

The Auburn First Baptist Church 1838-2013



JOHN H. JEFFERS

With Additions by J. Wayne Flynt

The Auburn First
Baptist Church
1838-2013

SECOND EDITION

John H. Jeffers

With Additions by
J. Wayne Flynt

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To Jeanette
My Co-Pastor of 49 Years

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of Dr. J. Wayne Flynt in updating the history of
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Foreword

In 2011 I celebrated both my 50th wedding anniversary and my 50th year as an historian. For two-thirds of those years, my wife and I have been members of Auburn First Baptist Church. Not surprisingly, if you know those two facts, you can understand why I love this church so much. Like me, it is *old*. In a couple of decades, our church we will celebrate its 200th birthday. And our history boasts venerable traditions and an amazing cast of characters.

Many Auburn University presidents have sat where we sit on Sunday morning. I. T. Tichenor, an ordained Baptist minister and first president of API, was a member and often preached here.

Spright Dowell, a president who locked horns during the 1920s with football-crazed alumni because he insisted that athletes and coaches conform to the same rules as other students and faculty, received the enthusiastic support of this congregation as well as the town's Methodists, though he was fired anyway. Harry Philpott, one of the most beloved university presidents, and also a Baptist minister, reminded the congregation in one of his sermons that, based on denominational preference, Auburn was the largest Baptist

university in the world.

In the gallery of pastors in the hall outside the church office, the first portrait on the right as you enter the church depicts a man with wire-rimmed glasses, red hair, twinkling eyes, and an impish grin. His name is Augustus Young Napier.

After two older, settled pastors turned the church down, Napier accepted right out of seminary to become pastor in the first year of the 20th century. He was young, inexperienced, single, and remained pastor only three years. The church changed rapidly and so did he. Membership mushroomed. He felt called to become a missionary in China.

And then he met Lois Davie, a 16-year-old Judson College student from Clayton in Barbour County. While visiting friends one summer at API, she attended services here and talked to the young pastor whose portrait is now on the wall downstairs. She later wrote that “it was a simple case of love at first sight.” After she finished at Judson, they married, spending their honeymoon in Shanghai on the way to their mission station in Chengchow.

Napier pastored both Chinese and Russian émigré churches in Shanghai, served as secretary of the Central China Mission, taught in the Baptist Bible School at Chungking as well as in a boys’ high school.

On furlough in America in 1922, he wrote a brilliant dissertation entitled, “The Challenge of China to America.” Though he acknowledged that physical needs could not be separated from China’s need for Jesus as Savior and Lord, nonetheless he urged Christians to address the nation’s poverty, the subordination of women to men, inadequate housing, and especially the lack of medical care. Above all, he wrote, medical

missionaries should be appointed to bring the love of God to China's suffering millions.

Incidentally, their son, Campbell Napier, became a Baptist minister in America, though after a long pastorate of a Baptist church in Virginia, he was hounded out for opposing racial segregation.

His brother, Davie Napier, was accused by some Alabama Baptists of heresy while teaching theology at Judson, his mother's *alma mater*, and he left the state to become a Fulbright Fellow in Germany, and later chaplain at the University of Georgia, Stanford University, and Yale. He became president of the Pacific School of Religion and ended his career as Holmes Professor of Old Testament Criticism and Interpretation at Yale University.

When you become a part of this congregation, you become part of a specific past, a history of faithful and courageous, free-thinking Christians, who have carried the Gospel around the world.

That is why, as Auburn First Baptist celebrates its 175th anniversary, my wife and I are so proud to be part of this tradition, this history, and this church.

Wayne Flynt
Auburn, Alabama
December 2013

Preface

Two factors converged to produce this present work. The first was my own desire to leave the church with my perception of our 28-year relationship as pastor and people in the form of a memoir. The second was a request from the committee planning the church's sesquicentennial celebration that I attempt to write a history; thus, the two parts, a history and a memoir. Part three is a brief collection of articles written for the weekly bulletin, *The Auburn Baptist*.

Since there are no church records prior to 1880, the first two chapters of the history have been reconstructed from other sources referring to the church and from information derived from biographical sketches of the early pastors. Previous histories by Mary Reese Frazer, Leland Cooper, and L. M. Ware have been most helpful.

As in all such endeavors, the author is indebted to many, among whom are David Rosenblatt and Bev Powers of the Auburn University Department of Archives, and Elizabeth C. Wells, archivist at Samford University; Dot Mitcham and John Cope for preparing the manuscript; and especially to Wayne

Flynt and Mary Virginia Moore for reading the manuscript and offering numerous helpful suggestions. Students John Alford and Glenn Crocker created the stained glass which appears on the cover.¹

The reader will find numerous evidences of literary inexperience for which the author is duly apologetic. He trusts that the work will be received with the same charity with which the congregation tolerated his pastoral efforts for 28 years.

John H. Jeffers
Still Waters, Alabama
October 1989

1 The cover of the first edition.

Part I



1838-1958

A History

Chapter 1

Beginning

Sunday, June 19, 1838—a small group of Christians of the Baptist persuasion came together, probably in someone’s home, to constitute the Auburn Baptist Church in the newly settled “loveliest village of the plains.” They came together around ten articles of faith, a church covenant, and rules of decorum commonly used by churches being organized in that era. (See *Appendices 1, 2, and 3.*)

According to Hosea Holcombe’s *History of the Baptists in Alabama*, Elder Obadiah Echols of Columbus, Georgia was called as the first pastor. Echols was born in Wilkes County, Georgia in 1785 which would have made him 53 years of age when he assumed the pastorate of the new church at Auburn. Pastor Echols served the church for five years, became a substantial landowner in the area, and was one of three men appointed by the governor of Alabama to conduct the first election in Auburn. He moved to Mississippi where he lived for approximately fifteen years before returning to Tuskegee to live with his son during the evening of his life. He died at the ripe old

age of 85.

In a memorial piece, the *Alabama Baptist* of July 18, 1883 described him as follows: “As a preacher, Mr. Echols belonged to the old style, without much method, but earnest, always entertaining, quaint, and at times somewhat tedious. In his method of speaking he was deliberate, occasionally quite emotional, and but for a habit of taking after a side thought at times, would have been effective; indeed, he was quite useful whenever his mind became deeply interested in his subject and when engaged in revival meetings. The churches he served in the days of his manhood enjoyed a fair degree of prosperity.”

Some of the names of the first Baptist families were Swanson, Sole, Mason, and Slaton. The minutes of the Liberty (East) Association Meeting in September of 1838 list William B. Ousley, Auburn’s first postmaster, along with Pastor Echols, as messengers applying for the church’s membership in the association. Holcombe’s history notes that Elder W. B. Jones, pastor of the Society Hill Church, was also a member of the church at Auburn.

Judge John Harper, founder of Auburn, was a generous Methodist. He gave land to the churches on which to erect their first buildings, as well as the land for Pine Hills Cemetery. In 1843 the Baptists received a lot where Toomer Street intersects West Glenn Avenue and erected a log building on it for their first house of worship. We may imagine it to have had a dirt floor with split logs for seating, probably housing no more than 25 or 30 persons. This building was soon inadequate and the second one was built in 1848 on the present site which was given by Mrs. Matthew Turner. Mary Reese Frazer describes this building in her *History of the Auburn Baptist Church* (see Appendix IX): “It

was an old-fashioned structure, with a long front porch and two entrances, one for the men and the other for the women and children. The pulpit was an old box concern with steps on either end, and doors to close the preacher in securely. The church seated about two hundred people, including the negroes, who occupied the back pews, there being no negro churches in those days.”

At the meeting of the Liberty (East) Association in 1838, Elder Echols was asked to preach, and chose his text from *Isaiah* 55:6-7: “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” The Auburn church continued in cooperation with this association until 1845 when it, along with 20 other churches, withdrew to form the Tuskegee Association. The name of the association “Liberty” (there were at least four other associations, and several churches in the state with the same name) indicates that the church was organized at a time when Baptists were seriously divided on the missions issue. W. C. Bledsoe, in his *History of the Liberty (East) Association*, explains: “At the time when the earliest settlers came to this part of Alabama, and during those years in which emigration was heaviest, considerable dissensions existed among Georgia Baptists on the question of missions, and the new settlers generally brought with them either mature opinions or deeply rooted prejudices on one side or the other.” In an effort to avoid a split in the newly formed association the following article was included in the constitution: “This Association shall not engage in the missionary institutions of the day, but leaves the churches

and members to exercise their judgment in all such cases.” Bledsoe concluded: “It is evident that this article was a concession by both parties—a kind of compromise measure; the Missionaries being content with the privilege of doing what they thought proper and the anti-Missionaries content in not being forced to enter into missionary enterprises.” Thus, the “liberty” idea was advanced as a probable solution to all the trouble.

The only information available about the second pastor of the church, a Reverend Thomas, is that he had a very unusual name. His full name was Edwin Champion Baptist Bowler Wheeler Nicholas Dema Stephen Resdin Carter Jackson Moore Thomas. He signed as E. C. D. B. Thomas. Ann Pearson in Nunn’s *History of Lee County* explains: “His mother dreamed three nights in succession that she was to have a son who would be a Baptist preacher. She also dreamed that his name would be as she gave it to him.” His tenure lasted just one year, 1843.

The church then enjoyed successive pastorates by brothers, Albert Williams (1847-1851) and William Williams (1852-1855). According to Ragsdale’s *Story of Georgia Baptists*, Albert Williams became professor of Ancient Languages at Mercer College in 1840, but after a few months, resigned due to ill health. Later he served pastorates at Athens, Columbus, Savannah, and Macon before moving to Alabama. When the old *South Western Baptist* newspaper was sold to the firm of Williams, Chilton, and Echols of Montgomery in 1852, Albert Williams became co-editor along with Samuel Henderson.

The younger of the two, William, was born at Eatonton, Georgia, March 15, 1821. He moved to Athens with his family at age 12, and received his undergraduate training at the University of Georgia where he “bore away the honors of his class.” After

law school at Harvard, he was admitted to the bar and established a law practice in Montgomery. He was ordained about 1851 and came to his first pastorate in Auburn. He resigned in 1855 to accept the position of professor of Theology at Mercer, and then in 1859 became one of the founders of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Greenville, South Carolina. Ragsdale observed that “Mercer’s hopes of becoming a Southern Seminary received a crushing blow when the Seminary was opened in Greenville. The climax of it all came when the new Seminary, about the same time, took from Mercer that peculiarly gifted and gracious theological teacher, Reverend William Williams.”

B. F. Riley adds: “In some respects he was a remarkable preacher. His method was the discovery and exhibition of the salient points of a subject, and grasping essential details so as to sum them up in comprehensive unity, and of making his conclusion so clear and convincing, that the hearer could hardly help believing that that was exactly the way he had always thought and felt upon the subject presented. Dr. Williams was a master of simplicity, and in preaching dealt largely in monosyllables.”

One imagines the next pastor to be of the folksy type. Mrs. Frazer recalls that he was known simply as Parson Jones and that he thought it very sinful not to be on speaking terms, which was the case with several members of his church. He made this remark one day in the pulpit, “Won’t speak to each other—why I’d even speak to the devil. I’d say ‘good morning, devil,’ and walk on.” She further recalls a sermon he preached when she was a young child. It was on “The Prodigal Son,” and he wept a good deal which caused her to weep also.

The next pastor to serve the church was Hardin Edwards Taliaferro (pronounced “Tolliver”). The exact dates of his tenure are not clear, but they must have fallen between mid-1856 and January of 1859. Irma Russell Cruse’s master’s thesis on Taliaferro includes the following reference to his pastorate in Auburn:

At the same time that Taliaferro was spending hours on his editing, he was beginning to feel the pull of community and church more and more. He was serving as minister (‘supply’ was the term used to describe his duties) to four small rural churches near Tuskegee, and did not affiliate with a home church for several months.

The four churches that needed a minister for monthly services were Auburn, Notasulga, Cotton Valley, and Bethel. In August 1856, Taliaferro joined the Tuskegee Baptist Church by letter from the Baptist church of Talladega.

Although this thesis states that Taliaferro remained a member of the Tuskegee church for his entire residence in this area, an article in the *South Western Baptist* of November 29, 1860 lists him as introducing a resolution signed by W. F. Slaton, clerk, in appreciation of M. B. Hardin’s pastorate at Auburn which begins as follows: “Whereas our beloved brother and Pastor in Christ...” This would appear to be evidence that he was, indeed, a member of the Auburn church during his tenure and for some time afterward.

Though we have no other information about his work at

Auburn, we know him to be one of the most influential Baptist leaders in Alabama from 1835 until after the Civil War. He was born in Surry County, North Carolina, in 1811, and as a young man moved to Roane County, Tennessee to make his home with his brother Charles. It was there that he was converted and called to preach; he also met, fell in love with, and married Elizabeth Henderson. Shortly after the birth of their first child, they moved to Talladega County, Alabama, where he pastored a number of churches and plied his trade as a tanner.

In 1855, the family moved to Tuskegee where he became junior editor of the *South Western Baptist* of which his brother-in-law, Samuel Henderson, was senior editor. It was in this ministry of the pen that he was most influential. In March of 1857 he published his first book, *The Grace of God Magnified—An Experimental Tract*. In this book, Taliaferro revealed his interest in classical studies in a bit of self-analysis: “I am a seventeenth century man in my theology and feelings... I have but little patience with, and taste for, most of our modern authors. They are too poor in thought and too shallow in piety.”

At his death on November 2, 1875, his brother-in-law, Samuel Henderson, wrote:

In person he was more than six feet in stature, erect as an Indian, character and force in every step and movement and look. His large face, tall brow and profuse hair and beard, attracted attention among a thousand.

Grand were the proportions and bearing with which nature had endowed him. His grave but benevolent face, and eye melting with a tear whenever anything

calculated to move the feelings occurred, he inspired confidence and made you feel you were backed by a great moral force, if attempting to do anything that was right and important.

No stranger but that was assured of a friend whenever he appeared, at a glance—the presence of one of nature’s noblemen, endowed with the greatest virtues. We shall not look on his like again.

Something of Taliaferro’s appraisal of Auburn is revealed in a dispatch to the *South Western Baptist* from Auburn, dated March 23, 1860:

Auburn’s schools are doing well. This is the first year of the Methodist College, and it has between 80 and 90 students in the college proper. Several students have left and some have been expelled. President Sassnett’s government is rigid, and bad boys must leave or be expelled. The President is right; rule bad, brainless boys, or make them leave.

The Preparatory School has 115 students, and is under charge of Professor W. F. Slaton. The Female School is doing well. Auburn has improved considerably since all these school interests have gone into operation.

Regular service is kept up in the Methodist and Baptist churches. Rev. W. F. Harrison is pastor of the Methodist church, and Rev. M. B. Hardin of the Baptist. The

Methodist people are strong here, on account of their school interests. The Baptist church and congregation are small, yet they are a united band of good brethren. Their young, talented and good pastor is zealous in promoting their interest.

Their young, talented and good pastor was Martin B. Hardin. He was born in Saint Joseph's, Florida, September 23, 1836. About the year 1842 the family moved to Columbus, Georgia, where he was educated for a career in law. He was converted in 1858 and licensed to preach by the Columbus church in October of the same year. Immediately afterward he was called to the pastorate of the Auburn church and was ordained in February of 1859. Thus, at age twenty-three he began a pastorate of two years which concluded when he accepted a call to the Union Springs church.

News items in the *South Western Baptist* indicate a variety of activities beyond his duties with his local membership, such as preaching the dedication service for a new church house at Society Hill, conducting a revival at the Farmville church, and participating, along with H. E. Taliaferro, in the organization of a new church at Opelika in November of 1859.

Following his pastorate at Union Springs in 1867, Hardin spent three years in Waco, Texas before accepting the call of the LaGrange Baptist Church where he served twelve years prior to his death, at age 48, in 1884.

A portion of the biographical sketch in *A History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia* reads as follows: "The churches of which Mr. Hardin has had charge have all made marked advancement under his administration. His Sunday

Schools have always prospered, and missionary and educational interests have ever received from him a vigorous and effective support. In the pulpit, Christ crucified is his constant theme. He loves the souls of his hearers, and eloquently tells the ‘old, old story of Jesus and his love,’ to win them to his Lord and Master.”

From Ann Pearson’s essay on Auburn in Alexander Nunn’s *History of Lee County*, we get a good picture of antebellum Auburn. Within ten years of its beginnings, Auburn boasted eight large dry goods stores, grocery stores, a shoe factory, a carriage factory, a bakery, jewelry stores, and several drug stores, one of which was located on what later became known as Toomer’s Corner.

From its beginnings, Auburn was devoted to a love of book learning, thus its schools were at the heart of the community then as now. Perhaps the most distinguished secondary school in the 1850’s was presided over by Professor W. F. Slaton, who after 1865 became superintendent of the Atlanta school system. Slaton’s Academy, located on Tichenor Avenue, where City Hall is today, served primarily as a preparatory school for the Alabama Conference Male College. Professor Slaton had a formidable reputation as a pedagogue and disciplinarian. As clerk of the Baptist Church, we can safely assume that he was among its most active and influential members, since the pastors at that time were probably non-resident and may have been in the community no more than one weekend each month.

These antebellum years were some of the most prosperous in Auburn’s history. Only ten years after its founding the town had moved from a survival society to one with enough leisure to cultivate social refinement. Though schools were prominent, the economy was based on the plantation system.

Plantation owners built large houses in town, at least two of which—the Scott Yarbrough house and Noble Hall—remain. These were the scenes of barbecues, Christmas celebrations, and other large social functions. The plantations ranged from 500 to 1,000 acres and the population by 1860 had reached 1,000 whites and 700 negro slaves. There were no more than six families in the town who were not slave holders.

Without any official records to go on, we may assume that the Baptist church—smaller than the Methodist—may have had a membership of 100 by this time, holding services one weekend out of each month with a conference on Saturday and worship services on Sunday with white participants seated in the front part of the building and slaves in the rear.

All was indeed well in the “loveliest village of the plains” until half past four in the morning of April 12, 1861, when the canon at the battery in Charleston Harbor fired on Fort Sumter, signaling changes unthought-of and unimaginable throughout the entire nation.

Chapter 2

War and Reconstruction

The Civil War devastated Auburn along with hundreds of other communities, North and South. Ann Pearson, in Nunn's history, quotes a letter to *The Montgomery Advertiser* from a C. C. Grayson of Selma:

Auburn was almost a deserted village at this time, the early '60's. I can't remember a single store that was open for business, though there must have been some. There were vacant buildings and grassgrown streets where goats by the hundreds took possession, and adding to the desolation, a terrible storm wiped out many houses, ours among them.

No more were the barbecues, the parties on pillared porches, the elaborate graduations of bright young girls. Far worse than the war, Auburn, like the rest of the South, faced reconstruction in a state of economic collapse.

The storm referred to in Grayson's letter is the single episode of these years in which the Baptist church is mentioned. Miss Leland Cooper's history reports: "The college and all church buildings in the town were used by sick and wounded soldiers as hospitals during the war. A violent storm in 1864 unroofed the Baptist church, but the roof rested on the tops of the pews and not a soldier nor volunteer nurse was injured: neither did any get wet by the downpour of rain that followed the cyclone."

Mrs. Frazer reported that during the years of the war the church was without a pastor, and the church house closed, except for those times when it was used as a hospital. In one review of those times, there is this simple statement: "When the war was over in 1865, Baptists were too poor to hold services."

In the early years of the war, former pastor H. E. Taliaferro was the senior editor of the *South Western Baptist*. It is probable that this paper reflected the prevailing view of Baptists as well as other Christians in the South. The following summary comment from the *Birmingham News* is quoted in the Cruse thesis: "When the Civil War broke out, the *South Western Baptist* took a pro-southern view. There were articles like 'War News,' 'The War and the Church,' 'How to Raise Money,' 'In Camp New Winchester,' and 'Interesting Religious News from the Soldiers.'"

Taliaferro's editorial stance was that secession was the right thing for Southern states, though he vigorously denied that resumption of the slave trade would be one of the results. He thought that the government in Washington would accept secession as fair and would not coerce the South—an attitude that was apparently changed by Lincoln's first inaugural address.

Soon after the war's end, the Baptist Church at Auburn

began to pick up the pieces. Mr. Alexander Frazer, father-in-law of the church's early historian, Mary Reese Frazer, contributed \$1,000 toward restoration of the church building, and in 1868, M. W. E. Lloyd was called as pastor and preached once per month for about ten years.

Brother Lloyd was born in Edgefield, South Carolina, on June 3, 1836. He was ordained in 1858 by the Ebenezer Baptist Church, Alabama, and served pastorates at Mt. Meigs, Ebenezer, Tuskegee, Auburn, Opelika, Seale, Alexander City, Salem, Notasulga, Loachapoka, and Cusseta. He pursued his education rather late in life, receiving the DD degree from Howard College in 1885.

B. F. Riley substantiates the impression that Lloyd's leadership and influence among the Baptists of East Alabama were among the most significant of his time. He writes:

About this time (1876), there was developed in eastern Alabama, a force of men and means that became preeminent in influence at a time when, with refreshing energy, the Baptists of the state were doing a work unapproached by that of any preceding period. Men of the type of I. T. Tichenor (then president of Alabama A & M and member of the Auburn church), J. P. Shaffer, Z. D. Roby, W. E. Lloyd, George E. Brewer, W. C. Bledsoe, and R. A. J. Cumbie, constituted a group that became conspicuous in progress and enterprise. Each of those named was a vital force in his sphere, and collectively, the group was unmatched in any other geographical part of the state. As an illustration of the zeal of the Tuskegee and East Liberty Associations, when it became known

that a strong, efficient general missionary was needed in northern Alabama, Rev. F. C. David was sent to that region through the combined contributions of these two bodies.

It appears that Dr. Lloyd was the first pastor of the church who made his home in Auburn and continued to live in the area throughout his life. At his death in 1914, Riley wrote:

The death of Dr. W. E. Lloyd which occurred near Auburn was a serious loss to the ministry of the state, and especially in the eastern part. For many years, Dr. Lloyd was pastor at Auburn and to other churches in that section. A man of substantial worth, an excellent preacher, a wise and sympathetic counselor, his long service in the ranks of the denomination was valuable. While most conservative of temperament, Dr. Lloyd was yet a man of fixed views, devout, and genial. He lived to a ripe old age (78) and to the end bore a reputation of honor.

As has already been seen, the Auburn church was blessed with some uniquely talented men in its early years. The giant among giants came on the scene in 1872, not as pastor, although he was an ordained minister, but as a lay leader. His name was Isaac Taylor Tichenor.

In his history of the First Baptist Church of Montgomery, Lee Allen says that I. T. Tichenor may have been the most outstanding pastor ever to serve that church—quite a bold statement in view of the many outstanding pastors that have

served that great church. He is universally regarded as one of the outstanding denominational statesmen in Southern Baptist history.

Tichenor resigned the presidency of Alabama A & M College in 1882 to accept the position of Executive Secretary of the Home Mission Board and served until retirement in 1899. One of his successors, J. B. Lawrence, evaluates his tenure:

Tichenor, during the years immediately following the Civil War, was the sturdy conservator of the Southern Baptist Convention. In no spirit of narrow sectionalism, but in absolute loyalty to what he regarded the most evangelical type of America's denominationalism, he contended heroically, and successfully, for the integrity of our great representative body. With the diplomacy of a statesman, the eloquence of an orator, the courage of a hero, and the devotion of a confessor, he kept in the column of harmony all the original southern states. To Tichenor more than any other man perhaps is due the solidarity of the denomination in faith and practice from Maryland to Texas, and from Missouri to Florida.

Because he is accorded so high a place in the history of Auburn, the South, and the Southern Baptist Convention, we record here a brief biographical sketch by his son-in-law, Dr. J. S. Dill (pastor of the Auburn Church, 1879-1881):

He was born in Nelson County, Kentucky, on the eleventh day of November, 1825. He was a precocious child and went to school at the age of four. He learned

rapidly and at sixteen was ready for the junior class in college. Sickness denied this. An attack of measles, followed by cold settling in the glands of his throat affected his vocal organs for life. His doctor told him not to worry about his throat for he would soon die of consumption. Also, when a boy, he had a serious bout with typhoid fever. The medical profession of the day had an inexorable law that no typhoid patient should drink cold water. The boy was perishing for water. When no one was in the room he slipped from the bed, crawled to the near-by spring and lying down with mouth in the water, drank his fill. He crawled back to his bed, was much better and soon well.

He was baptized and received into church membership when he was thirteen years of age.

Partly under the influence of his pastor he early entered the ministry and was known as the boy orator of Kentucky. He declined a call in Kentucky on account of health, for he was frail and only weighed 120 pounds. Instead, as agent for the Indian Mission Association, on horseback, he headed for Mississippi. When winter came and he could not travel, he settled in Columbus, Mississippi as supply pastor, and they soon called him to the pastorate and ordained him to the full work of the ministry.

In 1849 Tichenor attended the session of the Southern Baptist Convention. It was the third session of that body and it was to him a memorable trip and a great experience. He was

appointed to preach on Sunday afternoon and the sermon established his reputation. He was then just 24 years of age. At age 27, he was called to the First Baptist Church of Montgomery where he served for sixteen years except for two years when he served as a chaplain in the Confederate Army.

After a brief stint as manager of a coal mining company in Shelby County and a two-year pastorate at First Baptist Church, Memphis, he came to Auburn in 1872 as president of the new land grant college. Here he charted Auburn's transition from Methodist liberal arts college to the state's first land grant institution. He proclaimed the need for providing scientific training in agriculture and engineering and for better use of the state's resources to achieve any great and permanent improvement of the people.

As was true in most families in those early days, illness and death was a frequent invader. Tichenor's first wife, a Miss Cook of Columbus, Georgia, died after seven years of marriage. The second wife, a member of the Boykin family of Columbus, lived just long enough to bear him two daughters. After her death, he married her sister, but lost her as well as a daughter to malaria. In 1876 he married Eppie Reynolds McGraw, a widow from Talladega who died in 1878. Thus, the total number of years of married life for Isaac Taylor Tichenor amounted to less than seventeen. One can imagine the quality of pastoral ministry that stemmed from this strong lay member of the Auburn Baptist Church, refined in the crucible of personal suffering and loss.

There can be little doubt that during Tichenor's ten-year residence in Auburn his presence influenced the Baptist church more than that of any other person in its early history. For most if not all of these years, the church was served by its pastor only

one Sunday each month while Tichenor was present constantly. From the time he preached at the Southern Baptist Convention in 1849 until his death, he was involved in the life of that body. At the time he was a member of the Auburn church, he served as Alabama's representative on the Foreign Mission Board. In his book *Road to Recovery*, Joe Burton reports that "from the year he was host pastor to the Convention (1855 in First Baptist, Montgomery), at almost every session the name of Tichenor occurred as a member of committees, as the mover of motions, as a very vocal delegate."

That this was true during his tenure at Auburn is further certified in Burton's book: "At the same time, Tichenor never lost touch with his fellow Southern Baptists. He was in their councils. He served on their committees. He was recurrently a delegate to their conventions. He had contact with their Home Board in Marion to secure appropriations for churches, particularly his own in Auburn which needed the strong help of the denomination."

According to the best record we have, M. W. E. Lloyd's tenure as pastor ended in 1878 and that of J. S. Dill, Tichenor's son-in-law, began in 1879. Tichenor is listed as the pastor in 1878, but exactly how long he served is not clear. It is reasonable to assume that he acted as an interim pastor. His name is signed as moderator to the first minutes of the church in our possession, dated in February, 1880. The only other reference to him in the minutes records that he called for his church letter in December of 1882. He had accepted the call of the Home Mission Board Trustees to become the Corresponding Secretary of that Board, a position he held until his retirement in 1899.

Another layman whose name appears in almost every

minute of the church from 1878 until 1901 was Patrick Hues Mell, Jr. Born in 1850, the son of Patrick Hues Mell, Sr.,² outstanding pastor and college president in Georgia, young Mell entered the University of Georgia in 1866 and graduated in 1871. In 1872 he became a consulting mining engineer for the Bell Green Copper Mining Company and was State Chemist for Georgia from 1875- 1878.

In 1878, Dr. Mell was elected to the chair of Natural History and Geology in the A & M College of Alabama. During his 22-year tenure in Auburn he served as Director of the Alabama Weather service for nine years and as Botanist for the Alabama State Experiment Station. He left Auburn in 1900 to accept the presidency of Clemson University in South Carolina.

The next chapter will reveal something of the leadership role which this dedicated professor exercised in the Auburn Baptist Church.

2 Patrick Hues Mell, Sr. was president of the Southern Baptist Convention for more years than any other person in its history, 1863-1871 and 1880-1887.

Chapter 3

The Emerging Church

Recovery was slow and tedious, but steady in the South. So it was with the Auburn Baptist Church in the last two decades of the 19th century. The membership grew from just under 100 in 1880 to 140 by the turn of the century. Missions gifts increased from \$77 in 1880 to \$163 for 1897. During this period the church entered into a rebuilding program and constructed its first pastorium at a cost of \$2,000. Auxiliary organizations and committees began to appear indicating an interest in all phases of Christian growth and development.

The predominant lay leader throughout these twenty years was Patrick Hues Mell, Jr. His leadership in this era may be seen in these excerpts from the church minutes: In February of 1884 a Mission Society was organized and P. H. Mell was elected president. There were eleven names on the roll and they voted to meet once a month on Wednesday afternoon in conjunction with the prayer meeting. In 1888 he made a motion to establish a Finance Committee to raise money for the church and was promptly named chairman. In an apparent effort to

stimulate the membership to more liberal giving, he presented a ten-year report for the period 1880-1890 revealing that for this decade the church gave \$800 for missions, \$3,835 for the pastor's salary, and \$532 for current expenses.

He led in the building of the pastorium as indicated by the following resolution in the minutes of March 1889: "Resolved that the thanks of this church are justly due and hereby heartily tendered to Professor P. H. Mell for having planned and completed for us a pastor's home, beautiful in arrangement, substantial in material, neat in workmanship, and in cost, marvelously cheap."

Mell's concern for the well-being of the church went beyond the material. The minutes of February 1891 reveal that Brother Mell introduced the idea of improving the worship of congregational singing by providing hymn books for the congregation. He reported that books with verses only could be furnished for 45 cents each, and with notes, 90 cents each. Further evidence of his wide range of interest appears in the minutes of June 1898 when he raised the subject of dancing. Mell's motion that the church regard the form of dancing known as "modern dancing" as sinful was laid on the table for consideration at the next conference. The result was the adoption of a resolution. The church disapproved of its members attending and participating in "round dancing" in public places.

It can be safely assumed that Mell was regularly in attendance at the state and Southern Baptist Conventions. In February of 1895 he reported that at a recent meeting of the Southern Convention he had made a pledge of \$25 to the Home Mission Board Building Fund. The church voted to underwrite the pledge.

Pastoral leadership during this period was given by J. S. Dill (1879-81), M. W. E. Lloyd (1881-82), W. M. Blackwelder (1883- 84), W. E. Lloyd (1884-91), J. W. Willis (1982-94), and J. J. Cloud (1895-1900).

J. S. Dill was born in Carlowville, Alabama, on May 9, 1856. He was educated at Howard College and Southern Seminary, graduating at age 23. He was licensed to preach at Marion, Alabama, in 1874 and preached his first sermon at age 18. His first pastorate after seminary was at Montevallo where he met and later married Laura Lyman. She died in February of 1881 while he was serving his second church in Auburn. In July of 1882 he married Kate Tichenor, the daughter of I. T. Tichenor. Dr. Dill had a long and fruitful career as pastor in Alabama, North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina. He authored the biography of I. T. Tichenor and a collection of biographical sketches of Baptist preachers. Included in the latter is a brief autobiography which provides insight into the life of an interesting and effective preacher.

I am an old-time preacher and am better acquainted with myself than with any of the preachers whose life sketches I have recorded. It does not therefore seem improper to record a few incidents and experiences of my long ministry. I began to get acquainted with myself when I was four years old. My mother had the responsibility of keeping six children in the straight and narrow path. For this purpose she wore a pair of loose slippers. I remember those “slippers” and was vividly conscious that my lot was cast in “slippery” places. In after years I sent Mother a pair of slippers with this:

Ode to My Mother's Slippers

In days long, gone,
When I went wrong,
They followed in my rear.
But now tis meet That on her feet
These slippers she should wear.

Of his marriage to Kate Tichenor, he wrote:

On the sixth day of July, 1882, I was married to Kate Tichenor. She has now been my helpmeet for fifty- six years. When we celebrated our golden wedding six years ago we declined to give a reception and receive presents which in our old age we had no use for and did not want. Instead we went on a bridal tour into Virginia. We had a great time. On this trip Mrs. Dill carried the same hand satchel that she had as a bride. I claimed to do better than that, for I had the very same bride and she was better preserved than her satchel.

Church minutes reveal that Dr. Dill resigned the Auburn church in November of 1881 to take charge of the church at Union Springs. Thus, he became the second Auburn pastor to make that move.

After a second tenure by W. E. Lloyd of approximately one year, the church was served by another young man who was destined to have a long and useful ministerial career, W. M. Blackwelder. The history of County Line Baptist Church of Chambers County provides this biographical sketch: "Rev. Blackwelder was born near Dudleyville, Tallapoosa County,

Alabama, on October 18, 1857. In 1876 he was converted and baptized into County Line Baptist Church. He was licensed to preach on October 11, 1879, and ordained on April 9, 1881. He served several churches, including County Line, from November 1883 until September 1885. He also served Rock Springs and Antioch during this same period. He resigned these churches to enter the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the fall of 1885.” Other records show that he also served the Farmville and Auburn churches during this time, while attending the A & M College. This leads to the conclusion that the Auburn church continued to be served by part-time pastors during this period of its history. The minutes reveal no unusual activity in the church during Blackwelder’s brief pastorate with the exception of the formation of the Missionary Society mentioned above which was done at the pastor’s suggestion.

Insight into Blackwelder’s later ministry is gained from Lee Allen’s *History of the Woodlawn Baptist Church*. Following graduation from the seminary Blackwelder served the First Baptist Church of Decatur and was instrumental in starting the Central Baptist Church of that city. From there he was called to the new church at Woodlawn. Allen records that

Woodlawn was ten years old and had already had six pastors. This was not a good record, for it did not make for strength and stability. The church desperately needed a strong and lengthy pastorate.

In W. M. Blackwelder the church found the appropriate man. He remained for an unprecedented eight years.... The Birmingham church prospered during these eight

years and new Primary and Junior rooms were added to the Sunday School Building.

At his death on August 19, 1939, the *Alabama Baptist* observed that Alabama Baptists had lost “one of their most faithful, tender, sympathetic and efficient pastors. While he was a strong preacher, it was in pastoral duties and in comforting people in their sorrows, in sharing and helping the distressed, that he excelled. He served for 57 years as pastor of various churches in Alabama.”

Following Blackwelder’s resignation, M. W. E. Lloyd was called for his third term of service. This tenure got off to a good start as a result of a revival conducted in May-June of 1885. The minutes list the names of 22 persons who were baptized as a result of this meeting. The majority of the male names are preceded by the designation, “cadet” which obviously refers to students at the A & M College. The presence of these students in the church is further indicated by instructions given by the church in conference to various fund raising committees to “canvass the cadets.”

In July of 1888, the church voted to build a parsonage. The house was built at an approximate cost of \$2,000 and was subsequently sold to Pastor Lloyd, a transaction that seems to have been a source of some misunderstanding between the pastor and the church. Relationships between pastor and people were further strained during the rebuilding of the church. During the planning of this project, P. H. Mell reported that the Presbyterians had offered the use of their facilities during the interim. After Lloyd’s resignation in 1892 as the church

continued to try to resolve the misunderstandings, members passed a resolution to the effect that “it had acted in good faith in accepting the invitation of the Presbyterian congregation to use their facilities during construction, but that in doing so, it had meant no disrespect to Pastor Lloyd.” On the matter of the cost of the pastorium, it appears that the difference of opinion amounted to \$100. In due time the matter was settled when Lloyd appeared at a church conference and stated “that at no time had he said or written anything reflecting on any member of the church and had no ill feeling toward any member.” Similar statements were made by laymen, Mell and C. E. Little. After Lloyd left the meeting, Mell moved that all complaints against Dr. Lloyd be withdrawn. That all was now well is indicated by remarks made by pastor J. W. Willis regarding the good fellowship of the church.

In August of 1892, the church extended a call to another young minister who was just beginning his career, J. W. Willis, a member of the Ruhama Baptist Church in East Lake. This call apparently led to Willis’s ordination, the record of which is as follows:

State of Alabama, September 18, 1892: To all men in general and to Baptist churches in particular, the undersigned presbytery of gospel ministers sendeth Christian greetings in the name of Christ Jesus. These credentials are to certify that the bearer thereof, Brother James W. Willis, a member of the Baptist Church at East Lake, Alabama, was this day set apart and ordained by us to the full work of the gospel ministry whereby he is clothed with the office of Elder in the

church of God and the bishop of whatever local church of which he may become pastor; and with this authority we do commend him to the people of God everywhere. We do further certify that in this we are acting as a presbytery called and convened by the aforesaid East Lake Ruhama Baptist Church in whose presence we have done this work and at whose instance we have signed and sealed this document.

Three men signed the ordination document: A. J. Waldrop, B. F. Riley, and A. W. McGaha.

Willis was born in Jackson County, Alabama, and received his A.B. degree from Howard College just prior to his ordination in September of 1892. He may have been Auburn's first full-time pastor, coming at a set salary of \$600 per year with services to be held every Sunday. In committing to all Sundays, emphasis was placed on the church's ministry to students. Willis left Auburn in the fall of 1894 to attend Southern Seminary in Louisville and from there went to Mobile to become pastor of a little mission that was destined to become the largest church in Alabama, the Dauphin Way Baptist Church. Willis also found his bride in Auburn, Mary Emma Moore, daughter of Martin V. and Sallie Lenoir Moore, to whom he was married on November 15, 1898.

In October of 1894, the Tuskegee Association met at Auburn. The church letter listed 103 members, \$207 in missions gifts, and \$919 for pastor's salary and incidentals. The following paragraph was included: "The church is at peace; it is a unit in all things relating to the Master's work and no dissensions exist. The prayer meetings have never been better attended and there is an

unflagging interest in all phases of church work. Brother Willis, through his influence, has led the church to more than double its gifts to missions and his salary has been materially increased and promptly paid.”

But all was not to remain at peace. At the next church conference Brother C. E. Little reported that he had heard some serious charges made against the church in reference to the above paragraph from the church letter. He referred to a “depot conversation” in which a member of the church who happened to be a preacher stated that the reason for Willis’ resignation was that he was unhappy with the church and the church with him. The comments were made in the presence of a Birmingham pastor who was returning from an associational meeting. There followed a long series of letters and “committee communications” between the member and the church before the issue was finally settled and put to rest.

As the church gradually emerged from the depression of these years, what was it like? What were its major concerns? The church minutes of those years present a composite picture of how a body of approximately 100 members went about God’s work.

It was a body that placed great emphasis on membership maintenance. When the church was constituted there was a document called “Rules of Decorum” which set forth the manner in which the members were to conduct themselves in public and private life. Sometime before 1880 this document was referred to a committee for any needed revision. The committee reported that “the Bible is sufficiently explicit as to instructions for outward conduct, so that the ‘Rules of Decorum’ were no longer needed.” Nevertheless, the church continued to “watch over” the

personal behavior of its members. The minutes of September 1888 record that a motion was made that a committee be appointed to investigate a rumor about the unchristian conduct of some of the members. At a later conference the committee reported and the brethren at fault came forward and made satisfactory acknowledgments to the church.

The minutes also reflect a continuing concern for attendance at the services, including the business meetings of the church. The church would occasionally purge the church roll, removing inactive members but not before the pastor and a committee of deacons could “go to see them” and ascertain the reason for their inactivity. At several points along the way the church decided to call the roll at conference and record the names of those present. After several months of poor attendance at conference, usually around 15, in May of 1899, the roll was called and 24 brethren and 24 sisters answered to their names. This was the result of a visitation program by ten deacons, each of whom had one-tenth of the names on the roll to visit.

Persons who joined the church from other Baptist churches were received under “watchcare.” This term originally referred to a relationship that existed while the person was securing a letter from his former church. These were the days prior to good recordkeeping and rapid communication among the churches and considerable time was sometimes needed for securing a church letter.

Another area of major concern was money. We moderns can probably not imagine the difficulty of making ends meet during those days. The ten year financial report (1880-1890) referred to earlier reveals how meager were the resources of the church at that time. There was seldom a conference at which the

financial needs of the church were not on the agenda. Income was derived from “collections,” and in February 1883, the church voted to designate the first Sunday of the month as a time to take up an offering for missions and the third Sunday as the time to take up an offering for the pastor’s salary and incidentals. At the next conference they reversed the order.

From time to time the members would be reminded that they were behind with their obligations, usually the pastor’s salary, and a committee would be appointed to raise the deficit. A typical treasurer’s report was presented in September of 1884: For missions, \$31 had been raised and the church was behind in incidentals by \$760 and in pastor’s salary by \$121. In January of 1889, serious financial difficulties caused the conference to investigate why certain members had not paid their subscriptions, and to require those delinquent to give reasons. Should the reasons be acceptable they would be released from their pledges. The idea of “selling a lot” in front of the church was advanced at this conference.

In August of 1894, Mr. C. E. Little presented the treasurer’s report. P. H. Mell pointed out that the church owed Mr. Little about \$415. This note substantiates a practice that continued well into the 20th century. Little made up the deficit out of his own funds. C. E. Little and family joined the Auburn Baptist Church in February of 1881. They came to Auburn from Ohio and Mr. Little became one of the leading merchants and farmers of the area. In serving as treasurer of the church, it was his practice to always present a balanced report. Income always matched expenditures. Of course, he made up any deficit between bills due and funds on hand out of his own pocket. It was an accumulation of such deficits to which Mell referred.

Older members of the church in the 1980's still recall Mr. Little's financial practices on behalf of the church.

Like the modern church, the early church had to deal with problems related to buildings and grounds. Such housekeeping chores as the management of the stove and filling the pool for baptism were discussed and referred to the deacons. On one occasion they were faced with a decision regarding heating the church—the purchase of a hot air system for \$125 or the purchase of two stoves. They chose the stoves. They also discussed the possibility of having a well dug under the church in order to facilitate the filling of the baptismal pool. Cleaning was usually done by assignment; on one occasion the conference instructed a deacon to “meet with the ladies” to clean the church.

In March of 1891 the subject of rebuilding the church came up. A building committee was appointed and reported later that \$5,000 would be needed for the project, with half of it needed to begin. There was \$1,000 on hand which prompted a discussion on whether to begin or delay. The Ladies Aid Society was requested to appoint one or more of its members to canvass the members of the church for funds for this purpose. By September, \$1,400 was reported on hand and the amount needed to begin had been reduced to \$1,800. That same month drawings were presented by Bruce Morgan, an architect from Atlanta and the building committee was authorized to begin the project. The February 1892 conference reveals that some members were not happy with the location of the new building and had withdrawn their pledges, but the church letter of October mentioned that they were about to go into the new building.

Another characteristic of the emerging church was the

appearance of auxiliary organizations and committee structure. The conference of January 1889 reveals an emphasis on the Sunday School. It was recommended that the Sunday School use periodicals published by the Home Mission Board and several speeches were made encouraging people to participate in the Sunday School.

Reference has already been made to a Missionary Society which was established in 1884. Membership apparently included all ages and both sexes.

In October of 1892 the pastor was authorized to appoint a Finance Committee. He appointed a committee of nine divided into three subcommittees for pastor's salary, missions, and incidentals.

In November of 1893 the church authorized the organization of a Young People's Society in order to facilitate Christian growth, a better knowledge of the scriptures, missions, history, and church government. The Society was to be under the auspices of the church, having the same relationship to the church as the Sunday School. Cadet J. V. Brown was elected president. The first report showed a membership of 25. A few months later, attendance was below expectations and it was decided that the meetings (mid-afternoon on Sunday) were too soon after the worship service and should be changed to Sunday evening. This brought up the need for lighting the church and a committee was appointed to investigate putting lamps into the church.

Apparently the church had a Ladies Aid Society for many years, and it was, as the name implies, mainly for the purpose of giving aid or assistance to all activities of the church. What we now know as W. M. U. probably began in 1897 with the

organization of a Young Ladies Missionary Society “composed of such material and persons as will greatly enhance the raising of mission funds, and will create greater interest in and knowledge of mission work.”

As the century came to a close the organizational life of the church included the Sunday School, Young People’s Society, Sunbeam Band, The Ladies Aid Society, and the newly organized Young Ladies Missionary Society. Now 62 years old, the church was poised on the threshold of the new century with a relatively new building (1892), a full-time pastoral ministry, and an organizational life that afforded growth opportunities to all ages in the membership.

The march into the new century would be led by a dynamic young graduate of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His name was Augustus Young Napier.

Chapter 4

Entering the Twentieth Century

The pastorate of J. J. Cloud seems to have come to less than a happy conclusion in the fall of 1900, but not before he baptized a teenaged girl who was to make history as well as write it. The minutes of August 26 record that before proceeding with the regular business, the doors of the church were opened and Miss Leland Cooper presented herself for membership by experience. The time for her baptism was set for the following Wednesday after the Prayer Meeting service.

At this same conference Brother Mell moved that the pastor be given a rest and relieved of all duties until September 16. On the Sunday following this rest, the pastor spoke to the church along the lines of lack of interest, attendance, and participation. He offered to retire from the meeting so that the members could be free to discuss the situation. A week later, a motion was made that the pulpit be declared vacant and that a committee be appointed to seek a pastor. The letter to the Tuskegee Association for that year reported that the pastor had resigned as of October 1.

The discussion surrounding this action of the pastor indicates that the church was considerably in arrears on the pastor's salary. In December it was reported that Brother Mell had applied for \$400 aid on the pastor's salary from the State Mission Board and in January of 1901 Mr. C. E. Little submitted his resignation as church treasurer, but it was not accepted. Later on a resolution of appreciation for Mr. Little's services in which it was acknowledged that he had "carried the debt" of the church for a long time was entered upon the minutes.

After calls to two prospective pastors were unfruitful, Brother Mell read a letter from Dr. George B. Eager recommending the Reverend A. Y. Napier as a very suitable young man to serve the church as pastor. In May of 1901 he was one of three candidates submitted to the church and was elected by a substantial majority over the others. At the next conference, Brother J. F. Duggar moved that the call extended to the young seminary graduate be made indefinite. Thus, Augustus Young Napier became the first pastor to receive an indefinite call from the Auburn First Baptist Church, a significant step forward.

Napier was born in Lafayette, Georgia, received his AB degree from Mercer University, and the ThM and ThD from Southern Seminary in Louisville. He came to Auburn directly from the Seminary and remained but three years; but they were years of significant progress in the life of the church. After leaving Auburn for a brief pastorate at the Southside Baptist Church in Montgomery, he and his wife, the former Lois Davie of Clayton, Alabama, whom he married in 1906, were appointed missionaries to China. They served there with distinction in evangelistic work for 28 years before returning to Alabama to serve the Centerville Baptist Church as pastor. The Napiers had

two sons, N. C. Napier, a Baptist pastor, and B. Davie Napier, a theology professor at Yale University.

Some evidence of the growth of the church under Dr. Napier's leadership may be seen in the following excerpts from the church minutes. The church letter of 1901 reported 147 enrolled in Sunday School, a significant increase over previous years, and a pastor's salary at \$1,000. In July of 1902 a revival was held lasting 23 days. The largest in-gathering for a month in the church's history saw 34 persons join the church by baptism and 19 by letter. The church letter of 1902 showed an increase in membership of 76 over the previous year. Early in 1903 a Brother John Hudson stated that he had been called to preach, was licensed by the church and later ordained at the request of the Pleasant Springs Baptist Church near Tuskegee. The ordaining council consisted of A. Y. Napier, W. E. Wallis, M. W. E. Lloyd, J. J. Cloud, and F. Hudson.

Along with the excellent pastoral leadership of Napier, the strong lay leadership of P. H. Mell, Jr. continued. In June of 1902, Mell moved that all mission funds collected by the church be sent to the State Executive Secretary to be disbursed according to his best judgment. When Mell requested his letter in December of that year after accepting the presidency of Clemson University, the church passed the following resolution of appreciation: "Resolved that in giving up Brother Mell who has been a member of Auburn Baptist Church for more than 25 years, we have suffered an irreparable loss; resolved further that this church desires hereby to express its appreciation for Brother Mell's high Christian character, his devotion to duty, his consecration of heart and mind, his wise counsel in the affairs of the master, his able teaching of the scriptures; resolved further,

that while he is no longer with us in person, we will strive always to let his influence live among us, inspiring us by his example to a more noble Christian life, and more faithful church work. Resolved that Brother Mell will always have the deep appreciation of the Auburn Baptist Church and we will follow him in his new work with interest and prayer.”

While progress attended the church in these first years of the new century, life remained rather primitive when measured by modern standards. In 1903 a committee was appointed to see about heating the water in the baptistery. One brother stated that he knew of a method which consisted of placing a coil in a stove through which water could be circulated while the stove was hot. He thought the coil would cost \$5 and the stove \$10. Brother Little stated that if the whole outfit could be purchased for \$20 or less they should proceed.

In August of 1904 the church extended a unanimous call to the Reverend C. C. Pugh of Lafayette to become pastor at a salary of \$1,000 with \$300 of this amount to be furnished by the State Board of Missions. In September the salary was reduced to \$900 with the provision that the church would furnish housing. Since Napier was not married during his tenure, he probably had a room in someone's home. Shortly after arriving on the field, Brother Pugh brought up the matter of building a pastorium and a committee was appointed to pursue the suggestion.

Condie Collins Pugh was born at Grove Hill, Alabama, on November 27, 1867. He received his AB degree at Alabama University and the ThM from Southern Seminary. He married Mae Simms of West Point, Georgia in 1867. In addition to Auburn, his pastorates included Calvary Baptist, Vicksburg, Mississippi; College Park, Georgia; University Church, Austin,

Texas; First Baptist, Hazelhurst, Mississippi; First Baptist, Williamsburg, Kentucky; and First Baptist, Eufaula, Alabama. He taught Bible at Mississippi College and served as trustee of several boards and agencies, including the Home Mission Board.

That the church continued to progress during his tenure is indicated by the 1905 church letter—the first one to appear on a printed form—showing a total membership of 202, an average Sunday School attendance of 97 and total gifts of \$1300. In the spring of 1904 the matter of purchasing an organ—apparently for the first time—came up. A deal was made with Forbes Piano Company whereby Forbes would allow a \$200 trade-in value for the piano, and make an additional contribution of \$75 on an organ priced at \$675.

With no explanation as to the reason for the action, the minutes of June 1905 record that a motion was made and carried to change the Prayer Meeting from Wednesday night to Thursday night. While this change has not been in effect perpetually since that date, this appears to be the first point in time for this departure from traditional ecclesiastical orthodoxy.

