

THE HISTORY OF BANNERTOWN BAPTIST CHURCH

By
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On October 22, 1906 the residents of Bannertown community met in Oak Grove School to discuss building a church. Old records state "the interest in having a church in our community was so strong that a considerable amount of money, approximately half of the cost of the building, was subscribed on the spot."

A Building Committee, consisting of James O. Belton, N. S. Caudle, W. H. Stephens, J. W. Simmons, and Clint Gray was appointed. On a lot donated by James O. Belton, they decided to build "a white frame church 30 x 44 feet, with a 14-foot ceiling, with self-supporting roof, covered with good shingles, and good pitch the same, all to be good fine lumber, said building to be in good workmanship manner."

The Bannertown Baptist Church was organized Sunday, December 16, 1906 with Rev. C. C. Arrington as the first Pastor. All of the first members enrolled, except one, came by letter from Holly Springs Baptist Church. W. F. Welch came by letter from Sulfur Springs Baptist Church. The enrollment was listed as follows: T. J. Barker, George Arnder, James Johnson, Joe Barker, W. F. Welch, Ed H. Smith, Sarah Barker, Addie Arnder, D. S. Barker, Rosa Johnson, Bertha Caudle, Mary Smith, Ada Brinkley, Jettie Belton, Cora B. Moser, and Rebecca Boyd.

Though not charter members, some people who were enrolled in the church near its beginning were James R. Caudle, Silvana Myers, Ben and Lucinda Edwards, Pearlle Barker, James O. and Mary Jane Belton, and Jim and Lizzie Gunnell.

With quarter-time preaching, the church met at first on fourth Sundays in the Oak Grove School located on the Westfield Road where Gilbert and Ruby Flinchum now live. The church building was completed in 1907, the nucleus of the very church in which we have worshiped since then. By 1910 the church was paid for.

Years later the side wings and four rooms were added to the church along with a heating system. Prior to that time two coal stoves were used for heat. In 1951 four more Sunday School rooms were added to the back of the church. In 1956 the church was bricked, the choir loft changed and the vestibule added. Rest rooms were added to the basement in 1957 and a second furnace added in 1962. The church was air-conditioned and a baptistry installed in 1968.

In 1949 the church purchased a home next to the church which was used as the parsonage until 1969. The building was remodeled in 1966 and is now being used for the Pastor's study, library, and Sunday School rooms. In 1969 a wooded lot on Massey Road was purchased from Mr. & Mrs. Charlie Glass, and a new parsonage was built. In 1994 the parsonage was sold and a housing allowance is now paid to our Pastor.

In 1975 the Bannertown Elementary School property adjacent to the church property was purchased. The original school building, erected in 1930, was demolished and the separate later addition to the school was converted into Sunday School classrooms and a Fellowship Hall and is still in use. Our new sanctuary is located over the site of the original building.

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The Rev. Christopher Columbus (Kit) Arrington served as our first Pastor from 1906 until 1909. He was followed by the Rev. Sam F. Morton who first served from 1910 until 1916. He was succeeded by Rev. A. L. McClendon, a Rev. Haynes, and Rev. Lee Burris for whom we have no exact dates of service. Rev. Sam F. Morton served again from approximately 1922 until 1939.

In 1940 we began having preaching twice a month. Subsequent Pastors were: Rev. Edward Thornburg (1940 - 1947); Rev. W. Edgar Burrus (1947 - 1949); Rev. Joe Crews, our first full-time Pastor (1950 - 1966); Dr. Cort R. Flint (1967 - 1969); Dr. Gerald T. Smith (1969 - 1977); Rev. Terry Coe, interim (1978); Rev. Wayne Haynes (1978 - 1984); Rev. Donald Cashwell (1985 - 1987); Rev. Terry Coe (1987 - 1992); Dr. Gerald Hewitt, interim (1992 - 1993); Dr. William G. Guthrie (1993 - our present Pastor).

A Long Range Planning Committee was elected in 1988 to study the future needs of the church, and it was felt we should plan for a larger sanctuary. At that time the Building Fund was \$20,000. Preliminary architectural plans for a new sanctuary were first obtained in September 1990. At that time the church decided the Building Fund should be much greater before construction should begin. The Building Fund began to grow as interest increased.

In the summer of 1994 the Committee submitted some changes in the architectural plans which included raising the pitch of the roof of the sanctuary, bringing the floor elevation of the building up to the level of the old church and adding a connector between the old and new building to include a nursery and choir room. The church voted to proceed with starting the construction, and a ground-breaking ceremony was held on Sunday, October 30, 1994.

From 1988 to 1996 those who served on the Long Range Planning Committee were Gilbert Flinchum, Elizabeth Branch, Mary Neal, Ruth Smith, Lacy Sawyers, Jr., Paul Shelton, Earl Myers, D. M. Dalton, Imogene Bowman, Buck Bowman, Wayne Gwyn, and Guy Caudle.

Construction of the sanctuary was started in December 1994. The architect for the project was Ray Troxell and Associates of Winston-Salem, and the general contractor was Blum Construction Company, also of Winston-Salem, with Buck Bowman as Supervisor and Coordinated of the construction and Wayne Gwyn as his assistant, both men being members of our church.

The beautiful new sanctuary has a brick exterior, matching the old church which will continue to be used for Sunday School rooms, etc. The front of the new building has a covered porch with four large white columns and a three-door entrance leading into a large vestibule which has a lounge and rest room on each side of it. The sanctuary has a seating capacity of 452 including the balcony and has stained glass windows depicting the life of Jesus from birth to ascension. Construction was completed in December 1995 and the Dedication Service was held on March 17, 1996.

Since its founding in 1906, Bannertown Baptist Church has been aligned with the Surry Baptist Association, the North Carolina Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention. Our present church membership is 511 and the Sunday School enrollment is 180.

March 20, 1996