

Church History



In 1956 the congregation of First Baptist Church, Linwood and Park, Kansas City, MO first had the leading to form an American Baptist Church in Kansas City North. There were a number of the congregation who lived north of the Missouri river and it was felt that the area was ripe for a mission church and had potential for growth. Thus together with the support of the Missouri Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Convention the concept materialized.

Initially a five-acre plot was purchased at Russell Road and North Garfield, but it did not prove satisfactory, so was sold and the present site was purchased for \$22,800. It was donated, free and clear, to the new congregation.

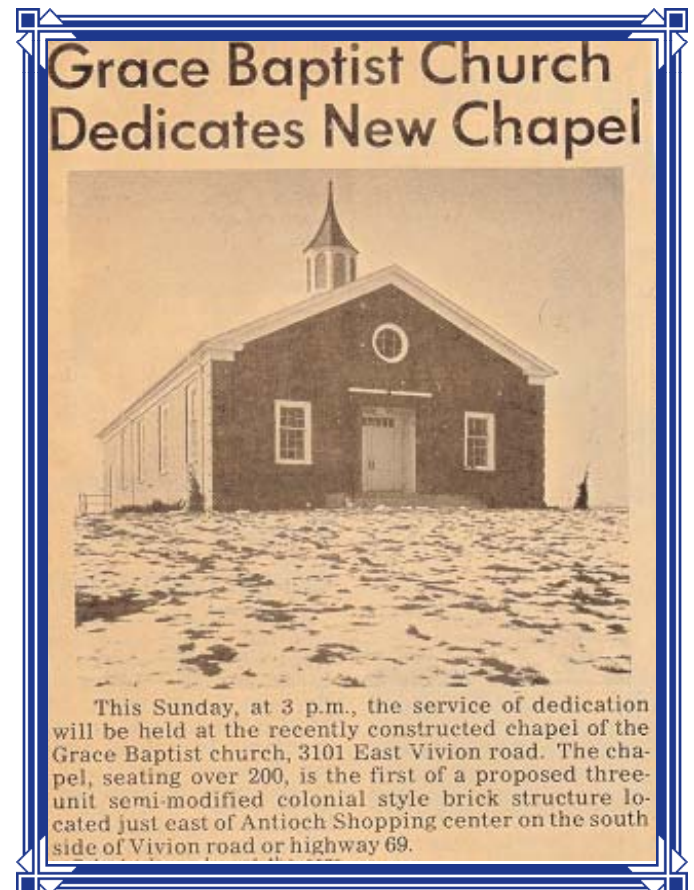
The first worship service of the congregation and friends was held on July 7, 1957 at 3:00 PM in an unfinished store in the Antioch Shopping Center. Dr. Robert Middleton, Pastor of First Baptist Church, conducted the service and introduced Dr. William Bostrom as the first minister of the mission church. On the following Sunday there were 7 people in attendance and during that month the average attendance was 19. There was also a Wednesday night prayer service. By February 1958 the average attendance was 49. Although the congregation of First Baptist Church had budgeted money to support the mission church, the young congregation was practically self-supporting from the start. It was during these early months that the name of Grace Baptist Church was chosen. On October 20, 1958 the congregation moved to the Golden Oaks School building at 3100 NE 46th Street.

In December 1957, Dr. Bostrom left. Dr. Fred Young, Professor at Central Baptist Seminary, served as Interim Pastor. In April 1958 the Rev. John Propert, who was a student at Central Baptist Seminary, assumed the student pastorate.

All the members were considered members of First Baptist Church until the charter for Grace Baptist Church was issued on July 13, 1965. The charter was recorded in the Clay County Recorder's Office in December 1966.

A women's mission circle was organized as Circle 16 of First Baptist Church and first met on April 29, 1958 and on the fourth Tuesday of each month thereafter. It became independent in the fall of 1961.

A Building Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Mr. M. L. Blessing. A three-unit master plan was developed and in April 1960 ground was broken for the first phase of the complex. This included the building of a sanctuary with full basement. Rev. Propert and Dr. Middleton conducted the ground-breaking ceremonies. Loans were obtained



Dispatch News, April 20, 1961

from First Baptist Church and the American Baptist Home Mission Society.

