

## THE HISTORY OF FIRST BAPTIST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

On August 6, **1944** five persons of faith and vision organized the Mozart Baptist Church at 114 North Mozart Street, they were: Rev. Henry McCrory, Sis. Anna McCrory-Allen, Sis. Dora Ollief, Sis. Willa Mae Taylor-Smith and Sis Henrietta Harrison.

Rev. McCrory was elected pastor; Willa Mae Taylor-Smith, secretary; Henrietta Harrison, clerk and Dora Ollief, treasurer. The church adopted the motto, "A PRAYING CHURCH AT WORK".

Later, Sis. McCrory organized the church choir; also during the year an Usher Board and a Vacation Bible School were effected.

In **1946**, the church adopted and began supporting an African girl, ordained its first deacons, appointed its first trustees and organized a Baptist Young People Union (B.Y.P.U.).

In **1947**, the congregation purchased property at 2834-36 W. Washington for the purpose of building a church edifice, and during this year it ordained one minister and two deacons.

From **1948** through **1950**, the congregation continued to grow, and the need of a larger church home became a necessity. In **1951** the members sacrificially rallied together behind the inspiring leadership of Pastor McCrory and purchased the edifice at 2900 W. Adams Street. In 1953, The Gospel Chorus was organized.

On January 9, **1955**, the church ordained two more deacons; and the following day saw its wonderful founder and Pastor, Rev. Henry McCrory called from labor to reward after ten years of faithful service to the Lord and His people at Mozart. The assistant pastor, Rev. Cornelius A. Adams marvelously carried the church on as interim pastor and ordained one minister during his tenure.

In June of **1955**, Rev. Maynard P. Turner was called to the pastorate. McCrory. A nursery, Y.W.A., and a Junior Usher Board were organized.

With the resignation of Pastor Turner in January of 1957, Rev. C.A. Adams carried on until the church called Rev. Richard W. Collins as its pastor. Under Pastor Collins leadership the plan for re-financing the church was begun.

When Rev. Collins resigned, the church called **Rev. Arthur D. Griffin** in November of 1957. During the last two months of that year 41 joined on their Christian experience, 10 by baptism and 1 by letter. During this time the Gospel Chorus, Young People's Choir, Junior Choir, Prayer Meeting, B.T.U., and Brotherhood Union were re-organized.

In **1958**, the Deaconess Board and Week-day Church School programs were established. On Easter Sunday, 1958 the church mourned the loss of Rev. C.A. Adams, a faithful servant who had served well when the church needed him most. During this year, 46 joined on their Christian experience; 50 by baptism, 2 by letter and 5 by restoration.

In **1959**, a Junior Church with a Junior Pastor, Junior Deacon Board, Junior Choir, and Junior Usher Board were instituted along with a Church Board of Education. One minister and two deacons were ordained. Fifty joined the fellowship by Christian experience and 91 were baptized.

In **1960**, the church resumed support of Johanna McCrory and began support of Rev. and Sis. E. Timberlake in Africa. This year also saw the organization of 5 different Scouting Units, a Nurse's Aide Board with a First Aid Room, a Junior Missionary Society, the ordination of 3 deacons. Fifty-six joined on Christian experience, 45 by baptism and 5 by restoration.

In **1961**, the church joined the North Woodrider Baptist District Association, the Church Federation of Greater Chicago, the Illinois M. & E. Convention, the National Baptist Convention of America, the World Baptist Alliance, the World Council of Churches and resolved to support its financial program through tithes and offerings. Also, during this year it organized a Sunshine Band, Girl's Auxiliary, Shepherd Boy's League and Church Concert Orchestra. Forty-four joined the church on their Christian experience and 65 by baptism.



Sis. Anna McCrory Allen

**In 1962**, the church began its Witnessing and Personal Evangelism Ministry under the leadership of a “Minister of Missions” expanding its missionary outreach to include financial support of Sis. Salome Quamina in the British West Indies and the California Gardens Baptist Church in Blue Island, Illinois. During this year an Intermediate Choir was organized; 56 were added to the church by Christian experience and 59 by baptism.



**Rev. Henry McCrory**

**1964** was an important milestone in the history of Mozart. During that year the congregation paid for the property at 2900 W. Adams Street during a special Mortgage Burning Drive in June, and held Cornerstone and Mortgage Burning Services during its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in August. Fifty-five joined on their Christian experience and 65 by baptism.

