

The History of FBC Crowley

Beginning

At the Tenth Annual Session of the Tarrant County Baptist Association in 1896 the newly formed Crowley Baptist Church petitioned for membership. Rev. G. W. Green was pastor. The church had a membership of twenty-seven. Since the association required a congregation to prove themselves an established church, the petition was approved and membership granted at the Eleventh Annual Session. In 1897 from the report of the county missionary this statement was made: "The Crowley Baptist Church is now able to undertake for herself and is trying to build." Land was purchased. In the Tarrant County records at the Court House in Fort Worth it is recorded that on September 28, 1897, two deacons of the Crowley Baptist Church entered into an agreement with Gilbert L. Shaw for the purchase of Lot 11, Block 16, of the town of Crowley, in the County of Tarrant. The sum of \$12.50 was given as a down payment with the promise to pay a like sum one year from date.

The church began meeting in their new auditorium in 1899 with Rev. J. R. Goode as pastor. Membership was now thirty. The original oak pulpit from this auditorium was saved and is still used on special occasions today. Total gifts that year were \$110.25 and the pastor was paid \$105.00. Sunday School was organized with an enrollment of thirty-five in 1901. By 1903 the membership had grown to thirty-eight and by 1907 was up to seventy members.

Mrs. Ada Teeter was the first recorded WMU president in 1910. The women sent \$17.65 to the Buckner Orphans Home. Rev. L. L. Johnson was pastor.

The 25th session of the Tarrant Baptist Association met at Crowley Baptist Church on August 23 and 24, 1911. One of the messengers was Laura Teeter who became Mrs. John McCarter. The church acquired a new (second-hand) piano which Mrs. McCarter played for thirty-five years as church pianist. She was our oldest member when she passed away in 1989 at the age of ninety-seven.

The Second Twenty-five Years

The church was repaired and remodeled in 1920 with Rev. A. J. Gross as pastor. About this time the pastor's salary was increased to \$40 a month half-time from \$15 a month quarter-time.

In 1923 the Ku Klux Klan paid a surprise visit, entering one door, giving money to the pastor, and marching out the back door without a word, to the amazement of all. Thankfully that is in our past. Rev. A. H. Mahaffey was the pastor.

In 1924, at the age of nine, Maxine Moore Roundtree was baptized at Crowley Baptist Church. She continued her membership and service in this church for seventy-one years until her death in 1995.

The auditorium was remodeled and electric lights were added in 1925. Rev. G. L. Johnson was pastor.

In July of 1927 the records from 1900-1910 were lost or destroyed and the lighting system was also destroyed by fire in an attempted burning of the church. A reward was offered but no arrest or conviction was ever made. Rev. C. S. Cadwallader became pastor and the Baptist Young People's Union was organized in 1927 also. Vernon Wilshire was the first president. Mearl Hewitt (Wilshire) (later Mrs. Bill Bing) was in his class and they were married in 1930 by Rev. Cadwallader. She became a church member in 1923 and was a Sunday School Teacher for more than sixty years.

In 1934 the church called Rev. J. W. Marshall as first full-time pastor. Membership had grown to one hundred forty. Mrs. Howard (Betty Race) Horn, then about ten years of age, remembered how angry this made her since she would no longer be able to go to church with her friends that attended the Methodist and Presbyterian churches on the Sundays no services were held at her church. Mrs. Horn passed away in December 1990. Our educational building on Eagle Drive was named in her honor after more than forty-five years of service.

In 1940 Forrest Stoker was the first Training Union Director. Mrs. Earl Owen was WMU president and the pastor was Rev. E. W. Massey. In 1941 gas heating was installed in the church auditorium and a new piano was bought.

In 1945 a church parsonage was built and water was piped to the baptistery. Rev. Glen Crofts came as pastor and Mrs. Roy LaFavor was WMU president.

The Half-Century Mark

In 1947 Army barracks were moved to the Crowley Baptist Church property on Tarrant Street and remodeled for educational space. Dedication for the remodeled building was held February 8, 1948. Mrs. H. F. (Marie) Stevens and Mrs. Howard (Betty) Horn had fond memories of helping to remodel the barracks. The third Vacation Bible School was held with eighty-one enrolled and an average of seventy-nine attending.

