

A History Of The First Baptist Church
Grayson, Kentucky

Those of us gathered here for the dedication of this auditorium, September 14, 1969 listened with rapt attention as our beloved Susie Kibbey told the history of our church. She established the organization date as June 8, 1920 although there was record of another group of Baptists from 1873-1891 which had ceased to function. No building was located.

Susie was a charter member of this present body and told us how fervent prayers had gone up from the Baptists of Grayson for the establishment of a church. In January, 1920, in answer to those prayers, A 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 was 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 candles on the Lord's Table are in memory of Mrs. Robinson and her daughters. Mrs. Kibbey's were put there by her Sunday School Class, and the others by family members in memory of their grandmother and two aunts. The recently completed Information Board out front was donated by the Kibbey family as a memorial to their mother.)

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. In 1929 Miss Browning left a will

bequeathing most of her estate to this church. Her relatives contested the will but our church received \$4,300 which was used in building an annex for Sunday School and also pastor's living quarters later.

Dr. Bow preached the first sermon on the Sunday following the organization meeting. At that time he presented to the church a rostrum he had made with a hand-carved bible joining the top and bottom sections. This rostrum is in good condition and is still in use in a Sunday School room.

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. (Many times Mrs. Kibbey laughingly told how upset Bro. Hyde would get at her very young son, Jack's noisiness and would stop in his sermon to request quiet).

In her history Susie told how 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 a revival. Throngs came to hear the preaching and singing and many lost souls were brought to Christ. (It was after he left Grayson Bro. Summers was staying in my home in Mercer County and preaching at my country church at Kirkwood. When he learned a young man in Carter County by the name of Horton and I were courting, he told me about his interesting work here).

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. It was with tears of regret his resignation was accepted.

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, even spiritual condition of the church went into depression.

It took 70% of the offerings for Bro. Meade's salary. Susie told us 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 this church in 1935 and remained until 1946, eleven years, resigning due to ill health. He and Mrs. Outland and son, Charles, returned to Murray, Kentucky, where Charles has been Business Administrator at the college for a number of years. I became a member of this church in time to enjoy ten years of Bro. Outland's preaching commitment and a life fully surrendered to our Lord. Very soon after he came the W. M. S. was re-organized and continued active to this date. Our church membership steadily grew during his years here.

In 1946 C. E. Wiley, of Catlettsburg was called as seventh pastor of this church which was 26 years old. Bro. Wiley was young, energetic, with a zeal for lost souls. His admonition to us as a congregation was from Isaiah 54:2 - "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen they cords, and strengthen thy stakes." Under his leadership we lost no time reaching 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.

It was during Bro. Wiley's pastorate that we first experienced growing pains and realized the Lena Browning building needed enlarging, remodeling, or in some way made to better suit our needs. Surely it was not God's time for this, but we did manage to purchase our first parsonage at Lansdowne and Third on September 29, 1949. In April, 1949, when W. K. Wood of Pollard Church, Ashland, had come for a revival the crowd's became so large that after three nights we moved to Prichard School Gym. God blessed us wonderfully and 50 members were added to our church. Bro. Wood returned the next year and a county-wide Baptist revival filled Prichard Gym nightly. Many were saved and for months afterward many were united with our church.

Bro. Wiley resigned as of September 30, 1951, and accepted a church in Indiana. He later entered Pioneer Mission work there and he and Mrs. Wiley are still doing mission

work there after 30 years. Their son Robert is with the Home Mission Board in Atlanta. The Wiley's are scheduled to join us on this occasion today to bring greetings.

