PREFACE

Baptists are basically a mission-minded people. From the earlier days of Tennessee Baptist history the majority of the churches have come into being as “arms” or “branches” of previously established bodies of believers.

First Baptist Church of Carthage is no exception. She had her roots in Peyton Creek Baptist Church at Monoville, a small community north of Carthage. First Baptist, in keeping with this practice, has extended “arms” in several directions over the years, some of which have been successful and are still bearing fruits. The most recently established mission was Carthage Road Mission started in July 1987 by Brother Nat McKinney. In 1990, Carthage Road Baptist was constituted as a church. Today, it is a thriving church pastored by Brother Donnie Payne.

Although every Baptist church is an autonomous body, First Baptist of Carthage, feeling that missions is the impelling force that gives meaning to any church’s existence, has joined hands with local, state, home, and foreign mission programs for the purpose of sending the Gospel around the world in obedience to the Great Commission given by our Lord Jesus Christ to “go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

The first fifty year period of the following historical record is an enlarged and somewhat revised edition of the original account written by Mrs. Era Allen and Mrs. H. C. Taylor.

The second fifty years, written by Rhoda Lee Hailey, Vivian Fisher, Ruth McKinney, Henry K. Smith, and Ruth Turner, has likewise been slightly revised. We acknowledge a great debt to both these historical committees. Most of the first 100 years is presented as they wrote it.

“The Beginning of a Second Century” was written in preparation for the 125th anniversary of the church.
Court records show that on April 3, 1880, a lot, 70’ by 44’, located on Main Street, was purchased for $150 by H. M. Hale, T. J. Fisher, and W. D. Sanders, Trustees of a Missionary Baptist group. The property occupied the south side of the present church property. A church was built on this lot and was ready for occupancy when the charter members met to organize almost a year later.

The organization of the church was probably largely brought about by the zeal and activity of Reverend A. D. Phillips who had been a missionary on the foreign fields, having lived and served in Africa for a number of years. On his return to Nashville he gave himself to active work in the ministry wherever he saw the need.

Sketch of the Original Church Building

At the time of the organization of this church, Brother Phillips visited his niece who was teaching at the Old Geneva Academy, located where Citizen’s Bank now stands. He saw the possibility of a church being organized and took advantage of the opportunity before him, and offered his help. The organization of the church was recorded in the minutes as follows:

For the purpose of organizing themselves into a Missionary Baptist Church at Carthage, Tennessee, certain members belonging to various churches of the same faith and order met in their House of Worship at Carthage, July 16, 1881, with J. W. Bowman and A. D. Phillips to act as a Presbytery in said organization. A. D. Phillips was chosen as moderator and the proceedings were opened by prayer. W. D. Gold was chosen Secretary. The names of those herein set out were presented as wishing to join in the organization: H. M. Hale, T. J. Fisher, Amelia B. Fisher, Jane Fisher, Charles Fisher, E. B. Haynie, Margaret E. Haynie, Clarence W. Garrett, Columbus B. Haynie, Mattie Haynes, James Piper, Eliza J. Piper, Samuel S. Piper, Elijah Piper, Clarkey Piper, Jesse Haynie, and W. D. Gold.

The first pastor of the church was W. M. Kuykendall, who received only ten dollars per month for his one-fourth time service. These were horse-and-buggy days and most preachers were Circuit Riders who traveled by buggy or horseback to a different church each Sunday in the month. Board and lodging were graciously furnished by church members who considered it a privilege and honor to have the Godly man in their homes.

Carthage was in the early stages of development at this time with a population of about four hundred. However, she boasted five churches, six stores, a courthouse, five schools, three hotels, a blacksmith shop, two livery stables, four doctors, and eight lawyers. Seven of the lawyers were zealous member of the newly organized church. They were W. D. Gold, H. M. Hale, A. E. Garrett, J. M. Fisher, T. J. Fisher, W. V. Lee, and L. A. Ligon.

Within two years after the church was organized, a Sunday School was organized, and H. M. Hale was chosen as the first Superintendent. He was one of the pillars of the church, and through the influence of his fine Christian spirit the Sunday School grew rapidly.

A long-time member, reflecting on her childhood days in the little church, describes a typical Sunday in the following terms:

The Church was a small frame building which consisted of the sanctuary, a vestibule, and a bell tower. Each Sunday morning at 9:30 the sexton would pull the ropes hanging from the belfry and the big bell would peal out in unison with those of
all the other churches in town to remind the townsfolk that this was the Lord’s Day. It was also a summons to get started on your way to Sunday School. Most members lived within walking distance.

At 9:45 the bells would set in ringing again – this time, a signal for services to begin. Everyone met in the sanctuary for the opening exercises. We would start with a song to give late-comers time to get in their places. Then, Mr. Hale would read from the Bible and pray in a big booming voice that commanded everyone’s attention. After announcements and another song we would break up into small groups for Bible study, each group filing off to a corner of the room.

Next there would be clanking of pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters falling into the metal collection plates, and a profusion of voices began as each teacher tried to be heard above the din of echoes bouncing from the tall ceiling. No one minded the clatter – it was a familiar sound and sweet to our ears.

No one left after Sunday School was over. We had come to stay and worship in God’s House and there was no thought of leaving – even among the children.

The preachers would preach about Christ and His saving power – about Heaven and Hell and repenting of our sins. People would be saved most every Sunday and others would join by letter.

After church services most families would have other folks in for company dinner. Then, after a long, lazy afternoon of talk and play and a snack from leftovers, we would all return to a dimly lighted church for night services. An aura of peace and tranquility would settle over the congregation and we would return to our homes renewed in Spirit and ready to begin another week of work or school. Sunday was truly a day of rest and a time of gaining strength and encouragement for the days ahead.

