



VERSAILLES FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

150 YEAR HISTORY OVERVIEW

Beginnings

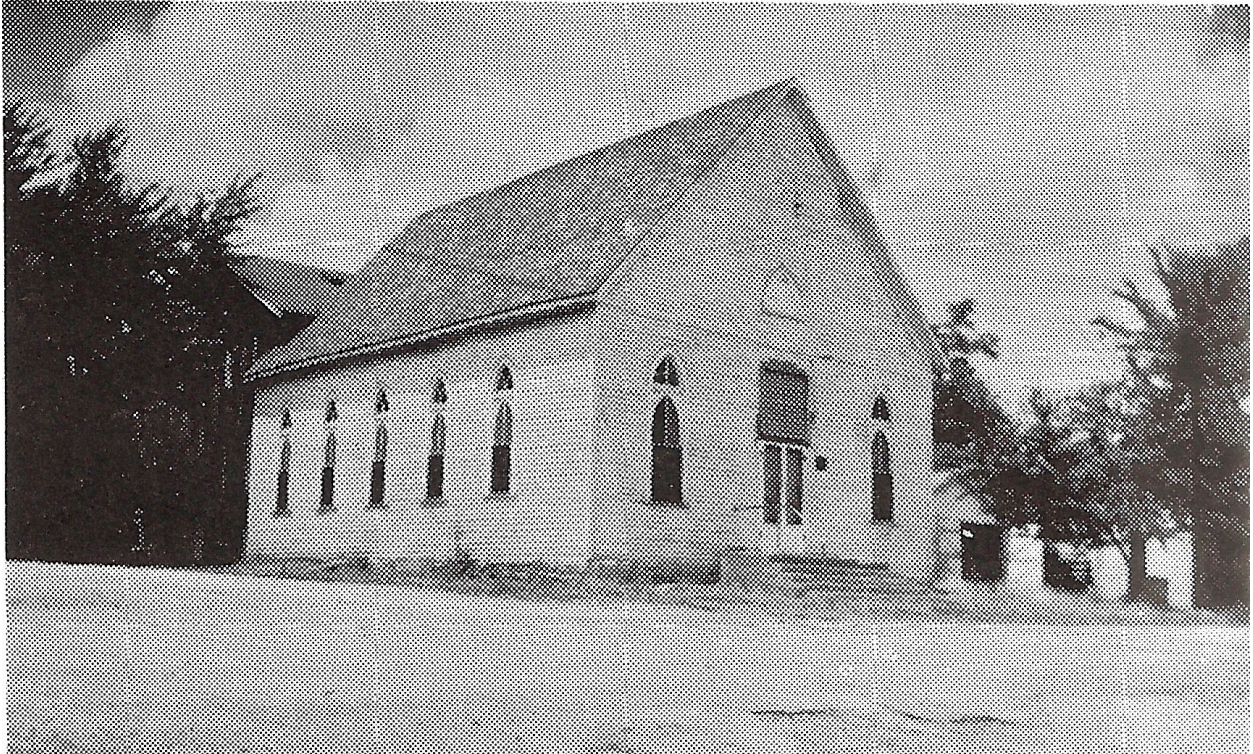
There were 16 charter members who began this church in 1868, three men and thirteen women. Those sixteen members called Rev. J. B. Box as their first pastor. He was a native Missourian and a pioneer preacher. They met about where the current Methodist church is now, for approximately one year. Then two of the charter members, Carrie and Josephine Coleman, purchased a log cabin that was used for Sunday School and worship services until the first church building was built between 1877-1879. The first service there was July 19, 1879. Other churches used our building to hold their church services until they built their own churches. In 1886 The Christian Church of Versailles held meetings here once a month. They even held a six week revival here. In 1888 the Episcopal Church of Versailles was organized and held meetings here once a month. In 1890 an organization called the Church of God met once a month. Then in 1891 a group of Presbyterians met and organized as the First Presbyterian Church Versailles. The following celebrations have been observed through the years: Semi-Centennial, 60th Anniversary, 70th Anniversary, 75th Anniversary 80th Anniversary, 95th Anniversary, 100th Anniversary, and 125th Anniversary. The 80th anniversary and the last services in the old church were on June 27th 1948. It took two years to build the new building and on April 2, 1950, the present building was dedicated.

