

*A History of the First Baptist Church
Grayson, Kentucky*

The First Baptist Church of Grayson was organized June 8, 1920. Previous to this time a record has been found of another organization of Baptists that had existed from the years of 1873 to 1891, but had ceased to function as a church, and no record of a building has ever been found.

Fervent prayers had gone up from the Baptists of Grayson for the establishment of a church. In January, 1920, in answer to those prayers, Dr. J. G. M. Bow, an old saint of God, appeared for the specific purpose of helping organize a Baptist Church. He contacted every Baptist in the vicinity. On the night of organizing there were Susie Kibbey, her mother, Lucy Robinson, two sisters, Hattie and Clara Robinson, Fanny Counts, Nettie Bradley, Jessamine Bradley, Luella Hall, Lewis Hall, Minnie Hall, Florence Jacobs, W. M. Crawley, Laura Everman, Alonzo Clark, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Nunn - 16 charter members, all deceased now.

The Presbyterians of Grayson had their old building near the Court House for sale for \$1,200. A lady in Falmouth, Kentucky had let it be known to some of Dr. Bow's contacts that she wanted to help some Baptist church in the mountains. Dr. Bow journeyed to talk with this lady, who donated \$800 to help pay for the \$1,200 building. On the night they organized, the new church accepted the gracious gift and named their church the Lena Browning Memorial Church in expression of thankfulness. Later the church received \$4,300 from her estate. This money was used in the building of an annex for Sunday School and also pastor's living quarters. Dr. Bow preached the first sermon on the Sunday following the organization meeting.

The first pastor was B. F. Hyde, who stayed a year and a half. Under his leadership the church grew in membership whom he taught Baptist doctrine in all its purity.

The second pastor, E. W. Summers, stayed about five years, from June, 1922 until 1927. His family lived in Georgetown because the children were attending college there. Bro. Summers boarded in town and preached in and around Grayson. In 1925 his wife, three daughters, and two preacher sons, Hollis and Erbert, came to help him in revival. Throngs came to hear the preaching and singing, and many lost souls were brought to Christ.

In 1927 missionary V. B. Castleberry returned from Brazil due to health problems. In September the church called him as pastor. He, his wife and three children moved to town. He labored faithfully on this field for two years.

In 1930 David Brainard became pastor for a year, and the first building program was undertaken. The annex was built and furnished with the \$4,300 received from Miss Browning's estate.

S. M. Meade came as pastor in 1931-34. These will be remembered as depression years. The financial condition and spiritual condition of the church went into depression. It took 70% of the offerings for Bro. Meade's salary. He never complained even though he received only \$17-\$40 per month.

Alonzo Outland, who was pastor at Olive Hill, accepted the full-time pastorate of the church in 1935 and remained until 1946, when he resigned due to ill health. Very soon after he came, the W. M. S. was reorganized. The church membership steadily grew during his years here.

In 1946 C. E. Wiley of Catlettsburg was called as seventh pastor. The church was 26 years old. Bro. Wiley was young, energetic and had a zeal for lost souls. Under his leadership the church reached out to surrounding communities, furnishing a bus to bring people in. Missions were opened at Willard, Wolf Creek and Carter. Volunteer members went out with him to help in Sunday Schools and revivals. The need arose to enlarge and remodel the Lena Browning building. It was not God's time for this, but the church did manage to purchase the first parsonage at Lansdowne and Third on September 29, 1949. In April of 1949 a great revival was led by W. K. Wood. The crowds became so large that after three nights, it was moved to the Prichard gym. 50 members were added. The next year Bro. Wood led a countywide Baptist revival, with many souls saved and added to the church. Bro. Wiley resigned on September 30, 1951, accepting a church in Indiana. He later entered pioneer mission work there. Before Bro. Wiley left, the Willard church was reorganized on March 19, 1950. The Grayson Church gave 56 letters to members to unite with the Willard Church. 16 letters were granted to members on August 19, 1951 to reorganize a church at Wolf Creek. A year after Bro. Wiley left, the members of the Carter mission organized a church at Iron Hill, and the Grayson Church gave 18 letters to members to unite with Iron Hill.

This church granted 90 letters in the beginning and some others later to these new churches. It was to this congregation of decreased membership that W. T. Durham was called as pastor on December 5, 1951. For almost four years of consistent teaching, peaching, and personal witnessing he kept the

church striving in the Lord's work. Mission efforts were undertaken in several areas, including Smith Branch where Bro. Durham preached for 2 years. The building was repaired and the baptistry rebuilt. Bro. Durham resigned in August of 1955.