One singular incident took place soon after the Church was organized that gave it a great impetus in its onward course. During the month of January 1881, a revival meeting took place, apparently almost by accident. Reverend J. J. Porter, a Baptist minister, stopped in Carthage while passing through, and while here the river got out of bounds. Reverend Porter was forced to stay for a time on account of the high water. There was no bridge spanning the river at this point and all transportation had to be ferried across at a landing on Upper Ferry Road. Because of the hazards involved, many travelers remained stranded for days during the flooding seasons.

Being anxious to use his time for the Lord, he decided to have a revival meeting. The meeting continued for two weeks and resulted in a large number of conversions and additions to the church.

Records show that on April 16, 1889, a lot on North Main Street was bought for $100 from T. S. Goodall by H. M. Hale, L. A. Ligon, and T. J. Fisher, Sr., trustees of the church, for the purpose of erecting the first parsonage. This was a big step forward since it meant full-time preaching and a pastor on the field. The cost of the building is not known, but after serving as a home for pastors for many years, it was sold to J. W. Ballinger in 1953 for $8,095.

Tragedy and New Beginning

On October 16, 1921, tragedy struck the little Baptist congregation. The old frame building in which they had worshipped for the past forty years burned to the ground, leaving in its wake a host of beautiful memories.
However, what at first seemed to be disaster proved to be a new era in the life of the church. The enthusiastic and determined members could not be daunted. Under the leadership of the pastor, Brother T. Riley Davis, they began at once to make plans for the erection of a new building. The adjoining Newt West property on the corner of Fite Avenue and Main Street was purchased for $1,600 and the house torn down to make way for a new and larger church building.

A year and four months were required to complete the new edifice and get everything ready for occupancy. During this time the neighboring churches and county officials came to the aid of their Baptist brethren. Sunday morning services were held in the Court House, Sunday evening services at the Methodist Church with Baptist and Methodist ministers taking turns at preaching, and Wednesday night prayer meetings were held at the Christian Church.

The main part of the new building was erected at a cost of $15,000. This consisted of the auditorium with folding glass doors at the wings to form four classrooms, and to the rear three other classrooms, the pastor’s study, and the baptistery. It was a joyous occasion when the congregation assembled in their new building for the first time on the last Sunday in February 1923.

The following April, the first Baptist Young People’s Union (BYPU) was organized in conjunction with a Sunday afternoon evangelistic service in which ten members were added to the church roll.

Following Brother Davis’ resignation in 1924, the pastorate was filled from 1925 to 1931 by Brother George L. Ridenour, Brother Bunyan Smith, and Brother H. D. Burns.

On November 11, 1928, under the pastorate of Reverend Bunyan Smith, letters were granted to forty members for the purpose of establishing a church at South Carthage. This is a thriving church today, known as South Carthage Baptist Church. The forty-one members of First Baptist Church to whom letters were granted for organizing the new church were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letters Granted to South Carthage Baptist Church</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. W. M. Garrett</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Stanton Hunter</td>
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<td>Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Highers</td>
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<td>Mrs. Carrie Thaxton</td>
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<td>Mrs. Lucille Gibbs</td>
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<td>Miss Christina Martin</td>
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<td>Miss Mary Sanders</td>
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<td>Miss Gladys Hunter</td>
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<td>Miss Mabel Petty</td>
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<td>Miss Virginia Haynie</td>
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<td>Miss Sallie Martin</td>
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<td>Miss Carey Winfree</td>
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<td>James Haynie</td>
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Also, in 1928, a mission Sunday School was organized in the Turkey Creek community under the supervision of James R. Smith and C. E. Wright. Classes were held in the Turkey Creek School building with the following persons serving as teachers: Mrs. Mary Ed Hackett, Mrs. W. V. High, Mrs. Callie Smith, Sam Key, Mrs. John Porter, and Mrs. Herman Bennett. This work continued for about two years, sponsored by First Baptist Church and Peyton’s Creek Baptist Church.

The Ladies’ Aid Society, organized in 1900, was led by Mrs. W. E. Myer, followed by Mrs. W. V. Lee. Others who served as presidents during this period included Mrs. E. S. Hart, Mrs. Callie Smith, Mrs. M. Y. Beasley, Mrs. J. M. Cox, and Mrs. Tom Massey.

Mrs. Callie Smith served First Baptist Church more than half a century in various positions, including teaching a Sunday School class for twenty-five years. Her ten children became members of the church and two sons, James R. and Henry (Pete), served as deacons.
The Men’s Bible Class of Carthage First Baptist Church met at the church each Sunday morning for Sunday School, fellowship, and to hear the teaching of the Bible by their dedicated and capable teacher, C. C. Davis. On April 15, 1928 when the above picture was taken, the Reverend Bunyon Smith was pastor of the church. It was difficult identifying these men. Some may not be identified correctly.

Front row: Frank G. Bradford, Monroe Malone, Will Cothern, Frank Yeaman, Bobby Flippen, Sanderson, the next three men are believed to be construction workers on the Carthage-Elmwood highway and Benton McMillin Bridge which was under construction during that year, Tommy Sanderson, Lee Rains, Cecil Hindsley, Rev. Bunyon Smith, and C. C. Davis, teacher.


