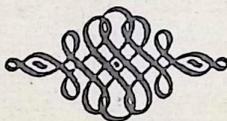


*Bob Lee*

HISTORY  
FIRST BAPTIST  
CHURCH

BRISTOL, VIRGINIA

1859 - 1949



Bristol

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History  
of  
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
BRISTOL, VIRGINIA  
1859 - 1949



*Compiled by*

H. G. NOFFSINGER

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## Foreword

History is not the science of dry bones. It is not a post-mortem on the past. Nothing is so alive as history. It bustles with people and events. It is the discovery of the sources of now wide rivers. It points out of the past to the future. It explains things as they are. It encourages progress.

Historical data on the First Baptist Church of Bristol, Virginia-Tennessee has not been preserved in abundance. No attempts have heretofore been made to collate the documents available; and carelessness in handling the records has occasioned serious lapses in tracing the earlier years. Complete silence for the period of 1917 to 1936 is attributable to the apparent loss of whatever sources once existed.

The church is indebted to all those who have contributed papers or facts from memory to this History. In particular, appreciation is expressed to Dr. H. G. Noffsinger, Sr. for his personal interest and effort in compiling this record at the request of the Church. The research, arrangement and preparation for publication was all his.

This booklet is presented in the hope that it will stimulate justifiable pride in its members at the growth of the Church; and produce in them an incentive to loyalty, service, and deeper devotion to Christ who alone is Lord of His Church.

Bristol, Virginia-Tennessee  
September, 1949

J. P. ALLEN

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# Brief History of First Baptist Church

Bristol, Va.-Tenn., August, 1949

Ninety years ago The First Baptist Church, Bristol, had its modest beginning with seven members. At that early date Bristol was only a straggling, struggling village of perhaps not more than two or three hundred souls. The earliest recorded history of Bristol of which we have knowledge, is preserved in an Industrial Supplement of the Bristol Courier, published Oct. 2, 1904. Much of the information concerning the early history of the churches and institutions of Bristol is found in that publication.

Under a picture of the First Church as it existed in 1904, we find the following account of the origin of the Baptist work in Bristol: "In the year 1859 Elder William Cate of Jonesboro, Tenn., organized the Goodson Baptist Church in Old Temperance Hall, near the present location of the Courier Building. Of the seven original members of this organization, only three are now (1904) living. W. P. Hamilton, W. J. Betterton, and Mrs. Coleman, sister of Mayor W. L. Rice of Bristol, Va." In the minutes of the Lebanon Association Goodson is listed among the newly constituted churches received on Sept. 13, 1860. Its delegates were—J. D. Chambers, L. A. Womack, Joseph Stuart. It had 28 white members and contributed \$19.60 to State Missions and \$2.50 to Foreign Missions.

In writing the history of the origin and progress of the church, the writer is handicapped by incomplete records. There are great gaps in the minutes of the church meetings. Prior to 1862 no records have been preserved of church meetings. From 1863 to 1867 the minutes are blank and from 1917 to 1936 we have been unable to locate any records.

When the above quotation from the Bristol Courier was written in 1904, Dr. B. C. Hening was pastor and H. G. Bramm was superintendent of the Sunday School. The church was prospering and the Pastor and Board of Deacons were already beginning to agitate the matter of a new building to meet the growing needs of the membership, numbering about 475.

Baptists were by no means the first to occupy this virgin and fertile field. In comparison with other denominations, especially Presbyterians and Lutherans, Baptists were late and few in numbers when they began their mission work in this section. As early as 1770, Presbyterians pushed down the valley from Maryland and Pennsylvania where they were in great numbers and established churches in this territory. It was about that early date that the Presbyterian Church in Abingdon was founded, the first church of any denomination west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Presbyterians, coming from half to three quarters of a century ahead of Baptists, have faced the question as to why Baptists have outstripped them in numbers and have admitted that it is because they themselves have been less evangelistic than Baptists.

Methodists came long before Baptists. They wisely knew the value of christian education and established Emory and Henry College in 1838, nearly a half century before Baptists launched their program of higher education in Southwest Virginia Institute for Girls at Glade Spring, Va.

Presbyterians and Methodists had churches in Bristol before Baptists arrived on the scene. Baptist churches had been established in Eastern and Northern Virginia nearly a hundred years before the Bristol church was organized. And even then it was from Tennessee that the founder, William Cate, came to the state line between Tenn. and Va. and began the Baptist work in Bristol. In the whole territory covered by the Lebanon Association, there were only ten weak country churches and only four in all the counties covered by the New Lebanon, Wise and Clinch Valley Associations before 1859. While in the East, around Fredericksburg, for example, in the Goshen Association, 34 of the 46 churches now listed were constituted before the Bristol church came into existence. Like practically all the Baptist churches in this section, the Bristol church was a missionary enterprise, aided by the American Home Mission Society of N. Y., which society contributed \$200 towards Pastor Kincannon' salary of \$800. On May 26, 1873 application was made to the same Society for the same support for Brother Maynard that had been given to Brother Kincannon.

"The Old Temperance Hall" in which the church was organized stood where the Lutheran Church now stands. Just how long the church used that hall, the writer is unable to find out. The church had no regular pastor for the first two or three years. The first pastor was Rev. J. D. Chambers who began his ministry in 1862.

A little more about the early history of this section may not be out of place. How long prehistoric Bristol flourished will never be known. Following the game trails came the Indians and founded a village where the squaw could cultivate corn and tobacco in these loamy bottoms along the banks of the clear waters of Beaver Creek, using their stone implements that were useless in the adjacent clays. Bones, pottery and flints have been unearthed within the city limits of Bristol, particularly is this true beneath the soil where Baptists first held their meetings in old Temperance Hall. That was originally an Indian burying ground.

This whole section was once designated as "The Territory South of the Ohio River." Later the land on which Bristol now stands was known as "Kings Meadows." On May 5, 1856, the town of Goodson was incorporated, just two or three years before the Baptist church was started; hence it was called The Goodson Baptist Church. It was not till 1856 that the first railway train reached Goodson. Prior to 1856 there was really no Bristol or its predecessor. However Abingdon and Blountville did exist and they were the chief centers of trade and industry for all this region.

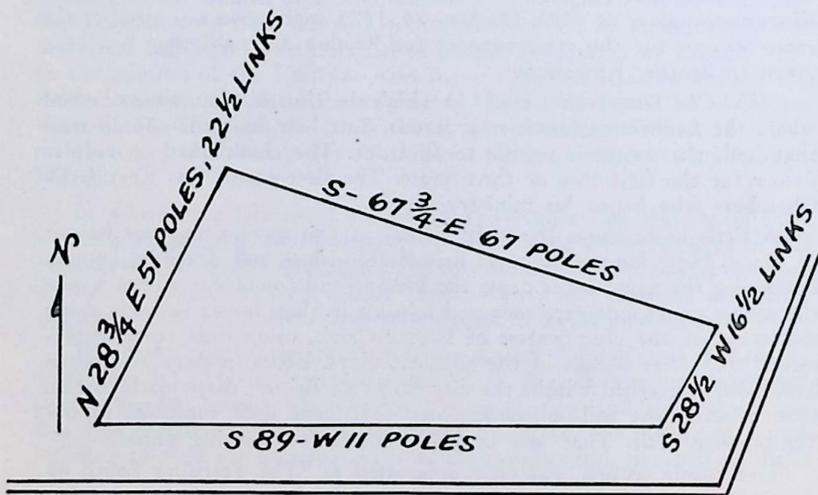
## Church Houses

The church has had three names and three buildings. From the organization to January, 1888, the church was called Goodson Baptist

Church. From 1888 to 1895 the name was Bristol Baptist Church and from 1895 to the present it has been known as the First Baptist Church of Bristol, Va.-Tenn.