A search committee was formed and on September 25, 1960 , Rev. Probert preached his farewell sermon and on the following Sunday Rev. Harold McMullen assumed the full-time pastorate of Grace Baptist Church.



Members of the congregation helped in the finishing of the basement. Many gifts were received and appreciated. The chancel furniture, piano and organ were donated by the Married Couples Class of First Baptist Church. The first service in the new chapel was held on February 19, 1961. The basement had temporary moveable partitions for Sunday School classes.

Since some classes had to meet at the adjacent funeral home, the congregation felt the need for more permanent classroom space with bathrooms upstairs. A building council was formed under the chairmanship of Dr. Donald Fakhoury and a new master plan was developed. Financing was negotiated through the

American Baptist Extension Corporation (ABEC) and arrangements were made to pay off the existing loan with First Baptist Church and consolidate the loan with the ABHMS. Don Hollis, of Hollis and Miller architectural firm, was hired as the lead architect for the project. The construction consisted of a new Educational Wing situated to the northeast of the sanctuary with an adjoining narthex. The building has 5 classrooms, 2 bathrooms, pastor's office, secretaries' office and room for associate pastor. A baptistry was put in the sanctuary. The parking lots were north and south of the Educational wing with a new entrance to the property. The unit was dedicated on July 23, 1967.

Rev. Harold McMullen ended his pastorate in June 1968 and Rev. Tom Allen served as Interim Pastor for 11 months until the Rev. Dr. Onis G. Chapman was called. He served from June 1969 to June 1973.

Early in 1970 the Men's Brotherhood was organized. By May of that year they sponsored Boy Scout Troop #613. In July 1972 the membership had grown to 237. During the ensuing years the sanctuary was carpeted and air-conditioned and the debts were all paid off. All the sanctuary windows were changed to faceted stained glass.

Dr. Chapman ended his pastorate on June 24, 1973 and 3 months later (on September 3, 1973), the Rev. Dr. Harold L. Smith started his ministry. He served for over 16 years until April 15, 1990. Different Youth Ministers were hired from the student body of Central Baptist Seminary and Midwestern Baptist Seminary. Rev. Charles Newman (a member), became Associate Pastor in 1985 and served through 1986.

In 1980 a new Building Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Dr. Donald Fakhoury for the purpose of constructing a new educational wing. Ground breaking was on February 8, 1981 with Mantel and Teeter as architects. The construction was in front and to the west of the sanctuary tying all together with a large narthex/fellowship hall in front (north), kitchen,



women's and men's restrooms, mechanical equipment room, janitor's closet and 4 classrooms. The contractor was Mr. Drexel Noble. The building was dedicated on September 13, 1981.

In 1988 the organizational structure was changed from a multi board to a single board. The need for us to start a Mission Church in Platte County materialized that year and Rev. James Walden was called. The Church was started by a nucleus of members from Grace Baptist Church and was funded by pledges from our congregation, Alive in Mission and American Baptist Church Developers (ABCD) of the Great Rivers Region. They were called the Church of The Master, later to be called Rolling Hills Community Church. Their first service was held on April 30, 1989.

In April 1990, Dr. Harold Smith retired and Rev. Charles Newman became Interim Pastor. The Search Committee presented Rev. Ronald W. Bowen and he was called in October 1990. From 1990 through 1997 the Korean Church used our basement for their services. In December 1991 it was decided to start a Christian Day Care Center in our facility. After significant planning and preparation and remodeling of the East wing, it was opened on August 31, 1992, run by a Committee of Church members headed by Mrs. Marylou Reiter.

A mortgage burning was held on June 30, 1996. Mrs. Ellen Brown was called as Associate Pastor from September 1993 until June 1997.

Rev. Ronald Bowen left in October 1997 and Rev Ethel Mae Champ was called as Interim Pastor until February 7, 1999 when Rev. Michael Crane was called. He started his ministry on March 1, 1999 and left in May 2003. Rev. Harriet Buttry is currently the Interim Pastor.