In August of 1906, the church issued a unanimous call to the Reverend Murray Perceval Edwards to become its pastor. The establishment of the indefinite call as policy five years before had the effect of stabilizing the church's pastoral leadership. Edwards' tenure was to be the longest in the church's history—fourteen years—although it was interrupted in mid-course by resignation and reconsideration. Late in 1912 the pastor submitted his resignation effective January 1, 1913, but the church asked him to withdraw it. The minutes of November 1912 declare that the clerk was instructed to enter on the record the reconsideration of Pastor M. P. Edwards. When he resigned in

1920 to accept a call to Tuscumbia the record shows that there were 28 votes to accept and eight not to accept his resignation.

The history of the First Baptist Church of Tuscumbia by Sadie Dickson Shrader provides this biographical sketch of Edwards: He was born near Crystal River, Florida, on January 25, 1875. He spent his early days on his father's farm, working in the spring and summer of each year and attending a country school a few months of each winter. He was converted at an early age and soon after his conversion felt the call to the ministry. The old Red Level Church, of which he was a member, licensed him to preach.

Edwards graduated from Stetson University in 1898 and was ordained by the First Baptist Church of Deland. He entered Southern Seminary in 1902 and received the ThM degree in 1905. After a year of postgraduate work, he came to Auburn and in 1907 he was married to Nanette Evelyn Spencer of Louisville, Kentucky.

The emergence of the Auburn church as a “college church” is highlighted in Shrader’s comment: “He remained at Auburn for fourteen years, preaching to the people of the town, and to the hundreds and thousands of college students.”

After a pastorate of seven years at Tuscumbia, Edwards was called to Demopolis where he served just two years before his death in 1929.

All indications are that the church kept pace with the times during these years, making progress in the areas of membership, church plant, finance, and organization. In 1906 a committee was appointed to see about putting lights in the church. Members reported that for about \$65 this could be done using some type of generator. In 1909 they voted to build a 22 x

29 foot room in the rear of the church, providing four classrooms at an estimated cost of \$1087. A committee was appointed to proceed and also to investigate the possibility of connecting the church to Brother Little's water tank. In the church letter of 1909 the value of the church property is listed at \$6,000 in comparison with \$3,500 the previous year. In February of 1914, Dr. C. S. Yarbrough stated that the Ladies Working Circle wished to get an endorsement from the church to install a pipe organ. A motion was made that the church install such an organ as soon as funds were available. In August of that year, Professor George Mitcham related that objections had been raised to the practice of hitching to the fence in the rear of the church. A motion was made that ten posts be placed for this purpose and that the cost be paid from miscellaneous collections. By 1920 there was talk of the need for a new church building, resulting in the establishment of a Building Committee and a Ways and Means Committee. The preliminary estimate of cost was \$40,000 and the plan was to raise \$10,000 from the membership, another \$10,000 from friends over the state which would match a tentative commitment of \$20,000 from the Home Mission Board.

The year 1910 was one of significant progress in the area of church finance. In February a duplex envelope system was adopted for the purpose of eliminating special collections for missions. A budget was adopted which provided \$200 for Foreign Missions, \$150 for Home Missions, and \$300 for State Missions, with smaller amounts included for Denominational Education, the Orphanage, Bible and Colportage, and Aid to Ministers—a total of \$780. In October members voted to abolish all existing committees that had to do with church finances and

establish a central Finance Committee composed of fifteen members, including the Pastor, the Chairman of Finance, and the Chairman of Deacons.

In February of 1916 a motion was made that a collection be taken on Communion Sundays for the poor. Boxes were to be placed at the doors for this purpose and the pastor and deacons were to administer the funds.

A giant step was taken in 1919 when the church voted to participate in the \$75 million campaign of the Southern Baptist Convention. Spurred by an unprecedented world vision resulting from World War I, the Southern Baptist Convention voted in 1919 to raise \$75 million for convention causes over the next five years. Alabama's share of this goal was \$4,000,000. Churches were asked to set goals and secure pledges. The Auburn church's goal was \$17,000, or \$3400 per year for five years, an amount almost exactly equal to the church's total gifts for 1919. In other words, in order to meet its pledge, the church would need to double its total gifts immediately.

The organizational life of the church had now developed to the point of giving careful attention to records. In 1910 the Sunday School began the practice of publishing in booklet form, a detailed report of each department, class, and individual enrolled. Members were graded on points and given special recognition for their achievements. Nine members had perfect attendance records for the year and 41 members received diplomas. The booklet listed every member of the Sunday School and the number of points accumulated by each name. One of these quarterly report booklets included a list entitled "some we would like to have," an ancient version of a prospect list. In another there is a picture of the Baraca Class which had 73 male

members. There were two teachers—both women—Mrs. R. D. Webb and Mrs. W. K. Clements.

Continued careful oversight of membership practices is indicated in the conference of February 1913. The report of the committee on church discipline recommended that certain names be taken from the church roll and entered on a list indicating they were suspended for non-attendance and non-support of the church. It recommended further that a careful record be kept, and that if someone on this list requested a letter, that they be notified that they were on such a list and that they could get a letter by making satisfactory explanation. Twenty-four names appeared on the list and the conference adopted the recommendation unanimously.

A growing interest in and concern for quality in church music is reflected in the minutes of February 1918. Dr. Yarbrough stated that the choir was badly in need of an instructor and that the services of a Mrs. Perryman could be secured for one dollar per week. A motion was made that funds for three months be made available for this purpose. In January of 1919 the church voted to buy 200 new songbooks at \$45 per hundred.

Through the years the Auburn church has seen God's hand in designating the called. In July of 1909, Charles Hudson was licensed to preach; in September of 1909, W. M. Llewellyn was also licensed; and in 1918 there is a record of an ordination service for Brother Ambrose Duggar.

Following the resignation of Murray P. Edwards, the church was to be without permanent pastoral leadership for over a year. After several unsuccessful attempts to call a pastor, the church turned to a distinguished retired pastor to serve as

interim. Dr. A. J. Dickinson of Birmingham had served such strategic churches as Lee Street, Baltimore, Maryland; Central Church, Memphis, Tennessee; First, Selma, and First, Birmingham, in Alabama. He had held many significant positions of leadership in denominational life, having served as a trustee for Howard College, Judson College, Marion Institute, and Alabama College at Montevallo. He is credited with making the motion in the 1894 state convention that established the annual Pastors' Conference as a pre-convention meeting. In her history of the church, Leland Cooper recalled that while serving the church as interim pastor, Dr. Dickinson stated from the pulpit that he had also offered a motion in the state convention in 1892 or 1893 that Alabama Baptist churches be allowed and encouraged to organize Baptist Young People's Unions in order that young Christians might have the benefit of its training program.

Cooper further stated that in 1919, the B.Y.P.U. of the Auburn church was divided into Senior, Intermediate, and Junior Departments with Leland Cooper as director. Thus, poised on the threshold of the 1920's, the church had reached a stability in its organizational life that would require it to build for the future. Leadership would come from an energetic young pastor, a distinguished college president, and the young lady who had been baptized as a teenager in 1900.

Chapter 5

The Emerging Church

The minutes of October 1921 record the arrival on the field of Pastor Earl W. Holmes and his wife. Holmes was born in Montgomery, Alabama, on April 10, 1894. He was educated at Howard College, Southern Seminary, and the University of Louisville, receiving AB, ThM, and MA degrees. He was ordained in July of 1916 and was married to Lillian Birdie Harris of Montgomery on March 3, 1920. They had two children, Dorothy Louise and Rosemary. After serving as a U.S. Army chaplain in France and Germany, he came to Auburn at age 27 to serve five years, followed by pastorates at Attalla and Abbeville in Alabama and at Mullin, South Carolina.

The year before Holmes came to Auburn, Dr. Spright Dowell began a tenure of eight years as president of Alabama Polytechnic Institute. This distinguished educator was to provide his young pastor with mature and experienced lay leadership in five of the church's most productive years. Before coming to Auburn, Dr. Dowell taught school in North Carolina, became supervising principal of the Birmingham Public Schools, and

then State Superintendent of Education. In 1928 he became president of Mercer University where he served until his retirement. These two men along with Miss Leland Cooper led in the establishment of a youth program that has been the hallmark of the church to this day.

In January of 1919, Miss Cooper became director of the Baptist Young People's Union and organized it into Senior, Intermediate, and Junior Departments. Out of this organization came the Baptist Student Union. She tells the story in her history of the church:

During Baptist Young People's Union study course week in December 1923, Dr. Frank H. Leavell, Southwide Secretary of the Interboard Commission, was in Auburn teaching his book on Stewardship.

He suggested an organization for Baptist college students. Dr. Leavell, Pastor Holmes, the B.Y.P.U. Director, and a number of interested college students laid the foundation for the Baptist Student Union organization. P. T. Ray, an electrical engineering student at A.P.I., was elected the first president. Pastor Holmes and Dr. Dowell were most helpful and cooperative in promoting the organization in those early years.

Miss Cooper's home was the place of meeting for the students as interest in the new organization continued to grow. The high esteem and deep appreciation the students had for her was manifested at Christmas in 1925 when they raised money among themselves and the church membership to present her with a new T Model Ford.

Meanwhile the need for a building program grew more acute with each passing year after it was first advanced in 1920. It fell to Pastor Holmes, as to David of Old Testament times, to make preparation for a building that would be constructed by his successor. In 1923 the church voted to seek the use of a public school building for the primary department and to inquire of Dr. Charles A. Cary if his lot on “church square” could be purchased. As the state convention of 1923 approached, the church made plans to print 2,000 copies of a brochure setting forth Auburn’s desperate need for a building, for distribution from an “Auburn Center” at the convention site in Montgomery. In a letter to the appropriate committee of the convention, the need was expressed as follows: “Our Baptist boys and girls representing every county in the state as well as neighboring states are forced to hold their meetings in a curtained-off, small, and obsolete auditorium, and in a shack which was built by the students themselves at a cost of \$400. The public school is being used also. Under the present conditions progress is impossible and expansion is absolutely out of the question.”

In response, the State Convention passed a resolution to “do something about the Baptist problem at Auburn.” Thus began a series of joint participatory efforts on the part of the church and the State Convention designed to minister to the rapidly expanding Baptist segment of the Auburn student body.

Meanwhile, progress went on apace in all facets of the church’s life. The Southern Baptist Convention finally collected \$52 million-plus toward the original goal of \$75 million of that campaign. In 1924 the Auburn church reported raising \$15,000 of its \$17,000 goal over the five-year period, truly a remarkable achievement in the light of other pressing needs of the church.

In 1925 the membership had grown to 340 and the B.Y.P.U. report listed 140 students on its rolls. An application to the State Board for assistance on pastor's salary during these years reflected the value of church property at \$15,000, with 2200 inhabitants in the area, not including students, and a Sunday School attendance of 261.

Needless to say, the church was saddened in 1926 when Pastor Holmes announced his resignation in order to accept a call from the First Baptist Church of Attalla. Dr. Spright Dowell's signature is affixed to the minutes as moderator at the time of this action, another indication of the leadership role in the church which he assumed during his tenure in Auburn.

Immediately upon the resignation of Brother Holmes on August 15, 1926, the deacons were charged with the responsibility of recommending a pastor. In less than two months they were ready with the nomination of Dr. James R. Edwards who was elected by unanimous vote with salary set at \$3,000 per year with residence to be furnished by the church. Dr. Edwards was born in Chatom County, North Carolina, June 16, 1862, and was 64 years of age when he accepted the Auburn church. His would be the longest tenure in the history of the church until that time, lasting nineteen years. He was educated at Wake Forest College and Colgate University receiving both the AB and BD degrees from the latter institution. In 1942 he received the honorary degree of LLD from Mercer University, awarded at the hand of Dr. Spright Dowell. He served a number of churches in the northeastern United States including the Calvary Church of Norwich, New York, and the Lenox Road Church of Brooklyn. Later on he returned to North Carolina to serve a mission field of five churches, followed by a brief tenure

in Alabama where he served the Ruhama Church in Birmingham and taught Bible at Howard College. From there he was called to the church at Mullin, South Carolina, and while there, married the former Martha Hudson of Smithfield, North Carolina. From 1919 to 1926 he served churches in Richmond and Marion, Virginia, before moving to Auburn. The Edwards had one son, James Hudson Edwards, born during their third year in Auburn.

Dr. Edwards is remembered as a man stately and dignified in appearance, scholarly and somewhat formal in his pulpit ministry, but not without an appropriate sense of humor. The thing that people seem to remember most about him was his devotion to visitation. In his earlier ministry he had sometimes been involved in hospital chaplaincy work which indicates a considerable bent toward the pastoral ministry, which in those days was done largely in home visitation. His son recalls that the pastor's home, which was located next to the church, was always open to guests and callers, and that his father acted as a "loving caretaker" of the church building, opening and closing it for services and meetings. He remembers going along as a little boy to "help" with stoking the furnace in order to have it warm for prayer meeting and Sunday services.

Mr. Edwards further recalls his father's interest in and concern for the growing number of college students who came to Auburn each year:

He worked hard to give students a church home away from home. The church away from home concept reached a peak during the war years when the college swelled with special military training programs. By then the church building seemed to be constantly open and

active. He made himself available to all: Baptists, non-Christians, and those whose denomination was not represented locally. He took special care to make his sermons timely and universally appealing, and he was constantly adding to the list of service men to whom he wrote.

Dr. Edwards preached his first sermon in Auburn on November 7, 1926, and in a few months the church was seriously involved in a major building program, the construction of a new auditorium which remains the heart of the church plant today.

As various aspects of this building program were addressed, it became necessary for the church to elect a Board of Trustees for the several business transactions related to the program. In September of 1926 the following men were elected trustees: Dr. Spright Dowell, W. L. Long, W. W. Hill, W. H. Eaton, and C. E. Little. The first transaction was the sale of what was known as the "Montague Property," real estate which had been left to the church in earlier years. It was located away from "church square," apparently somewhere on South College Street, since one of the purchasers was Alabama Polytechnic Institute. The church realized \$5,000 from the sale of this property, which was applied to the Building Fund.

The plan for financing the new building called for \$10,000 in over and above pledges from the membership and \$10,000 from the sale of the church property facing College Street to be added to the \$10,000 on hand in the Building Fund. The State Board had pledged half the cost of the building not to exceed \$50,000. Regarding the sale of church property on College Street, there were several deals projected but none came

to fruition at this time.

Soon after Dr. Edwards came, the church voted to build a pastorium. In February of 1927, W. L. Long, chairman of the building committee reported that the cost of the building would be \$6,500. Construction was begun and completed by July of that year at a final cost of \$7,585. The house was a two-story white frame building located on Glenn Avenue next door to the church. It served the Edwards family and the Ayers family before becoming a combination office and children's building in 1950. It was razed in preparation for construction of the second educational unit in 1967.

In March of 1927, the minutes report that Dr. Dowell made a strong recommendation and appeal that the church enter into the building program. The recommendation was adopted by unanimous vote and by January of the following year, plans were ready for church approval. The plans called for a handsome brick structure which would accommodate 600 people in the auditorium with a ground floor and three stories of educational space in the rear. Construction began in June of 1928 and was completed in time for the dedication service on April 29, 1929. Dr. Spright Dowell who had become president of Mercer in 1928 returned to preach the dedicatory sermon. Former pastors C. C. Pugh and Earl Holmes were also present for the dedication. On the front of the program folder there appeared this prayer: "This house which we have been permitted to build through the favor of God, we dedicate to the glory of His name and to the service of humanity. Put thy name, O Lord, in this place. Let thine eyes be opened toward it; and hearken unto the supplications of Thy people when they pray in this place, and hear Thou in heaven, and when Thou hearest forgive." The total cost of the building,

furnishings, and pastorium was finally reported to be \$84,640.76. It was necessary to borrow \$34,000 in order to finish paying for the building.

At the church conference in November of 1928 the pastor read a statement of appreciation for Mr. C. E. Little who had died a short time before. As previously mentioned, Mr. Little came to Auburn in 1880 and was an effective leader in the church until the time of his death. He was a key figure in developing plans for the new church building, but somewhat like Moses of old, was not privileged to see it to completion. A fitting memorial to Mr. and Mrs. Little, a pipe organ for the new auditorium, was given by their son, C. Felton Little. The organ served the church well until it was replaced by the present instrument in 1975. In February of 1929, the church received a bequest from his will in the amount of \$5,000 with half of the income designated for denominational missions and half for local missions. The original bequest is intact today, a part of the church's Missions Trust Fund.

Perhaps it was providential that the church completed its new building prior to the 1930's. Had it delayed a year or two, the onset of the Great Depression would doubtless have had a discouraging effect on its purpose to build. As it was, the early thirties were difficult times in Auburn as elsewhere throughout the nation. The church's income dropped to the \$5,000-\$6,000 level per annum. With a building debt to repay, other items in the budget had to be reduced. The pastor's salary gradually dropped from \$3,000 per year to a low of \$1,200 per year. Gifts to the Cooperative Program fell to a few hundred dollars annually. Hardly a church conference passed without the dire financial circumstances of the church being discussed.

Treasurer's reports reflected income in cash and warrants with some of the local bills being paid by the warrants. Warrants were a form of paper money paid to faculty and staff of the college "until things could get better."

One of the "remedies" for the financial problems of the church that kept recurring was the possibility of selling the frontage on College Street. Numerous deals are to be found in the minutes. One can only surmise that most of them did not materialize. In 1930 the church agreed to lease some of this frontage to someone who wished to install a miniature golf course on it. In so doing, the stipulation was made that it could not be used on Sunday until after the morning service was dismissed.

Although financial problems occupied the thoughts and energies of the church leadership, other aspects of the church's life enjoyed a steady growth. Each annual Associational letter indicates a growth in membership averaging from five to ten percent per year. The program for college students grew to the point that in November of 1934 O. T. Ivey spoke to the church conference regarding the need for a full-time staff person to work with the students. In spite of the financial pressure, the church voted to employ such a person provided the budget would not be increased substantially by so doing. In October of 1935 the church was notified that Mr. Davis C. Wooley had accepted the position of Student Secretary. His first term of service was for only nine months, but he was re-employed September 1, 1936, and served continuously until June 1, 1940.

Mr. Wooley later became the State Training Secretary for Alabama, then joined the Training Union Department of the Baptist Sunday School Board, and after a pastorate at Palatka,

Florida, concluded a distinguished career in Baptist life as Executive Secretary of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission. Innovative is but one of a number of words that describe the personality and work of Davis Wooley. An example is found in the church bulletin for Sunday, September 18, 1938, designated as “Freshman Sunday.” The pastor’s sermon topics were “And this is College” and “If I were a Freshman.” On the front page was this paraphrase of a familiar hymn:

Our freshmen ’tis of thee who long for liberty,
Of thee we sing.
Sons of thy Father’s pride; sons of thy mother’s side
From all the state wide, our voices ring.

Our prayer to God for thee, a successful journey through
all thy years.
May thy whole life be bright, filled with God’s holy light,
Producing works of might with hearts of cheer.

Our freshmen students, thee, sons of the noble free,
Thy lives we love.
We love thy dependability, thy mighty possibility,
And urge full loyalty to Christ above!

(with apologies to S. F. Smith)
Davis Wooley

The staff in these years consisted of Pastor Edwards, Mr. Wooley, and Mrs. Christine Tidwell as church organist and choir director. The bulletins reflect a music program of excellent

quality in the regular worship services and at special seasons under the leadership of Mrs. Tidwell. A regular feature of the church's music program appeared at this time in the weekly announcement that the "Student Chorus" would meet for rehearsal at 4:00 on Sunday afternoon. The May 2, 1937 bulletin tells of the Evening Worship Service being an observance of "Music Week" with combined choirs from the Auburn churches and the Music Study Club leading the service. The crowd at the annual Christmas Cantata in 1938 was estimated to be 800.

The minutes of January 12, 1930 reflect some membership policies that were probably more liberal than was the general custom of Baptist churches in that era. The deacons recommended and the church adopted the following policies: (1) The admission of members on presentation and acceptance of church letters with or without their appearance on the day they were received, and (2) that persons who had been immersed in connection with membership in a church of some other denomination shall be eligible for membership without being re-baptized. In 1941 members voted to accept as associate members persons from other denominations without their being immersed. On the other hand, the church reaffirmed membership policies adopted in 1911 to the effect that those members who did not at any time attend the services and who did not contribute to the support of the church could not be regarded as members in full fellowship.

On the tenth anniversary of his coming to Auburn, the church expressed its appreciation for Dr. Edwards in the following statement: "Due recognition and hearty congratulations to our pastor, Dr. J. R. Edwards, who has completed ten years as pastor of the Auburn Baptist Church. He

is one of the 152 pastors in Alabama who have served their churches eight years or more. Much good and lasting work has been accomplished at the Auburn Baptist Church during these ten years.”

The church bulletins reveal some of this “good and lasting work.” On December 5, 1936, a truck for the orphanage would be loaded at Mr. Clifton Jones’ store and a cash offering for that institution received on Sunday, December 6. In April of 1937, Dr. Chester Swor came to the church for a series of services. The first A.S.U. president for the summer term was elected that spring, Virgil B. Robinson, a student in veterinary medicine. The September 26, 1937 bulletin announced the beginning of a Baptist Adult Union. The sponsor was Professor Hubert Harris. One of the most popular student activities for many years was begun in these years, the Noonday Prayer Meeting on campus. Sunday School attendance in March of 1937 reached 337, the largest since the previous September. On Easter of 1938 the student choir of 23 members presented the Easter Cantata under the direction of Christine Tidwell. The spring B.S.U. banquet in 1938 attracted an attendance of 125 with Dr. William Hall Preston of the Student Department in Nashville as the main speaker. In the fall of 1938 a Young Men’s Brotherhood for college students was organized for the purpose of “fostering a spirit of brotherhood, missions, and evangelism among laymen students.” As emphasis on students moving their membership to the college church increased, 100 freshmen were expected to join the Auburn Baptist Church when the fall term of 1938 began.

The church letter of 1938 reported a total membership of 493, total gifts of \$7,580, and mission gifts of \$1,040. The disposition of some of the frontage on College Street finally took

place during this year. In April the church conference met to consider the sale of 100 feet to a party interested in the construction of a service station. The proposal by the trustees listed the pros as follows: the church needs the money; the lot is not being used; the lot is designated for business use; the trustees recommend the sale with the approval of the finance committee. The cons were listed as follows: the church was not being forced to sell; a service station on that location would detract from the general appearance of the church property; the space could be used for parking; and no member of the church "hurts himself giving." After discussion, the provision finally passed with the proviso that the trustees delay for three weeks in order that a committee might canvass the membership for funds with which to pay off the church debt so that the lot could be retained. On October 23, the lot was sold and the proceeds applied to the church's paving assessment and debt.

The events of December 7, 1941 called upon the church to adjust to the tragic reality of war for the third time in its history. T. A. Clark, who succeeded Davis Wooley as Student Secretary, was among the first of hundreds of Auburn men who entered the armed forces. Mr. Clark was succeeded by Raymond Coppinger, who along with Pastor Edwards, adjusted the church's fine student ministry to accommodate service personnel. The "student center" (the present fellowship hall) became a popular meeting place for Navy V-12 trainees and other military personnel. An open house for servicemen was sponsored by various Sunday School departments each Sunday afternoon and on Saturday nights following Bible Study. Each day there was Morning Watch at Smith Hall and Vespers at the church at 5:00 p.m. On March 5, 1944, a full column in the church bulletin

was devoted to an appeal for contributions to the Red Cross. Auburn's quota was \$8,400.

In 1943 the church received a generous gift from Mr. Clifton A. Jones when he deeded to the church in fee simple, business property which extended from the southern boundary of the present Baptist Student Center northward to the boundary of the present Standard Oil property. The property consisted of the old Jones Hotel, a four-unit apartment building, and several commercial buildings. At the time he made the gift, Mr. Jones was not a member of the church but had served faithfully as secretary of the Sunday School. He was received into the church membership on June 27, 1943. The only stipulation accompanying this gift was that the first \$500 per month produced by the property be given to Mrs. Marie Robelot Garrett of New Orleans as long as she lived. Early in his life, Mr. Jones along with two of his brothers had gone to southern Louisiana to work on the sugar cane plantations. While there he fell ill and Mrs. Garrett's parents took him into their home and nursed him back to health. Throughout her lifetime Mrs. Garrett received a check each month for the amount specified and there was maintained for her use an apartment in the building immediately behind the present Student Center. The Board of Trustees of the church managed the property until the church voted to sell it to the First Alabama Bank in 1977. The proceeds from the sale, approximately \$250,000, became a part of the church's present trust funds.

Early in 1944 Raymond Coppinger resigned as Student Secretary to enter the U.S. Navy as a chaplain and on March 12, 1944, the church welcomed Louise Green to that position. That same year, 1944, was the year that A. Hamilton Reid led Alabama

Baptists in a debt paying campaign under the slogan "Debt no more after forty-four." The Auburn church accepted its quota of \$1,200 and within the year announced that \$1,100 of that amount had been raised.

The church bulletin of February 18, 1945 announced the pastor's sermon topics as "A New Crusade" and "Healthful Habits." The prayer meeting occurred on Wednesday night of that week as usual, but there were no bulletins for the following two Sundays, for the hand that prepared them had been stilled. After his usual "visits" on Thursday afternoon, Dr. J. R. Edwards became ill and died the following day, Friday, September 23. In a tribute at its session the following fall, the Tuskegee Association noted that "Under his leadership during a period of more than 18 years the Auburn church made the greatest progress in its history. The growing student body of the college at Auburn afforded him a boundless opportunity for the exercise of his rich spiritual gifts. Thousands of young men and women have gone out from Auburn to places of leadership with their lives permanently enriched by their contact with this great spiritual leader."

The funeral was conducted by Dr. Frank Tripp, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Montgomery, with pastors of the local Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches participating. He was buried in Pine Hills Cemetery in Auburn.

In a resolution adopted at the Church Conference of March 11, the church noted that Dr. Edwards' ministry had been marked by great increases in the membership of the church, the Sunday School, and the young people's organizations. It also witnessed the completion of the most expensive building program in the history of the church, including retirement of the

entire indebtedness. In the death of Dr. Edwards, the church had lost the services of a “gifted preacher, an earnest and sympathetic pastor, a successful leader, a diligent student, a ripe scholar, and a worthy Christian example.”

On September 23, 1945, the church held a J. R. Edwards Memorial Service. Mr. W. L. Long gave a statement of purpose, Dr. R. B. Draughon presented the American flag, Mrs. John Ingram presented the Christian flag, and Miss Louise Green presented the Honor Roll of Service men and women who had served in the armed forces. Doubtless the planners of this service intended it to highlight the last years of Dr. Edwards’ ministry as he had served his community and nation during the trying years of World War II.

Dr. Edwards’ death was only one of several momentous events that occurred in 1945 that would shape the course of the Auburn Baptist Church for the next decade.

Chapter 6

Transition

On January 1, 1946, Mr. Arthur Krock, Washington correspondent for the *New York Times* wrote: “The year now closing will be marked as the high point of achievement thus far in the nation’s history, and that of any peoples in the annals of the world.”

The year 1945 was indeed a momentous year. On January 20, Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated for an unprecedented fourth term as president of the United States. Less than three months later, the nation was shocked to learn of his sudden death on April 12 at Warm Springs, Georgia. On May 7, the German armies surrendered and the war in Europe ended. On July 16, the first atomic bomb was exploded in the desert of New Mexico and on August 6 and 8, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki signaled the end of the war with Japan. On September 1, General Douglas MacArthur accepted the unconditional surrender of the Japanese forces aboard the battleship Missouri in Tokyo Bay. On December 28, the United Nations charter was ratified by the U.S. Senate.

For the Auburn Baptist Church the year marked the death of its pastor, Dr. James R. Edwards, on February 23, and the calling of his successor, Dr. Hoyt A. Ayers, on October 1. This change in leadership coupled with the changes experienced by the community by the ending of World War II inaugurated a period of transition for the church.

At the same conference at which the resolution on Dr. Edwards' death was adopted, it was announced that the church would have a revival the week of April 2-8. The preacher would be Dr. Hoyt Ayers, pastor of the Clayton Street Baptist Church in Montgomery and the music would be led by Dr. Fagan Thompson, pastor of the Auburn Methodist Church. In the bulletins of April 22, 29 and May 6, the names of 81 new members were listed as a result of this revival. Among them were five members of the Huguley family who would later leave the church a bequest of approximately \$250,000 when the last member of the family, Miss Willie Huguley, had died.

During the interim between pastors, the Baptist Student Union, under the effective leadership of Louise Green, began to adjust to the large influx of students resulting from the end of the war. In the summer of 1945, the B.S.U. report to the church reveals a local mission activity that would continue for many years, study courses and Vacation Bible School activities conducted in the black churches of the community. One hundred and seventy-five children were enrolled in these studies conducted by eighteen members of the B.S.U. In July of this year a trust fund was established by alumni of the B.S.U. for the purpose of providing equipment and supplies for this program, an indication of needs that far exceeded the ability of the local church to meet.

The annual church letter of 1945 reported a membership of 847 with approximately 300 listed as non-resident. The Sunday School enrollment was 723 of which 220 were students. There were 164 students enrolled in Training Union which included 15 Young Peoples' unions.

On August 12, the Pulpit Committee recommended that a call be extended to Dr. Hoyt Ayers, and on September 16 the church bulletin included a welcome to the new pastor and family whose ministry would begin on October 1. On this Sunday, the pulpit was supplied by the State Training Union Secretary, John Jeffers.

Hoyt Ayers was born at Fyffe, Alabama, and grew up in the Sand Mountain region of Alabama. After high school he continued his education at Howard College and Southern Seminary where he became a respected student leader. He answered the call to preach at an early age and served several churches during his student years. He was married to Vernie Camilla Guest and there were three children, Phyllis, Henry, and Camilla.

Dr. Ayers was one of the most dynamic young pastors on the scene in Alabama when he came to Auburn in the fall of 1945. His pastoral experience included Glencoe, Shawmut, and the great people's church, Clayton Street of Montgomery. He was much in demand as a speaker and preacher at state conventions and assemblies. He was a strong, yet compassionate, evangelistic preacher and a denominational loyalist to the core. Shortly after his arrival in Auburn, the returning veterans of World War II began to swell the student body at A.P.I., and in this part of the world probably half of them were from Baptist backgrounds. It takes no great imagination to realize the kind of change in

climate which took place in the church when this young, dynamic preacher encountered this segment of young America, matured beyond their years by the war, and bent on building the kind of world that would spare their children from the experiences through which they had just passed. It is a matter of record that the Baptist Student Union program at Auburn for the next two decades was to be one of the most outstanding in the country.

Church minutes are cryptic to a fault, and necessarily so, yet change is written there indelibly. There appears a well organized church budget of \$17,365 for 1946 which is coupled with the pastor's recommendation that the membership be informed of the plan to support the budget through the Sunday School. This was the heyday of the six-point record system with each Sunday School member from the youngest to the oldest bringing an individual envelope completely filled out with weekly offering enclosed. The pastor's desire to establish immediate contact with students is indicated by an announcement in the October 23 bulletin that a sign-up sheet would be posted in the student Sunday School Department for 30- minute conferences with the pastor.

Some idea of the "mushrooming" factor in the student body at A.P.I. can be gained by a comparison of the winter quarter registration for the three years beginning with 1945. That year the enrollment was 1778; by 1946 it had increased to 3498; and in 1947 it had reached 6311. An insight into the housing crunch and the spirit of the church is provided by this announcement in the January 6, 1946 church bulletin: "VETERANS, the pastor and members of our church are anxious to meet you and assist you in any way possible. As you are here and want to stay, don't give up; we'll try to find you a room some

way.” The February 17 bulletin announced that the W.M.S. would honor veterans’ wives at a party at the First Baptist Church on Tuesday evening, February 19.

On February 24, a special note appeared in the bulletin acknowledging that the Sunday morning crowds were overflowing the auditorium. A public address system had been set up in the Adult Sunday School auditorium and church members were asked to use this space, leaving seats in the main auditorium for visitors.

Growth in every aspect of the church's life was the order of the day. In February, two departments were added to the Training Union: an Adult Department beginning with 18 members and a Story Hour beginning with eight members. The attendance at five W.M.S. circles during this month was 94. Another successful revival was held in April, led by Dr. Henry Allen Parker, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Montgomery. Forty-five additions to the church were recorded. The Sunday School organization as of May 1946 was as follows: one Adult Department with six classes; one Young Peoples' department with six classes; one Intermediate Department with four classes; one Junior Department with six classes; one Primary Department with three classes; one Beginner Department with two classes; and a Nursery Department.

Sunday, April 28, 1946, marked the end of Christine Tidwell’s tenure as organist and choir director. She had served well and faithfully for more than a decade and would return later in the course of time.

The following note appeared in the August 4 bulletin: “Last Wednesday, July 31, terminated the services of Miss Louise Green as our B.S.U. Secretary. Miss Green has held this office for

the past two and a half years. She was Auburn trained in her church work and is beloved not only by the students but by the whole church. She is a tireless worker, a wonderful Christian, and she has rendered a great service here. Next Tuesday she will become the bride of Rev. A. Earl Potts, and they will enter the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary this fall for further study. Our prayers and best wishes will follow them that they may be used of God for great service in the years to come.” A prophetic prayer, indeed, for the Potts returned to Alabama to pastor the great McElwain Baptist Church in Birmingham in its transition from rural to suburban, then came to Montgomery where Dr. Potts served as Associate Executive Secretary and Mrs. Potts became a member of the State W.M.U. departmental team. After Mrs. Potts’ death in 1984, Dr. Potts was elected Executive Secretary of the State Board of Missions.

On August 11, 1946, the church extended a call to Mr. Charles Roselle to become the Student Secretary, a position he assumed at the beginning of the fall quarter on September 22. In another effort to alleviate the seating problem for the morning service, a “Junior Church Service” was begun on October 1 with members of the Primary, Junior, and Intermediate Departments and their leaders comprising the congregation. Mr. Roselle was designated to lead these services.

In these post-war years Religious Emphasis Week became a major activity for all the churches of Auburn. Sponsored by the various student religious organizations, the format was to invite an outstanding speaker who would be available for conferences during the day and preach at the church of his own denomination in the evening. Dr. Dale Dutton came for this emphasis October 13-18, 1946, and during the revival

services at the church, 36 new members were added.

As the year drew to a close, one imagines a church struggling to absorb the natural growth of the times and projecting bold plans for the future. The building which was less than 20 years old was woefully inadequate and the Building Committee which had been reactivated in April of 1946 was busily engaged in finding a workable plan for enlargement. The first of several plans envisioned four stages: (1) the construction of a B.S.U. building facing College Street; (2) a new auditorium seating 1000 to 1500 people facing Gay Street; (3) the conversion of the present auditorium to educational space by adding another floor above the present auditorium level; and (4) the construction of a new educational building. Financing would be raised from the membership—\$50,000 from students and alumni and \$50,000 from the state Board of Missions.

A budget of \$26,435 was projected for 1947 including \$3,300 for the Cooperative Program, an increase of 50 percent over the previous year. In order to raise this budget, the pastor urged the church to adopt the plan of financing the church through regular and systematic giving through the Sunday School.

On the final Sunday of the year, Dr. Ayers entitled his sermon: "A New Program for a New Year." He pointed out that in the past twenty years the church membership had grown from just over 300 to 1,085; that the budget had increased from \$3900 to \$24,300; and the value of church property had increased from \$15,000 to \$87,000. Among other things he recommended that every church committee be enlarged by 50 percent with the exception of the Board of Trustees, and that student members be included in the enlarged committees.

As 1947 began, the B.S.U. report to the church showed the enrollment at A.P.I. to be 6,300 and the number of Baptist students to be 2,300. Thus, for this and several ensuing years the Auburn Baptist Student contingent was the largest in the state and one of the largest in the world. Ministry to this host of Baptist young people was the sole responsibility of the Auburn church with assistance from the state Board of Missions in the form of a subsidy to the salary of the Student Secretary. Because of the very close ties of the B.S.U. to a single local church, the influence of the B.S.U. on participation in the church was at a maximum. The Student Center was in the church; recreational and social activities took place in the same space as did Sunday School and Training Union. The Student Secretary was a member of the church staff, employed by the church, directed by the church, and made responsible to the church. The original concept of B.S.U. as being the link between the campus and the church was strong and vibrant at Auburn.

The heart of the Auburn community then, as now, was the college, and the heart of the college was its student body. The lay leadership in the church were on faculty and staff at the university, and their concern for the well-being of the students carried over into the relationship between the B.S.U. and the church. The student Sunday School classes which accommodated 250 to 300 students were taught by these lay leaders and the 14 college unions—including two for married students—were led by them. Students crowded the church for worship services, morning and night. Many of them attended the “Junior Church Service” conducted simultaneously with the main service. Each summer Sunday evening the Auburn churches came together for union services in Graves Amphitheater. Largely due to the desire

of students to have a night service in their own church, sponsors of the union service delayed the starting time until 8:15 in order to give the Baptists time to get there.

In all of this, God was busily calling out the called. With each graduation, these B.S.U. and First Baptist alumni were taking their degrees in engineering, agriculture, home economics, and other disciplines, to one of our seminaries in preparation for a church related vocation. It is probable that in the late forties and fifties the number of students leaving Auburn for seminary study numbered more than ten per year. Not a few of them became missionaries and remain under appointment of our mission boards to this day.

In April 1947, Dr. Bill Marshall, Personnel Director for the Foreign Mission Board, and W. Hines Sims of the Church Music Department of the Sunday School Board led in revival services. A feature of this revival was a conference-like discussion in each of the Girls' Dormitories conducted by Cynthia Jo Hall of the Training Union and Student Department in Montgomery.

As the church continued to struggle with the space problem, attention was focused on the financial aspects of a sizeable building program. In June of 1947 the deacons recommended that all members of the church be urged to adopt tithing as the measure of giving; that the church adopt a unified budget with 60 percent to go for missions and local expenses and 40 percent to the Building Fund; that pledges over and above the tithe be sought for the Building Fund; that all funds received over mission and local needs be given to the Building Fund; and that members be requested to give to the budget, but be allowed to designate gifts if they so desired.

With professional assistance from the firm of Sizemore

and Campbell in Montgomery, the Building Committee came up with the second plan for enlargement. This was to add wings to the forward part of the building, one of which would serve as student center-educational building and the other for a local educational building. That part of the wings which corresponded to the auditorium floor level would add seating space to the auditorium at both main and balcony levels. The church actually voted to pursue this plan in July of 1947, but in a month a new plan had been devised. This plan was to extend the auditorium toward Glenn Avenue by 44 feet at an estimated cost of \$75,000. The committee recommending the plan was J. C. Lowery, Chairman, W. L. Long, D. N. Bottoms, H. F. Gibson, C. Felton Little, O. C. Medlock, Mrs. O. C. Moore, T. H. Rogers, Charles Roselle, and student Leon Marsh. In making its report, the committee expressed its thanks to Professor Keith Reeves of the A.P.I. Architecture Department for his valuable assistance.

With the plan finally settled, the church continued to press for sufficient funds to begin construction. On October 26 a Building Fund drive was launched with a goal of \$20,000 in cash and pledges to be completed by January 1, 1948. On the first Sunday \$15,000 was received.

Continued growth in all phases of church life is indicated in the church letter of 1947. The total membership is listed at 1,318, Sunday School enrollment of 928, Training Union enrollment of 510, and a projected budget for 1948 of \$30,875 with 15 percent going to the Cooperative Program.

As 1948 dawned, the church's attention was focused on the building program. On January 25, the Building Committee announced that it had authorized the architects to receive bids on the project with bid openings scheduled for February 12.

When the day came, five bids were received and the low one was submitted by Auburn Ice and Coal Company in the amount of \$109,890. This firm was headed by W. L. Long, one of the most active and influential lay leaders in the church. Knowing something of Mr. Long's sincere love for his church, it is not surprising that he would not be underbid on the project.

The financial projection called for a total expenditure of \$125,000, including furnishings and architect's fees, with \$75,000 coming from the state convention. There was \$40,000 on hand in the Building Fund, so an immediate drive for \$10,000 in cash and two- year pledges was launched. On March 14, the church voted to let the contract in the hope that the work would be completed by the fall of 1948. Services continued to be held in the auditorium during first stages of construction, but on June 20 it was announced that the morning services would move to Langdon Hall for the duration.

As the building project neared completion, it was obvious that a loan would have to be obtained to pay the final installment to the contractor. On January 10, 1949, the Board of Trustees passed a series of resolutions which came to the church for action on February 13. In effect these resolutions authorized the trustees to borrow \$60,000 from the Liberty National Life Insurance Company at 5 percent interest to be repaid in quarterly installments over a period of ten years. To secure the loan, the church pledged the remainder of the state Board's commitment to the building program, \$41,000, and gave a mortgage on the church property. The first service in the newly remodeled building was held on February 13 with Dr. Spright Dowell preaching the sermon. It will be recalled that Dr. Dowell chaired the committee when the sanctuary was originally built in

1928-29, and preached the first sermon on the completion of that project. The official dedication occurred on Sunday, April 10, with Dr. A. Hamilton Reid, Executive Secretary of the state convention, preaching the sermon. At that time the church still owed approximately \$15,000 on the total cost of the building and Dedication Day was set as "Pledge Day" and "Pay Up Day" in order to discharge that indebtedness.

Since its beginning around the turn of the century, the W.M.U. has been a vital part of the Auburn First Baptist Church. The growth of this organization is reflected in the church bulletin of February 15, 1948, where nine circles are listed to meet in the coming week's activities. Hostesses for those meetings were Mrs. D. H. Copeland, Mrs. J. E. Stephens, Mrs. Paul Bomar, Mrs. Harriet Ellis, Mrs. A. H. Chrietzburg, Mrs. W. T. Edwards, Sr., Mrs. L. W. James, Mrs. T. C. Clark, Miss Mary Helen Dodson, Mrs. J. L. Butt, Mrs. R. H. Hudgins, Mrs. J. D. Samford, Mrs. J. M. Rash, and Mrs. John Bagby.

The spring revival for 1948 involved the Baptist and Methodist churches in a joint effort. Morning services were held in Langdon Hall with evening services in the respective churches. Dr. J. P. Allen of Bristol, Virginia, preached for the Baptists. These two denominations collaborated on another project in 1948, a fund raising drive for Howard and Birmingham-Southern Colleges. Auburn First Baptist accepted a goal of \$3000 for this effort. The church also participated in a fund raising effort on behalf of Judson College at this time. Jewett Hall on the Judson campus had burned in 1947, and the college was in the process of rebuilding that historic structure. Auburn accepted a goal of \$2,700 and, by June, reported gifts totaling \$3,410.94; \$1,000 of this amount was given by Mrs. Paul Bomar, widow of one of the

former presidents of Judson.

One of the popular projects of Baptist student life during these years was the Youth Revival effort. In the summer of 1948 a team composed of Jim Pharr and Leon Marsh, Auburn graduates then at Southwestern Seminary, together with Bob Norman and Millie Hughes of Howard College, made up a team that conducted revivals over the state of Alabama with great success. Pharr had been the center and captain on the Auburn football team his senior year, and Leon Marsh, a local product, had been a key leader in B.S.U. Both Norman and Hughes were outstanding B.S.U. leaders at Howard. Both campuses took great interest in their work and supported them in prayer and encouragement.

In August of 1948, the church passed a resolution of appreciation for the ministry of Eleanor Abercrombie who had served two years as director of the Sunday morning choir. At her resignation, Richard Collins of the A.P.I. music faculty was employed as music director. Collins was a graduate of the University of Louisville and the Cincinnati Conservatory. At this same time Professor Edgar Glyde of the A.P.I. music faculty was directing the music for evening services and Dilson Petrey, a student, served as organist.

The idea of students moving their church letters to the college church had become established by this time and 102 were added on October 3, 1948.

The Auburn First Baptist Church had come a long way in its first hundred years, but like any church made up of human beings, it had experienced times of stress and disappointment. The first sign that all was not well during these busy and progressive years in the late 40's appears in the minutes of a

Deacons' meeting in June of 1948 when some unrest over "the student situation" was expressed. On October 10 of that year there is the record of the resignation of Charles Roselle as Student Secretary. Then in the May 22, 1949 bulletin there is this word: "Your pastor and family wish to express their deep devotion to, and love for, the members of this church and the people of Auburn. We thank God upon every remembrance of you and for every kindness that you have shown to us. We are returning to the Clayton Street Baptist Church on July 1, 1949. Our prayers and interest are with this church that God may lead you to find his will in calling a new pastor and Student Secretary." Tragically, that intent would not be fulfilled due to a serious heart condition that kept Dr. Ayers out of the ministry permanently.

Those who were in the church at that time know more of the circumstances than can be recreated through researching the records; and, it goes without saying, that there are several opinions as to the nature of those circumstances. Suffice it to say here that the record of both men in their relatively brief tenures with the church speak for themselves. Under the leadership of Louise Green and Charles Roselle the Baptist Student Union enjoyed some of its most productive years. Roselle went from Auburn to the University of Missouri as Student Secretary and from there to the Student Department of the Baptist Sunday School Board where he ultimately became the Director of Baptist Campus Ministries, the highest position available to a student worker in Southern Baptist life. He visited the Auburn church frequently during the sixties and seventies when both his children were students at the university.

The Resolution of Appreciation for the ministry of Hoyt

Ayers, adopted by the church on June 5, 1949, speaks for itself. Only a portion is reprinted here. It begins by noting the statistical accomplishments of his tenure: leading in the \$125,000 building program, seeing an increase in membership from 851 to 1,471, and in budget from \$11,500 to \$30,000. This comment follows: "Because of him the sick have felt better, the bereaved have found new faith, the delinquent have found a new and better way of life. To the lost he has been the lighthouse, to the humble and needy he has been the servant, to those seeking guidance, he has been the teacher. ... He has been a wonderful pastor and a great gospel preacher, filling his pulpit always with humility, but with dignity and honor."

"Mrs. Ayers has been the loving, faithful companion, filling her place, inspiring him to go forward in his work and dedicated to the task of unselfish service, prayer, and love and devotion."

Among the purposes of history, one is to remind us of our human fallibility which sometimes results in fractured relationships, then adds to the problem by defying the most honest attempts to mend them. From such, even the church of our Lord, Jesus Christ is not immune. Hopefully, the progress of the church in this era vastly outweighs in memory the circumstances of its ending.

Whatever else may be said of the relatively brief tenures of Hoyt Ayers and Charles Roselle, the fact remains that they provided the church with a necessary transition experience and paved the way for one of its most progressive eras.

Chapter 7

The Emerging Church

Following the resignation of Hoyt Ayers in 1949, the church established a Pulpit Committee composed of W. L. Long, Chairman, J. M. Richardson, G. B. Phillips, V. C. Helms, H. C. Teer, Ralph Draughon, Mrs. Elmer Salter, Mrs. Hayden Rogers, J. C. Lowery, and Frazier Galloway. While this committee was at work, the church enjoyed the very effective leadership and salient preaching if Dr. V. L. Stanfield, Professor of Preaching at Southern Seminary.

Soon after the Ayers had moved out of the pastorium, which was located next to the church building, the church voted to convert it to office and educational space. The sum of \$1,500 was transferred from income derived from the operation of the Jones property to be used for the necessary renovations.

Upon seeing the immediate need for another pastorium, Dr. Stanfield pledged a gift of \$100 toward a down payment provided twenty other persons in the church would match his gift. Within a few weeks it was reported that \$2,300 had been raised to apply on a new pastorium. After considering several

alternatives, the church voted to purchase a new house on North Avenue for the pastorium.

Interim arrangements were also made at this time for continuing the Student Ministry. Dr. William K. Weaver, State Student Secretary, was to have general oversight of the work with Mrs. Jamie Jones being employed on a full-time basis to carry on the work under the supervision of the pastor and Dr. Weaver.

At the church conference of September 11, 1948, it was announced that Miss Pitts Hughes had been secured as Interim Student Secretary. Among the items included in the B.S.U. report for September were these: 45 student leaders had attended a pre-school retreat for council members at Camp Grandview and 450 freshmen had attended a reception given for them at the beginning of the quarter.

On December 11, 1949, the Pulpit Committee reported to the church, recommending a call to Dr. Howard D. Olive, Pastor of First Baptist Church of Russellville, Kentucky. The report, given by Dr. Ralph Draughon, a member of the committee, observed that the committee had investigated ministers from "New York to Texas, and from Missouri to the coast of Florida." The following biographical information was included:

Dr. Olive is a native of Tennessee, but a portion of his childhood years were spent in St. Louis, Missouri. He attended Southwest Baptist Junior College and William Jewel College in Missouri. He holds Master of Theology and Doctor of Theology degrees from Southern Seminary at Louisville, Kentucky.

After graduation from college and prior to his study at

the Seminary, Dr. Olive was pastor of the First Baptist Church of Monett, Missouri. He pastored two churches while he was a student at the seminary which made outstanding progress under his leadership. Upon graduation from the seminary with the Th.D. degree, he became pastor of the First Baptist Church of Russellville, Kentucky, where he has served for the past two years.

Mrs. Olive is a native of Bolivar, Missouri. She is the daughter of Attorney and Mrs. T. M. Douglas of that city. She attended college at Southwest Baptist and Missouri State Teachers College. She is also a graduate of Women's Missionary Training School in Louisville, Kentucky.

Dr. Olive is 32 years of age. He and Mrs. Olive are the parents of three children, Douglas, 7, Timothy, 4, and Marjorie Corrine, 3 months.

A second daughter, Adelia Ann, was born in December 1954.

There were other changes on the church staff in 1950. In March, Dilson Petrey finished his work at the college and resigned as church organist. Frances High was elected to this position. Both Veda Long as church secretary and Pitts Hughes as interim Student Secretary offered their resignations, but at Dr. Olive's request agreed to remain. Meanwhile the search for a permanent Student Secretary centered on A. B. Parsons, Jr., of Sumter, South Carolina. A graduate of The Citadel and Southern Seminary, Parsons assumed the position on July 1, 1950. He served for one year and resigned to re-enter college and then was

re-employed for the fall quarter of 1951 on a half-time basis because a permanent person had not been found.

Church finances during these years profited from property given by generous benefactors. An indication of the nature of the Jones property operation can be gained from the Financial Report of the Board of Trustees for 1948. The report shows income of \$8,545.55 from the Jones Hotel; \$10,586 from rentals; and \$174.06 from sale of materials. Disbursements included \$6,000 to the primary beneficiary, Mrs. Robelot (Garrett); \$5,000 to the First Baptist Church; and the usual cost of operations. The report showed a loss of \$2,190.49 for the year with a balance on hand of \$5,871.00. For this year, the church showed a total income of \$19,582.56 from contributions, \$2,190.86 from the Baptist State Executive Board, and various special offerings which brought the grand total to \$32,278.21. Disbursements included \$12,502.01 for salaries, \$2,443.50 for the Cooperative Program, and \$5,290.49 to the Building Fund.

