

## **The History of Second Missionary Baptist Church**

A church's history mirrors the souls of its people. It reflects their longings and struggles, their frustrations and sorrows, their joys and successes. And it tells of their leaders, those who led them from hopes and dreams to reality. Second Baptist Church has a rich history.

Because of the persecution in England, Roger Williams with many others left there and came to America in 1620. In 1626, Roger Williams organized, not founded, the first Baptist church in America.

It was because of persecution, that the Second Baptist Church had its beginning. A very few years after the Civil War, a small group of Negroes desirous of worshipping together, sought refuge from persecution and harassment at the hands of local whites. In 1866, they moved from their small church in Wauhatchie to Chattanooga, using a house as a place of worship. The first stopping place of these weary travelers of God was out in the section of Chattanooga that is now occupied by the North Carolina and St. Louis Railroad yards, whose location is near the great Tennessee River, at the foot of the historic Lookout Mountain.

Several members were working at the Old Rolling Mill, which was located on Cross Street, between what is now Tenth and Sixth Streets. Mr. D. P. Montague was an official or joint owner of the Rolling Mill. Impressed by their zeal and sincerity, Mr. Montague was moved to give them a piece of land located on Leonard (now Tenth St.) and Elm Streets on which the first church was constructed. It was named Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. Now their church was near their work and their homes, for most of them had moved in this vicinity.

The REVEREND MASON BURT served as the first pastor. Rev. Burt was indeed a successful pastor. He was a charter member of the North Chickamauga and Chattanooga District Association.

The second pastor was the REVEREND J. J. SALES, under whose pasturage the church was enlarged. At the time Rev. Sales came to the church, the church entrance faced Sixth Street. After being there a while, the people realized that the church building was not large enough. They then began to rebuild the church, and in doing so turned it around so that it might face Leonard Street (now Tenth Street). Among the many that were added to the church under this great pastor were L. J. Suggs, Sr., Millie Suggs and Bettie Patterson. They all have now fallen asleep. Bettie Patterson died in August, 1940. The REVEREND R. C. RICHARDSON became the third pastor of this onward marching congregation. The first big task was to finish the re-building of the church which began under the former pastor. Its construction was completed under Rev. Richardson.

Realizing that the church was the second Baptist church to be organized in Chattanooga, the name was changed from Pleasant Grove to Second Baptist Church. St. James Baptist Church was the first Baptist church organized in Chattanooga. Members added to the church under this leader were Gussie K. Watson and Elizabeth Suggs Walker, who were still serving actively in the church as late as 1941. The fourth pastor to come serve was the REVEREND P. H. HUGHES. The church held its own under this leader. There were many added to the church, among them were L. J. Suggs, Jr., who later became a great leader in the church.

The REVEREND P. C. PARKER is the fifth selection as pastor. The members testified to the fact that he was a good leader. One of the saddest experiences in the time of his pastorate was the lost of one of his children. The church bowed in grief with this Christian family. Not long after this, Rev. Parker resigned. Again the church found itself without a leader; they called the REVEREND SAM H. JOHNSON, who became the sixth pastor. Under his leadership, the church became debt-free. This was a glorious time for the members of the church; for they realized that they had accomplished a great task. Pearlie Pope and Nelson McIntire were among the faithful members that were added to the church.

The REVEREND W. H. TILLMAN, a school teacher in the Hamilton County School System, came to the church as its seventh leader. The church was at peace and worked well under the leadership of this pastor.

The REVEREND H. J. JOHNSON was the next and eighth leader. Rev. Johnson was a mighty power and great evangelist. More than two hundred souls were added to the church through his preaching. The property that was already owned by the church was 25' x 55'. During Rev. Johnson's pastorate, more property was bought, thus extending the property to 38' x 65'. It was under this pastor that the church was placed under a charter, thus putting the church under the guidance of a few members, whose names appeared on the charter. Those members are as follows: H. Tyree, H. F. Staples, L. J. Suggs, Jr., William Turner, J. W. White, T. W. Adair and Thomas Fowkles.

Rev. Johnson resigned as pastor in 1908. Shortly afterwards, he was called to the Orchard Knob Baptist Church and was its successful pastor for more than thirty years. By 1941, Rev. Johnson had been blind for several years, but being a God-called minister, this was not a handicap for him or his church. His voice as a minister and a singer still rings out as clearly as many who are younger than he. He lived on beyond his 84th birthday.

In 1909, there came another God fearing man along our way. It was now time that Second Baptist should have another strong leader, so they called the REVEREND J. H. MASTIN of Huntsville, Alabama. Rev. Mastin was a very able leader and organizer. Throughout the church, you could see his recommendations

and suggestions being put into effect by the loyal and cooperative members of the church.

He was a studious man, even though he was doing well, he continued to study. He was ever mindful of Paul's advice to Timothy, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Dr. C. O. Booth, a dean of preachers, was his private instructor.

