
Central Fellowship Baptist Church

Formerly Known as Cochran Field Baptist Church and Grace Baptist Church before Merger



Cochran Field, now The Macon Municipal Airport, was built as a training base for pilots during the early 1940's in support of World War II. At the close of the war, the city of Macon acquired the base to use as a city airport. The buildings on the site were still intact and in early 1949 the city opened them for housing to help relieve the housing in shortage in the area. The new tenants were to remodel and paint in exchange for the first years rent. Materials for remodeling were salvaged from the building being razed.

Avondale Baptist Church; located on Cochran Field Road, started a mission for the people at Cochran Field in one of the old theater buildings. This began in late April in 1949.

The mission prospered, and in July 1950 the people voted to cooperate into an independent church with it's own identity. The church was chartered in July 1950 and a Pastor was called. Pastor Marcus W. Beck accepted the call and came in September of 1950. The position of Minister was a part time job for Brother Beck, who was a Teacher and an Educator. At the close of 1950, Brother Beck accepted a position in Alabama as a Christian Educator. The church called Max Miller; a Mercer University Ministerial Student, who stayed until he graduated in 1952. The Church united with the Southern Baptist Convention, and Sunbeams, G.A's, R.A's. a Ladies Missionary Union and Brotherhood were begun at that time. The church sponsored Boy Scout Troop 21 and a Youth center for teens. A building adjacent to the church was remodeled to use a Sunday School Rooms, Training Union, and Youth Activity Center.

Pastors who followed Brother Miller in the 1950's were – Russell Jensen (1953-1955), A.H. Britt (1956), Kelly Pritchett a Mercer Ministerial student (1956-1957, 6 months), Albert Stroup (1957-1958), Kelly Pritchett (1959-1960), Harry Mosley (1960), Henry Roberts (1961-1974).

In the spring of 1961, under Henry Roberts ministry, discussion begun on locating property to purchase and erect a new church off city property. There was a small sum in a building fund but not enough to cover a land purchase. Then in 1961, a church member's husband died of a coronary and she and her son donated a thousand dollars in his memory. This served as a fund for earnest money for the property, which the church acquired. The results were six acres of land with frontage on Highway 247, purchased from Mr. Grady Hamlin at \$1000.00 per acre. To start the new church, a bond issue of \$10,000.00 was initiated. Several months later, another \$10,000.00 issue was made to complete the building. The majority of the work was accomplished by church members. Services were begun in the new church in the

spring of 1962. The first service was an Easter Sunrise Service at the new location before completion on the church.

In 1969, prayer in schools became an issue and with the situation, church members begin to desire a Christian School Ministry. A church member, donated a sum of money; and the first building for the school was erected in the summer of 1970. (Present buildings were also utilized for this purpose.) Labor for building the first school classrooms was also accomplished by church members and prospective student's parents. The school opened for the fall term in 1970 for Kindergarten to 9th grade. Another class was to be added each year until the 12th grade. The first year total of 169 students attended. Teachers became members of the church in most cases. Other buildings were built as God blessed and gave growth to the school.

In February of 1972, the church purchased 38.25 acres of land adjacent to present property from Mrs. J.J. Simpson at \$1250.00 per acre for a total of \$41,526.00. The purpose of the purchase was to expand as needs dictated for the future growth of the church and school. On December 1, 1972, a bond issue was floated for the amount of \$250, 000 for the purpose of erecting a Day Care Center and Gymnasium.

The school graduated the first Senior Class in May of 1974. Rev. Henry Roberts resigned 1974. The church called Rev John Reynolds as pastor. His tenure was 6 months in 1975. Rev. Rollin Statts assumed the pastorate in 1976-1978. During this period the kitchen was remodeled, a lunchroom added where the church nursery was located with the nursery relocation to the Day Care Center. The gym was constructed during his ministry. Rev. Statts resigned in 1978 and the church again called Rev. John Reynolds. In this period, Grace Baptist was without a Senior Pastor and Rev. Reynolds was approached about a merger between Grace Baptist Church and Cochran Field Baptist Church. Both churches voted in conference in June of 1979 to merge. This merger took place on the second Sunday of July 1979. Rev. Reynolds assumed the pastorate at the location at 1010 Newberg Avenue, Macon, Georgia. The combined membership was charted under the name of "Central Fellowship Baptist Church" of which it retains at this date.

John Reynolds served the church as pastor for just a few months after the merger took place.

Bob Wilson was called and served for approximately two years before resigning.

The church and school struggled financial during this time. The church called Sonny Sherrill as pastor. He was able to help stabilize the finances by tight controls and liquidating of land holdings. Twenty six acres were sold along with the pastors' home.

Pastor Sherrill resigned in June of 1991 and Rodney Queen was called in September of the same year. The school enrollment was at 297 and the church attendance began to stabilize.

In 1993 the church retired the mortgage on the 1010 Newberg church property.

In 1994, Pastor Queen led the church to sell the 1010 Newberg property and move to the

school campus. The church property was sold to Beulahland Bible Church for \$800,000. Because of the relocation, a portion of our members felt that it was too far out for them to continue attending. We lost approximately 30 members.

We began meeting in the school gym in July, 1994. We spent \$75,000 to air condition the gym, purchase chairs, sound system, etc. to adapt the gym for the interim time. Because of battles with the Bibb-Co Planning and Zoning concerning building the new facility, we were delayed in starting the project for approximately a year. We pursued legal counsel and filed briefs which ultimately overturned Planning and Zonings denials. Because of FAA regulations at the Macon Municipal Airport, we were unable to build on our first location. We eventually purchased 2 and one half acres adjoining our property for the sum of \$150,000. Construction began and we occupied the building in May of 1996 with an indebtedness of \$125,000.

Pastor Queen has now served as our Senior Pastor for the past 20 years.