

75th ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCH

The First Southern Baptist Church of Warren in Bisbee was started on September 15, 1946. Rev AB Barnes encouraged fifteen people from nine families to become the first Charter Members. This included the Jenkins, the Hendersons, the Bergmanns, the Williams, the Edwards, the Alconns, the Schreibers, the Barkers, and the Huffmans. The Church called Rev RA Brooks to be their first pastor on November 17, 1946.

The Church met at the houses of members. The Home Mission Board loaned the Church \$2500 to start a building. The Church adopted a constitution and by-laws on April 9. On Mother's Day, May 11, 1947 the Church met in their new building for the first time. On May 16, 1948 Dorothy Bowers was the first person to be baptized. In March 1949 the Church ordained their first four deacons.

On February 18, 1951 the Church started a radio ministry. Mr. Druding started the first choir on February 10, 1952. The Church bought their first piano in 1953. On September 9, 1953 the Church bought a parsonage in the Huachuca Terrace Addition. Rev Edwards was the first pastor to live in the parsonage. In March 1954 the Church built a Junior Department addition to the church building. A record 97 members were added to the Church in the year 1953-1954. Michael Hicks and John Sughart surrendered to the Ministry during a revival held in January 1955. Preston Burkett

accepted the Lord during that same revival. In September 1955 John Hicks became the first president of the men's Brotherhood. Five deacons were ordained on June 24, 1956, including JH Irwin, Preston Burkett, Melvin Owens, MJ Stanley, and Cletus Carroll. On October 20, 1957 the Emmanuel Mission was organized and financed by the Church. (The Grady Fletcher family became early members of Emmanuel Baptist Church.) In the latter part of 1959 the men of the church started building the current Sanctuary.

In the early 1960's the Church bought a piano, organ, and pews for the new Sanctuary. On Christmas Eve of 1961 a young student from Grand Canyon College was invited to preach on Sunday night. Eddie Hicks preached about the resurrection of Christ. His Grandfather, Herman Childress came forward and accepted the Lord. In March 1962 the Church started a Spanish Mission in Naco by buying property there. On June 25, 1963 Preston Burkett, John Hicks, and Irwin Williams as trustees of the Church signed a \$19,000 loan from the Home Mission Board to expand the educational building. Then on February 1, 1967 the Church bought a parsonage next door to the Church. Rev Houston Walker was the first pastor to live in the new parsonage, so the old parsonage was sold. On January 23, 1969 the Church ordained Omen Irby as the new pastor. Then John Hicks was ordained as a deacon on March 30, 1969.

In the 70's the Church went on to license an additional six

men to the Gospel Ministry. The Church also added new carpet and drapes to the Sanctuary and painted the inside. In the mid 70's Phelps Dodge started shutting down in Bisbee. Many miners from Bisbee were transferred to Safford and Morenci. By 1976 the Church lost 25 families and 80 members due to the shutdown.

This first 30 years of Church history included 13 full time pastors, 3 interim pastors, and 19 deacons. The history was summarized by Billy Terrill and Karen Cass, both of whom had served as Church Clerk.

Mike Cass was ordained a deacon on February 20, 1981. The Church celebrated their 35th Anniversary in September 1981. Many members and past members submitted letters of precious memories they experienced with the Church. Ruthell submitted a letter recalling the Christmas Eve service of 1961 was her best Church memory of her son and her father. In 1982 the Church started a Fifth Sunday Night Special with special music, poems, testimonies, and devotions. In 1983 Don Clark led the men to make major repairs of the parsonage. Shortly after a new pastor Luke Allen and his family moved into the parsonage. Anita Evans was elected director of the new Women's Missionary Union (WMU) in 1984. In May of 1984 the Church began sponsoring the Naco Sharing Center to reach people for Christ in the Naco area. The fellowship hall was renovated and called "Don's Hall" in honor of Don Clark who lead the work.