Back row: Walter Scott, Mr. Hopkins, Powford Coffee, R. E. Martin, Tom Porter, Ernest Hart, Sr., Sam Ward, Jim Robinson, Mr. Scott (?), W. H. Turner, Sr., Chester Midgett, Henry Matthews, Robert Turner, and Mr. Mathews (?).
The Second Fifty Years
(1931 - 1981)

Pastors serving during this period of Church History were:
V. Floyd Starke, 1931-1938;
H. C. Bennett, 1939-1941;
E. E. Deusner, 1941-1945;
Joe Harting, 1946-1948;
W. W. Harrison, 1948-1951
John C Parrish 1951-1955
W. R. Vestal 1957-1962
Kerney Bailey 1963-1967
S. John Crawford 1968-1974
Dr. Jere Plunk 1975-1987

First Baptist Church as it looked in 1981

All of these were fruitful years with a steady growth of interest and membership. Some the highlights of these years are as follows:

During the pastorate of Brother Starke, Braxton Sams, a young man from First Baptist, accepted the call to preach. Brother Sams went out and enjoyed a fruitful ministry.

Following his ministry in our church, Brother H. C. Bennett served at First Baptist Churches in Vivian, Louisiana, and Kilgore, Texas. In 1960, he was elected president of East Texas Baptist College in Marshall, Texas, where he served for sixteen years.

The untiring efforts of Brother E. E. Deusner brought the Baptist Training Union (formerly called BYPU) attendance to a record high of 114, and the pastor’s salary was raised to an all-time high of $200 per month.

Brother Joe Harting led the way in a mission project in Eastland Heights in 1947-1948. This subdivision had just been opened up and the community seemed ripe for mission work. Cottage Prayer Meetings were held in the homes each Thursday night with large crowds attending and three Sunday School Classes were organized with attendance sometimes numbering in the sixties. Miss Cornelia Smith, Mrs. Louise (Hughes) Bishop, and Mrs. Hugh Hailey were the teachers.
The project was concluded with a Tent Meeting in an unsuccessful attempt to bring the entire group into the church body. The work was finally discontinued, but some of those involved in it continued their worship at First Baptist Church. In later years another Baptist group went in and established a thriving little church known as East Carthage Baptist Church.

In 1947 the church began the erection of an additional sixteen classrooms. This addition was dedicated on January 23, 1949. The next progressive step undertaken by the church was to remodel and redecorate the auditorium. This work was completed the following year and included the replacing of the folding doors with archways.

With the ordination of William Turner Fisher as deacon on February 29, 1948, three generations of the T. J. Fisher family had served the church as deacons since its beginning – Thomas J. Fisher, Sr.; Thomas J. Fisher, Jr.; and William Turner Fisher. Other deacons ordained on this date were W. H. Turner, Reggie Gore, J. G. Heitt, W. K Robinson, Jr., and Thomas Amonette.

On April 11, 1948, the church voted unanimously to change the name of the church from Carthage Baptist Church to First Baptist Church of Carthage.

In 1948, W. W. Harrison came to pastor First Baptist. Under his pastorate two people acknowledged God’s call on their life. Brother Nat McKinney answered the call to preach. Cornelia Smith surrendered her life for Christian service.

On July 22, 1951, Brother John Parrish came from Texas to serve as pastor. During the first four years of his ministry the church experienced an unusual period of growth. There were 185 additions, 122 of these by baptism. Training Union attendance soared from twenty-five to well over the one-hundred mark, and there was a substantial increase in mission offerings.

A Hammond organ was purchased, the first amplifying system installed, and a new pastorium built.

Brother Nat McKinney, Jr. served as Director of Missions for New Salem Association from 1953 until 1982 and for Bledsoe Association from 1956 until 1981. During this time he was involved in 14 missions, 12 of which later organized as churches. After his retirement, Bro. McKinney led First Baptist Church in establishing Carthage Road Mission in 1987. This mission organized as a church in 1990.

Cornelia Smith, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Smith, attended Carson-Newman College and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. There she met and married Paul Brown. They became affiliated with Hannibal-LaGrange Baptist College, Dr. Brown as Dean and Cornelia as teacher.
with all debts paid. Mrs. Parish served as organist. Her musical talents were a great asset and her contribution to the Training Union and Woman’s Missionary Union work was outstanding.

In December 1951, through the efforts of the pastor and Brother McKinney, an active Mission was established in Sullivan’s Bend. Others involved in this endeavor were O. E. Hackett and Miss Era Allen.

The church, through its Missionary Societies, sent two students through Harrison-Chilhowee Baptist Academy in Knoxville, Tennessee, during the years of 1952-1954. One of these was Clint Davis, who received his call to preach during a revival in 1952. The other student was Joyce Bowman, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harrison Bowman.

On September 2, 1952, Brother R. D. Brooks openly confessed his call to preach in an evening service at First Baptist. He delivered his first sermon on Sunday night, September 7, 1952.

During this period First Baptist also extended a helping hand to Rawl’s Creek Baptist Church, which was struggling for survival. Brother Nat McKinney and Mr. and Mrs. Waterman Hodges were involved in this venture. Rawl’s Creek is now a self-supporting, independent church.

Bobby Woodard, W. C. Day, Turney Ford, and M. D. Fuqua were ordained as deacons in 1955. That same year the rotation system of deacons was begun.

In 1957, Brother W. R. Vestal came to First Baptist Church from Searcy, Arkansas. He was a forceful preacher and filled the pulpit graciously. Under his leadership and guidance the organizations of the church grew. A new religious census was taken and much follow-up work was done. Mrs. Vestal was actively involved in the music program, children’s work, and the Women’s Missionary Union, serving as president of both the local Associational Woman’s Missionary Union organizations.

While Brother Vestal was pastor, the sanctuary, classrooms, and halls were redecorated; air-conditioning was installed on the main floor in 1958 and in the basement in 1959; choir robes, banquet tables, office furniture, automatic water heaters, and additional pews for the sanctuary were purchased; curbing and sidewalk were replaced on Fite Avenue. Paul Welleford was employed part-time as youth worker and music director. The music program included graded choirs and participation in the Spring Hymn Festival with choirs and instrumentalists.