**DEED READS:** The infant organization lost no time in securing a plot of ground on which to construct a church house. We find recorded in Deed Book No. 24, page 363 in the Clerk's Office, Washington County, a deed dated April 22, 1859 to Trustees of Goodson Baptist Church from Joseph R. Anderson and wife, Melinda, to lot 13 containing 30 poles, consideration being \$100 donated and \$50 cash in hand. This same Joseph R. Anderson was the founder of Bristol and its first mayor. When he laid off the town he named it after Bristol, England. The village of Bristol, Tenn. was chartered Feb. 22, 1856, while Goodson, Va. (now Bristol, Va.) was organized in 1855 and incorporated May 5, 1856.

Later on the members of the church wished a more detailed description of their church lot, and so it was that on Oct. 1871 A. H. Campbell re-surveyed the lot and described it as follows:



"Surveyed for the Baptist Church at Bristol. Beginning at a rock on a line of Main St. at the junction of First St. and running with the latter  $N. 28\frac{3}{4} E. 5^1$  poles  $22\frac{1}{2}$  links to a stake at Betterton fence; thence leaving First St. and running  $S. 67\frac{3}{4} E. 10^2$  poles to a stake in Dr. Peppers line; thence running with Peppers line  $S. 28\frac{1}{2} West 16\frac{1}{2}$  links to a stake on a line of Main St. and with the same  $S. 89 W. 11^3$  poles to the beginning.—Oct. 30, 1871, A. H. Campbell, Surveyor."

Undoubtedly a modest church building was erected on the lot, though we have no record of its kind nor the cost. This assumption is based on

1. Probably this should be 51 poles.
2. Probably this should be 67 poles.
3. Probably this is an error.

three facts: first, a lot was purchased, second, the deed distinctly states that the lot was for the purpose of erecting upon it a house of worship and third, in the year 1873, the church property was insured for \$1000, and the policy was transferred to the Home Mission Society as security for a loan of \$250 to be applied on the church debt.



THE SECOND BUILDING CONSTRUCTED ON THE PRESENT SITE

A new church was built and dedicated June 5, 1887. It cost \$3651.70 and it was insured for \$3500.00. Rev. S. A. Goodwin, D.D., of Richmond, Va. preached the dedication sermon. This building served till the beginning of the 20th century when the membership had outgrown its capacity and the decision was reached to increase the size of the lot and build a new church.

## Third Church Building

After much agitation, decision was reached Nov. 11, 1906, to purchase for \$3000.00 the lot adjoining the existing church lot. And April 17, 1907, the following were appointed a Building Committee: W. P.

Hamilton, W. W. Brand, H. W. Powers, H. G. Bramm, C. C. Minor, J. T. Henderson, A. P. Moore, J. R. Dickey, S. C. Hodges, J. F. Hicks, S. L. Millard, W. P. Roller, J. F. Howell and G. P. Fairfax. To make the best deal possible with Mr. Smith, owner of the property to be purchased, W. P. Hamilton, Jno. R. Dickey and H. G. Bramm were named a special sub-committee.

Evidently the above named Building Committee did not function, for four years later, June 4, 1911, we find the following record: "The following persons were added to the Building and Finance Committee: S. C. Hodges, H. W. Powers, Dr. J. F. Hicks, Jno. R. Dickey, H. G. Bramm, J. H. Connelly and Jno. H. Gose. We note that S. C. Hodges is named first and he was evidently chairman of the committee. He gave practically his entire time to the construction of the building, and much credit is due to his efficient management. Under this same date we find this note: "The preaching services are now being held in Bristol, Va. City Hall."

By January, 1912, we find that the magnificent present building was well along in construction. When finally completed, Dr. J. L. Rosser, the Pastor, wrote: "Thus through unrelaxing purpose, crowned with successive items of achievement, with the single defect of imperfect acoustics, this church has come to possess a plant, that is the admiration of all observers, dignified without being severe, and beautiful without useless and meaningless ornamentation. Estimates would differ, but the most conservative would not believe that it could now be duplicated for less than \$100,000.00."

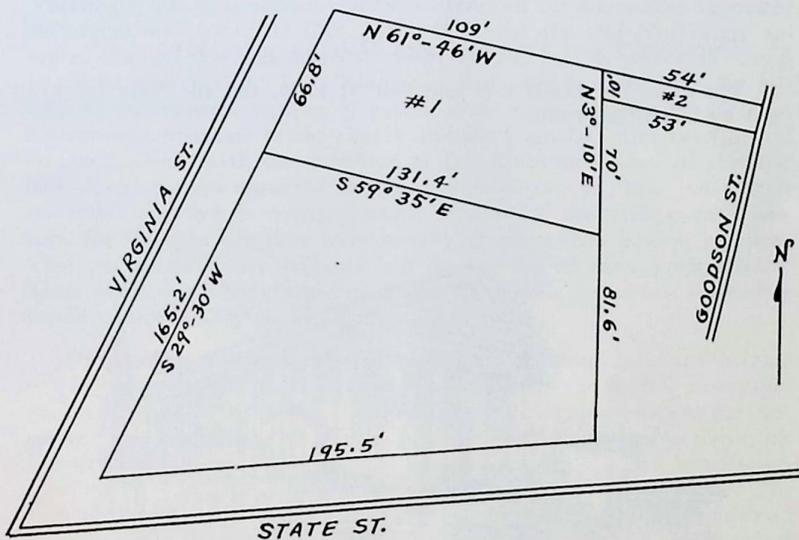
It was a great day in the history of the church when on Sept. 5, 1926, that peerless Baptist Minister, Dr. George W. Truett, came from his great church, Dallas, Texas, and preached the sermon dedicating the building to the worship of God. The church delayed the dedication until the building was paid for.

## Educational Plant

The church grew and every department began to be organized to meet modern demands. Hence the need for an educational plant became a necessity. And so it was that during the pastorate of Dr. J. E. Hicks (1933-'43) the present teaching and training addition was constructed. The first item of need was additional ground on which to place the building. Here are the data concerning the purchase of the lot on which to build, the official survey of same, and the cost of the addition and remodeling of the existing building: "June 28, 1939," the churches passed the following motion, "to adopt the option on lot adjoining the church, 65 feet on Virginia St., 150 feet back to Goodson St., and 67½ fronting Goodson St., be exercised by Brother Tom Smith at a price of \$4,000.00." The measurements were only approximately correct as may be seen from the official survey recorded later. Again on July 5, 1939, Tom Smith reported he had a price of \$250 for 10 foot strip of land on proposed

property to Goodson St. This strip was also purchased to enable the church to have an alley from Virginia to Goodson St. Here the new Educational Plant was constructed, the Building Committee being: C. C. Wilson, I. D. Eggers, A. H. Hawthorne, H. G. Noffsinger, Mrs. Robert Boggs, Ernest H. Dickey, Fillmore McPherson, Paul Siler and Dr. J. E. Hicks. This committee reported on June 23, 1940, that a bid of \$35,425.00 for construction of the new building and an estimated cost of \$4,000.00 for remodeling the existing building had been submitted. This was accepted by the church and the Finance Committee was authorized to use the cash on hand, \$15,000.00, and to borrow as much of the additional \$25,000.00 as and when needed. During Dr. Allen's early pastorate the last dollar of the indebtedness amounting to approximately \$17,000.00 was liquidated. Dr. George W. Leavell was the chairman of a special committee appointed to raise this amount. The degree of success in this effort is indicated by the cash gifts exceeding \$12,000.00 brought to the morning worship on Oct. 10, 1943.