One of the prominent lay leaders in the church at this time was L. M. Ware. He had served as deacon, trustee, Sunday School teacher, and committeeman, and in 1950 was chairman of the trustees. Prof. Ware, as he was affectionately known, took a special interest in the financial affairs of the church and spent many hours with pencil in hand working on various projects. He had a firm conviction that the income from the Jones property should not be used as a crutch for the regular operations of the church. In November of 1951 he offered this motion regarding those funds: "In order that the purpose of the grantor, the late Mr. Clifton Jones, in the gift of his estate to the First Baptist Church of Auburn might be carried out in a more orderly way, the Board of Trustees recommends: (1) That beginning January

1, 1952 the annual net profits of the estate be divided as follows: one-third to the cooperative program; one-third to the estate's reserve fund; and one-third to a church building reserve fund. (2) That the numerous requests of the church for miscellaneous purposes be hereafter handled through the regular church budget." He also called on the church to pause and be thankful for the generous gift of Mr. Jones.

A strong emphasis on evangelism and outreach characterized the ministry of Dr. Howard Olive. Dr. Carl G. Campbell, pastor of the Ruhama Baptist Church of Birmingham, led in a revival meeting, April 9-15, 1951, and at the end of the year, the church reported 45 baptisms, the highest number since 1946. That record was surpassed the next year by the end of April when the number of baptisms reached 53; of those, 38 resulted from a revival led by Dr. Vernon D. Elmore, evangelist, and Frank Boggs who led the music.

A religious census which was taken in 1951 revealed 100 Baptist families in Auburn who were not affiliated with a church, another 100 Baptists from divided families, and 800 single students who were prospective members.

On June 1, 1952, the church welcomed Paul Stewart as Music Director. He was an active member of the church, serving as director of the Adult I Department in Sunday School, and was director of the Lee County High School (now Auburn High) Band. The following January he announced the reorganization of the Student Choir, anticipating as many as a hundred students to be enrolled. In September of 1953 he resigned to enter Southern Seminary in preparation for a career in church music. Following his seminary work he became Alabama's first State Music Secretary, a position he held until his retirement in the mid

1980's.

Following A. B. Parsons' resignation, the search was on again for a Student Secretary. Late in 1951, J. C. Grimes, chairman of the search committee, presented the recommendation of the committee that Mr. Maurice Willis be called to that position and begin work as soon as arrangements to move the Willis family to Auburn could be made. In making his report, Mr. Grimes observed that Willis had been approached on two other occasions regarding the position but had declined on grounds that his work at Berea College in Kentucky was not finished.

Maurice Willis was a native of Lexington, Kentucky, and a graduate of the University of Kentucky. He had completed the regular Religious Education course at Southern Seminary and was committed to the student ministry as a career. The Willises, with their four children—David, Betty, Tommy, and Deborah—began work at Auburn on January 1, 1952.

The B.S.U. reports to the church conference during his tenure reflect his careful and systematic organizational procedures and a continuation of meaningful participation in the church on the part of its student members. A typical report made to the church in October of 1953 lists the following statistics: 600 students participating in one or more unit organizations; 404 students enrolled in 14 Sunday School classes with an average attendance of 212; 500 students enrolled in 15 Training Unions with an average attendance of 327; seven Y.W.A. units with an enrollment of 60; an average attendance of 50 at noonday meditations; 400 attending morning worship; 150 attending evening worship; and 25 students participating in weekly mission activities at three Negro churches in the community. The

report listed 600 students as belonging to a local church in the college community. Since First Baptist was the only such church, approximately half of its participating members were students.

The fifties were years of steady growth in all aspects of church life, with mission consciousness and participation leading the way. Mrs. Elmer Salter's report to the church conference in January of 1950 revealed nine active circles in the W.M.U. with \$500 given for the Cooperative Program the previous quarter and \$706.75 for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. In March of 1951 the minutes of the conference included a copy of a congratulatory note to Mary Hazel Ford Moon, who, along with her husband, Lloyd Moon, had just been appointed missionaries to Brazil. Although other members of the church had been called to missions, Mary Hazel was a local girl, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Ford.

As the church budget grew each year, so did the percentage and amount budgeted for the Cooperative Program. The figures are as follows: for 1951, a budget of \$40,155 with \$4,500 for the Cooperative Program; 1952, \$39,967 and \$9,465; 1953, \$57,111 and \$12,267; and for 1955, \$69,000 and \$16,191.

In his letter to the membership promoting the 1953 budget, Financial Chairman Hoyt Nations wrote: "You may recall that last year our gifts to the Cooperative Program were raised from 15 percent to 25 percent of the undesignated receipts. We have had the best year in baptisms, new church members, and finances in the church's history. We feel that the Lord has wonderfully blessed us because of our contribution to the Cooperative Program and that most of you are in favor of doing more in this endeavor. Therefore, we have increased the amount to the Cooperative Program and missions to approximately thirty

percent of undesignated gifts.”

It was at this time that the deacons brought a recommendation to the church that it subscribe to a proposal for an associational missionary to serve three-fourths time in Tuskegee Association and one-fourth time in Bullock Centennial Association. Participation in this proposal would require the church to increase its annual contribution for associational missions from \$150 to \$875. The proposal was implemented and Rev. Karl Seepe became the Associational Missionary for this area. Later on the church provided his office space in one of the side rooms of “Babyland” (the old pastorium).

The church lost a great friend and promoter of missions in the death of Mrs. Paul V. Bomar, widow of Dr. Paul Bomar, former President of Judson College and a leading pastor in the state. On the occasion of her death, November 5, 1952, the church acknowledged the loss of “one of its most noble members, the Woman’s Missionary Society a loyal character, the Sunday School an excellent teacher, the home a faithful and devoted mother and grandmother, and the community a most beloved citizen.”

Two years later the record of a memorial established to Mrs. Bomar was entered upon the minutes. The sum of \$5,000 was received by the church from Mrs. Bomar's children—Mrs. M. C. Ellis, Mr. John Earl Bomar, Mrs. G. W. Green, Mr. Paul V. Bomar, and Mrs. D. W. Wallace—and designated to the erection of an educational building on the mission field at Matsuyama, Japan, where Miss Elizabeth Watkins, an appointee of the Foreign Mission Board and a relative of the family, was stationed.

Further indication of the financial progress of these years

is indicated by the motion made on December 9, 1951, authorizing the Trustees to make the final payment on the mortgage with Liberty National Life Insurance Company and to secure the canceled mortgage. This action further authorized the closing of the records of the Building Finance Committee, and a letter of thanks was dispatched to the Baptist State Board for paying the final part of its \$75,000 allocation ahead of time.

However, it was not long before the need for additional space became acute. By the fall of 1953, attendance at the worship services had grown to the extent that the deacons recommended that an 8:30 a.m. service be instituted on a trial basis. Although auditorium space was limited, the lack of adequate educational space was even more critical. In August of 1953 the church voted to employ an architect to develop plans for an educational annex. The church formed a number of committees. The Building Committee consisted of Hubert Harris, chairman, Mrs. J. D. Samford, John Kennedy, and O. C. Moore. The Building Finance Committee included L. M. Ware, chairman, Hoyt Nations, Eric Bell, Olin Hill, Pete Turnham, and Olan Cooper. When plans were completed, the church voted to construct the building on a cost-fee basis and authorized the Board of Trustees to borrow funds as needed.

The Building Finance Committee recommended that funds for the building be derived from the following sources: over and above contributions from the membership, \$5,000; contribution of the State Board, \$6,000; loans from Jones Property Reserve Fund, \$10,000; loans from local banks, \$22,000; and balance in the current building fund, \$18,500. In the final analysis, the church borrowed \$40,000 for the construction of this annex.

On February 14, 1954, the new unit was used for the first time, furnishing the following educational space: adults, an assembly room and six classrooms; local young people, an assembly room and five classrooms; intermediates, an assembly room and eight classrooms; two primary departments; and one beginner department.

The summer of 1954 prompted another decision regarding buildings. While the auditorium with its high ceiling was “tolerable” during the summer heat, the new annex proved to be oppressive. Personal comfort demanded air conditioning. The question was whether or not to air condition both buildings. After considerable discussion and cost analyses, the decision was made by a vote of three to one to air condition both buildings. The church bulletin of March 20, 1955 featured the decision and an appeal to the membership on the front page as follows:

The Verdict: The required number has expressed an opinion. The vote was three to one in favor of air conditioning the annex and the auditorium.

The Next Step: To obtain \$8300 in cash, and \$6000 in pledges for 1955.

The Schedule: Main solicitation during the week

March 28 to April 3 with plans complete by April 10.

A Hope: That everyone, whether he or she voted for

or against the proposal, will accept the decision of the majority and support the effort to the limit.

A Long-Time View: With air conditioning the Baptist Church will be as modern (not as new), as spacious, and as beautiful as any church in Auburn. Without air conditioning our Church will be out of date; two other Auburn churches have let contracts for air conditioning.

The total cost of air conditioning will be approximately \$25,000; members of another great church of Auburn are in the process of building a \$383,000 structure.

Our additional obligations will be about \$16,700 and our total building obligations about \$39,700; the obligation of the other church will be over \$200,000.

We have a great Church, wonderful facilities, and a great people. Our building needs to be modernized by being air conditioned.

Won't you consider this not just another request for funds but a step in long-time plans that will modernize our Church and make it the equal of any in Auburn.

We can't reach our goal by token gifts; everyone

must make a special effort. Won't you join with us?

Raising the funds to complete the air conditioning work was a struggle as indicated by a note in the May 1 bulletin to the effect that a group of young married men were attempting to raise \$2,400 yet needed to meet the cash goal.

In April of 1955, Maurice Willis resigned as Student Secretary to accept the position of Director of Campus Ministries for the State Mission Board. Throughout his tenure as Student Secretary in Auburn, the Baptist Student Union maintained a high level of participation. Some 600 students were active in one or more of the unit organizations with Sunday School attendance ranging in the high 200's and Training Union doing as well. Noonday Meditations, social activities such as the annual banquets and Christmas coffees were highlights of the program. Students participated in local mission projects among the black churches and gave liberally to the summer missions program.

On July 3, 1955, the church welcomed Richard Spain, his wife, Elizabeth, and children, Ricky, Marshall, and Libby, as the new Campus Ministry family. Spain came from a background of public school teaching in Bremen, Georgia, following his educational preparation at Mississippi College and the University of Georgia.

The church bulletin of November 20, 1955 asked the congregation to pray especially for their pastor and his wife who were going before the Foreign Mission Board in December, with the view to being appointed as missionaries. The appointment came through and the Olives resigned effective December 31, 1955, to begin their career as missionaries in the Philippines.

The Resolution of Appreciation for the Olives' ministry,

as adopted by the church on February 12, 1956, observed among other things, "that the church had made steady progress under his inspiring leadership, and that he had rendered great service to the Tuskegee Association in promoting a program of associational missions."

In January of 1956, Dr. Wiley D. Ogletree of Milstead, Alabama, began an interim pastorate that lasted four and one half months. The former pastor of the Central Park Church in Birmingham and the First Baptist Church of Enterprise, one of Alabama's most respected pastors, greatly blessed the church through his ministry. Meanwhile, the Pulpit Committee lost no time in settling on Dr. Harold Cole of South Carolina as the new pastor. A call was extended in March and Dr. Cole's telegram of acceptance was carried in the March 25 issue of the *Auburn Baptist*.

The June 3 bulletin carried the following biographical information: Dr. Cole was a native of Greenville County, South Carolina, and a graduate of North Greenville Junior College and Furman University. He received his theological training at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His former pastorates included churches in Indiana and South Carolina. He had a notable background in student work, having served as Student Secretary at Clemson College, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Clemson, and for the previous five years, Director of Student Work for the South Carolina convention. Mrs. Cole (Inez) was a graduate of Carson-Newman College and had attended the Carver School of Missions in Louisville. The Coles had two sons, David, 12, and Charles, 7.

Although Dr. Cole's pastorate would last only 14 months, it was marked by some of the most progressive decisions in the

church's history. It was during these months that the expansion of the Baptist witness in Auburn began, enlarging from one church to four by 1986.

The initial factor in this period of expansion was a motion made in church conference by J. C. Ford in late 1955. He moved to establish a Missions Committee to make a continuing study of the growth and changing conditions within the area and to make such recommendations and suggestions as might seem expedient to the pastor's council or cabinet and the Board of Deacons or Finance Committee. The Committee which was subsequently appointed consisted of W. L. Alford, chairman, Louie James, Mrs. Foy Helms, Miss Katherine Cater, Felton Little, and Mrs. J. C. Ford. This committee, assisted by Associational Missionary Karl Seepe, worked long and hard in developing plans which would ultimately come to fruition with the establishment of the Lakeview Baptist Church. Later on, Dr. Virginia Zachert was added to the committee and became a leading force in establishing the Lakeview Mission.

Another factor in this expansion was the establishment of the church newsletter, *The Auburn Baptist*. Underwritten by several laymen in the church, this piece was originally a seven by nine inch, four-page bulletin, very professional in appearance. It served as the medium of communication by which the membership could be informed and inspired regarding plans and developments. In one of the first issues, L. M. Ware, Chairman of Deacons, wrote of "A Church Vision." After citing needs in the area of staff, buildings, programs, and financial undergirding, he wrote: "As important as these needs are, our church needs also to sponsor smaller local churches. We have over 4000 Baptists in Auburn and the vicinity. We are reaching about one-fourth of

them. Some of these will never be reached by the larger parent church. Other cities the size of Auburn have two, three, and four churches. Experience shows that once these churches are started they become fully self-supporting and assume all obligations belonging to them.”

Similar articles were written by John Bagby, Chairman of the Finance Committee, Karl Seepe, and J. C. Grimes, Chairman of the Trustees. Grimes phrased his remarks in the form of his personal belief in the working out of a Divine Plan through the ages and concluded as follows: “I believe that the First Baptist Church of Auburn is a part of the Divine Plan. I believe that it will continue to do in the future what it has always done in the past; that it will grow and will expand its facilities and resources to meet the spiritual needs of a growing student body and an expanding community.”

Among the several study projects done by the Missions Committee was a survey that revealed the following growth factors from the close of World War II to the mid-fifties: the city limits had expanded from four square miles to nine; the number of business licenses had increased from 569 to 722; the tax value of real estate had grown from 1.5 million to 4.7 million; the number of students had increased from 3765 to 7913; the number of telephones had expanded from 1,023 to 3,758; and the staff at A.P.I. had grown from 411 to 899.

A community-wide religious census was conducted in the fall of 1956, revealing 2,500 Baptist and Baptist preference residents, and 3,500 Baptist students enrolled at the college, making a total potential pool of prospects of 6,000. Of this number the church was reaching no more than 20 to 25 percent. In the Pastor's Word on the first Sunday of January 1957, Dr.

Cole referred to the awakening effect of these statistics and applauded the church's response in deciding to add a full-time staff position in the field of education and music—the first such position in its history. This new staff member was to be the counterpart of the Student Secretary, working with the local constituency in the church as the latter worked with the students. Soon thereafter, the church extended a call to Mr. Robert Balliew, a native of Greenville, S.C., and a graduate of Carson-Newman College and the New Orleans Seminary, to fill this position.

In November of 1956 the Missions Committee reported that it was meeting regularly each week following the Prayer Meeting and was looking into possible sites for a branch Sunday School, one of which was the National Guard Armory on Dean Road. In December the church voted to approve the establishment of such a Sunday School and set the beginning date for January 20, 1957. Charles Rollo was elected as superintendent and Karl Seepe as advisor. Although the work did not actually begin on the designated date, plans continued to develop through spring and summer, and on October 16 the first meeting of the teachers and officers took place at the home of the Pattersons and Ledbetters.

Meanwhile, steps were being taken toward securing a permanent location for the new work. In April of 1956 two sites for prospective missions were purchased, the Lakeview site for \$7500 and a location in the Heard subdivision further south on Dean Road for \$4000. The latter was later to be sold when it was determined that a mission would not be needed in that area. The purchase of the Lakeview site brought to surface the challenge of financing a new building. The church ultimately decided to go

the route of a bond issue and employed the Providence Company to provide an issue of \$45,000. On June 2, the first anniversary of Harold Cole, the church presented him with the first of these bonds as a gift. He immediately returned the favor. By mid-August practically all of the bonds had been sold.

Local committees who worked on the issue were as follows: Program Director, Dr. and Mrs. D. G. Sturkie; Banking, Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Teer; Mechanics, Mrs. J. C. Moore, B. C. Pope, Mrs. J. M. Pruet, and Mrs. John Bagby. The Advertising Committee was headed by Tex Williams and Gene Stevenson and the Training Committee by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Sowell and Mr. and Mrs. Bill Eden. The membership was divided into three divisions for promotional purposes and these were headed by Mr. and Mrs. John DeLoney, Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Harris, and Mr. and Mrs. Dan Hollis.

On Dr. Cole's final Sunday, August 25, the *Auburn Baptist* carried an appeal from Chairman of Deacons L. M. Ware that the membership accept places of leadership in the organizations, be faithful to their responsibilities, be generous in their gifts and pledges, and be constant in their prayers for the Pulpit Committee. As the church faced the annual influx of students at the beginning of the fall quarter in 1957, Professor Ware again appealed to the membership through the *Auburn Baptist*: "True it is, we have lost our Pastor, our Minister of Education-Music, our Organist-Choir Director, and the Chairman of our Nominating Committee—all of these at a time when everyone seems to be on vacation, when a student body is about to descend on us, when officers and committees are about to change, and when many of our key men and women are out each Sunday trying to find a new Pastor. Will you do just a little

more than your part while this emergency lasts? Won't you conscientiously try to do your part by putting the best you have into the task before us of making a great church greater?"

The church once again surmounted such crises, as it had so many times before. The mid-fifties saw continued growth in the organizational life of the church. A Training Union enlargement campaign was held in September of 1956 resulting in the organization of three new departments and 21 new unions. Attendance at round-up Sunday reached 776. The 1956 church letter showed a total membership of 2,178, Sunday School enrollment of 1,281, a Vacation Bible School enrollment of 261, Training Union enrollment of 554, W.M.U. enrollment of 312, Brotherhood enrollment of 89, total gifts of \$71,094.28, and mission gifts of \$22,941.11.

Interesting reports of student activity appeared in the November 1, 1956 issue of the *Auburn Baptist*. The first told of three students who had spent the summer in California working as a part of the Tentmaker program. The three students were Walter Porter, Bill Brock, and Dwayne Beckett, B.S.U. Mission Chairman. The other was entitled "A Freshman Looks Ahead," and was signed by Sara Cannon. Beckett later married another B.S.U.'er, Doris Bryant, and Sara another, Ed Wood. The three Beckett children, Paul, Gena, and Donald, and two of the Wood's children, Miriam and Jimmy, followed in their parents' footsteps and became leaders in the B.S.U. and the church in later years. Children of other A.S.U. leaders who followed in their parents' footsteps were Oyette and Brenda Chambliss's children, Leigh Anne and Tim; Tom and Linda Powe's children, Beth and Kathy; Paul and Betty Smith's children, Susan, Rob, and Leigh Anne. These families are mentioned as typical of many others whose

children have followed their parents in this activity. To attempt to name them all would be impossible.

Reference has already been made to the involvement of many former members of the church as missionaries. The January 24, 1957 bulletin observed that former member Earl Posey and his wife had recently been appointed by the Foreign Mission Board to serve in the Philippines and that A.P.I. was second only to Howard College in the number of graduates from Alabama colleges serving as missionaries.

Following the resignation in August of 1957 of Bob Balliew and Christine Tidwell, the church employed Ruby Barker as music director at a salary of \$50 per month. On October 13, the Pulpit Committee recommended Grady Bradshaw of West Point, Georgia, as interim pastor. Meanwhile a Pulpit Committee composed of the following members was busily searching for a pastor: V. C. Helms and L. M. Ware as co-chairmen, Mrs. Dan Hollis, Roudell Byrd, J. C. Grimes, Richard Spain, B. C. Pope, Mrs. Katherine Reaves, Mrs. J. M. Pruet, O. N. Andrews, Dwayne Beckett, and Paul Shoffeit. Later J. T. Cope was added to replace Roudell Byrd who resigned because of illness.

As the calendar wound down on 1957, joy reigned in the Loveliest Village when the Auburn Tigers were named the number one football team in the nation; the Baptist students from Alabama campuses were preparing for their annual convention in the First Baptist Church; and things were about to fall in place for the calling of the 23rd pastor in the church's long history.

Part II



1958-1988

A Memoir

Chapter 8

Call and Response

On a day in late summer of 1957 the door bell sounded at the pastorium in Andalusia. The caller was Abe Martin, county agent for Covington County, and his mission was to inquire on behalf of some of his colleagues in Auburn if I would be interested in talking with the pulpit committee of the First Baptist Church there. I responded with the answer that I had, and have since, given to such inquiries; that is, that if a church thinks me worthy of their consideration, I should at least honor their interest by talking with them. I hastened to add, however, that the chances of my leaving Andalusia under the circumstances then existing would range from slim to none. The circumstances were obvious from where we stood in the living room of the pastorium, for next door the steel for a new church plant was then being put in place. The project was scheduled for completion sometime the next year, and at that time the church would need to borrow some \$75,000 to pay for this first unit. We had a nice chat and he went his way.

Some days later on a Sunday members of the pulpit

committee attended the morning service in Andalusia. Then, in my mid-thirties, I had occasional visits from such committees and usually recognized their presence, but for some reason I was not aware of the presence of this one. Later, in discussing the visit, committee members recalled an incident that had fixed that particular Sunday indelibly on my mind. Before the days of air conditioning, the auditorium windows were open and a little bird had chosen to share our worship that morning. He (or she) had been especially inspired by the music, circling the ceiling with enthusiasm. The enthusiasm ceased when I began the sermon and the little creature joined a few others in a Sunday morning nap. The visiting committee said they were impressed by the preacher's ability to persevere in the presence of the distraction.

Sometime in late August I received a telephone call from Mr. V. C. Helms, who along with Mr. L. M. Ware was serving as co-chairman of the Auburn pulpit committee. He requested that I meet with the two of them at some place between Auburn and Andalusia for a get-acquainted conference. He assured me that the conference would be without obligation on the part of either of us. In a few days we met in a churchyard at Banks, Alabama, under a big oak tree for a very pleasant visit. The only specific subject discussed that I can recall was my lack of a seminary degree. Both men confessed that they were not aware of this fact, but felt that this was not crucial for the committee.

In September the committee contacted me and asked that Jeanette and I come to Auburn for a visit. Again we were assured that this would not obligate either party for any further consideration, so we agreed to come. Within a week after this visit, I wrote the committee thanking them for their hospitality, assuring them that there was nothing in the Auburn situation

that prevented us from considering a call, but that we simply did not feel that we should leave Andalusia at that time. Mr. Helms acknowledged the letter in his characteristically gracious manner.

In about a month Mr. Helms called again to ask if there had been any change in our circumstances. There had been, but not regarding the possibility of moving from Andalusia. A severe epidemic of mumps had struck south Alabama, and our Jane had brought the virus home from her kindergarten friends. Successively, all five males in the family contracted the bug and the older ones were confined strictly to bed for three weeks. It was in this position that I took Mr. Helms' call and positively assured him that I was in no condition to reconsider.

At this point it is appropriate to note that my involvement in the work of the State Convention was at least indirectly related to Auburn's interest in me. As a member of the Administrative Committee, I was asked to chair a subcommittee on student work. Among other things this committee was to relate to local student committees in matters of buildings and equipment. In this role I had come to Auburn earlier in the year to confer with pastor Harold Cole and the Building Committee. In this meeting we found that although building plans were not specifically complete, the need for a student facility at Auburn was critical, and felt that funds should be earmarked for this purpose as soon as possible. Consequently, we agreed to recommend to the State Board of Missions that the State Convention match funds with Auburn for their building program up to a maximum commitment of \$200,000 on the part of the convention. This action had placed me in right good favor with the Auburn people.

Then around December 1, the Covington County Board of Commissioners offered to buy the old First Baptist property in Andalusia which was located next to the courthouse for a price that would enable the church to complete the building under construction debt-free. By this time we were thinking ahead to moving to the new location, and since the new unit was the main auditorium, some temporary educational space had to be located. The church had purchased a residence on one side of the new building, and on the other side was the house in which we lived consisting of ten large rooms. It was very logical to consider vacating this house for use as part of the needed educational space.

If a turning point can be identified in our thinking, it occurred in the process of driving from Andalusia to Florence, Alabama, and back. Again, as chairman of the subcommittee on student work, I was asked by our Executive Secretary, Dr. A. Hamilton Reid, to go to Florence to see a building which the local committee was planning to buy for a student center. The long drive turned out to be an extended prayer time for me as I contemplated the recent developments in Andalusia and the situation at Auburn. I shared these thoughts with Jeanette when I got home and found that she had not dismissed the Auburn situation from her mind; however, we reasoned that by this time the church had probably settled on someone else. We would know for sure in a few days for I had been invited to be a conference leader at the B.S.U. Convention which was to be held in the Auburn church.

During the convention in early December, we talked again with the Auburn committee and found that they were still searching. There were other talks and a final agreement that I

would come to Auburn on Sunday, January 19, 1958, to preach in the morning services. Jeanette and I had come to the conclusion that if the church called us we would accept. We came up on Saturday with our three older boys, John, Jim, and David, and met with the deacons on that night for a question and answer period. The next day following the 11:00 a.m. service, the Pulpit Committee recommended that the church call us and the vote was unanimous. We returned to Andalusia that afternoon and at the close of the evening service I submitted my resignation effective March 1.

The next five weeks were difficult. Some of the Andalusia people had problems about our leaving with the building not yet completed, even though it would be finished debt-free. I must confess that there were times when I questioned the wisdom of the decision myself, but once the move was made there was never a doubt but that it was the will of God for us.

The church had decided (and rightly so) that the house on North Avenue was too small for our larger than average family, so a house on West Magnolia Avenue where Anders Bookstore is now located was rented. We had a speedy orientation to the university community at that location—a few steps from Toomer's Corner, across the street from Biggin Hall, and a half block from the Lambda Chi Fraternity house. We arrived on Friday, February 28, received an old-fashioned pounding from the membership on Saturday night, and preached our first sermon on Sunday, March 2, 1958.

The Building Committee, chaired by J. C. Lowery, went immediately to work to find a suitable pastorium. Within six months the church bought a house from one of its members who was moving to another city. It was a five-bedroom, three-bath

house located at 723 Moore's Mill Road, and was ideally suited for our family. We have many fond memories of the big house and lot where our children grew up.

There were three immediate challenges to be dealt with by the new pastor: getting the Lakeview Chapel on a firm foundation, developing some plans for critical space needs, and building a staff. The Lakeview Chapel pretty much took care of itself. The week before calling me as pastor, the church had called Wyley Peebles, assistant pastor of First Baptist Church, Sylacauga, as Mission Pastor, and he began his work two weeks before I began mine. Along with excellent lay leadership, he led the chapel in a steady growth pattern. On May 11, 1958, the Chapel building was dedicated with our Youth Choir furnishing special music. By this time the Sunday School had grown to 108 and practically filled the new unit which had cost a total of \$34,771. By the first anniversary in September, the enrollment had reached 188 and there had been 71 additions to the church from the Lakeview work.

Just two years after it began in the National Guard Armory, the mission was constituted into the Lakeview Baptist Church on September 27, 1959. The First Baptist Church granted letters to 186 of its member who were among the charter members. Of course, Wyley Peebles was called as pastor and continued his fine leadership until he was called back to his native state of Texas.

The need for building a staff was obvious to everyone. Besides myself the staff consisted of Martha Ann Humphrey who had been employed to succeed Fran Rollins as church secretary, Martha Beaty as part-time financial secretary, Ruby Barker as part-time choir director, Royce Harbor, organist, and Carey

Evans as custodian. Since the mid-thirties, the other leadership position on the staff had been the Student Secretary, so the first step was to find a successor to Dick Spain who had resigned to go to New Orleans Seminary. The chairman of the Search Committee was John Bagby, who as I recall, had three solid recommendations for the position. One of these was Harold Gully, a graduate of New Orleans Seminary, then serving as an associate in the Brotherhood Department in Mississippi, but who, according to our information, wanted to get back into student work. A conference was arranged and Jeanette and I met Harold, his wife, Nelly, and infant son, Ronnie, at a motel in Meridian, Mississippi. We thought this to be a most attractive and congenial young family and so reported to the Search Committee. The result was a call to Harold Gully who accepted and began his work in Auburn on June 1, 1958. The Gullys, who proved to be very popular with students and church people alike, served for nine years before returning to Mississippi State, Harold's alma mater.

In the interim between Dick Spain and Harold Gully, the president of the Baptist Student Union, Walter Porter, functioned as the student director. He was an invaluable help to the new pastor during those first months. When Walter graduated in March of 1959, I wrote in *The Pastor's Word*: "Walter has had the unique distinction of serving our students and church for two consecutive years as president of the B.S.U. During several months of this period, the church was without a pastor or student director. He happily and successfully carried the load." Nine years later when Harold Gully resigned, the church would turn to Walter as his successor.

Some months after I began, Martha Beaty, a student

wife, resigned due to graduation and was replaced by another student wife, Mary Shelton. In May of 1959, the deacons, being aware that both Mary and Ruby Barker would be leaving in August, recommended to the church that the position of Minister of Music-Education be reactivated. The Music and Education Committees were given the responsibility of finding a person to fill the position. As usual, the pastor was asked to assist the committee. This led to an interesting sequence of events which I record here to highlight the good staff relationships we have always enjoyed at First Baptist.

One of the persons recommended for this position was Jerry Warren who was completing his seminary work at Southern Seminary. The Southern Baptist Convention was to meet in Louisville that May, and the Jeffers and Gullys planned to drive up together and meet the Warrens while there. Louisville was too small a city to accommodate the convention so we had room reservations at Elizabethtown, 40 miles south of Louisville. On arrival at the motel about 10:00 p.m., the embarrassed desk clerk acknowledged that we had the two rooms reserved but only one remained available. To have two rooms we would have to backtrack another 40 miles away from Louisville. Jeanette lost no time in suggesting a solution. Since the one room had two beds, we would all stay in the same room. While Harold appeared to be a bit dubious, Nelly opined that she had always wondered how it would be to spend the night with a preacher!

Later that week we arranged to meet Jerry Warren and his wife, Dot, for lunch. In the process of telling them about the church and our trip, the experience at the motel in Elizabethtown was related. When Dot laconically remarked that such a circumstance would pose no problem for her, we felt assured that

the six of us could enjoy a good working relationship. Later on the Warrens came to Auburn for a visit and the two committees were convinced that Jerry was our man. He was a native of Wetumpka, a graduate of Samford University and Southern Seminary, and had served three churches as Minister of Music: Goode Street, Montgomery; First Baptist Church, Cartersville Georgia; and Crestwood Baptist Church in Louisville. The Warrens, with daughters Lee and Laurie, began work with us on July 1, 1959.

The staff leadership team for these early years was completed in July of 1961 when June Matthews, a native of Thomaston, Georgia, and a recent graduate of New Orleans Seminary, was called to work as an associate in the student ministry and director of our local youth program. June's creativity and vivacious personality added another dimension to our staff team, and we enjoyed several years of good fellowship and work together. Excellent secretarial support was given by Martha Ann Humphrey and Katherine Reaves.

I have always followed several basic guidelines in enlisting and working with staff members: (1) describe the job to be done, (2) find the person who best fits the job and who is compatible with existing staff members, and (3) allow the staff member freedom to do what he or she does best. Although Jerry's job title was Minister of Music and Education, we were all aware that his basic bent and training was in the field of music. As a result, the staff work fell into the natural pattern of Harold concentrating on the student ministry, Jerry the music ministry, and all three of us along with our wives and June Matthews working on the educational program. It was a good team and with good secretarial support and a very capable organist in

Royce Harbor, we enjoyed three years of solid growth in all phases of church life.

The early records of the church reveal an interest in quality music, and Jerry's predecessors were quality people. Therefore, it did not take him long to establish a fully graded choir program consisting of adult, student, youth, and children's choirs. At Christmas 1959, the Student Choir presented "Wondrous Love," a mountain choral drama of The Nativity; the Adult Choir presented "The Childhood of Christ" by Johann Christoph Bach; and the Youth and Children's Choirs presented cantatas as well.

The challenge presented by the need for a building program was a bit more complex. When I came on the scene the church had adopted a rather elaborate plan involving adding transepts to the present building with part of the space to be used as a Student Center and part for local educational space. Auditorium seating was also to be increased to around 1,500. The State Board of Missions had agreed to match funds for this program up to a maximum of \$200,000 of the anticipated \$400,000 total cost. This plan depended on the church's ability to acquire the service station on the corner of East Glenn and North College. Mr. J. C. Lowery, chairman of the Building Committee, had secured a verbal commitment from an official of the Pure Oil Company for the sale of the property to the church, but before it could be consummated, the official died and the sale did not take place, making it necessary for the church to look for an alternate plan.

As soon as Harold Gully arrived as Student Secretary, the two of us began to search for some solution to our crowded situation for students. By the beginning of the fall quarter of

1958, we had taken a step that would lead to an entirely new arrangement for the Auburn B.S.U.

The oldest building of the property deeded to the church by Mr. Clifton Jones was a large frame building known as the Jones Hotel. It was probably built before the turn of the century and had been a residence for some permanent citizens as well as short-term guests. By 1958 it had grown old and was a constant maintenance problem as well as being a negative factor in revenue derived from the operation of the total Jones property.

Harold came up with the idea of taking over the Jones Hotel as the Baptist Student Center on a trial basis—a rather radical suggestion for several reasons. First of all, the Board of Trustees was gun-shy about taking any of the buildings in the Jones property out of commercial operation. The reason was that Mr. Jones had stipulated that the first \$500 per month produced by this property was to go to Mrs. Garrett of New Orleans whose family befriended him as a young man. Communication between the Trustees and this beneficiary was practically nil. It was thought that she, through her attorney, Judge Tyner of Opelika, would take a dim view of any action of the church that might jeopardize her monthly stipend. To try to clarify this matter, Mr. Ware and I were delegated to go to New Orleans for a conference with Mrs. Garrett. We took the overnight sleeper to New Orleans and upon arrival were informed that we could see Mrs. Garrett and her husband late that afternoon. We spent the day wandering around that interesting city, including a visit to the New Orleans Seminary.

As to the conference with the Garretts, I recall a delightful meal at Del Monico's and a very pleasant conversation. Mrs. Garrett saw no reason to prevent the church from doing

what it would with the Jones Hotel so long as her income was not affected. A major hurdle had been surmounted. Mr. Ware and I returned home, again on the overnight sleeper.

We were ready to move the B.S.U. from the basement of the church to the Jones Hotel with the idea that if it worked out we would raze the old frame building and build a new center on the property. However, there were some other questions that begged an answer.

How would the State Board of Missions, especially its Executive Secretary, Dr. A. Hamilton Reid, view this drastic change in plans? Would the Board stand by its commitment to Auburn for financial assistance? On what basis would the state's financial assistance be determined?

At that time the Board had a standing committee on Student Work composed of nine members. I happened to be serving as chairman of this committee by virtue of being on the Board as a representative from the Covington Association, which term would expire with the convention session in November of 1958. The committee on Student Work met in Auburn on November 13, 1958 to hear reports from several campuses including our own.

The minutes of this meeting refer to actions taken at centers in Tuscaloosa, Florence, and Troy, all of which were separate and apart from any local church, and to a \$50,000 allocation to the First Baptist Church of Jacksonville for Student Center facilities included in its new plant. When the committee was apprised of our problems regarding the original plans submitted to the State Convention and of our decision to move to the Jones Hotel, it adopted the following recommendation for presentation to the full Board at its meeting in November. "That

the former action of the State Convention be rescinded with regard to Auburn, and that an allocation of \$200,000 be made to the First Baptist Church of Auburn for the purpose of building a Student Center in which there will be educational facilities to care for all student departments of the church program, this money to be allocated from the Student Center Building Fund at the minimum rate of \$25,000 per annum.”

Our rationale for the proposal was that this would clearly identify the money allocated by the State Convention as being spent for student center and educational space only, while the local church would assume responsibility for any additional buildings for its local program. However, when presented at the November meeting of the Board, the recommendation was tabled.

The Board met again in December of 1958, and at this time a full report on the Auburn plans was presented and the Board took action favoring the revised plans and referred details to the Administration Committee. This action set in motion a series of negotiations with the State Convention that would continue until 1974 when the church voted to sell the property on which the B.S.U. center is located to the State Convention.

The negotiations were conducted primarily through me, as pastor of the church, and the State Executive Secretaries, Dr. A. H. Reid, until his retirement, and his successor, Dr. George E. Bagley. Of course, committees in the church and of the Executive Board were always involved in final decisions. From the outset, Dr. Reid felt that the 50-50 financial arrangement adopted by the 1957 Convention should be retained, rather than to change to an arrangement whereby the State Convention would bear the full cost of the Student Center. As a result, the 1957 action was

confirmed in the 1959 convention with a payment schedule from the State Board set at \$50,000 in 1960 and \$20,000 more or less per year following until the state's half of the Student Center cost was paid.

Immediately following this action for Auburn, the convention voted to allocate \$150,000 to the Birmingham Association as half the cost of purchasing and renovating the old Dewberry Printing Building adjacent to the University of Alabama Medical Center for use as a Student Center and other purposes.

Although most of the negotiations mentioned above were amicable, there were times when patience ran thin on both ends of the line. One of the chief points of disagreement was whether the value of the lot on which the center was to be built should be included in the total cost of which the state would pay half. We said yes on the basis of the Birmingham precedent where the state had paid for half the ground, half of the existing building, and half of the renovation cost. However, our point was never accepted by the state until the building was sold in 1974.

Although we felt we had the green light for the construction of the Student Center when the Executive Board acted favorably in December of 1958, it was not until May 22, 1960, that ground was broken for the building.

The Birmingham request for \$150,000 entered the picture in May of 1959, and because the opportunity to purchase the desired property had to be seized or lost, a sizable portion of the state's amount had to be paid at the outset. This caused some delay in funds available for the Auburn project. As a result of this development, the Administration Committee appointed a subcommittee, with Dr. William K. Weaver as chairman, to work

out a suitable financial arrangement that would allow us to proceed. This subcommittee reported in July of 1959, and as a part of the action, our request for consideration on the value of the lot was denied.

Meanwhile, the church employed the firm of Lancaster and Lancaster as architects for the Student Center building. Mr. J. C. Lowery served as chairman of the Building Committee and Mr. L. M. Ware as chairman of the Building Finance Committee. Another problem that had to be faced was to find a meeting place for the Baptist Student Union while the old Jones Hotel was being razed and the new building constructed. We rented another old residence on North Gay Street where the Colonial Bank building now stands for an interim Student Center.

In March of 1960, bids on the building were opened and on May 15, the church adopted a recommendation from the Building Committee that a contract be signed with Burns, Kirkley, and Williams Construction Company in the amount of \$142,452 for the building. The total budget for the project was to be \$186,000, which included architect's fees, furnishings, folding doors, contingency items, and interest on borrowed funds. Groundbreaking took place a week later with Auburn University President Ralph B. Draughon and Dr. A. Hamilton Reid as featured speakers.

Due to the careful attention given this project by laymen Lowery and Ware and their committees, construction was without incident, and the building was dedicated on Thursday, April 20, 1961, with Dr. Howard Reaves, pastor of First Baptist Church of Mobile and State Convention president, giving the main address. At last, the Baptist Student Union at Auburn, first organized in 1924, had an adequate home.

From its beginning until the time of the construction of the Student Center, the Baptist Student Union was the sole responsibility and privilege of the First Baptist Church except for the financial assistance given by the Student Department of the State Board of Missions. Since the post-World War II years, students had participated in the B.S.U. and the church in large numbers. In planning the building we envisioned a flexible arrangement that would adequately house the weekday activities of the B.S.U. and the educational program on Sundays. Even so, Harold Gully and I were not blind to the reality that one day there would be more than one church in the area involved in the student program. We hoped, perhaps with more idealism than realism, that at that time some way could be found to continue the Sunday educational activities at the Center on a cooperative basis.

While this goal has not materialized, the flexibility of the building continues to be a most useful asset in the functioning of the Baptist Student Union.

When all bills were finally in, the total cost amounted to \$174,000. Of this amount the State Convention paid exactly half and the church half, plus approximately \$28,000 in interest on \$80,000 which the church borrowed for the construction.

For reasons already cited, the rather elaborate plans for enlarging the main church building were abandoned when the decision was made to build the Baptist Student Center on the Jones Hotel location. Due to the press of financing the Student Center, immediate enlargement of educational space was not possible, but a less expensive improvement in the auditorium soon came to pass.

Under Jerry Warren's leadership, the choirs, especially

the college choir, soon outgrew the choir loft. This, plus the fact that the platform-choir-baptistry area of the auditorium was generally unattractive, led to an extensive renovation of this area. Everything was torn out to the outer walls and rebuilt with the organ console being moved to the left front of the platform. The changes provided seating for fifty persons in the choir loft and added immeasurably to the appearance of the front of the auditorium. The total cost of this project was \$31,000, of which the State Board contributed half.

The newly renovated auditorium front highlighted a generally unattractive appearance in the main section of the building which led to additional improvements in the ensuing years. The floor was refinished, new carpet placed on the platform and aisles, and the pews were reworked.

There were two sets of pews; one set having been placed in the building when it was built in 1929 and the other set when it was enlarged in 1949. They were finished in dark mahogany with plain ends. The Richardson Brothers Furniture Builders of Lafayette contracted for the renovation. The pews were removed in batches of 12 to 15 at a time, disassembled, refinished in white with mahogany trim with new caps placed on the ends, and then reassembled on site. The cost was \$5,040, or about \$80 per pew.

A generous gift from Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Salter added the cushions and handsome baptistry curtain.

Our next improvement to the property was unforeseen and occasioned by circumstances. The building now known as our Activities Building was built for a supermarket and used for that purpose by the Winn-Dixie Company for several years and then vacated in the early 1960's in favor of a more spacious building in the Glendean area. Another grocery firm occupied the

building, but its occupancy was short-lived and presently the building was vacant again. In those days no supermarkets were open on Sunday, and the parking area was available to church attenders. Rumors began to circulate that an automobile agency might be dealing for this property and we were faced with the prospect of losing the use of the parking space. Our Board of Trustees acted with dispatch, making contact with the owner, and expressing an interest in buying the property. In due time the deal was consummated and for \$185,000, we had acquired additional parking space and more buildings to rent. Over the years the rent helped to pay for the property.

The accomplishments of these first years established a solid foundation for future growth. An excellent staff was in place and the congregation was responding to its leadership. The construction of the Baptist Student Center and its availability as educational space for the Student Sunday School and Training Union departments freed the ground floor of the auditorium unit for much needed additional space for our adult division. The construction of the first educational unit in 1954 made it possible to move from a class to departmental structure with two departments for adults, the younger meeting in the new space and the older in the choir room. All of the classes in this department were moved to the ground floor space, but enough persons remained along with some who were promoted from the younger one to form a new department, thus, Adult I, II, and III. It was in this adult division that the church would experience its most significant growth in the ensuing 25 years, moving from two to six departments.

Chapter 9

Crisis

We often refer to the first few years of a pastorate as “the honeymoon.” We had a good one at Auburn, but there were currents abroad in the nation that would bring it to an end in the early 1960’s. I speak of the Civil Rights Movement and the corresponding racial tensions that attended it. It is fair to say that every church in the South was affected by these currents, some more drastically than others. I shall try to record the experience of the Auburn First Baptist Church as accurately and fairly as possible with the hope and prayer that no reader shall find a judgmental spirit in the record.

In order that my role in the experience may be better understood, I digress for a moment to write of my background. I grew up in an industrial suburb of Birmingham during the Great Depression. Life in this community was as provincial as life can be. Anyone who was not white, a Baptist, Methodist or Presbyterian, or a Democrat was peculiar to say the least. As to whites and blacks, it was about as segregated as a community could be. Amateur baseball was a popular pastime during the

spring and summer, and the industrial plants that sponsored teams even provided separate diamonds on which the respective teams played. Until I started to work in one of the plants after graduation from high school, I had virtually no contact with blacks.

My job at the American Cast Iron Pipe Company gave me my first opportunity to do any thinking at all about race relations. This company had been founded early in the century by a dedicated Presbyterian Christian named John J. Eagan. He based his company on what he called the “Eagan Plan of Business Administration” with the golden rule as his motto. As a result he demonstrated an unusual compassion for the employees, black and white alike. Although facilities such as bathhouses, cafeterias, and medical clinics were segregated, they were equal in the services they provided. The wage scale was higher than in union plants and blacks were paid according to skills.

Although Mr. Eagan had died years before I began work in the plant, he became a sort of hero to me. I recall having good feelings about the way the black men with whom I worked were treated in the company's system and bad feelings when white supervisors were sometimes abusive. Thus, my first concept of “right race relationships” was simply that blacks were people like me and deserved to be treated fairly.

Any consciousness that I might have had of problems in the area of race relations was soon submerged in my return to college, work, and my early pastoral career. Only occasionally did something happen that pricked my conscience. One such incident occurred during the war on a bus ride from my first church at Collinsville, Alabama, back to Birmingham. The buses

were always crowded on Sunday nights with servicemen returning to Camp Siebert in Gadsden from a weekend in Chattanooga. On this particular night, a black soldier was seated two or three rows from the back of the bus. The driver asked him to move back in order to make room for a white passenger. When the soldier failed to comply, the driver took a hatchet from the front of the bus and went back to the rear and threatened the man if he refused to move. I had ridden with this particular driver a number of times, and he was usually friendly and affable. After that incident, I could never recover my former feeling of warmth for him.

I was well into my pastorate at First Baptist, Andalusia, in the mid-1950's when the tension in race relations began to increase. I recall a meeting of our local ministerial group at which an attorney who was a member of our church spoke regarding the segregation in public schools case then before the United States Supreme Court. So much a creature of my culture was I that I sat in disbelief as this man told us that the court would probably declare segregation in schools unconstitutional.

When that decision was handed down in 1954, the fear of the changes that would result in our society quickly drove people to extremes in their thinking. The destructive results of action and reaction created an atmosphere of fear and distrust which drove whites and blacks farther and farther apart. The NAACP became the embodiment of the demon that was invading our way of life, and the White Citizens Councils took on the image of the deliverer mounted on the white charger.

About this time I was profoundly influenced by an article that appeared in the old *Saturday Evening Post* written by one of the South's few prophetic journalists, Hodding Carter of

Mississippi. It was a long article that tried to anticipate the changes that would stem from the Supreme Court's ruling and the effect these changes would have on both white and black. In the final paragraph of the article, he commented along the lines that the one unpredictable factor in the situation was the role that religion would play in the crisis. He observed that in the South both whites and blacks were essentially religious people. Would this fact become a resource out of which we might find solutions and adjustments to this change in the social pattern?

Two sermons emerged from this thinking, one entitled "Resolving Racial Problems in a Christian Community" and the other, "The War Nobody Wins." Both were rather feeble attempts to encourage church people not to allow the tensions that were being generated by the NAACP and the WCC to affect their attitudes toward fellow human beings, black or white. Only by maintaining the Christian attitude of respect (love) for one another could we hope to work through these difficult times of change.

This bit of background is recounted here so that the reader may understand that the pastor of the Auburn church in the early 1960's was by no means a crusader for civil rights (though he probably should have been). It can only be said that he sought to apply the Christian ethic to the changes taking place in the community as they affected the members of the congregation.

Probably the best word for the atmosphere in the Auburn church regarding this issue in the early sixties is "tentative." We were all conscious of the issue and aware that we had to deal with it, but delaying as long possible, knowing that it was apt to be divisive. If a precise date must be selected as the moment it came

to a head, I would say that this was the week in May of 1961 when the Southern Baptist Convention met in St. Louis, Missouri. This same week a group of Civil Rights proponents decided to challenge the segregated facilities in bus terminals by making a bus ride through the Southern states. The riders met with various forms of violence in both Birmingham and Montgomery. I recall some sidewalk conversations with fellow pastors in Alabama in which we expressed our mutual regret that the incidents had occurred in our state. We asked each other what positive steps we might take to atone for such incidents and prevent future ones.

While we were still in St. Louis, I received a telephone call from one of my fellow pastors in Auburn. He reported that in view of these unfortunate incidents, the Auburn Ministerial Association had decided to hold a community-wide prayer meeting to pray for peace. He wanted to know when I would return so that I could be a part of the meeting. Although I suggested that they go ahead without me, he assured me that they wanted to wait until I could be present. The meeting was set for the following Monday evening at the First United Methodist Church.

When I returned home late Saturday afternoon, I received a call from one of our deacons requesting an appointment. Three deacons came to my home and expressed genuine concern about the forthcoming prayer meeting and my participation in it. They felt that this would be regarded as a commitment from the church with which many church members would not agree.

They said that rumor had it that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would be present and that there might be trouble over his

presence in the community. I thanked them for their concern, assured them that I would announce the meeting on Sunday morning in such a way as to make it clear that my attendance would be a personal choice and would in no way imply any position by the church one way or the other.

The meeting occurred (without Dr. King) without incident and was quite well attended by people of all churches and both races. Nevertheless, the issue would not be put to rest. Following the “freedom rides” there were the “sit-ins” and the “kneel-ins.” Students from nearby Tuskegee Institute began coming to Auburn for worship services in the local churches. Although, for some unknown reason, they never came to First Baptist, I was confronted with the possibility that they would come, and asked by deacons and other church leaders what I would do about it if they did. I took the position that the best response would be to allow them to enter and worship with as little notice as possible. Those who opposed this suggestion did so on the assumption that such visitors would come not for the purpose of worship but only to create trouble. My response was that we should not pass judgment on the motive of any person who came to a worship service.

One Sunday morning following a deacons’ meeting held earlier in the week, I was confronted on this issue in a very disconcerting way. As I was walking around the building during the Sunday School hour, a member of the largest men’s class came out to the sidewalk and invited me in to the class. There he said to me: “Now, preacher, tell these men just what you told the deacons in the meeting last week.” Only a preacher understands what such a confrontation does to one’s “spiritual preparation” for leading a worship service.

To sum up the matter, there were discussions on top of discussions at deacons meetings, committee meetings, and church conferences. The minutes of the deacons meeting of June 4, 1961 record the following: "The remainder of the meeting was spent in discussion of racial problems. Brother Jeffers detailed his stand on these problems and a general discussion followed." This meeting included all active and inactive deacons. There were 32 men in attendance and the active group at that time totaled 27. Later in the month the pastor reported that the study committee on race relations had been enlarged and emphasized that this committee had no authority to act but was to act as a study committee only, reporting to the deacons periodically. I was determined, if at all possible, to avoid a congregational vote on the issue, believing that such a vote would provoke a "splinter movement" among the membership. There was never a time when I doubted how a majority of the membership felt on the issue. On the other hand, I felt that the majority of the minority who wanted to refuse entrance to blacks would adjust their thinking if given time. I did not want a vote to suggest to them that they were "out of fellowship" with the church.

The issue finally began to recede following a meeting of a rather large committee that had been established to "study the matter." After several meetings and much discussion, a motion was made in the committee that the church adopt the policy of refusing admission to blacks. The motion failed by a vote of about 20 to 10. Immediately one of the members who had voted against this motion moved that we adopt an open door policy to all comers. When it was seconded, I interrupted the proceedings and asked that the motion be withdrawn. I asked that the pastor be trusted to deal with the situation if it arose. I promised the

group that if blacks appeared I would talk with them, and if possible persuade them not to come in, but that I would not refuse them entrance. Thank God, I never had to deal with that situation.