Solon Fitzpatrick, K. C. Porter, W. K. Robinson, Sr., and Ray Winningham were ordained as deacons on August 3, 1958.

In May, 1960, Clifton Alexander was called as the church’s first full-time Associate Pastor to assist Brother Vestal with the pastoral duties and to lead the music and youth programs. He served until late 1961.
During the later years of Brother Vestal’s ministry, his health problems brought about a need for someone to supply the pulpit for him on a regular basis. Brother William C. Mays, Associate Chaplain at Baptist Hospital, was kind enough to fill the pulpit for several months. Then, following Brother Vestal’s resignation, he served as interim pastor. Dr. Mays came to First Baptist to serve as interim pastor again in 1967 and in 1974-1975. On other occasions, he came to supply on Sundays when the pastor was away. Members of First Baptist Church grew to love and greatly appreciate Dr. Mays.

Brother Kerney Bailey came from Louisville, Kentucky, to begin his pastorate on October 2, 1963. During the years he served the auditorium was redecorated, including the installation of wall-to-wall carpeting and the purchase of draperies. A three-story annex was added to the education building, and the existing rooms were remodeled, including the relocation of the office space to more spacious quarters. This construction was begun in the spring of 1966 and the Dedication Service was held in December 1966. New furnishings and equipment were purchased as well.

Three Music Schools were conducted during Brother Bailey’s pastorate and the total church program was strengthened under his leadership. A religious survey of the community was completed, highway signs were put up, and two cottages were built at Camp Nor-Da-Thor, a Christian retreat established earlier through the New Salem and Bledsoe Associations. Mrs. Bailey was actively involved in all the church programs, serving as director of both the local and associational Woman’s Missionary Union organizations and in other places of leadership.

On August 29, 1965, Alfred Apple, Jimmy Key, Jerry Cole, and Robert Webb were ordained as deacons.

In August 1968, Brother S. John Crawford of Falkville, Alabama, was called as pastor and served until 1974. During his ministry, the parsonage on Jackson Avenue was sold, and the Harry Hart Kemp home at 516 Carmack Avenue was purchased for $29,000 and partially redecorated. Outside awning was installed at both side entrances of the church and the auditorium beautified with new velvet drapes and pew cushions. A school bus was purchased, repainted, and used for youth work and other local ministries.

Ken Jones, a Belmont College student, was employed part-time to serve as Minister of Music and Youth in 1968. The music program and the youth work grew under his leadership until his resignation in September 1970. In December 1970, Mark Powers, a Middle Tennessee State University student, succeeded him in this position and served until August 1971. Robert (Bob) Spears, a Belmont student, was employed to succeed Mark Powers in September 1972, and served until September 2, 1973.

In 1974 Terry Taylor, a student at Cumberland College and later at Belmont College, began his ministry with youth and music programs. He served the church well in both areas of work until the fall of 1977, when he resigned to go to Dickerson Road Baptist Church in Nashville.

Dr. Jere Plunk came to First Baptist Church from Immanuel Baptist in Murfreesboro. He began his pastorate on February 23, 1975. During Dr. Plunk’s ministry a new public address system was installed and a radio broadcast of the Sunday morning service was started on WRKM, the local radio station.
W. C. Garrett, B. J. Reich, and James Broyles were ordained as deacons on May 22, 1977. Later that year Lanny Evans, ordained by First Baptist Church, Viburnum, Missouri, was added to the deacons.

In June of 1977 the property adjoining the west side of the church was purchased. This is now the location of the Christian Life Center.

In 1977 Mike Aiken succeeded Terry Taylor as Minister of Music and Youth. He served until 1978 when he left to attend seminary in Louisville. From 1978 to 1980 Dennis King served as full-time Music and Youth Director, followed by Richard Lutz in 1980.

On November 2, 1980, J. C. Franklin and Bob Webb were ordained as deacons.

As the first century of First Baptist Church history came to a close, the foundations were still solidly in place. Henry Hale Smith, the namesake of the first Sunday School Superintendent H. M. Hale, was the Sunday School Superintendent. The Ladies Aid had evolved into Women’s Missionary Union. The annual budget had been increased from $2,060 in 1928 to $80,000 in 1980, with gifts to missions representing 25% of the gross receipts. Our Lottie Moon offering for 1981 was $4,000 and the Annie Armstrong Offering was $1200. The total membership had grown to 640 with a resident membership of 510. The average Sunday School attendance for 1981 was 172.

Carthage Baptist Church had grown in many ways from the small one room building on the 70'x44' lot into the larger sanctuary and three level education building of First Baptist Church, Carthage. But the building is not the church, the people are, and the people of First Baptist had grown over the years through the diligence and strength of the strong forefathers. These people were ready to build the legacy of another century of work for the Lord.

Mrs. Lucille Smith was honored for 30 years of perfect attendance at Sunday School. She served several years as teacher of the Pre-school class. Congratulating her on her accomplishment is H. H. (Pete) Smith, Sunday School Superintendent.

“Mr. Johnny Day” was observed by First Baptist Church on September 9, 1979, to honor Mr. John G. Hiett for his tireless and dedicated service as custodian for twenty-four years. Mr. Johnny continued on as custodian for some time.

Tim Frank accepted God’s call on his life in the fall of 1977 as a high school senior. He dedicated his life to full-time Christian serve and is today (2006) Associate Pastor of Stevens Street Baptist Church in Cookeville, Tennessee.
The Beginning of a Second Century (1981-2006)

As the next century of history for First Baptist began, Dr. Plunk continued to pastor the church until 1987. In the summer of 1982, two morning worship services were held with Sunday School between the services.

