

*We celebrate those, who through embrace, transformation and doxology have embodied their faithfulness to God by their service and participation at Oklahoma City First Church of the Nazarene.*

You will see years 1910-2010 listed on the side of each biographical sketch, with 20 years highlighted. This is to illustrate the section of 20 years this person (or couple) participated most at OKC First Church. We are aware that several nominees span several 20-year designations; however, we have tried to identify those years best suited for that individual.



### **Jubilee - 100 Years...**

April 30 - May 2, 2010 We celebrated 100 years of ministry at OKC First Church of the Nazarene. More information can be found on the "Jubilee - 100 Years" page found on this website. Click the link to view pictures and information about the celebration, including a video presentation that summarizes the 100 year history of this church.



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**Neal Snowden, Sr.**

Before OKC First Church opened its doors at our present location, it shared facilities at Messiah Lutheran Church on NW Expressway. A certain family had its roots at Messiah – Neal and Polly Snowden, along with their children, Nancy and Jan Neal. We know Jan Neal today simply as Neal, or as Neal Jr. Neal Jr. became friends with several other children at OKC First and soon started attending OKC First's children's programs. He persuaded his father to attend these programs, too. Neal Snowden Sr. confessed Jesus as Savior at OKC First Church just a year after the doors opened on NW Expressway. Many of us remember Neal as the ultimate greeter. Not only did he occupy a spot at the middle set of doors on the east side, but everywhere in the church he was seen embracing and talking to people around him. Children freely came up to him. Perhaps his ministry of greeting people coming into this church was enhanced by the fact that he called this place his home. He literally came here every day during the week and spent time in the sanctuary, reading his Bible

and praying. He had an amazing prayer list. When Neal said you were on his prayer list, you could count on his prayers.

You would think that retirement would slow him down, but he really never got bored. He never wanted to be associated with “old folk” – but loved hanging out with young people. He had an amusing way to give his testimony when his favorite Missouri team won. He loved bright clothes. He simply did retirement right.

Of course, his greatest ministry, without a doubt, was sailing. We all smiled when he named his boats “Salvation” and “Amazing Grace.”

Many of us were startled when he imposed his entry fee onto his boat – the reciting of the Apostle’s Creed. He was always inviting people from OKC First Church to join him on his boats. His lake ministry touched many unchurched people so much that a garden memorial by the lake stands today in his memory.

Our church celebrates the faithfulness of this kind man and the impact he has made on so many of us.



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### **Allison Beth Lester**

Allison Beth Lester rolled into OKC First during her sophomore year of high school and immediately became an integral part of our ministry to high school students. Challenged by a rare disease that affected her skeletal structure and central nervous system, Allison taught all of us about perseverance, joy, faith and love.

Allison constantly battled the pain of her disease, and yet she never complained. Her toughness allowed her to live much longer than doctors had anticipated. But Allison didn't miss any opportunities to live a full and joyful life. She was vocal about her dreams and plans, and those of us around her were inspired just by listening and watching!

She was a person of deep conviction. You never wondered how Allison felt about anything; she believed in God and the power of the Gospel, and she lived in ways that birthed this same Gospel wherever she went.

Allison loved deeply; where her family and friends were concerned, she wore her feelings on her sleeve. She was proud of her parents and her brothers, and while she enjoyed her friends, she didn't hesitate to nurture and challenge them.

Though quiet and small, Allison led with great courage and conviction. She continues to have a significant impact on our church and youth ministry.



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### **Pete and Cheryl Hall**

A quiet couple, both Pete and Cheryl have contributed significantly in helping OKC to become an accepting and loving place. Cheryl is extremely committed to the music ministry of OKC First, through her participation in the choir, and presenting special music in song with her lovely alto voice. Both are involved in their small group and find that to be the place where they can grow closer to Christ in relationships that provide confession, accountability and shared excitement as each person grows in their faith. They love their small group!

