

## **HISTORICAL SKETCH OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, FORT OGLETHORPE, GEORGIA**

In the early 1950's there was a group of members at First Baptist Church, Rossville, Georgia, led by their pastor, Rev. E. B. Shivers, Jr., who felt that a growing community in the Fort Oglethorpe area called for a church in that area. That vision was a compelling one with a special group who would become the founding members of First Baptist Church of Fort Oglethorpe. J. H. Inscore is remembered as the person who first went to talk with Rev. Shivers regarding the need for a new church. In February, 1952, worship services were begun by a group of twenty-five in a church bus parked on Forrest Road; and they continued for several Sunday afternoons until the old school building in Fort Oglethorpe was secured for a meeting place. In a short while, Rev. Frank Phillips came from the Rossville church as supply pastor. Rev. Phillips was a blind man; but with the assistance of his wife, he served the chapel ably. The first service held in the old school building, which was located behind the present-day Hutchison Medical Center, saw thirty-five in attendance.

In May 1952 the growing fellowship moved to the old fire hall at the corner of Forrest Road and Eaton Circle. The building had been used by the East Tennessee Company as an office building. While meeting in that building, this group organized into a church on February 1, 1953, at 2:30 PM., and soon thereafter moved into a building on Highway 27, then known as Frank's Restaurant, which is now "The PX Antiques and Gifts." The First Baptist Church of Rossville granted letters to the following members to charter the new church: Mr. and Mrs. G.C. Heuser, Carol Jean Heuser, Mr. and Mrs. Arvil Pierce, Ronald Pierce, Harold Pierce, Miss Robbie Fletcher, Miss Louise Fletcher, Mrs. Mary Bullock, Mr. and Mrs. Mark Fletcher, Mr. and Mrs. J.H. Inscore, Mr. and Mrs. T.G. Hixon, Mr. and Mrs. Darwin Holder, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Johnson, Mr. George Crawford, Jr., Mrs. Ethel Boggs, and Mr. and Mrs. Burl F. Newport. Others who came to unite as charter members were Mrs. Mary Ruth Lingerfelt, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Brown, Jr., Mr. Carl Morgan, and Mr. Charles Wilkinson, a total of twenty-nine members.

At a meeting of the charter members who remained in May 2002, members recalled the spiritual enthusiasm which gripped their lives in those early years, the feeling of being needed, and being willing to make sacrifices for the well-being of the new church. Deacons and Trustees, for example, put up their own homes as collateral for loans secured for the church's acquisitions and building projects. Asked what particular vision compelled their church's ministry, the reply was "reaching people, expanding the Lord's work." Having come from churches of varied backgrounds and locations, the group acknowledged that they had perhaps a better idea as to the kind of church they didn't want to be rather than in particular what kind of church they aspired to be. Those views and feelings, however, helped lay the foundation for the very special church First Baptist of Fort Oglethorpe would become.

The first church officers of the new church were as follows:

Moderator – J.H. Inscore

Treasurer – T.G. Hixon

Clerk – G.C. Heuser

Pianist – Mrs. G.C. Heuser

Choir Director – G.C. Heuser

Assistant Choir Director – Mark Fletcher

Janitor – Harold Pierce

Head Usher – Ronald Pierce

The three Trustees were as follows:

T.G. Hixon  
Mark Fletcher  
Lloyd Brown, Jr.

The five Deacons were as follows:

J.H. Inscore, Chairman  
B.F. Newport  
G.C. Heuser  
Arvil Pierce  
Dean Morgan

Burl Newport served as the first Sunday School Director (called Superintendent). In the early weeks of the young church, Carl Morgan was elected as Music Director, a position he held for the next twenty-three years. Members considered themselves especially blessed to have a trained musician such as Carl leading the music program. His salary in those early days was \$25 per week. Evelyn Morgan, Carl's wife, the organist, received a salary of \$25 per month.

Rev. Frank Phillips continued as supply pastor until April 26, 1953; at which time Rev. Floyd Creasy was called as full-time pastor, a position made possible through an income supplement provided by the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Rev. Creasy's background in the practice of law proved to be a great asset to the church in its efforts to secure properties, loans, and construction contracts.

The lot upon which the present church buildings sit was purchased in September, 1953. Utilizing a bond program under the Broadway Plan of Church Finance, construction of the first sanctuary and educational building was begun in October 1953. The first service was held in the new building on June 13, 1954; and services continued while the work progressed until completion in August, 1956. A baptistery was donated by J.H. Inscore. To finance the building, three series of bonds were issued - \$30,000, \$25,000, and \$15,000, respectively, making a total of \$70,000. The value of the church property, including musical instruments, furnishings, and fixtures, was estimated to be approximately \$112,000 at completion. Many of the workers, suppliers, and contractors accepted bonds as payment for part of their work and materials. Many church members who had skills useful to the work donated their time and paid their employees out of their own pockets for work done. Lloyd Brown, Sr. was overseer of the building project. The building, the L.L. Brown Memorial Hall, is named in his memory.

In 1965 work was begun on an education wing and was dedicated on April 24, 1966, at a cost of \$135,000. This new addition enabled the church to accommodate 350 people in Bible Study and in worship.

The steady growth over the next years was managed by the purchase of six adjacent lots, using the houses on these lots for educational space and for staff housing.