On November 6, 1983, David McDonald was ordained as a deacon. In August 1986, Russell Campbell, Henry H. Smith, and Don Wilson were ordained as deacons also.

In October 1986, the sanctuary was enhanced with the addition of faceted glass windows. “We believe that stained glass windows should be more than just beautiful. Therefore, the membership of First Baptist Church has worked together to design Biblical windows, which encourage us to have a closer relationship to God. Every window conveys specific theological content.” This statement was made at the dedication service held on October 26, 1986. Each of the windows is dedicated in memory of, in honor of, or given by people who had an impact upon First Baptist Church.

Foyer Windows

♦ The Cross and the Crown in memory of Clint A Lamons by wife Anna M. Lamons
♦ The Harp, Bible, and Praying Hands in memory of Floyd Reece, Jr. and Jeffery R. Reece
♦ The Wheat and Grapes in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Tommy L. Curtis and Mr. and Mrs. Henry F. Smith by Mr. and Mrs. Timothy F. Smith and Shelley
♦ The Dove, Cross, and Bible given by Mrs. and Mrs. J. G. Hiett, Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Garrett, and Mr. and Mrs. T. D. Sanderson.

Sanctuary Windows

♦ The Creation (right) in memory of Robbie Key Beasley
♦ The Creation (left) given by Morris and Hazel Frank and family
♦ The Flood in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Finis Gwaltney by Deona Lee Thomas
♦ The Passover in memory of Marshall Farley and Hattie Farley by Mary Elizabeth Brooks, Laura Mai Giacinto, and Joe Farley
♦ The Old Covenant given by Orion and Betty Key and Bob and Betty Bollinger
♦ David and his Harp in memory of Gladys T. Nixon and Elmo Bridgewater by Herlin and Modena Bridgewater Nixon, Sally B. Gibbs, and Molly Bridgewater
♦ Daniel and the Lions Den in memory of Marilyn Ruth Kirby by Sam L. and Mary Kirby, Sammy and Jane Kirby, and Paul and Pam Kirby.
♦ The Nativity in honor of The W. B. and Allie Granstaff Family by Loved Ones
♦ The Lord’s Supper given by Alfred and Margaret Apple
♦ The Crucifixion in honor of Samuel Beckett Torrence and Berchie Odessa Torrence by children Sam Bob and Lyla and families
♦ The Resurrection in memory of Lymon and Winnie Key Beasley
The Ascension in memory of Edwina Key Oldham by Gordon Oldham, Roberta Oldham, and George Oldham.
The Day of Pentecost in honor of D. T. and Amy McCall and family
The Second Coming (right) in memory of W. K Robinson Sr. by The Robinson Family
The Second Coming (left) in memory of Mrs. Ruth Wright by C. E. Wright and children
Ruth given by Willard Hetsch, Elizabeth Beasley, and Rhoda Lee Hailey.
The Good Shepherd in memory of Daisy Hart Bell, Dr. L. R. Sloan, and Dr. F. T. Rutherford

Under Dr. Plunk’s pastorate during the start of this second century, several Music and Youth Directors served the church. They were: Seme’ Dewees, part-time Youth Director from 1981-1982; Rick Baumgartner, part-time Music Director in 1982; Janet Bailey, part-time Music Director from 1982-1983; David and Treva Thompson, part-time Youth Director from 1983-1984; Tim Smith, part-time Music Director from 1984-1988; Jeff Harris, part-time Youth Director from 1985-1986; and Gary Lee, part-time Youth Director from 1986-1988.

On June 7, 1987, Jere Plunk resigned from First Baptist to accept a call to Broadway Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tennessee. The church asked Mike Pearson, then Director of Missions for New Salem Association of Baptists, to serve as interim pastor. He served from July 1987 until April 1988. Janet Bailey served as Music Director during this time.

Brother Ron Ralph was called as pastor on May 1, 1988. He was a native of McMinnville, Tennessee, and a graduate of Carson-Newman College and of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He came to our church from Mossy Grove Baptist Church in Harriman, Tennessee. Brother Ralph resigned from First Baptist on August 21, 1991, and started an independent Baptist church, Cornerstone Baptist. On November 6, 1991, request for letters from 71 members of First Baptist were granted to Cornerstone, including three deacons, Bob Johnson, David McDonald, and Don Wilson.

Brother Ray McCall, a native of Smith County, had recently moved back to Carthage and joined our church after retiring as minister of Glenwood Baptist Church in Nashville. He graciously accepted the call to be the interim pastor.

Under the leadership of Brother McCall, a Senior Adult Program was organized. The Seniors met monthly for a fellowship meal. Day trips were taken to various points of interest in the area. This program grew and strengthened under the early leadership of Modena Nixon and Virginia Amonette.

God blessed First Baptist when Brother Ray McCall and his wife, Helen, returned to Carthage after his “retirement.” He is a native of Carthage, farming and working at D. T. McCall’s before surrendering to the call to preach. While a student at Belmont College, he pastored River Road Baptist in Nashville. When he attended New Orleans Theological Seminary, Brother McCall pastored Charpentier Baptist Mission in Houma, Louisiana. Upon returning to Tennessee he pastored at West View Baptist in Cookeville, Shelbyville Mills Baptist in Shelbyville, and retired from Glenwood Baptist in Nashville after serving 20 years as their pastor. First Baptist was fortunate that after his “retirement” he agreed to serve as interim pastor from August 1991 until February 1992. Not one to quit serving, he assumed the job of Director of Missions for New Salem Association of Baptist in October 1993 and continued in this position until severe health problems forced his resignation in March 2004. Brother Ray and Mrs. Helen are a living testimony of their faith and First Baptist is very grateful for them and to them for their service.
On February 9, 1992, David Thompson was called as our pastor. He and his wife, Treva, along with their children, Landon, Leah, and Logan, moved to Carthage in March of 1992. David and Treva had previously served as Youth Directors in 1984. Treva, an accomplished pianist and vocalist, and David used their musical talents regularly in the worship services for the glory of God. First Baptist was extremely fortunate to have them both as church leaders.