In 1950 Crowley Baptist Church became incorporated as First Baptist Church, Crowley, Texas, under the laws of the State of Texas. Appointment of the building committee during the pastorate of Rev. Don Rose in 1949-50 laid the groundwork for the construction of a new auditorium. The designing of the building was by J. G. Bagley after Dr. John Howell came as pastor in 1950. He served for six years. The building plan was adopted by the church. The fifty-three year old frame was torn down on October 28,

1950, to make way for the new building. Financing was a matter of much prayer and concern for the church family. The building fund was \$711.00 when they started. From July 1950 to September 1951 a total of \$14,211.54 was given. The remainder was borrowed. The total cost of the building and furnishings was \$26,859.33. The first service in the new building was July 22 and the homecoming and dedication was held on October 14, 1951.

Joe Novak came as Music and Education Director in 1954. Mrs. W. S. Horn (mother of Howard "Ziggy" Horn) was WMU president that year. The first recorded Brotherhood president was J. D. Meador in 1955 and Mrs. John Howell was WMU president.

Sometime during the 50's dry weather caused crops, cattle and money to be scarce. It seemed the only thing to grow plentifully was sweet potatoes. As was the custom, WMU members always brought "pot-luck" to each meeting. One particular memory was when eight ladies were uncovering dishes for lunch, and there were eight (you guessed it) sweet potato dishes. Rev. Gordon Walker became pastor in 1957 and Sally Henderson became WMU president. Sally is still serving in Adult VI at the present time. (2016)

In 1960, Rev. W. C. Stephens became pastor and an office building was added to the Tarrant Street church property with dedication in 1961. In 1963 the church library was started with Mrs. George (Ada) Teeter as librarian. By 1964 there were 1,000 books catalogued. Morris Cunningham was Chairman of Deacons.

In 1965 a new Educational Building was completed under the pastorship of Dr. Bailey Smith. This large two-story building made history in 1980 because it was moved from North Tarrant Street to our new church location on South Eagle Drive. The building, later called the Youth Building, was destroyed by fire in Nov., 2015. Also in 1980 Mrs. Bill (Mearl Hewitt Wilshire) Bing was WMU president. Dr. Smith married the Bings that year. In 1966 Rev. James Ingram came as pastor. Sunday School Superintendent was Bob Duvall, Music Director was F. B. Blair, and Mrs. Mack Lee was WMU president.

Rev. Bruce McLaughlin came as pastor in 1968 and at this time the church began having two Sunday Schools and two worship services on Sunday mornings because of such rapid growth. It was stated that attendance had increased forty percent from 1967 to 1968. Jerry Sanders was Music and Youth Director. In 1970 the Music and Youth Director was Lonnie Jones. Educational Director was Adam Hall, and Lois Miles was Church Secretary.

Seventy-five Years and Counting

Dr. William H. White became pastor in 1971. At this time Mike Beagh became Music and Youth Director. Mrs. Robert (Shirley) Booker became Church Secretary and Truman Parker was Educational director who was instrumental in beginning the tradition of "White Christmas". In 1973 the youth went on the first summer mission trip to Uvalde,

Texas, with twenty young people and nine adults. The Uvalde trips continued through 1984. On August 1, 1973, after being closed a few years the library was reopened with Mrs. Bill (Wanda) Rentzell as Librarian, where she served for twenty-seven years.

Even with the additional services on Sunday mornings the need to expand again was realized. In November 1973, the church began a program called "Building For Today's Challenge" to encourage members to give sacrificial gifts weekly for the next three years to provide funds for the expansion needs. Since there was not enough land at the Tarrant Street location, in 1974 the church voted to buy 9.3 acres of land in the Southwestern corner of Crowley (now 400 South Eagle Drive). Pastor Bill White was instrumental in naming the street at this new location. This same year David Venable came as Music Director, Richard Spearman became Director of Youth and Marilyn Slack became church pianist and continues to serve in her 42nd year in 2016. Evelyn Pipes became our volunteer Director of Mission Ministries on December 14, 1974 where she continued to serve until Dec., 2014 for forty years. George Parker began as Director of Missions in 2015. In August, 2005 Evelyn became President of Tarrant Baptist Association WMU. She served a second term of office until January, 2007. In 1975 Jonathan Payne came as Music Director, Mrs. Tom (Elaine) Jarrett was WMU president, and Richard Spearman's duties were changed to Educational Director. Paula Spells became church organist where she served until 1993, when Mrs. Carl (Sue) Jennings became organist.

A new tradition began in December, 1975 called "White Christmas" where mission offerings were laid at the altar manger scene, family by family. Our church celebrated the Nation's Bicentennial on July 4, 1976, with an old fashioned dinner, special music, speakers, drama and members in costumes. The activities were outstanding and memorable. Mike Reeves came as Educational Director and Steve Stanley became Youth Director.

