

FBC Washington Church History

1910 through 2010

1910-1935

The First Baptist Church of Washington, Oklahoma was organized on April 12, 1910 shortly before the town of Washington was surveyed and incorporated. At the time of organization, the church consisted of ten members. There was no church building in Washington and the different denominations alternated Sundays worshipping in the school building which stood where the Church of Christ now stands. The Baptist people in the community felt the need for a Baptist Church so they built a brush arbor and worshipped there one summer. With a need for a permanent building, Rev. H.E. Hogan, the church's first pastor, was responsible for securing the lot for the building and forming a committee to build the church. A loan and gift were secured from the Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1912, a sanctuary was built in the very spot our fellowship hall sits today.

J.F. Keating, one of the church trustees at the time, gave his milk cow to the church and designated that the cow be sold and the money used to paint the church. Farmers donated produce from their farms to pay church expenses, including part of the pastor's salary. The mid-twenties and early 1930's were depression years and there was little money to be had and no extra money to give to missions. The ladies pledged their wages from a day of picking cotton to give to state and foreign missions offerings. Other projects included canning a jar of fruit or vegetables for the family and a jar for the Baptist Orphans Home. Families accumulated 30 dozen eggs for a full crate of eggs to give on "Egg Day." A truck from the children's home would come and pick up the eggs and give them to the children on Easter.

Early pastors of the church all engaged in other work to support themselves and preached on Sundays. At least two of them were barbers, several were farmers and one was the principal of Washington Public Schools. Rev. Ratliff operated a farm five miles west of town. As the church pastor, he was paid seven dollars per month. One important event during his ministry was a great revival where eighty-six baptisms were reported. Several of those baptized went on to form the Woody Chapel Church. Together with The Goins Mission, Woody Chapel Church formed what is presently known as Union Hill Baptist Church.

Other Pastors who served between 1910 and 1935 were: J.T. Brown; Rev. Higgins; Rev. Ferguson; E.N. Campbell; C.F. Alcorn; Floyd Marshall; S.E. Sparks; W.A. Cummings and J.W. Wilson.

1935-1960

In 1940, the church hired W.E. Henson as the first official full-time pastor with no other means of support. His salary was \$65 per month. The church had no parsonage at the time, so they contributed an additional \$10 per month for housing expenses.

Early in the spring of 1941, heavy rains washed out the bridge across Walnut Creek along the north edge of Washington. During most of the summer, the only means of crossing the creek was a foot log. Half of the church members lived north of the creek so this caused a decrease in church attendance. It was time for a revival, but church members felt this would be impossible given the road conditions into town. It was decided to go ahead and hold the revival with Rev. J.A. Pennington as the evangelist. It was an open-air meeting on the church grounds. Members living in town and south of town provided taxi service to those beyond the creek. The town night watchman agreed to extend his patrol to include all cars parked beyond the creek. Both Sunday afternoon services of the revival baptism services were held at the C.W. Morehead tank two miles north of town. Then, the people living on the north side of the creek provided taxi service for the folks living in, or south of town. 18 people were baptized as a result of this revival. Soon after the revival, the bridge was rebuilt.

After Rev. Henson left the church in 1946, E. Victor Jones and Dillard Shields, respectively, served as pastors. During this time, the lower floor of the educational building on the east end of the auditorium was constructed. Rev. Lon Roberts became the pastor in 1941 and served until his death in 1952. He was the only pastor to die while in active service of the church.

A tornado swept through the town of Washington on Friday, March 13, 1953. Damage to the community was estimated at \$200,000. The church basement was used as a classroom until the elementary school could be rebuilt.

Russell Murrell took over as pastor in 1952 and continued until April of 1958. It was under his pastoral guidance that the church sent members to organize a mission at the Goldsby School House. The mission flourished and soon developed into the Goldsby Baptist Church. The Cole Mission was also established during this time. The educational building was enlarged at FBC Washington by adding an upper floor to make room for the growing Sunday School and Training Union and again a few years later with an addition made to the south end of the educational building of first and second floors of the church.