Pete is a faithful attender and finds avenues by which he, along with Cheryl, can reach out to those who are marginalized in this society. They work tirelessly in their efforts to reach out and lovingly disciple those afflicted with HIV virus and are doing everything in their power to show the love of Jesus Christ in practical ways to this group of

people. Often, they have followed this call even when it meant possible (and probable) embarrassment!

When asked, their son Joe commented, "my best memory of my parents at OKC First is when Oliver became a part of the family. Amy and I were already in Kansas City at that time, but we watched as God began to change each of them and gave them the courage to love someone like Oliver, in spite of what others might have thought about them."

Pete and Cheryl have learned to model Christian living, especially in the midst of crisis, as evidenced when Pete broke his back in an accident four years ago. In the midst of living Christian lives, they have helped this church become a place where anyone can come to be confronted by the love of the Savior.



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### **Jerry and Mary Ann Bell**

You hardly mention one name before the other spouse's name rolls off your tongue. Jerry and Mary Ann Bell actually met in Kindergarten and started dating in the eighth grade. Other than a 6-month break-up in high school (you'll have to get the story from them), they have been dating ever since! About a year after joining OKC First (24 years ago), they were asked to lead a ministry to singles. According to their son, Mike, "My brother Tim and I felt we either lost our parents during this time or we gained 20-30 siblings. Seldom did we call them or dropped by that they weren't counseling or praying with someone in the group going through some crisis!"

Marisela Brown, who attended the Singles' class at that time, writes, "Mary Ann has been there for me from the first day I arrived to OKC First. She has guided me in spiritual issues, marriage questions,



financial advice and has been there with me every time I have gone down to the altar to ask for healing. They both mean so much to Monte and me, because they have guided us not only through the hard times, but even through our daily life."

Tina Hughes adds, "I was one of the fortunate members of that group. They provided us with wonderful examples of what it meant to grow up in Christ. I, and the others in that group, are better people and better church members for having been affected by their ministry."

Jerry served many years on the board before stepping aside for the last ten years, until this past year. Mary Ann is affectionately known as the "cookie lady" to Pastor Jon and the students at PC Academy.

Perhaps the best endorsement of their faithfulness to their church and to their family is summed up in these words by Mike, "Tim and I can vouch that what you see in them at church is exactly who they are at home."

This kind and gracious couple has blessed, and continues to bless, the people of OKC First Church.



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### **Doyle Green**

If you walk down the Cole Educational Wing, you will see a set of double doors leading into the Green Center. This large room is named for Doyle Green, a man who had an equally large heart for people and for God. Doyle, his wife Marilyn, and their two sons, Jere and Tag, moved to Oklahoma City from California. They quickly fit into the life and community of OKC First Church.

Perhaps the greatest description of Doyle comes from his own son, Jere, who is also a long-time member of OKC First Church. Jere commented that his dad "loved this church and taught me to respect it without reservation." With that in mind, it is fitting and reassuring for

everyone here to know that Jere takes care of our church property on a daily basis.

Doyle was involved heavily in the administration of church affairs, serving numerous times on the church board. During the times he was on the board, he was instrumental in making some tough decisions regarding financial issues. Our church benefited greatly from his business background, careful planning and thoughtful insights. He was also a writer and expressed his love for people and God through poetry. Sixteen lines of a poem written by Doyle often said more than ten pages of prose!

He and his wife Marilyn were hosts for numerous youth parties and he knew how to make everyone feel welcome. His warm personality and genuine humor made it easy for any new person to feel at ease. It made clear sense to many people to name this large room after a man with a large heart. Doyle would also be pleased to know that this very room now plays host to our Kaleo community, welcoming people to living their lives fully for God.



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### **Stan Toler**

Born in Welch, West Virginia on November 7th, 1950, Pastor Stan was called to preach at the tender age of 7. As teens, Stan and his younger brother, Terry traveled the surrounding area holding revivals; Stan did the preaching and Terry did the singing. Pursuing his call, Stan went on to earn a Bachelor's degree in theology, a Master's degree in theology and a Doctor of Ministry degree.

Pastor Stan established himself as one of the finest pastors in the Church of Christ-Christian Union tradition.