The sanctuary was refurbished in the spring of 1992. Mr. K. C. Porter in loving memory of his wife, Ruth, donated $10,000 to be applied to the cost of the redecorating. New carpet was installed, new pew cushions were purchased, and the sanctuary was painted. Ella Lee Piper, Ann Eatherly, Ruth Denney, John Conger, and Jim Broyles served on the Properties Committee overseeing the refurbishing.

In September 1992, it was recommended to the church that John McCall and Dewayne Wilmore be ordained as deacons. They were ordained on October 4, 1992.

The position of Youth Director was filled by Bill Sikes in September 1992, a college graduate waiting to enter the seminary. In January 1993, Bill entered seminary and Jeff Crawford, a Belmont student, was hired as part-time Music and Youth Director. He served until July 1993. Tim Smith then assumed the duties of Music Director and Treva Thompson became the Youth Director.

During Brother Thompson’s pastorate several programs were initiated. The “Big A” Club was formed. This was an after school Bible study group for school age children that were not enrolled in Sunday School. Sue Franklin, Kathy Reece, and Leslie Fitzpatrick were the adult leaders of “Big A.” A Children’s Church was formed for ages three – kindergarten; Children’s Choir was organized under the leadership of Cindy Dowell; a Mother’s Day Out Program was held each Monday and Thursday with Venessa Denney and Mary Lou Key as the leaders; and the children’s Bible Drill was started with Edith Oldham. Rita Shiverdecker later took charge of this program and presently Kathy Reece is the leader.

In March 1993, Alfred Apple resigned as church treasurer. He had served faithfully for many years as a Sunday School teacher, a deacon, and as church treasurer. Mrs. Hilda Ford, church secretary, resigned in August 1993. She had served the church faithfully as secretary for 17 years. She had also served as Church Hostess for many years, was instrumental in forming a clothes closet and church pantry for the needy in the community, and was active in all phases of mission work. Mrs. Ford and her husband, Coach Turney Ford, were faithful and dearly loved members of First Baptist. Phyllis Jamison assumed the duties of secretary.

The Long Range Planning Committee, consisting of Jim Broyles, John McCall, Phillip Piper, Tim Smith, and Dewayne Wilmore, recommended to the church that we explore the possibility of building a Christian Life Center. The project was proposed in April 1995, and stayed in the planning stages until February 1997 when the plans were finalized.

David Thompson resigned as pastor in June 1995 to become pastor at Alta Loma Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee.

Brother Jimmy Edwards, recently retired from Lifeway (formerly known as Baptist Sunday School Board) came to be the interim pastor, serving for eight months. The unpleasantness of interim pastors is you get to know them and love them and their families, and then they have to
leave. This was the case with Brother Edwards and his lovely wife, Sue. He had heart surgery in November 1995. Brother Johnny Godwin, a close friend and former co-worker of Brother Edward’s, became “the interim for the interim” until Brother Edwards was able to return. He and his wife, Phyllis, were also greatly loved at First Baptist.

During Brother Edwards’ pastorate, Michael Boyer, a student at Tennessee Technological University, became Youth Director. He served from November 1995 until May 1996.

Two men were presented to the church for approval as deacons on March 6, 1996. They were Steve Dowell and Jerry Hutchins. Their ordination was held on March 31, 1996.

After diligent searching by the Pastor Search Committee, they recommended a man to the church to fill the position of pastor. On April 28, 1996, the church voted to call Thomas Baines as pastor. He was a native of Lebanon, Tennessee; graduated from Lebanon High School, Middle Tennessee State University, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Brother Baines served in the U. S. Army in Vietnam; then after obtaining a degree in Business, he taught and coached at Lebanon High School. Brother Baines came to First Baptist from Bethany Baptist Church in Loudon, Tennessee.

One of Brother Baines’ greatest assets was his wife, Beverly. She served the church in many areas, especially as kindergarten Sunday School teacher, Vacation Bible School teacher, and WOM leader.

Trey Sanders, a teacher and coach at Smith County High School, was hired as Youth Director in April, 1998.

On March 4, 2001, the church ordained four men into the position of deacon: Raleigh Campbell, Joe Hackett, Ed Key, and Dave Shiverdecker. Then in February 2003, Brad Tackett and Jerry Wilmore were installed as deacons. Both had served as deacons before transferring their membership: Brad Tackett from Stevens Street Baptist, Cookeville, Tennessee, and Jerry Wilmore from Peyton Creek Baptist in Monoville.

During the pastorate of Brother Baines, the church achieved several major accomplishments. After years of planning, construction of the Christian Life Center began in March 1998 and was complete in October 1998. This building was dedicated to the Lord in November 1998 in memory of Alfred and Margaret Apple. They were long time members of First Baptist who honored our church with a very generous bequest. Their gift made possible for a dream to come to fulfillment. The total cost of the Christian Life Center was $566,000. The debt was retired in July 2001. Many of the programs First Baptist has today would not be possible without this building, which consists of a fellowship hall and gymnasium.

Over the span of Brother Baines’ pastorate several
changes were made to the sanctuary. A new organ was purchased for the sanctuary in February 1999. Then in 2003 audio-visual enhancements were done in the sanctuary. The sound system was updated and two video projectors and screens were installed on each side of the sanctuary. A year later, a projector and screen were added to back of the sanctuary for the choir. These have greatly enhanced the worship service and special programs.

