

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH



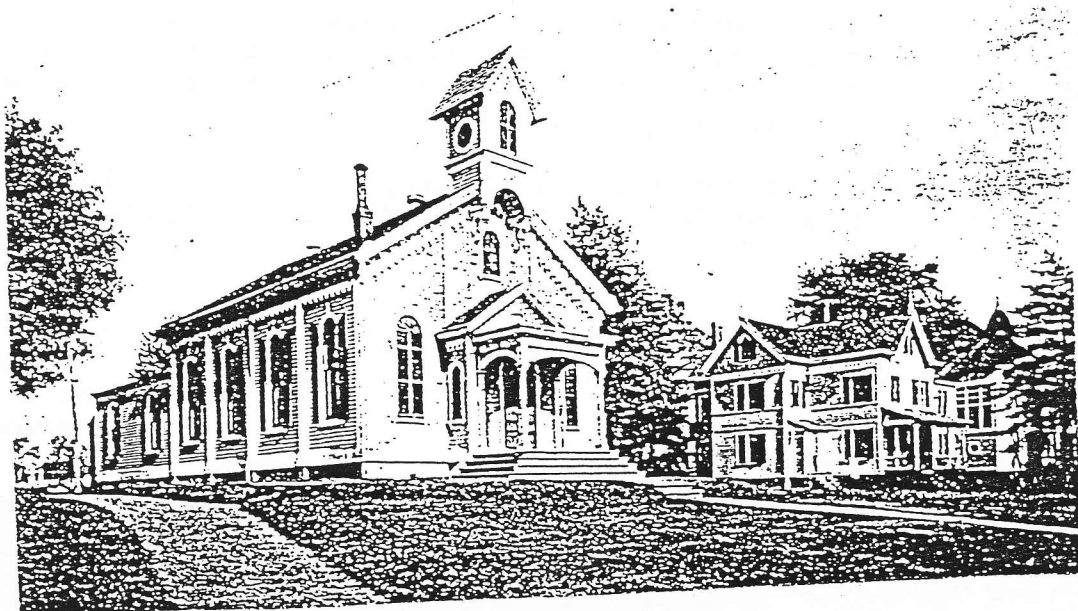
WESTFIELD, NEW JERSEY

1866-1991

No.	Date	Name	Residence	Gender	Where From
1	Nov 4	Lehemill Jackson	Constitution	2 ^d	King's Field
2	"	Elizabeth T. Grant	"	"	"
3	"	Amos H. Grant	"	"	Scotch Plains
4	"	Elizabeth P. Grant	"	"	"
5	"	Joshua Brown	"	"	Berlin N. York City
6	"	D. B. Brown	"	"	"
7	"	Philip M. Clark	"	"	First Savannah
8	"	Joe S. Gadd	"	"	Clinton St. N. York City
9	"	George Spadell	"	"	"
10	"	Erastus Miller	"	"	Scotch Plains
11	"	Eliza Miller	"	"	"
12	"	Marcia Miller	"	"	"
13	"	Mary C. Miller	"	"	"
14	"	Matthias Townley	"	"	"
15	"	Mary Townley	"	"	"
16	"	Fanny A. Wilson	"	"	"
17	"	Berra Osborn	"	"	South Dedham
18	"	Emma E. Osborn	"	"	"
19	"	John Ledger	"	"	Central Brooklyn
20	"	Maxion Ledger (mrs)	"	"	"
21	"	(Maxion Ledger (mrs))	"	"	"
22	"	Elizabeth D. Drake	"	"	"
23	"	William B. Chamberlain	"	"	Second Plainfield
24	"	John Hatfield	"	"	Bethlehem
25	"	Mary Hatfield	"	"	Scotch Plains
			"	"	"

Reorganized Dec 20 1866 - also laid down plan of Chapel

In the month of December 1865, fourteen Christian men and women met for prayer at Nehemiah Dunham's home in Westfield, New Jersey. Among these men and women were members of Baptist churches in New York City, Brooklyn, Plainfield, and Scotch Plains. The group grew in the meetings that followed. By October of 1866, having outgrown their parlor meetings, the worshipers were gathering on Sunday afternoons in the lecture room of the Presbyterian Church of Westfield. In September of that same year, those meeting together had purchased the land where the church stands today, including the land of the current video store. On December 20, 1866, THE WESTFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH was recognized as a regular church of Christ and a cornerstone was laid for a chapel - to cost \$5,000!



This statement was placed in the cornerstone:

"At sundry times, prior to, and during the month of November, 1865 incidental conversations occurred between a few Baptist Brothers and Sisters who lived in and around the Village respecting the propriety of holding meeting for prayer.