Rev. Mastin was strictly an orthodox Baptist preacher, and believed in the discipline and doctrine of the church. Under his leadership, the church made great progress. Some of the members added to the church by baptism were Hubert Wyatt, Floyd Parks, who became a minister, Lillie Suggs, Elderidge Pope, III, Viola Detheridge Moore, D. C. Harper and others. Some of those who joined by Christian experience were John B. Turner, Maggie Turner, the Rev. J. R. Moore, Sam Washington and many others.

Rev. Mastin attended the National Baptist Convention every year, representing his church. In 1914, Rev. Mastin resigned as pastor and accepted a call to the Union Hill Baptist Church of this city.

After a few months of wandering, the church made its tenth choice; the REVEREND G. K. WILSON was called to lead the church. Rev. Wilson was a great evangelist. LaFreda Pope White and many others were baptized into the church. S. E. Flemister joined the church by Christian experience. These members remained faithful workers of the church through 1941 and beyond. Rev. Wilson's stay was a short one. After resigning from Second, he was called to the Carter Street Baptist Church of this city.

From 1916 - 1919, the REVEREND H. K. KENNEDY lead this host of Baptists as the eleventh pastor. The first parsonage was built during Rev. Kennedy's pastorate and was located on church property. As the membership continued to grow and prosper, the church also grew. The next pastor, the REVEREND E. F. GOUCH, realized the potential strength of the growing congregation and during his pastorate; the charter was revoked, making the church body autonomous.

Having overcome differences of opinion, the REVEREND F. M. HUTCHINSON led the congregation to the site of Fourteenth and Grove Streets where the erection of a new church, including a baptistery, was begun. The auditorium was completed during the time when the REVEREND H. H. HUBBARD, the fourteenth pastor, led the flock.

Recognizing the need for further organization within the church, the REVEREND S. P. PETTIGREW, the fifteenth shepherd, put forth many sound ideas which strengthened the work of the church. It was he who promoted the idea of Missionary Circles within the Missionary Society and re-organized the Baptist Young People's Union (B. Y. P. U.) into a Baptist Training Union (B. T. U.). The training union was recognized as

one of the best in the state.

In the life of any church, a financial advisor is essential and the REVEREND G. W. SANDEFUR proved himself to be worthy of this title.

During the pastorate of the REVEREND WOODROW WILSON TAYLOR, the Sunday School was reorganized, the Baptist Training Union revitalized and the mortgage on the building program was completely liquidated. At his resignation, some members of the church followed him, marking the first split in the sixty-year history of the church.

The REVEREND MARTIN H. RIBBINS became eighteenth pastor in the year 1945. He served actively throughout the city and state in such capacities as Moderator of the Chattanooga District Association and Vice-President of the Tennessee Baptist Missionary and Education Convention. Within the ranks of the National Baptist Convention, he served faithfully. The Reverend Mr. Ribbins gave new hope to the congregation for the erection of a new church building. He died in 1961, thus leaving a dream that was yet to be fulfilled.

After a long mourning period, the church called the REVEREND EDWARD NOLAN BATES as its nineteenth pastor. Rev. Bates served as a dynamic preacher and as one who continued to nurse the idea of a building program.

Following the second division of the membership, the church looked northward for a new leader. In 1966, it extended a call to its twentieth pastor, the REVEREND PAUL ANDERSON MCDANIEL, who was then pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Rahway, New Jersey.

One of his first tasks was to seek to unite a scattered congregation. He began to emphasize the need of faithful stewardship to the church's program and gave new impetus to mission and benevolent giving. Also, there was a revival of various groups to serve in different areas of the church program, such as evangelism, religious education and the welcoming of new members.

In 1969, a five-year building program was instituted which was preceded by an Every Member Canvas Program. Due to the Reverend Dr. McDaniel's concern for people, there grew a deeper awareness of the church's need to become involved in the total life of the community.

Under Pastor McDaniel's leadership, Second Baptist witnessed a consistent growth in membership, ministries and community involvement. Among the initiatives spearheaded by Rev. McDaniel were the Blood Assurance Program, the Family Ministry Program, a quarterly church council meeting of church

leaders, and the Evangelism School, an affiliate of the National Evangelism Movement, Inc. using the curriculum of the Bethany Christian Bible College of Los Angeles, California. Also under his guidance, weekly classes and training for ministers, deacons and members were conducted, including the Baptist Beliefs Class. Second saw the elimination of two mortgages, one for the 14<sup>th</sup> & Grove St. facility and the second for the current Third St. structure.

Over the years, Rev. McDaniel made significant contributions to the local, state and national civic and religious landscape. He won a Supreme Court ruling that allowed him to become the first clergyman to serve in the Tennessee State Constitutional Convention. He also served a record-setting five consecutive terms on the Hamilton County Commission, serving as chairman for four terms. As a member of the local Church Koinonia, a ministers' association, he served as its chairman as well as the first African American president of the Chattanooga Ministers' Association. On the national level, he was an instructor and subsequently supervisor of the National Baptist Convention, under the presidency of Rev. Dr. Julius Scruggs, First Baptist of Huntsville, Alabama.