Kenneth and Jewel Andrews were beloved church leaders at Washington First Baptist. Jewel Andrews was elected pianist in 1952 and served many years in that capacity. Kenneth Andrews was elected as music director in September of 1954 and as a deacon in 1970. He filled both roles until his unexpected death on April 4, 1976.

1960-1985

From 1958 to 1969, several pastors served the church. Glen Pence served from 1958-1960. Herbert Barnett served from 1960 to 1961, when he resigned after being called back into military service to serve as Chaplain of his Reserve Unit in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Harold Wills served from 1961-1963. Charles Alexander came in May of 1963 and left in 1967 when God called Charles and his wife, Betty to serve in foreign missions. D. Joe Fowler served from 1967-1968. Rev. Bill Blair was hired as pastor in January of 1969. The Blair family was the first to live in the new parsonage which was completed in February, 1969. During his pastorate, the church was remodeled with a new kitchen, paneling in all the classrooms, central heat and air unit as well as a new ceiling and lighting. Rev. Blair served until July 1979.

The 1970's saw many new beginnings. 1970 was the first year the church had modern amenities such as central heat and air. In May of the same year, the lot where the old parsonage had stood was hard surfaced into a new parking area. The first church directory was compiled in 1971 and the first Junior Retreat was held at Falls Creek during that same summer. Children's' Church was also established in 1971 with Mary Isbill as the Coordinator. A bus was purchased from Hilltop Baptist for \$650.00 and the first bus route to Cole was established with Quinn Bennett as the bus driver. A newer bus was purchased two years later and helped greatly with bringing people and children to church and Vacation Bible School during the summer. In those two years, nine riders made professions of faith. In 1972, the first P.A. system was purchased for the church and had to be replaced less than two years later due to theft.

Rev. Paul A. Koonce became the pastor in September of 1979. The church launched a building program with groundbreaking services in September of 1981 and dedicated a new \$400,000 sanctuary less than a year later. In 1984, the church began a tradition of an annual Easter sunrise service at the football field and 107 members of the community were present.

1985-2010

The last twenty five years at First Baptist Church of Washington have been focused on growth, outreach and missions. For many years, we have contributed 15% of our income to the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention, 5% to Associational Missions and 1% to the Child Care Department for the Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children.

A new church constitution was adopted in November of 1988 during a regular business meeting. Church income in 1989 totaled \$113,543.73 and average attendance was 126. In September, a committee recommended that the old education building be torn down and a new one built south of the existing building. The plans

called for additional classrooms, a new fellowship hall and the conversion of the old fellowship hall into classrooms.

In January 1992, Rev. Paul Koonce submitted his letter of resignation and in August of the same year, Rev. Jody Richards was called as pastor. The old building was demolished in 1994 and new construction began. The church voted to keep the bell from the old building and place it in the new building. Rev. Claude Butler was the pastor from 1996 to 1998 and Jack Sappenfield accepted the call as pastor in November of 1998. In 1999, the church purchased a new 25-passenger church bus in the amount of \$45,000.

The Banner Ministry was started in 2001 and the church purchased an ice maker for the kitchen and installed a new kitchen floor. New siding was installed on the church building and new sound equipment was also purchased and installed.

Bro. Jack's last day as pastor was November 28, 2004. The parsonage was sold in 2005 and funds were used to help pay off the note on the building loan from The Baptist Foundation. Bro. Davies Vanpool was called as pastor in July of 2005. The land across from the church was purchased in 2006 and the church accepted the gift of the Apache Cabin at Falls Creek. The Apache Baptist Church asked for no money, only to be able to use the cabin free of charge during youth camp.

In 2007, the church voted to purchase the house and lot behind the church. An increase in attendance brought about the need for the church to convert the balcony into additional seating space for Sunday morning services. Church income in 2009 totaled \$231,327 and average Sunday School attendance was 175.

Currently, the church is in the beginning stages of a Capital Gains Stewardship Campaign with a slogan of "Building for Our Future: Blessed By The Past, Challenged By the Future." The church wishes to approach building for the future with eyes wide open, hearts attuned to the heart of God and the practical use of building funds and to give God the glory when the campaign is complete.