"It was thought desirable to make the trial, but their number was so small, they feared it might prove but a feeble interest and so the matter made no progress until the early part of December. About this time Brethren Dunham and Brown providentially met at, or in the vicinity of the railroad station, and as on many other occasions the subject of prayer meetings was again alluded to, when Brother Dunham remarked that it was useless to delay the matter longer and suggested a meeting be called at his house on the following Friday evening. They thereupon agreed to notify personally as many of the brothers and sisters as they could prior to the meeting. This they did, and succeeded in securing the attendance of the following persons - Brethren Dunham, Brown, Ladd, Grant, Townley, and Pierce -- Sisters Dunham, Brown, Ladd, E. Miller, Mary Miller, Martha Miller, Caroline Miller, Mary Townley, and Pierce. This meeting occurred in December, 1865. Brother Grant acted as leader. It proved to be a meeting of special interest, the hearts of all present being pervaded with the spiritual presence they invoked. Under this influence the necessity was felt that they should meet regularly every week, and they so determined.

"Upon this every brother present arose, and pledged his personal attendance and efforts to sustain the meetings unless providentially prevented. To this the sisters also gave their assent.

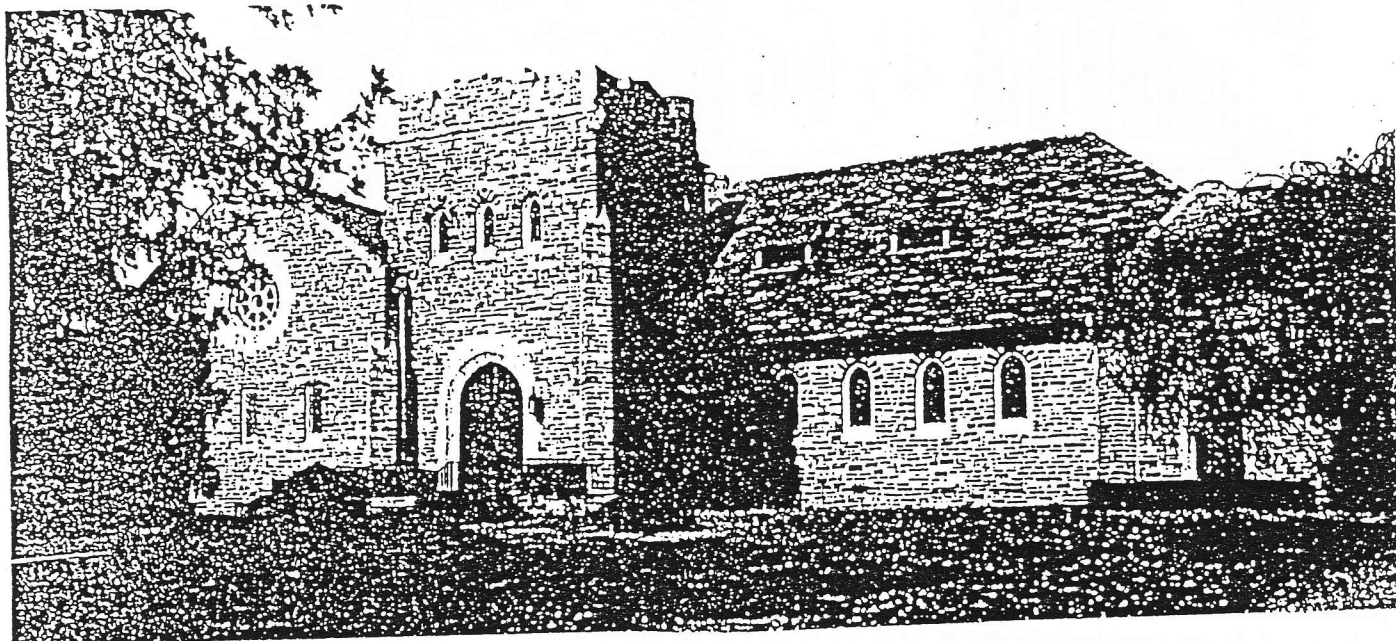
"Thus committed, the meetings continued from house to house, with growing interest as the promised presence of Jesus was verified to them promoting the religious growth, and prosperity of the whole body. The interest gathered fresh impetus with every meeting, and their numbers increased as it became known throughout the Village. Neighbors and friends were introduced to each other for the first time as fellow Christians of the same faith and order."

Twenty years later, the membership had outgrown the chapel, and an extension was added. Another contract was issued to build a parsonage.