Exactly just when the first black person came to worship at First Baptist I do not know. I recall the Sunday when an usher returned to the rear of the auditorium after seating a worshiper and said to my wife in apparent surprise, "I just seated a black person." Somehow, through it all, by the grace of God, we held together and the splinter movement did not occur. I trust that it is not naive on my part to believe that today, after 25 years, most of the church members who had negative feelings about blacks coming to church, no longer feel that way. Today, every indication is that Auburn First Baptist is a church for all people.

Several incidents contributed to my being perceived as a proponent of Christian race relations which I appreciated but did not really deserve. One of these resulted from a visit to Auburn by the nationally known newspaper columnist Drew Pearson. After his address on campus, he was chauffeured back to the airport in Columbus by our son John, a member of the student senate. Another passenger in the car was Powers McLeod, my colleague at the Auburn United Methodist Church. The conversation en route to Columbus turned to race relations in the South, including the role of churches and ministers. Out of deference to John, my friend Powers, whose leadership in this area was quite well-known, probably made some positive comment about my role. At any rate, a few days later Pearson's column had to do with his visit to Auburn, and he mentioned both of us by name as being courageous leaders for civil rights in the South. I recall getting a few letters, all complimentary, one of

which came from as far away as the state of Oregon.

During these years I was serving as chairman of the Christian Life and Public Affairs Committee of the State Convention. In this position I attended a national conference in Washington sponsored by the SBC Christian Life Commission. In our first session, we were told that President Lyndon Johnson or his aide Bill Moyers would address the meeting at its final session on Wednesday. It turned out to be the President, and he urged the group to assist him in getting support for his Civil Rights legislation which was before the Congress. The media made quite a story out of the address and, needless to say, it evoked considerable criticism from the southern region of the country. When I returned to Auburn for our regular Thursday evening service, I quickly learned that there were those in the church who expected me to join in the criticism and were quite upset with me when I defended the President's right to ask what he would of any group of citizens.

Another incident that contributed to my growing image as some sort of champion of the civil rights movement resulted from a column I wrote in the *Auburn Baptist*. As a result of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s appearance in the chapel of Southern Seminary, a group of laymen in Alabama led their church(es) to withhold that portion of cooperative gifts that would normally go to the seminary. In press releases regarding this action, these men were referred to as a "brotherhood." Many people misunderstood this to refer to the official Brotherhood organization in the churches and the corresponding Brotherhood Department of the State Board of Missions. I wrote the article primarily for the purpose of clearing up this misunderstanding, but also defended the Seminary's right to have whom it would in

its chapel, and observed that Dr. King was no insignificant religious personality at that time. Several persons let me know that my article was not greatly appreciated.

In 1968, I was selected to preach the annual sermon at the State Convention which met in Huntsville. By this time, I had reached the firm conviction that as churches we had not responded positively to the changes in race relations, and that our failure to do so was having and would continue to have an adverse effect on our mission enterprise throughout the world. I chose as a text a passage from the great eighth century prophet of justice, Amos, and emphasized the nature of sin in its corporate dimension as well as the personal dimension. While numbers of people thanked me for the timeliness of this message, it was not generally popular. I was one of four nominees for state convention president that year and came in a distant fourth.

One of the unfortunate incidents in this situation is recorded here in the hope that it will help all to see how certain actions, however well intended, may produce an unfortunate result. I had made a few mimeographed copies of a sermon I preached on race relations for people who had requested them. A week or so later I received a letter from Dr. A. Hamilton Reid, our state secretary. In the letter he said that he didn't mind my sending him a copy of my recent sermon, but that he did not appreciate my addressing the envelope, "Bishop A. Hamilton Reid." I immediately realized that someone else had sent the copy with no cover letter or signature, and by addressing it so, seemed to imply that "the Bishop" ought to know what his pastors were preaching. I picked up the telephone, called his office for an appointment at the earliest possible moment, which turned out to be that very afternoon. Though I came away from

this conference satisfied that he was convinced that I had not sent the document, I felt that a relationship that was long-standing had been fractured. He had known me since student days at Howard; we had begun work at the Baptist Building the same day, January 1, 1945—he as Executive Secretary and I as Training Union Secretary. We had worked together closely in later years during my term on the State Administration Committee, and while at Andalusia, I had conducted the funeral of his father-in-law who was a member of that church. His was a friendship that I greatly appreciated, and though it remained following the incident of the sermon, it was never quite the same.

As stressful as these years were, they were not without their humorous incidents. The year Auburn University was integrated, Dr. Frank Stagg of the Southern Seminary faculty was our guest teacher for January Bible Study the first week of the winter quarter. He was housed at what was then the University Motor Lodge next door to the Baptist Student Center. Also lodged there were representatives of the media from many parts of the country. Typewriters and teletype machines were set up in the lobby of the motel so that it became a sort of news headquarters for what was expected to be a rather sensational week at Auburn. On the contrary, it turned out to be a rather ordinary week. Due to the careful preparation made by the administration of the university, and with the cooperation of the Student Government Association, Mr. Franklin, Auburn's first black student, matriculated without incident and the media people had to dismantle their equipment and depart without much of a story. Dr. Stagg thought this to be something of a humorous consequence and spoke of it often in many places in later years, always in the vein of complimenting Auburn, its

people, and its churches for their Christian decorum.

On one day of this week as Dr. Stagg and I were having coffee in the faculty lounge, the student at the Union Building desk came back to tell me that President Draughon wished to see me in his office. Imagine my surprise; this was the first and only time in 28 years that I ever received such a summons. On entering the office, I found the usually calm president a bit agitated. He lost no time in getting to the point, saying: "Preacher, will you please do what you can to get the preachers in town to let that student alone." When I asked for an explanation, he told me that the security personnel assigned to follow Mr. Franklin about the campus had complained that morning that an automobile driving through the campus had picked him up and taken him out of their range of surveillance. In a perfectly innocent act, one of the local ministers had done this in an effort to be cordial and helpful, but the president had caught the flak from the security people.

The Civil Rights Movement and the various responses to it will continue to be a fertile field for present and future historians. Looking back, this writer feels that in general, church people in the South were too afraid, too reluctant, and too slow to accept what was and is inevitably right—seeing persons as persons, regardless of the color of one's skin. While much of the fear and reluctance seems to have disappeared, the indications are that the black community still feels that progress is too slow. Nevertheless, when one looks at the situation then and compares it with now, there are some dramatic differences.

Prior to 1960 a black person could attend a football game at Auburn, but only if he or she were willing to sit in a section of bleachers at one end of the field, separated from the rest of the

crowd. Needless to say, the scene at Jordan-Hare Stadium today is quite different. Incidentally, the first time that stadium had integrated seating was not for an athletic contest. It was for a Billy Graham rally. In the days when racial tensions were high, Dr. Graham made it known that he would come to cities in the South for rallies on condition that these rallies would be open to all persons and that seating would not be on a segregated basis. At the suggestion of some local people, President Draughon extended an invitation to Dr. Graham and he accepted. The rally was held on a class day in the stadium at 10:00 a.m., and classes were excused for students and faculty to attend. One wonders if anyone in that stadium that day imagined what it would be like on an autumn Saturday today.

Chapter 10

Progress

Although dealing with the tensions related to the racial situation was not always pleasant, the early sixties were years of notable progress in all areas of church life. The church letter for 1962 listed 425 additions to the membership for the year, with 34 of these coming by baptism. The resident membership was 1504 with approximately half this number being college students (single and married). The average Sunday School attendance was 612 and the average Training Union attendance 269. The enrollment of the W.M.U. and youth missions groups was 341. The church gave a total of \$96,000 for all causes with \$18,600 going to the Cooperative Program. The one disturbing statistic was the number of non-resident members—985. This prompted a search for the whereabouts of these members and an effort to encourage them to move their church letters. The search continued for several years, and when all efforts had been exhausted the church authorized the creation of an inactive roll for non-residents who could not be located. This resulted in a sizable decrease in total membership later in the decade.

Contributions grew steadily as follows: \$73,000 in 1958, \$78,700 in 1959, \$88,100 in 1960, \$90,400 in 1961, and \$96,000 in 1962.

A number of outstanding Baptist leaders came to the church for special events in those years. Dr. and Mrs. Winston Pearce were featured in the Religious Emphasis Week program at the B.S.U.; Dr. Brady Justice preached our revival in the spring of 1959; Dr. William Hall Preston came for the March 8, 1959 anniversary of the Friendship Circle at the B.S.U.; and Bill Glass of the Cleveland Browns led our revival in 1963. In January of 1962 the state Student Department and the Sunday School Board provided an outstanding faculty for the last Baptist Focus Week to be held in our state. A dozen or so outstanding Baptist leaders spent the week in Auburn holding conferences and services for our student constituency. They stayed a day longer because of a snowstorm that prevented transportation out of the city. A portion of the expenses for some special events was underwritten by income from a designated gift of stock certificates by Dr. and Mrs. James H. Naftel. The church continues to enjoy the benefit of this generous gift for certain special events.

A tragedy in the church family in the early 1960's led to the establishment of a lecture series which greatly benefited the Baptist Student Union at Auburn and the University of Alabama and their respective sponsoring churches. Mrs. Betty Harwell, wife of Professor Kenneth Harwell, died in an automobile accident on November 11, 1966. During their student days, Dr. and Mrs. Harwell had been active B.S.U.'ers at the University of Alabama. By supplementing memorials to his wife with generous personal gifts, Dr. Harwell established the Harwell Lecture Series

in her memory. As a result, an outstanding Christian leader was brought to each of the two campuses each year for lectures and conferences at the B.S.U. centers and the churches. Among those who came were Dr. D. Elton Trueblood, author and professor from Earlham College; Dr. William E. Hull, Provost at Southern Seminary; Dr. Brooks Hays, former congressman from Arkansas and ex-president of the Southern Baptist Convention; and Dr. Kenneth Wilson, editor of *The Christian Herald*.

Under the leadership of June Matthews, Associate at the B.S.U., a program of sponsorship for international students was inaugurated in October of 1962. The idea for this effort was probably born in Jeanette's kitchen. Among a group of married student wives who came to our house each week for fellowship and woman-talk were some international wives. The need to include these families in the life of the community and church was obvious. Harold Gully, Student Secretary, was especially interested in structuring programs that would include them in the B.S.U. As a result, local families were enlisted to host these international families. The effort proved to be very successful and through the years has been expanded through the efforts of one of the circles of the W.M.U.

The W.M.U. circle meets with international wives each week and assists them with language study, grocery shopping, and other essentials. In cooperation with the B.S.U., a Thanksgiving Dinner is arranged on the Sunday prior to Thanksgiving each year with internationals from every country represented at Auburn in attendance. The group has a special meeting during the Christmas season at which time we have the opportunity of sharing with those of other religious traditions the meaning of the Christ event. Perhaps the most significant result

of this ministry is the establishment of very close ties of friendship between the sponsoring Americans and the Internationals. With apologies for omitting some who should be noted, leaders among this group of women included Cornelia Williams, Ruth Alford, Anne Miller, Fran Cadenhead, Mary Zade Bussell, Ada Ware, and Billie Ruth Wood.

In January of 1963, the B.S.U. hosted a tea for the local members on the 26th anniversary of the Friendship Circle, a social activity inaugurated in the 1920's by Miss Leland Cooper.

In May of 1963, the church bade farewell to Jerry Warren and his family. Jerry returned to Southern Seminary on a teaching fellowship to pursue a doctoral degree. The music program had made significant progress during his four-year tenure. Some of the special presentations included Part I of "The Elijah" by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, a Choir Clinic led by Dr. William C. Bushnell of the Southern Seminary faculty, and the Christmas Oratorio by Camille St-Saens. The College Choir made its first tour in 1961 and has continued this practice now for 27 years. The choir program increased from two choirs with an enrollment of 45 in 1959 to eight choirs with an enrollment of 250 in 1963. Beyond the statistics was the intangible contribution that Jerry made to the worship services in the quality of sacred music provided.

The November 4, 1962 church bulletin noted the dedication of the Mary Hall Ware Memorial Library at the Lakeview Baptist Church. This was a part of the will of the late Mary Hall Ware, wife of L. M. Ware. The will provided an ongoing sum for libraries at the Baptist Student Center, the First Baptist Church, the Lakeview Baptist Church, and later at both Parkway and West Auburn Baptist Churches.

Another significant contribution of a First Baptist family was noted in the June 2, 1963 bulletin, in the dedication of the Kate Park Samford Memorial Cottage at the Baptist Children's Home in Troy. The cottage was a gift of Mr. and Mrs. James D. Samford in memory of Mr. Samford's mother. Mr. Samford served as a trustee of the Children's Home for many years while a member of the Auburn First Baptist Church.

Another of the church's dedicated laymen was memorialized in 1964 when the children of W. L. Long presented the church with six sterling silver offering plates. Mr. Long served for many years as a deacon and trustee and was instrumental in

Following the resignation of Jerry Warren in the spring of 1963, the church turned to another graduate of Southern Seminary for leadership in its music program. R. B. Easterling, a native of Birmingham and graduate of Samford University, came to this position in late summer of 1963. While at the Seminary he had served the Bardstown, Kentucky Baptist Church as Minister of Music. When the Bardstown church learned that the man he was replacing in Auburn was returning to the Seminary for doctoral studies, they immediately called Jerry Warren, thus, the two men simply exchanged places of service. R.B., his wife, Jackie, and children, Jan, Gail, Woody, Doug, and Fred, served the church five years before accepting a position in the Church Music Department at the Baptist Sunday School Board. Typical of the excellent quality of music which the church continued to enjoy was a Christmas presentation of Bach's "St. Matthews' Passion" and Leonard Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms" sung by the Student Choir in Hebrew.

In August of 1964, Royce Harbor completed his master's

work at Auburn and joined the faculty at Mississippi State University, completing eight years of excellent work as church organist. He was followed in this position by Mary Baron Conoway who served for two years, and then Mickey McInnish, who resigned in July of 1969 to enter Southern Seminary.

Following the resignation of June Matthews as the Associate at the Baptist Student Center and Director of our local youth program, the deacons recommended to the church that a staff position be established to give leadership to our local educational program. In January of 1967, Nancy Dunnahoe, a native of Ruston, Louisiana and recent graduate of Southern Seminary, was employed as Educational Secretary. In this position she worked with our lay leaders in the educational program of the church, supplying them with methods and materials, and otherwise giving leadership as needed. Nancy won the hearts of all our people, but especially that of Ken Mooney, a graduate student, and they were married in our church in May of 1968. In April of 1969, the church called Evelyn Blount, another Southern Seminary graduate from Winder, Georgia, as our Minister of Education. While dedicated to the total educational program of the church, Evelyn's forte was in the area of missions, a bent which led her to accept a position with the W.M.U. of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1970, and ultimately to the position she now holds, Executive Secretary of the South Carolina W.M.U.

After nine very productive years as B.S.U. Secretary, Harold Gulley resigned this position effective at the end of the spring quarter in 1967 to return to his alma mater, Mississippi State, in the same position. The search committee chaired by John Gray, turned to an Auburn alumnus as a successor. Since

leaving Auburn in 1959, Walter Porter had found and married Mary Lynn Glasgow of Ruston, Louisiana, completed his MRE degree at Southern Seminary, and served as area director for B.S.U. in south Georgia for six years. The Porters moved to Auburn in the summer of 1967 to prepare for the influx of Baptist students at the beginning of the fall quarter of that year.

After Easterling's resignation as Minister of Music in 1968, the Music Committee spent several months looking far and wide, before one of the members who had close contact with the First Baptist Church of Opelika said that our man might be only seven miles away. He spoke of Bill Hornbuckle who had served that church well for several years, but might be open to a move as a result of the church's impending change in pastoral leadership. After an initial contact, Bill indicated an interest in our position and we joked about flying him over for an interview. After the usual conferences, Bill agreed to accept the church's call and began work on October 27, 1968. Bill embodied the unusual combination of a likeable personality, excellent musical ability and training, and a pastoral attitude toward ministry. After a few weeks, we found ourselves in a true team relationship which lasted until his resignation five years later to accept the call of the Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. Accompanying him to Auburn were his wife, Linda Gail, daughter, Jennifer, and son, Zachery. Another son, Wynn, joined the family during their residence in Auburn.

A significant step forward in the development of the physical plant was taken in 1966-67 by an addition to the Educational Annex. For many years the pressure to provide auditorium seating and space for college students had limited the church's ability to provide adequate space for its educational

programs.

The firm of Lancaster and Lancaster designed an addition to the 1954 Annex which more than doubled its floor space, providing a complete pre-school suite on the ground floor and rooms for children and young adults on the second floor. The Creveling Company of Columbus, Georgia was low bidder at \$183,000. Financing was arranged by \$90,000 of bank loans at 6 percent interest, \$40,000 of interest bearing warrants sold to the membership, and an \$8,000 loan from the church's reserve funds.

The complete project included the handsome entrance facing Tichenor Avenue and connecting walkways on both levels at the north end of the building. The additional space allowed the razing of the old pastorium and the construction of the playground for the weekday pre-school program.

For the first time in its history, the church had a plant that provided balanced space for its worship and educational programs.

To fill the vacancy of Associate at the B.S.U., Walter Porter turned to another Auburn alumnus and former member of the B.S.U. and church, Oxford Smith, who had completed his seminary work at New Orleans. He, his wife Phyllis, and children, Andrea and Drew, came to Auburn to complete the staff leadership team. The nine of us, the Jeffers, Porters, Hornbuckles, Smiths, and Evelyn Blount, worked together harmoniously, but, unfortunately, not to the pleasure of the entire church membership. In working through a series of difficult decisions, several families in the church felt led to continue their Christian pilgrimage in another church setting, but before recounting these events, we note some of those

dedicated women who served behind the scenes as our secretaries.

These included Diane Curenton, Natalie Garland, Kathleen Watson, Donna Miller, and June Hardy. The senior member of the secretarial group came on board in those years and continues to grace the reception area of the church office—Dorothy L. Mitcham.

Chapter 11

Difficult Decisions

To understand something of the difficulties of the late sixties, one must look beyond the minutes of deacons' meetings and church conferences to the events of the early sixties and the mood of the culture. The Civil Rights Movement and President Johnson's War on Poverty had caused to surface once more one of the sometimes neglected aspects of the Christian gospel—the social gospel. In its purity this is the tenet that persons saved by the grace of God will live out their salvation in ministry to other people. Its opponents see the social gospel as an attempt to bring about social change without the inner change that personal salvation brings and holds that the church's business is to save souls and let society take care of itself. Thus, the decade of the sixties was characterized in all of Christendom by the running debate between the advocates of the social gospel on the one hand and the gospel of grace on the other. Attempts to reconcile the two occupied the best minds of leading Christian writers, one of whom was D. Elton Trueblood.

A young adult Sunday School class in the Auburn church

was especially attracted to the writings of Trueblood and came to the commitment that the church ought to be sensitive to and respond to needs in its own community. One of these needs had long been recognized as child care for married students. Auburn University was attracting more and more graduate students and most student wives had to work to support the family, and there were no public facilities for children prior to the first grade. At the pastor's suggestion, this group of young adults and a few older ones became a Mission Task Force and later adopted the name of Community Ministries Fellowship. The first community need to which they sought to respond was to make the facilities in the church's new educational unit available for pre-school child care.

The first of several committees which dealt with this proposal was appointed in August of 1967. In June of 1968, the committee presented a recommendation that the church establish a kindergarten program in September of 1968 and that another committee be appointed to work out the details and that the program be self-supporting as to personnel and supplies. However, it was not until two years later that the first unit opened with Emily Lacy as lead teacher and Jean Cox as assistant.

Another difficult decision that the church finally made in 1969 had to do with the housing arrangement for the pastor. When we first came to the church in 1958 the possibility of the church providing a housing allowance instead of a house was mentioned, but not seriously considered. Simply stated, we had no money to invest in a house. Occasionally this possibility would be mentioned and we were aware that more and more churches were moving to this arrangement. Early in 1969, we

found a property that was for sale that we felt we could manage and that had some possibilities for enlargement that would accommodate our family, so we broached the subject to the deacons and trustees. After a great deal of discussion in several meetings, the change was made with the church graciously allowing the trustees to make us a loan of \$8,000 for the initial investment. That loan was refinanced and repaid within two years.

By far the most difficult decision of these years had to do with the church's relationship with the Alabama Baptist State Convention in our ministry to college students; and, ironically, it was a decision that could only accept and adjust to policies adopted by the state convention. Again, to understand this change, one must know something of the history of the student ministry. Ministries of Baptist denominational bodies are born spontaneously out of need and grow like Topsy. Such was the case of the Baptist Student Union, born in the mid-1920's as a spinoff of the Baptist Young People's Union. Within ten years there were large concentrations of students, and the sponsoring churches saw the need of full-time staff leadership for this ministry, and Auburn responded by employing Davis Wooley in 1934. The ministry needed housing, so the first Baptist Student Center in Alabama was built in Tuscaloosa in the late 1940's. All of these developments were at least partially financed by the State Board of Missions.

When this writer became the State Training Union Secretary on January 1, 1945, the Student Department was within the Training Union Department. The leadership at the state level was given by Cynthia Jo Hall, the Young People's leader in that department. The budget paid for part of the

salaries of the two B.S.U. secretaries at the University of Alabama and Auburn. Within a few months the student ministry became a department of its own with Howard Halsell as the State Student Secretary. Then came the post-war years and mushrooming student bodies all over the state. In responding to this need, the State Board soon found that its budget for the student department was exceedingly large and still there were desperate needs for buildings and personnel on many campuses in the state.

At this point the philosophy for doing missions from the state level began to change. Earlier it had been casual and decentralized. A. Hamilton Reid, the State Executive Secretary, operated on the theory that mission funds should be placed in the location where the need existed and that local people should be given a strong voice in how they should be spent. One of the state convention presidents of this era held a different philosophy which I heard him express in this cryptic sentence: "We have no business putting mission money into anything we don't own and control."

As the student ministry in the state continued to grow, there was a steady trend toward this latter philosophy which resulted in a policy adopted by the convention in 1967: "The State Convention would move to own and operate all student centers and employ and supervise all personnel." In fairness to the convention's action, it should be noted that this was the case already on most campuses in the state, with Auburn being the only notable exception. This meant that a ministry that the Auburn church had begun in the 1920's, nurtured as probably its primary ministry through depression and war, accommodated in very limited space, and which was alternately a source of

frustration and pride, must now be yielded for administration to some entity of which it would only be a small part. When the first part of the new policy was implemented and the campus minister and his associate became employees of the state convention instead of the church, the outcry was considerable.

It was pointed out that we were in violation of the church's constitution and by-laws which did, in fact, contain an article that spelled out the church's relation to the state convention in its student ministry. More personally, it was charged that the pastor and campus minister had made an under-the-table deal with state convention leadership without informing the church. The truth is that this pastor took a dim but realistic view of the change. He here confesses that he enjoyed the presence of the students and the close relationship that the historic working arrangement afforded. However, he also here acknowledges that the change was inevitable. Auburn was now no longer a one-church community, but a multi-church community, and the pattern for the student ministry simply had to be altered to fit the situation.

In November of 1966, the State Convention instructed its Special Study Committee on higher education to study its program for Baptist students on non-Baptist campuses and bring recommendations to the 1967 convention regarding this work. In the summer of 1967, during the process of this study, the local student committee brought a report to the deacons indicating the thinking of the study committee and the probable nature of its report to the state convention. The deacons heard the report, but took no action, except to request that they be kept informed. The following recommendations of the Special Study Committee were adopted by the convention in 1967: "That all Baptist Student

Directors and Associates at non-Baptist colleges and universities become employees of the Baptist State Executive Board of the Alabama Baptist State Convention in the Department of Student Work, with salaries and benefits to be paid by the executive board. That we encourage increased support for the expanded operational needs of the student program by the local committee, in the light of the convention's assumption of the salaries of the campus directors. That the implementing of these recommendations be done by the time of the fall session of the 1968 convention if at all possible.”

At the first deacons’ meeting following the 1967 meeting of the convention, the pastor reported this action to the deacons. This action was implemented in November of 1968 when the Director and Associate Director were informed that their salary checks would be issued from the Montgomery office.

In December of 1968, it was pointed out in a business meeting of the church that this practice was not in accord with the Church Constitution which states in Article IV: Relationship of the Local Church, Baptist State Board, and Student Program: “While working in closest cooperation with the Baptist State Board on all matters of mutual concern, the First Baptist Church (1) shall have the responsibility for the religious program of the Baptist student body, which program will be coordinated with and be an integral part of the program of the First Baptist Church, and (2) shall select and employ the Student Director and determine his duties, responsibilities, tenure of office, and salary.”

It was further reported that since this issue was raised, the deacons had been involved in discussions and committee work in an effort to bring some recommendation to the church which would resolve the apparent conflict between this article of

the constitution and the present practice as established by the Convention in 1967 and implemented one year later.

The recommendations printed below were presented to the church by the deacons after hearing a report made by a special committee composed of E. M. Evans, chairman, Joe Moore, Allen Brown, L. M. Ware, and Charles Bentley.

(a) That the church approve the present arrangement of direct payment of salaries of the B.S.U. staff by the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

(b) That the B.S.U. staff be jointly selected by the Alabama Baptist State Convention and the First Baptist Church and other churches of the Tuskegee Lee Association.

(c) That the religious programs on Sundays be under the direction of the First Baptist Church or by the First Baptist Church and other churches of the Tuskegee Lee Association under an arrangement approved by the First Baptist Church.

(d) That the student program during the week be under the direction of the Alabama Baptist State Convention and the First Baptist Church or the First Baptist Church and other churches of the Tuskegee Lee Association.

(e) That the details of the arrangement in regard to the selection, and number of representatives, voting power, financial support, and the operation of the program be

worked out by a committee of the First Baptist Church and other churches of the Tuskegee Lee Association interested in participation.

(f) That the Constitution of the church be amended to conform to the action taken.

In its report the committee went into detail regarding the history of the B.S.U. at Auburn and the cooperative effort with the State Convention in sponsoring this ministry. It noted the dramatic increase in the number of institutions of higher education in the state as well as the increase in the number of students in attendance. It traced the response of the State Convention to this challenge that led to the establishment of the Special Study Committee which had made its recommendation to the 1967 convention. The Committee further reported that the deacons had been informed of these actions as they occurred and had taken no action, but requested that they be kept informed.

Because of the general unrest within the membership resulting from these and other decisions of the late sixties, and the obvious unhappiness with some of us on the staff, I suggested that we have a meeting of the congregation for the purpose of giving anyone who so desired the opportunity to voice his concerns about the work of the church. At this meeting, I attempted to make a statement setting forth the basic work of the church as being evangelism, religious education, ministry, and worship; and then discussed each staff member's responsibilities in these areas. I concluded this presentation as follows:

... In summary, as long as I am the head coach,

or chairman of the staff, I am not interested in any changes in personnel, whether here at the church or at the student center.

Having reviewed my philosophy of the various functions of the church and how I feel about our staff as leaders in a program along these lines, I would now like to talk with you about us-our relationship as pastor and people. It has been a relatively long one, and as I have said on a number of occasions, an unusually enjoyable one for us. In the light of recent events and discussions, however, it may be questionable as to whether it should continue.

We established this relationship more than 12 years ago because we believed that God's Spirit led us together. When and how does that same spirit terminate such a relationship? Sometimes by calling a man to another field of service, but the likelihood of this happening in my case is not great. The church may terminate it, but there is usually something rather drastically wrong with the pastor when that happens, and I trust that this is not the case at the moment. I could probably move by letting it be known that I would be open to an invitation, believing that I had served out my usefulness here.

This, I am quite willing to do, if I feel that it is best for the church. Most pastors have no desire to continue serving a congregation when an appreciable

minority feels that he is no longer effective. I certainly feel this way.

This is why I have spoken to you tonight as honestly as I know how. If you are not in general agreement with what I have said this evening, then you should let me know. If a healthy majority of you feel that this relationship should continue, then I believe I have a right to ask two things: (1) your continued cooperation, support, and prayers, and (2) that you make it clear to those who disagree that you do believe this to be right; that they are welcome to full participation in the life and work of the church, but that you respectfully request that expressions of disagreement and criticism be made at the appropriate times and places—to the appropriate persons—and, above all, in the Christian spirit.

Although the remark is not in my notes, I distinctly recall saying that if as many as twenty-five percent of the church members desired a change in pastoral leadership, I would do my best to initiate such a change. Only one person, and he remains a friend to this day, suggested that such a change might be for the best.

Out of this meeting, there emerged a significant and sincerely held difference of opinion about the nature of pastoral leadership in a church. There are those who see ministers as employees who are obligated to do the bidding of the congregation, usually expressed in the decisions of the deacons. I recall saying in the discussion of the evening that I saw my ultimate responsibility as being to Jesus Christ, the great head of the church, and that I should exercise leadership in the light of

that responsibility.

Shortly after this congregational meeting, Jeanette and I, with a group of our church members, left for the Baptist World Congress in Tokyo, Japan. On our return three weeks later, I learned that some of the members who were unhappy with the situation had met to discuss their response. The rumor was that they had talked about leaving the church and forming a new one. Some of these people I believed I could trust and believed that they trusted me. I sought out two or three and suggested that if they no longer felt comfortable in First Baptist that they consider going to the Auburn Heights Mission, which then with this added strength might be constituted into an autonomous church. Thus, it was that what is now the Parkway Baptist Church was constituted in September of 1970. The Baptist witness in Auburn had expanded from one church to three in less than twelve years.

Chapter 12

Expansion

The Auburn Heights Mission had begun as a mission Sunday School in the summer of 1963. The Airview and Pepperell Baptist Churches had sponsored a Vacation Bible School near the Starr and Stoker Mobile Home Courts primarily for the children of families residing in these courts. Following the Bible School there were enough adults who showed interest in the work to warrant the beginning of a mission Sunday School. By the end of the year, Auburn First Baptist had joined the other two churches in sponsoring the effort, and a short time later became the sole sponsor. The Reverend C. M. Clinkscales conducted services in the early years and J. M. Whitman was a key leader, especially in the first building program.

The small residence in which this work began was soon outgrown and the search for a more spacious and permanent location began. Soon we located a property on the Opelika Road which belonged to the Harper family, members of Lakeview Baptist Church. It consisted of two small apartment buildings with space enough in between for an auditorium. The Harpers

readily made the property available to the church for \$15,000. The building program consisted of renovating the two apartment buildings and constructing a frame building in between. The church appropriated \$10,000 for these expenses and with a good deal of voluntary labor led by J. M. Whitman, Hubert Harris and Marvin Waller, the mission soon enjoyed adequate space for 200 persons. A generous gift from Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Samford made the purchase of the Harper property possible.

On April 25, 1965, dedication services were held with participants including Lee Gray, Missionary for the Tuskegee and Lee Associations, H. O. Hester of the Special Missions Department of the State Board of Missions, Clifford Bailey, pastor of the Pepperell Baptist Church and this pastor.

Following the resignation of C. M. Clinkscales as pastor, O. Thomas Eason was called as Mission Pastor and served until he accepted a position with the Home Mission Board in the ministry to Spanish speaking people in West Texas. On June 22, 1969, the Missions Committee recommended that the church call Rev. Ted Houston as Mission Pastor. Houston served the church during its first years following the organization in September of 1970 through the experience of relocating on the site it now occupies at the intersection of Dean Road and University Drive.

The decade of the seventies in Auburn First Baptist Church was characterized by a number of progressive developments including the evolution of the pre-school ministry from one kindergarten unit to the present accommodation of infants through four years, the beginning of a branch in the Wire Road area, the inclusion of women on the diaconate, an extensive renovation of the main auditorium, and the sale of the B.S.U. property and establishment of the church's several trust funds.

Each of these will be traced in some detail here.

As previously recorded, the pre-school ministry began in the fall of 1970 with one kindergarten unit. This action was authorized by the church after much discussion and a vote of 132 for and 47 against. By the following April, the deacons were ready to recommend that the church offer its facilities to the Auburn Inter-Agency Day Care Center and the recommendation carried unanimously. This arrangement continued by annual vote of the church through August of 1973. In December of 1972 the Kindergarten Committee proposed that this ministry be extended to three- and four-year-olds and in March of 1973 recommended that a Monday-Wednesday-Friday program be established for four-year-olds. With the enlargement of the program, Emily Lacy was named Director of the Weekday Preschool Educational Program in addition to her responsibilities as lead kindergarten teacher.

On August 2, 1973, Mr. Ted Taylor made a report to the church on behalf of the Weekday Preschool Education Committee with the concurrence of the deacons and personnel committee as follows: (1) That the church accept the offer of the Inter Agency Center to sell the program to the church for \$1.00, (2) That the church establish a full-time staff position of Director of Pre-School Activities, and (3) That Jay Pickens, who later became Mrs. Richard Deese, be employed to fill that position. The recommendations passed unanimously.

In December of 1974 the deacons passed a motion affirming the preschool program and staff and recognizing that this mission might require funds beyond those obtained from fees.

The relocation of Auburn's School of Veterinary

Medicine from the Donahue Drive/Thach Avenue area to the more spacious acres on the Wire Road gave rise to the development of mobile home courts and other housing in that area. As these facilities continued to grow, I became more and more convinced that the church should look into the possibility of a ministry to these young families, both single and married. It was my vision to provide these members of the community with a "community center" type facility that would function as a meeting place for Bible Study and recreation. The idea was presented to the Missions Committee and in August of 1972, R. E. Stevenson as chairman moved that we use funds left to the church in the will of John Earl Bomar to finance the beginning of such a ministry. Because of the experimental nature of the proposal, this first action authorized an expenditure of \$6,500 for a mobile home unit to be located in Gentilly Trailer Park. The balance of the Bomar bequest of approximately \$3,000 would be used for lot rental and other incidentals.

The work was begun in the fall of 1971 with a Sunday School class meeting on Sunday morning taught by some of our lay people including Camilla Lowry, Gerald Johnson, and L. B. Williams. Other fellowship type meetings during the week soon followed. The idea caught on and soon the small mobile home was inadequate for the attendance. We felt that the pilot project had proven itself and began to think in terms of a more permanent facility. In March of 1974, the Missions Committee requested that the church authorize it to make the necessary studies with regard to need, building, program, and resources for a permanent branch in the Wire Road area.

In October of 1974, Inez Hepburn, Chairman of the Missions Committee, presented the following recommendations:

(1) That the appropriate action be set in motion to acquire land for the permanent location of the work, (2) That a committee be formed to structure and direct a program for approximately 200 persons and to establish a state-approved licensed day care center to provide for approximately 66 children, (3) That the committee be authorized to secure the necessary architectural help for developing plans for an 8,000 square foot building for the program, (4) That the Home Mission Board and the State Mission Board be requested to assist with the financing of the program, and (5) That the Finance Committee and the Board of Trustees study the church's financial commitments and determine how this project could be included in its overall plans.

A motion was then made that this action be referred to the Long Range Planning Committee of the deacons for the purpose of working it into the appropriate priority position among other commitments of the church. The motion passed unanimously.

In February of 1975, the deacons recommended to the church that 4.32 acres of land adjacent to Ridgewood Village be purchased for \$20,000, as a permanent location for the Gentilly branch. A year later the church signed a contract with the W. F. Newman Company of Columbus, Georgia, for the erection of a Butler-type building on this location. The total cost of this building and equipment, not including floor covering and paving of the parking area, was just over \$86,000 bringing the total investment to about \$125,000.

Meanwhile, the church had reached an agreement with the State Mission Board and the Home Mission Board for assistance on the salary of a full-time person to lead this work. Joel Snider, an Auburn graduate, was called to this position in

July of 1976 and served for one year before going on to Southern Seminary for further training. Another Auburn graduate, Ken Corr, who had completed the Master of Divinity at Southwestern Seminary, succeeded Joel in this position. Since Ken had grown up in the Lakeview Baptist Church, the two churches joined together for his ordination to the full gospel ministry.

Concurrent with the move to the new location, the name of the work was changed from the Gentilly Branch to Village Chapel. Under the excellent leadership of Ken and Denise Corr, a full program was developed including Sunday School, Church Training, worship services, a midweek program, and a day care center. The Corrs resigned in 1980 to accept a position in the student affairs department of Houston Baptist College. Corr was succeeded by Robert E. Harvey who served until 1986 when the congregation decided to ask to be constituted into an autonomous church, now the West Auburn Baptist Church.

Chapter 13

Deacons

The matter of including women in the diaconate was first brought to the church's attention in the business meeting of September 20, 1973. It was reported at that time that since the church constitution did not preclude the election of women to this position, interested persons had suggested to the Committee to Nominate deacons that women be included on the ballot. They reported that the committee was reluctant to do so since the members perceived this to be a rather radical departure from tradition. As a result, it was moved that the church establish a committee to study the matter and report to the body on ways and means to decide the issue. There were "a few" dissenting votes, but the motion carried by a substantial margin.

At a later date the church in conference was asked to select a committee from a list of ten men and ten women. The following were selected: W. L. Alford and Frances Stevenson, co-chairmen; Claude Moore, Mary Greissman, Gene Meadows, Mary Anne Armour, J. C. Farrington, and Charlotte Ward.

Since the church constitution merely stated that "there

shall be a Board of Deacons consisting of some multiple of three and ranging from 24 to 3”, with no stipulation as to sex, it was suggested that the present wording could remain unchanged and a sentence added as follows: “Nominees may be either men or women.” After considerable study, the committee decided to propose a change in the wording of the constitution to the effect that “Deacons shall be men and/or women....” On April 18, 1974, the proposed change was put to a vote with 55 voting for and 33 voting against. However, since a two-thirds majority is required to effect a change in the constitution, the proposed change failed by three votes.

The proponents of including women as deacons immediately seized on the fact that at least a majority of those voting on that occasion favored opening the diaconate to women. Opponents of including women interpreted the failure of the constitutional change to mean that the church had voted against their inclusion.

What to do now? The pastor suggested that those who wanted to nominate women continue to request the Committee to Nominate Deacons to include women on the ballot, always making sure that those who wished to vote for an all male roster could do so.

As is now well-known, the first time that women were included, September 24, 1974, resulted in the election of the church’s first woman deacon, Miss Leland Cooper. No one was more surprised than the pastor when he learned that Miss Cooper had given her consent to be nominated. When asked about it, she made this reply: “At first, I thought I would refuse, and then I remembered overhearing a conversation between my parents after a deacons’ meeting years ago. In the conversation

my father remarked to my mother, ‘If we had had a woman or two in that group, things would have gone a lot smoother.’”

Up to this point in time, a total of 13 women have been ordained as deacons by the Auburn First Baptist Church. Each of them has served with dedication and grace in this position. Several are now life deacons. The testimony of experience is that the church has been blessed and helped by their service.

As a result of the trauma of the late sixties over the action of the State Mission Board regarding the student ministry, the matter of ownership of the B.S.U. Center was temporarily shelved. Neither the representatives of the board or the church were anxious to raise that issue. However, in April of 1973 the pastor reported to the church as a matter of information that the deacons had opened the subject of the sale of the B.S.U. Center to the state board. In negotiations that took about a year, a committee of Oyette Chambliss, Gene Meadows, and O. C. Moore represented the church. The final recommendation to the church by the deacons was as follows: “We recommend that the church accept the offer of the Baptist State Executive Board to purchase the property on which the Baptist Student Center is located and the building and property known as the Garrett Apartments at a cost of \$100,000.”

This recommendation was made with the deacons having come to some agreement with representatives of the Baptist State Convention concerning the following details:

1. The First Baptist Church of Auburn would have first option to purchase the property at appraised value should the property no longer be used for B.S.U. purposes.

2. The Baptist Student Center will be used on Sundays for Sunday School and Church Training by students. These programs will be under the direction of the Campus Minister and the associational student committee. First Baptist Church will cooperate with other churches in the Tuskegee Lee Association in staffing these organizations. The building will be available for use by the Auburn First Baptist Church on special occasions which are scheduled and coordinated with the B.S.U. calendar. (The use of the Student Center for Sunday programs was ultimately abandoned as local churches provided these programs in their own facilities.)

3. The local student committee will be a committee of the Tuskegee Lee Association structured to give representation according to financial support.

In conference on July 7, 1974, the church voted to sell the property with four dissenting votes.

Early in the decade of the seventies, the church was faced with the necessity of redecorating the main auditorium. Discussion of this need led to the conclusion that it was time to do more than just redecorate, but how much more was the question. The first step was the establishment of a Building Committee composed of Lamar Ware, chairman, Mrs. Elmer Salter, Mrs. Herbert Hansell, Tom Miller, Daniel Benson, and Jim McGregor. The committee requested the assistance of the interior consultant of the Church Architecture Department of the Baptist Sunday School Board and received invaluable assistance

from that source.

It was soon decided that we needed a new ceiling with new light fixtures, a complete repainting of ceiling and walls, and new carpet; but in almost every meeting of this committee the question was asked, "Can we do anything about the windows?" The original windows were made of amber colored glass panes framed in wooden triple hung sash. They were now almost fifty years old and not in the best of condition. When the possibility of stained glass windows was mentioned, I reminded the committee that this would probably cost as much as we planned to spend on the entire project. Then someone mentioned the possibility of the windows being given as memorials. We decided to investigate that possibility and ultimately got in touch with the Laws Stained Glass Studios in Statesville, North Carolina. When the estimated cost of the large windows was shared with the congregation, we soon found that financing this part of the renovation would pose no problem. The contract with Laws for \$18,685 was approved on November 29, 1973 and the windows were installed within six months (See *Appendix 4*).

Not only were the original windows fifty years old, so was the pipe organ, and a professional evaluation of that instrument revealed the need to replace it.

This evaluation was made primarily as a result of the leadership of Dale and Julia Peterson who had begun work with us in June of 1973 as Minister of Music and Organist, respectively. After the resignation of Bill Hornbuckle in the fall of 1972, we had looked at several very capable Ministers of Music, but the search committee had not been impressed to make a recommendation to the church. Knowing this, Bill Hornbuckle wrote a letter suggesting that we might want to take a look at

Dale Peterson. Dale had sung in Bill's Youth Choir while he was Minister of Music at a church in Louisville during his seminary days. Later Dale graduated from Kentucky Southern College and went on to the University of Cincinnati for graduate work. At the time he was recommended to us he was serving the Fort Mitchell Baptist Church in Kentucky as Minister of Music.

While on a university-related trip to that part of the country, two members of the search committee, Warren Valine and Gene Meadows, stopped to visit with Dale and talked with him about our church. When they returned to Auburn, they gave a very positive report to the committee regarding Dale and his wife, Julia. The committee invited them to visit Auburn and as a result became convinced that these were the people that we wanted to lead our music program. Thus began their tenure which has been marked with continuing growth in numbers and quality in the music program of the church.

In May of 1975 an organ committee was established composed of Anne Eaves, Sylvia Gossett, Mike Evans, O. N. Andrews, Mary Jim Coleman, Eugene Griessman, Martha Naftel, and Dale and Julia Peterson. Dr. Edward Tibbs of the Samford University faculty was employed as a consultant.

By June of 1976, the committee was ready to recommend the purchase of the three manual, 44 rank Schantz organ for \$98,000 plus \$4,250 sales tax to be completed and installed by September of 1977.

The committee recommended that at least half of the cost of the organ be financed by memorial gifts which could be as small as \$1.00 for a single pipe or as large as \$30,000 for an entire division of the instrument. Some parts of the original organ would also be included in the new one.

Installation of the organ in the fall of 1977 called for still more changes in the platform choir loft area which added immeasurably to the attractiveness of the interior of the building (see *Appendix 5*).

Other projects which called for capital funding in this decade were the purchase of the first church van for \$8000 and the conversion of the building adjacent to the parking lot to the present Activities Building. The Deacons and Trustees worked out a long-range financial plan and made the necessary loans to accomplish these several improvements.

Following the sale of the B.S.U. property to the State Convention in 1974, the deacons recommended a policy to the church to the effect that the church own only such property as would be used in its program and that to this end it would seek ownership of all properties in the quadrangle where it is located. As a result of this policy, the trustees were authorized to actively pursue the sale of the remainder of the Jones property on North College Street, which led to the sale of the property to the First Alabama Bank for \$250,000.

The sale of the B.S.U. Center to the State Board of Missions was another step in the evolution of the Baptist Student Ministry at Auburn from a “one-church” to a “multi-church” ministry. The indirect effect of this process on the Auburn First Baptist Church was that it was a factor in changing the make-up of the church from the 50 percent students and 50 percent local people ratio to the present ratio of 10 percent student and 90 percent local people. The final step in the transition took place in the seventies when Oxford Smith, the Associate Campus Minister, moved to Montgomery to become the Associate Director of the Student Department of the State Board; and when

Walter Porter resigned as Campus Minister in 1977. Walter's resignation was due to his perception of some changes in the philosophy of administering the student program at the state level with which he did not feel compatible. It is this writer's conviction that we lost a very capable Campus Minister when he resigned, although the church was fortunate enough to retain the Porters in positions of lay leadership.

Another factor in the change of the church's make-up may have been my own commitment to making it a church in which young adults—primarily graduate students and faculty families—could feel at home. For years I had heard some of my older colleagues in Southern Baptist life lament the fact that we were losing many young families who were committed to careers in higher education. I happened to come to Auburn at a time when the university was in the first stages of an expansion program that would bring a number of these young families to the community, and was determined to try to understand their needs and structure a church program that would meet those needs. Though admittedly seen through these biased eyes, at least some measure of success has resulted from that commitment.

At the same time in an effort to keep our local young people from being overshadowed by the unusually large numbers of college students being ministered to, we decided to establish a part-time staff position of Director of Youth Activities so that these young people would feel that they had a staff person all their own with whom they could relate. The church called one of our local college students, Dale Henderson, to that position and he served effectively in that role for three years.

In the summer of 1971, Franklin J. Butler, a Religious

Education graduate of Southern Seminary with two years experience as a journeyman missionary in the Philippines, joined our staff as Minister of Education. When he resigned in 1978, the church decided to incorporate the part-time Director of Youth Activities position into the full-time position of Minister of Youth and Outreach. John T. Brantley, a graduate of the University of Georgia and Southern Seminary, was called to the position and served admirably for four years. He and his wife Patty endeared themselves to young and old alike during their four-year tenure. While in Auburn, their first son, Drew, was born. In addition to administrative duties in the areas indicated, John gave valuable assistance in the pulpit ministry. He resigned in June of 1983 to accept the pastorate of the Pendleton Baptist Church in South Carolina.

As of December 31, 1981, Carey Evans, who had been the church custodian for over thirty years, retired. Carey and I had worked together since my first day and our relationship had been a pleasant one. He approached his responsibilities with a measure of pride in what he was doing because it was God's church in which he was working. His retirement reminded me that my own was now not many years away.

Following John Brantley's resignation, the church returned to the part-time Youth Director position, calling Mike Williams, a graduate student, to the work. As Mike's schedule allowed, he was able to give more time to the church and provided a highly effective and appreciated ministry to youth and adults.

In September of 1978 the church was informed by the executor of the will of Miss Willie Huguley that the church was the primary beneficiary of that will, and that the value of the

bequest was to be approximately \$250,000. This bequest, along with the liquidation of the remainder of the Jones Property, raised the question of how these funds would be used. In April of 1980, the deacons recommended that a special study committee be established to study this matter and bring recommendations to the church. The committee was composed of Camilla Lowry, James O. Nichols, Doris Beckett, Mary Jim Coleman, Bill Dyas, E. M. Evans, Rick Hulsey, Gerald Johnson, and Louis Trucks.

This committee ultimately recommended that \$100,000 be used for immediate capital improvements, the major project being renovation of the present Activities Building, and that the remainder be divided into three major trust funds: (1)

Capital Improvements, \$200,000; (2) Property Acquisition, \$100,000; and (3) Special Missions, \$175,000. The latter included the funds left to the church by C. E. Little, C. Felton Little, and John Earl Bomar. The bequest of \$25,000 from L. M. and Mary Hall Ware remained intact with income designated for the libraries of the Auburn churches and the Baptist Student Union.

The recommendation also stipulated that one-sixth of any future undesignated bequests would go into the Special Missions Trust Fund. Since the adoption of these recommendations, two major additions have been made to the trust funds. The church received approximately \$100,000 from the will of C. E. and Mary Emma Newman, and on September 10, 1981, O. N. Andrews made a motion that the church establish a Pastor's Retirement Gift Fund. The motion passed, and by the time our retirement became effective September 1, 1986, the church had decided to use this fund as a trust fund with the income paid to us in monthly installments as long as either of us

lives.

Through the years the church has received numerous memorial gifts honoring members who had died. Many were designated for the church library and some for scholarships. Among the latter were gifts in memory of J. C. Lowery and Mrs. J. I. Hardy.

As of December 1, 1987, the principal amounts in the several trusts were as follows:

Property Acquisition Fund	\$157,629.00
Capital Improvements Fund	239,541.00
Special Missions & Ministries Fund	321,131.00
Special Programs Fund	11,498.00
Lottie Moon Trust Fund ³	80,337.00
Mildred Enloe Yates Fund	78,661.00
Pastor's Retirement Fund	48,544.00
L. M. & Mary Hall Ware Fund	30,091.00
Ware Day Care Scholarship Fund	5,064.00

³ In keeping with the wishes of the donors, this fund was made available to the new West Auburn Baptist Church to be used as part of the purchase price of the Village Chapel property.

Chapter 14

The Fifteenth Decade

As the year 1978 approached, the church made plans to celebrate its 140th birthday. April was designated as the month for a Festival of Dedication. On April 2, the Auburn University Choir, under the direction of Dr. Thomas Smith, presented a concert; on the 9th, the pastor brought a special message on the state of the church; and on the 13th, Dr. Harper Shannon, president of the Alabama Baptist Convention, was guest speaker at the annual church banquet. The 20th anniversary of the pastor was noted on April 16th; and the annual Composer Day was held on the 23rd with Mark Blankenship of the Church Music Department, Baptist Sunday School Board, as guest composer. The celebration was climaxed on Homecoming Day, April 30th, with dinner on the grounds. Dr. Grady Cothen, President of the Baptist Sunday School Board, was guest speaker for the occasion. As a part of the Festival of Dedication, the church committed itself to a decade of growth looking forward to its sesquicentennial year in 1988.

The first step toward utilizing the present Activities

Building for church activities was taken in 1978. The portion of the building that had been rented by the Pittsburg Paint Store for several years was vacated, and the church voted to use that space for a new Sunday School class for single adults, a program which has enjoyed significant progress since its inauguration.