Before Bro. Wiley left, labors in outlying missions were ready to bear fruit. The Willard Church was re-organized March 19, 1950. It had been first organized in 1884. The Grayson Church gave 56 letters to members to unite with the Willard Church. We gave letters to 16 members on August 19, 1951, to re-organize a church at Wolf Creek. A year after Bro. Wiley was gone 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 with consistent teaching, preaching, and personal witnessing he kept us striving in the Lord's work. Mission efforts were undertaken at Greenbrier, King's Chapel, and Smith Branch. Response was meager except at Smith Branch where Bro. Durham preached for 2 years. Our building had to make-do except for some patching up and re-building the baptistry. Bro. Durham resigned in August, 1955 and moved to Marion, Kentucky. At present he is retired and lives in West Palm Beach, Florida. (Mrs. Durham is quite ill at this writing.)

On December 14, 1955 J. C. Stephens, a native of Owen County, Kentucky was called from his pastorate in Chaffee, Mo. and became our pastor, January 1, 1956. He was God's man in God's time for our anticipated expansion program. With business-like qualities, administrative ability and leadership that inspired follower-ship, he brought us to organize a departmental Sunday School with W. L. Kouns as Superintendent for 12 years, a departmental Training Union, and led us to boldly launch forth for more space.

The Castle homestead adjoining the church was bought from Judge Joe Johnson for \$8,000. We voted to become a corporate body named the First Baptist Church of Grayson and undertook to raise money August 26, 1956 to pay for the property. One half the amount (less \$5) was raised that day. On October 3, 1956 a church budget of \$14,841 was voted, the largest one ever. On January 9, 1957 four members of the building committee went to

Nashville, Tennessee for a conference with T. Lee Anderton, Chief Draftsman of the Department of Church Architecture, who drew the floor plans for an Educational Building and the future auditorium.

On October 6, 1957, a Bond Issue prepared by a member, Peyton Richie, was adopted by the church. The bonds were printed and ready for sale December 28, 1957. \$29,650 of the bonds sold in 30 days. January 5, 1958 two years after coming here, Bro. Stephens saw the notes on the Castle property and the parsonage burned, debt free. May 21, 1958 the church voted to build the first unit of the Educational Building. Ground breaking took place June 8, 1958 on the church's 38th birthday. Construction started August 8, 1958 and we moved in February 1, 1959 with \$3,000 already paid on this debt. March 22, 1959 a special service was held dedicating the Educational Building to the ongoing of the Lord's work.

Evangelistic fervor never ebbed during the years services were held in the basement of the Educational Building. There was a closeness of fellowship in the compactness of those concrete block walls. The wood-work was not fir like some had wanted but the atmosphere was always friendly and sharing. In 1962 the parsonage was sold and a new one built on Lynwood Drive. Ten years passed looking forward to building an auditorium before the break came. 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 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 February 1967 the church voted for corporation papers to be brought up-to-date and B. O. Satterly was named as resident agent. Deacons and trustees were voted to compose the finance committee. March 1967 the church voted to employ James Moore of Ashland as architect to draw up specifications and supervise constructions of the planned auditorium. At this same March meeting the church voted to issue \$100,000.00 in bonds for the new construction and the liquidation of the remaining debt on the Educational Building. Interest was to start July 1, 1967 at 5% and the ^{FINAL} first

maturing date was scheduled for July 1, 1981. With God's help and blessings and the credible financial records of B. O. Satterly, Treasurer, we kept the appointed payments of \$200 per week or \$10,400 per year and come here today with thanksgiving as we watch those notes turn to ashes.

Ollie Callihan was employed by the church incorporate at \$2.25 an hour to supervise all construction, under architects supervision, hire all laborers, and oversee sub-contracts.

June 4, 1967 was set as Ground-Breaking and Home-Coming Day with Bro. John Ivey preaching at the morning and night services.

All was not as easy as it sounds. From time to time trustees had to make notes for needed funds. June 25, 1967 the church incorporate voted to borrow \$16,000 on the Fraley lots to retire the remaining bonds on the Educational Building. These lots later sold for \$22,000.