Grace Baptist Church has been a very active church involved in many local, city, state, regional and national activities. Members have served on and presided over Area V Boards, Great Rivers Region Boards, served on the ABC/USA General Board, National ABWM Board, American Baptist Assembly (Green Lake) Board, ABC/USA Foundation Board, Central Baptist Seminary Board and Ottawa University Board of Trustees and Bethel Neighborhood Center Board of Directors.



Through Church Women United, the ladies have been involved in assisting with birthday parties for the Mental Hospital in St. Joseph in the 60s and 70s. They have made and contributed clothes and funds, and worked at the Clay County Clothes Closet. The Circles and ABWM held parties and provided gifts and funds to the Bethel Neighborhood Center. They have supported the Samaritan's Purse, Crisis Pregnancy Center and other organizations. They started and supported an AB GIRLS group and raised funds each year for the Great Rivers Region Special Projects. They have faithfully contributed to White Cross and Love Gift.

The AB Men encouraged attendance at weekend conferences of Area V men and women. They sponsored Boy Scout Troop 613 and had a very active troop under the leadership of Mr. Bob Busch. The troop had one of the highest percentage of Eagle Scouts in the area. A few years ago the troop disbanded for lack of a supply of boys from a cub-scout troop. Also a few years ago, the Men's group disbanded, although the men have attended and followed carefully the national men's activities. There is a strong interest is starting up the group again.

Sunday School classes have sent children to camp through the City Union Mission and adopted needy families for Christmas and other times. They sponsored 2 Vietnamese families (Hanh and Thanh Nguyen in 1975 and Thuong Duc Nguyen and Yen Hung in 1980). They have been involved in feeding the homeless through Project Uplift and have also provided food and supplies for the organization. There are many other activities that the congregation has been involved in - too numerous to count.

The church raised funds to send Rev. Para Hal to his home in Nigeria to spend time with his family while he was a student at Midwestern Baptist Seminary. We have provided and continue to provide financial support and assisted members of our congregation when they have had special needs. We have raised funds to send our youth to camp, conferences and Green Lake. We collect food to deliver to Metropolitan Lutheran Ministries monthly and have supported the organization through the budget. We established and continue to support an active Christian day care center. We have contributed generously to the American Baptist Mission, in fact are in the top 10% givers in the country. At least 50 different members have been to conferences at Green Lake and quite a few go every year to



ABWM or Missions Conferences, or both. We send delegates to every Biennial. We have had Macedonian Ministries and revivals and later in 2003 have a revival scheduled with Dr. Jeffrey Johnson. We have a very active Adult Choir, Children's Choir and men's and women's ensembles and soloists. We have had cantatas twice a year as well as plays and skits. We have weekly Wednesday night dinners (except in summer when they are monthly) followed by Prayer meeting.

In 1960 we had 65 Charter Members. In 1994, at the Homecoming celebration we had 10 Charter Members and today there are 6 Charter Members still in the congregation.

Our youth have been involved in service projects at Camp Lake Benton, Children's Mercy Hospital and Bethel Neighborhood Center. They have walked and raised money for the CROP WALK, raised money for Trick or Treat for UNICEF and have been involved in The Clown Ministry at area Nursing Homes. The youth have taken two ski trips to Colorado, trips to the Kansas City Zoo, Worlds of Fun Christian Weekend and fun weekends at Area V Youth Retreats. They have had sleepovers, sponsored all-church prayer vigils, camped out at Watkins Mill and been to Spiritual Retreats at Tall Oaks and Presbyterian camps. Each year three to four attend American Baptist Camps. Many have been to Green Lake.



Throughout the history of Grace Baptist Church we have had professional youth/children's workers and are presently looking for one. Many adults have volunteered to provide spiritual growth for the youth.

Our pastors have been involved in the local Ministerial Alliance, an ecumenical group of ministers in the community, with the other American Baptist Churches in the area, and have been involved in pulpit exchanges. They have also been involved in Area and Regional board and other activities, which the congregation has encouraged.