As we entered the decade of the eighties, we became more acutely aware that this period would see a change in pastoral leadership. I reached my 60th birthday in August of 1981 and realized that my options at that point were to actively seek a move to another church or to commit myself to remaining at Auburn First Baptist until retirement. Whether right or wrong, the decision was not a difficult one for us since we were very happy in our relationship with the church and there seemed to be no reason within the church for us to actively seek a move. Realizing that retirement might be as early as 1983, we began to remind the church (usually in the informal setting of Thursday night meetings) that this change would be taking place in the near future. I tried to listen for responses from the membership that would provide any clue as to the most appropriate timing (whether at age 62 or later) for our retirement. I detected none that indicated early retirement, so in the summer of 1985, in compliance with the request of the Personnel Committee that I give a year's notice, I announced that I would retire as of my 65th birthday.

The transition in pastoral leadership was, as I had fervently hoped, ideal in every way. It will be detailed later in the hope that it might be of help as a model to pastors and churches who face this experience.

Among the personal experiences of these final years, two opportunities to preach overseas were afforded us by the church.

In the fall of 1980 I received an invitation from the Foreign Mission Board to participate in a simultaneous revival effort on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines. When informed of this invitation, the Missions Committee recommended that the trip be funded from income derived from the Special Missions Trust Fund. I left in mid-February of 1981 for one of the most memorable experiences of my life. I worked with a native pastor in three very small churches deep in the interior of this largest of the Philippine Islands. Living conditions were very primitive, but the people were cordial and responsive. More than fifty decisions were made during the three revivals in the churches with some thirty-five or so for baptism.

Then in 1983, on the occasion of our 25th anniversary, the church made it possible for Jeanette and me to go to Nigeria as a part of the Alabama-Nigeria partnership. We traveled to Abeokuta in February of 1984 to assist in simultaneous revivals throughout the country. We stayed in the home of Nita McCullough, one of our missionaries who taught in the girls' school there. A high point of that experience was the Sunday morning chapel service at the school with 600 students in attendance. Some twenty-five or thirty of the girls responded to the invitation at the close of the service.

At the same time funds were appropriated for this trip, the church voted to give each student summer missionary a stipend of \$100 in memory of Louise Green Potts who had been the B.S.U. Secretary in the late forties. The practice continues each year when these young people are commissioned by the church to serve in this capacity.

In the early eighties, the Alabama Baptist State Convention established a partnership arrangement with the

Wyoming Baptist Convention. As a result we entered into a relationship with the Sunrise Baptist Church of Casper, Wyoming, to assist them in their building program. Our first action was to vote to underwrite a loan to enable them to complete their building, but was later changed, at their request, to assist them in selling bonds. We agreed to sell to our membership, or buy with church mission funds, \$25,000 of these bonds which would enable them to finish their building.

Following the resignation of John Brantley, it was decided that this position on the leadership staff should be designated as Minister of Education. Late in 1984 we were informed that a young woman with qualifications to fill this position would soon be moving to Auburn. We immediately contacted Barbara Stauffer and our talks resulted in her being called by the church in December of 1984 to begin work in January of 1985. Barbara is a native of Clanton, Alabama, a graduate of the University of Indiana and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. She has served churches in Louisville, Kentucky, and Anniston, Alabama, as Minister of Education. She is married to Dr. J. Garth Stauffer and the couple have one son, Jay.

After Mike Williams resigned as part-time Youth Director to attend Southwestern Seminary, the church called another Auburn student, Steve Steverson, to the position. A native of Tallahassee, Florida, Steve provided excellent leadership in the youth program while completing his studies in Veterinary Medicine at the University. Following Steve's tenure, the position was filled by a talented young woman from Decatur, Alabama, Peggy Daniels. Following her graduation and matriculation at Southern Seminary, Bill Moore, one of our local

young people—a graduate of the university awaiting assignment with the Air Force—served in this capacity. After Bill's assignment, the church called one of its young matrons, Elaine Ridgeway, who is currently serving in this position.

Jay Deese, Director of our Preschool Division, announced her retirement as of December 31, 1987, and in February of 1988, the church called Miss Susan Shelton to the position. She is a graduate of Murray State College in Kentucky and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. She came to Auburn from the First Baptist Church of Wetumpka, Alabama. Thus, the leadership staff at this writing consists of Glenn Turner as pastor; Dale Peterson, Minister of Music; Barbara Stauffer, Minister of Education; Susan Shelton, Director of the Preschool Division; Elaine Ridgeway, Youth Director; and Julia Peterson, Organist.

At this point, it is well to note the development of the church's very excellent support staff. For many years after Dot Mitcham came on board, she did the financial records with the able assistance of AJ Hill, the church bookkeeper. When the workload demanded a full-time person, Judi Brown became available and serves admirably in the position of Financial Secretary. It so happened that the LaVaughn Johnson family moved to Auburn from Athens, Georgia, at a time when the Educational Secretary's position was vacant. We learned that Mrs. Johnson (Peggy) had experience as a secretary in their former church in Athens. We approached her about coming to work with us and, after consideration, she agreed. She attends to the secretarial duties related to all staff members. Dot Mitcham continues as receptionist and church secretary. Following the resignation of Carey Evans as custodian, the church turned to

janitorial contracting firms for their services, but later decided to return to the former arrangement and employed Grady Hutchinson as Custodian.

In June of 1983, the church voted to provide a home for furloughing missionaries. We rented the home of former members, Dr. and Mrs. Warren Valine, purchased some furnishings from the estate of other former members, Charles and Jenks Knight, and notified the Foreign Mission Board of its availability. Our first missionaries in residence were Loyd and Mary Hazel Moon from Brazil. Mary Hazel had grown up in our church and the couple had spent other furloughs in Auburn, so they were right at home. Later on, the Dennis Hale family, former members of the church and missionaries to Spain, occupied the house.

The Baptist witness in Auburn was expanded to four churches in September of 1986 with the constitution of the West Auburn Baptist Church. The sequence of events which led to this action is as follows. Bob Harvey, our Associate for Village Chapel, began to advance the idea at staff retreats and meetings of that work becoming a Mission of First Baptist with the view to becoming an autonomous church. The proposal was discussed at length on several occasions with the point being reiterated that the work was established to serve a transient constituency—primarily Auburn University students. It was granted, however, that the possibility envisioned by Bob and the leaders of the chapel congregation, might be appropriate, and that a survey of the area needed to be made to ascertain if it were. Each time the subject came up, we referred to the need for such a survey, yet plans were never projected to conduct it.

In October of 1985 the Missions Committee of the church

received a letter from the chapel congregation formally requesting that the chapel be given mission status with the intention of developing into an autonomous church. On Wednesday evening, January 22, 1986, members of the Missions Committee and staff of First Baptist met with the chapel congregation for an open discussion of the matter. The chapel congregation expressed very forcefully the restraints they felt at being a branch rather than a mission with intent to become a church. Representatives of First Baptist expressed sympathy for the desire of the chapel congregation and encouraged them to take a survey to determine whether or not the change in status would be feasible. At the same time the representatives of First Baptist reaffirmed the church's desire to continue the student/transient ministry in the area.

My personal feeling regarding the request was that it was untimely. I had already announced my retirement and it was set for May 31, 1986, and the church had established a Search Committee which was busily engaged in the process of finding a new pastor. I felt that a decision of this proportion should not be made in view of the impending change in pastoral leadership.

A number of other meetings between representatives of the church and the chapel congregation were held, but the determination of the chapel group persisted. In August of 1986, Charlotte Ward, chairman of the Missions Committee, made an extensive report to the church on the matter to the effect that: (1) It was the unanimous recommendation of the Committee with concurrence of the Deacons that the status of the chapel remain the same. (2) In view of the fact that Bob Harvey feels strongly that he is being led to establish a mission with the view of becoming an autonomous church, that his employment by First

Baptist would end as of December 31, 1986. (3) No further financial assistance nor use of the building would be available to the chapel congregation after December 31, 1986.

Following this action the chapel congregation made contact with the New Testament Fellowship, a congregation made up primarily of former members of the Farmville Baptist Church which met in the same area, and a merger was accomplished, enabling the constitution of the West Auburn Baptist Church meeting in the facilities of the New Testament Fellowship.

Although reports from the Missions Committee indicated a need to continue the program at Village Chapel, the decision was made to abandon it since two programs in the same area identified as Baptist would give the impression of competitiveness, and we did not want to leave that impression with the residents of the area. Although none of the charter members of the new church came from First Baptist except those who had been members via Village Chapel, we were at least indirectly involved in the establishment of Auburn's fourth Baptist Church.

In keeping with the request of leaders in the church that I give one year's notice of my intent to retire, I did so in May of 1985. The minutes of the church business meeting for May 30 refer to the announcement and observe that the church would soon establish committees for developing the Pastor's Retirement Gift Fund and a committee to search for a new pastor.

Chapter 15

Approaching Retirement

In considering the timing for my retirement and the coming of a new pastor, church leaders expressed the hope that the new pastor could be on the field prior to the beginning of the fall quarter of 1986. In order to allow for a brief interim, the church graciously allowed me three months of terminal leave; thus, I would end my tenure as of May 31, 1986. It was agreed that a Search Committee would be established in time to allow it to do its work and have a recommendation by early summer of 1986.

In July of 1985, the process was set in motion when church members were requested through the *Auburn Baptist* to nominate persons to be considered for membership on the Search Committee. As per the church constitution, an ad hoc committee, composed of Chairman of Deacons, Sunday School Director, Church Training Director, President of W.M.U., and President of the Brotherhood, was instructed to study the nominations and recommend a committee no later than the November 1985 business meeting.

The search committee was elected at the September business meeting as follows: Doris Beckett, Mary Jim Coleman, Jan DeVenny, Jimmy DeVenny, Wayne Flynt, Camilla Lowry, Gene Meadows, Mary Virginia Moore, Walter Porter, Kathy Powe, Bob Stevenson, Louis Trucks, Dennis Wilson, Cissy Yarbrough, and the incoming Chairman of Deacons, Mike Evans. Mary Virginia Moore was named Chairman by virtue of receiving the largest number of nominations from the congregation.

At the same meeting Mike Evans was named Chairman of the Committee to Develop the Fund to Supplement the Pastor's Retirement.

Following my retirement, I encountered at various denominational meetings several of the pastors contacted by the Search Committee, and without exception they complimented very highly the procedures used by the committee. For this reason, I have asked the chairman, Mary Virginia Moore, to provide the notes from which the following account is constructed in the hope that it may be of value to other such committees.

The Pastor Search Committee of 1985 began its work under almost ideal conditions. The church was strong and at peace with itself. While not a large church, Auburn First Baptist was known within the denomination and had a clearly defined identity. The church treasured its 148-year history, rejoiced in recent accomplishments, and was well aware of a rich potential for the future.

The members were grateful for the excellent 28-year tenure of its pastor, but were open to the leadership of a new pastor. The committee was assured that it should take as long as needed to nominate a new pastor. A strong interim pastor, Dr.

W. T. Edwards of the Samford University faculty, had been called. The church staff was totally supportive of the committee and followed a policy of non-interference in its deliberations.

The eight men and seven women on the committee represented every age decade and all major programs of the church.

Prior to the first meeting the chairman requested that each member (1) begin the task with no “preselection” of a favorite candidate; (2) maintain complete confidentiality of information related to candidates, both during the process and after a pastor was nominated; (3) make the necessary time commitment to do the work of the committee-but also to maintain other church responsibilities during the interim between pastors.

The committee organized itself along the following lines: a meeting place was located for the exclusive use of the committee and a regular meeting time was established—weekly during part of the search, though less often at times; a co-chairman, a record keeper, and a corresponding secretary were named; and small, task- oriented groups were formed. It was agreed that all major decisions would be brought to the entire committee and unanimity sought.

Considerable time in discussing how the committee would go about its work resulted in the formation of unwritten guidelines.

The committee would conduct a broad search, actively seeking nominations from many sources and committed to giving thorough consideration to every nomination it would receive. In the process it would endeavor to combine openness to the congregation with confidentiality toward all nominees. It

would attempt to do its work in such a way as to reflect positively on the church and at the same time confirm and strengthen all correspondents in their ministries. The committee would avoid “hard-sell” methods and would not presume to know the will of God for the persons with whom it dealt. Within the committee, members would be open and honest with each other, accepting differences of opinion and supporting each other personally. They would pray together at every meeting and pray privately for each other, for the church, and for all persons whose lives would be touched by the search. The committee would be aware of the roles and appropriate input of other church committees and would be open in its communication with them. In order to make the best use of time and resources, the committee would establish an orderly, systematic process of screening candidates, but would also be constantly aware that the working of the Holy Spirit might lead to unanticipated deviations from any plan which the committee might construct. During the interim the committee would attempt to be especially supportive of the church staff and interim pastor, and would keep the church as fully informed as possible of progress being made.

Early on the committee set two goals: to specify as clearly as possible the attributes the church desired in a pastor and to outline a procedure to be used in the search.

In realizing the first goal, a questionnaire was circulated among the membership, interviews were conducted with staff members and the retiring pastor, conversations were held with church members, references to ministers in the scriptures and church constitution were studied, and careful study was given to the history of the church and the Auburn community with emphasis on the challenge of the future.

As a result of the studies, the committee prepared for its own use a "Pastoral Profile" with some characteristics determined as essential and others desirable. One of the task forces obtained information related to salaries and job descriptions of ministers in comparable churches and in secular positions requiring similar educational preparation and vocational experience.

In establishing guidelines of the search procedure, the committee turned to books and articles by Baptist and other Protestant publishers, information from the Pastor-Church Relations office of the Alabama and other state mission boards, conversations with persons who had served on other search committees, and archival accounts of two previous search committees of Auburn First Baptist Church. The experience of two members of the committee who had served on other search committees and interviews with the Executive Secretary of the State Mission Board and the head of the Pastor-Church Relations Department were especially helpful.

The committee then agreed on the following mode of operation: names of possible candidates were solicited in writing from church members, Southern Baptist and Alabama Baptist Convention officials, Southern Baptist seminaries, former members of Auburn First Baptist Church, Pastor Relations Departments of State Conventions, and personal acquaintances. As a result, 150 names were recorded in a master log.

A letter was sent to every person nominated. It contained information about the church and the general expectations the church had for a pastor. The letter indicated that the willingness of candidates to be considered would be a prerequisite for consideration. A response was requested and a form enclosed for

that purpose. Letters of appreciation were sent to those who did not wish to be considered and a file begun on those who responded positively. Each was then asked to complete a biographical form and provide names of references.

The committee was divided into reading teams of four which evaluated the information on each candidate, noting those considered "highly qualified." The information on these persons was then read by the entire committee of fifteen resulting in the emergence of a group considered the most highly qualified of the "highly qualified." At the request of a member, any file was reconsidered and names of new candidates were systematically added to the process.

Each nominee under consideration was informed of the committee's interest and that others continued to be under consideration as well. Additional information was requested and personal interviews arranged. Plans were made for listening teams to hear the ministers in their own churches, always with their prior knowledge of the visit. These teams returned to make oral and written reports to the full committee and recommendations for future plans.

During the search process, the committee placed a high priority on open communication with the church, the candidates under consideration, and the members of the church staff. Reports were presented in each church business meeting and occasionally in the *Auburn Baptist*. The committee members answered questions unless the answers would violate confidentiality.

A diligent effort was made to inform the candidates about Auburn and the church. One of the task forces developed an attractive and comprehensive notebook summarizing the

history, characteristics, and statistical information of the church. The committee made a special effort to keep communications with the candidates current, answering questions honestly without trying to inflate the strengths of the church, and keeping them up to date on the committee timetable.

Special attention was given to members of the church staff during the process. They were apprised of the procedures being used by the committee, assured that the candidates understood that the church desired to retain its present staff, and that the committee was seeking a pastor who would work well as a team member as well as the leader of the staff.

As the process moved toward a decision, Mrs. Moore recalls:

After about five months of work, the committee had learned a great deal about several outstanding candidates. The intensity of the relationships between candidates and committee increased. Communication between prospective pastors and committee members seemed open and trusting. Candidates and committee were praying for each other.

The committee came to care deeply for the candidates as people, not simply as prospects for pastor. The committee liked the candidate s-and the candidates liked Auburn First Baptist Church! At this stage, the committee felt sure that Auburn First Baptist Church would have a splendid new pastor. It was obvious that a cadre of well-trained, spiritually committed ministers with attractive personalities had been identified.

However, the committee was seeking ONE pastor, not a group.

In working through this cadre of qualified persons, additional visits to churches of the candidates were scheduled. More telephone calls were made and letters flowed back and forth. Permission was obtained from those still under consideration for the committee to investigate sensitive information related to physical and mental health, financial condition, candid personality assessments from former teachers, church members, and colleagues not originally listed as references, and an appraisal of the stability of the candidate's marriage and family.

Designated members of the committee talked with candidates about the vision the minister had for the Auburn First Baptist Church. Soul searching occurred on both sides. Some candidates reached the conclusion that a move to Auburn would not be right for them and so advised the committee. One candidate accepted a call to another church, and the committee rejoiced with him. The committee continued to talk, pray, and study the further information obtained, knowing that it was getting close, but not able to predict how it would know with certainty that it had found the right person for the position. The committee had no pre-planned mechanism for making the final decision, yet there was a sense of confidence that it would know.

The following is a narrative of how this process resulted in the decision of the committee to recommend W. Glenn Turner as pastor: The preliminary studies had identified Dr. Turner as one of several who seemed to fit the pastor-profile. The studies revealed that Glenn Turner was born in Anchorage, Alaska on January 23, 1947. He had grown up in Memphis, Tennessee and was educated at Mississippi College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, completing the PhD degree in 1967. After marriage to his high school sweetheart, Peggy Ballard, the couple served as US2 missionaries for two years in Ocean Springs, Maryland. From 1972 until 1978 he was Associate Pastor of Price Hill Baptist Church, an American Baptist congregation in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1979 he became pastor of the Lane Avenue Baptist Church of Columbus, Ohio, a Southern Baptist congregation of 850.

First contact occurred when three members of the committee who were attending the SEC Basketball Tournament in Lexington, Kentucky, in March of 1986 journeyed to Covington, Kentucky for a visit with Glenn and Peggy Turner. The others of us, including the retiring pastor, who were attending the tournament remained completely in the dark as to the identity of the person visited. Later, three members of the committee flew to Columbus, Ohio, to hear Dr. Turner preach in the Lane Avenue Baptist Church. Three other members visited the Turners' home and church at a later date. The committee decided it wanted to collect the "sensitive information" about the candidate. Extensive and intensive correspondence took place between the candidate and the committee by mail and by telephone. The Turners were inundated with information about Auburn, including an Auburn High School yearbook and real

estate ads. Committee members talked with Peggy Turner and daughters, 13-year-old Kathy and 9-year-old Laura, about their feelings regarding the possibility of moving to Auburn. The committee heard several audio-tapes of Dr. Turner's sermons. While interactions with other candidates were placed on "hold," the committee secured information from the Personnel and Stewardship Committees regarding compensation and moving arrangements should the relationship continue to ripen.

At this point in time, May of 1986, the chairman of the committee informed me that the committee was nearing a decision, and I was asked if I preferred the deliberations to be delayed until after our retirement at the end of the month. I readily assured her that they should proceed. Therefore, although the month was filled with considerable activity, arrangements were made for Dr. and Mrs. Turner to come for a two-day visit. The first day was filled with intense interactivity between the Turners and the committee, and by late evening the committee members felt certain that they had found the right person.

Consequently, arrangements were made for the Turners to have private time with other staff members the next day and an opportunity to talk with me. I saw Glenn Turner for the first time that morning and we had a most cordial talk, primarily about how each of us felt about the succession in the pastorate. I, along with the committee, felt certain that the church and the minister were being led to each other.

At the close of this two-day visit the committee informed the Turners that they wished to recommend Dr. Turner to the church and asked them to take whatever time they needed to make a response and, should the response be affirmative, that

they take an active role in determining how they would be presented to the church.

Within a few days Dr. Turner informed the committee of his willingness to accept the call of the church. With guidance from Dr. Turner, the following procedure was adopted. (1) The committee would present Dr. Turner's credentials and the impressions of the committee to the church at an information meeting. He would not be identified by name at that time. (2) The Turners would then visit Auburn the weekend following the SBC meeting in Atlanta, at which time Dr. Turner would preach and have conferences with deacons, Sunday School faculty, the church staff, and others. (3) Following the Sunday morning service on that weekend, the Committee would present its formal recommendation.

The committee communicated immediately with other candidates with which it had deep relationships, sharing with them these recent developments-omitting, of course, the name of the prospective pastor. They were advised that the committee would let them know in a timely manner the outcome of the business meeting.

Jan DeVenny, the youngest committee member, was selected to present the recommendation of the committee to the church on June 22, 1986. Following a chorus of "seconds," the church voted by ballot and the decision was an overwhelming "yes." The Turners were then escorted back to the congregation by committee member Kathy Powe, and received a standing welcome from an emotional congregation.

While other committees accepted the responsibility of the details involved in receiving the new pastor and family, the Search Committee quickly concluded its work. All prospective

candidates and significant others who had assisted in the search procedure were notified immediately, many by personal telephone call. The committee dispatched a letter to the Chairman of Deacons of the Lane Avenue Baptist Church in Columbus which would soon be losing Glenn Turner as its pastor. The records of the committee appropriate to be retained were placed in the church's archives.

Mary Virginia Moore's reflections on the concluding moments of the committee's life are recorded here:

In July, nine months following its first meeting, the committee of fifteen held its final meeting. The now closely-knit group was in high spirits. What the future would bring was unknown, but the committee was filled with optimism.

To the committee, it was no small accomplishment that fifteen quite different people had, again and again, reached unanimous decisions. On the decision of greatest significance, the members had been in the strongest agreement. Although no member could have found words to describe the phenomenon, each was convinced that the Holy Spirit had been at work in the committee to bring the search to fruition.

For a fleeting, sentimental moment there was discussion of the committee banding together to become a permanent support group for the new pastor.

This talk was quickly ended. The time had come for the

committee to be dissolved into the ongoing ebb and flow of the work of the church. Its specific charge was completed. Its work was done. Once again there was unanimity: not only was the work done, it was well done.

The prayers of the group that night were for the new pastor and his family, the retiring pastor and his family, the church staff, the many people who had aided the committee in its search, the candidates whose lives had profoundly touched the members of the committee, the future of Auburn First Baptist church—and, also, for the joy of working together on so great a task.

Chapter 16

Conclusion

The month of May 1986 was one of the most exciting in our lives. We approached our retirement with a deep sense of satisfaction as we looked back over the 42 years of our ministry. A committee headed by Dale Peterson had planned a series of activities for the final days which were “just right.”

One of these was our annual "Composer Day." This day had begun fifteen years earlier under the leadership of Bill Hornbuckle. Each year we would invite an outstanding composer of sacred music to come to the church, work with our choirs, and talk to us about how sacred music is produced and how it ought to be used. A year earlier I had asked the church to invite Dale to be our guest composer for 1986 in recognition of his achievements in composing sacred music and in honor of his thirteen-year tenure as our Minister of Music.

While a 28-year tenure is notable for a pastor, it is not all that unique, but 15 years (as of this writing in 1988) is quite unique for a Minister of Music. The contribution of the Petersons, Dale, Julia, Travis, and Tyler, to the church is now

well recognized in the church and in the Auburn community as well. The following is taken from an unpublished article prepared by Dr. Wayne Moore, professor of organ at Auburn University:

The Auburn First Baptist Church is one of the few churches which can boast of having a fine choir director who is also a successful choral composer.

Dale Peterson, who came to the Auburn church in 1973, has had approximately 100 compositions published, receives frequent commissions for new works, and is in demand as a conductor for choral festivals and workshops where his works are performed. For each of the last five years, Mr. Peterson has received a cash award from the Standard Awards Panel of the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers, in recognition of his compositions.

The Auburn church's long tradition of musical activity has grown and improved under Mr. Peterson's guidance, with the fine assistance of his wife, Julia, who serves as church organist. Several volunteers direct various children's choirs, leaving responsibility for the adult, student, youth, and handbell choirs to Dale. The Student Choir, a group of 60 Auburn University students who rehearse weekly and sing at the Sunday night service, is a unique and stimulating feature of the church's music program.

Dale's ability as an administrator is proven by the

smoothness and effectiveness of the church's music program, which involves an unusually large percentage of the church membership. His choirs, made up of enthusiastic, dedicated singers, supply choral music for two regular Sunday services, plus several musical programs spread through the year.

The excellence of the choirs has been recognized by invitations to appear at several state and division conventions of the American Choral Directors Association and at various state meetings of Southern Baptists. Dale also serves on the National Committee for Church Music of the American Choral Directors Association.

While the sale of many of Dale's anthems has been extremely good, perhaps the most successful, in terms of sales, has been "Sound the Trumpet," of which more than 100,000 copies have been sold since 1984. This festive work for choir, organ, trumpet, and congregation, with both words and music by Dale, also incorporates the familiar Easter hymn, "Christ The Lord Is Risen Today." Several of Dale's anthems have been featured in choir festivals such as a recent one in Mississippi, in which 1200 children sang one of his pieces. Others are being used in workshops in state and convention-wide assemblies.

Having shared the platform at Auburn First Baptist for 13 years with Dale and Julia, the Composer Day programs during our last month together were especially moving and meaningful.

Only a pastor knows the degree to which he is indebted to dedicated musicians and other staff personnel who share the ministry with him.

Retirement weekend began with a reception and dinner at the Auburn Union on Friday, May 25. Many friends came for the reception and the Union ballroom was filled to capacity for the dinner and program that followed. Representatives from our former churches at Hartford and Andalusia were among those in attendance. The program reflected the organizational and technical skills of Dale and his committee. Introductions, testimonials, a video feature, and presentations all flowed without a hitch and within the planned time limit! Testimonials were presented by Dr. Earl Potts, Executive Secretary of the State Mission Board and a friend since college days; Bill McLemore, pastor of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, who spoke for the Auburn Ministerial Association; Frances Stevenson, who spoke for the church membership; and Auburn Mayor Jan Dempsey, representing the community.

A video presentation produced by Ned Browning featured taped comments from Bill Hornbuckle, former Minister of Music; Dr. Harry Philpott, President Emeritus of Auburn University who was out of the country at the time; Dr. Jim Vickrey, President of the University of Montevallo; who was a regular attender at First Baptist during his student days at Auburn; Dot Mitcham for the church staff; and Dr. C. L. Isbell, oldest member of the congregation.

In a clever take-off of a TV game show, we were presented with furniture for the deck of our new house in Still Waters and a barbecue grill. Mike Evans, chairman of deacons, presented us with our first supplementary retirement check from

the Pastor's Retirement Gift Fund which had now reached approximately \$48,000—all raised without my involvement in any respect.

Our final service on Sunday, May 27, was a mountain top worship experience. The combined choirs sang two of our favorite anthems, "The Majesty and Glory of Your Name" and "My Eternal King" and the congregation sang our favorite hymns, "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," "Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life," and "He Leadeth Me." For the morning message I chose to give a paraphrase of Paul's letter to the Philippians. The apostle's love and appreciation for partnership with the Philippians best expressed my feelings for the Auburn First Baptist Church.

Early the next week we began moving to our new house in Still Waters. Retirement was now a fact and we found it a pleasant experience.

During the months of June and July of 1986, the church was blessed by the ministry of Dr. W. T. Edwards Jr. as Interim Pastor. Dr. W. Glenn Turner assumed the pastorate as of August 1 of that year and quickly endeared himself to the membership through preaching and pastoral ministry. He lost no time in getting acquainted with the membership via group meetings in his home. Peggy, Kathy, and Laura were soon very much at home in the Auburn community.

The first two years of Dr. Turner's pastorate have been characterized by significant progress in several areas. A number of young families have been added to the membership of the church and, as in the past, have moved into leadership positions. The 1987 budget was \$448,144, an all time high and contributions exceeded the budget by \$14,000, resulting in a

budget projected for 1988 of \$552,291.

Sunday School attendance for October of 1987 averaged 505 including classes at Wesley Terrace and Ease House. High attendance at the main church was 492.

At the beginning of the year three important committees were established: the committee to plan for the church bicentennial in 1988 with Billy Pickens as chairman; a staff development committee with Gerald Johnson as chairman; and a long range building committee with Ben F. Cooper as chairman.

For the final several years of my tenure, we had made several attempts to address the matter of improving our physical plant, but had failed to make significant progress in that direction. The Long Range Building Committee made a fresh start on this problem and ultimately recommended that the church employ the firm of Pearson, Tittle, and Humphries of Montgomery as architects to develop the necessary plans. At this writing the general plan has been developed and adopted by the church, and under the leadership of General Chairman Dennis Wilson, we have just completed the first phase of a "Together We Build" fund-raising plan-by far the most successful in the church's long history. The overall plan will remodel much of the existing educational space, provide a central vestibule that will tie the several units together, and erect a new educational unit in front of the present one facing East Glenn Avenue.

A happy development in the overall plan resulted from Chairman of Trustees Cecil Yarbrough's persistent attempt to secure the service station property at the corner of East Glenn and College Street. The church purchased a property in Lafayette which the owner desired and traded for the property adjacent to the church. The lot, hardly more than 100 square feet, had been

sold by the church during the financial pressure of the Great Depression for less than ten percent of the amount paid for the Lafayette property. Nevertheless, the price paid for the service station corner was well below the current real estate values in Auburn.

During the summer of 1987, the church was informed of another generous bequest from the will of former members. Blake and Mildred Enloe Yates left the church the sum of \$75,000 designated for the provision of literature for the educational program of the church.

The concern of a number of members of the church for social issues and Christian ethics resulted in changing the name of the Community Ministries Fellowship to the Christian Life and Ministries Fellowship.

The Staff Development Committee reviewed the structure of the present church staff and, as a result of eliminating the position of Associate for Village Chapel, recommended that the church establish a full-time staff position for ministry to college students. In establishing this position, the church was reminded that two other churches in the area have had such positions for several years and that neither of the two leadership staff at the B.S.U. Center is a member of Auburn First Baptist.

The committee to plan for the church's bicentennial recommended that special events be planned for the months of April and December 1988. This writer was commissioned to produce this history as a part of the observance. A series of special services was arranged for the third week in April with Dr. Dotson M. Nelson of Birmingham, Dr. Peter Rhea Jones of Atlanta, Dr. Carolyn Weatherford, Executive Director of the

W.M.U. of the Southern Baptist Convention, and Steve Tondera, President of the State Convention, as guest speakers. The week culminated with Homecoming Day on Sunday, April 24, with Dr. Walter Shurden, professor of Church History at Mercer University, as the preacher. At the evening service three of our members presented vignettes of persons prominent in the early history of the church. Wally Ridgeway portrayed the first pastor, Obadiah Echols; Jerry McRae represented Isaac Taylor Tichenor; and Billie Ruth Wood played the part of Miss Leland Cooper. The December portion of the observance focused on the church's role in missions through the years and for the future.

During the year another gracious gesture came our way. We were informed by The Baptist Foundation of Alabama that anonymous donors from Auburn had established a Trust Fund with the Foundation in our honor to the effect that, after 50 years or at any time prior to that point in time that the fund would reach \$1,000,000, the income from the trust would be used for student loans, capital improvements at Auburn First Baptist, and general operating expenses of the Foundation.

As a result of income derived from the Special Missions and Ministries Trust Fund, several members have been commissioned to do volunteer missions on both home and foreign fields. On September 28, 1988, six women from the church journeyed to Alaska to participate in training sessions for various aspects of W.M.U. work. They were Dartie Flynt, Frances Disseker, Barbara Stauffer, Laura McDonald, Brenda Yost, and Jay Deese. They traveled to the Anchorage-Palmer area where they were guests in three homes in the Palmer area. The team returned to Auburn to report a most cordial reception from the churches they visited and the Alaskan Baptists with whom they

worked.

In the fall of 1988, Veterinarians Dwayne Beckett, Paul Smith, and Lloyd Lauerman along with Bob Stevenson traveled to Sao Luis, Brazil, for two and a half weeks of work sponsored by the World Hunger Project. They provided professional advice to missionary Louise Donaldson and local Brazilian natives on the operation of a demonstration farm. The demonstration farm will be an extension educational unit to teach indigenous Brazilians to improve their family food supply, level of nutrition, and farm income.

The volunteer team was involved in services in five Brazilian Baptist churches and one preaching station. The team presented eight sermons, fourteen to sixteen testimonies and six solos or other musical presentations. On their return they reported that twenty-one professions of faith were made during the activities in which they were involved.

A second volunteer team composed of medical and dental personnel is scheduled to return to Sao Luis in August of 1989.

Statistics are useful as a means of measuring growth, but the growth of a church cannot be measured by this means alone. Figures may not lie, but neither do they tell the whole truth. The statistical history of Auburn First Baptist alone is not impressive, except in the area of church finance. In the past fifty years the income of the church from the contributions of the membership has grown from \$7580 to more than \$500,000 per year; or from \$14 per resident member per year in 1938 to \$550 per resident member per year in 1988.

If one considers the role of Auburn First Baptist in establishing or helping to establish the other three Baptist

churches in the city, the following figures are relevant:

Year	Number of Churches	Total Membership	Total Gifts	Gifts to Missions
1938	1	493	\$7,580	\$1,040
1948	1	1,471	58,993	4,255
1958	1	1,492	79,676	15,904
1968	2	3,105	202,746	32,128
1978	3	3,439	420,040	68,040
1988	4	3639	2,135,058	295,397

While the figures reveal a significant growth in the total Baptist witness in Auburn over the past 150 years, this writer would project a more subjective appraisal of Auburn First Baptist. He sees a small cadre of Baptist Christians, both town and gown, whose roots run deep in the soil of Auburn, who provide a kind of spiritual "way station" for thousands of men and women who have passed through this community on their way to destiny. They have been students, undergraduate and graduate, on their way to degrees and vocations; graduate assistants and instructors, on their way to professorships in other institutions; professors, on their way to department heads, deanships, and presidencies in other places.

Those who have passed through have been more than mere observers. They have been welcomed and integrated into the life and work of the church and have left a significant imprint on its character. Some have been from other denominational traditions who participated fully in the work of the church under its "watchcare provision" for temporary membership. Some have come from other countries and cultures providing an

international flavor to the constituency of the church. The sadness which accompanied their departure was always tempered by the coming of others to worship and work with us for a while. Thus, the influence of Auburn First Baptist reaches out from its house on East Glenn Avenue, in as many directions as there are, to as far as those directions take one in this world. Many are in what are called “full-time church-related vocations,” but the vast majority are now the laity in other churches all over the world. These are the engineers, the veterinarians, the school teachers, the accountants, the pharmacists, the secretaries, the homemakers, and scores of followers of other vocations who bear witness through their vocations as well as the local churches of their choice. What a reward must be that of those hardy pioneers who began this work 150 years ago and those who nurtured it through wars and depression in the early years!

One is reminded of the familiar poem entitled “The Bridge Builder” by Will Allen Dromgoole. It is about an old man who is found building a bridge across a chasm at the close of day. When asked why he is building it, he replies that, though he does not need it himself, some youth who follows will need it. The last line of the poem is, “Good friend, I am building the bridge for him.” This expresses the commitment of those who make up Auburn First Baptist—here to provide a spiritual family for those who will pass this way.

Occasionally through the years, a fellow pastor has inquired about how it is to be pastor of a “college church.” In response, I share a few reflections on my experience over my 28-year tenure in that position.

The preaching ministry is a unique challenge. One is conscious that the majority of the listening congregation is on a

pilgrimage in education—searching for more truth about themselves and the world in which they live. That search carries over into the realm of religion and results in a degree of eagerness to hear what God says through His word. At the same time the preacher is aware that in that listening congregation are those who are well-informed in their respective disciplines, so that he is aware of the necessity of being accurate when alluding to non-biblical material in his sermons. There is some truth in the observation that congregations make or break preachers by the way they listen. The Auburn First Baptist congregation deserves high marks on singing and listening, thus providing a great measure of inspiration for the preacher. I have said in all honesty that my favorite place in all the world is the platform of that church at 11:00 o'clock on Sunday morning.

Another aspect of the pastoral ministry is pastoral care—relating to people in their experiences of need and crisis. Every pastor knows the feeling of helplessness that attends his efforts to function in this area, and that ultimately he is simply a symbol of the care of the Heavenly Father and the church as a whole. In moving about in the congregation of Auburn First Baptist through the years, I was often impressed by the degree of spiritual maturity with which people faced and coped with difficult circumstances. The confidentiality of these relationships forbids the recitation of specifics, but time and again in times of serious illness, death, and other kinds of trauma, I encountered that high degree of spiritual maturity in this ministry. Through the years people have been gracious in their comments to me about funerals I have conducted. This characteristic of unusual spiritual maturity on the part of those experiencing loss probably had more to do with what people perceived in those services than

my contribution. It is a quality that makes the pastoral care ministry “easier” than it would be otherwise.

There are more than the usual number of “extra-church” functions in a university community that call for the participation of a minister. While these are sometimes regarded as chores, I saw them as an opportunity of service and responded to invitations whenever possible. They included prayers at graduations, commissionings, dedications of buildings, and, in the early years, invocations prior to football games (in later years, these were led by student athletes). Several of the buildings and other facilities at which I officiated were in honor of our church members. Among these were the gardens at Funchess Hall in honor of Professor L. M. Ware, the Ralph Brown Draughon Library in honor of Dr. Draughon, and the Katherine Cooper Cater Hall in honor of Dean Cater.

The prayers at graduation and commissioning exercises always prompted me to think of the investment which parents and other teachers had made in the lives of the graduates, and of the tremendous challenge of the future for them.

The inauguration ceremony for President Harry M. Philpott was an especially gratifying experience. As we lined up for the processional by twos, my partner and I were to walk immediately in front of the president, who was to walk by himself. In the small talk, I observed that he had no partner. His reply, made in a friendly response, was profound: “There are some times in life when one must walk alone.”

On two occasions I was called upon by the Athletic Department to conduct memorial services in the wake of the tragic deaths of two persons prominent in that phase of university life. The first was the death of Paul Lambert, the newly

named head basketball coach at the university, who died in a motel fire while on a recruiting mission in Columbus, Georgia. The other was for Greg Pratt, the starting fullback on the Auburn football team, who collapsed and died at the close of the first day of fall practice in 1983. In both cases the services were held in the University Chapel simultaneously with funeral services in the respective hometowns of these men. Both were situations in which the Auburn community wanted desperately to reach out to the affected families. The services were one way in which this was attempted.

The presence of several hundred international students at Auburn University adds a dimension to the community that is extraordinary. Reference has already been made to the church's attempt to reach out to these friends who have come to live in a strange culture for a while. Relationships that Jeanette and I have had with some of these international students are among the choicest treasures of our Auburn years.

In the early sixties a young Chinese couple came to my office to inquire about being married in the church. They did not know me, nor I them, and I was sensitive to a shyness on both their parts that bordered on fear. She was from Taiwan, but had been separated since childhood from many of her siblings who remained in mainland China. He was from Hong Kong. I thought of how desperately they must have wanted their families with them at this time. With the help of some of our members who knew them at the university, we arranged a wedding with surrogate parents for each. It was a beautiful and happy occasion. Word got around and in the ensuing years eighteen other Chinese couples were married in the Auburn First Baptist Church. In each of these weddings, I was impressed with the

seriousness with which the couple approached the service and the relationship that was to follow. Though many were of other religions, they wanted to be married in a religious setting and expressed deep appreciation for the Christian view of marriage which the services reflected.

A young Lebanese widow whose husband was accidentally killed after completing his PhD at Auburn chose to come back to the community for the rearing of her two sons. She became a close friend and confidant as she worked through her grief experience.

An Iranian woman who was about to return home for a while with her aged mother requested that we come by for a visit and prayer for them on their journey.

Sometimes there are situations where you can only “fly by the seat of your pants.” Such was the case when an Indian student was found dead of a heart attack. His friends came to me for advice about his burial. He was a Hindu who belonged to a small sect that did not believe in cremation. The friends had contacted his parents who were too poor to have his remains sent home for burial, so they were faced with the problem of arranging for burial in Auburn. Since a funeral with a burial was entirely strange to them, they were at a loss as to how to proceed.

The result was a graveside service at Memorial Park Cemetery where one of the friends read passages from their sacred writings and I read from the Old and New Testaments. We prayed for his family and for all of us to be aware of the oneness of the human family at the hour of death, and of our complete dependence upon the God of all human beings for our ultimate destiny. It was an emotional moment for me realizing that the words of committal that I spoke consigned the remains

of this man to the soil of a strange land, thousands of miles away and forever separated from his own land and people.

There were many opportunities to share our Christian faith with Internationals at Thanksgiving and Christmas, and in the weekly sessions at the church led by our W.M.U. ladies. Occasionally, we had the privilege of seeing them come to Christ and leading them in Christian baptism. I recall baptizing four young men following a revival sponsored by the Chinese Bible Study group which met in the church each Friday evening. Another was baptized following his commitment made at our Village Chapel branch.

The retirement years and attempting to record the history of this 150-year-old church have heightened an already deep appreciation for this opportunity of ministry. A sense of mystery continues to invade my reflections as to how one with only a baccalaureate degree could have been called to this ministry in the first place, and even more mysterious is the realization that he remained so long.

Trusting that the Providence that seeks to work in the affairs of the churches at least had something to do with it, suffice it to say that words cannot express my gratitude for the experience of coming to this spiritual “way station” and remaining for a while. With Jacob of old at Bethel, I am convinced that “surely the Lord is in this place.”

Epilogue

The Sixteenth Decade

The Auburn First Baptist Church began its 151st year in mid-1988 led by a capable staff consisting of Glenn Turner, Pastor, Dale Peterson, Minister of Music, Barbara Stauffer, Minister of Education, Elaine Ridgway, part-time Minister to Youth, and Susan Shelton as Minister to Preschool Children and Director of the Child Development Center. The ministerial staff was supported by secretaries Dot Mitcham, Peggy Johnson, and Judi Brown. Julia Peterson served as organist and Grady Hutchinson as custodian. Several changes were to take place in the ensuing years.

Barbara Stauffer resigned effective October 30, 1989, to enter a training program for Hospital Chaplaincy. After serving three years, Elaine Ridgway resigned, effective at the end of 1989. Barbara Stauffer was honored at the Sunday School banquet on October 19 for her effective leadership of the educational ministry. On October 22, a reception was held in appreciation of the work of Elaine Ridgway with the youth of the church.

On February 25, 1990, H. K. Kingcade was called to the

full time position of Minister to Students. The search committee recommending the call was composed of Camilla Lowry, Chair, Gene Rochester, Lyle Johnson, Julia Peterson, Mike Brown, Lisette Daniel, Dale Peterson, Becky French, Glenn Turner, Mark Morgan, and Shirley Brown.

Susan Shelton resigned as Director of the Child Development Center, effective December 31, 1990. A search committee to find a replacement was established composed of Cindy Cleveland, Gerald Johnson, Mary Lynn Porter, Frances Stevenson, Charlotte Sutton, Glenn Turner and Diane Wilson.

As of January 1, 1991, Tim Graus was called to the position of part-time Youth Director to assist H. K. Kingkade in the ministry to local youth and college students.

In April of 1992 the Personnel Committee with the concurrence of the Music Committee and the Deacons recommended that Dale Peterson be named Composer in Residence. The church unanimously adopted this recommendation in appreciation of Mr. Peterson's nineteen years of faithful leadership of the church's music ministry, and in recognition of his contributions to the field of church music in his many compositions.

In December of 1992 the church voted to license Jeffrey C. French to the gospel ministry. The son of John and Becky French, Jeff had grown up in the church and was presently serving as Youth Minister at the High Hope Baptist Church in the western section of Auburn.

West Auburn Baptist Church

In 1986, the congregation at Village Chapel, the church's branch ministry in west Auburn, had voted to be constituted into a

church (see p. 164). The group merged with another congregation in that area to become the West Auburn Baptist Church and expressed an interest in purchasing the Village Chapel property. The trustees had the property appraised at \$170,000 and recommended that the church offer it to the new congregation at 10% less than the appraisal. The new congregation purchased the property for \$153,000 with \$70,000 of the amount provided by the transfer of the Lottie Moon Trust fund by the direction of the original donors of this fund, Hubert and Grace Harris (see p. 175).

Church Buildings, Expansion and Rededication

Over its long history, Auburn First Baptist Church had struggled to provide adequate space for worship and educational activities. This was especially true after the turn of the century as the community and the college experienced steady growth. In the 1920s, the church renovated and added to a building built in 1892. In 1928-29, the present auditorium was built with financial aid from the Alabama Baptist State Convention. This building was enlarged in another effort in 1948-49. In 1954, the first educational unit was added to the east and rear of the auditorium. In 1973, that space was doubled with the addition of another education unit. The purchase of the building now known as the Activities Building added still more educational space. By 1986, the auditorium, 58 years old and in need of renovation, and the lack of cohesion in the educational space prompted the church to launch the most extensive building program in its history.

A long range Building Committee was established with Dr. Ben F. Cooper as Chair. This committee recommended the

church employ the architectural firm of Pearson, Tittle, and Humphries of Montgomery to develop plans for renovating and enlarging the church plant. Preliminary estimates of cost were in the two million dollar range. To finance the project, the church launched a “Together We Build” campaign with Dennis Wilson as Chair.

On May 20, 1990 the Long Range Building Committee recommended that the church accept the low bid of \$2,046,477 from the Bailey-Harris Construction Company of Auburn. The TWB campaign had succeeded in raising one million dollars in cash and pledges over a three year period. The trustees were authorized to arrange long range financing for \$1,100,000. As it turned out the loan was made with AuburnBank for \$900,000.

The work to be done included the complete renovation of the auditorium including wiring, plumbing, and a heating and air conditioning system; a new lobby and vestibule connecting the auditorium and educational buildings; an elevator; paving and fencing east and west parking lots and children’s play yard, and some renovation to the educational buildings.

During the renovation the church held worship services in the Activities Building at 8:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m., and 7:00 p.m. On October 6, 1991, the church returned to the newly-renovated auditorium.

Included in the service of rededication was the following statement which was featured in the dedication of the first brick structure which was held on Sunday, April 14, 1929:

“This house which we have been permitted to build through the favor of God, we dedicate to the glory of His name and to the services of humanity. Put thy name, O

Lord, in this place. Let thine eyes be opened toward it and harken unto the supplication of thy people when they pray in this place and hear thee in heaven, and when thou hearest, forgive.”

Church Vision and Mission

In 1988, the church established a Long Range Planning Committee to study the church’s programs and activities and bring recommendations from time to time. The committee was composed of Sylvia Gossett, Chair, Bill Alford, Ed Bagwell, Mary Jim Coleman, Wayne Flynt, Cheryl Hulse, Gerald Johnson, Don Minyard, Mary Virginia Moore, David Sayers, Beth Smith, Betty Smith, Philip Tyler, and Dennis Wilson.

The committee recommended that the church adopt the following mission statement: “Believing that the spirit of God is alive in each of us and in the world, we affirm that the mission of Auburn First Baptist Church is to glorify God as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of life; to call all people to accept Christ as Savior and Lord; and to enable all people to be more like Jesus.”

Pastoral Leadership and Church Staff

In late August of 1991 the congregation was stunned by the sudden resignation of Glenn Turner. In making his oral resignation from the pulpit, Dr. Turner indicated both mental and physical fatigue as the reason for the resignation which took effect immediately as of August 31, 1991. In his message Dr. Turner stated, “The one word which comes to mind is *exhaustion*. It is not the sort of sweet tiredness which comes after long and productive work and which magically dissipates after a

time of rest and relaxation. It is instead an exhaustion which is so deep as to leave me immobilized.... Furthermore, I not only think I am tired. I believe our church is tired. We have been through much together. This church is not at fault. This is the best church I know anything about. It has the best staff I know anything about. I am not leaving here to go to another church. That should tell you that in my opinion the grass is nowhere greener than here.”

The church unanimously adopted a resolution of appreciation for Dr. Turner’s leadership through the recently completed building program as well as other aspects of his ministry. The church voted to continue his full compensation of salary and benefits for the next six months.

In the months following Dr. Turner’s resignation various ministers supplied the pulpit until January 1, 1992, when William J. Leonard of the Samford University faculty was secured as Interim Pastor. Dr. Leonard served in that capacity for the full year of 1992.

The Committee to search for a new pastor was composed of Sylvia Gossett, Chair, William L. Alford, Helen Brown, Laura Bussell, Bill Campbell, Mary Ann Dell, Camilla Lowry, Bob Rogow, and Cecil Yarbrough.

At the September 19 business meeting Charlotte Sutton, for the committee to recommend a Director of the Child Development Center, submitted the name of Micki Jones as Minister to Preschool Children. Miss Jones had previously served in a similar position with the University Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

On October 25, 1992, at the request of the Pastor Search Committee, Dr. Howard W. Roberts was the pulpit guest for the

worship service. Following the service, Sylvia Gossett, Chair of the committee, presented the recommendation that Dr. Roberts be called as pastor. The call was unanimous with Dr. Roberts to begin his ministry on January 10, 1993.

The Roberts family consisted of wife, Peggy, daughters, Melanie and Danita, and son Brandon. The installation service was scheduled for Sunday, February 14, with a reception to follow.

Early in his tenure, Dr. Roberts projected an emphasis on the theme “First Loves Auburn.” The theme was employed in four services in October 1993, as follows:

1. The business and professional community
2. The university faculty, staff and students
3. The public and private schools for children and young people
4. Senior adults.

On the pastor’s recommendation the church voted to establish the staff position of Minister of Christian Formation, designed to lead the membership in religious education and ministry. A search committee was established composed of Dennis Wilson, Chair, Leigh Ann Armstrong, Wes Glisson, Mary Virginia Moore, Travis Peterson and Robert Taylor. In February of 1994 on recommendation of this committee, Alica Kirkpatrick Bremer was called to the position. She is a graduate of Ouachita College in Arkansas and the Southern Baptist Seminary. She came from the position of Minister of Education at the St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. Her family consists of husband Eric and sons, Kirk, age 5 and Ky, age 3.

After 20 years of excellent service, Julia Peterson resigned as organist in October 1993. Sylvia Gossett was appointed as her replacement and assumed the duties of organist in November 1993.

H. K. Kingcade resigned as Minister to Students effective November 15, 1993. On recommendation of a search committee chaired by Ben Polidoro, Mark Allen Johnston was called as Minister to Students and began his ministry in mid-July of 1994. At the June business meeting in 1994, the church accepted the resignation of Micki Jones as Director of the Child Development Center. Belinda Paul was called to that position and began her ministry November 1, 1994. As of January 1, 1995, Sherri Jenkins was called as Minister to Children on recommendation of a search committee chaired by Teresa Johnston.

Mid-week Service

For many years the church had held its mid-week service on Thursday instead of the traditional Wednesday. This arrangement was the result of an informal agreement between the churches and campus organizations that Wednesdays would be reserved for meetings of the campus organizations and Thursdays reserved for church meetings. As campus organizations multiplied over time the agreement was no longer useful. Early in 1995, some members introduced the idea that the church return to the more traditional Wednesday for its mid-week services. After several weeks of study and discussion, a vote was taken on April 2, 1995. The vote was 116 to keep the meeting on Thursday with 31 voting to return to Wednesday.