It was during his pastorate in Ohio that he was called to consider a move to Oklahoma, and to the Church of the Nazarene- OKC First. Pastor Stan and his wife, Linda, after days and weeks of prayerful consideration, graciously accepted that call and became our church's 19th senior pastor.

When Stan Toler came to pastor OKC First in the fall of 1984, he found our fellowship struggling against a debt load that threatened the church's future. But our new Pastor, with a sound business mind, a

hopeful vision of the future, a firm handshake and an uncanny ability to remember people and their names, refused to be discouraged or defeated. Dr. Toler called for and modeled sacrificial commitments to OKC First, leading us through the struggle and into a great season of health and growth.

Among Dr. Toler's greatest contributions to the life of OKC First were his administrative and organizational skills. Many of these church structures exist to this day, and they have taken life and shape in hundreds of other congregations around the nation as the "Large Church Operations Manual" was published across denominational lines.

Dr. Toler continues to be a prolific author and speaker. Lifestream Church Resources supports church life within many different Christian traditions, now reaching churches around the world.

Even though he ended his ministry here in 1991, we continue to enjoy the mark left on OKC First by Dr. Stan Toler.



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### **Walter and Kathryn Cherry**

Kathryn Cherry had always proudly exclaimed that, "I was carried into OKC 1st Church as a baby!" And, indeed she was. In January 1913, H.L. and Hattie Short brought the youngest of their three girls into Oklahoma City First Church of the Nazarene for the first time, a place where she would make her home for over 92 years.

Walt and Kathryn Cherry were married in August 1935. They met at a church function while attending the University of Oklahoma. In an interview many years later, Kathryn would say, "Our relationship began at the church and it is still going on there." Walter and Kathryn complimented one another very well-Walt was contemplative and quiet, Kathryn was outgoing and candid.

Walt was known locally and within this church - taught a Sunday School class, was a leader of a very successful scout troop, and was known for his many restaurants, "Cherries for Burgers". He served on the church board a number of years and was the driving force of the formation of the OKC 1st Nazarene Foundation. Walt's wisdom, strength, and quiet confidence held the church together through

tough times. Kathryn impacted the junior high program by forming the "Live Wire" girls, young women who followed her every move. She also served as the camp director of our very own church summer camp for over 20 years. Wherever she was, it seemed that her camp whistle could have been in tow, as she could shape up any crowd. Kathryn served wherever she was needed.

In their later years, the Cherry's served our church through their prayers and continued financial giving. Their selflessness was evident to all. Walter passed away on Columbus Day of 2002, and we just recently lost Kathryn on Columbus Day of 2005. OKC 1st Church will always esteem the Cherry's, holding them up as exemplars for their remarkable faithfulness.



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### **Reuel and Irma Douglas**

Reuel Douglas, and his wife, Irma, were members of the Friendship Sunday School Class for over 50 years.

Reuel served on the church board for many years. He helped lead the church in its relocation from the 6th and Francis property to our present property. In fact, one of the shovels was his during the groundbreaking for the first stage of this building on May 24, 1970. Perhaps the most endearing quality of Reuel Douglas was his deep resonant voice that could be heard in many church services. People knew him to be a man of God who just couldn't keep quiet when he was blessed. Many remember his enthusiastic support of Pastor Stan Toler's sermons as Reuel would shout, "Well, glory to God!" as the pastor preached. We who knew him, miss him during the services. His deep faith and conviction to pray unceasingly was evidenced as Reuel led the prayer time before the worship service for years. He believed in covering the pastor with prayer before every Sunday morning service.

Reuel was loved by everyone and had a quick sense of humor that caught most of us off-guard. He loved people and everyone knew that



he loved OKC First Church.

Reuel and his wife, Irma had one daughter, Madolyn Douglas Wright. Madolyn served as our church organist for many years.



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### **Ken and Betty Rice**

Ken and Betty Rice came to OKC First Church in the late 1940s, where Ken served as Minister of Education with Rev. R.T. Williams.

