunday School building was erected behind the main church building facing Weed St. It was a brick veneer and constructed in 1948. An annex to the building was completed in 1952 under the leadership of Rev. Alfred Engleman. May 1955, the note on the Sunday School Annex was paid off. Dr. Garrison, of Atlanta, was here for the burning of the note and giving the message. Also, during Rev. Engleman's leadership the Southeast Baptist Association was formed.

In 1954, Rev. David J. Lundin was called as pastor. Bro. Lundin faithfully served for 12 years, seeing growth and leading First Baptist Church to establish a mission church, which would eventually become Westside Baptist Church.

A Mission, sponsored by the St. Marys Baptist Church was organized in July 1955. Its beginning was a Prayer Meeting in the home of W.W. Davis, a charter member of St. Marys Baptist Church. A full time church program was held in the home of Mrs. Donald Jones until a building could be erected.

On February 6, 1955 a special meeting was called for the discussion of buying a piece of property on St. Marys – Kingsland Highway for a future Southern Baptist Church. A purchasing committee was appointed: Rufus Lovell, Elmer Webb, and Frank McGhin. In June 1955 a lot was purchased for the sum of \$1000 from Mrs. Catherine McLenden. In August 1957 the lot was deeded to Westside Baptist Mission when they were constituted into a church. On March 11th, the St. Marys Baptist Church licensed Brother Jerry Harris to preach; and, he served as their pastor.

During this time, at St. Marys Baptist Church, it was necessary to have two morning services. One at 8:30 a.m. and the other at 11:00 a.m. to accommodate the growing congregation. The church, recognizing the need for a larger building, purchased a lot from Clark Brown in October 1956. The lot on the northeast corner of Weed and Wheeler streets facing the present church building was purchased for the purpose of building a new sanctuary. The lot East of the Clark Brown lot was purchased about this time from Mrs. Sarah Bryant.

In August 1957 the St. Marys Baptist Church entered into a \$100,000 Church Bond Program. On November 3, 1957 the church observed Ground Breaking Services, which constituted the actual beginning of construction. A Building Committee and Furnishing Committee were appointed at this time. The Building Committee was composed of Wade Reynolds, Ed Crawford, Frank McGhin and Ralph Carter and the Furnishing Committee was composed of Mrs. Ellen Carter. Mr. Harvey D. Frye was employed as the architect. The church was its own contractor and Mr. Everett Trig was employed as construction supervisor. When Mr. Trig received his wages, he returned one half his tithe, 5% back to the church. The new sanctuary was dedicated August 31, 1958 with Rev. Dave Lundin delivering the dedicating sermon.

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A Vacation Campers Sunday School was started at Crooked River State Park in June 1963. Lessons were taught by men of the church.

In 1964 St. Marys Baptist Church sponsored Forest View Mission near Colesburg. The children of Mr. And Mrs. R. Ferguson contributed to a Memorial Fund to be used to start a library, and Hubert Aldridge, son of Mr. and Mrs. W.R. Aldridge, was licensed to preach.

In 1966, the church voted to call Mr. Alan Celoria to serve as Youth Director for the summer. Bro. Alan and family currently serve as full time evangelists, preaching and singing throughout the Southern Baptist Convention and the nation. In December 1966, Bro. Carlton Owens accepted a call to St. Marys Baptist Church to fill the vacancy of the pulpit, due to the resignation of Bro. Lundin. Bro. Owens accepted and began his ministry in January 1967.

In August 1968, the Church appointed a committee to enlist a Minister of Music and Education. At the close of August, the church had a membership of 628, with 14 Deacons, an active Sunday School, Training Union, W.M.U., Y.W.A., R.A., G.A., and Sunbeam organizations. Bonds for the new church building were paid in full in September 1968.

In February of 1969, a called business meeting was held and a committee was appointed to select a site for a new pastorium, and present plans for same. This committee was, also, to recommend plans to renovate present auditorium. The committee was composed of the following members: William H. Davis, Troy Stanfield, Charles Estes, Mrs. Kathleen Hart, Mrs. Mary Hiers and Mrs. Virginia Lang. In March 1969 the committee recommended that the church purchase a lot on the corner of Mildred and Dilworth Streets. The church voted to purchase the lot and a new Pastorium was later built.

In April of 1969 plans were presented to the Church by the committee for painting outside of Church buildings and renovating interior of Church. Also, plans for the pastorium were presented. The new pastorium of modified Georgian Colonial design was completed in 1970. Final payment being made in 1973.

In 1976, the church called Rev. John Goad as Pastor. Under the able leadership of Bro. John Goad, a building program was begun in 1979 on an annex to the sanctuary – cost approximately \$250,000. Those on the Building and Furnishing Committee were Chairman: Mr. Wade Reynolds, Mr. Ron Ross, Mrs. Bob Hiers, Mrs. Calvin Lang, Mr. Bill Davis and Mr. Leonard McCollough. The Church again implemented a bond program to finance the building. The annex has 10,000 square feet in it. It is two story brick building that compliments the Sanctuary. The upstairs consists of classrooms and restrooms. The downstairs contains office space, library, well stocked with Christian reading matter, spacious kitchen and social hall (seats over 200), study rooms, restrooms and choir room. All these rooms have adequate air conditioning. The old office space and choir room in the Sanctuary were renovated into very attractive nursery rooms for the babies and small children.