Pledge Cards and Mission Contributions

As a result of what is now referred to as the Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and the emergence in 1990 of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF), members of the church began asking how they might direct the portion of their contributions which went to world mission causes to the CBF. A committee chaired by John French and Claude Gossett reported that the pledge cards for 1995 revealed that 283 members wanted to support the traditional Cooperative Program budget of the SBC; that 62 wished to support the Alabama Baptist State convention and the CBF; and 22 wished their contributions to go to CBF only. The report recommended that henceforth the pledge cards would provide three options for members:

1. The State Convention and SBC
2. The State Convention and CBF
3. CBF only.

Where no choice was indicated on a pledge card the contribution would go to the State Convention and the SBC.

In November of 1992, the church's Lottie Moon offering goal was \$13,000 and speakers included Judy Colley of Bangladesh, Louise Donaldson of Brazil and Cindy Hoover of Bolivia.

Community Ladies Bible Study

In 1985 an interdenominational Bible study of ladies known as the Community Ladies Bible Study (CLBS) began meeting at AFBC. The group used a curriculum guide known as PRECEPT

which required that the teachers be certified. An administrative problem developed as a result of this requirement when the two certified teachers moved their membership to other churches. The group requested and received a line item in the church budget to assist with materials and child care. Due to financial constraints this line item was omitted from the 1993 budget, but was reinstated in 1994. A request came from the CLBS that it be an integral part the educational ministry of the church.

At the October business meeting, a committee composed of Camilla Lowry, Alica Kirkpatrick-Bremer, Cindy Golden, Talitha Putnam, Kayron Campbell and Gerald Johnson, Chair, presented its final report with five recommendations:

1. The ministry group will be a Ministry Group of AFBC's Woman's Missionary Union (WMU),
2. The WMU Council, the Ministry Group, and the Bible Study group voluntarily agree to work toward the election of teachers to serve as lead Bible Study teachers,
3. The Bible Study group will establish communication with the missions ministry structure of the church through the WMU Council,
4. AFBC will provide assistance and administrative support services for child care, literature ordering, use of facilities, and publication of announcements,
5. The CLBS will be included in the AFBC-WMU operative budget for \$2500.

After a lengthy discussion the vote was taken by ballot with 70 voting for and 12 voting against.

Music Ministry

During this decade, the music ministry under the direction of Dale Peterson continued to provide the church with meaningful worship experiences. Guest conductors for the annual “Composer Day” included Craig Courtney, Anna Laura Page, Allen Pote, Lloyd Larson, Joseph Martin, John Carter, and Mary Kay Beall.

At Easter, 1992, the choirs of Auburn First Baptist and First United Methodist Church combined for a presentation of Handel’s *Messiah*.

In May of 1993, which was Dale Peterson’s 20th anniversary as Minister of Music, there was a reunion of former members of the College Choir. Approximately 100 former members of the choir joined in this occasion.

In January of 1995, the choir from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary presented a concert and later that year there was a dedication service for the new hymnal, *The Worshiping Church*, with editor and renowned organist, Donald Hustad, as guest.

Leaders, Speakers, and Pulpit Guests

Several outstanding Baptist leaders were featured in various emphases of the church during this period. Among them were Phil Strickland, head of the Christian Life Commission of Texas, who led a workshop on Christian Life and Ministries; Esther Burroughs who was featured during the week of prayer for Home Missions; Dale and Anne Beigle, former members, now

missionaries to Botswana, spoke during the week of prayer for Foreign Missions; Glen Hinson, professor at Southern Seminary led a weekend Bible Study; Dr. Robert Parham, head of the Baptist Center for Ethics, addressed the problem of world hunger; and Paul Simmons of the Southern Seminary Faculty led a series of discussions on Tragedy and Divine Providence.

Pulpit guests during this time included Ralph Langley, Bill O'Brien, Director of Global Ministries at Samford University, Robert Nash of the Judson College faculty, Fisher Humphreys, Professor at Beeson Divinity School, Molly Marshall of the Southern Seminary faculty, Joe Lewis, Associate Provost at Samford University, Stan Hasty of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs who led four sessions on "Our Baptist Identity," Alan and Virginia Neely, professor of Missiology at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond, and John and Rowanda Deal, CBF missionaries in Europe.

Missions

The church's commitment to participation in missions was demonstrated during this decade by several "hands-on" missionary activities. An annual Thanksgiving Dinner for International Students was inaugurated under the leadership of Ruth Alford. Mary Jo Randall, retired missionary to Japan, led in establishing a weekly meeting offering English as a second language and other insights into American culture. In addition, she established a Sunday School class for International Students.

In 1988, Louise Donaldson, missionary to Brazil, sent a request to the Foreign Mission Board for a team that would assist in activities related to agriculture. The request ultimately came to the desk of Dr. Paul Smith, a professor at Auburn's School of

Veterinary Medicine. He, along with J. R. Stevenson, organized a team to respond to this request. As of this writing (June of 2008) a team has gone to Brazil every year with only one exception. These teams led by J. R. Stevenson featured medical and dental personnel, as well as construction crews. Each team led Vacation Bible School activities for children and evangelistic services at night.

Along the same line a larger mission team from area churches led by Dr. Dwayne Beckett, another professor in the School of Veterinary Medicine, has gone to Honduras for 12 consecutive years providing assistance in the same areas, including treatment of animals.

In 1990, a mission team, led by Dr. Wayne Flynt and Dr. Lloyd Lauerman, traveled to Oviedo, Spain for work directed by missionary Dennis Hale. There were ten members of this team, all members of Auburn First Baptist Church.

As usual, students in the Baptist Student Union (BSU) participated in summer missions. Among those who served in 1990 were Ginny Brown in New York, Lizette Daniel in Africa, Tim Graus at Shocco Springs, and Katie Graves at Ridgecrest.

In September of 1992, a team led by H. K. Kingkade traveled to the University Church in Fairbanks, Alaska.

A little closer home, but no less significant, was what we have come to know as the Jail Ministry. Begun as an adjunct of the WMU, it has been led from the beginning by Helen Brown. This ministry provides a weekly devotional time for female prisoners, and a special effort at Christmas which provides a box of practical gifts for all prisoners in the Lee County Correctional Institute.

Division and Conflict

At the conclusion of the business meeting on February 4, 1996, a member of the church asked for the floor and made a strong statement of objection to an action on the part of the pastor. The pastor had responded to a request to make a statement opposing prayer in public schools before a public forum in Montgomery. As a result an area television station reported the statement on its newscast, leaving the impression with some viewers that this was the official position of the church. The member who spoke took issue with the fact that while the pastor had every right to his opinion and the right to express it in public forum, that the attendant publicity should not have been allowed.

At the next business meeting on March 3, 1996, another member asked for the floor and made a very strong statement applauding the pastor, the staff, and the church.

Subsequent events would reveal that there were members who were in agreement with each of these speakers and that these divergent opinions regarding pastoral leadership would plague the church for the next two years. Ultimately this growing dissatisfaction led to an *Ad Hoc* meeting of some concerned members early in 1997. The consensus of the meeting was that the church needed a change in pastoral leadership. This message was communicated to the pastor by representatives of the *Ad Hoc* meeting, and within a few days was known throughout the congregation and members quickly rallied to the pastor's defense and a serious division within the congregation was the result.

Efforts to resolve the problem were set in motion almost immediately. In their March 1997 meeting, the Deacons adopted a threefold procedure as follows:

1. A letter would be sent to all members acknowledging a relational problem.
2. Family Care groups would meet for open discussion with the Pastor.
3. The possibility of securing outside help to assist the church in working through the problems with a positive outcome would be conducted.

At the April business meeting a recommendation was brought to the church to employ George Bullard of Columbia, S.C. as a Conflict Management Consultant to assist the church in resolving its relational problems. By a vote of 99 to 18 the recommendation was adopted.

An Expanded Steering Committee of the church was established to work with Mr. Bullard. A two day retreat was held in May of 1997 which resulted in the following recommendations which were presented by Drew Smith, Chair of the Expanded Steering Committee:

1. The Expanded Steering Committee would lead the church in an effort to find healing and reconciliation.
2. The church membership would be divided into groups of three (Share a Prayer Triplets) for a period of 100 days.
3. The Pastor would be granted a sabbatical leave (September-December, 1997).

4. The members of the Expanded Search Committee (ESC) who had been members of the Search Committee would recommend whether or not to recall Howard Roberts as pastor.

At a called business meeting on August 28, 1997, the ESC reported that John Jeffers and Dale Peterson would arrange for pulpit supply while Dr. Roberts was on sabbatical leave. In response to a question as to persons who would be invited to preach in the interim, Dale Peterson gave the following names: Paul Shoffeit, Delanno O'Brien head of SBC WMU, Tom Corts, President of Samford University, Randall Lolley, retired President of Southeastern Seminary, and Ken Corr, former staff member now pastor of FBC Memphis, Tennessee.

On Sunday, November 16, 1997, the above mentioned committee reported to the church as follows (The report was based on a mutual agreement between Dr. Roberts and Mr. Bullard on behalf of the committee):

Recognizing that apparent progress has not been made in a recommitment of the call as pastor, Howard Roberts is willing to relinquish the Church Office of Pastor on June 30, 1998, contingent upon church approval of the arrangement outlined below.

Howard Roberts will return from his sabbatical January 1, 1998, and carry out the duties of the Church Office of Pastor January 1, 1998 through June 30, 1998 at which time he will discontinue serving in the role of Pastor. As severance, Auburn First Baptist Church will pay to

Howard Roberts his full salary and benefits for the period of July 1, 1998, through December 31, 1998.

If Howard Roberts obtains a comparable place of ministry service where he assumes his duties prior to June 30, 1998, then he will indicate an earlier relinquishing of his duties to the church.

Auburn First Baptist Church will have no financial obligations to Howard Roberts beyond December 31, 1998.

The vote on these recommendations was 212 Yes, 26 No, one abstention and 2 unmarked ballots.

In a letter dated January 3, 1998, addressed to the Music Committee, Sylvia Gossett tendered her resignation as church organist to be effective on the day of the final service of Dr. Roberts.

As it turned out, Dr. Roberts' tenure would end on April 30, 1998 when he accepted a call to another church.

The Future

As Auburn First Baptist Church approached the 17th decade the church faced some serious challenges. Among them were the selection of an "intentional interim" pastor, establishment of a pastor search committee, and the search for healing after two years of struggling with issues inherent to an autonomous church.

Part III



The Pastor's Words

Commencement⁴

Proud parents, grandparents, friends and sweethearts waited for the impressive ceremonies to begin. Rows of meticulously clad young men, four years of ROTC behind them, listened for their cues to walk to the platform, salute, shake hands, and receive their coveted commissions. These commissions are recognitions of achievement, but more, they are a charge to serve.

The crowning moment of graduation comes when the senior reaches forth to receive his or her diploma. This is a commission too. It declares that knowledge has been gained which fits the recipient to perform adequately in a given field. In short, it says “go to work.”

Jesus commissioned his followers. He commissions those who choose to follow Him today. Our credentials—a personal faith in Him which transforms our lives. Our task—to tell others of His transforming love and power. Our field—the world. “Go Ye.”

Christlikeness⁴

The wrapping around the new fishing lure said: “When this minnow is cast into the water and retrieved at the proper speed, it is guaranteed to look and behave exactly like a live minnow.” The effectiveness of a fishing lure depends upon its ability to duplicate the real thing.

When Jesus sent out his disciples, he instructed them to go into the cities and villages and do exactly what they had seen him do—“preach, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils.”

After his death, the religious leaders of Jerusalem “marveled” at the disciples and “took knowledge of them, that

they had been with Jesus.”

Our effectiveness in fishing for men will depend in large measure on how accurately our daily lives reflect Jesus. The lure for men-fishing is the Christlike life. If we aren't getting results, we had better check on the behavior of the lure. It may be entangled with the tiny weeds of sin or tarnished with the rust of indifference. “Ye are my witnesses,” said Jesus.

“He who has ears...”⁴

An expectant hush prevailed throughout the great sanctuary as the conductor stood to signal the choir to sing. Presently the harmony of half a hundred voices fell upon the ears of the congregation-but some didn't hear.

In a remote corner of the auditorium a woman stood between the choir and a small group of "listeners." She made movements with her hands and fingers conveying the message of the song. They were receiving the message without hearing the music. Music without sound! Amazing!

Jesus was concerned about people with healthy ears, but who still couldn't hear. Some, like the packed soil of the wayside, simply refused to hear until they couldn't. Some, like the shallow soil over a rock ledge, heard his words but not his message. Some, like soil occupied by thorns, were too busy listening to trash to hear the word of life.

It is ironic that a deaf person can get the message of a song and never hear a note, while others hear the music but never get the message. How fortunate is the person with good ears on either side of his head and also in his soul. He hears both the music and the message. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Thoughtfulness⁴

The roses on the desk were a lovely surprise; their blush of pink splashed color against the usually drab walls. Someone had thought to place them there, and that thoughtfulness was as nice as the flowers.

Thoughtfulness is a lovely virtue. Those who cultivate it add a great deal to the world—but not without a blessing in return. The word of appreciation—the smile of contentment... these things money cannot buy.

Man is thoughtful and benevolent only because he is made in the image of God. We think of others because we have first been the objects of God's thoughtfulness. The entrance of Jesus into the world, his death and resurrection, and his living presence, are like the blush of beautiful roses and the caress of helping hands. He came because God thought of us in our time of need.

The Cross⁴

During World War II, it was announced that a certain city would undergo a practice blackout on a given night. It fell my lot to be returning home from work on a city bus when the signal for the blackout sounded. The driver pulled to the curb and we watched the lights of the city go out; first, the neons, then the street lamps, finally the traffic signals. For a moment everything was dark and strangely silent.

Then I noticed a reflection in the store window to my right which startled me at first because it was the reflection of a lighted cross towering in the sky. I looked up Sixth Avenue and there it was shining brilliantly atop the Church of the Advent. Someone had overlooked one switch and a city that would otherwise have been in total darkness looked up to a cross in the

sky.

Even so must a world in darkness look to the cross for its salvation—so must individuals, including you and me, look to the cross of Jesus for life abundant and eternal.

Two Fishermen

The big barber shop calendar displayed two contrasting fishermen. The first was modern in every sense of the word, but his expensive wicker creel was empty. The other was just as primitive as the first was modern. He was a boy about 12 years of age, in a tattered shirt and overalls, straw hat, and feet adorned with only a bandage around one big toe. His pole had been recently cut from a nearby bush, his line a piece of string on the end of which was a bent pin. A tobacco can protruded from the pocket of his overalls, revealing an earthworm dangling over its side. This primitive fisherman had a nice string of trout to show for his day's work.

In fishing for men we sometimes get encumbered with too much fancy equipment. There are some basic tools that one must always use in winning people to Christ. They are prayer, which might be compared with the pole that reaches out where the fish are; the Bible, which might be compared to the line that plumbs the depths of the stream to reach the fish; and the hook, which may be compared to the fisherman's personal experience that ultimately makes the catch.

Vision

The red-tipped white cane tapping along the sidewalk startled me. First, because the man behind it was so young; second, it seemed not to belong in its surroundings, a bustling university

campus. Perhaps—through no fault of his own—he walked in darkness where light presumes to prevail.

Or did he? He may have been seeing more than some of his contemporaries—dashing about in brightly colored sports cars; absorbed almost completely in the “plush” of modern university social life; so taken by the scientific approach to life that nothing is so that isn’t “seen” with physical eyes; so “pragmatic” as to be spiritually “astigmatic.”

It takes more than 20-20 vision to see and sometimes a man has to lose his sight to see. Saul of Tarsus did. Jesus talked about those who “having eyes see not.” How fraught with light is the modern university community—its books, laboratories, and highly trained teachers. If the frills occupy our vision, we are no better off than the boy following the constantly tapping cane—maybe not as well off.

Reflections on the Death of President Kennedy

Most of us have never experienced an emotional reaction like that which came with the news of President Kennedy’s death. We recall, quite vividly, our reaction to President Roosevelt’s death in 1945; there was the keen sense of loss, but also a feeling that he had lived his life and accomplished his purpose. Mr. Kennedy was comparatively young, and astute observers have said that he had not yet reached his zenith as a statesman and leader. But the fact that he was assassinated is the thing that shocks and grieves us most; in time of peace he died of an act of violence.

Three men are dead, a fourth recuperating from wounds in a hospital, and a fifth is charged with murder. What of the families that are left? What will be the emotional scars left upon the children of these ruptured families? What other emotional

currents have been set in motion by this chain of events that will go on to do harm that will not be known via the national news media? These questions point up the truth that we as members of the human family are very closely linked in today's world. Never have men needed to know how to get along with others and how to control their feelings as they do today. Let us at least be willing to learn from the tragic events of history.

One thing more, aren't we thankful to live under a system of government that goes on though shocked by the sudden loss of its chief executive. One person remarked that the government didn't miss a single heartbeat. In most countries of the world such a loss would have been a signal for a national upheaval and perhaps a revolution. Nothing has ever united the American people like tragedy. A man is dead, but let us pray that his death was not in vain, but that it may be used of God to make us better people, and to unite our nation as the leader of the free world.

Until the Tide Changes

It was an icy winter morning when we put our boat into the reedy waters of northwest Florida and set out to find the speckled trout. We trolled until the sun was well up into the sky but not a sign of fish had interrupted the steady drone of the motor. We drifted by an old salt idling about a rickety old pier, and when we shook our heads in response to his inquiry, he volunteered this bit of piscatorial wisdom: "Tide's out—won't catch anything until she changes."

Jesus called men to be fishers of men. They stayed with him during his ministry but forsook him in the apparent defeat of the crucifixion. They perked up considerably when he

presented himself to them after the resurrection, but the tide didn't really change until Pentecost. Then in a mighty surge of power they became possessed of His Spirit and went out to witness with great effectiveness to their world.

Fishing for men is so like fishing for fish. We aren't catching many today. The tide is out—the tide of our desire and compassion and disciplined effort. The tide must change before the results change. Compassion must replace indifference and discreet organizational effort must replace haphazardness. “He that goes forth weeping bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.” (*Psalms* 126:6)

Of Men and Machines

The spray of red carnations atop the gray steel casket rippled in the gentle spring breeze as the moist earth prepared to receive its silent tenant. The man had been a civil engineer—a builder of roads. Presently, the subdued tones of the committal service were lost in the noisy chattering of a giant road machine grading nearby. The man was dead, but the machine he had once directed worked on, the product of his mind and will.

A few minutes before, more than a thousand miles away, another man had been fished out of the sea and set down upon the deck of a destroyer. His magnificent accomplishment of orbiting the earth three times in less than five hours was a masterpiece of engineering precision. His space capsule, his rocket, and an innumerable number of other man-made machines had provided him with “the ride of a lifetime.”

Machines—mute masses of metal and plastic, but for the minds of men that manufacture, motivate, and man them. The

men will sicken and die for they are creatures who think and breathe and walk where they choose. The machines don't die, but neither do they live unless men think and press buttons that tell them what to do. They lie silent or roar out of control to wreak havoc with all that falls in their path.

What a blessing are machines in the hands of good men —what a curse if they are ill-guided. What a trust God has placed in man to give him knowledge to make and use machines. “What is man that thou art mindful of him? Thou has made him but a little lower than the angels!”

Ridgecrest

The upstairs porch of Rogers Retreat overhangs beautiful Lake Ridgecrest in “The Land of the Sky.” It was a welcome hideaway to a weary traveler and sleep came soon in spite of the concert being rendered by a choir of bullfrogs down below.

Morning revealed the typical mountain fog but it was soon dispelled by the warm June sun that turned the lake into a glistening sheet of emerald. Across the way a carpenter's hammer echoed and re-echoed against the surrounding peaks as it repaired a pier jutting out into the water.

A stone's throw away a score of Boys' Camp staffers lingered after breakfast for a songfest in preparation for the approaching session of camp. Across the valley the brilliant orange of structural steel towered above the trees—the framework of a new Pritchell Hall, replacing the venerable white structure that was once all there was to Ridgecrest.

Presently the notes of song came again—this time from the voices of a thousand students gathered in the great auditorium for worship and praise. Speakers often refer to this

place as "these hallowed hills"-and they are, indeed. Only heaven's record can reveal the contribution of Ridgecrest to the destiny of the world. Like Jacob's Bethel, surely "the Lord is in this place."

Alcatraz

After checking into my hotel in San Francisco late in the afternoon, I set out to do a little exploring and find supper (or dinner, if you prefer). The air was cool and brisk and the ground felt good under my feet. Presently, I topped Nob Hill and looked down on San Francisco Bay, Fisherman's Wharf, and Golden Gate Bridge. Walking down to the restaurants along the wharf, I chose DiMaggio's—it seemed I knew him personally.

The most fascinating object in the picture that lay before me was the knobby little island, jutting out of the bay, only a mile and a half away—Alcatraz. Two days later a sightseeing boat took me within 200 yards of the steep, rocky shores of what was then a maximum security federal prison. Here lived 400 men, cut off from the rest of the world by a mile and a half of the sharkiest and most treacherous water in the world. So near, yet so far.

Our imperfect system of justice, based upon the finite decisions of men, has always decreed that some people must be separated from society. For the sake of the masses, and, in a way, for the sake of those separated, it must be so. Good people do not overtly will that other people shall so live and work for ten cents an hour in a prison laundry. It is a last resort made necessary by those who insist on doing ill to their fellow human beings.

God's judgment is perfect. If we who are imperfect find this to be necessary for our society, how much more must God deem it necessary for His eternal Kingdom. For those who will

have nothing else, the Just and Loving God has prepared an Alcatraz.

Darkness and Light⁴

One early winter morning the falling of ice laden limbs sounded to a half asleep preacher like someone moving about in the house. A flip of the light switch revealed that the power had failed. There should have been matches in the top drawer, but after five minutes of groping in the dark, he decided to go back to bed and let the prowler find him.

Trying to locate those matches in the top drawer in darkness, “like midnight shut up in a gopher hole,” set him to thinking on the tragedy of blindness. We can imagine blindness in games of childhood, but it is much more realistic on a dark night when danger threatens and no light can be found. It is a feeling surpassing helplessness.

Jesus saw the multitudes of his day as blind. They too were fumbling around in top drawers in an effort to locate God and themselves. John, the apostle, described this condition as “darkness.” A light came to this darkness, but the darkness refused to see it and the people remained blind and continued to grope helplessly for truth. But, some saw.

Growth⁴

Located in a university science building are some little cell-like cubicles called growth chambers. By using electric power most any combination of climatic and atmospheric conditions can be simulated in these chambers making it possible to determine

4 John H. Jeffers, *A Field of Diamonds* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1974). All rights reserved. Used by permission.

how plants may fare under certain conditions.

Artificial, you may say? Follow the touch of human hand that sets the thermostat and flips the switch, through the wires of the building back to the transformer, to the powerline, to the generator, to the turbine, to the river, the rains, the clouds, and you stand ultimately in the presence of God. He is still the power that germinates and nurtures growth.

The church is the Christian's growth chamber, but conditions can't be made exactly right here by the flip of a switch- too many personalities involved. Its members must provide the right conditions—reverence, good teaching, effective prayer, service, meaningful worship, and vital fellowship. Things like heat, light and moisture are not of our own making; they reside in God, the source of all life, both physical and spiritual.

Communication

A new family has moved in next door to the pastorium—right next door—just about three feet from the bedroom window. They are Mr. and Mrs. Cardinal, and from all indications there will soon be three little cardinals. In fact, one youngster arrived last week and there are two more yet to come.

They like their privacy but seem not to mind the closeness of their human neighbors as long as they stay inside the house. When they get outside too near the nest in the hedge, Mrs. Cardinal hastily flits away to a nearby tree where she observes the proceedings with considerable trepidation.

We really enjoy our feathered friends and would like very much to assure them that we are glad to have them and wish for them a happy home. We seem not to be able to communicate with them, however. Perhaps if one of us could become a bird...

At a point in history some two millennia ago this kind of thing happened. God wanted us humans to know just exactly how he felt about us and the only way He could communicate with us was to become one of us. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (*John 1:14a*)

Too Much of a Good Thing

The noon newscast mentioned a town in England where tons of topsoil had to be bulldozed into the sea because cows were dying from poison resulting from an application of too much weed-killer.

In the parable of the tares (*Matthew 13:24-30*) the owner of the field is asked by his servants if they are to go out and root up the tares. He tells them no—that in so doing they may destroy the wheat also.

Both situations emphasize a basic truth in life—one may be so intent upon doing away with the bad, that he destroys the good in the process. Another way to think of this is that the presence of the bad in life points up the value of the good.

Suppose we had some magical power that would enable us to snuff out evil in an instant. Where would be all the good that has come to man in his struggle against evil? Man's real need is to know how to deal with evil effectively rather than to be able to destroy it in a moment.

Weed-killer is a good thing but when it destroys cows and top soil it is too much of the good thing.

Religion and Politics

Many people have expressed concern over President Johnson's continuing appeals to religious leaders on behalf of the Civil

Rights Bill. The apparent reason for this is the President's belief that the bill deals with a moral problem. In a UPI story of April 30, the President remarked, "The problem of racial wrongs and racial hatreds is the central moral problem of our republic."

While many may disagree with the President in his appraisal of the racial situation as a moral problem, as long as he believes this he has ample precedent to call on religious leaders for help. Religious leaders have always been vocal when they felt that moral issues were being determined in the political arena—prohibition, women's suffrage, and child labor being examples of this in our history.

Baptists should be the least upset of all people over these appeals. There is no Baptist hierarchy to which the President can appeal. There is no obligation on the part of any Baptist leader or pastor to do anything more than his conscience dictates on this or any other such matter. No Baptist individual is expected to do anything more or less than his own conscience—after prayer and careful thought—suggests.

If opposition to these appeals means that the President ought not to make them, it is well to take a second thought. If he hasn't the right to make such appeals, have religious leaders any right to make appeals to him? (In the last sixty days the White House has been flooded with appeals that aid to parochial schools not be a part of the Johnson war on poverty.)

Personally, I prefer that the President ask what he will. When I can't, in good conscience, respond, I will not. But when I desire to call on him, I will, with perfect freedom.

From the Cradle to the Grave

Yesterday, the pastor's responsibilities included a funeral service

for one of the elderly members of our church. As the funeral procession approached the cemetery, I noticed a young couple out in their front yard making snapshots of their infant child. As the proud young father held the tiny babe for his wife to snap the picture, I thought of the striking contrast in the two situations.

It is truly but a short distance between the cradle and the grave. The Bible constantly reminds us of the comparative brevity of man's life on this earth. In the ninetieth psalm a man's life of eighty years is compared with a brief watch in the night and with grass that lives no longer than one day.

Yet, in spite of its brevity, the normal life span of the human being is packed with more changes and with a wider variation of activity than any other living being. The man who was buried yesterday preceded the automobile but lived long enough to see men travel around the world in an hour and a half. Because of this tremendous potential, Jesus regarded a human life as the most precious thing in all of God's creation. He came to make that life as meaningful as it can possibly be.

Our own journey from the cradle to the grave is well on its way. It behooves us to allow the Lord of Life to come in our hearts and make that journey as rich and meaningful as possible.

The Sounds of a Coffee Shop

Breakfast in the coffee shop of Washington's Statler Hilton is quite a cosmopolitan experience. The accent that inquires whether you prefer a table or the counter is richly Scandinavian. Next to you two oriental gentlemen order without using a menu. Two tables away to the left two men whose vocabulary in English is hardly more than "yes" or "no" finally convince the waitress that all they want is plain bread and coffee. Immediately in front

two Africans haven't the faintest idea how they want their eggs cooked. The obliging waitress says, "Take 'em scrambled—they're better that way."

Service is quick and efficient as if everyone knows that there are appointments to be made on time. Presently there is an awfully familiar sound to a preacher from the South. Busily serving the scrambled eggs, plain bread, and coffee, the waitress is singing. It was what she was singing that stood out in the cosmopolitan atmosphere—"At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and the burden of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight, and now I am happy all the day."

Reflections on a National Tragedy

The explosion of Challenger and the loss of its seven-member crew on last Tuesday morning was a national tragedy of unique proportions. Not in my lifetime has a single event captured the total attention of the nation and produced the kind of emotional response of the extent that this one has. We have had other national tragedies: Pearl Harbor, the death of President Roosevelt, the assassination of the Kennedys and Martin Luther King, Jr., Vietnam, to name a few. In all of these instances save one there was some reason that could be immediately identified and, more importantly, someone to blame—someone to be angry with—some appropriate retributive action to be taken. The exception was Roosevelt's death, and we could accept that because he was an old man and died of natural causes in the comfort of the place he loved most, his cottage at Warm Springs.

Not so last Tuesday. Challenger and its crew were on a benevolent mission. They, like all their colleagues in the space

program, were exploring on our behalf. We applauded them because they were doing what we all have a hankering to do—pioneering—finding out things we all want to know about our universe—discovering things that would broaden all our lives. They were the extension of ourselves in space, like members of our own family. We knew them by name and by face; television let us stand within a few feet of them as they walked to the cabin of Challenger, faces wreathed in smiles of anticipation. When the reality of the explosion dawned upon us, there was that sinking feeling which we call sadness, because we had lost someone we knew, and we couldn't figure out why.

The trauma was no respecter of age or generation. Every school child in the country lost a teacher in Christa McAuliffe. For my generation, they were our sons and daughters who perished and our grandchildren who have suffered the loss of their parents. For those of similar age, it is like losing brothers and sisters. And the sadness lingers. The tragedy of Tuesday intrudes upon street corner and coffee cup conversations, but there is nothing much to say about it except that it was bad and to question whether we will ever know why.

However, as is the case in personal tragedy, national tragedy serves to sharpen our perception of life's true realities. The loss of Challenger has brought us face to face with life's truest reality—our human fallibility. There is no such thing as an infallible human being, an infallible machine, or an infallible decision making process. Sometimes there is nothing more to say than that “we have a major malfunction.”

We have a tendency to lose sight of this fact. The more sophisticated our technology becomes and the more “fool-proof” our machines become, the more likely we are to rest on our

laurels. The truth is that in our most sober moments we have all thought the thoughts of Challenger's pilot who had confided to a friend that the shuttle and its volatile power system was too complicated a machine not to blow up at some point in time.

It seems to me that there is a certain irony in the events of last weekend and last Tuesday. It was “super weekend” in our country—the final and climactic game of the season and the “monsters of the midway” had indeed performed like “super men” in their domination of the game. In sub-freezing temperatures on Monday, their city went wild in the adulation of their accomplishment—and we all joined them in spirit. This is to take nothing away from our ecstatic moments of victory whether in the Super Bowl, the Iron Bowl, in the conquering of some threatening disease, or in achieving the utmost vocational goal. It is simply to say that on Tuesday, we had to come back to earth—to face the fact that we are not so super after all.

The loss of Challenger also demonstrated that, at heart, we are a religious people. I am quite aware of the fact that there are multitudes of people in this country—maybe even a majority—who do not think of themselves as being very religious. I would be the first to say that, as a nation, we are a far cry from being the kind of people God would have us be in fulfilling the purpose for which we are created. Nevertheless, the response of the populace to this national tragedy reveals a basic religious consciousness. From the president, the NASA officials, politicians, news people, school officials and children, and the man and woman in the street have come affirmations of a basic religious faith.

However we say it, it comes out that “they have not died in vain.” “Christa will continue to teach us... and the investment of the lives of the others will result in future advances that will be

of benefit to all people.” We simply cannot bring ourselves to believe that the fireball in the sky destroyed everything there was in Challenger and the personalities of its seven occupants.

To us who are committed to religion in its institutional form—the church—this national tragedy is a challenge—a challenge to stand in the presence of a grieving nation with our message of comfort and hope. The man whose death we remember this day once said: “Man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” In the twentieth century that means: “Man cannot live by technology alone, he must believe in that which surpasses it.”

**Invocation for Inauguration of Dr. Harry M. Philpott as
Eleventh President of Auburn University, May 15, 1966**

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father,

By whose word all things have been created, by whose breath we have the gift of life, and by whose grace we are redeemed from our sin; we praise Thee for this day.

Thou who art the God of history and far distant purposes, come to us at this signal moment in the pilgrimage of this great institution. Enlighten us by the wisdom of our illustrious predecessors, but grant us courage to probe beyond its limits, even as they probed beyond the limits of their heritage.

Deliver us from complacency and the debilitating hope for easy answers. Quicken our senses to the cries of earth’s millions for food, shelter, peace, and light. Give us a holy discontent for our ignorance and a dedication to the sharpening of intellects and the deepening of compassion that shall mobilize our resources for a divine-human onslaught against the ills that plague thy children.

We pray thee especially to grant thy servant, Harry Melvin Philpott, an understanding heart that he may discern between good and evil in the administration of the affairs of this academic community. Strengthen his spirit by the constant presence of Thy Holy Spirit and enable those about him to support his hands in every endeavor.

With these prayers of thanksgiving and petition, we offer Thee ourselves, even as thou hast given Thyself on our behalf, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Part IV



Surveying 175 Years

J. Wayne Flynt

Chapter 17

Warts and All: Auburn First Baptist Church in the Beginning

East Central Alabama was the cow's tail for Baptists in the state. Before the Second Creek War in the mid 1830s, white settlement had spread from Mobile to Huntsville and from the Coosa River to the Tombigbee. But the area to the east of this vast domain, from the banks of the Coosa to the Chattahoochee, remained under Creek Indian control until the Trail of Tears forced them into exile in the West. Although Baptist churches thrived in settled regions, they did not prosper east of the Coosa until after 1836.

In earlier decades, patterns had begun to form that would soon become permanent. Small log churches, often with two front doors to welcome women and girls on one side, men and boys on the other, multiplied. The organization was as simple as the architecture: a part-time pastor, clerk, deacons, and elders. Most churches met once a month, and even then

only in seasons when dirt roads were passable and the weather not so inclement as to prevent travel. As late as the 1840s, the 23 churches in Montgomery, Lowndes, Dallas, Macon, and Autauga Counties numbered only two congregations that conducted services every Sunday.

Such groups of churches formed loose Associations for fellowship and instruction. These groupings were entirely voluntary, respecting the autonomy of each Baptist congregation. Once a year, usually in the Fall after crops were harvested, churches sent “messengers” to the Associational Meeting which typically lasted Friday and Saturday. Preaching mixed with business, which determined benevolent causes to be supported, theological differences to be resolved (or not, which led to withdrawals, splits, and even new denominations such as Primitive Baptists), and ethical issues to be debated.

Church worship was simple as well. There were no Sunday Schools until late in the century except in urban churches and prosperous rural areas. There was much informality and little structure. Often churches had only a single hymnal, meaning the leader had to “line-out” the words (he would say the words, the congregation would then sing them). Attention riveted on the preacher. The pulpit stood in the middle at the front of the church, emphasizing the centrality of the spoken word rather than altar or liturgy.

To become a Baptist preacher was as simple as proclaiming a sense of God’s calling, finding other preachers to agree, a church to ordain the applicant, and another to place confidence in him as pastor. Most preachers were bi-vocational, earning their primary income from farming, trapping, teaching, or some other profession. The negative side of such an

arrangement was perpetual financial worry among those who neglected secular work for church work and perpetual guilt among those who neglected congregations for paying jobs. Many churches expected little more of their pastors than preaching once a month, officiating at marriages and funerals, and when convenient a word of counsel, admonition, or encouragement.

Bi-vocationalism had its positive aspects as well. Ministers entered fully into the lives of parishioners. Their crops burned up during droughts just like those of their members; they sparred over politics like their congregations; they worried about the price of commodities and chaotic conditions within their communities. The very characteristics that caused better educated denominations to ridicule them (lack of education, lack of respect, low pay, lack of structure) endeared them to congregations consisting of people exactly like themselves. Their closeness of the people, the egalitarian way they were “called”, licensed, and ordained, the ease with which barely literate young men could preach, assured them a respectful hearing by a population of migratory, newly arrived frontier people just beginning to put down roots and terrified of warring Indians, deadly diseases, unfamiliar land, and financial uncertainty. Whereas the stiff ministerial requirements of Presbyterian and Episcopalian churches posed challenges to staffing their churches, Baptist lack of standards, doctrinally or educationally, favored them.

The first historian of Alabama Baptists, Rev. Hosea Holcomb, wrote in 1840: “The Baptist ministers in Alabama have been much like those in other parts of the United States: they have generally been men who were seeking a more productive

soil; and have possessed but a moderate share of education...; they were plain in manners, and many of them preached the gospel in its simplicity, and in the power of the Holy Ghost. With regard to their doctrinal views, they have been considerably diverse; in general, they have occupied what is termed the middle ground....”

Elder Obadiah Echols of Columbus, Georgia, was one such man. Born in Wilkes County in 1785, baptized in 1809, ordained by the (chillingly named) Murder Creek Church in Jasper County in 1827, he was 53 years old when he became first pastor of the new Baptist church in Auburn on Sunday, June 19, 1838. He came to what was then newly settled northern Macon County after Indian removal to guide Baptists in what Holcomb described as “a small town... which may be strictly called a temperance town. According to a special agreement, no ardent spirits are to be sold there. Whoever shall have the temerity to trample on the good rules and morals of the place, so far as to sell a half pint of whiskey... forfeits his lot, and it reverts back to the trustees. What a blessed thing, if all the towns and villages in Alabama were placed on the same principle.” Although Echols was called as pastor of the “amiable church,” Elder W.B. Jones, pastor of the new church in Society Hill, was also a member of the Auburn congregation. The church joined the new Liberty Association, consisting mainly of churches in Chambers and Macon Counties.

While bi-vocational pastor of the church, Echols became a substantial land owner and one of three men appointed by Alabama’s governor to conduct the city’s first election. Following five years as pastor, he departed for Mississippi where he lived for 15 years, then returned to Tuskegee to reside with his son

until his death at age 85.

The best description of Echols as pastor/preacher/leader is found in a memorial published in the Alabama Baptist in 1883 and quoted in John Jeffers' history of the church; "As a preacher, Mr. Echols belonged to the old style, without much method, but earnest, always entertaining, quaint, and at times somewhat tedious. In his method of speaking he was deliberate, occasionally quite emotional, and but for a habit of taking after a side thought at times, would have been effective; indeed, he was quite useful whenever engaged in revival meetings. The churches he served in the days of his manhood enjoyed a fair degree of prosperity." That is probably a more honest appraisal than modern memorials, often better known for hyperbole than candor. And it starts the story at just the right place: not with perfection but with sincere and fervent effort.

Chapter 18

Settling In: The Antebellum Years

The years between the beginnings of Auburn First Baptist and the Civil War were like those of most new institutions: short-term leaders; slow development of patterns, traditions, and practices; financial challenges; some eccentric people. For instance, the mother of the second pastor dreamed three nights in succession that she would birth a son, who would bear the name she gave him, and who would be a Baptist preacher. All three dreams came true, though the birth of a son and his call to preach was less amazing than the name he endured all his life: Edwin Champion Baptist Bowler Wheeler Nicholas Dema Stephen Resdin Carter Jackson Moore Thomas. In a half century of writing Baptist history, I can affirm that our former pastor was blessed (or cursed) with the longest name in denominational history.

Thomas remained pastor only a year, to be followed by two brothers, Albert and William Williams. Both were sharp contrasts to the first two pastors. Albert went on to become professor of Ancient Languages at Mercer University and co-

editor of the *South Western Baptist* (predecessor to the *Alabama Baptist*). William, an honors graduate of the University of Georgia, left his first pastorate in Auburn to become professor of Theology at Mercer, then in 1859 became one of the founders of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

After the two erudite Williams brothers, the church reverted to its egalitarian, folksy beginnings, calling Hardin Edwards Taliaferro (pronounced “Tolliver”) as pastor on the eve of the Civil War. In some ways, Taliaferro was the most complex of all the church’s pastors. Born in Surry County, North Carolina in 1811, where as late as 1850 one-third of adult males and more than one-half of adult women were illiterate, he moved to Roane County, Tennessee, at age 18 and managed only a single year of education in a one room academy. He farmed, learned how to tan hides from his brother, and was licensed to preach. In 1835 he and his new wife moved to Talladega County, Alabama, where he established a tanning yard, farmed, and preached for a circuit of nearly a dozen Baptist churches stretching along 50 miles of the Coosa River. A tall man of more than six feet, with profuse hair and beard, he was an emotional preacher, often weeping in the pulpit. Though sometimes criticized for being “a little too frank and outspoken”, he became a respected preacher. “Let a man mix with a church of poor, praying, working people”, he wrote, and one could “admire the wisdom of Jesus for companionizing with them.” Ten years later he joined a relative in editing the *South Western Baptist* published in Tuskegee, becoming sole editor in 1858.

During these years, Taliaferro (“Skitt” to his friends) experienced a crisis of faith (“perplexing doubts and fears” and a sense that God was remote from him). Once he had passed

through this dark valley, he wrote a book about the experience in 1857 entitled *The Grace of God Magnified*, which described his “torture of the soul.” The book circulated widely throughout the South and was, according to one contemporary, unsurpassed “by any book of confessions in our language.”

He took to the writer’s life and began to pen humorous articles about poor whites for Southern Literary Messenger, a leading southern magazine. In 1859, while pastor in Auburn, his articles were published under a pseudonym as *Fisher’s River-Folks and Scenes by Skitt, Who Has Been Thar*. Most of the stories centered on his boyhood in Surry County, but several are set in East Alabama. When the name of the author became known, the book made Taliaferro famous as writer of an original form of American literature called Old Southwestern Humor. But his work was unique in that other writers in the genre were well educated, mostly lawyers and journalists, who set their stories in the deep South and tended to ridicule the rustic folk ways of the people they described. Taliaferro instead wrote about the upland South and treated his subjects with respect. His book remains a masterpiece in its descriptions of poor white customs, traditions, and tall tales. One wonders how often he entertained the congregation of AFBC with such stories.

Fragments of his sermons, newspaper articles, and other writings offer insight into his preaching. Though largely self-educated, Taliaferro was obviously a bright, well-informed man. He was swept up in antebellum debates about Calvinism and covenant theology, which in some form Primitive Baptists adopted in their fierce battles against missionary Baptists. To the evangelistic Taliaferro, God’s covenant of salvation meant nothing more than an ancient contract with “our fathers”, not the

Primitive Baptists with their “antinomian predestination... croaking babbles of that gloomy school” (could that have been what his acquaintance meant by being “a little too frank and outspoken”?). In his theology, he balanced conservatism and liberalism. Change was inevitable and often good. Infidelity could appear either in the garb of traditional Christianity or the “horribly distorted” shape of liberal change, which seemed to appeal especially to people with “literary pretensions” and claims to rationalism. But he also denounced words such as “conservative” and “orthodox” as “humbugging words” meaning nothing. Often conservatives were restrained and not frank or outspoken enough, urging him to use too gentle terms for “factionalists, fanatics, abolitionists, and bandy courtly epithets with errorists of religion.” Such equivocation, he wrote, was not his style.

During the years he edited the *South Western Baptist*, Taliaferro often served as pastor of AFBC. Church historian John Jeffers lists the probable dates of his pastorate as mid 1856 to 1860. Taliaferro pastored four quarter time churches, the Auburn congregation being one of them. During this time, he often commented in his paper about the town’s development. In March, 1860, he wrote that the local Methodist college enrolled some 80 or 90 students though several had been expelled. The college president was firm: “rule bad, brainless boys, or make them leave” (I taught some candidates for expulsion based on that standard). The preparatory school enrolled an additional 115 students, and the female school flourished as well: “Auburn has improved considerably since all these school interests have gone into operation,” he concluded. Methodist people dominated the village. “The Baptist church and congregation are small, yet

they are a united band of good brethren.” In August, 1861, he traveled from Tuskegee to observe the training of fifteen companies (1,500 men) who crowded the village and its outskirts, preparing for war. Of the 15 company commanders, six were Baptists, two of them fellow preachers. On Sundays they conducted worship services for their men, and the new pastor of AFBC baptized converts in a nearby creek. Paradoxically, during the war, Taliaferro pastored a black Baptist church, where in 1866 he baptized 30 or 40 converts a month. And in 1868 he attended the organizational meeting of the Alabama Colored Baptist State Convention. By then the times in Auburn were out of sorts.

Chapter 19

Reconstructing the South, Alabama, and Auburn First Baptist Church

Between 1861 and 1865, one in five white Alabama males of military age lost their lives to disease or combat. East Alabama Male College shut its doors. First Baptist Church, which had met only once a month anyway, became a Confederate military hospital. Whether one believes in miracles, lots of Confederate soldiers wounded in the defense of Atlanta and evacuated by train to Auburn believed in them. Laid on bedding between pews in the church, their lives were spared in 1864 when a tornado collapsed the roof of the church onto the heavy church pews just above wounded soldiers.

Neither human nor natural disaster was a new experience for AFBC. Nothing seemed to come easy to the struggling congregation. The “call” to pastors was renewed annually. Pastors pleased the congregation or hit the road. Beyond occasional worship, no church structure existed. Methodists had dominated the religious life of the village (and, indeed, the state) until the great revivals in Confederate armies,

and would continue to hold the upper hand in Auburn. During the last three years of the war, the church had no pastor at all. In fact, pastors served the church for only 25 of the first 30 years, and their average term was slightly less than 4 years.

Nonetheless, from the end of Reconstruction in Alabama (1875) until the beginning of a new century, important patterns emerged. Deleting the terms of M.W.E. Lloyd (he served as pastor three times between 1868 and 1890 for a total of 17 years), the average ministerial term actually dropped to barely 3 years. These short tenures hardly mattered because lay-led structures such as Sunday School, Young Peoples Society, Woman's Missionary Society began to take charge. Strong lay leadership gave the church steady, firm direction during the final quarter of the 19th Century.

Chief among these lay leaders was Isaac Taylor Tichenor, who church historian John Jeffers called the "giant of the giants." Actually, Tichenor is too complex a man to simply call a "layman", though that was chiefly the role he played in the church. He of the Biblical first name and unusual family name, symbolized early and late century eras in the church and denomination. He represented what was most provincial and what was most expansive, what was sectional and what was universal.

Born in Nelson County, Kentucky, in 1825, he was such a precocious child that he began school at age 4. At 16 as he prepared to enter college with a strong background in classics (mathematics, Latin, rhetoric, and logic), a devastating case of measles and a resultant throat infection left him with lifelong vocal cord damage and deflected his life away from college into teaching and preaching. Although a lifelong reader and student

of many subjects and in time a university president, he never finished college.

His ministerial career carried him to Montgomery, where he pastored perhaps the state's largest and most prestigious First Baptist Church. With governors, legislators, and Confederate officials filling his congregation during 1860-61, it is no surprise that patriotic sermons preached to them began to weigh on him as well.

He finally resigned to become chaplain of a Montgomery area regiment. On Sunday morning, April 6, 1862, at the Battle of Shiloh, Tennessee, Tichenor earned his nickname, "The Fighting Chaplain." When many Confederate officers were killed or wounded, he assumed command (though chaplains held no rank or even military commission). When a Union sharpshooter targeted him, he retrieved a Colt repeating rifle from the battlefield and killed the enemy soldier, the first of several victims of his marksmanship that day. When a bullet struck his leather belt, it deflected the ball sufficiently that, though bruised badly and knocked down, he escaped serious injury. When the Seventeenth Alabama Regiment faltered under heavy fire, he literally preached them a sermon, reminding them over the roar of battle that it was Sunday morning and back in Alabama their families were at church praying for them. The battle left no mark on his conscience, but it did cement his sectional identity as a fierce foe of all things northern. He returned to his Montgomery church a hero but also a critic of the excesses and abuses of the slavery system that had brought the war, though he did not oppose slavery itself.

When the war ended, he sought to defend the South through economic development, education, and religion.

Convinced that the South had lost the war because of its weak industrial base, he became a self-taught metallurgical engineer who developed the Cahaba Coal field. In 1872, he was chosen as first president of the new Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical Land Grant College. When the state refused to supplement Federal funds appropriated under the Morrill Act, he chastised legislators and attacked the University of Alabama for its elitism and opposition to state funding for his school. Determined both to maintain the classical and religious legacy of East Alabama Male College and merge it with applied education in agriculture and engineering, he imprinted the university in ways that were unique among Land Grant universities.

While president of the college, he played a key role as lay leader at AFBC. As Alabama's representative on the Foreign Mission Board, he championed missions. As a southern sectionalists, he opposed the dominance of northern Baptist literature in southern churches. As a foe of northern Baptist missionaries to the South, he demanded that each region have its own autonomous realm. After serving as interim pastor of the church in 1878 and bringing his son-in-law as pastor the next year, Tichenor resigned as college president in 1882 to become the first leader of the newly restructured Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, relocated to Atlanta, queen city of the New South, which he helped build. Just as Tichenor had pioneered industrial and educational institutions which mimicked northern trends without conforming to northern ideology, he turned his new agency into the principal Southern Baptist institution resisting religious reunion of Baptists in America. His literature publishing house, mission efforts among southern blacks, immigrants, and Native Americans, essentially blunted northern

Baptist efforts to evangelize the South and ensured a regional religious sectionalism throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. J. B. Lawrence, one of Tichenor's successors at the HMB, described his legacy in sectional terms: "In no spirit of narrow sectionalism, but in absolute loyalty to what he regarded as the most evangelical type of America's denominationalism, he contended heroically, and successfully, for the integrity of our great representative body. With the diplomacy of a statesman, the eloquence of an orator, the courage of a hero, and the devotion of a confessor, he kept in the column of harmony all the original southern states. To Tichenor more than any other man perhaps is due the solidarity of the denomination in faith and practice from Maryland to Texas..., from Missouri to Florida."

To read more about Tichenor, see Michael Williams' (a former member of our church while in graduate school) biography of him in the church library: *Isaac Taylor Tichenor: The Creation of the Baptist New South*.

Chapter 20

Building the Body of Christ at Auburn First Baptist Church

If I. T. Tichenor was the flaming comet shooting across Auburn skies in the 1870s, leaving in its wake both solid ecclesiastical and educational institutions, Patrick Hues Mell, Jr., and C. E. Little were the smaller, more enduring, and perhaps in the long run more important meteors trailing behind.

As impressive as Tichenor's denominational influence South-wide was, and as influential as he was in the history of Auburn University, the Mell family matched him institution for institution. Patrick Mell grew up in a family whose Baptist credentials trumped even Tichenor's. His father was a Baptist preacher, denominational leader, educator, Confederate soldier, and author. He attended Amherst College in Massachusetts, became professor of ancient languages at Mercer University in his native Georgia, then moved on to join the faculty at the University of Georgia. There, he ascended the administrative ladder to become Chancellor in 1878. Like Tichenor, he became a denominational leader, serving 15 years as president of the

Southern Baptist Convention, the longest tenure ever. He authored books on baptism, church discipline (a favorite topic), prayer, Calvinism, predestination, slavery, God's providence, and parliamentary procedure. He was married twice and fathered a total of 15 children.

His namesake son attended the University of Georgia, graduating in 1871, but preferred science to theology. The A. and M. College of Alabama elected him chair of Natural History and Geology in 1878, beginning a 22-year career in Auburn, where he also served as Director of the Alabama Weather Service and Botanist of the Alabama State Experiment Station.