After years in OKC, it was off to Kansas City for Ken, Betty and family to work at Nazarene World Headquarters in the Department of Church Schools. In 1958, when Reverend RT Williams resigned as pastor, OKC First Church called Ken Rice to be senior pastor. It was a call he accepted and the Rice family returned to OKC for a successful pastorate. Daughters, Linda and Ronda, were 15 and 8, respectively. Joining Ken on the pastoral team were Rev. Harper Cole and Rev. Dean Galloway.

With an intense love for Sunday school and the belief that a vibrant Sunday school was the way to build a strong church, Ken Rice is known world wide in the Church of the Nazarene as "Mr. Sunday School." Ken also felt that Sunday School was a great way to become grounded in the scriptures therefore providing an early firm foundation for people trying to follow Christ's teachings.

Betty Rice's creativity and many talents made her an integral part of the ministry of the church. After a four year pastorate at OKC First Church, Ken Rice returned to World Headquarters in Kansas City to be the Director of the Department of Church Schools. Ken and Betty continue to have wonderful memories of OKC First Church and a deep love for its members. Of course, Linda chose to stay in Oklahoma City and is happily married to Leigh Nichols. The Rice family recently returned to Oklahoma City from San Diego, CA. We appreciate any time they are able to attend our services.



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### **Marion Jamison**

Marion Jamison began coming to OKC First in 1950 when he met Helen Sarras, a fellow Bethany Peniel College student, who was already a member here. He eventually married her! After the wedding, they attended Ken Rice's Teacher Education Classes and taught in the Children's department of the Sunday School.

When First Church grew beyond the capacity to expand, the congregation voted to build Lakeview Park Church of the Nazarene as a home missions project. The Jamisons were among 68 volunteers who agreed to help organize that church. It was at Lakeview Park that Marion began his first venture as an adult class teacher and discovered a passion that gave meaning and direction to his life.

Once Lakeview Park was well established, the Jamisons returned to OKC First. Marion immediately started another adult class. The Church secretary compiled a list of members who did not attend Sunday School, and Marion began to contact them – by letter, phone, personal visits and even by telegrams – until they agreed to visit the class. Then they were hooked, for they found in Marion an outstanding teacher who made God's Word relevant to their lives. They also came to enjoy a unique time of fellowship as they shared coffee and doughnuts before class – "unique" because no other class had done this.

In 1966, Olivet Nazarene College requested that Marion supervise the building of a planetarium on their campus. True to form, the first month on campus, Marion requested a room to start a Sunday School class at the College Church. When the Planetarium was completed, the Jamisons returned to Oklahoma City, and Marion started his fourth adult class in the present facility. Marion started the four classes with less than five people in each class the first Sunday and each class grew to an attendance of 75 to 100 members. Some of those members are still serving at OKC First Church..

His life took a circuitous path, but OKC First Church was always home to him. His teaching career ended only when illness forced him to retire. Dr. A.S. London called Marion "Mr. Sunday School" – and that was a fitting designation for him.



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### **Shelvy and Ruby McPhail**

As the story goes, a teacher of one of our adult Sunday School classes asked the class to name a saint. The first names mentioned were those of Shelvy and Ruby McPhail. They attended our church for decades, and were mainstays, enthusiastically involved in every facet of church. We've found several pictures that chronicle their lives here- the earliest shows Shelvy standing beside then Senior Pastor I.W. Young in 1935.

But many who knew and loved the McPhails believe Shelvy's greatest contribution came after OKC First moved away from the 6th and Francis location to NW Expressway and Meridian in the late 1960's. The decision to move away from the downtown location caused a painful rift in the congregation. Many, maybe even half of the congregation, refused to leave and ultimately left the church.

This wounded congregation, without a building of their own, and now struggling to gather the resources or the courage to move forward, was meeting at Messiah Lutheran for worship services, Sunday School and even board meetings.

Things were slowly going from bad to worse, so bad that in one board meeting in 1969, one exasperated member made the motion that the church be disbanded and the resources distributed appropriately. The remaining members of the board sat in stunned silence.

