

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF GATLINBURG

Information concerning the beginning of First Baptist Church of Gatlinburg was taken from microfilm stored in the Sevier County Public Library.

“First Saturday, November 1817: A petition from the White Oak Flats for a church meeting to be held there on the third Saturday of the month at Henry Bohanon’s and the church appointed Brethren Jonas Moon, George Moon, George Oldham, and James Breeden and as many more as can attend.”

Apparently, the November meeting was a gathering for the purpose of discussing the forming of a Baptist Church in the community of White Oak Flats, the first name of the city of Gatlinburg.

“First Saturday in December, 1917: Spencer Clack, Little Pigeon Church clerk... The committee reported their work at White Oak Flats. One joined by experience, one by letter. The body wants to be an arm to the Church in The Forks. Membership was 14: Thomas Ogle and wife, Hercules Ogle and wife, John Roberts and wife, Isaac Ogle, Middleton Whaley, William Whaley and wife, Sarah Huskey, Metty Bohanon, Sarah Thurman, and Marthy Ogle. The church at the Forks of Pigeon agrees to receive the above named members into her body and grant them the privilege of an arm to do business with help from the body.”

Reverend John Roberts became the first pastor on the first Saturday of June 1818. A petition to become a church was drawn up the third Saturday in September 1836. “Appointed Brother Jeremiah Reagan to draw the petition and William and Harkless Ogle to carry same to the body at the next meeting.”

The second Friday of June 1837: “Articles of Faith read to church. Church and presbytery kneel in prayer. Church receives charge from Presbytery, gives church hand of fellowship and love. Pronounced ‘A constituted church.’

Reverend Eli Roberts served as pastor from 1838 to 1848. Other pastors from 1838 to 1877 included Richard Evans, Asa Lemons, and Richard Evans for the second time.

Men serving on the first building committee were “Elijah Ogle, Isaac Bradley, and John Owenbey.”

It is recorded that on the first Saturday of April, 1861, the church made a land purchase: “...paid \$10 for piece of land in District II in White Oak Flats on bank of Basken Creek, a quarter of an acre.”

White Oak Flats Baptist Church became the Gatlinburg Baptist Church July 12,

1932, later to be name First Baptist Church of Gatlinburg. A parsonage built in 1936 was debt free by July 11, 1937 when the church celebrated the hundredth year.

After one hundred years of progress, First Baptist Church of Gatlinburg had grown to be a church providing educational facilities for 535 with a beautiful sanctuary seating 584. There was a three-manual pipe organ and the value of the church was in excess of one million dollars. The pastor at that time, Dr. Charles Maples, served the church for 27 years, until April 8, 1984. Dr. Marvin Cameron became pastor in 1989.

The above history was supplied by Jewel Dodgen, Lucinda Ogle, and Herb Clabo and the following supplement came from Dennis Colwell, Administrative assistant and Organist:

In 1991, the congregation of First Baptist Church completed a new church facility, built on 10 acres of land on Highway 321 north of Oglewood Lane. The new facility allows for increased educational space, potential for more sanctuary seating, parking, and handicap accessibility. The three-manual pipe organ used by the congregation since the 1950s has been re-installed with some modifications and additions.