When Tichenor left shortly after Mell arrived, the younger man assumed his role of church leadership for two decades. In 1884 he was elected first president of the Mission Society. Four years later, he offered the motion to establish a Finance Committee to raise money for the church and was, in finest Baptist tradition, promptly elected chairman. In 1889, he led the effort to build the church's first pastorium. In 1891 he proposed a way to improve worship services by providing hymn books to every member of the congregation (at a price of only 45 cents a book with verses only, or a bargain at 90 cents each with both words and notes). He regularly attended the Southern Baptist Convention where his father presided brilliantly. And in 1889, Mell supported switching from northern Baptist Sunday School literature to the new publications of Tichenor's Baptist publishing house, leading some AFBC Sunday school teachers to resign in protest.

Despite all these innovations and leadership roles, he was very much his father's son in his regard for church discipline. Early in its history, church members had adopted

“Rules of Decorum” which were common among 19th century Baptist congregations. The rules described a strict moral and ethical consensus within the congregation about how members were expected to conduct themselves in private and in public. Some more “liberal” church members believed the rules went too far, were too censorious, and were unneeded because the Bible spelled out such conduct adequately. Others felt that to eliminate the rules was a compromise of principles for the sake of popularity. As one of his final acts, on December 3, 1882, just before Tichenor departed for his new job in Atlanta, he led a successful move to drop rules of decorum.

This was about as far as the church or Patrick Mell were willing to compromise their principles. In the mid 1880s, a committee of deacons contacted members who failed to attend services and asked them to explain their absence. In 1887, the church discussed a common church tradition of dismissing a member if his/her conduct did not improve after a visit by pastor and deacons (which must have been a pleasant committee task!). The following year, motions came before the church to investigate rumors of unchristian conduct among some members, leading at least one straying member to confess the error of his ways, at which time he was continued in fellowship. In June, 1898, “Brother Mell” offered a motion to declare “modern dancing” (presumably not including Square Dancing) sinful. Some resistance from young people and more “liberal” members resulted in tabling the motion temporarily. However, when the motion was taken off the table a month later, AFBC went of record as opposing “round dancing” in public places (apparently dancing at home away from public scrutiny remained acceptable; sin on, but not in public?).

After two decades of lay leadership at AFBC, Mell departed in 1900 to become president of Clemson University, opening the way to a new generation of church leaders.

A man of quieter temperament and less commanding opinions, C. E. Little was no less a passionate and loyal member of the church. Whereas hardly a church business meeting ended without the church clerk recording Mell's name as author of a comment or motion, Little's name seldom appears in church minutes. But in a more behind-the-scenes way, he may have made an even larger contribution. He and his family came from Ohio and joined AFBC in February, 1881, three years after Mell arrived. In following years, he became one of Auburn's most prosperous farmers and merchants.

The one place where church records do refer to Little dealt with finances. Little served for years as church treasurer. After he presented the treasurer's report at the August, 1894, business meeting, his friend, Patrick Mell, shocked the church by announcing that the church owed Little \$415. Little routinely balanced church financial deficits by paying bills due out of his own pocket, never telling the congregation.

Church discipline concerned Little as much as Mell, though he made less noise about it. Probably the trend to hold members accountable for their church pledges owed something to him. And in 1894, he reported that a member of the church had charged that the congregation's report to the Tuskegee Association (which claimed church harmony, well attended prayer meetings, doubling of mission gifts, and increases in the pastor's salary) was untrue. In fact, the disgruntled member said that the pastor had resigned because he was unhappy and the church was unhappy with him. This instigated a long church

controversy, with charges leveled back and forth between the aggrieved member and the church represented by various committees.

Nonetheless, the church survived, thanks in no small part to Little's generosity and faithfulness. Rapid turn over in pastoral leadership, part time pastors who preached only once a month, the yearly necessity to stand for reelection as pastor, two major depressions in the 1870s and 1890s, and Methodist domination of town leadership, left the church barely stronger at turn of century than when it began. In 1890, total church membership numbered only 90; three years later it had grown to 113; but two years of nationwide economic calamity dropped that number to 110 in 1895. Although no one could imagine it, the next twenty years would not only see the rise of a new generation of leaders but one of the major explosions in church growth in the history of AFBC.

Chapter 21

Intersections at Auburn First Baptist Church

Intersections can be figurative or literal, destructive or constructive. Sometimes they can be both. We are the church at the corners of Glenn, Gay, and College. But in 1900 we also occupied intersections of a new century, a failed pastorate, a phenomenally successful new pastor, a period of growth unprecedented in church history, a strong surge in mission interests, a corresponding boom in student ministry, and the emergence of a lay woman who would become legendary in the annals of the congregation.

Pastor and historian John Jeffers wrote about the pastoral transition in his church history with typical frankness: “The pastorate of J.J. Cloud seems to have come to less than a happy conclusion in the fall of 1900....” The church voted to relieve Rev. Cloud of his duties for rest. Following the furlough, he criticized the church’s lack of interest, attendance, and participation. A week later, the congregation voted to declare the pulpit vacant and to seek a new pastor. Cloud had reason to

complain. His salary had not been fully paid, and C.E. Little (who had long subsidized the budget from his own funds) submitted his resignation as church treasurer as well, though the church did not accept it.

If the old century ended in controversy, the new one swept away bad memories. Upon the strong recommendation of Southern Baptist Seminary professor George B. Eager, the church called newly graduated Augustus Young (A.Y.) Napier as pastor. Though the Georgia native and Mercer University graduate would go on to a distinguished career, he was untried and untested in 1900. That the church gambled so much on him owes much to Eager. He had pastored two of Alabama's wealthiest and most influential congregations, Parker Memorial in Anniston and Montgomery First Baptist. His wife, Anne, had been a distinguished social reformer, vice-president of the Alabama Library Association and Boys' Industrial School, a suffragist, and president of the Federated Women's Clubs of Alabama. As a seminary professor, her husband was also an early advocate of social justice. To seal the deal, First Baptist for the first time extended Napier an indefinite call rather than a one year appointment.

The church's confidence was not misplaced. The young bachelor took the town by storm. A 23-day revival in 1902 added 34 members by baptism and another 19 by letter. The church increase for that year, 76, nearly doubled the membership of 100. The budget increased so rapidly that the church could afford to buy its first organ in 1904. Church infrastructure typical of modern Baptist congregations strengthened, with a Sunday School of nearly 100 and a thriving women's missionary society.

One source of rapid growth was a flood of new migrants

from the country and towns. The 1870 census listed only 1,000 Auburn residents; by 1910, the population had increased by nearly half that amount to 1,400. Students also flooded into Auburn. By 1907 the 600 students attending the Land Grant university made it the largest college in Alabama. In 1916 the church also began a tradition now nearly a century old: it placed collection boxes at the doors on communion Sundays to help the poor.

Just before J.J. Cloud resigned in 1900, he baptized Leland Cooper, a young school teacher who would become the focus of the congregation's student work. Auburn Female Academy had employed Cooper in 1896 to teach second and third graders. The school soon admitted boys, and for awhile it was the only public school for whites.

As a cascading avalanche of college students joined the church, it not only escalated membership, it also fueled idealistic interest in missions and less visionary attraction to the opposite sex. So many college romances began in the church that a catalog of them might be longer than this history. But the most unusual courtship may have been between the dashing, leprechaun of a preacher and a teenage church visitor.

Lois Davie, a 16 year-old Judson College student and daughter of a prominent Clayton (Barbour County) Baptist merchant, visited Auburn First Baptist while on summer vacation. After the service, she talked with the new pastor, and according to them, "it was a simple case of love at first sight." Three impediments stood in the way of marriage: her age; her father's fierce disapproval of her impulsive romance; and A.Y. Napier's growing sense that God was calling him to mission work in China. They resolved these obstacles one by one. Napier

successfully sought missionary appointment, and left for China. Upon graduating college, his daring fiancé joined a throng of America's most committed and idealistic Christians bound for China. She traveled to Seattle where she embarked for Japan. Napier met her there, where they married and immediately sailed on a 1,000 mile honeymoon across the Yellow Sea, then up the Yangtze River to Nanking, and on to Chingchow in Honan Province, in one of the most remote areas of China. Lois gave birth to two sons, and they remained through famines, plagues, and revolutions for a quarter century. While home on furlough, A.Y. earned his Ph.D. at Southern Seminary with a thoughtful dissertation entitled "The Challenge of China in America".

Extolling the cultural and historical richness of China, he argued that though preaching the Gospel was important, social ministries that addressed poverty, illness, illiteracy, and the exploitation of women paved the way for such proclamation. Secular learning alone, which the Chinese welcomed, left them with much knowledge but little faith. But no door opened China more to the Gospel than medicine. He urged the Foreign Mission Board to appoint women physicians and devote more funds for medical missions. His advocacy established him as a leader of the Baptist cause in China, and he was elected head of the Central China Mission. He also urged more ecumenical ministries.

In a letter to me many years after his parents died, their son, Davie Napier (who served as religion professor at Yale, chaplain of Stanford University, and in the 1970s created controversy in the South when he performed a mixed race marriage of Secretary of State Dean Rusk's daughter to an African American) wrote: "My parents' China years moved them increasingly away... from 'typically Southern Baptist culture'.

Through all my life with them, they were outraged by ‘our’ treatment of American Indians and Afro-Americans...; and, in another... departure, they advocated... the merger of duplicated schools run by Southern Baptists and some other denominations.”

The Napiers were among the first of a great missionary tradition at AFBC. Toward the end of the 20th century, Dartie Flynt and other W.M.U. members set about quantifying this effort. They located the names of hundreds of members, mostly students, who volunteered for missions. Although their list is not exhaustive, it seems certain that few churches so small sent forth so many to the “uttermost parts of the earth” to gather in a great eternal harvest.

Chapter 22

The Making of Modern Auburn First Baptist Church

Nearly all churches have several beginnings, some many more. As decades come and go, realities change, and elements of tradition and modernity collide, dramatic alterations occur. For Auburn First Baptist, the decades between 1900 and 1940 produced most of those transitions. Organizationally, theologically, and culturally, the church after 72 years of life became more like the church of 2013 than the one of 1838.

The “indefinite call”, which began in 1900, stabilized pastoral leadership. The eight pastors who served between 1838 and 1877 served an average of five years, those from 1878 to 1903 only three-and-a-half years. But the twelve pastors who served from 1904 until 2013 averaged nine years (a figure distorted by the long pastorates of Murray Perceval Edwards, 14 years; James R. Edwards, 19 years; and John Jeffers, 28 years).

Although the church had always enrolled college students, the rapid growth of Auburn University resulted in a structured, organized, and highly successful student ministry led

by Leland Cooper. Some old time members note that Miss Cooper never married. In some sense that is incorrect. She gave her heart and life to two generations of college students. Having herself become a Christian as an adult, she understood that not every student was nurtured to early conversion. Together with pastor Earl W. Holmes and new university president Spright Dowell, Cooper established a vibrant youth program. She organized Senior, Intermediate, and Junior departments. One branch became the new Baptist Student Union, which met for some years in her home. When it overflowed that space, she moved to a public school auditorium. So beloved was she that during Christmas season 1925, students raised enough money to buy her a spiffy new Model T Ford.

Nonetheless, Baptist life had developed a toxic pattern in gender relations. As long as church staff positions were largely voluntary, women generally filled them. But when they became organizationally large enough to require a full time person, the paid staff were almost always men. So it was for Cooper. The State Baptist Convention employed Davis C. Wooley as first Student Secretary (director) for BSU in October, 1935. The warm, hospitable Wooley carried on Cooper's work and institutionalized it. On "Freshman Sunday", he preached sermons such as "If I Were a Freshman." Unlike Cooper, Wooley became a regular church staff member. Using the argument that the avalanche of 140 BSU members could contribute little to the church budget, AFBC asked the State Convention to fund student work, help with facilities, and supplement the pastor's salary. For decades thereafter, the convention subsidized the church.

Dr. James R. Edwards began the second longest tenure in church history, 19 years, in 1926. A North Carolinian,

Edwards attended Wake Forest and graduated from Colgate University, then pastored several churches in Brooklyn and New York. Moving to Birmingham as pastor of Ruhama Baptist, the home church of Howard College, he also taught Bible at the college. This educational experience made him a good match for AFBC. Though scholarly and formal in the pulpit, he flourished at personal visitation. The first pastor to occupy the new pastorium built next to the church in 1927 (the dream of C. E. Little, who died before it was completed), Edwards functioned as custodian as well as pastor. He locked and unlocked the doors, stoked the furnace, and presided at the weddings of many college students. He also formed a board of trustees to oversee construction of a new church. The congregation moved into its new sanctuary, built for \$85,000, on April 29, 1929. Beloved Dr. Dowell, who had left Auburn to become president of Mercer University, returned to preach the dedicatory sermon. C.E. Little's son, Felton, honored his deceased father with the gift of a new organ which served the church until 1975.

Dowell's reunion was bitter sweet for him and the church. A distinguished North Carolina educator, he had come to Alabama to supervise Birmingham public schools, then was hired as State Superintendent of Schools. He became president of Auburn in 1920. He immediately plunged into church life, moderating church business meetings.

He also plunged into a mess of trouble over football. Evangelical Americans had reached a consensus that much was wrong with the game. Too many badly injured players. Too much association with alcohol and gambling. Too many double standards in the academic and ethical conduct of players. To minimize corruption in recruiting, Dowell sought to transfer

control of athletics from the semi-autonomous Auburn Athletic Association—made up of coaches, alumni, and boosters—to regular academic officials. He rejected more money for sport and required that coaches actually teach. Under his watch, the university avoided scandal but also avoided victories on the gridiron. Coach Mike Donahue, who had won three conference championships, departed for L.S.U. The Jefferson County Auburn Club demanded Dowell's resignation. A fierce three-year battle ensued, highlighted by Dowell's suspension of players for academic deficiency and for violating the school's moral code. Church members, led by Leland Cooper, loyally supported him. The pastor of Auburn Methodist Church condemned football as little better than a collective brawl. Though many moralists agreed, this theology did not take deep root in Alabama, where the University of Alabama had just won a national championship in 1926. Moralists lost the battle (and AFBC a steady and strong leader) in 1927 when Dowell was fired.

It is a good thing the church completed its building in April 1929. If the project had continued into the Fall, the Wall Street panic and ensuing Depression might have prolonged the project by more than a decade. With a hefty debt to pay and offerings falling to \$5,000-6,000 a year, austerity became the major fixture of church life. The pastor's salary declined by more than half, \$3,000 to \$1,200. The church tried to lease its property on College Street, but finally had to sell it for a service station in 1938.

Nonetheless, life went on. As in the past, volunteers stepped forward to serve the faith community they loved. Beloved Dr. Edwards preached on, the quality of sermons not declining with his salary. Mrs. Christine Tidwell served both as

part time organist and choir director until prosperity returned and she was replaced by a full time male director. She combined various church choirs at Christmas, 1938, with 800 attending the cantata she directed. The church eased up a bit on membership requirements, adopting a rule unusual for Baptist congregations at the time. In 1930 AFBC allowed people who had been immersed in some other denomination to become full members without re-baptism. Eleven years later, members voted to accept as associate members persons from other denominations who had not been fully immersed in the Baptist way.

By the death of Dr. Edwards in 1945, Auburn seemed set on a course that would lead straight to the future: strong lay leadership, including females; a robust student ministry; strong organizational structure; a modern sanctuary; and an independent streak in theology and polity.

Chapter 23

All in the Family: The Golden Age, 1945-1960

When asked to name Auburn First Baptist Church's golden age, long time members often mention the years from the end of World War II to the 1960s. America's most formidable global economic competitors lay in ruins. People discovered new and profound meaning in their families. They sought religious renewal. Baptist evangelist Billy Graham launched a world wide revival. The modern Civil Rights Movement was in its infancy. The Women's Movement, jolting cultural change, the Baby Boomer generation, all were on the horizon but had not yet matured.

All these would transform Auburn in the 1960s. Until then the town seemed to be in a time warp. AFBC was the only option for white Baptists. Alabama Polytechnic Institute claimed to be the largest Baptist University in the world: in 1947, 2,300 of its 6,300 students belonged to that denomination. API president Ralph Draughon was a prominent layman. Though some students had fallen from grace, those who had not either

returned home to worship or attended AFBC. Church membership broke new records nearly every year. Not coincidentally, so did enrollment at API.

The G.I. Bill, perhaps the most transformative development in higher education since the Land Grant Act, unloosed an avalanche on the town. Winter quarter enrollments soared from 1,778 in 1945 to 3,498 the following year, to 6,311 in 1947. API staff and faculty grew from 411 to 899 by 1955. City limits more than doubled from 4 square miles to 9. With 6,000 Baptists living within the city limits by 1955 and only one white Baptist church to serve them, church growth needed no guru: just open the doors, get out of the way, and welcome hordes of newcomers. On the first Sunday of Fall quarter in 1948, 102 students crowded into the aisles to move their membership (records do not record the number of verses of the “invitational” hymn the congregation sang that October morning or where so many found a place to stand). Pastor Howard Olive baptized 45 in 1951 and 53 the following year. By 1953, the church had to add an 8:30 a.m. service because of overflow crowds. Shortly thereafter, the church installed air conditioning and an auxiliary speaker system so members listening in a large auditorium below could leave the main sanctuary for visitors and new members. In 1945 membership stood at 847 (300 of whom were non-resident, probably students who had graduated without moving their membership). By the mid 1950s, membership reached 2,178, with 312 in WMU and 89 in Brotherhood. Contributions reached an unprecedented \$71,000 plus \$23,000 in mission gifts.

Missions dominated the congregation’s vision. API was second among state colleges only to Baptist Howard College in number of graduates who entered missions. Many began their

mission careers as students, working at one of three African American Baptist churches in Auburn, or serving Summer mission terms. During Summer, 1956, Walter Porter and Dwayne Beckett worked with the Tentmaker program in California. By that year, BSU, located in the church, enrolled 600 API students. Many BSU members departed for graduate school, then returned to teach at their alma mater, where they rejoined the church (Dwayne and Doris Beckett, Walter Porter, Oyette and Brenda Chambliss, Tom and Linda Powe, Betty and Paul Smith), giving the BSU and AFBC family a multi-generational flavor. J.C. Grimes, chair of the Search Committee for a new BSU director in 1951 as well as of the Trustees, described enormous opportunities: “I believe that the First Baptist Church... is a part of the Divine Plan. I believe that it will continue to do in the future what it has done in the past; that it will grow and will expand its facilities and resources to meet the spiritual needs of a growing student body and an expanding community.”

In 1955, the church established a Missions Committee to study the need for a new Baptist church in Auburn. L. M. Ware, chair of deacons, described in the new church newsletter, *The Auburn Baptist*, “A Church Vision” to sponsor new congregations in a town where only a quarter of Baptists attended AFBC. Members voted to buy a lot and began plans for what would become Lakeview Baptist. The timing could not have been worse. Ware joked that the congregation was without a pastor, minister of education-music, organist, and chair of the Nominating Committee, “all of these at a time when everyone seems to be on vacation, when a student body is about to descend on us, when officers and committees are about to change, and

when many of our key men and women are out each Sunday trying to find a new pastor. Will you do just a little more than your part while this emergency lasts?" They did, and in September, 1959, Lakeview was chartered with 186 members from AFC as its core leadership.

Although the church was blessed with fine pastors during these years, they served short terms. The three between 1945 and 1958 averaged only four years. Lay leaders filled the void as they had so many times before.

Familiar names appear in critical leadership positions: Leland Cooper; J.C. Grimes; Felton Little. But one layman seemed to fill the most key roles. Lamar Mims Ware, referred to simply as Professor Ware by generations of church members, was born in Marshallville, Georgia, on August 20, 1895. He attended API for his BS and MS degrees before leaving for additional graduate work at Michigan State. He returned in 1923 as instructor of Horticulture before moving to Mississippi State in 1928. He returned to his *alma mater* and became chair of the Department of Horticulture and Forestry in 1932. He founded the new School of Forestry in 1947 but remained chair of Horticulture until retirement. Ware became nationally known for his research on sweet potatoes, headed the Southern Region of the American Society of Horticulture, was voted 1960 "Man of the Year" in Service to Agriculture by *Progressive Farmer*, and joined the ranks of those honored in *American Men of Science* and *Leaders of American Science*. But in his biography at the Auburn University Archives, he especially delights in describing himself as "a faithful member of First Baptist Church, Auburn, Alabama."

Rightly so. He served as chair of deacons, trustees, and

most strategically, of the Building Finance Committee. Shrewd with his own money (at the end of W.W.II he built a men's dormitory behind his house to rent to veterans) he was also a meticulous accountant and financial whiz who wrote a little remembered book, *A History of Church Buildings, Properties, and Capital Assets of the First Baptist Church*, detailing the church's financial history. He devised the strategy that allowed the church to spend hundreds of thousands for missions by utilizing the 1945 Clifton Jones bequest of land on College Street to guarantee loans or for revenue.

On the bottom of the title page of Ware's history of API's forestry program, he quoted a passage from French novelist Victor Hugo which could just as well have described his role at AFBC: "We build the Road: Others Make the Journey."

Chapter 24

“Brother John,” Dearest Jeanette

Church histories often focus on measurements of success more appropriate for a corporation than a church: large building projects; budget increases; growth in church membership. But if current Auburn First Baptist members conducted a referendum, they probably would select the team of Jeffers and Jeffers the most successful co-pastors ever.

That outcome defies conventional wisdom. Although John led a renovation of the recreation building at AFBC, made possible by a large bequest from the estate of Miss Willie Huguley, he planned no major construction efforts despite the longest pastorate in church history (28 years, from 1958 until 1986). The church budget expanded steadily but slowly, reflecting the prosperity of the four decades during which he served. Because of changes in the church’s relationship to the Baptist Student Union, rapid growth by its mission churches, the church’s more transparent record keeping (a purge of “nonresident members” who had long since moved away from Auburn), and increasing conflict in the Southern Baptist

Convention (in which AFBC was considered a heretical “moderate” congregation), membership actually declined from a record high of some 2,000 members to slightly more than 500. The active, resident membership remained fairly constant though the names and backgrounds changed. More were moderate Baptists or drawn from a variety of denominational backgrounds.

In the absence of these traditional “success” markers, what made the Jeffers beloved? Auburn folk referred to them by a variety of names. The most common for him was simply “Brother John”, an indication that he was not a man of degrees who flaunted education or erudition to distance himself from his flock. As a team, no term fit them better than the frequently heard “Mutt and Jeff.” Based on “two mismatched tin horns” created by cartoonist Bud Fisher in 1907, the cartoon featured one extremely tall, lean figure, the other short and rotund. It was literally true that when John held his arms straight out, Jeanette could walk under them without touching either. Standing six-and-a-half feet tall, John towered above his below-five-feet tall wife.

Born in Glencoe, Etowah County, Alabama, in 1921, to working class parents, John’s family moved early in his life to Tarrant City, an industrial Birmingham suburb. His father worked in a plant, and when John graduated high school in 1939, he also began factory work at American Cast Iron Pipe Company. Tall in any generation, he was a veritable giant as a teenager in the late 1930s. Raised in a conventional, devout Baptist family, he early felt called to preach and gleefully accepted a modest basketball scholarship to the little Baptist college in nearby East Lake.

For four years John majored in economics while playing forward for the “Battling Bulldogs” of Howard College. As the team’s tallest player, he enjoyed a solid freshman season (the team’s 16-10 record included victories over Mississippi State and Loyola) and they won second place in the Dixie Conference with a 13-1 record. He had an even better sophomore season when Howard defeated Auburn 37-33, led the University of Alabama for three quarters before falling 39-32, beat the Dixie Conference champs, and lost by only five points(45-40) to the traveling Boston Celtics. John never talked about his stellar college basketball career, even when fanatical basketball fans at church pressed him on the subject. In truth, he was never a team “star”. He spent his time like he spent his life, as a quiet team player, a thoughtful man who led by example.

John married his high school sweetheart, Jeanette Thomason while they were both at Howard College. She was one of nine children whose grandfather had once been mayor of Tarrant City. They began their family as soon as they departed for seminary, which complicated already difficult economic circumstances. As a result, John did not complete seminary despite attendance at both Southwestern and Southern and an honorary doctorate from Judson College that validated his description as “Doctor Jeffers.” In later years, John often spent his time in the presence of “Doctors” of theology, philosophy, education. Perhaps in the early years, lack of a seminary degree made him uncomfortable. When the pulpit committee from AFBC offered him the pastorate, he emphasized that he did not have the requisite seminary degree. It is a compliment both to the man and the church that it never mattered. As he grew older, he confided to friends that he thought the absence of the degree

had been more asset than liability. Without a piece of paper to rely on, he had to read widely, study hard, think deeply, exchanging ideas not with teachers but with some of the greatest theologians and philosophers in the world. No one who knew him well doubted either his wisdom or his learning. The only person in whose presence he sometimes wilted was his diminutive wife, Jeanette. Not one to suffer fools gladly, Jeanette was a woman of strong opinions freely shared. As outgoing as John was reserved, she spent her early married years mothering five children.

Their return to Alabama brought them to pastorates in Collinsville, Hartford, and Andalusia, as well as the directorship of the state Baptist Training Union. But their tenure at AFBC nearly didn't happen. As long-term member Bob Stevenson tells the story, he was a young member of the pulpit committee at Opelika First Baptist who visited Andalusia to hear the young pastor preach. The men on the committee liked him, but the older women rejected him because Jeanette had stayed home with a colicky baby instead of attending church that Sunday. Shortly thereafter, Bob and Frances Stevenson joined AFBC, which was also in a pastor's search. Legendary layman, L. M. Ware, co-chaired the committee, which journeyed to south Alabama to hear the 37 year old minister. They were impressed despite the presence of a bird that flew in the window and soared around the sanctuary until John began his sermon, when the bird immediately roosted and went to sleep. Ware joked that the committee was impressed with his ability to tranquilize the feathered visitor with his sermon.

The arrival of seven Jeffers considerably enlarged the membership of AFBC and brought just the man for four stormy

decades ahead. John's excellent history of the church essentially contains his memoir of those years. His love of missions found fulfillment in the launching of Lakeview, Parkway, and West Auburn Baptist churches. His sermons cited not only theologians but also famous novelists. His criticism of an attempt to teach creationism in public schools and his growing resistance to fundamentalist take-over of the Southern Baptist Convention began his withdrawal from the SBC.

Dale Peterson, John's longtime colleague, described John as "much a Christ-like figure as I have ever known. On many controversial issues, he preferred not to press the issue to a vote, to wait, to expect people to change their minds. He told me that one of his professors at Howard College said, 'Boys, be there when the people need you, and members will put up with a heap of poor sermons.'" Thankfully, Auburn First Baptist never had to worry about that.

Chapter 25

Dissent in Zion: Conflicts During the Jeffers Years

Have you noticed how often we deify people we don't agree with after they retire or die? This phenomenon is not only frequent, it is nearly universal. In the case of AFBC, the deified leader is John Jeffers. Yet, according to his own memoir and my research, the story of the Jeffers' years (1958-1986) is much more controversial.

In one sense the times made the man. The 1950s when the Jeffers arrived were halcyon years of economic prosperity, strong nuclear families, baby boomers ripe for evangelism, rapid growth of Auburn, and an AFBC monopoly on the university community. Both university presidents during these years (Ralph Draughon and Harry Philpott) had been or were members of the church. AFBC and B.S.U. were synonymous. Nearly half of church members were college students. Baptist discipline in their home churches mandated that when they left for college, they should immediately transfer membership to a local church and become active in it. As a result, a church with some 1,500

members would add 300-400 members a year (mostly by “watch-care” or “transfer of letter”), between the beginning of Fall quarter and Thanksgiving. Since First Baptist, like nearly all S.B.C. churches, eagerly added members and almost never deleted them enrollment was artificially expanded. Realistic church leaders referred to “resident” (permanent) and “non-resident” (no longer living in Auburn) members until the church finally purged the names of people who had left the community years or even decades earlier, thus reducing membership from a fanciful 1,500 to a more realistic 500-600.

Demography was not the only problem John faced. The times, they were a-changing. He arrived at the tail end of the “Ozzie and Harriet” generation and soon entered the “Age of Aquarius.” Civil Rights and women’s movements, racial integration of Auburn schools, the sexual revolution, the Viet Nam War, resurgent religious fundamentalism in response to 1960s “Culture Wars,” everyone demanding that he “take a stand”, all must have been daunting. John’s solution was twofold: sail straight into the storm when there was no way around it, following his own moral compass; distinguish between storms he could not navigate around and ones that were more a matter of route than principle.

John described four major crises the church faced during his tenure. In trying to reconcile the deepening Christian division between a gospel of social justice and one of personal salvation, John and the church steered a middle course. One group of church members organized a Community Ministries Fellowship that proposed creation of a pre-school child care center. The center began in 1970 but not without resistance from some who believed this was not the church’s business, others

who worried about the costs, and a few who feared who might enroll. In time, the admission of black children would cause some members to seek sanctuary in a less “liberal” church.

Another controversy broke out between AFBC and the State Convention. Some state leaders wanted to direct mission funds to college ministries through local churches. Others preferred to centralize student work directly under a convention agency. By the 1960s, only the Auburn student program remained within a local church, and there was then more than one Baptist congregation in town. The convention insisted that Auburn conform to the new administrative procedure, and John (who loved to preach to a sanctuary full of students) reluctantly bowed to reality. But many church members—justifiably proud of their student ministry since the 1920s and of local B.S.U. directors such as Leland Cooper, Louise Green (Mrs. Earl Potts), and Walter Porter—resisted. Some angry members accused John and the church staff of capitulating to the state convention. So tense did feelings become that in the 12th year of his pastorate, John offered to resign. Only one member openly asked him to do so, but enough subsequently left over a variety of issues to begin Parkway Baptist Church.

For some departing members, who controlled student ministries was less important than who sat next to them in church. Having worked side by side with African Americans at American Cast Iron Pipe Company in Birmingham as a young man, John had been exposed to perhaps the most unusual corporation in Alabama, founded by a Presbyterian layman who instituted profit-sharing for workers, joint governance by management and worker committees, and equal treatment of black employees. John had concluded that “blacks were people

like me and deserved to be treated fairly.” Reading the writings of journalist Hodding Carter of Mississippi, one of the South’s foremost racial liberals, had deepened his convictions.

In reaction to violent 1961 attacks on Freedom Riders in Anniston, Birmingham, and Montgomery, John agreed to attend a community-wide prayer meeting. Three deacons advised against this, warning that many church members opposed the meeting. John agreed only to promise his congregation on Sunday morning that he would attend as an individual, not as a representative of the church. When asked later what he would do if black students came to worship, he advised that they should be admitted. But determined to avoid a vote on the matter that would divide the church, he sought time to allow emotions to cool and hearts to expand. Both occurred, and the church entrusted John to deal with whoever came as he saw fit. In time, blacks did come and were welcomed.

The main casualty of his ethical sensibilities may have been John’s denominational aspirations, if he had any. In 1968 the state convention selected him to preach the keynote sermon at the state convention. If the preacher was sufficiently electrifying and denominationally “correct”, this was an opportunity to win the convention’s presidency. John was neither. His title (“The Gospel and the Social Order”) and his text (from the 8th century B.C. prophet Amos: “Let justice roll down like the waters....”) doomed his chances. The rich still exploited the poor, he observed, and Baptists held too personal a definition of sin (murder, adultery) while ignoring corporate injustice. Messengers thanked him for his message, but he came in a distant fourth in a four-man presidential race.

Paradoxically, another defining S.B.C. controversy only

briefly rippled the waters of AFBC. At a business meeting in September, 1973, some members noted that since church bylaws did not preclude election of women deacons, the nominating committee should include names of eligible women. In April, 1974, a committee proposed adding to the bylaws, "Nominees may be either men or women." The proposal passed 55 to 38, short of the required two-thirds majority. John suggested a compromise: offer a full slate of women and men so members could vote their conscience. Miss Leland Cooper agreed to have her name listed, explaining that she was inclined to refuse until she remembered her parents discussing a deacons' meeting: "In the conversation my father remarked to my mother, 'If we had had a woman or two in that group, things would have gone a lot smoother.'" Beloved Miss Cooper was elected, though issues of social justice remained.

Chapter 26

Exit Southern Baptist Convention, Enter Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

If John Jeffers had a theological roadmap on which to base his ministerial career, it might have been *2 Timothy* 2:14-16, 23-26. When Paul sent his beloved student, Timothy, advice for pastoring a church, this is part of what he wrote: “Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teachings spread like gangrene.... And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him, he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to knowledge of the truth, and that they may come to their senses.”

John did not personalize what he considered wrong or

even malicious thinking. He did not retaliate or try to destroy. No better example of this can be found than in his gradual, extremely painful exodus from his beloved Southern Baptist Convention into a leadership role in the new Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

The roots of this controversy go far back into Christian history but found most recent ideological expression in the reaction to world upheaval during Napoleon's reign in France, his attempt to secularize his Catholic country, and the violent wars for empire which he launched. Many Christians saw in these 19th Century events the beginning of end times (thus movements such as "apocalypticism" and "millennialism") and prepared for Christ's return. Biblical literalism, rejection of Darwinian science and new methods of Biblical study (historical and literary "criticism") then sweeping through university communities, all merged into a great theological tide that swept across Christian churches and divided Christ's followers into warring camps. By the early 20th Century, their ideas were codified in a series of publications called *The Fundamentals*, which gave a name to the movement and its adherents an ideological identity.

Although fundamentalism was more ideological than regional or denominational, it particularly flourished among northern Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. Indeed, its intellectual capital was renowned Princeton Theological Seminary. Rabidly sectarian Southern Baptists, who rejected all ecumenical cooperation with other denominations whether conservative, moderate, or liberal, reacted cautiously or even with hostility toward fundamentalists. And fundamentalist Baptists in the South reacted by refusing to join the SBC and

instead formed their own independent churches.

By the 1980s, the inevitable decline in baptisms and the “plateauing” of SBC membership occasioned by the aging of “Baby Boomers” and the receding demographic generations that followed them combined with the 1960s “Culture Wars” to generate a backlash whose expression in the SBC was a resurgent fundamentalism that ultimately organized like a modern political movement, won control of the Convention, and moved the denomination toward ecumenical cooperation with like minded groups.

During these years, John Jeffers was a leader of both the Alabama State Convention and the SBC, though he did not care for denominational politics. He served as trustee of the powerful SBC Sunday School Board, of Judson College (which awarded him an honorary doctorate), and chaired both the Alabama Baptist Christian Life Commission and the Historical Commission.

Both traditionalists and theologically conservative within the context of historic American religious groups, SBC leaders such as John resisted the “takeover” of the Convention (as they called it) or “correction” (as their opponents called it). For the Baptist historian in John, the opposition seemed more “radical” than “conservative,” severing Southern Baptist from historic beliefs such as the priesthood of the believer (new Baptist “popes” were determined to tell lay people what to believe and do), separation of church and state (fundamentalists wanted to merge evangelicalism and government with the church dictating the rules), and autonomy of each congregation (fundamentalists booted out congregations that ordained women as deacons or ministers).

At first, John sought to do in the SBC what he had done at AFBC: reason with opponents; respect them while neither capitulating nor quarreling endlessly with them; try not to draft written policies or creeds that everyone had to sign to be considered a “faithful Baptist.” He made sure that a full compliment of AFBC members attended each Convention in order to defend those values.

Chapter 27

The Dale Peterson Era

I would contend that historically speaking, we should refer to the decades from the 1970s to the early 20th Century as the John Jeffers-Dale Peterson era of AFBC. Dale was born in Louisville, Kentucky, and graduated from Kentucky Southern College in 1969. He continued his education at a much better known and prestigious institution, the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music from 1969 until 1973, completing his masters and the class work for his Ph.D. Music theory was one of his strengths, a skill that is as critical to composition as imagination is to writing.

Dale grew up in a working class family and attended a similar kind of church, 18th Street Baptist, one that would now be called theologically fundamentalist but was also warm-hearted, mainstream Southern Baptist. It was there that his parents met a couple in Training Union by the name of Hornbuckle who had a son 7 or 8 years older than Dale. Their paths would cross repeatedly over the next half century. Bill Hornbuckle graduated from high school and enrolled at Howard college in Birmingham. He returned to Louisville to attend

seminary and also became music minister at his home church. His younger family friend was now drum major for his high school and an aspiring musician. Bill was sufficiently impressed with Dale to ask him to conduct the choir on an occasion when he had to be out of town. He even paid Dale for taking his place.

Hornbuckle left Louisville for Opelika, Alabama, to become music minister at First Baptist Church for four years before moving 12 miles down Auburn-Opelika highway to the neighboring First Baptist Church. When he left for Texas a few years later, John Jeffers asked him for a recommendation of someone to take his place. Bill gave him the name of a young fellow from Louisville, a family friend newly graduated from Cincinnati Conservatory.

Much of the rest of the story we know, but here are some professional highlights you may not know. Dale is the longest serving minister in the history of AFBC. He served as chair of the Music and Worship Committee for the Southern Division of the American Choral Directors Association. He wrote numerous articles published in *The Church Musician* magazine. He has composed more than 100 anthems published by numerous publishers, one of which, "Sound the Trumpet," has sold more than 100,000 copies. For more than 30 years, he has been a recipient of the Standard Awards given by the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers. Many churches, colleges, universities and Baptist state conventions have commissioned him to write anthems for special occasions. For the past 6 years Dale has taught all Auburn University Music majors and minors their first year of music theory.

Now that you have the skeleton of a life, let me provide some meat for it. I interviewed four people: Charles McCartha, a

dentist and gifted composer in his own right, from Tallassee, Alabama; Dale's youthful mentor, Bill Hornbuckle (now retired and living in Texas); Mike Williams (former History graduate student at Auburn University; AFBC part-time youth minister; pastor; History professor and dean at Dallas Baptist University; and author of a fine biography of our former pastor and SBC superstar, I. T. Tichenor); and Jan Kennamer (Auburn graduate, AFBC college choir alumna, and presently college minister at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Homewood, Alabama). I asked each of them simply to tell me about Dale. Following is a summary of those conversations organized into three subject categories: *Conductor*; *Composer*; and *Minister*.

Conductor

Mike Williams: "Dale had a great influence on me and so many others. He taught us about 'excellence'. He demanded excellence not for its own sake, but for God's sake, because we honor God in the excellence of what we do. He was a perfectionist who always pushed himself harder than anyone else. He taught me a philosophy of worship, to have high standards of worship."

Jan Kennamer: "As a freshman college student from little Morris, Alabama, I found Dale to be intimidating. I came from a small pond where I was a big fish to a big pond where I was a little fish. I tried the bell choir, but I was terrible. Dale stared at me. I talked with him, and he said he would find a place where I was more comfortable. He did. And I was so happy and learned so much from him. The three words I would use to describe him are *encourage*, *challenge*, and *excellence*. Dale had a standard of excellence. He challenged me to be better than I thought I could

be. He told me that God demanded the same thing of me that he demanded: to be excellent; to be my best.”

Composer

Bill Hornbuckle: “Music theory is one of Dale’s great strengths, and that is critical in composition. I go to churches all the time to conduct choirs, and when I examine their choral library, I almost always find some of Dale’s anthems. His music grows out of his parish experience, and it is not confined to Baptists. It serves any volunteer choir meeting every Sunday and trying to enrich the worship experience.”

“His Dad, Charlie, was so proud of Dale that he framed Dale’s published music and hung it all over his living room wall. And when you publish more than 100 anthems, they cover a lot of space.”

Charles McCartha: “I first met Dale about ten years ago. He and Julia Morgan agreed to read and listen to some of my compositions. They were very supportive and offered wonderful suggestions. Dale and I began to exchange music for the other to criticize.”

Minister

Curiously enough, this category elicited lengthier responses than the other two. McCartha expressed it like this: “He has become a ‘Big Brother’ for me. I admire him so much. I no longer think of Dale as a minister of music. I think of him as simply a minister. He takes people to the doctor in Birmingham. He visits them in the hospital. He is the glue that holds your church together. And it has taken a toll on him as a composer. One of his spiritual gifts

is encouraging. And he is so careful in critiquing my work, so respectful of my feelings, yet frank in his criticism. He is so nurturing and mentoring, and he also has a wonderful sense of humor. He is just fun to be around. Dale is a musician, but he is so much more than that. He is in the truest sense a minister who changes enmity into harmony, not only in the realm of music but in the church.”

Jan Kenamer: “Dale and Dr. Jeffers were the first people to see the possibilities in me. I was studying personnel management at Auburn, but Dale and John forced me to consider whether that is what God wanted me to do with my life. The reason I am serving on church staff ministering to students is because of Dale and John. Maintaining a sense of ‘calling’ is hard sometimes, and in my mind I return to Auburn First Baptist to remember and reaffirm my calling. Following my seminary work, I took a chaplaincy internship. One night I was called to the ER to baptize an infant who was dying. Afterward, I needed desperately to talk with someone. So I called Dale at 2:00 a.m. and talked to him for an hour about what had happened.”

“Dale would not let me remain in Morris, Alabama. He demanded that I move somewhere else. Although I still live here in Morris physically, I have moved spiritually a very long way from Morris. Wherever we are in the world, those of us who ‘graduated’ from his choirs still sing Dale’s songs, perhaps not literally but certainly in the deepest meaning of what the words mean to us. I am not the only one that Auburn First Baptist inspired. There are so many stories. The church gave us opportunities to serve.”

Mike Williams: “I learned pastoral ministry from Dale and John. I watched them interact with church members who stopped by when we went for coffee and tea at the little restaurant near Toomer’s Corner. Dale opened his home to college students like me. I visited with him when he went to the hospital and learned how to minister to people there. He once warned me that ministry is often a hiding place for lazy people. ‘Don’t be one of them’, he told me. ‘Demand the highest standard of yourself.’”

Dale Peterson’s shadow is taller than he is. And his legacy will last, like that of so many who came to this place before him, as long as this congregation endures.

Afterword

The epilogue that John Jeffers wrote not long before his death in 2008 ends on a sour note not characteristic of his eternally upbeat spirit and faith in the future. But then it was a time in the church of division, rancor, and animosity. John was good enough historian to know this was a common if not inevitable stage in the life of all social and religious institutions and not unique to Auburn First Baptist Church. And he was an honest enough historian not to sweep trouble under the pews to be ignored or forgotten.

Most local church historians sanitize their congregation's story because church members have unrealistic expectations about their history. They mythologize some long ago era as much better than today, forgetting that all epochs in a congregation's life grow out of a certain historical context that no longer exists. A church can't recapture another time no matter how hard it tries. As an ancient proverb reminds us, "no man crosses the same river twice because the river changes and so does the man." The church has to move on, respectful of its past, but resilient in its response to change. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and

forever. His Church, unfortunately, is not.

Just as there are no perfect Christians and no perfect churches, there are no perfect pastors. Troy Morrison, former Executive Director of the Alabama Baptist State Baptist Convention and a conflict management expert, likes to quote an apocryphal letter describing a perfect pastor: “The perfect pastor preaches exactly ten minutes. He condemns sin, but never hurts anyone’s feelings. He works from 8:00 a.m. until midnight, and is also the church janitor. He makes \$40 a week, wears good clothes, drives a good car, and donates \$30 a week to his church. He is 29 years old and has 40 years experience. He makes 15 house calls a day and is always in his office.”

In his memoir, *Apples of Gold*, Morrison discussed types of Baptist churches. Person(s)-centered churches typically are controlled by one to three lay persons, usually successful businessmen. They use wealth, intelligence, and influence to dominate church policy. Fellow church members may resent them but nonetheless accept their leadership. Wise pastors make friends of such leaders or become former pastors.

Family-centered churches (typically small and rural) are often governed by one to three families rather than by individuals. This makes a pastor’s work even more difficult because power is more diffused.

Committee-centered churches are usually larger, more likely urban, and contain better educated members. Authority runs through committees (finance; personnel; trustees; Sunday School; W.M.U.; youth; college). This leadership pattern tends to be the most diffused, democratic, and representative.

Pastor-centered churches tend to be the most authoritarian. This pattern has become especially common

among fundamentalist churches, where pastors often claim special insight from God about Scripture, doctrine, gender, race, politics, economics, and other matters that congregants must accept. Such pastors are often charismatic preachers, lightening rods on various social, political, and theological issues, and are strongly backed by key church leaders. They also tend to thrive on controversy.

Auburn First Baptist flirted with both individual and family-centered leadership early in its history but by the post Civil War period had settled into a pattern of short ministerial terms between long periods of lay leadership by a few influential males (I. T. Tichenor in the 1870s and 80s and Patrick Mell in the 1880s and 90s). By the 20th Century, leadership had become more diverse while maintaining the pattern of two or three alpha male leaders. Between 1900 and the 1960s, Leland Cooper was a forceful leader. So was Spright Dowell during the 1920s and L.M. Ware between the 1930s and the 1960s.

By the 1960s, the committee structure had become more important than any single leader. Although quiet and never a traditional church leader, Mary Jim Coleman chaired the flower committee for years and turned the sanctuary into a veritable garden. Camilla Lowry represented a different model of leadership: forceful; opinionated; articulate; a worker bee who refused no task asked of her and performed them all well. Mission leadership came from Lowry as well as Dwayne Beckett, Bob and Frances Stevenson, Dartie Flynt, and Wallace Baldwin. Helen Brown pioneered the jail ministry. Bill and Ruth Alford, Gerald Johnson, Claude and Mary Virginia Moore, Frank and Pat Randle, Oxford and Phyllis Smith, Drew and Beth Smith, Charlotte Ward, Dennis Wilson, Charlotte and David Sutton,

Leigh Anne Armstrong, and a host of others assumed key committee leadership roles. By the end of the 20th Century, committees more than individuals shaped the church.

Troy Morrison ends his book by describing levels of conflict and steps required for its management or resolution. Conflict tends to escalate from differences to disagreement, distrust, detachment, disassociation, and destruction. Successfully managing conflict requires collaboration, investigation, negotiation, and reconciliation. Congregations function best when members retain mutual respect for each other, do not personalize differences, try to find middle ground, and determine that a good and healthy church welcomes a variety of viewpoints, ideologies, and theological opinions rather than trying to enforce uniformity or theological “purity” on one side or the other. Churches pass through all these stages if they survive long enough. The issue isn’t whether conflict will occur. It will. The issues are: what caused the conflict; whether it can be resolved; and if so, at what spiritual cost to the congregation?

Returning to consideration of the nearest thing a church ever has to a “perfect pastor”, meticulous research almost always reveals a cache of members or former members who definitely did not consider the person a “perfect pastor”, challenged his leadership, fought him over priorities, and often left the church when they could not mobilize a majority of members to their side. Put another way, “perfect pastors” often are deemed to be so by the “winners” in a succession of congregational disputes. Such disputes tend to occur amid transitional times in a community or nation, when long enduring consensus breaks down, secular tensions seep into the church, members suddenly and surprisingly become aware that other members whom they

assumed thought like they did actually disagreed with them on important issues.

That is when churches with mature members shine brightest, choosing love, forgiveness, tolerance, openness, reconciliation, unity, and common purpose over spite, intolerance, warring cliques, secrecy, divisiveness, and personal agendas. Such churches live out the reality of an Arab proverb drawn from Bedouin experiences along ancient caravan routes: “The dogs bark, but the caravan moves on.” Churches will always hear the distant barking about this or that. Wise and mature churches learn to ignore most of the barking and make sure their caravan moves steadily on toward the Kingdom of God.

Wayne Flynt
Auburn, Alabama
December 2013

Appendices

APPENDIX I

Church Covenant

I. As we trust we have been brought by divine grace to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and to give up ourselves to him, so we do now, relying on his gracious aid, solemnly covenant with each other, and promise that we will walk together in brotherly love as become the members of a Christian Church; that we will exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.

II. That we will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and for others, that we will endeavor to bring up such as may be at any time under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and both by precept and example to try to win our acquaintances to the Savior, to Holiness, and to Eternal Life.

III. That we will strive together for the support of a faithful evangelical ministry among us; that according to our abilities and opportunities we will as faithful stewards of the Lord do good to all men, especially in helping to extend the Gospel in its purity and power to the whole human family.

IV. And that through life, amidst evil as well as good report, we will humbly and earnestly seek to live to the glory of Him, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

APPENDIX II

Articles of Faith of Auburn First Baptist Church

Adopted at its constitution, July 28, 1838.

I. We believe in one only true and living God, and that there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

II. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the word of God, and the only rule of faith and practice.

III. We believe in the doctrine of eternal and particular election.

IV. We believe in the doctrine of original sin.

V. We believe in man's impotency to recover himself from the fallen state he is in by nature, of his own free will and ability.

VI. We believe that sinners are justified in the sight of God only by the imputed righteousness of Christ.

VII. We believe that God's elect shall be called, regenerated and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and that the saints shall persevere in grace and never finally fall away.

VIII. We believe that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the church of Christ, that true believers are the only subjects of these ordinances, and that immersion only is Baptism.

IX. We believe in the resurrection and the general judgment, and that the punishment of the wicked will be everlasting, and the joys of the righteous will be eternal.

X. We believe that no minister has a right to administer the ordinances, only such as are called of God, as was Aaron, and comes under the imposition of hands by a Presbytery, and in fellowship with the church of which he is a member.

APPENDIX III

Rules of Decorum

The following is taken from the *History of the First Baptist Church of Huntsville*. These rules were adopted by the Enon Church, August 4, 1821. It is reasonable to assume that they were being used by all the churches being organized in that era.

Rule the 1st

Members are received into our fellowship union by experience by the unanimous voice of the church and also by letter.

Rule the 2nd

Each member to attend church meeting once a month and for neglecting to attend meeting twice are liable to be called to account for nonattendance, especially the males.

Rule the 3rd

The minister is moderator in all church meetings and in case of his absence the church is at liberty to choose another.

Rule the 4th

All business done by the unanimous voice of the church that are present must stand, except in cases that the church agrees to act by a majority.

Rule the 5th

It appears agreeable to the Word of God that the deacons' duty is to collect from the hands of the church according to their several abilities for the support of the gospel, expense of the communion table, and the necessity of the poor.

Rule the 6th

No member ought to move out of the bounds of the church without first applying to the church for “dismissal” or leave church meeting without consent of the church.

All members present at the sacramental season shall take their seats, unless some matter of dealing with some may be unsettled at that time.

Rule the 8th

Any testimony may be heard for or against a member of our church, but the church to be their own judges of the same.

Rule the 9th

Members that have been suspended or excommunicated by the church are to be received into full fellowship with the church by giving satisfactory evidence of their repentance.

Rule the 10th

It is the duty of each member to abstain from evil company as much as their world concerns will admit of.

Rule the 11th

A member having a motion to make to the church shall rise to speak and shall not speak more than three times to any subject without leave.

Rule the 12th

We do believe that there is a Sabbath Day that should be strictly kept holy and distinct from other days.

Rule the 13th

We do believe it to be our indispensable duty to make use of our best endeavors to discharge all our just debts; and if a member

move out of the county in which the church is, without making use of his best endeavors to satisfy his creditors must be considered a crime and come under the censure of the church.

Rule the 14th

Any motion made by any member and seconded shall be taken up and considered by the church, and but one to speak at a time.