In September the church approved building committee plans for the new facilities on Eagle Drive. Plans were drawn by George Peterson, architect. A sign was erected on the new site. Sunday, November 21, 1976, ground breaking ceremonies were held there. Construction began and the first service was held in the new facilities on January 15, 1978. Total cost of the new church was \$624,510.36. Dedication services were March 5 under the leadership of the pastor, Dr. Bill White, with special guest speaker Dr. John Howell, former pastor.

The first new staff member in the new building was Clea Herring, Church Secretary. She served from January 1, 1978, until Linda Parker became Church Administrative Assistant January 6, 2013. Clea continues to serve as our church Clerk today.(2016) The baby grand piano was given to our church by John Ikerd in 1978. The stained glass window over the baptistery was given to our church by Mrs. Nell Wadsworth and was

first placed under the steeple at the Tarrant Street location. It was then incorporated into the plans for the new church and moved to the Eagle Drive location.

On Sunday morning January 7, 1979, Elmer Thompson (Wanda Rentzell's father), our building superintendent, arrived to find a flooded sanctuary. Due to severe cold weather, two pipes had burst and three quarters of the building was under water. While some members proceeded with morning services at the Crowley Middle School (now H. F. Stevens), others were mopping water. Damage was estimated at \$10,000. Kent Farris came as Educational Director.

Church growth continued and in April 1980 the two-story educational building on Tarrant Street was de-bricked, cut in half, and moved to its new foundation at 400 South Eagle Drive, while TV cameras, reporters and hundreds of sightseers watched. This was a history making event because of the building's size. It is said that Dr. White rode on top as it was being moved.

In December 1980 Dr. Bill White resigned. After nine years as pastor, he had served longer than any pastor in our church's history. That same year Ron Kendrick came as Youth Director and Nathan Corbitt, Music Director. The Dave Walton family made a gift of a three-octave set of hand bells to the church, which is still enjoyed today.

August 16, 1981, Dr. Eugene Stark came as pastor and Blaine Hollub as Music Director. On January 31, 1982, Jim Wilson became Educational Director and on June 6th, Cliff Sims came as Youth Director. The church family had been in a "Together We Build" program for three years and on July 25, 1982, the newly remodeled educational building was dedicated debt free at approximately \$105,000.

In 1983 Sunday School enrollment was 1,015 and average attendance 393. Robert Garrett was Youth Director, Becky Robinson WMU president and Rick Adams became Educational Director in February 1985. At the evening service on July 14, Paul Magyar, our Music Director, was ordained to the gospel Ministry.

Glen Chapman came as Music Director in 1986 and Dr. Stark resigned on July 6, going to First Baptist Church in Enid, Oklahoma. On July 23, Ron Malone, a church member and seminary student, took a packed church van full of clothes, hygiene kits, and a church offering of \$1,200 to Laredo, Texas, as a mission project. Because we are located near Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, it has been our privilege to serve with, minister to, and benefit from the talents of many seminary students through the years.

Dr. Gene Wilson came as pastor on April 5, 1987. A Long Range Planning committee was organized with fifteen members. Dave Paxton came as Minister to Youth in 1989 and Dr. Wilson resigned to go to California as Director of State Missions that year.

Transition to the New Century

In 1990, Dave Paxton led teenagers from First Baptist Church, Crowley, to participate in the first ever "See You at the Pole" prayer meeting. The idea originated in a Burleson teenager's heart. With other local churches, Crowley First Baptist Church participated that first year. The movement of students praying annually at their schools' flag poles is now worldwide.

Dr. Carl Jennings, Jr., became our pastor in April 1990 where he served for twelve years. He resigned in 2002 to go to Southern Calvert Baptist Church, Lusby, Maryland. In November of 1990, Charlie Bass became Minister of Administration and Education. Total membership in October was 1,347. During Dr. Jennings's pastorate, educational space was again needed and funds were short. No architect seemed affordable. As the committee began to meet to solve the space shortage they were about to start building temporary classrooms as funds could be raised, when a recently graduated architect student, Kent Griffin was invited by Charlie Bass to the meeting to help with questions. The idea of building permanently by sections was conceived. The money and time spent for temporary buildings could be saved!

In October the building and the finance Committees recommended to the church that we adopt a seven phase construction plan. Each phase would begin as finances became available. After the ground breaking ceremonies on April 21, 1991, the first section of the Betty Horn building was built. Two more sections were added in 1999 for additional educational space and landscaping was done.