**1965 to 1968:** During this period of time an extension of Vacation Bible School into a program of day camp, exercise, classes in Black History, arts, crafts and other activities were offered to the children of the community. A full time secretary was employed by the congregation to serve the church office. Three deacons were ordained; the Girl Scout Program was increased; the number of adult workers for Junior Church was increased.

**In 1969**, the church authorized and initiated the appropriate dialog toward the implementation of a merger with the congregation of the First Congregational Church of Chicago. This affording the two churches greater dimensions in outreach for Christ. On August 11<sup>th</sup> immediately following the church anniversary observance, Sis. Henrietta Harrison went home to be with the Lord; she was the second founding member to pass away. Forty-eight were added to the church by baptism, 52 by Christian experience and 3 by restoration.

**In 1970**, we relocated our operation to the edifice of the First Congregational Church of Chicago and with these expanded facilities added a music school, legal-aid clinic and a gymnasium program to the ministries of the church. Special witnessing and personal evangelism efforts were implemented to acquaint the neighborhood residents with the services of the church to the community; 36 were added to the congregation by baptism, 18 by Christian experience and 11 restored.

**In 1971**, our church was officially affiliated with the Chicago Conference of the United Church of Christ, changed our name to **First Congregational Baptist Church** and made significant progress in resolving the many legal problems toward making this church complex our permanent church home. Forty-four were added to the church by baptism, 35 by Christian experience and 6 restored.

**In 1972**, we decorated the sanctuary of the church and dedicated it in memorial to our founding pastor, **Rev. Henry McCrory**, the Chapel room in memorial to **Rev. C. A. Adams**, the Assembly Hall in appreciation to **Sis. Anna Allen**, the Dining Room in appreciation to **Sis. Willa Mae Smith**, the Fellowship Room in appreciation to **Mother Dora Ollief**, our remaining founding members and the choir meeting room in memorial to **Sis. Henrietta Harrison**. Forty-two were added to the church by baptism, 30 by Christian experience and 1 was restored.

**In 1973**, we established a mission congregation, **the Austin Baptist United Church of Christ**, provided a pastor, an assistant pastor, a minister of missions and a core group of dedicated workers whose charge was to build a new church fellowship in the Austin community as an extension of a ministry of First Congregational Baptist Church. Forty-five were added to the church by baptism, 40 by Christian experience and 5 restored.

**In 1974**, a concentrated witnessing effort by the congregation was begun with instruction and reporting time provided by the Training Union hour each week. The litigation was finally completed and its adverse rulings were used by **God** to strengthen our faith and dependence on Him as a congregation. We voted complete autonomy to the Austin Baptist UCC even as we continued to work together as one body in Christ. Fifty were added to the church by baptism and 48 by Christian experience.

**In 1975**, an Early Morning Prayer Service was established to enhance the prayer life of the church fellowship and has been blessed by the Lord through the months to increase in spiritual and numerical strength. Two ministers and two deacons were ordained; 66 were added by baptism and 45 by Christian experience.

**In 1976**, we completely decorated Adams Chapel and many of the meeting halls of the sanctuary building in preparation for successfully entertaining the Illinois National Baptist State Convention. Fifty-two were added to the church by Christian experience, 70 by baptism and 8 were restored.

**In 1977**, six ministers were added to our ministerial staff, which made a total of 14 ministers on staff. Also, for United Church of Christ Denominational purposes we officially changed our name to **FIRST BAPTIST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF CHICAGO**. Sixty-eight were added by baptism and 44 by Christian experience.



**Sis. Willa Mae Smith**

**From 1978-1980**, the ministerial staff was increased to over 30 with special instruction classes each week shared with ministers from sister church congregations. The renovation process for the restoration of the windows in the sanctuary was begun, and the re-organizing of the Junior Missionary Society has significantly enhanced the spiritual life of the young adults in the church family. We were blessed by a greater accountability of the registration and instruction of new members, and a meaningful extension of the Church's personal evangelism ministry through the weekly prayer services in Union Park. Eleven ministers and two deacons were ordained. During this 3-year period 190 were added to the church fellowship by baptism; 161 by Christian experience and 34 restored.