It seems that the original lot purchased in 1859 has been added to twice. Here are copies of outlines and description of the ground on which the church and the educational plant now stand in 1949.



"This is to certify that I have this day made survey of the premises described above and more particularly described as follows:

Tract No. 1 Beginning at a point on the East side of Virginia St. 165.2 feet North of the Northeast intersection of Va. St. and State St. corner to property owned by First Baptist Church; thence with the North line of the church property South 59 degrees, 35 minutes East 131.4 feet to

an iron pipe; thence North 3 degrees, 10 minutes 70 feet more or less to an iron pipe, thence North 61 degrees, 46 minutes, West 109 feet to a point on the East side of Virginia Street, thence along the East side of Va. St., South 29 degrees West 30 minutes 66.8 feet to the point of beginning.

*Tract No. 2* Beginning at an iron pin on the North of Tract No. 1, 109 feet East of the East line of Va. St.; thence continuing with the said North line of tract No. 1, 54 feet to a point on the west line of Goodson St.; thence with the West line of Goodson St. in a Southerly direction 10 feet to a point; thence with the line parallel with the said North line of tract No. 1, 53 feet more or less, to a point on the East line of tract No. 1, 10.3 feet to a point of the beginning. And have made the above plat which I certify to be correct plat of above described property. I further certify that I have measured the improvements on said property and find that said improvements are situated wholly within the lines of said property as shown above, the walls being plumb and there being no overhanging features projecting beyond the property lines.—July 11, 1939, Arthur Green, Engineer.”

Tract No. 1 cost \$4000 paid for, cash \$1200, and Note given for \$2800.

Tract No. 2 cost \$250 paid with Note given for \$250.

The Note for \$2800 was paid Feb. 9, 1940, and the Note for \$250 was paid Feb. 20, 1940.



THE THIRD CHURCH BUILDING AND EDUCATIONAL PLANT

# Pastors

The church has had approximately eighteen regular pastors, not counting some substitutes and supplies. It would seem from available records that there was no pastor till some time during the year 1862. Pastors, with dates of election and resignations are as follows:

J. D. Chambers, 1862 to 1863; M. B. Wharton 1864 to 1865; J. T. Kincannon, 1866 to 1870; R. B. Boatwright, Oct. 1, 1871 to Dec. 1, 1871; J. T. Kincannon, Jan., 1872 to 1873; Rev. Lloyd substituted 1874 to 1877 while Dr. Kincannon was financial agent for Bristol Female College; B. G. Maynard, 1877 to 1879; W. W. Worley, 1879 to 1880; W. A. Clark, 1880 to 1881; J. T. Kincannon, 1881 to 1884; R. D. Haymore, 1885 to 1890; G. S. Williams, 1891 to 1896; M. E. Broadus, 1896 to 1900; M. D. Early, 1898 to 1899, substituted for Dr. Broadus while the latter looked after the financial interests of Virginia Institute; B. Cabell Hening, 1901 to 1904; G. N. Cowan, 1905 to 1908; J. M. Shelburne, 1909 to 1913; J. L. Rosser, 1913 to 1932; J. E. Hicks, 1933 to 1943; J. P. Allen, 1943 to.

The minutes of church meeting of Sept. 7, 1874, states that M. V. Noffsinger was unanimously elected Pastor, and the committee appointed to inform him stated on Oct. 5th, 1874, that the said Noffsinger accepted the call. There is no record however that he ever served as Pastor. It can be seen that Dr. J. T. Kincannon had a big hand in the early history of the church, serving as pastor three times, alternating his time between the pastorate of the church and the financial interests of Bristol Female College. With the exception of Dr. Kincannon, none of the first half dozen pastors remained longer than from one to three years. It is regrettable that we do not have more information about those early pastors, for undoubtedly they were worthy of more than passing mention. They played their part well and laid the foundation for a great church. Their work was difficult and no doubt discouraging at times. How they would rejoice if they could see the church today.

Dr. Hening was a great preacher and led the church to new heights not hitherto attained to that time. The editor of the Bristol newspaper said of him under date of Oct., 1904, that "Dr. Hening came to the pastorate from Richmond, Va. Under his leadership, his intense activity, his forceful and eloquent preaching, the church is zealous and progressive. The membership now numbering about 475 is loyal to the pastor. The Sunday School with Mr. H. G. Bramm as Superintendent is flourishing . . . To meet the demands of rapid growth in membership, the Board of Deacons are beginning to agitate the question of a new and more commodious building."

When Dr. Shelburne came to Bristol in Nov., 1909, the church was worshipping in a frame building which was in bad repair and occupied the same site as the present building. During the erection of the new church building all services were held in the Court House of Bristol, Va.

Dr. Shelburne has expressed himself as "having a very happy time in Bristol and had no dream of ending his work in Bristol until the matter of becoming President of Howard College was presented to him."

The church began its upward climb under Dr. Shelburne, not so much in numbers (baptized only 28 persons during his four years ministry) as in starting the new building, grading the Sunday School and organizing other departments. In 1911 the number on the Board of Deacons was increased from 8 to 15 and were rotated as follows: 1/3 to serve 3 years, 1/3 2 years and 1/3 one year and were not eligible to succeed themselves.

#### DR. J. L. ROSSER

Following Dr. Shelburne and building upon the solid foundation laid by his predecessors, came Dr. John L. Rosser in 1913 from Selma, Ala. He gave the church 19 years fruitful service. It was then the church really began to make progress and to grow in numbers. Under his ministry the new church building was opened. The first occurrence of importance in the new structure was a double wedding, Jewel Howell and W. T. Rowen, Esme Howell and Tom Smith being the contracting parties. July 26, 1914, marked the first service held in the new church, the opening service of The Interment Chautauqua.

Dr. Rosser says that when he came he could find only 275 members. He evidently means active members for more than that number was reported to the Lebanon Association. He recalls saying that in 1927, the church had 800 members. He reports also that about 1500 members were received during his 19 years' ministry. The membership grew to such an extent that in 1931 it was deemed wise again to increase the Board of Deacons from 15 in number to 21.

Dr. Rosser was honored during his stay in Bristol by being chosen President of the General Association of Virginia for two terms.

We may look upon Dr. Rosser's pastorate as the critical time of the church. There the church had stood for 55 years, just standing, marking time, still weak and small. As Dr. Rosser expressed it: "Would the church continue to mark time or would it move out into larger things." We know now that it did launch forth into deeper waters and that it is now one of the larger and more influential congregations of the whole State of Virginia. We have already noted that the church was dedicated Sept. 5, 1926, after the debt on it was paid. The 75 Million Campaign was launched throughout the Southern Baptist Convention during Dr. Rosser's term with the church.

Any record of Dr. Rosser and his work would be incomplete without some mention of his charming wife. Mrs. Rosser's intelligence, warm hearted friendliness, genuine Christian piety and unselfish service endeared her to everyone fortunate enough to make her acquaintance. Not only will the church members rejoice, but everyone in this entire section is glad that the Rossers have returned to Bristol to live in the Staley Apartment. (In Dr. Staley's will an Apartment was left to the church for the use of retired ministers and missionaries).