Our church went through the war of WWI for the 50th anniversary, WWII for the 75th anniversary and Viet Nam, for the 100th anniversary. It closed its doors during the cholera epidemic in 1873, the Spanish influenza in 1918, and polio in 1946.

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Morgan County Court House—Versailles, Missouri, Built in 1844 and destroyed by fire at the time of the big Versailles fire, March 13, 1887. Our Church met here from may 16, 1869 until July 19, 1879.



Our first church building, built during 1877 to 1879. First meeting held in this building July 19, 1879. Dedicated in 1881 with Rev. Manley J. Breaker preaching the Dedication sermon. Our last meeting in this building June 27, 1948.



Auditorium Erected in 1879
Educational Building 1929



Tweedie Building—Our church home from July 5, 1948 until April 2, 1950.



Our current building was dedicated in 1950.

Original Church Covenant

As we trust we have been brought by divine grace to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the influence of his spirit to give ourselves up to him, so we do now solemnly covenant with each other that God enabling us we will walk together in brotherly love; that we will exercise a Christian care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully warn, rebuke and admonish one another as the case shall require; that we will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor omit the great duty of prayer, both for ourselves and for others; that we will participate in each other's joys, and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy, to bear each other's burdens and sorrows; that we will earnestly endeavor to bring up such as may be under our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; that we will seek divine aid to enable us to walk circumspectly and watchfully in the world; denying ungodliness and every worldly lust; that we will strive together for the support of a faithful evangelical ministry among us; that we will endeavor, by example and effort, to win souls to Christ; and through life amidst evil report and good report seek to live to the Glory of Him who hath called us out of Darkness into His Light.

Selected Historical Information

Pastors

At the time of the 125th celebration there had been 41 pastors who served at First Baptist Church and 70 deacons through the years. The list of pastors is as follows:

J. B. Box	1868-1869	Robert H. Harris	1870-1871	J.B. Box	1872
J.K. Godby	1873-1875	W.H. Kim	1876	B.F Taylor	1877-1878
Daniel Horn	1879-1880	W.H. Gibony	1881	J.S. Price	1881-1883
S.M. Victor	1884	No Pastor	1885	Dr. John Letts	1886-1887
L.N. Berry	1888-1889	E.M. Lumpkin	1890	T.W. Tate	1891
E.T. Shelton	1892	W.C. Driver	1893-1895	D.C. Peters	1896-1897
Edward James	1898-1901	No Pastor	1902	C.N. White	1903-1908
A.R. Foster	1909-1911	H.S. Thornhill	1912-1916	G.E. Barnum	1917-1918
G.N. Neafus	1919-1920	J.C. Cook	1921-1922	F.C. Richards	1921-1926
H.S.Thornhill	1927-1928	B.F. Kennedy	1929-1936	L..G. Christian	1936-1941
R.H. Nolte	1942-1943	Willard Bright	1944-1948	Dr. Alexander Best	1948-1953
Lloyd Johnson	1953-1959	Charles Sexton	1959-1966	Robert Stokes	1966-1969
Archie Warren	1969-1973	James Hagan	1974-1978	Joe Acuff	1979-1984
Stephen Hewitt	1985-1990	Dr. T.J. Fortner Sr.	1990-1995	Dr. Todd Forman	1995-2016

The current pastor is Dr. Chris Bass who began in 2017.

Records

In the centennial history book it was mentioned that many records had been lost. The business meeting minutes from 1868 to 1896 have been put on microfilm and are stored at Columbia University Historical department. The centennial book and a few other paper records are stored at the Rolla Historical department. Our record room in the church has only the minutes from the last quarter of 1962 to 1997, and financial records for about five years or so. There was also a small box with several membership record books. Many of our later records now are computerized and can be accessed on the church computer.

Mission Work

From 1962-1997 the Church sponsored the Royal Ambassador program, the Girls Auxiliary, ACTEENS and Sunbeams. There was a Brotherhood program as well as a Women's Missionary Union program. The missions programs placed Home Life magazine in Doctor's offices, and in barber and beauty shops around Versailles. One of the classes started a coat closet for the needy. There were different visitation programs, music programs, outreach programs, and revivals. Guest speakers were brought in at times to speak to the membership about different types of missions and outreach. Funds were solicited for support of local missions. The church sent funds to Gravois Mills First Baptist Church to help support them, as well as 2nd Baptist Church to support them. The church worked hard to be a mission minded church and help wherever there was a need. In 2010 the church voted to begin the AWANA program and partnered with Trinity Southern Baptist Church for two years. The third year the program met at Calvary Baptist Church and was staffed by members from both churches. Both Trinity and Calvary have chosen to pursue other programs, so for the past two years the program has been held at FBC and staffed by FBC members.