The next voice to be heard belonged to Shelvy McPhail. Through tears he said, "I just don't think that's what the Lord would have us do." He then followed with an impassioned speech that spoke of a faithful God and a dynamic congregation that had both a storied past and a promising future. The speech must have worked; the motion never came to a vote- in fact there wasn't even a second!

Shelvy and Ruby McPhail embodied so many of the core values and characteristics of this congregation: loyal, faithful, hopeful, aware of difficult circumstances but not bound by them, stubborn and passionate.

Above the center door on the western entrance to the sanctuary is a plaque commemorating the leadership and vision of Shelvy McPhail, a man who believed our best days were ahead of us. He was right.



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### **Homer and Wilma Cole**

"There was something incomplete in us until Homer touched our lives." That line was uttered at Homer's funeral service by his good friend and pastor, R.T. Williams, Jr. Homer and Wilma Cole have helped complete the work of God in countless lives down through the history of OKC First Church. They were introduced to our church in 1955 after a friend invited them to one of R.T. Williams' hymn concerts. The "Singing Pastor" led this couple into the life of our church, where they attended regularly, tithed, and were active in the daily life of the church.

By nature a shy and private person, Wilma is generous in every way with her time, money and love. There is no way to tell of all of the ways she has gifted our congregation, as her giving is usually anonymous. We do know that the Cole's have left a legacy for our church, as they



have been major benefactors for OKC First Church of the Nazarene. When Homer died, Wilma contributed funds for building the Homer Cole Education Wing. She also furnished the new organ and grand pianos for the sanctuary. Over the years she has made major contributions to the Church Building Fund.

In 1986, Wilma gifted the church valuable property as part of her estate. The proceeds of its sale were able to pay in full all existing indebtedness on the property of the church, make a significant contribution to the Vision 2000 Master Plan for Expansion, and to endow a fund known as the "Wilma Cole Music Fund." The income of this fund continues to help maintain our organ and pianos, purchase music for services, as well as provide music scholarships.

Wilma loved music, and from the "Singing Pastor" until now has allowed our church to experience the very best during our times of worship. Homer passed away in June of 1975, leaving a void in both in Wilma's heart and in the life of our church. Wilma continued attending OKC First until a stroke limited her ability to worship with us. In September of 2006, Wilma went home to be with the Lord. In her passing, Wilma continued to leave a significant imprint on OKC First Church as she gifted yet another substantial piece of property earmarked specifically for construction of an additional facility to be used for increased ministry in the life of our church. You can see the beginning of the plans for a new facility on our campus on Northwest Expressway on our website. We thank the Lord for Homer and Wilma's continued faithfulness to God and are forever grateful for their service and generosity to OKC First Church.



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### **Wes Harmon**

Wes attended Bethany Nazarene College in the forties, and graduated in 1950. Our church had the privilege of outfitting Wes and his new wife, Modelle with many things they needed on their departure to the mission field of Trinidad - including a new refrigerator! After their first term of five years in Trinidad, they returned to the States. Once again, our church showed how they take care of their missionaries by providing them with funds to buy a new car. Wes and Modelle have three children.

Wes returned to BNC and received a Masters degree in Religion in 1970. He then went to the University of Oklahoma and received his

Master of Arts in Philosophy. He is credited for having started the Philosophy Department at SNU in 1974, and the Men's Soccer program at SNU in 1978.

Hundreds of students recall Coach Harmon's leadership on the soccer field as Christ-like. Dean Morgan, former SNU Soccer team player and current member of our church recalls being impressed as a freshman that Coach Harmon always prayed this prayer before the games, "Lord, we don't pray that we win this game, but that you help us do the best of the ability you've given us. Keep all on both teams free from injury. Amen." Coach Harmon influenced Dean in such a way that he and his wife, Melissa, asked Wes to dedicate both of their sons right here at OKC First. Many recall fondly his humor and wisdom in the classroom as well. He retired from full time coaching and teaching in 1997, yet continued to teach in an adjunct role until 2003.