## DR. J. E. HICKS

Dr. Hicks grew up near Bluff City, Tenn. He came back to his native heath after serving as Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Danville, Va. for 18 years and for 12 years as Pastor of First Church, Baltimore, Md. and became Pastor of the First Baptist, Bristol, in 1933. For ten years he served not only the First Church but the city and this entire section with a dignified, scholarly and self-sacrificing ministry. During his stay with the church, the Sunday School Addition or Educational Plant was constructed but not entirely paid for. More than 800 members were added to the church roll during his ten years service. Very soon after his arrival, over a hundred names on the church roll were transferred to a separate list termed "the Inactive Roll." Erasing or dropping names and transferring to the Inactive Roll is the nearest approach the modern church ever comes to the practice of the early years in expelling disorderly members and recording the names of those "from whom the hand of Christian fellowship was withdrawn."

Dr. Hicks was a scholar, member of Phi Beta Kappa. He held membership on the Board of Trustees of the University of Richmond for 35 years. He was chairman of the Board of Trustees of Virginia Inter-mont College; member of the Board of the Seminary in Louisville, of the Southwestern Theological Seminary; of the Relief and Annuity Board; and of the Va. Baptist Hospital.

Dr. John J. Wicker said, when he heard that Dr. Hicks had come back to Va., "It is fine to have Hicks return to our fellowship in Virginia. Words fail me when I endeavor to express my love and admiration for this fine, devoted and gifted minister of Christ . . . His splendid poise, genial personality and wise counsel will mean much to Va. Baptists. I know of no man in all our ministry whose life interprets Christ more beautifully."

The following words are taken from the obituary of Dr. Hicks in the Virginia Baptist Annual for 1946: "Nothing of a spectacular nature came from his pulpit; he took part in no political tirades. His geniality and indefatigable work among his congregation and in all Bristol made him beloved in the city." When he resigned his pastorate and retired Jan. 1, 1943, from active ministry, the church elected him Pastor Emeritus, which he held until his death, June 27, 1946.

## DR. J. P. ALLEN

Such scholarly and outstandingly distinguished ministers as Broadus, Hening, Shelburne, Rosser and Hicks set the standard high for the pastorate of the First Church, Bristol. When Dr. Hicks resigned, the Pulpit Committee, consisting of I. D. Eggers, Ernest H. Dickey, H. H. Ellis, Mrs. H. C. Epperson and Mrs. Avery Walker, was charged with the responsibility and heavy task of finding and recommending to the church a Pastor able and worthy to follow in the train of those outstanding ministers. The Committee succeeded. After looking the entire country over for several months, they were Divinely directed to look in our own

back yard, (in near-by Newport, Tenn.) and there they found acres of diamonds. There the members of the Committee discovered the man and his wife exactly suited to the needs of the church—Dr. J. P. Allen, who began his ministry with the church in May, 1943. The only objection voiced by anyone was his youth. He soon dissipated any fear on that account, for he quickly demonstrated the fact that he has a wise head on his young shoulders. He has met and solved the problems (he inherited some immediately upon his arrival) as they arose.

Dr. Allen preaches the pure gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with conviction and power. His popularity with both young and old increases daily. Especially strong is his hold on the youth of the congregation and community. As College Pastor at Virginia Intermont College, he is heartily appreciated and loved by the faculty and student body. So great is the demand for his services throughout the entire South and even outside the South, to hold meetings, take part in Religious Emphasis and Christian Focus Periods in Colleges and Universities that his calendar is constantly crowded, and yet he can only accept a small percentage of the invitations that come to him. The church is trying to be generous as possible in sharing the time of this popular minister with others. Dr. Allen is growing and his church is growing with him. Since he began his ministry with the church, up to Aug., 1949, there have been 803 additions to the membership.

Dr. Allen's wife has endeared herself to everyone not only in the church, but to all with whom she has come in contact throughout this entire section. She is especially endowed by nature and fitted by special training to be the wife of such a model Pastor as Dr. Allen is proving himself to be. His success is due in no small measure to her influence.

## A Missionary Church

From its earliest period, the church has been missionary in spirit and practice. Not only were contributions made to Home and Foreign missions all along the way, but the church, even while a mission enterprise itself, soon began to establish and foster mission centers in the community. A mission station that was later called an "Arm of the Church" was established at Sparger's Cotton factory. Rev. W. S. Leak preached there and in 1888 the Sunday School there had 52 members. The Sparger Mission is referred to frequently in the minutes of the church and it was evidently quite successful.

Letters of dismission were granted in 1865 to 42 colored members of the church to form a Baptist Church of their own, now known as the Lee Street Baptist Church. More about this interesting event later on in this story. In 1890 letters were granted to 24 members to form a new Baptist church at the Sparger Mission to be known as "South Bristol Baptist Church." That church was regularly organized in 1890 under the care of Rev. Upchurch. In 1898 a deed was secured to the property.

In 1898 a Committee was appointed to aid in selecting and buying a lot in West Bristol suitable for a mission church. From this came the West Bristol Baptist Church organized in 1899. To this enterprise the First Church gave "earnest moral support and contributed \$200 the first year on salary of the Pastor." Nov. 21, 1900, the First Church moved "to guarantee to pay the difference between \$400.00 and the amount raised otherwise in Bristol towards the salary of Rev. H. W. Bellamy, pastor of the West Bristol Church." Aid was also given by the First Church on the building of West Bristol Church.

When Dr. Hening was pastor in 1902, he reported to the church the names of quite a number who had joined in a meeting held at the Chalmers Street Church. In 1904, the church, having bought a new organ, donated the old organ to the South Bristol Church. There is no Baptist church in Bristol now named Sparger Mill nor South Bristol Church, and the writer is unable to discover from the records of the First Church just what became of those mission stations.

The latest city mission project of the First Church is the Good Will Center Mission on Norfolk Ave., Bristol, Va.

## An Evangelistic Church

From the very beginning, the church has been evangelistic. Revival meetings were held from time to time. Before the prominence given the organized Sunday School as a recruiting agency of the church, revivals were almost the sole means of ingathering members. Under Brother Worley's ministry in 1879 we read: "The church was gloriously revived and often during the series of meetings the members were made to rejoice together in the hope of the glory of God and we met at the water's edge at 3 o'clock at which time the Pastor baptized in due and ancient form the following members (names of ten)." Again we read: "On the 16th day of April 1888, a precious revival meeting closed in which the pastor had been assisted by Rev. J. R. Harrison of Glade Spring, Va. The meeting lasted three weeks and resulted in the hopeful conversion of from 60 to 70 persons. There were 35 additions to the church.

"On Sunday, Oct. 8, 1887, Pastor R. D. Haymore baptized two ladies in the creek near Spargers Cotton Factory and on Nov. 6th another lady was baptized at the same place. All down the years revivals have been held more or less regularly, and special emphasis placed on evangelism."

## A Church Strong on Discipline

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the early church in contrast with the modern church was its extreme activity in disciplining its members. A great portion of the minutes of the church meetings was devoted to charges against various members for engaging in unchristian practices.