During the 1960's, FBC continued to send financial support to missions in Iowa and Kansas and to Second Baptist Church of Versailles. They also donated used hymnals to Second Baptist Church and to Kidwell Nursing Home. Financial assistance was also given to Freedom church to help them secure a legal title to the land and building. (The Freedom Church was organized in 1844 and named United Baptist Church of New Hope, and belonged for a while to the Concord Association then changed to the Lamine Association. In 1845 it was renamed Freedom Church. The permanent building was completed in 1874 and the Freedom Cemetery was established shortly thereafter. The minutes prior to 1900 also include investigations of improper conduct by members which often led to expulsion from the church. The ante-bellum congregation also included many African-American members presumably slaves as nine "colored brethren" were listed as members in 1854. The actual church sat just over the line in Maries county, but was listed in Miller county records and mostly Miller county residents are buried in the cemetery. Other records say it was near Versailles in Morgan County even though the history and statistics are the same, so it is talking about the same church. The church was abandoned years ago.

By The Numbers

In August of 1969 the ACP report listed 11 baptisms, 18 additions, 12 deaths and 10 lost. Brotherhood enrollment was 24, and Sunday school enrollment was 442 with an average attendance of 275, (These totals probably included 2nd Baptist Church.) Training Union enrollment was 137 with an average attendance of 76. There were two revival meetings held. There was one mission operated by the church. Resident membership was 561 and non-resident members were 184 for a total of 745.

In the 1970's, the church discontinued the support to the Iowa churches. Support was given instead to the Carbondale Baptist Church, Gravois Mills Baptist church, and to Freedom church. In 1979 the resident membership was 479 and non-resident members 201 for a total of 680. Sunday school enrollment was 246 with an average attendance of 180. Training Union enrollment was 96 with an average attendance of 55. Music enrollment was 66 with an average attendance of 18. WMU enrollment was 41 and Brotherhood enrollment was 27. VBS enrollment was 97. Ninety-six members left FBC in 1978 and established Calvary Baptist Church which exists today just west of Versailles on Hwy. 52. The Cooperative Program giving reached its peak at 28%.

The 1980's was a decade of continued changes in the church. The tradition of the Valentine's Day Sweetheart Banquet was established and continues until the present time. The missions programs continued and began outreach to the Kidwell Nursing Home and the Sheltered Workshop. There were several pastors during this time. In 1983 fifty members transferred their membership to Trinity Southern Baptist Church. The 1989 ACP report showed seven baptisms and fifteen other additions. There were 27 lost. The resident membership was 326 and non-resident membership was 225 for a total of 551. The cooperative giving was at 9% and the associational giving was at 3.5%. The Sunday school enrollment was 256 and the average attendance was 120. VBS enrollment was 105. Church training enrollment was 102 with an average attendance of 37. The Music enrollment was 91 with an average attendance of 20. WMU enrollment was 48 and Brotherhood enrollment was 15.

Many improvements were made to both the church building and the parsonage during the 1990's. The church obtained a Disaster Relief Trailer. The Apple Festivals began and FBC participated by having a float in the parade and by giving out free coffee from the Disaster Relief Trailer. The church entered the computer technology age by purchasing a computer for the office in the late 1990's. The 1999 ACP report listed resident membership of 259 and non-resident membership of 250 for a total of 609. There were 16 baptisms and 9 other additions. There were 2 deaths and an unknown number lost. The Sunday school enrollment was 124 with an average of 83. Discipleship Training enrollment was 40 and Music enrollment was 38. The WMU enrollment was 15 and Brotherhood was 10.

The 2010's again saw changes in church focus. In 2012 the church became involved in the Acts 1:8 ministries program and began to focus more on missions again. The AWANA program was started and continues until this time. Both men's and women's Bible studies began and have been very successful. Major maintenance was required on the brick exterior of the church building. The church began considering safety issues such as fire escapes from the second story, emergency lighting, and intruder safety planning. The church began participating in the 3MT project to do painting and other repairs for church members.