On the first Sunday in June, 1991, Stan Ford came as Minister of Music. He later became Minister of Music and Administration, assuming administration responsibilities in April 1996. Also in 1991 the church history was researched by Jan Whisonant with input from a class at H. S. Stevens Middle School. Because of her efforts, an historical marker was approved and erected on our site. The dedication of that marker took place on August 25, 1991, at our Ninety-fifth Anniversary service. The dedication service for the first phase of the Betty Horn Building was April 5, 1992, with local press and city Mayor Nancy Behrens and other officials in attendance. Funds were available before construction began. This same year twenty-eight young people and adults went to First Baptist Church in Manhattan, Illinois on a mission trip. Mike Brown was minister of Youth. Tom Jones became our custodian.

Many of our church members now volunteer at Crowley's House of Hope which started in 1994 by a combined effort of the city's churches to help the needy which previously had been done through food pantries and clothes closets of individual churches. Angus McKinley came as Minister to Youth in March 1994. His position was changed to Associate Pastor of Family Ministries in April 1996, as he assumed additional responsibilities of education and adult ministries. A new position for the first Director of

Preschool/Children Ministries was approved by the church. Karen Breedlove was accepted for the position. Richard Maas came as our first Minister of Counseling. Jeanette Copeland came in 1995 as director of Preschool/Children. The Library now had 3,950 books catalogued.

On October 29, 1995, a "Note Burning Service" was celebrated as the last payment on the buildings and land for the Eagle Drive Location was made. First Baptist Church was debt free!

At a church conference in March 1996, the members voted not to go into debt for the current capital improvement needs. On Mother's Day, Dr. Jennings announced that all the money had been received for a new organ and funds for roof repairs were complete. It is uncertain when the old organ was purchased, but by the end of July the new organ was bought and dedicated and a new roof had been put on the sanctuary. By the end of August, because of many hours of volunteer work and generous financial gifts, the top floor of the South Education Building had been renovated for the youth departments with a meeting room for the Youth Wednesday Worship and Outreach service. Also, a designated area for the Prayer Room was set up and furnished and a twenty-one passenger bus purchased—all with "Love Offerings." A donation of \$5,000 for the choir robe fund was received and new blue robes were purchased. Also given was \$5,000 for a new church marquee sign in memory of Howard "Ziggy" Horn and was placed on the north-east corner of the church near the historical marker. Sunday, August 18, 1996 was set for the culmination of the 100 days of our 100th year celebration and the beginning of a revival that we hoped would launch us into our new century. Dr. Baily Smith, a former pastor, returned as guest evangelist.

Craig Erb became Youth Minister from August 3, 1998, until August 1, 2003. After our 1996 100th anniversary celebration, the two-story South Education Building (later named Youth Building) was completely remodeled, upstairs and downstairs, painted, new carpet, two office rooms and appliances added for a full working (second) kitchen. Also a game room was equipped.

In January 1996, Charlie Bass left to become Associate Pastor/Minister of Education in Anchorage, Alaska. On August 6, 1996 Donna Roe served as Children's Director until June 2, 2002 when Kay Lewis came for one year. Steve Kretzer came as Minister of Education and Administration from May 23, 1999, until September 1, 2002, when he left to go to the Parkside Baptist Church, Denison, Texas, as Minister to Missions/ Senior Adults. Craig Erb became Youth Minister from August 3, 1998, until August 1, 2003 when he resigned to go to First Baptist Church in Bridgeport, Texas.

A quilt ministry, named FBC Quilters was started by Barbara Roundtree (Mrs. Terry) Martin and several other ladies as an outreach to our church members and the community in 1999. This self-supporting ministry continues today providing lap quilts to

home bound, seriously ill and new born babies in our nursery. A Quilt Show is held every year for Crowley and surrounding areas.

When Stan Ford resigned, David Whittington came in April 2001 as Minister of Music. David resigned in September 2002. Dr. Al Fasol, professor of Preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, was called as our Interim Pastor on February 3, 2002, and served for thirteen months at which time Dr. Joel McCoy was called as pastor on a snowy Valentine weekend in 2004.

Beginning in 2003, Chris McKinny served as our Senior Adult Intern during his 3 years while attending Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, graduating in December of 2006. He was instrumental in starting Game Night for senior adults. A seminary student, Matt Celoria, served as Music Director Supply from October 2003 to 2004, when he left after graduation for a full-time position in Mississippi. WOW (Women of the Word) was organized in 2003 by Pat Worrell. This combined all women's ministries under one umbrella. Kevin Caffy served as Youth Director from September 1, 2004 to January 15, 2006. Maurice Butler served as Adult Sunday School Director from 2004 to 2006. Mike Houston served as our interim Music Director from August 2004 to September 2005 when Mark Burnett came to that position in September 2005 as our part-time Minister of Music. He resigned in 2013 to go to First Baptist in Shawnee, Oklahoma. Larry Clark became our church Organist October 3, 2004. Ken Bullock became part-time Adult Education Director, beginning 2005 until his retirement in 2015. We needed a Children's Director at this time so Kelly Watts came in October 2005, and in December of 2006 became Mrs. Drew Dowden. She then resigned so they could prepare themselves to become foreign missionaries.