During the first thirty-five or forty years, the names of over 70 members are recorded as having been accused, tried, found guilty and excluded from the church. Some of the offenses for which members were "churched" and from whom the "hand of Christian fellowship was withdrawn" are listed under the following heads: repeated untruthfulness, fighting, too frequent use of ardent spirits, trafficking in ardent spirits, obtaining note under false pretense, attempting to falsify his word and written obligation, dancing, disorderly conduct, not in fellowship with all the members of the church, general absence from the church and for other unchristian conduct, assuming hostile attitude toward the Pastor that is unchristian and incompatible with proper relation between Pastor and member, setting at naught the authority of the church by leaving the church and identifying themselves with an organization started by excluded members from this body, (Sister—) leaving Bristol in company with a married gentleman under suspicious circumstances, drunkenness, lewdness, disorderly conduct unbecoming a Christian, swearing, immoral and irreligious conduct, taking the Lords' Supper with other denominations, permitting a bar room on his premises, drunkenness and stealing, etc.

On one occasion the motion to receive a member was rescinded before he was baptized because he was leading an "Unchristian" life. At first it seemed to be the custom for any member to prefer charges against a fellow member and this was done in open meeting before the whole church. This was the practice for nearly twenty years, when in 1877, Dr. J. F. Hicks offered the following motion which was unanimously adopted: "Resolved that all cases of discipline be referred to the officers of the church and its Pastor, as a Committee to be disposed of as they in their judgment may determine, subject to the approval of the church." This prevailed till we come down to the year 1885, when the following Brethren were appointed to constitute a "Vigilance Committee," W. F. Cooper, Jno. R. Dickey, T. F. Wood, and A. K. Brown, whose duty it shall be to look after the morals of the church." Prior to this, as early as 1870, a resolution had been passed that henceforth the business of the church be conducted with closed doors, and that only those who are members of the church be present.

BURSON'S  
CHURCH In 1872 a letter from the Baptist Church of Goodson was addressed to the Baptist Church at Jonesboro, Tenn., protesting the action of the Pastor, G. C. Thrasher of the Jonesboro church, in giving recognition to a disorderly body calling themselves "The Missionary Baptist Church of Goodson," and some times "The Second Baptist Church of Goodson." This so-called church was made up of members excluded from the Goodson Baptist Church for "Unchristian conduct." This is a long letter and is recorded on pages 48 and 49 of the original book of minutes of the church. The activities of this "disorderly" Baptist Church in Bristol are too many and the account is too long to be recorded in this brief history. No doubt it was a thorn in the flesh of the regularly organized body. Fortunately we can relate that most of the straying members finally came back into the fold.

If the extreme activity in disciplining its members was typical of all churches of the early period, and we have no reason to think otherwise,

then surely they did not believe in "sparing the rod and spoiling the (church) child." Perhaps those severe disciplinary measures were necessary to start the church on its serious path of duty to high moral ground of Christian living. Far be it from us to criticise them! Times and conditions change, and what suits conditions at one time will not work under changed conditions.

## Colleges

### *Bristol Female College and Virginia Intermont College*

Few churches have had more vital connection with higher education for women than the First Baptist, Bristol. This relationship began very early with Bristol Female College and continues to the present date with Virginia Intermont College. Dr. J. T. Kincannon was part owner if not the sole owner at first of The Female Institution. He was certainly the promoter of it, dividing his time and energies between the church and the school. On March 2, 1871, motion was made by the church "to purchase from Bro. Kincannon the property known as the Bristol Female College for the sum of \$5,500.00, on conditions offered by Bro. Kincannon." The following were elected trustees to manage the property: Z. L. Burson, J. M. Robinson, A. T. M. Provence, W. A. B. Waldrop, R. B. Boatwright, J. T. Kincannon, W. P. Hulse, W. J. Morrisett, W. P. Hamilton, A. H. Burroughs and George Ambrose, five of whom were to constitute a quorum for business." The trustees were authorized to employ an agent to solicit funds for the purchase of the property. Just what came of the effort to raise the money is not clear. We do know, however, that Z. L. Burson and others made an attack on Bro. Kincannon which attack the church considered wholly unjustified and those making the attack were expelled from the church. This occurred Oct. 1871. We also learn that two more of the above named trustees, A. H. Burroughs and George Ambrose were unanimously excluded from the church on Jan. 10, 1872, for "leaving the church and identifying themselves with an organization started by excluded members from this body . . . an irregular organization, self-styled a Baptist Church." Evidently the trustees, with three of their number no longer members of the church, were not successful in raising money for the church school. For in June 1872, Bro. Kincannon was released from pastoral duties till November to raise \$1,500 additional for the college. By April 1873, Dr. Kincannon, having accepted the General Agency of the College, tendered his resignation as Pastor, only to be re-elected Pastor in December 1874. He again offered to resign in Sept. 1875 in order to give his whole time to Bristol Female College. The church granted him six months leave for this purpose.

We find no further reference to this school till May, 1882 when, "delegates were appointed to represent the stock this church was entitled to in the next meeting of stockholders of Bristol Female College. Dr. J. A. Dickey and Brother G. N. Lockhart were appointed. With this appointment, so far as the church records show, the connection of the college

with the church comes to an end. We would like to know what became of the school and the church's interest in it. But so far as the church records reveal the school faded from the picture and like multitudes of other church-connected schools and colleges it passed out of existence. Doubtless very few who read this ever knew there was a Bristol Female College.

### *Virginia Intermont College*

Southwest Virginia Institute, now Virginia Intermont College, was located at Glade Spring, Va. in 1884. The members of the First Church, Bristol, had an active though not the leading part in founding the school. The financial agent was Rev. J. R. Harrison. He rode a famous horse named John-the-Baptist all over the hills and valleys of Southwest Virginia and other territory, gathering funds to found a school for girls. He secured enough money, perhaps ten or twelve thousand dollars, to construct a frame building in Glade Spring, Va. There Virginia Intermont had its humble beginning.

Very soon Bristol Baptists and other friends of Christian education took sufficient financial interest in the school as to induce the trustees to move it to Bristol. The meeting of the Trustees that reached this important decision was held in the home of Dr. Jno. R. Dickey, one of the members of the Bristol Baptist Church. Thus it came to pass that in 1901, the school was moved to its present magnificent site in the suburbs of Bristol and its name was changed to Virginia Institute.

From that time to this day the relationship of the school to the church has been of the most intimate nature, one of mutual help and advantage. It would be impossible to estimate which has received the greater benefit. Let us look first at what the church has done for the school. We have already noted that it was largely through the influence of the church that the school was moved to Bristol. This was attended with great rejoicing as the stately buildings arose and students flocked in from many states. But alas, money ran out and debt piled mountain high. The property was mortgaged to a Mr. Gary to secure money to complete the plant and pay off urgent obligations. Finally the Gary debt threatened the loss of the school to the denomination. It looked as though the school would have to go under the hammer. It is well within the bounds of truth to assert that but for the moral and financial support of the members of the First Baptist Church, the school would have been sold for debt. Baptists of Bristol literally poured their money by the thousands into the school to save it. And this support has been kept up all down the years. Whenever any sort of financial campaign is on for Christian Education, the members of the Old First have carried the major portion of the load for V.I.C. Is it any wonder that often the school has been thought of as belonging to the First Baptist Church? The members of that church saved it. This fact Baptists of Virginia should know and never forget.

The Pastors of the First Church have been the College Pastors. These have been able ministers and their influence upon faculty and students has been of incalculable good throughout the years.

The burden, not only of the debts of the school, but of administering its affairs from year to year, has rested largely on the local Trustees, and these have nearly always been members of the First Church. The unusual success the school has enjoyed has been due in large measure to the wise direction of these trustees. The First Church furnished the school these efficient leaders. This fact also should be known and never forgotten.