Rule the 15th

Any member having a public charge against another shall first make it known to him or her, and if they should fail to come to the church and answer to the complaint, the church shall appoint members to cite them to the next meeting.

Rule the 16th

It shall be the duty of the clerk to read the minutes of the day at the close of each conference.

APPENDIX IV

The Memorial Windows

North

“The Nativity”—Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Hansell, in memory of
our loved ones

“The Good Shepherd”—Mr. and Mrs. Elmer G. Salter, in memory
of our parents

“The Resurrection”—Mr. and Mrs. William A. Rose

East

Theme: “The Bible” (from front to rear)

“The Creation”—Dr. and Mrs. O. C. Burkart, in memory of
Jake Ellard Watkins

“The Nation of Israel”—In honor of Maty Hall Ware and Lamar
Mims Ware, by their children

“The Wisdom Literature”—Charles L. Isbell, in memory of
Alma Bentley Isbell and Julia Collins Isbell

“The Prophets”—Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Conner, Sr., in memory
of Marshall Conner, Jr.

“The Gospels”—Mr. and Mrs. James A. Naftel

“The Acts and Letters of the Apostles”—Col. and Mrs. Clements
B. Merritt

“The Coming Kingdom”—Mr. and Mrs. V. C. Helms

“Stewardship Window” (east stairwell)—by the Board of Trustees
honoring the pastors

West

Theme: “The Church” (from front to rear)

“The Foundation of the Church”—Daniel Flurry Moore in honor
of O. C. and Irene Moore

“Pentecost”—Mrs. J. C. Lowery and children, in memory of J. C.
Lowery

“The Ordinances”—In memory of John Frederick and Fannie
Camp Duggar, by their daughters

“The World Mission”—Mr. and Mrs. O. C. Moore, in honor of Dr.
and Mrs. Howard Olive

“Worship”—Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Newman, in memory of Dr.
James R. Edwards

“Ministry”—Mr. and Mrs. Jay C. Grimes

“Student Ministry”—In honor of Miss Leland Cooper by former
students

“The B S U Window” (west stairwell)—Dedicated to Campus
Ministers

East Stairwell

(from the ground up)

1. In memory of Alexander Frazer, Paul Shoffeitt, Dalton R.
Harbor, and Mrs. Emma Little Webb

2. In memory of H. C. Teer, by the Teer family

3. In memory of I. T. Tichenor, Mrs. Matthew Turner, and
Spright Dowell

4. In memory of Dalton Bruce Jones, by Mr. and Mrs. Bill Jones

5. In memory of Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Eaton, by Mr. and Mrs. V. C.
Helms

6. In memory of Miss Annie Heard, Mrs. Paul Bomar,
Mrs. J. B. Jackson, Mrs. Mary Reese Frazer, and Miss Kate
McElhaney

West Stairwell

(from the ground up)

1. In memory of Carol Dianne Wingate, by Mr. and Mrs. H. T. Wingate
2. Honoring Choir Directors and Ministers of Music, by Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Phillips
3. Honoring Ministers of Education, by the Adult III Department
4. Honoring Miss Leland Cooper, in memory of her family
5. In memory of J. V. Brown, W. L. Long, J. C. Lowery, John T. Williamson, and W. W. Hill
6. In memory of R D. Webb, J. F. Duggar, Welbom Jones, J. C. Ford, and Felton Little

Transom Windows, Main Lobby

1. In memory of W. W. Hill, by his family
2. In honor of Mrs. Fannye Heard McDonald, by Mrs. Frances Vowell
3. In memory of Mr. and Mrs. Tom S. Rogers, by Mr. and Mrs. Leon Caine

The Baptistery Window

Mr. and Mrs. Elmer G. Slater, in honor of Elmer George Salter and Frank Carson Salter

APPENDIX V

The Memorial Organ

The Memorial Organ consists of 44 ranks made up of 2,488 pipes of varying size and material. It was built by the Schantz Organ Company of Orville, Ohio, founded in 1873 by Abraham Tschantz (later changed to Schantz). Three of the founder's grandsons now operate the company. The tonal design of the instrument evolved from the planning of Edward Tibbs in consultation with Dale and Julia Peterson and Al Lunesford of the Schantz Company. The functional visual design was executed by the Schantz Company in consultation with the Organ Committee of the church. Each pipe was carefully regulated and balanced by tonal finisher John Schantz, assisted by Tom Morrow.

Three of the 44 ranks were retained from the Little Memorial Organ given to the church in 1929 by C. Felton Little in memory of his parents, Charles Edward and Charlotte Felton Little. They are:

Chimes	20 Bells
8' Gemshorn	61 Pipes
16' Brumbass	32 Pipes

The organ is unique in that it was not the gift of one or even several individuals, but was made possible through the love offerings of more than 350 persons. A book of memorials containing the names of donors and honorees may be seen in the church office.

The wording on the plaque at the left front of the auditorium is as follows:

The Memorial Organ replaces the organ given in 1928 by Mr. C. Felton Little honoring his parents. That instrument served the church almost fifty years. Contributions made by numerous donors whose names are listed in the church's *Book of Memorials* made possible the installation of the present instrument which was dedicated on October 2, 1977.

"Praise Ye the Lord... with stringed instruments and organs"

Psalms 150

APPENDIX VI

Church Staff

Pastors	
Obadiah Echols	1838-1842
E. C. B. D. Thomas	1843
Albert Williams	1847-1852
William Williams	1852-1855
Willis Jones	1855-1858
H. E. Taliaferro	1858-1860
M. B. Harden	1860-1862
<i>War Years</i>	
M. W. E. Lloyd	1868-1878
I. T. Tichenor	1878
J. S. Dill	1879-1881
M. W. E. Lloyd	1881
W. M. Blackwelder	1883-1884
M. W. E. Lloyd	1884-1890
J. W. Willis	1892-1894
J. J. Cloud	1895-1900
A. Y. Napier	1901-1904
C. C. Pugh	1904-1906
M. P. Edwards	1906-1920
E. W. Holmes	1921-1926
J. R. Edwards	1926-1945
Hoyt A. Ayers	1945-1949
Howard D. Olive	1950-1956
Harold Cole	1956-1957
John H. Jeffers	1958-1986

W. Glenn Turner	1986-1991
Howard M. Roberts	1993-1998
Vaughn CroweTipton	1999-2004
James L. Evans	2004-2012
John M. "Tripp" Martin, III	2013–

BSU Secretaries • Campus Ministers	
Elva Leland Cooper	1923-1928
Davis C. Wooley	1936-1940
T. C. Clark	1940-1942
Raymond Coppinger	1942-1943
Louise Green Potts	1943-1946
Charles Roselle	1946-1948
Bob Dorough	1949
Pitts Hughes	1949-1950
A. B. Parsons	1950-1951
Maurice Willis	1952-1955
Richard Spain	1955-1958
Harold Gully	1958-1967
June Matthews (associate)	1958-1967
Walter Porter ⁵	1967-1968
Oxford Smith (associate) ⁵	1967-1968

Choir Directors • Ministers of Music	
Kate McElhane y	1887-1922
Mrs. Perryman	1918
Christine Tidwell	1936-1946
H. E. Arment	1946

⁵ In November of 1968 the Campus Minister and Associate became the employees of the State Board of Missions.

Eleanor Abercrombie	1946-1948
Edgar Glyde (evening)	1946-1948
Richard Collins	1949-1952
Paul Stewart	1952-1953
Richard Collins	1953-1956
Robert E. Balliew	1957
Ruby Barker	1957-1959
Jerry L. Warren	1959-1963
R. B. Easterling	1963-1968
William R. Hornbuckle	1968-1972
R. Dale Peterson	1973–

Ministers of Education • Associate Pastors	
Robert E. Balliew	1957
Nancy Dunnahoe	1967-1968
Evelyn Blount	1969-1970
Franklin J. Butler	1972-1978
John T. Brantley	1979-1983
Barbara Stauffer	1985-1989
Alica Kirkpatrick-Bremer	1994-2012

Minister to Children	
Sherri Jenkins Rainer	1995-2004

Youth Ministers	
Dale Henderson Steve Steverson Mike Williams Bill Moore Susan Owens Elaine Ridgeway Tim Graus	

College Minister	
H. K. Kingkade	1990-1993
Ruth Perkins Lee	2002-2003

Minister to Students (College and Youth)	
Mark Allen Johnston	1994-2002
Ruth Perkins Lee	2003-2012

Mission Pastors
Wyley M. Peebles Clarence M. Clinkscales O. Thomas Eason Ted Houston Joel Snider Ken Corr Robert Harvey

Pre-School Directors • CDC Directors	
Emily Lacy	1970-1972
Jay Deese	1973-1987
Susan Shelton	1988-1990
Micki Jones	1992-1994
Belinda Paul	1994-1999
Edna Earl Christmas	1999-2003
Holly Judd	2003-2008
Jennifer Stubblefield	2008-2011
Milissa Clower	2011–

Organists
Mrs. Swanson Miss Kate McElhaney F. P. Williams Mrs. Bessie Wright Miss Sara Mardre (Tidmore)

Christine Tidwell
Dilson Petrey
Frances High
Royce Harbor
Mary Baron Conaway
Ann Thomas
Mickey McInnish
Sara Beth Seay
Janet Holland
Julia Peterson
Sylvia Gossett
Bryan King

Secretaries • Office Administrators

Veda Long
Fran Rollins
Martha Ann Humphrey
Martha Beaty
Mary Shelton
Katherine Reaves
Diane Curenton
Natalie Garland
Kathleen Watson Dunn
Becky Sanders
Donna Miller
June Hardy
Joyce Blackwell
Linda Goodman
Dorothy L. Mitcham
Nancy Gardner
Pam Nichols
Sue McDonald
Dixie Robertson
Leigh Compton
Judi Brown
Peggy Johnson

APPENDIX VII

Church Officers

Church Clerks

A. F. McElhaney
E. R Lloyd
L. W. Wilkinson
J. L. Forbes
W. B. Frazer
W. V. Jones
Hubert Harris
H. R. Benford
H. C. Teer
D. R. Harbor
H. T. Wingate
Frances Stevenson

Treasurers

P. H. Mell, Jr.
C. E. Little
W. D. Martin
C. F. Little
S. J. T. Price
W. H. Eaton
O. C. Moore
W. A. Jordan
H. A. Nation
L. L. Long
H. C. Teer
Daniel Benson
Louis B. Trucks

Sunday School Superintendents

W. B. Frazer
J. F. Duggar
R D. Webb
W. C. Blasingame
S. J. T. Price
E. D. Stivers
F. W. Parker
Hugh G. Grant
W. H. Eaton
J. B. Clark
J. V. Brown
S. W. Garrett
B. C. Pope
E. L. Mayton
D. G. Sturkie
H. A. Nation
D. N. Bottoms
V. C. Helms
O. C. Moore
J. C. Lowery
F. J. Marshall
Sam T. Jones
Tom Cope
Dan Hollis
Allen Brown
Richard Graves
Earnest Phillips
Fred Lacey
J. R Stevenson
Dennis Wilson
Mary Virginia Moore
LaVaughn Johnson

Training Union Directors

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R D. Webb
C. S. Yarborough
George F. Freeman
Charles Gray
B. H. Bryan
R L. Haggard
Leland Cooper
O. T. Ivey
O. C. Moore
Frank Jones
W. H. Cowan
H. O. Murfree
R P. Russell
Lamar Dunn
John Davis Brooks
Jack Finley
H. A. Nations
John H. Thomas
Catherine Goldsmith
Beth Martin
W. A. Jordan
Clifton B. Cox
Pete Turnham
John E. Deloney
L. B. (Tex) Williams
O. N. Andrews
Joe Coon
Kenneth Cadenhead
Wayne Jordan
Oyette Chambliss
Gerald Johnson
Dwayne Beckett
Doris Beckett
Mary Virginia Moore
Jimmy DeVenney
Coleman Ward
Paul Smith
Judi Brown
Barbara Stauffer
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W. M. U. Presidents

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Mrs. T. O. Wright
Mrs. E. V. Caldwell
Mrs. E. G. Boyd
Mrs. M. P. Edwards
Mrs. H. E. Dalby
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Mrs. C. C. Brooks
Mrs. J. B. Jackson
Miss Annie Heard
Mrs. J. L. Wright
Mrs. H. C. Teer
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Mrs. W. A. Jordan
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Mrs. Glen Shrader
Mrs. Elmer Salter
Mrs. J. R. Parrish
Mrs. W. H. Eaton
Mrs. Dan Hollis
Mrs. Camilla Lowry
Mrs. Inez Hepburn
Mrs. H. W. Green
Mrs. Eleanor Allgood
Mrs. Ada Ware
Mrs. Geraldine Farrington
Mrs. Billie Ruth Wood
Mrs. Jonnie Dee Little
Mrs. Dartie Flynt

Brotherhood Directors

C. A. Shepherd
Frank Forwood
Billy Austin
Fred Browder
T. Howard Johnson
Lonnie Whitt
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W. L. Alford
Paul Shoffeitt
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Ted Little
Dwayne Beckett
Claude Boyd
Lloyd Lauerman
Mark Yohn

APPENDIX VIII

Chronological Listing of Properties, Buildings, and Other Facilities of Auburn First Baptist Church

Year	Added or Acquired
1843	First Church Building
1848	Second Church Building
1867	Third Church Building
1892	Fourth Church Building
188?	First Pastorium Acquired
1927	Second Pastorium Acquired
1929	Fifth (Present) Church Building
1945	Clifton Jones Property Received
1948	Church Building Enlarged
1950	Third Pastorium Acquired
1954	First Educational Unit Built
1956	Air Conditioning of Church Building
1957	Lakeview Mission Started
1960	B.S.U. Center Built
1961	Choir Loft Alteration
1964	Auburn Heights Mission
1965	Shoemaker Property Purchased
1966	Second Educational Unit
1972	Gentilly Trailer Mission
1974	Fellowship Hall Renovated
1974	Church Building Re-roofed and Painted
1975	Gentilly-Ridgewood Lot Purchased
1975	First Gentilly-Ridgewood Structure (Proposed)

1978	Activities Building Renovated
1990	Renovation of Sanctuary Building
2012	Renovation of Sanctuary & Education Buildings

APPENDIX IX

History of the Auburn Baptist Church

By Mary Reese Frazer

Originally published as a pamphlet in 1926, by Auburn First Baptist Church.

In 1838, this part of the State was inhabited by the Creek Indians; they were not an antagonistic tribe, and were somewhat friendly with the white man.

One John Harper and his son, Jack, came into this part of the state of Alabama in 1833, in search of a new home, and new surroundings. Mr. Harper came from Harris County, Georgia.

There were no railroads at that time, so these two came on horseback, then the most convenient mode of travel for men and often women.

Throughout the country there were what was known as taverns or Inns.

Mr. Harper and his son stopped to spend the night at an Inn, kept by one Mr. Taylor, as the way was long, and it took more than a day's travel to complete their journey over here. In that Inn was a beautiful daughter of Mr. Taylor, Elizabeth Taylor, who had much to do in shaping the destiny or rather the early history of our lovely village. She, in fact, named the town "Auburn".

Mr. Harper, I am told, was a very fine Christian gentleman, and was quite generous in his treaty with the Creeks.

They were so pleased with the transaction that they agreed at once to vacate this, their former home, some going toward the East, and some going West, naming the towns, and rivers, and creeks as they chose. These towns and water courses still retain the beautiful Indian names.

Mr. Harper came in communication with one Mr. Simeon Perry, a Civil Engineer, whom he engaged to lay off the town. Mr. Perry was engaged in this work six months, he being so pleased with the location decided to build, and bring his family here.

The Cawthons now own the residence that Mr. Perry erected. This generous man of God, Mr. Harper, made gifts of the church lots to the following denominations. To the Methodist (Mr. Harper was a Methodist) he gave the lot very nearly where the church now stands. It was dedicated in 1850. Of course the original church was a different structure to the present one.

To the Presbyterians Mr. Harper presented them the lot now used by the Y. W. C. A. That house was built by Mr. Edwin Reese, Mrs. Margaret Reese, and F. M. Reese, relatives of this scribe.

About 1857, or perhaps a little earlier, a Mr. McGreggor, a rich man, built the Episcopal Church. It was situated about where the library is. That church stood as a monument to that good man for many years.

The Baptist lot was where the laundry now is. The Baptists were not very prominent in Auburn at that time, so their first structure was a log house; their first preacher was a Mr. E. G. B. Thomas. His Mother dreamed three nights in succession that she was to have a son who would be a Baptist preacher. She also dreamed what his name was to be. The third night after this

wonderful dream, Mrs. Thomas had her husband get up and write the name of her son, then unborn. This much named Divine was Edwin Champion Johnson Baptist Bowler Wheeler Nicholas Demer Steven Resdin Moore Thomas. It was said by some of the older citizens that Mr. Thomas was so afflicted with names that he proved to be a poor preacher, and he only remained a short while, returning to his home in Georgia. At that time services were only held once a month. This town was then on a boom, and after nearly fifteen years of much building it was finished, for more than twenty years.

During the period of the boom many prominent and influential Baptists came in from all parts of the South. Among the number were the Swansons, Sales, Echols, Masons, and a Mr. Thomas Slaton. There were many others that the writer of this history does not recall.

The above named Baptists, it has been said, were not pleased with the situation of the first church, so they purchased the lot where the Baptist Church now stands.

The second church was an old fashioned wooden structure, with a long front porch, two entrances, one for the men and the other for the women and children. The pulpit, an old box concern with steps on either end, and doors to close the preacher in securely.

The church, according to my recollection, seated about two hundred people, including the negroes, who entered from the back of the church and occupied the back pews. (There were no negro churches in those days).

The writer of this history remembers as far back as 1854, and to her young memory, the music was good. A Mrs. Patrick Swanson was the organist, and the organ was an old fashion

melodeon. Mrs. Swanson said she would play if a curtain was drawn in front of her, so that no one could see her. She was a modest and timid woman. To gratify this dear little woman, the melodeon was placed in the center of the church, and a green curtain drawn in front of the singers and organist.

After this church was completed, in about 1837, or perhaps a little later, the good men of the church decided to call a young man from Savannah, Georgia, Reverend Albert Williams. He moved here with his family, but for some reason unknown to this scribe, he resigned, and in the early 50's Moved to Montgomery, where he lived for many years, and died there, having left the ministry. He was a very wealthy man. So the new church was left pastorless.

In 1852 the Reverend Mr. William Williams called. (Brother of Albert Williams). Mr. Williams accepted the call and for several years was a most acceptable minister, a very highly educated man, who was graduated in law, from Princeton.

A strange romance is woven around the life of this young polished gentleman.

Mr. Williams was brought up in Savannah, Georgia, his father was a very rich man and owned a very large cotton factory. At that time there were but few such factories in the South.

After Mr. Williams' graduation he came home for the summer. One morning he walked over to see how things were going along in the Williams Factory, and going from one department to the other he came into the spinning room. There he saw a pretty black haired girl busy at her wheel. He was so pleased with her appearance that he introduced himself to her. She, not knowing that she should return the compliment, only modestly nodded her head; he asked her to tell him her name,

which she said was Ruth Bell.

A friendship soon sprang up between these two, and he began to bring such books as he thought she could read and understand, and always after that the manager would see a new book upon the wheel of Ruth Bell, the poor factory spinner. After a while he asked Ruth's father to allow him to visit his daughter.

The father refused this request and warned his daughter against the young man's flattering attentions.

In spite of these protests, Mr. Williams would go to the little factory home to see this girl of his choice, and all the family would sit with them during the evening. Ruth, her mother and sisters always brought their knitting and plied their needles very diligently. At last the climax came, and Mr. Williams asked for the hand of this modest factory girl. The Williams family refused to accept such a fact, but in spite, of the protests of his fashionable and aristocratic sisters, he told them that the wedding would come off. So his sisters accepted the situation and began to purchase a beautiful, and useful trousseau for the bride-to-be. They took her in their home and taught her many useful lessons and in about 1845 Mr. Williams married this young factory girl. They immediately left for New York, and there he placed his young wife in the best school, and remained with her until she finished.

He, in the meantime, was gloriously converted and went into the ministry in New York where he also graduated.

As was stated before, Mr. Williams came to this charge in 1852, bringing his wife and several children with him. He occupied the house now owned by Amos Cox. I think at that time the Baptists owned that residence.

While Mr. Williams was in this work here, he was elected

to a chair in Penfield, Georgia, now Mercer University. Afterwards he was elected as President of the Baptist Theological Seminary, then at Greenville, S. C. He lived and died at that work.

The second church was again without a shepherd, and for some time its doors were closed. After the resignation of Mr. Williams, the wise heads of our small denomination, again began to cast about for another man, and the choice that time was an old man, known as Parson Jones.

About the year 1855 this dear old man of God came with his family from Tuskegee.

As there were only two services a month, the Parson supplemented his salary by teaching the Masonic Female School, then in a flourishing condition here.

Parson Jones was a peace loving old man. Some of his members would not speak to each other. One morning in the pulpit he reprimanded them severely, and said, "I hear some of you don't speak to one another; why I would be ashamed of myself, I would speak to the Devil. I would say, good morning, Devil, and walk on." He had a high whining voice. The old Parson was here for several years. After he resigned the church began to be depleted, as to numbers, and the remaining few were rather indifferent as to the work; none of the men could be induced to open Sunday School, so the Mother of this scribe, Mrs. Reese, and Mrs. Drake did that service for quite a while.

In 1858, perhaps, a man by the name of Toliferro, was called. He never brought his family here, as he owned his home in Tuskegee.

His love of humor and fun was a great drawback to his usefulness.

He wrote a very ridiculous book, called "Skit". It had quite a wide circulation. Mr. Reese, Father of this scribe, said it was a wonderful production of wit and humor. As Mr. Toliferro grew older and more serious, he became ashamed of this production, and made every effort to secure the books from parties who owned them, and burned them. This dear old man was a welcome guest in the homes of his people. He kept all the family roaring with laughter at his side splitting jokes. Mr. Toliferro served the church here for several years. After he resigned, he returned to his humble little home in Tuskegee, where he died at a ripe old age.

For a long while the church was closed. Then in or around 1859 or '60, one Mr. Harden was secured, a good preacher, and a very consecrated man. He had a most distracting case of hay fever; at times he could scarcely preach for sneezing. Hay fever was not known then by such a name, so he had what was called sneezing disease.

Mr. Harden was a Georgian: He died young with T.B. I think he served his church about two years, and was the last of the old guard.

In 1861 the Civil war with all the horrors was upon the Southland and for four years the dear old church was without a shepherd. It was used as a hospital, and filled with sick and dying soldiers.

In 1864, a very terrible storm swept the town, killing several, and leveling many homes. The roof of the church was blown down, resting upon the pews. The house was filled with sick and wounded men, but not one was hurt. Of course the roof was raised and I think the soldiers still remained in the building until the war clouds passed over, which was in 1865.

After that terrible conflict, Auburn, as well as the entire South was desolate for many months, or for several years. The members were too poor even to have services, and for a long while the doors of the old church were closed.

But a Baptist will not always remain down and under. He will after a while arise when the opportunity presents itself. So 1866, or '67, Mr. Alexander Frazer moved in from the country and seeing the sad condition of the old house, said, "We must have a new church. It shall be built if it cost me a thousand dollars." The little remnant, inspired by the blessed Mr. Frazer began to look around and see what could be done. With the thousand dollars and small contributions from the members and outside help, the third church was erected.

About the year 1868, the Reverend M. W. E. Lloyd was called from LaPlass, Alabama, Mr. Lloyd was not an educated man, but was considered a pretty good preacher by those who thought themselves judges. He served this people for a long while, preaching once a month.

This being a college town, perhaps Mr. Lloyd felt his lack of education, so after a while (I don't recall what year) he resigned, and attended the Baptist Seminary. He was there for two years, I believe. After his return from the Seminary, he was recalled to this charge again, serving in all twenty-two years.

In 1892, the new church was begun. The lumber was furnished from the Plantation of T. O. Wright, and prepared by Mrs. Wright's father, Mr. Parkinson, who was at that time in the lumber business.

After Mr. Lloyd's resignation, Dr. I. T. Tichenor, President of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, often occupied the pulpit, and always led in prayer meeting.

It was a great privilege to listen to Dr. Tichenor's wonderful sermons, they were both inspiring and instructive. Dr. Tichenor had occupied the pulpit in Montgomery for many years, also in Nashville, Tennessee.

"Under date of February 8, 1879, the church called the Reverend J. S. Dill. He was then closing his course of study at the Seminary at Louisville, Ky. The call was accepted, to begin work at the close of the Seminary session. The salary specified was \$600.00, the church failed to raise the amount, so the salary was supplemented with \$200.00 from the Home Board."

This quotation from a letter from Pastor Dill, who preached his first sermon in Auburn, May 25, 1879. Taking his first meal at the home of Mrs. Reese, her daughter, Mrs. Frazer, said to him, "Why you are not nearly so ugly as I expected, from reports that preceded you." This was indeed encouraging to the new pastor.

Mr. Dill married Miss Laura Lymon, of Montevallo, Alabama, November 4, 1879. In a few months the dear young wife developed an incurable disease. The pastor took her to her home in Montevallo, and after much suffering she lingered for several months. Our pastor resigned his charge here and after her death in February, 1881, the church then recalled Mr. Dill, and he promptly returned to his former charge and continued his ministry until the close of that year. All reluctantly gave Mr. Dill up, and he took charge of the church at Union Springs. Mr. Dill was much beloved by all his people here.

After Mr. Dill's resignation Dr. Lloyd returned and took charge for a short while. Again Mr. Lloyd resigned. After this we called the much beloved young graduate from this Institution, Rev. W. M. Blackwelder. He only served one year, from

September, 1883, to September 1884. Mr. Blackwelder is indeed a precious memory to the few of the old members.

After Mr. Blackwelder left us, Mr. Lloyd came back and served the church a short while.

August 2, 1892, James Wisdom Willis was called. He served us only two years. On March 3, 1895, Rev. Mr. Cloud came, and did his best until 1900. He then resigned and returned to his old home at Shorters where he died soon after leaving here. A dear good old man he was.

When Mr. Cloud left this charge, Mr. A. Y. Napier was called, this was in 1901. He remained with us until 1904. He was called to a church in Montgomery. From there he went as a Missionary to China, where he now is, and for years has been wedded to that great mission.

Mr. Napier was a very earnest Christian gentleman, and we loved him.

In 1904, Rev. Mr. Condry Pough came to lead this people, and a wonderful teacher he was. Together with his consecrated young wife they built up the church greatly. To the sorrow of the entire congregation, Mr. Pough remained only two years, and on June 1, 1906, he bade us a fond farewell, to take charge of a church in Mississippi.

Rev. Mr. Murry Edwards came September 1, 1906, and for fourteen-years he was a faithful servant of God. Mr. Edwards was a consecrated man, was beloved by many of his flock. He resigned after fourteen years of service here. He was called to take charge of the Baptist church in Tuscumbia, where he has done a great work, and is still the pastor of that church.

Now last but not least, Rev. Mr. E. W. Holmes came to this charge in October, 1921, and resigned after five years of good

service. Mr. Holmes together with the spiritual Miss Leland Cooper, has the finest organized B.Y.P.U. of any other in the state.

Mr. Holmes was a power among the young college boys and girls. Many were brought to Christ by his and Miss Cooper's influence and teaching.

Mr. Holmes, like our dear Lord, went about doing good. The writer of this paper will ever hold him in grateful memory for his prayers and sympathy in times of sorrow. His wife, too, was a wonderful inspiration to the W.M.U. and young women whom she taught.

The Baptist are now agitating greatly the erection of a \$100,000.00 church on the same lot where for many years very plain houses of worship have stood. This, when built, will be the fifth Baptist church built by the people of Auburn, Alabama.

Mr. and Mrs. Dill have expressed a desire to place in the new church a memorial window to their Father, Dr. I. T. Tichenor. Mrs. Dill is the second daughter of Dr. I. T. Tichenor, and spent much of her girlhood in Auburn, and in the Baptist Church. This window will indeed be an acceptable gift from these dear people of God and will be a fitting reminder of the loving and generous service of that great and good man.

Mr. T. G. Bush, of Birmingham, was born in Auburn. Her father was the second pastor of the Baptist Church. Her uncle, Mr. William Williams was the third pastor.

Mrs. Bush, a wonderfully consecrated woman, has just presented to the Baptist denomination a check of \$500.00, greatly appreciated by the entire church. This gift was in memorial of her father and uncle.

A new pastor, Dr. Edwards, was called on the 3rd of

October, 1926. He has accepted the call, and will take charge November 1, 1926. No doubt this man of God will be a great inspiration in the building of the new church. For with a long strong pull, all together, much can be accomplished through Him whose promises never fail.

Let co-operation be our watchword, and all will be well.

APPENDIX X

A History of First Baptist Church of Auburn, Alabama

By Miss Leland Cooper

Foreword

The Church Member Orientation Program being pursued at this time (Fall 1965) during the Training Union hour, includes a study entitled, "Your Church And Its History." There being no compiled history since 1926, and this writer having been a member of this church since August 26, 1900, she was asked to write a sketch bringing the history up to date.

The information contained in this history of the First Baptist Church of Auburn was obtained from church minutes, church bulletins, Tuskegee Association minutes, a few annuals of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, a history of the church written in 1926 by Mary Reese Frazer (Mrs. William Baxter Frazer—great aunt-in-law of the present writer), by personal interviews and from personal experience and knowledge.

Written November 1965; Printed September 1966

A History of First Baptist Church of Auburn, Alabama

The First Baptist Church of Auburn is one hundred and twenty-seven years old having been constituted in 1838. It has worshiped in five church buildings, four of which have been located on the present lot.

Twenty ministers have served as pastors during these one hundred and twenty-seven years. At least five other

ministers have served from a few months to a year as interim pastors also. Three pastors had long terms of service. Mr. W. E. Lloyd was pastor three different times, which amounted to almost twenty-two years. Dr. Murray P. Edwards was pastor fourteen years, and Dr. James R. Edwards, eighteen years and a few months (they were not related).

This part of Alabama was inhabited by the Creek Indians and in 1832 the Federal government made a treaty with them in which they agreed to relinquish all their lands east of the Mississippi River and move west of that river.

A Mr. John Harper and young son, Jack, from Harris County, Georgia, came to this part of Alabama in 1833 in search of a new home and new surroundings. They spent the night at an Inn operated by a Mr. Taylor as they traveled to Alabama. His young daughter Elizabeth was home from boarding school. She and young Jack were very much attracted to each other.

On a later stop at the Taylors, the Harpers reported they had decided to move from Georgia to this Alabama location and wanted a name for the town. Elizabeth Taylor, who had been reading Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* enthusiastically proposed the name "Auburn" which the Harpers accepted. Young Jack also later adopted Elizabeth as his wife and she was said to have been very influential in shaping Auburn's early history.

We are indebted to Mary Reese Frazer (Mrs. William Baxter Frazer) for much early history of Auburn and the Baptist Church from its founding through 1926. Her father and mother came to Auburn as bridegroom and bride in the late 1840s, and she was born here August, 1850. She was a very jovial person with a most pleasing personality, a faithful church member and steadfast worker with the children and young people. She wrote

the history of the church from its beginning through 1926.

The first church building was a log house erected on land donated by Mr. John Harper, a Methodist, to the Baptist people. He also gave lots to Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal congregations. The Baptist lot was located on the north side of West Glenn Avenue about where Toomer Street intersects Glenn. I recall gravestones on that lot in the early 1920s.

The Baptists somehow were not pleased with their location; therefore in 1848 the present lot was given by Mrs. Matthew Turner, who also built the first building on the lot. The College building of East Alabama Male College and all church buildings in the town were used by sick and wounded soldiers as hospitals during the War Between the States. A violent storm in 1864 unroofed the Baptist church. But the roof rested on the tops of the pews and not a soldier nor volunteer nurse was injured, neither did any get wet by the downpour of rain that followed the cyclone.

The church house remained in this dilapidated condition for several years. Mrs. Frazer says, "A Baptist will not always remain down and under." Therefore, in 1866-67 under the inspiration of her father-in-law, a layman, Mr. Alexander Frazer, a second building on the same foundation was erected.

Miss Mildred McElhaney, the oldest native member of this church, has presented three pictures of the earliest church buildings to the Church Library. Miss McElhaney will be ninety-two years of age this year (1966). She united with this church by baptism on May 28, 1885.

This building, an exact reproduction of the first one, was an old fashioned one-room structure, with a long, wide porch across the front from which there were two entrances, one for the

men, the other for the women and children-because the men occupied pews on one side of the house; women and children the other.

The pulpit was an old box conceill with steps on either side and doors to "close the preacher in securely." The building seated about two hundred people including the negroes who occupied the back pews, for there were no negro churches in those days.

The musical instrument was a melodeon, a small reed organ. A Mrs. Swanson, a very modest and timid little woman, agreed to play the melodeon for the church services if a curtain could be drawn in front of her in order that she might not be seen. Therefore, the melodeon was placed in the center of the church surrounded by a green curtain which enclosed the organist and choir.

In 1892 a new and more pretentious building was erected. The lumber was secured from the plantation of Mr. T. O. Wright and prepared by Mrs. Wright's father, Mr. Parkinson. Mrs. J. T. Williamson (Bessie Wright) and Mr. Emil Wright are daughter and son of Mr. and Mrs. T. O. Wright and grandchildren of Mr. Parkinson.

This building had three Sunday school rooms across the rear and beautiful stained glass windows. There were two entrances, one facing College Street, the other Tichenor. This building was located about where the south end of the present Sunday School Annex extends. It faced College Street as did the other two buildings.

As the college enrollment increased and the town's population grew, an annex was added to this building in 1910.

The south side of the building faced Tichenor Avenue. It provided seven Sunday school rooms and seating for more than two hundred people.

On the second Sunday, May 1911, the Sunday school observed Mother's Day for the first time. In those days college students wore uniforms at all times and went to Roll Call on the campus at 10:30 A.M. every Sunday then marched to the church of their choice for preaching service.

As time passed the congregation also outgrew this building.

To help relieve this situation the interested college students and the men of the church in two Saturdays built a long "shack," as they called it, just back of the three Sunday school rooms in the rear of the church. This building had movable partitions so it could be used as one room or three class rooms.

The women of the church furnished sumptuous dinners to the builders during this building process. This house filled the needs for a short time; but with more Sunday school classes and Baptist Young People's Unions being organized, more space was needed at an increasingly rapid rate.

The Grammar School Building across Tichenor, where the Post Office now stands, was used for both Sunday school and B.Y.P.U. meetings. Also a class of college men students—about two hundred in number—met in the town picture show building then located where Stacy's Thrift Store and Guy's Appliance are located. This class was taught by Dr. Spright Dowell, president of Alabama Polytechnic Institute. Mr. Earle W. Holmes was the pastor then—1922.

With aid of Dr. Dowell, other interested members, and a number of college students, Mr. Holmes went to Montgomery to

the Baptist State Convention in 1923 and presented these needs. The convention appointed a committee to study these needs with the view to furnishing some financial aid to the church for erection of a larger and more adequate building.

These plans resulted in the present building which was begun in early fall of 1928 and completed the spring of 1929. The pastor was Dr. James R. Edwards. This building was dedicated April 14, 1929.

Dr. Spright Dowell, then president of Mercer University , preached the dedicatory sermon. His text was "What Mean ye By These Stones?" *Joshua* 4:6. The mortgage was burned April 5, 1942, when indebtedness had been fully paid. The total cost of the building was a little more than \$100,000. The ladies of the church contributed \$11,453.60; the men about \$40,000; and the State Mission Board, \$50,000.

By 1948 the church building was again inadequate for our needs. The church auditorium was, consequently, enlarged by spring 1949. The pastorium, built in 1927, was converted into an office and Sunday school building in 1950 and in 1953 the present Sunday School Annex was erected.

A home for the pastor was bought on Norwood Avenue, which was used until 1957. In 1958 the present pastor's home on Moore's Mill Road was acquired. The Baptist Student Center was completed in 1961. And yet more space is needed to accommodate our ever increasing membership with its unnumbered opportunities in the Lord's work here at Auburn.

In addition to enlarging the present facilities of the First Baptist Church, a mission branch was started in 1956, which in 1959 became Lakeview Baptist Church, an independent and full time church with Wyley M. Peebles as official pastor. This church

is rapidly growing in buildings and membership with Rex H. Dickey as the present pastor.

The summer of 1963 Airview and Pepperell Baptist churches sponsored a Daily Vacation Bible School in the vicinity of Starr's and Stoker's Trailer Courts on Opelika Highway. Auburn First Baptist soon became a third sponsor of this project; thus today the Auburn Heights Mission is being developed as another church.

Our church is also looking forward to its future expansion in the recent acquisition of lot and buildings east of the present lot, bordering Gay Street. This lot, with buildings—one of which was a two-story house—was once owned by the church, but was sold February 28, 1893, to W. E. Lloyd, a former pastor, for \$1500. We bought lot and buildings from last owner on July 15, 1965, for \$165,000.

Sunday school is the Bible teaching period in the program of the church. We know little about the Sunday school of this church in its early days. We find in Mrs. Frazer's history that in the late 1850s the church membership was very small and rather indifferent toward the church program. None of the men could be induced to conduct Sunday school; so Mrs. Mary Reese, Mrs. Frazer's mother, and a Mrs. Drake kept the Sunday school work alive quite a long time. Both Mr. and Mrs. Frazer were quite active in Sunday school work in 1880s through early 1900s—Mr. Frazer as Sunday School Superintendent, and she as teacher, sometimes of the Primaries, at other times teenage girls.

The associational church letter of 1897 records eight members of the Sunday school were received into the church for baptism. The 1901 associational letter noted the "Sunday school in a flourishing condition with one hundred and thirty-five

enrolled, ninety-six average attendance.”

In 1902, twenty-five from Sunday school were received for baptism. A. Y. Napier, a young minister, just out of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, was pastor at that time. He had a burning passion for lost souls. Two revivals were held during his administration, one of twenty-three days in July 1902 with fifty-three additions to the church; the other, twelve days in April 1903, nineteen additions, with fourteen of these for baptism.

Brother Napier went to China in 1904 as the first missionary from Auburn. He served there twenty-eight years. He died in 1964 at a son's home in Virginia at the age of ninety-two. The spiritual and numerical growth of the church and Sunday school during these years continued for many years afterward.

Professor R. D. Webb of the English Department of Alabama Polytechnic Institute, became Sunday school superintendent about 1905. He organized the Sunday school into departments and the classes according to ages. He introduced a three point record system, namely: attendance, lesson study, and contribution, for which three credits were recorded every Sunday to each individual who had a perfect record. It was possible to earn one hundred and fifty-six points per year, but for as many as one hundred and twenty points, a diploma of merit was awarded at the end of the year.

A quarterly report was printed each quarter and furnished to all church families. This greatly strengthened and increased the interest of the church members in regular attendance, not only for Sunday school, but for all other church services. This Sunday school development served as a foundation for building a better and stronger church organization.

There are records in Alabama Baptist History of women's missionary societies under varied names, even before the Baptist State Convention was organized in 1823. One name found in several records was "Benevolent Sewing Society." We have found no such record for the Auburn Baptist church, but we have visible evidence that there was here a society by this name as is portrayed by the inscription on the tankard which is part of the old communion set in our library.

We have records of a Ladies' Aid Society in 1897 and 1898, also a Sunbeam Band in 1897 and years following. In the associational letter of 1902, the Ladies Missionary Society was reported as "Woman's Missionary Union," whose president was Mrs. E. G. Boyd—wife of Dr. Boyd, president Agricultural and Mechanical College, the year 1883. The 1905 report bore title: "Woman's Missionary Union and Ladies' Aid Society with Mrs. M. E. Bell as president."

In 1905 a Young Ladies' Aid Society was organized which was known later as "The Willing Workers." The church minutes February 27, 1916, state this group planned to kalsomine the walls of the church building.

Miss Willie Kelley, an Alabama woman, who went to China as a missionary in November 1894, was supported financially by Alabama Woman's Missionary Union for a number of years. This fact was a great stimulus to Auburn Woman's Missionary Union work in its early existence as Mrs. Bell and Miss Kelley had been girlhood friends at Renton, Alabama.

The name Woman's Missionary Union was adopted about 1909 or 1910 by the ladies of Auburn Baptist Church and seemed to have become firmly established as a permanent part of the church organization. Thousands of missionary-hearted men

and women in our Southern Baptist Convention churches testify that they received their first missionary impressions in Woman's Missionary Union young people's organizations. Many missionaries on state, home, and foreign fields heard the call of God for special Christian service while members of Sunbeam Bands, Royal Ambassador Chapters, Girls' Auxiliaries, or Young Woman's Auxiliaries.

First Baptist Woman's Missionary Union has had a long list of capable and consecrated women as leaders—too long to name here—who from 1897 to the present day have achieved great things for the kingdom of God at home and abroad.

Among many worthy achievements of these noble women was the establishment of a memorial fund of five hundred dollars with the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to be used by the Church Building Loan Fund. This is known as the Murray P. Edwards Memorial Church Building Loan Fund. Inspired by its growth and development and these accomplishments may we ever keep before us the love of Christ for a lost world as expressed in His sacrificial death on the cross. Today is the conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The most missionary churches are those that have the strongest Woman's Missionary Union.

For several years there have been strong and enthusiastic Sunbeam Bands, Junior Girls' Auxiliary—ages 9-12—Intermediate Girls' Auxiliary—ages 13-15—and Young Woman's Auxiliary organizations in our Woman's Missionary Union. We have a Young Woman's Auxiliary of local young women and one of young college women. These young people are the future leaders of our churches and mission enterprises through our

denomination around the world. We are being unfair and disloyal to them if we fail to give them the training due them.

The church has been greatly blessed through the men and women who have gone from among her members as foreign missionaries.

The first student on record to go as a missionary from this church was Arthur E. Hayes, who went to Brazil in 1919. Since that time we have had at least ten other students go as missionaries and one former pastor. Among the students are Mary Hazel Ford Moon who with her family spent their furlough here and returned to Brazil recently. Another Auburn student couple are Dr. and Mrs. William R. Norman, missionaries to Nigeria, who returned to their field of service last August. Dr. Howard D. Olive and family of the Philippines are now on furlough at Howard College.

In 1890 in connection with some Baptist meetings in Chicago, the Baptist Young People's Union was organized, including the United States and Canada. Dr. A. J. Dickinson of Birmingham, while serving as interim pastor, stated from this church pulpit in 1921, that he offered a resolution to the Alabama Baptist State Convention in 1892 or 1893 that Alabama Baptist churches be allowed and encouraged to organize Baptist Young People's Unions in order that young Christians might have the benefit of its training program.

First Baptist Church's associational letter of 1898 contains this statement: "Interest in church work has been greatly increased by the active work of the Baptist Young People's Union under the leadership of Brother P. H. Mell." Dr. Mell was a member of the college faculty in Science for twenty-five years, leaving Alabama Polytechnic Institute in 1902 to

become president of Clemson College, South Carolina.

The Baptist Young People's meetings were held on Sunday afternoons. During the early 1900s, the organization was of short duration, due perhaps to lack of leaders. However, in the fall of 1916 two local young women—Miss Laura Watt (now Mrs. J. H. Hanson) and Gatchell Cooper with A. B. Pimm, a college student from Florida, talked with the pastor about organizing a Baptist Young People's Union. With the pastor's blessings and sympathetic cooperation, a Baptist Young People's Union was organized. It began functioning in January 1917 and has lived continuously ever since.

In January 1919, B.Y.P.U. was divided into Senior, Intermediate, and Junior departments with Leland Cooper as director. The name was changed by our Southwide leaders from Baptist Young People's Union to Training Union in 1937 with three other departments added to the work—Adults, Beginner, and Nursery.

During Baptist Young People's Union study course week in December 1923, Dr. Frank H. Leavell, Southwide Secretary of the Interboard Commission, was here teaching his book on Stewardship. He suggested we organize a BSU except it wasn't called by that name. The name Baptist Student Union originated in Texas in 1920 but was not applied to southwide student work until April 1924. Dr. Leavell, the pastor, the B.Y.P.U. director, and a number of interested college students laid the foundation the Baptist Student Union organization. Thus BSU was an outgrowth of Baptist Young People's Union. P. T. Ray, an electrical engineering student at A.P.I. on a scholarship, was elected the first president.

There was much pioneer work and many unusual

undertakings among Auburn college students during the next five years. Pastor Holmes and Dr. Spright Dowell, A.P.I. president, were most helpful and cooperative in promoting Baptist Student Union activities and in ironing out rough places that often arose.

The BSU undertook and accomplished one thing not usually listed on any BSU calendar of activities. The second state BSU convention was held in Tuscaloosa in November 1925, and for several reasons the BSU director was not able to attend. One particular reason was that her T Model Ford was almost beyond travel use. The twenty-odd students who attended the convention decided with the pastor's approval that they would solicit funds from Baptist students and church members with which to buy a new car for the student director as a Christmas surprise. It was indeed a surprise and a most welcome one!

Not until October 1, 1935, did this church have a full time student director to assist in leading and training Baptist students. Davis C. Woolley became the first paid student director. His first term of service was for only nine months, but he was reemployed September 1, 1936, and served continuously until June 1, 1940.

In 1946 the state Baptist Student Union Convention met in Birmingham. Auburn had furnished the state president for two years—Ralph Gandy, a veterinary student from South Carolina.

At this convention a former Auburn student who had accepted God's call to the ministry and had transferred to Howard College was elected president for the following year.

It is significant that two Auburn students filled the office of state Baptist Student Union president for three consecutive

years. Charles Martin and family had one tour of service as missionaries to Japan. He is now pastor of Parker Memorial Church, Anniston, Alabama. Baptist Student Union as we know it today is designed to meet the spiritual needs of all Christian students. With its Training Union, Sunday school, Young Woman's Auxiliary, Brotherhood, music, missions, drama, journalism, and other phases of work, a student is able to develop in many worthwhile directions in Christian endeavor.

The church library is an integral part of the education ministry of church. Our early church leaders may not have thought of the education ministry of the church; but someone was interested in books and people and thought and cared enough to have a library in this church as far back as 1899. The associational letter of that date reported one hundred volumes in the library. The following year, 1900, two hundred fifty-six volumes were reported. How long this library existed has not been ascertained. But we do know that within more recent years a library was begun with Mrs. O. R. Hodges as librarian, who served from its inception till she left Auburn in 1955.

Miss Berta Dunn was then elected and has filled the office so acceptably until September 1, 1965. With her dedication and conscientious ability, the library has been developed to fill the need for which it is designed. Mrs. Robert Williams has been chosen as the librarian for the future. With her enthusiasm and competence, the library in its new location will continue to be of great service to our church people. Presently we have more than two thousand volumes in the library. New books are constantly being added.

The Brotherhood department of our Baptist work

provides four areas of emphasis for the men of the church, namely: Christian witness, personal stewardship, world missions, and boy's work.

Dr. W. J. Isbell, Jr. a graduate of Auburn University and former member of this church is secretary of the Brotherhood Department of the Alabama Baptist State Executive Board.

Auburn First Baptist Church had no Brotherhood organization until early 1953 when a Men's Fellowship Dinner was held March 25 at seven P.M. with Mr. Forrest R. Sawyer, then State Brotherhood Secretary, as speaker. The organization was perfected some time after this meeting. The new organization held a Fathers' and Sons' Banquet on June 19, 1953, at the church with Mr. L. M. Smith, president of Alabama Power Company, a very active member of Brotherhood of Ensley Baptist Church as the speaker.

Until a few years ago the Woman's Missionary Union had as part of its mission work, boy's work known as Royal Ambassador; but this was presented to the Brotherhood as their responsibility. It is the belief of Baptists that Christian men should be interested in boys and provide the proper outlets through which their energies may be directed to higher Christian principles of life. The Royal Ambassador program, with emphasis on Christian missions, is the ideal way to meet many of the boys' needs today.

It has been said that music is a universal language. All people of all nations love and enjoy music. It speaks a language all its own. The Bible contains many beautiful psalms and hymns that God's people used in worship ages ago. We still use them in our worship services today.

Miss Kate McElhaney was church organist for many

years. A small organ, pumped with foot pedals, was in use when she first became organist. Later a larger organ was bought that in addition to foot pedals had to be pumped by hand-because we had no electricity. A Junior or Intermediate Sunday school boy was paid one dollar per month to do this service for many years. Mrs. Sara Tidmore was organist for a long time after Miss McElhaney resigned.

For many years the Ladies' Aid Society, Willing Workers, and Woman's Missionary Society saved money to buy a pipe organ. They had about six thousand dollars in this fund. With the erection of the present building in 1928, Mr. Felton Little presented our beautiful pipe organ as a memorial to his father and mother. The ladies put their money into the building fund.

There have always been faculty members and their wives as well as students with good voices who are glad to serve in the choir. For many years the principal soloist was Mrs. P. H. Mell, wife of Dr. Mell in the Science Department of A.P.I. She was a Presbyterian; but as preaching services were held only once a month in her church practically the whole time she lived here, she was in the Baptist choir with her husband at least three Sundays per month.

The faculty and students of University Music Department render much help to our church in many ways. If little Mrs. Swanson of so long ago could spend a week around First Baptist Church and observe the music activities, she would hardly believe it possible. There is Youth Choir rehearsal at 5:00 p.m. Sunday; Student Choir rehearsal at 6:30 p.m. Monday; Church Choir rehearsal at 7:00 p.m. Tuesday; Primary I, Primary 11, and Junior Choir rehearsals at 3:00 p.m. Thursday.

With the well prepared and efficient music directors we

have fortunately had, the dedicated pianists, and organists, our people learn to sing well and enjoy praising God with their voices. Good music takes dedicated people, prayerful patience, and persistent practice on the part of director and choir members. Let us pray that our lives as well as our music may always be not for our selfish gratification, but for God's glory.

Since March 1, 1958, Auburn First Baptist has been fortunate to have as leader and pastor, Brother John H. Jeffers, who is friend, counselor, and guide in all our undertakings. We hold him and his family in high regard and great esteem and thank God for sending him to us. Our church has accomplished much under his leadership and is looking forward to greater achievements in the kingdom work.

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“The retirement years and attempting to record the history of this... church have heightened an already deep appreciation for this opportunity of ministry.... Trusting that the Providence that seeks to work in the affairs of the churches at least had something to do with it, suffice it to say that words cannot express my gratitude for the experience of coming to this spiritual ‘way station’ and remaining for a while. With Jacob of old at Bethel, I am convinced that ‘surely the Lord is in this place.’”

—John Jeffers

“When you become a part of this congregation, you become part of a specific past, a history of faithful and courageous, free-thinking Christians, who have carried the Gospel around the world. That is why, as Auburn First Baptist celebrates its 175th anniversary, my wife and I are so proud to be part of this tradition, this history, and this church.”

—Wayne Flynt
From the Foreword

“Since the time of Auburn First Baptist’s founding in 1838, certainly one aspect of who we are today as a church stems from the lives and legacies of those who have come before us. Today, we are who we are as a congregation, because of the personal experiences and shared lives that each of us brings to this time and place, and our individual stories are integral in binding us together as a dynamic Family of Faith.”

—Chad Parish
Chair, 175th Anniversary Committee

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