In spite of the many business transactions there was continuity of evangelistic efforts. In 1967, Ross Hanna, a former member and home missionary to Indians in Arizona lead in a joyful revival. In late February 1968 a BSU team from Morehead State University lead in a week-end revival. In April and early May 1968 the last revival was held in the Educational Building. In June Pastor and Mrs. Stephens were designated by the church as delegates to the Southern Baptist Convention at Houston, Texas. A later insert in the June minutes reads: "Friday evening, June 21, 1968 at 6:00 P. M. Bro. J. C. Stephens who had been pastor of this church for the past thirteen years was called to meet his God. He departed this life with many faithful years to this church."

The funeral was held in the unfinished auditorium—there was the bare concrete floor and the roof overhead. Chairs were brought in to seat the over-flow crowd. The resounding of caprenter's hammers was hushed while workmen, members, friends, and townspeople gathered to pay respects to a preacher they had come to love.

The work which had been stopped by death started again. The workmen's hammers let people know the Baptists on the hill were busy. Deacons assumed responsibility for the

services and Ronnie Graves was chosen to fill the pulpit when no visiting preacher was present. B. O. Satterly was appointed as a go-between to Ollie Callihan and Mr. Moore, the architect. A special business meeting was called for the election of a pulpit committee. A fall revival was scheduled as previously arranged by Bro. Stephens. Cottage prayer meetings were held. Church business continued to be conducted regularly and with enthusiastic support as evidenced in the minutes.

In time came the finishing-up of the builder's work. Pews were installed bearing the donor's name plate. Likewise the pulpit furniture, Communion Table and chairs and musical instruments were put in place. On November 29, 1968 the first service was held in the auditorium with Bro. Roy Lyons of Frankfort, as revival evangelist. People had been saved during the interim pastorate and the first Baptismal Service in the new baptistry was January 19, 1969. Nine candidates were baptized by Ronnie Graves as authorized by the church.

Four days later, January 23, 1969 Adrian Lanekin of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Texas, Kentucky, was called as pastor to assume duties March 2, 1969. It would take a pastor of broad experience, patience, and understanding to fully assess the traumatic effects of the pressures this congregation and its leaders had suffered. The nerve-racking decision, the financial load and the long road ahead had not made them doubters but they were hungering for the presence of a shepherd of the flock. Bro. Lanekin was this shepherd 4 1/2 years. In business sessions he was different - refusing to be church moderator. He became part of the church body making motions, discussing, voting, while a church-elected moderator officiated. Under his reserved, methodical approach what was most important for the good of the Lord's work came to pass. It has been said his stabilizing influence was immediately felt in tithes and offerings. A steady church program was experienced with spring revivals, fall revivals, and youth revivals each year. A music director had an important part in each revival. Bro. Lanekin appreciated good music in all services and got more men to participate in singing than usual. Maybe they never got around to telling him but members say they especially enjoyed his good prayer meetings and the teaching of the scriptures he did at that time.

Others appreciate him for his outstanding participation as a citizen in the wet-dry election of 1971 in Carter County and his weekly news letter.

In that first half year of Bro. Lankin's pastorate the dedication of the auditorium on September 14, 1969 drew a large assembly. It was at that time Susie Kibbey gave her history of the church and Mrs. Stephens, on behalf of her family, presented a pulpit bible to the church in memory of Bro. Stephens. (Mrs. Stephens had moved to the hometown of Owenton and passed away about a year ago.)

Another event worthy of attention was the surrender of two young men to God's call to preach. August 23, 1970 the church ordained Ronnie Graves and Adrian Lankin, Jr. to enter the gospel ministry.

At a later date 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. Lankin resigned effective October 1, 1973 and moved to a pastorate in Jefferson-town, Kentucky. At present he and Mrs. Lankin reside in Elizabethtown, he is retired and here to bring greetings today.

Bro. W. K. Wood of Ashland, retired and getting along in years, became our interim pastor. He preached with his usual power and in less than half a year 31 additions to the church resulted. Appreciated for his devotion to the Lord's work prompted a special service in his honor July 14, 1974 and the bestowal of the title "Pastor Emeritus". Not only our church but Carter County Baptist Churches participated in this service.