The church has furnished the faculty and student body every year with a beautiful auditorium, a dignified, stately worshipful atmosphere in which to find a church home during the formative years of college life. It would be difficult to see how any church could do more for a school than the First has done for V.I.C. The biggest job a school for girls can do is to train for Christian Motherhood, the greatest calling life can offer. The First Church has largely made that possible for V.I.C.

Now let us turn the picture and see what V.I.C. has done for the First Church. The college has brought to Bristol and to the church some choice leaders who have been loyal members that have done valiant service in the church: members and officers in the W.M.U., the Sunday School and Young Peoples Societies, Deacons, Trustees, and members of many committees. The college has brought as Executives some able men and women; notable among them are J. T. Henderson and Dr. J. F. Howell who served the church for 45 years and lived beyond his 102nd birthday, and Dr. R. L. Brantley. The college out of its meager funds has helped the church financially.

In 1908 the college donated to the church a reduction of \$402.88 on a note made by the church to Mrs. S. C. Hodges in part payment on the pastorium, which note Mrs. Hodges gave to the college in part payment of her donation to help build Hodges Hall at the college.

### *Music*

The contribution V.I.C. has made to the church in music is of such outstanding importance as to deserve special mention. For many years the college furnished the church with leaders in music free of charge to the church. Such distinguished teachers of music as Mr. Hanshue, Mr. Beckwith, Mr. and Mrs. Frederic Martin, Mr. and Mrs. S. T. Schroetter and others have all given freely of their time and talent to the church. The fact that the First Church as been noted for its excellent music may go down largely as a credit to the college.

For years, when the church was not able to pay for music, the college included in the salaries of its teachers of music provision that they were to furnish music for the church without charge to the church. That was true even down to quite a late date, in the case of Mr. and Mrs. Martin, Mr. C. P. Daniel and Mr. Schroetter.

Mr. Schroetter's service as Organist for the church has been long and eminent. He came to Bristol in 1906 as Professor of Music in Virginia Institute. The first record of his name in the church minutes is dated Sept. 25, 1907 when he was baptized into the fellowship of the church, and from that time even down to the present, Mr. Schroetter has been

Organist for the church. For the first eleven years he was not paid by the church. Mr. Schroetter also served for a time as teacher of the Baraca Class and also on the Board of Deacons with such illustrious men as Dr. Jno. R. Dickey, H. W. Powers, S. C. Hodges, H. G. Bramm, Dr. J. F. Howell, Charlie Brown. March 6, 1933 the Trustees of the College received a letter from the Board of Deacons of the Church expressing appreciation for music furnished to the Church by the college free of charge. At the present time, 1949, salaries are provided in the church budget for Mr. and Mrs. Schroetter as Organist and Choir Leader respectively.

## The Organ

A few words about the Organ may not be out of place in the story of the development of the Church. Let us quote from Dr. Rosser's Report of His First Ten Years as Pastor: "The next move related to the organ. Who can forget that wheezy little instrument inherited from the old church? If your memory is not fresh, Mr. Schroetter can revive it for you. Joe, the janitor, was the motor, while Schroetter manipulated the limited key board; and, led by that poor equipment for music, many a song went up to crowd heaven's gates with thankful praise. In 1914 I got in touch with the Carnegie Corporation of New York, stated our needs and made a humble plea for help. They replied that our building was not sufficiently completed." Again in 1917, Dr. Rosser applied for help, but still we had not met the conditions. Letters passed and finally the following letter was received June 6, 1917: "Responding to your appeal, The Carnegie Corporation of New York will be glad to provide the last half of the cost of an organ, not to exceed five thousand dollars, when the first half has been collected by the congregation and payment of the organ becomes due." This promise was limited to June 30, 1918. It was reported that this was the last organ the Carnegie people helped to pay for in churches. Whether that is true or not we do not know, but we do know something else that is important and of especial credit to the women of the church. They paid \$2000.00 of the church's half of the cost of the organ and the men of the church paid \$500.00.

"Thus," concluded Dr. Rosser, "we made a forward step, in securing the finest instrument located anywhere for many miles around Bristol, and a credit to any auditorium in the state."

## Trustees

From the very beginning the legal aspects governing the church property have been carefully guarded. We find as early as April 22, 1859, W. W. Weathers, W. J. Betterton, A. Edwards, I. W. Wingfield and Jos. Street were named as Trustees to have legal trust of the lot that was purchased upon which to build a church house. This Trustees Board has been kept, with the necessary changes in personnel, to the present time when the Trustees consist of J. L. Cooper, M. H. Copenhaver, E. R. Dickey, L. H. Pruner and H. G. Noffsinger, Chr.

Dec. 3, 1934, Bro. W. H. Rouse discussed the duties of Trustees from a legal point of view under the following eight heads:

1. The laws of Virginia do not limit the number of trustees.
2. The trustees must be recommended by the church and approved by the court of the state before they can transact business for the church.
3. If church property were to be sold, the Board of Trustees must go before the court and show that it is the wish of the church for such action to be taken and get the approval of court to sell such property and make a deed for same.
4. The church cannot make a contract. The Board of Trustees, a Committee appointed by the church or the Board of Deacons may make a contract, and they are held responsible individually and collectively for the fulfillment of same.
5. The church cannot be taxed by the state of Virginia.
6. The church cannot be incorporated.
7. The church cannot own more than two acres in town.
8. The church cannot own more than 75 acres in the country.

## Deacons

The names of the first Deacons are not found in the Minutes of the church, but they were eight in number. In Oct. 1911 the number was increased to 15: H. W. Powers, C. C. Minor, H. G. Bramm, S. C. Hodges, A. P. Moore, Jno. R. Dickey, Dr. J. T. Henderson, W. E. Sams, T. H. Koty, H. C. Purvine, J. H. Gose, J. P. Young, Dr. A. L. Dykes, S. N. Christian and J. G. Tilley.

After twenty years, in 1931, the number was again increased, this time to 21 which remains to the present time. At that time the Board consisted of: C. M. Brown, Chr., A. E. Reynolds, Ernest Dickey, Roy Taylor, H. W. Powers, C. C. Wilson, S. P. Earhart, L. S. McGhee, Jno. L. Cooper, S. T. Schroetter, T. C. Smith, M. H. Copenhaver, H. G. Noffsinger, J. S. Salyer, R. P. Ellison, Dr. T. R. Bowers, J. B. Redford, Roland Weekley, Lewis Moore, A. H. Hawthorne and H. H. Ellis.

Five of the 15 whose time expired that year were succeeded by T. M. Sampler, J. F. McEver, R. J. Mottern, E. K. Everett and W. B. Hulsey.

For the year 1949, the following Deacons have served:

Ernest H. Dickey, Chr.	F. R. Davidson, Sec'y	Geo. W. Leavell
R. M. Boggs	G. L. Ainslie	P. E. Caldwell
Guy Carter	A. S. Doak	M. H. Copenhaver
J. L. Cooper	W. S. Erwin	Earl Francisco
H. C. Epperson	W. B. Hulsey	F. R. O'Dell
J. S. Hawthorne	J. R. Laws	S. O. Snodgrass
H. C. Purvine	R. H. Spiro	Roy Taylor

# Organizations

## *Men's Brotherhood*

The Men's Fraternity which has now merged into The Men's Brotherhood, a Southwide Organization, was first organized Oct. 1921, with a membership of sixty. It was to meet monthly and be served by the ladies after each Deacon's Meeting. After the first meeting the Deacons voted the payment of \$50.00, the cost of supper and dishes purchased. Also a letter was written extending thanks and appreciation to the members of the Men's Fraternity of the Central Baptist Church of Johnson City, Tenn. for their visit and their valuable assistance in the organization of our Fraternity.

