

# Who We Are

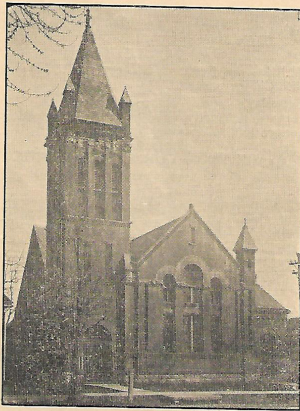


## Our History

### THE PARAGRAPH.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, MURFREESBORO, TENN.

SUNDAY, APRIL 9, 1917



|                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| AUSTIN CROUCH         | Pastor              |
| DR. A. J. JAMISON     | Clerk               |
| S. M. CRICK           | Treasurer           |
| C. H. BYRN            | Supt. Sunday School |
| H. H. WILLIAMS        | Chairman of Deacons |
| MISS VIOLET GROSS     | Organist            |
| MISS MARY LOU BEESLEY | Pastor's Secretary  |

On June 9, 1843, a small band of sixteen Baptists met at the James Franklin Fletcher Schoolhouse for the purpose of organizing a Baptist Church. The Reverend Robert Boyte Howell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Nashville, delivered the inaugural sermon. Burrell Gannaway, John Molloy, and James Fletcher were elected as the first deacons. The group asked Joseph Haywood Eaton to serve as the first pastor of the church. While serving as pastor of the church, Reverend Eaton also served as the first president of Union University.

By the advent of the Civil War, the church was meeting at the corner of South Spring Street and Sevier Street. Following the Battle of Stones River in late December, 1863, the Federal army took over the church building, removed the pews, and converted it into a hospital for the wounded soldiers. During the Reconstruction Period, the church grounds were used as a campground for freed slaves who came through Murfreesboro. Eventually, First Baptist Church gave the Sevier Street property to ex-slaves to be used for a new church. This was the beginning of First Baptist Church East Castle Street, a predominantly African-American church, with whom our congregation

today enjoys a warm friendship and loving partnership. In the 1870s, the congregation moved to a new building in the 300-block of East Main Street. It was in this building that the Tennessee Baptist Convention was formed on April 10, 1874. Whether through local on-the-ground missions, or through cooperative efforts with other churches, conventions, and fellowships, First Baptist Church enthusiastically continues the tradition of sharing the word and love of Christ.

In need of a new structure, the congregation moved in 1920 to its present location at 200 E. Main Street, and invested in the construction of a new Greek-Revival style building. The foundation, vertical columns, and classical roofline are featured on our church logo and symbolize for today's congregation a steadfast reliance on God.

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Like most of the nation, First Baptist Church faced financial difficulties during the Great Depression. When the church could no longer meet payments on their outstanding bonds, the saddened congregation watched as their building was sold at auction on October 14, 1936. Pastor Leland Sedberry arrived in 1937 and initiated what would today be called a stewardship campaign. The church gave and saved their funds until they were able to re-purchase their building on December 6, 1941. A few of our dear members still remember this time in the life of First Baptist, while the resulting heritage of stewardship, giving, and financial responsibility remains a source of pride for the entire congregation.

The latter half of the 20th Century was a time of energy and growth for First Baptist Church. We expanded our campus, constructed new education buildings and a Christian Life Center, and worked to spread the word and love of Christ by planning, planting, watering, and growing mission churches in Rutherford County and beyond. These churches include Midland Baptist Church, Smyrna Baptist Church, Westgate Baptist Church, Southeast Baptist Church, Westwood Baptist Church, New Life Laotian Baptist Church, Northside Baptist Church, Murfreesboro Community Church, Calvary Baptist Church, Cannon Community Church, Fellowship Baptist Church in Saline, Michigan, and Harvest Baptist Church in Clinton, Illinois. These years also marked an era of new inclusion, as First Baptist Church hired its first female minister in August, 1990, and ordained its first female deacon in December, 1991.



Under the leadership of Dr. Mike Smith and Dr. Noel Schoonmaker in the first 20 years of the 21st Century, First Baptist Church has cultivated a warm hospitality that extends outside the walls of our buildings and into the broader community. FBC welcomed faith communities from across Murfreesboro to the One Community Prayer Vigil on the eve of a white supremacist rally, taking a stand against senseless hate in favor of the unifying love of Christ. This deeply missional church leads an annual trip to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota to minister to the Oglala Sioux people, opens its facilities to homeless neighbors on freezing nights, and continues to engage in a variety of loving mission work locally, regionally, and internationally.