4.05 acres of land adjacent to the South border of the church property was purchased in 2005 for \$90,000 and was paid for in a year with generous donations and much prayer from the congregation and without a fundraiser. It was dedicated in July, 2005. This brings the size of the church grounds to 12.35 acres.

Matt Winn served as interim Youth Director from March 1 to July, 2006 and in January, 2007 became part-time staff member, serving as Creative Ministries Assistant for the church. Mark Murdock came as Minister of Students in September of 2006. Joanna Warren came as Preschool Director on October 15, 2006. A separate children's church was begun for 4 year olds through 2nd graders in January 2007 and continues today under her leadership. In 2006, a sign saying "First Baptist Church, with letters measuring 36 inches in size were installed outside on the second level of the sanctuary building and lighting was added.

In 2012, as children's attendance began to grow, a second staff member called Children's Minister was added as Jenny Everwine served from October 14, 2007 until October 10, 2012. Under her leadership Kids Hope USA was begun for at-risk school

children in partnership with Bess Race elementary school located in our church neighborhood. Beverly Warren has been director for this ministry since 2012.

Keith Warren was hired on October 14, 2012 as Youth Director. On June 8, 2014 he became Youth, Education and Administration Director. Dr. Ed Ferlazzo has served as our Music and Worship Minister from April 22, 2013 until 2016 directing choir, Dinner Theater and other interesting productions. Over the next few years the sanctuary was re-carpeted, stage area completely remodeled, lighting rewired, bathrooms and Preschool and Children's area painted and remodeled, and new sound, lighting and audio/visual equipment added.

Dr. McCoy began his pastorate in March of 2004 and resigned in Jan., 2016. With new interest in gas drilling in our area, the church leased its mineral rights to Chesapeake. Rights for laying pipe along the west side of the land was also purchased by this company.

Through the efforts of the Church Development Committee the church hired architect Lawrence Foxworth to design a Master Plan for new buildings which would be accomplished in five phases on our larger piece of land, now 12.35 acres. The church adopted this proposal and a Building committee was elected. Again the church was planning for growth.

On May 14, 2008, the church broke ground for a new Community Life Center which was completed and dedicated in August 2009. The new center (called CLC) was attached to the Betty Horn Building and offered additional classroom space which completed the seven phases to the Betty Horn, in addition to a gym/all-purpose area and commercial kitchen facilities at a cost of \$2.4 million on two loans. The smaller loan has been paid as of August 2016 and the larger loan is over half paid. Soon after the CLC dedication in 2009 the church began an Upward Basketball program which has attracted many children and their families. The church also sponsors a Fall Festival and a Spring Fling prior to Easter to bring children and their parents to our facilities. Another ministry called MOMS attracts and supports moms of all ages.

On November 16, 2014, an accidental fire caused by faulty wiring in the furnace in the Youth Building completely destroyed that two-story building. Our insurance paid for the cost of rebuilding and its contents. The new Youth Building in its new location was dedicated on July 17, 2016.

In March 2016 the church voted to use the Intentional Interim Process/Training, developed by the BGCT (Baptist General Convention of Texas) so that churches might better match their characteristics with a new pastor's beliefs and characteristics. Dr. Pat Correll became our Intentional Interim pastor on May 16, 2016 to lead us in our search.

Celebrating and Looking Forward

August 23, 2016, is the 120th Anniversary of our church. The theme of “Reaching Generations” truly characterizes our first century and twenty plus years.

This is a brief glimpse of our past history, a story of how God has led us—history does not end with the past. What we do in the future is what matters. Let us continue to make history in Crowley by reaching generations to come.

REFERENCES

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Interviews and writings by:

Ila Cunningham Clela Herring
Betty Horn Laura McCarter
Wanda Rentzell Marie Stevens
Ada Teeter Bertha White
Barbara Martin Sallie Henderson

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Whisonant Research Paper for FBC Historical Marker

History collected and edited 1996 by: 100th Anniversary Committee
History Updated, next ten years, January, 2007; Second Update, Aug. 2016

Committee Members:

Wanda Rentzell Ed Evans
Clela Herring Delores Gilchrist
Annette Howard Janet Copeland
June Griffin, chair

Facts and dates in the history are reprinted as they were found in the documents and old programs. However a few inconsistencies seemed unavoidable and unexplainable.