We find in the minutes of the Deacon's Board, under date of March 6, 1933, the following item: "Committee of Dr. T. R. Bowers, Dr. W. W. Hurt, S. T. Schroetter, Roland Weekley, and H. G. Bramm appointed to organize A Men's Fraternity in the church." And on April 3, 1933 we find: "Dr Hurt reported on the organization of *The Men's Brotherhood* of the First Baptist Church."

## *Woman's Missionary Union*

By MRS. H. C. EPPERSON

From the very earliest date down to the present day, the women of the church have been most active, especially in all phases of missionary activity and young people's work.

A meeting of several women of the Goodson Baptist Church was held Dec. 31, 1882 for the purpose of organizing a Woman's Missionary Society. Rev. J. T. Kincannon was pastor at that time and assisted in the organization. Beginning with only a few members who believed sincerely in the cause, they worked hard and grew for a time. In the latter part of 1884 they disbanded, but reorganized early in 1885 and their organization was then known as the Ladies Aid Society. A Sunday School Class of Young Women not enrolled in the Ladies Aid was organized into a Young Women's Missionary Society in Feb. 1885. Their teacher was Miss Lydia Good and she was their first President. The two societies joined later forming the Woman's Missionary Union.

Believing in the Word: "Train up a child in the way he should go," an organization was started in Dec. 1886 by the Ladies enrolling the children of the church in definite Christian work.

In 1896 the Missionary Society of the church joined the other associational organizations, forming the Woman's Missionary Union of the Lebanon Association.

During the early years of the Ladies Aid and the Woman's Missionary Society, the work of these was largely devoted to the needs of their own church members. They believed profoundly in the cause of Christian education, and did a great work in helping in many ways Virginia Institute which was having a struggling existence at that time.

However as the church developed the Women caught a larger vision, and began to reach out into the great mission fields of the world. Also at home they had a great part in helping to organize and sponsor mission stations in the city. In their offerings they included generous contributions to State, Home and Foreign Missions.

By the early 1900s every phase of the Baptist Women's Work was a part of the W.M.U. Program. The first Young People's Leader who had been trained in Religious Work and Leadership was Miss Myrtle Smith, who came in 1932 to the church from the Training School in Louisville. However, Mrs. Arthur Byrd of the local organization had been doing valient service as Acting Leader for five years before the coming of Miss Smith.

The W.M.U. has been most fortunate in the Young People's Leaders it has secured for the important work with the young people of the church. Miss Frances Hughston followed Miss Smith and began her work in 1943. She was succeeded in 1945 by Miss Doris Rippey and Miss Billy Childress. All these were truly answering the call to be co-laborers with Him.

At the present time the President of the W.M.S. of the church is Mrs. Earl Francisco and the Associational President of the W.M.U. is Mrs. H. C. Epperson. The report to the Lebanon Association for 1946 shows the following for the First Baptist Church, Bristol: One W.M.S. with 247 members, one Y.W.A. with 18 members, two G.A.'s with 33 members, two R.A.'s with 21 members, and two Sunbeams with 27 members. The total contributions given by the W.M.U. (the eight societies named above) was \$2,090.00.

## Church Covenant

Oct. 28, 1878 A Church Covenant was adopted as follows: "Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage therefore, by the aid of the Holy Ghost, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of his church in knowledge, holiness and comfort, to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions, to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances, to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings; faithful in our engagements and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, back biting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and

use of intoxicating drink as a beverage, and from dancing, and attending such places of public amusement as may be detrimental to individual Christian influence and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense but always ready to reconciliation, mindful of the rules of our savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible, unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this Covenant and the principles of God's Word."

"*The Declaration of Faith*" can be found recorded in 18 sections on pages 130-133 inclusive of the original church record book. Also in the same book on page 134 may be found "The Manner of Conducting Business."

All of the above were recorded Oct. 28, 1878.

A Covenant for North Carolina Baptists written about the year 1757 may be found on page 401 of Pascal's "History of North Carolina Baptists, Volume I." That covenant was probably written by Shubal Stearns. Dr. Pascal says, "If Stearns wrote or inspired this covenant, he had a sublimity of soul which few men have attained." Dr. Pascal further says that if Stearn did write the body of the Covenant that the preamble and the concluding paragraph, containing Calvinistic elements, must have been added later by some one else. The particular phrases referred to read as follows: "particular election of grace by predestination of God in Christ," and "free and boundless grace."

This covenant was written 121 years before the one adopted by the First Church, Bristol. All who are interested should by all means study this North Carolina covenant. It is too long to quote here. However, Dr. Pascal summarizes it as (omitting the Calvinism) the views of Stearns as to what a church should be—"a body of Christians who have unreservedly surrendered themselves to the service of God, living in sweet charity toward their brethren, seeking each the good of the other and of the church as a whole, supporting the ministry of the Word, holding what they have and themselves always at the disposal of the Lord, not forsaking the assembling themselves together, submitting themselves to the discipline of the church, as a part of Christ's mystical body, guided by the word and Spirit of God, looking for more light from God and believing that greater mysteries are still to be revealed."

## Colored Members

On a front page of the first book of minutes of our church is this statement: "*A List of Colored Members Dismissed to Form a Church.*" There follow the names of 17 males and 25 females. That's all; no record when they became members, no date as to when they were dismissed except that after three names, "dismissed by letter March 7, 1863."

Our colored Baptist brethren have been more careful in keeping their church records than we have been. We find no records of our church prior to Nov. 28, 1862, at which time the church was a going organization. There is also a gap in the recorded minutes of 4½ years from March 1863 to Oct. 1867. By consulting the records of the Colored Baptist Church of Bristol, we find a most interesting event that occurred during this period for which we have no record, and that is that the colored members were granted their letters in the year 1865. The record of the Lee Street Colored Baptist Church is in possession of William Brown, a leader in that church. It begins as follows: "It was in the year 1865, at the dawn of freedom, while the gloom and shadows of the awful nights of slavery still lingered, that thirty-nine (39) members of African descent, belonging to the White Baptist Church of Bristol, Va., feeling that they could render more efficient service to God and humanity in a church separate from that of their White Brethren, withdrew, without any provocation, they made application to the church for letters of dismissal and organized themselves into a little band known in primitive days as The Anglo African Baptist Church of Bristol, Va. And midst poverty, ignorance and superstition, with no spiritual leader but the Angel Jehovah, no shepherd but Christ, no Guide save the Holy Spirit and the inspired Word, they launched forth as an Independent Baptist Church." This little band grew, and now they have a membership of about 500, and a substantial brick church constructed in 1902. And so we find that it was in 1865 that 39 colored members received their letters in a group. Three had previously been granted their letters of dismissal. There are some interesting questions that we should like answered. How did so many (comparatively speaking) colored people become members of the Baptist Church in so short a time? What is more remarkable is that of the 42, there were 16 named King. We know that slaves usually were given the last name of their masters and belonged to their masters' church. Practically all the Kings in this entire section have always been and still are Presbyterians. How did 16 colored men and women named King become members of a Baptist Church so quickly? We think it is to the credit of Baptists that this was the case. In Mark's Gospel, 12:37 it is recorded of Jesus that "The common people heard him gladly." Matthew 11:5 states that Jesus said in proof of his Messiahship that "the poor have the gospel preached to them." So after all it should not be an unanswered question as to why poor ex-slaves flocked to the Baptist fold as soon as they had the opportunity.