Until 1870, devoted men in the congregation provided leadership and sermons; at that time Reverend Joseph Greaves became Pastor for six years.

In the autumn of 1888, Reverend Judson K. Folwell encouraged black Baptists of the area to join the church. Trustee T. H. Love made funds available for the black Baptists to buy land and erect a chapel for their own worship in 1890.

By 1890, the church had received 121 by baptism, 171 by letter, 19 by experience, and two by restoration, for a net total of 175.



In 1922, the original building was moved to a different location and use, and the large stone building was completed.

The Education Building was added in 1956.

"The Church in the Round", including the lounge and improved office space, still another major renovation and building project, was dedicated in 1970.

Changes in demographics and diminished membership made it necessary to find other uses for the Education Building, and it has been occupied variously by classes for disturbed children, nursery school, Linn Hill School for gifted students, and at present by the Westfield Y Children's Center.

But buildings are only buildings. The church has been active in mission both in the community at home and at large. Gifts of money, equipment, time and physical labor have gone to Africa, Haiti, Newark; to the homeless, hungry, and physically and emotionally abused; space provided for meaningful groups such as singles, alcoholics, Mobile Meals; and to community and cultural groups.

Music has always been an integral part of our church life. From the first pipe organ installed in 1876 for \$800, to today's splendid Reuter organ with its 24 ranks and 1,327 pipes, a joyful noise has been raised in praise and thanksgiving. It is impossible to think of First Baptist Church without music.

In this 125th anniversary year, after six years of planning and prayer, we have added a Minister of Christian Education and Evangelism.

Without the dedication and talents of our ministers and many lay persons, the church could not have survived. Men and women have provided inspiration, leadership, education and technical skills to keep the programs and plant viable.

The fortunes of the church have ebbed and flowed as the times have changed, but its mission continues as declared in its first Covenant:

"...That we will exercise a mutual care, as members one of another, to promote the growth of the whole body in Christian knowledge, holiness and comfort, to the end that we may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

That we will not omit closet and family religion at home, nor allow ourselves in the too common neglect of the great duty of religiously training up our children, and those under our care, with a view to the service of Christ, and the enjoyment of heaven..."

Note: The early records of the church have been copied and indexed, and are in the process of being bound. They will soon be available to those interested in reading about the early history of the church.

MISCELLANY FROM THE RECORDS

- 1872 A committee of discipline was appointed to see Sister Allen in view of her persistent absence from meetings and services. "The saints," wrote Mrs. Allen, "are to assemble around the Lord's table in His name alone, not in the name of Baptists or any other denomination." Her conclusion left the church no option but to withdraw the hand of fellowship.
- 1899 The Pastor presented for consideration the question of improving the responsive readings. It was authorized to purchase 100 copies of the Psalms at 10 cents each.
- 1901 Rev. George A. Francis tendered his resignation. Ballots were tallied. The moderator declared the resignation of Mr. Francis not accepted.
- 1914 Rev. Charles T. Snow served as Acting Pastor, but declined to accept the position of Pastor.
- 1921 An elaborate minstrel and musicale for the benefit of the First Baptist Building Fund was given in the high school auditorium. Authorization was given to move the chapel to the rear of the lot for use during construction of the new church building. (The chapel was later sold for \$400 and moved away.)
- 1922 A week of dedication ceremonies. Final cost of the church, including organ and furnishings, came to \$120,740.47.
- 1928 The Buildings and Grounds Committee proposed that the space back of the baptistry curtain be filled in with solid panels, in order to avoid drafts on the pulpit which were annoying to the Pastor.
- 1932 The Finance Committee reported that due to the depression the sexton had been notified that his wages would be reduced by ten dollars; also that the service of the organist would end with the expiration of her contract. Income ran below expenses and was made up by special drives - "Share the Debt" and "Major Bowes Party."
- 1941 "Re letter from Howard Savings Institute demanding painting of parsonage...is our intention to do so when possible if funds are available."
- 1948 Mr. Heidl Slocum presented a proposal for improving the facilities of the Church School. A long-range plan was submitted for this purpose.
- 1951 An architect was hired to draw up plans for the proposed Educational Building and a building fund drive was planned.
- 1959 It was voted to hold two Sunday morning services.
- 1967 Dances in the Dungeon, in its second year, had seen 2,657 youths in action.
- 1969 Worship services were held in Fellowship Hall as excavation and building began on the new addition. A legacy of over \$336,000 was received from the estate of Walter Beebe, a nephew of Leonard Beebe who was a founder and trustee of the church.
- 1970 An all-night prayer vigil was held in the newly completed sanctuary on Maundy Thursday. The sanctuary was dedicated in June.
- 1973 The carillon was installed. A loan of \$3,000 was made to Senior Citizens Housing for studies, survey and architect fees.
- 1974 Mortgage on the Education Building was paid off. Returned to a single Sunday service.