During this time, Sam Sloan, formerly of Catlettsburg, entered into a revival with Bro. Wood that so stirred the people he was called as pastor to begin June 2, 1974. He was no stranger having pastored in the association and preached at our church. We were relieved and joyful to have him as ours. It was unbelievable that shock-waves of grief could strike us again so soon. In less than one year, May 15, 1975, we lost this man of God to death by sudden heart attack.

Once more the auditorium was filled to capacity with members, friends, and fellow-workers who mourned his going. Our present pastor preached the funeral. Bro. Sloan was

strong in doctrine, powerful in witness and compassionate in personality. In his short time with us more than 50 were added to our membership. (The urn of greenery sitting behind the open bible and in front of the rostrum is a tribute from this church to his memory.)

Mrs. Sloan bravely and impressively accepted the tribute on behalf of her family and has chosen to live in Grayson, teach a Sunday School Class, and continue in active membership here.

George Steele, then Ora Slone became interim pastors while an elected pulpit committee was seeking a pastor. Their recommendation of another Gatlettsburg son, Earl G. Neal, was accepted and he came on the field November 2, 1975 from the Second Baptist Church of Ashland. It was both a happy and sad occasion for him and for us. He was a special friend and fellow-pastor of Bro. Sloan's and experienced the same sense of loss as we. Bro. Neal has preached from Genesis to Revelation week by week. Instead of retirement he has chosen to stay active in the Lord's work and with visitation anywhere he is needed continues to practice what he preaches: "Be Somewhere working for the Lord." More than 100 have been added to our membership during Bro. Neal's pastorate. Of all ministers Bro. Neal is most blessed to have a helpmate as supportive as Mrs. Neal.

We have continued to give of our means as the Lord blesses us. Bro. Neal has seen us redeem the last bonds on our indebtedness on this auditorium assumed in 1967. He has seen us purchase the parking lot for \$ 10,000 cash and Lawrence and Elizabeth Cooke pay for the black-topping (\$2,750). An amplifying system and piano have been installed. The vestibule has been made more inviting by the addition of chairs and attractive decor furnished by Mr. & Mrs. B. O. Satterly in memory of their parents. The church has added a planter around the information board and Irene Sexton has placed evergreens in it in memory of her late husband, Ruben. Bro. Neal has always encouraged us 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.

Ours is a fluid membership-moving in, or moving away, transferring by letter or leaving-whereabouts unknown. As with seed sown the 16 charter members have multiplied to 512. Many "has-been" members are out there somewhere, living for Jesus we hope. The meager offerings

have increased to \$59,365 in the year just ended.

Down through the years since 1920 there have been many members who faithfully held a corner of the sheet. Each in his or her own time and way has filled a niche in God's plan for this church. Some of these people stand more than ten feet tall in magnanimity and Christ—like spirit. How God has kept us as a church loving Him and others, and looking to the future with undimmed hope inspires us to continue in faith.

Let us thank Him for giving us spiritual men as pastors, devoted members willing to assume responsibility, and for leading us as His children whether on the mountain top or in the valley. In the words of Susie's poem let us pay tribute to our church.

MY CHURCH

My wish was always to be there
With earnest thought and fervent prayer
Upon my lips and in my heart
As God's man did his Word impart.

I loved to hear the voices fall
Soft and sweet from wall to wall
When the choir would sing Amazing Grace
The Holy Spirit was every place.

Outside the world was sometimes cold
As the sweetest story ever told
Was sounding forth inside with Might
And sinners saw "God's Holy Light".

No other life could be so sweet
No other joy quite so complete
As to meet God's people, pray and sing
Praises to Our Christ and King.

We've carried our loved ones to God's throne
Trusting His Grace to save alone.
We've oft' felt grieved by their delay
But always then we'd kneel and pray.

The burden He lifted when we read his Word.
Where He promised our prayers would surely be heard
So let us live by faith and work together
Until we dwell in the "House of Our Lord Forever".