On a personal level, Rev. McDaniel's tenure was characterized by highs and lows. His arrival brought a young family of five: his wife, the former Edna Philips of Momfort, New York, and three children, Paul Jr., Pamela and Patricia. A history making event occurred when their second son and youngest of four children, Peter Adam, was born. This marked the first time a child had been born into a pastor's family in the over one hundred twenty-five year history of the church. After a lengthy illness, Mrs. McDaniel passed in 19\_\_\_. Later, he suffered the loss of his oldest daughter, Pamela. Years later, he married the former Linda Isadore, D. Min., of Los Angeles, California, who became the first dean of Second's School of Evangelism. She currently serves as assistant pastor of First Centenary United Methodist Church of Chattanooga, the first African American to do so.

After almost fifty years of serving as under-shepherd, Rev. McDaniel retired in June 2014, leaving the pulpit vacant for a year. Prior to his departure, however, Pastor McDaniel graciously and effectively prepared the church for transitioning to a new pastor. From his relevant and inspiring sermons to updating the church constitution and membership records, and holding pastoral transition classes, Rev. McDaniel demonstrated a love and compassion for Second and the challenges ahead.

A search committee was formed in the Fall of 2014 to recruit a new pastor. The committee was chaired by the Honorable Judge Curtis Collier, with Deacon Eric Payne serving as the vice-chair. Other members of the committee included Church Clerk Francine Thomas Brown, Dr. Sandra Hardin Clark, Emani Crumsey (youth representative), Roslyn V. Hurt, Geraldine Parks, Larry Rowe, and Angela B. Sims, Esq. After prayerful consideration and a thorough vetting process, the committee made its recommendation to

the body.

In June 2015, the REV. DR. ERNEST L. REID, JR. was called as the twenty-first pastor of Second. Dr. Reid, a native of Suffolk, Virginia, previously served as pastor of the Olive Branch Baptist Church, Portsmouth, Virginia for nine years and at Zion Baptist Church, Reading, Pennsylvania for three years. Dr. Reid, his wife, the former Sherelle Harris of Richmond, Virginia and their two sons, Ernest III and Noah, relocated to Chattanooga to begin a new chapter in their lives and in the history of Second Baptist. Dr. Reid was installed as pastor on Sunday, October 18, 2015.

Dr. Reid believes that community and civic involvement are vital in the work of "Kingdom Building." He further believes Second is called to be *"Real, Relevant and Rooted for the cause of Jesus Christ."* As one who has an appreciation for technology, he embraces its use in connecting with believers, and non-believers, through social media, and other tools to reach people where they are. His sermons and bible study lectures consistently reflect his commitment to making the Word relevant and the worship experience meaningful. His appeal spans the scope of intergenerational families, from adolescents, to middle age and seniors. Former and inactive members are returning, baptisms are up and new converts are consistently increasing. The Reid's arrival has sparked a Renaissance and excitement that has blessed the church with welcomed growth and revitalization.

During the long history of the church, there have been many ministers who have assisted in its worship life. Among them are the Reverends Eldridge L. Pope, John B. Turner, Sam Washington, W. M. Robinson, William Culberson, J. R. Moore, David Moore, O. B. Brown, Amos Finley, E. L. Spratling, John Alton Allen, James C. Wyche, I. J. Jordan, W. L. Williams, A. E. Pierre and Samuel Jenkins.\*

Among those who currently serve as assistants to the pastor are the Reverends Darnell Baker, Richard Ervin, Grant Harris, Ronald Harris, Frank Jones, Eric Kennedy, John Perry, Jr. and Lee Roy Stewart. Locally and nationally, Second has nurtured other sons serving in the ministry, some of whom have or currently serve as under-shepherd their own congregations:

- The Reverend Tommy Bester, Jackson, TN
- The Reverend Louis Brooks,\* Chattanooga, TN
- The Reverend James Cantrell, Cincinnati, OH
- The Reverend Gerry Davis, Chattanooga, TN
- The Reverend Arthur Eberhardt,\* San Francisco, CA
- The Reverend Robert Freeman, Chattanooga, TN
- The Reverend Cornelius Ford, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
- The Reverend Shepherd Harkness, Oberlin, OH
- The Reverend Grant Harris, Chattanooga, TN
- The Reverend Gordon Humphrey,\* Chicago, IL

- The Reverend Isaac Mullins, Thomasville, GA
- The Reverend Alfred Williams, \* Philadelphia, PA
- The Reverend Calvin White, Chattanooga, TN

(Note: \* Deceased)

As we reflect on our rich history we do so with a deep sense of thanksgiving and enlightenment from whence we have come. In so doing, we look to the future with an abiding faith and a prayer for continued guidance as we strive to meet the challenge of our church's motto ~ “. . . to be and do what God desires us to be and do.”