On September 30, 1984 the Church ordained the pastor Luke Allen. A new sound system was given to the Church in 1985. Later in '85 the Church called Sam Dunham as pastor. In 1986 the Church hosted the Community Thanksgiving Program with Priest Coleman from St. Pat's Church participating. The VBS of 1987 saw 12 professions of faith and two were baptized. Michael Hicks preached a revival in March 1988. In the summer a youth group from San Antonio, Texas conducted VBS and backyard Bible Clubs. The parsonage was sold. Pastor Sam Dunham resigned and the Church called Ken Roberts as the new pastor in October 1988. So went the history of the first 42 years.

Pastor Ed Hicks served the Church for 13 years, from 2005 until the end of 2018. Pastor Ed served the Church the longest of any Pastor. During his ministry the Church reached out to Bisbee through the Bisbee Ministerial Fellowship with the Easter Sunrise Services at Lavender Pit and 5th Sunday Sing-a-longs. The Church held Vacation Bible Schools, entered floats in the Bisbee Fourth Of July Parade, and sponsored a girls Little League baseball team. Pastor Ed visited many Bisbee people in the hospitals, he officiated weddings, and preached memorial services and funerals. After the passing of Shirley, his first wife, Pastor Ed himself was married in the church to Louise, his second wife. They remain active members of the Church.

Bill Crow served as Interim Pastor from January 2019 through March 2019. Pastor Bill Crow was then called as Pastor from April 2019 through August 2020. Pastor Bill lead the rebuilding of the Education Building after the flood of 2019. A water pipe ruptured in a wall in the Education Building and flooded much of the building. Better access to the classrooms and new wallboard, paint, and flooring was a great success. Pastor Bill patiently lead the Church through the early stages of the Covid 19 Pandemic. Church services were discontinued for several months while Pastor Bill started a Facebook Church Service ministry. He preached each Sunday to an empty church and broadcast them live on Facebook. The podcasts of the Sunday Morning Worship Services on Facebook that Pastor Bill started, continue to this day.

Pastor Jeremiah Walpert served as interim pastor from September 2020 through December 2020. While serving as our interim pastor, he continued to serve as Pastor of First Baptist Church of Bisbee. He would preach at First Southern then quickly drive to First Baptist and preach there.

The Church called Dr. Jim Smith to be the Senior Pastor in December 2020. Pastor Jim began serving in February 2021. He is a teacher-preacher in his sermons and in teaching Bible studies. Pastor Jim excels in Biblical History. He moved from North Carolina to Bisbee with Teresa, his wife, and Linda, his mother. However, Pastor Jim is not new to Arizona.

As a member of The United States Air Force, Pastor Jim was stationed at Davis Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson for 13 years. We are pleased to have him back in Arizona.

The progression of Church pastors is as follows. RA Brooks 1946-1948, JW Comack 1949, HD Beck 1950, Thomas Cobb 1951-1952, David Edwards 1952-1955, Rodney Coleman 1956, WC Oakes 1957-1958, John Cory 1959-1960, Bill Duncan 1961-1962, Without pastor 1963, Houston Walker 1964-1967, Wayne Baldwin 1968, Omer Irby 1969-1970, Audie Cathy 1971-1974, Hershel Henkle interim 1975, Kenneth Gant 1976-1978, Hershel Henkle interim 1978, Bill Exter 1979-1982, Hershel Henkle interim 1982, Luke Allen 1983-1984, Sam Dunham 1985-1988, Kenneth Roberts 1988-1989, Bill Chambers interim 1990, Sam Dunham 1991-1992. Bill Nail 1992-1994, Bill Chambers interim 1994, Bill Parham interim 1995, Charles Short 1995-2000, John Stone interim 2000, Keith Kersey 2001-2004, Jeff Barnes interim 2004-2005, Ed Hicks 2005 to 2019. Bill Crow interim January through March 2019. Bill Crow April 2019 through August 2020. Jeremiah Walpert interim September 2020 through December 2020. Dr. Jim Smith, Senior Pastor, February 2021 until present.