Also, under Rev. Goad’s leadership there was one or two Mission Trips to Jamaica. The first trip July 21, 1980 was to Emanuel Baptist Church in Port Maria. The second trip was after a hurricane when some of the men went over to help rebuild. About this time the Church purchased two second hand greyhound buses for approximately \$25,000.

During this time the church purchased the Alex MacDonald lot 109’ x 125’, that joins the church property and faces Osborne Street for \$33,000. Several years later, the Arnow Long (Pink House) and property was purchased for \$75,000. At that time the Church had 519

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members. Sunday School was 517. There were 30 teaching units (class) with 17 known teaching spaces available when needed.

The following are some recommendations the long-range planning committee made to the church body.

- (1) Make a special effort to lower debts so as to eliminate high interest rates.
- (2) Set a limit on expenditures without church approval.
- (3) Expand parking lot.
- (4) Renovate small building across street (original sanctuary) with duplicate exterior to match existing buildings.

Note: These plans are dependent on reduction of church debt.

During Bro. Goad’s leadership, Barbara Lundin and Mike Stonecypher served as Youth Leaders with Milton Randolph as Music Director. Milton served as Music Director for many years in a voluntary capacity. During this time, Mike Stonecypher was called to the Missionary Field and is now serving the Lord in Jos, Nigeria.

Keith Rustin served as Associate Pastor and Youth Director, after Mike Stonecypher. While serving here, he made the decision to go into Seminary school. He is at present serving the Lord as Pastor of Blackburn Baptist Church in Hickory, N.C.

Bob and Rhonda Gauger served as Music and Youth Leaders after Keith Rustin. During the summer of his tenure, the Youth went on a memorable Mission Trip to Chicago. Bob is now Music Director at San Jose Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida.

Bro. Stan Sanford was called to serve in April 1988 after Bro. John Goad. He led the church in a Lay Renewal Weekend. The purchase of the house on Weed Street was made at this time. Stewart McDonald was a Youth Minister during the summer before Joe Roberts was called to be Minister of Music in January 1990.

Bro. Carl Milton, Jr. served as interim from July 1, 1992 to February 28, 1993. He challenged the church to get out of debt.

Bro. Bob Halstead, Jr. became pastor at First Baptist Church on March 1, 1993. He saw Bro. Milton’s challenge to become debt free completed. Renovation in the Sanctuary and upstairs were made. Also, under Bro. Bob’s leadership the church has seen the highest number of Baptisms in the church’s history. Bro. Rick Quast was appointed Associate Pastor/Education and Music, in 1995. During his tenure he has started a Children’s Summer Singing Camp with many children from other churches participating and becoming an annual event.

Successive pastors have been Rev. W.C. Deloach, Rev. E.H. Campbell, Rev. Shaw Harden, Rev. Carl Milton, Sr., Rev. Lester Edgy, Rev. Charles Sneed, Rev. Alfred Engleman, Rev. David J. Lundin, Rev. Carlton Owens, Rev. Archie Carmichael, Rev. John Goad, Rev. Stan Sandford and Rev. Bob Halstead, Jr.

People from the church who have entered Church Vocations are: Pastors Carl Sheffield, Jerry Harris, Hubert Aldridge, Ronnie Wildes, Quinton McArthur, Marty McGhin and Mike Stonecypher – Missionary Teacher.

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Factors that have affected the growth of the church are employees moving in and out of the area that work at Gilman Paper Company, Kraft Bag Division, Thikol Corp., Union Carbide Corp. and the Submarine Base at Kings Bay.

The church still owns all buildings mentioned in the report, except the first pastorium on Wheeler and Conyers, which was sold when the new pastorium was erected in 1970.

Through the years the Church was supported the Mission Program of the Southern Baptist Convention by giving through the Co-operative Program, the Home, State and Foreign Mission Program.

The history of the St. Marys Baptist Church does not cover many years, but many changes have taken place in this period of time that has had an effect on the ministry of the Church in this community. Some names have not been mentioned; but, it should be said that each and everyone who has been a member of this Church, in the 60 years of its ministry, has contributed through attendance, prayers and giving of self and money. Nothing is said of the early struggle of preservation; the giving and forgiving that show a Christian Spirit. Looking back over the years, we see how the Lord has blessed his Work in our church, association and state, all working together for the Glory of God.

In the history of First Baptist Church, one can see the effect of the Holy Spirit ministering through the members. This has been a missionary oriented body of believers beginning with the \$200 donation from the State Mission Board for the new church building in 1938. The church began giving 10% of its tithes and offerings in it's early years to the Co-operate Program of the Southern Baptist convention. Then in the later years it has increased it's giving to 11%. Each December the gift to the Lottie Moon offering has steadily increased – as well as State Missions gifts. In recent years, approximately 25% of all offerings collected are spent in mission related areas. To God be the Glory!

We owe a debt of gratitude to those of other denominations who gave of their time and service in the music program in our early years and those who gave encouragement, prayers and money. We wish to thank all who have contributed in any way to this history of the St. Marys Baptist Church.

This history of First Baptist Church was obtained from records of Mrs. Rufus Lovell, a charter member of First Baptist Church and Church Historians Mrs. Dixie Jordan and Mr. Wade Reynolds, who diligently compiled all the information from the old church records and put in an assemblage of order.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dixie Jordan

Wade Reynolds

Church Historians