**In 1981**, we served as host Church for meetings of the CMA, UCC and shared the blessings of having the entire church family involved in the varied ministries of the congregation that correspond with our individual spiritual gifts. Thus, under the leadership of the **Holy Spirit**; we have significantly increased the opportunities for every member to participate in the work of the Church. Eighty-four were added to the fellowship by Christian experience, 90 by baptism, 33 were restored and 1 by letter.

**In 1982**, the church edifice was designated as a **Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmark** by unanimous vote of the City Council. We ordained 12 ministers and 4 deacons and burned the mortgage of the church during the anniversary celebration. Seventy were added to the fellowship by Christian experience, 68 as candidates for baptism and 23 were restored.

**In 1983**, we initiated a weekly street ministry for Witnessing and Personal Evangelism and a monthly ministry to the women at Dwight Correctional Center. Members donated money during the Homecoming Observance for a new boiler for the chapel building and ceiling fans for the sanctuary. Eighty were added to the fellowship by Christian experience, 92 candidates for baptism and 30 restored.

**In 1984**, we enlarged our outreach ministry to the Henry Horner Housing Project with a Bible Class every Saturday afternoon with participation from all adult groups. One hundred-eight were added to the fellowship as candidates for baptism, 97 by Christian experience, 50 were restored and 1 by letter.

**In 1985**, the congregation ordained 7 ministers and 4 deacons; extended its outreach ministry to the Schwab Rehabilitation Center, the Ma Houston Halfway House, and Sunday School classes at the Henry Horner Housing Project. We successfully entertained the 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Session of the Illinois National Baptist State Convention. One hundred thirty-seven were added to the fellowship as candidates for baptism, 61 were baptized; 131 by Christian experience, 36 were restored and 2 came by letter.

**In 1986**, the windows in Adams Chapel were renovated and the church steeple repaired; our Spiritual Gifts, Marriage and Sunday School New Members classes were made permanent and perpetual ministers to the congregation. One hundred-fifty were added to the fellowship by baptism, 144 by Christian experience and 24 were restored.

**In 1987**, the congregation purchased several lots west of the church edifice on Washington Boulevard in its effort to enlarge the ministry and work of the church in this area of the city. The Junior Church ministers initiated a

confirmation class for the young people transferring from Junior Church to Senior Church confirming their knowledge of their salvation and relationship to Christ.

**In 1988**, land acquisition by the congregation continued in earnest on west Washington Boulevard, and our membership and financial accounting were put on an extensive computer system; thereby substantially contributing to the accuracy and permanency of our congregation's records. One hundred-six were added to the fellowship by baptism; 69 by Christian experience and 57 were restored.

**In 1989**, additional land acquisitions and paving of the church parking lots were accomplished; Word Perfect software was added to the computer system, and Social Action Committees were organized for extended areas of ministry in drug abuse counseling, job exploration, Health Care assistance, Teen pregnancy, Economics Development, Political awareness, Single-parent support, welfare and legal referral, Widow's support, cultural enrichment, and Senior Care Networking.

**During the year of 1990**, the congregation accentuated its ministry to the men of the church by establishing a monthly Saturday afternoon fellowship above and beyond its weekly Brotherhood meetings and extended its Singles and Young Adult Ministries to include a greater number of active participants in the various Church Services.

**1991** saw the congregation moving to provide a more concentrated ministry to the people in the Henry Horner Housing Complex by having the members develop their collective spiritual gifts, talents and competencies to share with Horner residents; in addition to new monthly outdoor Worship Services to reach more people for Christ in the surrounding community.

In 1992, the congregation undertook the “**Save Our Steeple**” drive - an effort to restore the steeple to its historical eloquence as it continues to speak to our generation and to those generations that will follow us; of the glory of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

On **April 28, 1993** a Street Designation and Recognition Ceremony was held in honor of our Pastor, **Dr. Arthur D. Griffin**, naming Ashland Avenue from Lake Street to Madison in honor of Pastor A. D. Griffin.

With a consciousness of greater service yet to be offered, the church moves on with renewed determination to accomplish the **Will of God** in this part of the moral vineyard.

The years **1995 and 1996** have brought economic development to our community in which First Baptist along with the Interfaith Organizing Project of Greater Chicago have been instrumental in bringing affordable housing to our members and community. The vision of the First Baptist Congregational Day Care/Learning Center is becoming a reality.