On December 14, 1955 J. C. Stephens, a native of Owen County, Kentucky was called from his pastorate in Chaffee, Mo. and became the pastor here on January 1, 1956. With business-like qualities, administrative ability and leadership, he was instrumental in organizing a departmental Sunday School with W. L. Kouns as Superintendent for 12 years. A departmental Training Union was also organized and property purchased for much needed space. Some other blessings realized during Bro. Stephens' ministry are: The Castle homestead was bought, and the church became First Baptist in 1956. On Feb. 1, 1959 the church moved into the first unit of a new Educational Building. In 1962 the parsonage was sold, and a new one built on Lynnwood Drive. Mrs. Mary Fraley made a gift of 18 lots to the church to be disposed of by the trustees to the best advantage, and the money from the sale was to go for the auditorium. In September 1966 the church voted to go into a building program to begin construction of an auditorium sometime in 1967. In spite of the many business transactions there was continuity of evangelistic efforts. On June 21, 1968 Bro. Stephens, who had been pastor for thirteen years was called to be with the Lord. The funeral was held in the unfinished auditorium. On November 29, 1968 the first service was held in the new auditorium. It was a revival service.

On January 23, 1969 Adrian Lamkin of Texas, Kentucky was called as pastor. He assumed duties on March 2, 1969. He remained pastor for 4½ years. Under his reserved, methodical approach that which was most important for the good of the Lord's work came to pass. Members enjoyed his good prayer meetings and the teaching of the Scriptures. He actively participated in the wet-dry election of 1971 in Carter County. The auditorium was dedicated on September 14, 1969. Landscaping was done to beautify the appearance of the grounds. Inside, the baptistry scene was painted by Dorothy Waggoner Womack and J. C. Ted Counts from a picture of the Jordan River taken by Bro. Stephens in the Holy Land. Bro. Lamkin resigned effective October 1, 1973 to go to a pastorate in Jefferson, Kentucky.

While Br. W. K. Wood of Ashland was interim pastor, Sam Sloan, formerly of Catlettsburg, entered into a revival at First Baptist Church of Grayson. The people were so stirred that he was called as pastor to begin June 2, 1974. He was strong in doctrine, powerful in witness and compassionate in personality. Bro. Sloan had been pastor less than one year, when on May 15, 1975, he was called to be with the Lord by sudden heart attack. More than 50 had been added

to the church membership. His wife, Bonnie, still lives in Crayson, teaches a Sunday School Class and continues in active membership.

Earl G. Neal from Catlettsburg accepted the pastorate and came on the field on November 2, 1975 from the Second Baptist Church of Ashland. Bro. Neal preached from Genesis to Revelation week by week. He practiced what he preached: "Be somewhere working for the Lord." More than 100 were added to the membership during Bro. Neal's pastorate. The last bonds on the indebtedness on the auditorium were redeemed. A parking lot was purchased. An amplifying system and piano were installed. The vestibule was redecorated. Bro. Neal encouraged the church to be generous with the Lord's money in helping others, supporting missions and all levels of the church's endeavors, including the Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists. In 1982 Bro. Neal retired, and he and his wife now reside in Catlettsburg.

Charles Davis came on the field as pastor on November 22, 1982. Due to the Lord's blessing, the church and Sunday School grew. The church was number 3 in the Greenup Association in baptisms in 1983, 1984, 1985, and in 1984 was thirteenth in the state of Kentucky in baptisms with 59. A successful bus ministry and Children's Church programs were started. Several new Sunday School classes were organized. The Sunday School attendance reached a high in 1984 with an average of 246. In May of 1983 a part-time secretary was hired. The church purchased three lots of property in May of 1983 at a cost of \$120,000. The note was paid in full in June of 1988. In May of 1984 David Messer was called as Minister of Youth and Music. In May of 1989 the church purchased another piece of property on the corner of Main and Veterans Sq. for a price of \$50,000. There have been several steps taken toward upkeep and improvement. These improvements include: purchase of a new organ, sound system, padding of the pews, redecorating of the building and new carpet for the auditorium and other areas. We are presently blessed with a great spirit of harmony and love and are trusting that God will enable us to have a continuing vision to reach the lost and unchurched people of the greater Grayson area for Christ.

This is but a brief composition of the history of the First Baptist Church of Grayson. We could not begin to name names of all who have made contributions to her growth and continuity. God is keeping a much better record and knows of contributions, acts and prayers that we know nothing of. There have been faithful interim pastors between the faithful pastors with whom we have been blessed. Some of these were Ronnie Graves, W. K. Wood, George Steele and Ora Slone.

Our membership now numbers 630.