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- 1977 Grace Thompson left the bulk of her estate for scholarship grants to students.
- 1979 Singles ministry was established.
- 1983 The Homer J. Tucker Christian Service Award was created.
- 1985 Handicapped access completed.
- 1986 Cremains Garden developed. A confused deer crashed through a window in the passage to the Education Building, looked in on the church office and AA meeting, then left by destroying another window.

CHURCH ANNIVERSARIES

THE 50TH

The committee in charge presented an action-packed week of activities. This is the program which they offered, beginning Sunday, April 22, 1917, with morning and evening services of sermons and music: Monday evening, reading of the church history plus an address by Dr. Daniel Clare of the East Orange Baptist Church; Tuesday evening, address by Dr. Cornelius Woelfkin, Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, and special music of anthems, quartets and solos; Wednesday evening, special musical numbers, "roll call" and two addresses by out-of-town Baptist ministers; Thursday evening, history of the Sunday school, anthem by the Junior Choir, violin solos, and an address by Ivan Flood, Secretary of Sunday School and Young Peoples Work, New Jersey Baptist Convention; Friday evening, addresses by pastors of each of the following churches--Presbyterian, St. Paul's Episcopal, Methodist, and Congregational Church. Music was two bass solos and two violin solos.

THE 75TH

Special events for this anniversary were recorded in a beautifully printed little pamphlet--opening with an 11 o'clock morning worship featuring greetings from Rev. George A. Francis (pastor 1896-1902) and a sermon by Rev. E. J. Holden (pastor 1916-1927). The date was December 7, 1941, and by the time the New Jersey College for Women Choir had sung for the vesper service, news of the attack on Pearl Harbor had swept the country. Because of this, interest in the historical pageant on Thursday evening was divided.

THE 100TH

The committee planned a year of Centennial emphasis highlighted by the leadership of Dr. D. Elton Trueblood at a September Church Retreat. Dr. Trueblood, one of the day's most widely-known interpreters of religious thought, gave a stimulating weekend and Sunday sermon.

The Centennial Year was celebrated in the congregation and publicized in the town. The second hundred years of The First Baptist Church of Westfield began on December 8, 1965, with an attempt to reconstruct the initial December 1865 meeting. Ten homes had the same guest list for the evening. Hosts and hostesses for the evening were all Brother and Sister Dunham. Leaders were all named Brother Anson Grant. Other guests played the part-factual, part-fictional roles of the Browns, Townleys, Pierces, Ladds, and Millers. On December 15, church members were invited to return to the same homes for consideration of the long-range plans of the church. A discussion period brought forth fresh ideas and deep convictions which were relayed by a secretary to the long-range planning committee.

PASTORS OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF WESTFIELD, NJ

1867-1870 *Supplies: Brethern Greaves, Hillman, and Ladd*

1870-1876 *Rev. Joseph Greaves*

1876-1880 *Rev. Charles A. Harris*

1880-1882 *Rev. Edwin H. Bronson*

1882-1883 *Supplies*

1883-1884 *Rev. Stephen F. Massett*

1884-1885 *Supplies*

1885-1891 *Rev. Judson K. Folwell*

1892-1896 *Rev. John G. Dyer*

1896-1902 *Rev. George A. Francis*

1902-1903 *Supplies*

1903-1914 *Rev. C. J. Greenwood*

1914-1916 *Acting Pastor: Rev. Charles T. Snow*

1916-1927 *Rev. Edward J. Holden*

1928-1931 *Rev. Frederic Briggs*

1931-1945 *Rev. Eugene G. Mintz*

1945-1949 *Rev. A. Ray Petty*

1949-1959 *Rev. Elbert E. Gates*

1959-1960 *Interim Pastor: Dr. G. Pitt Beers*

1960-1972 *Rev. William K. Cober*

1967-1972 *Associate Pastor: Rev. Robert Thatcher*

1972-1973 *Interim Pastor: Rev. Robert Thatcher*

1973-1977 *Rev. Wilmont J. Murray*

1973-1975 *Minister of Education: Rev. William Frederickson*

1977-1978 *Interim Pastor: Rev. Elbert E. Gates*

1978- *Dr. Robert L. Harvey*

1991-2010 *Min. of Christian Ed. & Evangelism: Dr. Darla Dee Turlington*

2011 - *Rev. Mayra Castañeda*