Late **1996 to 1997** the church has been able to accomplish goals in the areas of increasing the Scholarship Fund for those students in college, acquiring the 1635 building mansion, remodeling the dining room, increasing the Homeless Feeding to twice a month, restoring the Great East Window of the main sanctuary, participating in the west side Prayer Vigil and starting process of exploring possibility of having a day care in the education building.

During the years of **1997 and 1998** the Congregation began an extended Bible Study Ministry by having Bible Classes each night, Monday through Friday; and as a result, has seen a significant increase in the number of members committed to tithing of time and finances to the Lord.

Also during this period, we have ordained six ministers and three deacons into dedicated Christian Service.

IN THE YEARS **1998 AND 1999** the vision of the First Baptist Congregational Day Care/Learning Center has been rejuvenated and moving with “full steam ahead”. We are also anticipating a new drive to see an ELEVATOR added to our historical edifice. We are continuing to grow through our Bible Study Ministry and our commitment of tithing. We consider ourselves “Improving and Blessed!”

**The Year 2000**, ushering in a **New Millennium**, has made us a more visionary Congregation that recognizes our

personal obligation as individual members of the Body of Christ to rededicate our hearts and lives to a **DAILY COMMITMENT** of fellowship, study, and worship of Christ Jesus; thereby moving us from a “**DATING RELATIONSHIP**” to a “**MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP**” to Jesus in faithful compliance with the apostolic precedence clearly stated in Acts 5:42; “**AND DAILY**” in the temple, and in every house; they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ”!

### **2001**

Our Congregation's 57<sup>th</sup> Year of comprehensive ministry is high-lighted by the termination of financial support to the Foreign Mission Congregations we established in Calcutta, India; for they no longer have to depend on us for financial assistance; but are now more able to be self-sustaining and truly financially independent.

The monthly allocation of those funds have now been shifted to the support of the **CHICAGO BIBLE SOCIETY**, for the expanded distribution of scriptures to institutions served by our **HOME MISSION** initiatives. Indeed, to celebrate this significant victory achieved “**TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH**”; so that we may now better serve our “**JERUSALEM, JUDEA, AND SAMARIAS**” at home!

### **2002**

The computer classes for the senior are entering its second year, these classes are offered through the auspicious of the Department on Aging. The seniors class has grown tremendously, we have exceeded our goal for student enrollment. As a result of the skills learned, many of our seniors have received part-time employment. The computer classes are offered to the community at large.

In September 2001, First Baptist Congregation began a complete remodeling of all their washrooms. The Junior Church washrooms were completed in November 2001. Each washroom was completely gutted, enlarged, new walls, floors and new equipment installed.

The washrooms on the Senior Church remodeling started February of 2002, and completed in March 2002. The gymnasium was totally renovated, complete with a new floor, windows and two separate washrooms complete with showers.

**May 10, 2002**, seven ministers and nine deacons were ordained into dedicated Christian Service.

**In July of 2002**, First Baptist Congregation church installed two outer doors at the 1613 entrance, which was custom made and durable. They truly enhanced GOD'S property. Also, we corrected major masonry work on the outside of building and made structural damage repairs.

**In 2003**, our beloved Pastor, Dr. Arthur D. Griffin, announced his retirement to be effective in October of this year and assumes the role of Pastor Emeritus. We praise and thank God for the 46 years of dedicated service he has rendered to this congregation. We are grateful for his vision and the progress made over the years, for he was certainly a shepherd worthy of “double honor.”

In October, Rev. George W. Daniels after serving thirty years as Assistant Pastor is installed as Senior Pastor of the church.

**In 2004** under the leadership of our newly elected pastor, Rev. George W. Daniels the ministerial staff was restructured with the appointment of five Associate Pastors to assist with the spiritual nurture of the members of the congregation. All the groups of the Church were renamed “**FELLOWSHIP TEAMS**” with a greater ministry focus. As a Church family we undertook the task of retiring a \$500,000.00 debt. Our Wednesday pray meeting was renamed “Community Prayer Meeting”, with participation from all the fellowship teams of the church.

As we celebrate our 60th year of the Lord's blessings and enter into another year **we give God the Glory, for the great things he has done!**



Mother Dora Ollief



Sis. Henrietta Harrison