In August 1976 the church began construction of a new domed, circular sanctuary and fellowship hall at a cost of nearly three-quarter of a million dollars. The sanctuary seated over 800 people. Completed in November 1977, this new facility gave the church not only needed room for

continuing growth, but also a distinctive architecture and a place of meeting for the community. At the time of its construction, the dome was the only one of its kind in all of Georgia.

The original sanctuary was revamped into a two-story educational building and office suite, completed in 1987, under the supervision and leadership of Marlin Paulson.

Property which bordered the church front and U.S. 27 was part of a major 1992-1993 program of improving facilities and grounds. A major landscaping effort was begun with a groundbreaking in August 1993; and this was completed in early 1994.

The church has always been deeply committed to world missions. A “missionary house” at 106 Gilbert Circle, formerly the parsonage, was razed in 1994, and a new house was constructed at the corner of Gilbert Drive and Gilbert Circle. Members Marlin Paulson and Mike Smith developed the plans and estimated the cost at \$35,000. On the day pledges and gifts were brought together, exactly \$35,000 was the amount. The house was built by volunteers under the supervision of Marlin Paulson. Dedication services were held on March 25, 1995, with Don Kammerdiener of the Foreign Mission Board, SBC, as guest speaker. Also present was Barbara Eager, Missionary Housing Coordinator, WMU, who declared that this was, to her knowledge, the first home for missionaries built by a church specifically for that purpose. Moving from the old missionary residence in February 1995 to be the first missionary family in the new house was the family of David and Betsy, Katy, and Kris Kammerdiener, missionaries from Cali, Columbia.

From 1997 to 2002 there were other significant improvements and enhancements to the facilities. The educational building and worship center were upgraded and remodeled; a new fire escape was added to the second floor of the educational building; new furniture was procured for the Fellowship Circle; parking lot and landscaping was upgraded; and an irrigation system added.

In 2003 a “Master Planning Team” was appointed by the church to develop a plan for use of facilities, needed expansion of ministries and facilities, and land use. Terry Lamb was elected team chairman. During the planning process it became apparent that retiring the building debt of \$475,000 should precede any new projects requiring funding; thus the “Unfinished Business Campaign” was kicked off in October of 2004. On October 31 the church body pledged over \$390,000, and on November 7 over \$340,000 was given in one offering. As of mid-January 2005 only some \$50,000 remained to be paid.

In late 2004 the church also purchased a used 27-passenger bus for the price of \$40,000. It was delivered in late December. In late 2008 the opportunity came up to buy a gasoline station that adjoined out property. It has since been razed and landscaped to compliment our grounds.

A building program started in late 2008 for a Family Life Center, classrooms, and atrium to add to our present facilities. The proposed finish date is July.

Ministers who have served the church since its inception as pastor or interim pastor are as follows:

Rev. Frank Phillips	3/52 to 4/26/53
Dr. Floyd Creasy	4/26/53 to 8/3/58
George Turner, Interim	11/5/58 to 3/1/59
W.L. Selman	3/1/59 to 3/16/63
George Gray, Interim	3/16/63 to 2/2/64
Peter McLeod	2/2/64 to 6/26/66
Dr. Clarence Sallee, Interim	8/17/66 to 1/29/67

Jerry Vines	1/29/67 to 8/28/68
Ferd White, Interim	11/29/68 to 6/1/69
Max Thurman	6/1/69 to 11/8/74
Ferd White, Interim	11/10/74 to 8/3/75
Dan Scott	8/3/75 to 12/31/01
Dr. John Wyatt, Interim	2/6/02 to 2/5/03
Dr. John Wyatt, Pastor	2/5/03 to 12-31-10
Jason Thomas	7/17/11 to present

Ministers of Education and their approximate dates are as follows:

Don Norris	1964-1968
Paul Montgomery	1970-1972
Keith McManus	1972-1974
Mike Springer	1976-1978
Tom Dunn	1979-1984
Jack Smith	1988-2012

Ministers of Music and their approximate dates are as follows:

Carl Morgan	1953-1976
Dr. Thomas R. Mosser	1976-1984
Jim Forester (Interim)	1984
Frank Drewry	1985-1997
David Kammerdiener	1997-2003
Herschel Spivey (Interim)	2003-2007
Jeffrey Bush	2007-Present

Ministers of Youth and their approximate dates are as follows:

Don Norris	1964-1968
Paul Montgomery	1970-1971
Keith McManus	1972-1974
Thomas Mosser	1976-1985
Eric Shaw	1984-1990
Becky Autry	1990-1995
Rick Clark	1995-1997
Lora Ogden	1997-2001
Matthew Mantooth	2001-2002
Tylan Blansit	2003-2006
Jason Thomas	2006-2008
Adam West	2008-2011
Kevin Stone	2012-Present

Minister of Children:

Carol McDowell	1998-2010
Heather Parente, Interim	2011-2012

Cathy Patterson 2012-Present

Minister to Families and Outreach:

Betsy Kammerdiener 1997-2001

Associate Pastor of Families & Discipleship

Andy Atkinson 2013-Present

We acknowledge the contribution of many whose information, recollections, and records made possible this historical sketch. We particularly express gratitude to Mr. Jeff Fletcher, whose “History of First Baptist Church of Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia” (date: circa 1980) provided the basic material for this update.

The Interim Transition Team  
Charles Helton, Chairman