Improvements to the building and property were made as well with more being planned. A steeple was added to the church in 2004 with a beautiful carillon donated by Dr. Ben and Carol Phillips in honor of her parents, Bro. Ray and Helen McCall. The bells play hymns on the hour every weekday and before and after services on Sunday. They also play for special holidays or special occasions in the community. In the fall of 2005, the church purchased the Rankin property across Main Street from the church for a future parking lot. A covered walk to connect the Education Building and the Christian Life Center is in the planning stages.

Many areas of ministry opened for First Baptist also. In 1995 and in 2000, First Baptist joined with other New Salem Association of Baptist churches in a World Mission Conference. A 120th anniversary celebration was held with our sister church, Peyton Creek Baptist, on July 15, 2001.

A Bereavement Committee was organized in October 1999. The purpose of this committee is to lead the church in preparing a meal for the families of church members when they have a death in the family. Since its inception, the ladies of the church have served approximately 55 families. This committee is led by Kay McCall, Denise Hackett, Venessa Denney, and Betsy Broyles.

Missions have always been a part of what First Baptist is about. During the pastorate of Brother Baines, these areas were greatly expanded with expansions of old programs and instigation of new programs. Today, First Baptist has mission organizations affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention for all ages and some independent programs as well.

Women on Mission has been a big part of First Baptist with its roots going back to the Ladies’ Aid Society organized in 1900. Beverly Baines was instrumental for establishing a Women on Mission Night Group for ladies that could not participate in the Day Group. The WOM has on-going local, state, and foreign mission projects. They promote the various mission offerings including Lottie Moon Offering for Foreign Missions, Annie Armstrong Offering for Home Missions, and Golden State Offering for Tennessee Missions, just to name a few. One of the local projects is “Ladies Only,” a ladies night out for unchurched ladies on the community. These ladies are a vital part of the church ministry.

The children even get involved in mission projects. RA’s (Royal Ambassadors) for school age boys, under the current leadership of Joe Hackett and Tom Broyles, learn about reaching out to people. They have collected and sent “goodies” and personal supplies to
Mr. W. K. Robinson is a symbol of a family’s dedication to the Lord and to their church. Mr. W. K. is the third generation to serve as a deacon. In fact at one point, his grandfather, Will Wright, his father, Walter King,Sr. and Mr. W. K. all served on the board of deacons at the same time. His uncle, Mr. C. E. Wright, also served as a deacon. Mr. W. K. is now deacon emeritus, after serving for over 50 years.

Mr. W. K. and Mrs. Erlene are strong role models for First Baptist. On June 2, 2006, they celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary.

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the troops in Iraq. On a local basis, they have done yard clean up for some elderly residents in the community. GA’s (Girls in Action) for school age girls, under the current leadership of Suzanne Angel, are involved in mission outreach projects as well. They work hard for Operation Shoebox. In this program a shoebox size box is filled with various small toys, school supplies, toothbrush, toothpaste, etc. and then sent to missionaries in third world countries for the children in the churches there. Operation Shoebox is a branch of Billy Graham Ministries. Even the youngest of children are involved in missions. Mission Friends for pre-school children teaches about what missionaries do and why it is important.

In the fall of 2002, Fifth Quarter was started under the leadership of Brad and Melody Tackett and their adult Sunday School class. This program is for junior high and high school students. It offers the youth a place to go after home football and basketball games on Friday nights. There is an inspirational speaker, games, and lots of food. This program has been a great mission outreach for all the youth in the community.

In partnership with Stevens Street Baptist Church in Cookeville, First Baptist has participated in two mission trips to Montana, serving on an Indian reservation. Activities included construction work on the church building, witnessing, and holding Vacation Bible School for the children of the reservation. The first trip was in summer 2003 with 18 people from First Baptist going and again in 2005 with 12 participants.

Brother Baines resigned from First Baptist on November 30, 2005, to accept the call to Salem Baptist Church in Liberty, Tennessee.

God has promised in His word He will always provide for us. Again, that came true when He sent Brother Ray Gilder and his wife, Diane, to First Baptist. Brother Gilder is presently serving as interim pastor. Since 1992 he has served the Tennessee Baptist Convention as a Bi-vocational Ministry Specialist. Brother Gilder and Diane were both appointed as Home Missionaries in 1996. They are natives of Mississippi, serving churches there, in Memphis, and for the past 11 years as pastor of Gath Baptist Church in McMinnville, Tennessee.

As the first quarter of this second century comes to a close, First Baptist has come a long way from the small one room building with its 18 charter members. The church membership has grown to 576 with 378 resident members. Sunday School attendance averages 125 each Sunday. The church budget is now at $185,172 for 2006. Missions are still very important with $16,400 given to the Cooperative Program and $6,600 to Association Missions. Mission offerings include $6,429 to Lottie Moon Offering, $2,899 to Annie Armstrong Offering, $1,634 to Tennessee Baptist Children’s Homes, and $1,800 to Smith County Help Center. The church staff includes four paid employees: Pastor, Ray Gilder; Youth Director, Trey Sanders; secretary, Deborah Weaver, and Nursery Director, Kathy Reece. Church Officers in 2006 include Church Clerk, Denise Hackett; Sunday School Superintendent, Ed Key; Church Treasurer, Dewayne Wilmore, and Chairman of Deacons, Brad Tackett. Church Trustees are James Broyles, Jimmy Key, and Dewayne Wilmore. Steve Dowell
leads the Sanctuary Choir and Jerry Wilmore leads the congregational music. Kandy Smith leads the youth choir and is the church organist. Ladonna Reyka is the pianist. Cindy Dowell and Amy Broyles direct the Children’s Choir. Numerous others teach the various Sunday School classes. First Baptist is truly blessed with an abundance of talent that is used for the glory of God.