Wes has been active in our church for over 50 years, serving the Lord through this local congregation, and the international church. In this local church, he has served as Sunday School teacher of the Friendship Class, board member, and as a member of the Oklahoma City First Nazarene Foundation.

If you travel to Trinidad today, you will find that all Nazarenes speak fondly and with respect of the Harmons. In fact, in Trinidad, you will also find the Wesley Harmon Library. This gracious and kind man blessed many – in Trinidad and in the states.

Wes Harmon passed away in April of 2006 and his loving wife Modelle passed away in January of 2007. Although they are dearly missed in the life of our church, their impact continues, not only in many fond memories, but also through generous gifts designated for OKC First Church of the Nazarene in their passing.



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### **Rev. R.T. Williams, Jr.**

A young and vibrant 25 year old man assumed the pastorate here at OKC First Church of the Nazarene in 1945. He proceeded to make an indelible mark not only on the church, but the entire city for the 14 years as pastor. His name was R.T. Williams, Jr..

It is told that a radio station manager reluctantly gave him two 15-minute spots a week on a trial basis. Within a few short months, the radio's rating system showed that Rev. Williams' spots led all the rest of the schedule in the number of listeners! Because of his influence, OKC First Church fast became known as the "Singing Church."

During his pastorate, OKC First experienced an incredible increase in Sunday School. An activities building that included a gym, classrooms and kitchen facilities was built. Rev. Ken Rice was called as a full time

minister of Christian Education. By 1952, the church facilities increased to a total of 37,500 square feet of floor space. The original sanctuary seated about 900 and often it was packed to hear Dr. Williams.

It was also during R.T. Williams' pastorate that the church building at NW 6th and Francis was gutted due to a major fire. The sanctuary, with all of its furnishings, burned to the ground. First Church was originally built back in 1928 for big money at the time. It cost \$25,000.

Replacement value was now estimated over \$100,000. Dr. Williams led the congregation through this rebuilding period.

After leaving OKC First Church, Williams held a variety of leadership positions in the church, in education and in business. He passed away in August 1999, at the age of 79. A memorial service was held in this very sanctuary, honoring the ministry of this special man.

OKC First Church of the Nazarene would not be the church it is today without the profound influence of Dr. R.T. Williams. He left an imprint of his ministry here and we celebrate his faithfulness to our church.



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## **Frederick and Charlotte Nichols**

Frederick and Charlotte Nichols were members of OKC First Church for more than 60 years. Frederick's grandmother, Mrs. M.E. Blackburn, was a founding member in 1910. His mother, Hattie Nichols, brought Frederick to OKC First Church as a small boy.

Charlotte's family moved to OKC from the Tulsa area in the late 20's. They married in the mid thirties under the ministry of I.W. Young. Frederick was a member of the official board for many years. Charlotte was music director several different times. They were both Sunday school teachers and camp counselors. Charlotte was a choir member, involved in special musical groups and a soloist.

They were members of the Friendship Class, which, at that time was the largest and most active class at OKC First. Frederick and Charlotte lived lives that revolved around the church and its activities. Their children, Barbara and Leigh, were raised in the church. Barbara was church organist for many years and Leigh continues to be involved in many activities of the church.

Frederick and Charlotte Nichols gave unselfishly of their time, talent and finances, as did many others, to help make OKC First Church what it is today.



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### **Lela Stricklin**

Lela Stricklin, "The Hat Lady," was the beloved aunt of Ron Wheeler and Lawrence Wheeler of our congregation. Lela could be easily spotted in our congregation because of her beautiful hats. She wore them with style long after the other women stopped wearing them. Lela's dedication to OKC First Church was shown in many ways. She was involved in "everything" according to her nephews! She supported missions and the Samaritan Sunday School class taught by Shelvey McPhail.

Because she never met a stranger, Lela constantly invited people to church. Her love for the Lord was shown by her overwhelming generosity. Everyone knew her as one who practiced hospitality with such grace and poise.