## A Growing Church

In Bristol Baptists have grown in numbers from seven in 1859, when the First Church was founded, to ten Baptist churches, as listed in the Bristol city directory, with fully six thousand members. The history of this growth in Bristol is of intense interest and should be written for the information and inspiration of future generations. In this forward move-

ment the First Baptist Church has had no small part. A brief review of the growth story is presented here and with this summary the history will end.

The following digest of additions and improvements which were made in the latter part of the present decade will indicate the direction the church has taken. A full-time Church Secretary was added to the church staff in 1943. In 1948 an Educational Director took the place of the Young Peoples Director which had been the pattern for a number of years. Mrs. Autry S. Doak was the first secretary in the church office and her efficiency straightway made the place of the Church Secretary indispensable. Mr. Claud Gilstrap, who came to the church in March of 1948, was the first of the Church's Directors of Religious Education. The coming of Mr. Gilstrap loomed large in the quick increases in the Sunday School and Training Union programs. To accommodate these new staffs members, the church furnished and equipped a suite of offices which are well prepared to take care of the church's business. A church library was added in 1945. From a small beginning of 300 volumes, the library has grown to more than 600 with an annual appropriation in the budget to keep the book lists up to date.

Strong emphasis was laid on adequate equipment and decoration of the church plant to make it both useful and conducive to worship. The auditorium received an expert paint job in 1944 which beautifully emphasizes the Corinthian architecture. The church windows, which dated from the construction of the present building, were demolished by the explosion of a gasoline station diagonally across the street in February of 1947. New windows were installed in 1948, inclosed in one-piece steel frames. The great remaining need of the physical appointments of the church auditorium at this writing is a new carpet, an order for which had already been placed in late 1949.

The Sunday School witnessed rapid growth in its departmental and class organization. In 1948 a modernized and completely equipped Nursery division was put into operation. The Nursery included three departments with adequate equipment to take care of small babies in bed, this department being officiated over by trained nurses as their service to the church. This equipment made the First Baptist Church one of the few churches in the Southern Baptist Convention thus far advanced in a childrens ministry. A significant stride was made in October of 1949 when three new departments were added on Promotion Day. Each of the Junior and Intermediate Departments was divided into two, and a new Young Adult Department was created with a starting enrollment of more than 50. One of the keynotes of the Sunday School at the close of the present decade is the stride made in the number of awards for training by Sunday School teachers and officers. The First Baptist Church led the state of Virginia during the entire year of 1949 in training awards and appeared certain to set even new records in 1950. Training Union advancement had also been of prime importance. During March of 1949 the First Baptist Church of Bristol went into the lead in the state of Virginia for Training Union

average attendance. That lead was held throughout 1949. The Training Union advanced from an attendance of less than 50 in 1943 to an average attendance of between 175 to 200 by 1949.

Beginning in 1946 the church began to broadcast some of its morning services. Facilities of WOPI-AM and FM and WFHG were used until 1948 when the church signed a contract with station WCYB, a ten thousand watt, clear-channel station, for the broadcast of its morning worship service on the fourth Sunday of each month. Emphasis also was placed upon the ministry to college students. Buses went to each campus on Sunday mornings to bring the girls of Intermont and Sullins to Sunday School at no cost to themselves. In addition a "College Mother-Daughter" adoption plan made it possible for the girls to be taken into the homes of church families to receive an added service there.

The Goodwill Center of the First Baptist Church came under church management in January 1948. The Center had been in operation for about two years under the control of the Bristol Group of the Lebanon Association W.M.U. From the first, members of this church had taken the lead in giving and serving in this mission project. All property was deeded to the church under the provision that it would carry on the program alone. From 1948 the church employed full-time directors to supervise the work, which by 1949 reached an enrollment of approximately 200 with an average attendance of 170. The Goodwill Center is designed to apply the full Gospel to every realm of the life of an under-privileged community. Progress is seen everywhere, not only in conversions and additions to the church but also in the personal and home lives of the people who attend.

Perhaps the most significant item of growth was reflected in the financial program. The church's over-all giving as late as 1942 was about \$18,000.00 per year. Such was the average budget for several years, with missionary gifts being set at \$4,000.00 per annum. (This does not include building projects.) By 1949 the total gifts to the church were above \$48,000.00. The missions giving rose from \$4,000.00 to approximately \$12,000.00, including the full salary of the Church's own missionary, Miss Cornelia Leavell, to China and Hawaii. The following budget which was passed by the church for 1949 expenditures indicates the proportion of the church's work:

## Budget For The Year 1949

### CURRENT EXPENSES

Choir Director, Organist Salaries.....	\$ 850.00
Assistants' Salaries.....	220.00
Pastor's Salary.....	6,000.00
Educational Director's Salary.....	4,000.00
Office Secretary's Salary.....	1,620.00
Janitor's Salary.....	1,625.00
House Rent—Pastorium.....	900.00

Pastor's Annuity and Retirement.....	120.00
Convention Expenses.....	250.00
Pulpit Supply.....	300.00
Boy Scouts.....	50.00
Flowers .....	60.00
Lebanon Association Minutes.....	40.00
Printed Music.....	75.00
Nursery Expense.....	120.00
Baptist Training Union.....	250.00
Radio Broadcasting.....	150.00
Church Library and Film Service.....	100.00
Kitchen Management.....	600.00
Staley Apartment.....	75.00
Insurance .....	400.00
Cleaning and Laundry.....	60.00
Fuel .....	850.00
Janitor and Church Supplies.....	300.00
Telephones .....	125.00
Church Office Expense.....	125.00
Stationery, Printing, Postage.....	450.00
Water .....	50.00
Lights and Electric Service.....	500.00
United Tennessee Dry Forces.....	50.00
Maintenance and Equipment.....	4,500.00
Miscellaneous .....	600.00
Total Current Expenses.....	\$25,415.00

#### MISSIONS

Co-operative Program.....	\$ 5,500.00
Cornelia Leavell Mission Salary.....	2,000.00
Goodwill Center Operating Expense.....	2,015.00
Goodwill Center Director's Salary.....	2,400.00
Lebanon Association Missionary.....	300.00
Virginia Baptist Home for Aged.....	1,000.00
Total Missions.....	\$13,215.00
TOTAL BUDGET .....	\$38,630.00

## The First Baptist In 1949

The church is fully organized with the following Boards and Committees: Deacons and Trustees Boards and Committees of Finance, Care of Property, Auditing, Pulpit Supply, Visitation, Sick and Flowers, Publicity, Music, Relief and Charity, Scout Troop, Welcoming, Ushering, Insurance, Lords' Supper, Baptismal, Social, Library, Servicemen, Faculty and Church Cabinet. The Pastor is a good organizer. Under his efficient leadership, the church is making steady and substantial progress in building the Master's Kingdom.

The following data is taken from the Report of the First Baptist Church, Bristol, to the Lebanon Baptist Association meeting August 18-19, 1949.

Baptisms during the year 43, additions by letter and otherwise 113, losses 73. Total resident members 916, non resident members 345. Grand total membership (Aug. 1949) 1261. Sunday School enrollment 848, average attendance 451. Gifts during the year to Missions \$11,161.51. Total Gifts \$48,286.18.

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