In looking for a way to sum up these 125 years, the words of the previous Historical Committee, at the end of the first century, still resonate strong and true:

As First Baptist member span these one hundred years of Church History, they get a panoramic view of all the delights and pathos of human existence. They envision times of joy and times of sorrow, peaks of success and vales of despair, dreams fulfilled and others shattered. They see life and death, hope and fear, sunshine and shadows, laughter and tears – but superseding all else, they visualize a People of indomitable faith, who would not be deterred from their one purpose of worshiping and serving their Creator.

Like a silver lining behind the dark clouds of human history, they see an undying spirit of VICTORY in the lives of thousands who have crossed the thresholds of First Baptist Church of Carthage. With humble and grateful hearts, they pay homage to those who have gone before, and pray for those who shall follow, that the NAME OF CHRIST might be lifted up in the earth, until that day in which He appears to take the reins of government into His own OMNIPOTENT HANDS.

DEACONS

2006

James Broyles
Raleigh Campbell
Steve Dowell
Joe Hackett
Jerry Hutchins
Ed Key
Jimmy Key
John McCall
Dave Shiverdecker
Brad Tackett
Dewayne Wilmore

DEACON EMERITUS

J. C. Franklin
W. K. Robinson
DEACONS
1881-2006

W. G. Adsmond
Thomas Amonette
Alfred Apple
F. G. Bradford
James Broyles*
Raleigh Campbell
Russell Campbell
Paul Caplenor
Jerry Cole
W. F. Cothern
C. C. Davis
W. C. Day
Steve Dowell*
Lanny Evans
Ollie Emery
J. L. Fisher
W. T. Fisher
Solon Fitzpatrick
L. B. Flippenn
Turney Ford
Morris Frank
J. C. Franklin**
M. D. Fuqua
W. M. Garrett

W. C. Garrett
Reggie Gore
Joe Hackett*
O. E. Hackett
H. M. Hale
E. S. Hart
J. G. Hiett
Ed High
Randall Highers
Jerry Hutchins*
Bob Johnson
John Corbin Kelly
Ed Key*
Jimmy Key*
Orion Key
Harold Knox
W. V. Lee
L. A. Ligon
W. H. Mathews
John McColl
David McDonald
Chester Midgett
Herlin Nixon
Casper Porter

K. C. Porter
B. J. Reich
John Robinson
Walter K. Robinson Sr.
Walter K. Robinson Jr.
Titus Samson
Dave Shivelydecke*
Henry (Pete) Smith
J. R. Smith
Tim Smith
Brad Tackett*
E. E. Turner
W. H. Turner
Robert Webb Sr.
Robert Webb Jr.
W. C. Williamson
Don Wilson
Dewayne Wilmore*
Jenny Wilmore*
Ray Winningham
Bobby Woodard
C. E. Wright
W. E. Wright
F. W. Yeaman

* currently serving as Deacon  ** Deacon Emeritus

Sunday School
Superintendents
1883-2006

H. M. Hale
C. B. Mathews
L. B. Flippenn
C. C. Davis
J. C. Midgett
Stanton Hunter
W. K. Robinson Jr.
J. B. Key
Ray Winningham
Thomas Amonette
Henry H. Smith
Bill Adsmond
Don Wilson
Bill Brooks
Jimmy Key
Dewayne Wilmore
Ed Key

Church Clerks
1881-2006

W. D. Gold
L. A. Ligon
N. J. Kemp
Lee Duke
Frank Yeaman
W. H. Mathews
Miss Era Allen
Bobby Woodard
Martha Langford
Hazel Granstaff
Betsy Broyles
Tammy Key
Denise Hackett

Church Treasurers
1920-2006

L. B. Flippenn
Chester Midgett
F. G. Bradford
C. C. Davis
H. M. Hale
Edd Moore
Solon Fitzpatrick
W. K. Robinson Jr.
Alfred Apple
Tim Smith
Tommy Angel
Dewayne Wilmore
Baptist Training Union
Church Training Dir.
C. C. Davis
Stanton Hunter
James R. Smith
J. R. Highers
Nathan Lowe
Mrs. W. W. Harrison
Miss Cornelia Smith
Russell Pitchford
Bobby Woodard
Casper Porter
Dr. Robert Webb
K. C. Porter
Jerry Cole
Herlin Nixon
Jimmy Key
Harold Knox
Modena Nixon
Janet Sanderson Bailey
Bob Webb
Phillip Henry
Russell Campbell
Tom Arnold
Bill Hewitt
Beverly Baines

Women on Mission
Presidents/Directors
Mrs. T. Riley Davis
Mrs. T. J. Fisher, Jr.
Mrs. J. M. Cox
Mrs. M. V. Lee
Mrs. T. D. Sanderson
Mrs. Tom Massey
Mrs. J. G. Hiett
Mrs. Hugh Hailey
Mrs. Robert Turner
Mrs. Waterman Hodges
Mrs. L. R. Sloan
Mrs. Dorothy Conger
Mrs. Martha Fitzpatrick
Mrs. Morris Frank
Mrs. Glenn Sanderson
Mrs. Joseph Bell
Mrs. Kerney Bailey
Mrs. A. B. McCall
Mrs. W. E. Russell
Mrs. Gene Oldham
Mrs. Ray McCall
Mrs. Turney Ford
Kandy Smith
Beverly Baines

Brotherhood Presidents
J. G. Hiett
K. C. Porter
Morris Frank
Sam Bob Torrence
Dewayne Wilmore
Harold Blair
Fred Thurmond
Mike Mayfield
Russell Campbell
Thomas Baines