Lela deeply loved her family, and started an annual reunion that the family still practices, as she left money in her will to fund the reunion.

Her bequest left a permanent reminder of her generosity as it funded the redecoration of our parlor, purchased the pulpit, and funded the current church electronic outside sign.





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### **The Three Deaconesses**

The early days of our church featured a vibrant Sunday school, first conducted at 2:30 Sunday afternoons in the basement of Varnell Drug Store on the corner of Reno and Robinson streets. In the spring of 1912, the congregation of 20 moved to the corner of Clegern and Main streets.

No matter what the activity or location, three particular women were instrumental in carrying out the work started by Uncle Bud. These three energetic deaconesses defined our congregation in our early years. The early Church of the Nazarene celebrated and relied on dedicated women called to ministry, called deaconesses, who visited the sick, prayed and fasted and worked with all who needed their assistance.

At OKC 1st, Mother Wallace did pastoral care, which included encouraging and caring for the marriages of our young couples. Sister Welch was responsible for Sunday School, and was a paid staff member for a portion of her time with us. Mother Jones was even an

ordained minister. Filled with the Spirit, these precious ladies were known to shout, clap, and skip up and down the aisles, hairpins and bonnets falling as they went.

In 1917, led by Pastor Joseph Speakes, OKC 1st was now able to purchase the church building that stood on our original meeting place at Reno and Shartel. The purchase price was \$7,500. The roof leaked and the building was in great need of repair. The real estate agent who handled the transaction must have felt sorry for the struggling congregation, or else God laid it on his heart, for he donated his commission of \$500.00, making it possible to re-roof the building. OKC 1st was definitely off and running. Though times were hard, seeds were planted that would later bloom. It was during these days that some of our faithful leaders were born and grown. What a heritage! Uncle Bud, a stuttering illiterate itinerant preacher, three deaconesses (Mother Jones, Mother Wallace and Sister Welch), and a handful of children who grew into legendary leaders. Our very presence in this sanctuary is a testimony to the faithfulness of these and others who have called OKC First Church of the Nazarene – their church – for the past 95 years.



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### **Uncle Bud Robinson**

We are sitting in these pews today because a group of people gathered under a dusty makeshift tent to hear the stuttering words of a traveling evangelist, Uncle Bud. Born in the mountains of Tennessee in 1860, Bud grew up in a tiny cabin with twelve brothers and sisters. His father died when he was 12, and at age 16 his mother moved the entire family to Texas. Bud worked on a farm, but he went to town as often as he could to gamble, dance and drink.

Finally, at the age of 20, he attended a tent revival with a pack of cards in one pocket and a pistol in the other. At the end of the service, he threw his cards into the fire, lost the gun forever, and listened as God called him to traveling, preaching, and evangelism.

Those closest to Bud discouraged his notion to preach. How could God use a man who never learned to read? How could a man with a speech impediment preach the good news? But, Bud's prayer was simple: "Oh Lord, give me a backbone as big as a sawlog, ribs like the sleepers under the church floor, put iron shoes on me and galvanized breeches, give me a rhinoceros hide for a skin, and hang a wagonload of determination up in the gable-end of my soul, and help me to sign the contract to fight the devil as long as I've got a fist and bite him as long as I have a tooth, then gum him till I die. All this I ask for Christ's sake. Amen."

God simply took what Bud had to offer and made him into one of the greatest preachers the Church of the Nazarene has ever known. Uncle Bud never pastored a church, but he rode horseback around the country in his straw hat, always carrying his Bible and a songbook, holding tent meetings wherever he stopped. A pioneer in the early years of the Church of the Nazarene, Uncle Bud was on the board of Texas Holiness University, one of the institutions that later became what we know today as Southern Nazarene University.

During these early years on the circuit, Uncle Bud traveled to a little town on the prairie called Oklahoma City. He held a tent revival in 1910 in the Sunshine mission located at Reno and Shartel streets. And out of this tent revival, a tiny church was born. Rev. E.B. Hackley, who served as superintendent of the mission, became our church's first pastor.