



FBC BRIDGEVILLE HISTORY  
(AS OF APRIL 2017)



# LATE 1800S, EARLY 1900S



Several citizens residing in the community of Bridgeville, Pennsylvania and surrounding areas worshiped in prayer at various homes. Eventually, the attendance of these home gatherings became so large that other accommodations had to be arranged.



# 1903-1906



The prayer services were moved to the Lewandowski Building, located at the corner of Painters and McLaughlin Run Roads. Between 1903 and 1906, the prayer gatherings moved once more, and were regularly held at an old school building located on Washington Avenue in Bridgeville.



# 1906



The present site of First Baptist was purchased from Mr. and Mrs. Robert Cook. A permanent site for the worship of the Trinity was realized. The first erected church had a seating capacity of 50. During the same year, McLaughlin Road was renamed Bower Hill Road.



# A PRAISE TRADITION



Singing praise unto the Lord is a vital tradition within the African-American church. Realizing this, a non-member of the congregation, Mrs. Ethel Randolph, a Bridgeville resident and local music teacher, organized the church's first choir. Mrs. Randolph held rehearsals and tutored interested choir members at her home.

# 1944-1945



In 1944 and 1945, First Baptist was the recipient of an endowment from the Estates of Mr. George Baird and Mrs. Mary B. Espy. These contributions greatly assisted the church's building fund.



# 1945

The church's pastoral leader was the Reverend S.A. Johnson. First Baptist underwent a major remodeling project. The frame exterior of the church was now brick and mortared. The interior of the church was enlarged for more seating. Modern heating equipment was installed along with other fixtures to make the facility more comfortable for its members and visitors.

# 1950



In 1950, with compliance of the Nonprofit Corporation Laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, First Baptist Church of Bridgeville submitted an application for a Chapter of Incorporation.



# SEPTEMBER 18, 1950



According to the Records Office in the County of Allegheny, the First Baptist Church in Bridgeville was duly registered with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on the 18th day of September, 1950. Interestingly, the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Mr. Gene D. Smith, approved May 5, 1933 as the official date by which the name the First Baptist Church of Bridgeville, PA could be used by the "proposed nonprofit corporation."



# 1954

In 1954, the First Baptist Church lost one pastor and gained another. Reverend S.

A. Johnson passed, and Mr. William

Burnett was ordained into the priesthood and soon installed as Pastor of the First Baptist Church. Reverend Burnett continued improving the facilities of the church as the church grew both spiritually and financially. A new church organ was purchased and the church was carpeted. The Reverend William Burnett remained Pastor until 1961.



Rev. William C. Burnett and Family





# 1961



The Reverend William E. Davis was installed as Pastor of First Baptist. The church's growth remained strong. Under Reverend Davis' leadership, the facilities of the church improved further. New carpeting was installed, restrooms were added, the basement dining walls were paneled, and the kitchen area was improved. In the worship gathering area of the church, a lighted cross was added to the pulpit wall. A sound system was installed as well.



# 1984



Concerns for the physical condition of the church continued as a priority for the members of First Baptist. In 1984, as written in the church's historical statement, it states, "Plans are currently being developed for major remodeling."



# AUGUST 20, 1984



First Baptist began this major remodeling project. After careful planning and deliberation, it was decided the entrance of the church be moved from the front of the church to a side entrance. In order to accommodate the new entrance and exit, the sanctuary was moved to its present location. The new sanctuary was then modernized with new lighting, carpeting, paneling, and plastering. The pews were refurbished and new upholstering of the pulpit chairs was done. The choir area was improved as well.



# APRIL 21, 1986



A special dedication service was held for the newly renovated sanctuary. During the service, a memorial observance in honor of the church founders was also held.





# REVEREND WILLIAM E. DAVIS

The Reverend William E. Davis led First Baptist Church for 32 years, and during those years in the church, although structurally small, influenced the lives of many within the southern portion of Pittsburgh.



# REVEREND CANARD S. GRIGSBY, JR.

Reverend Canard S. Grigsby, Jr. was installed as the the 12th pastor of the First Baptist Church. Along with Reverend Grigsby, the church was fortunate to have Mrs. Rita Grigsby and their two lovely children, Christa and Corbin, as the first family for years to come.





# REVEREND NORMAN H. HUNT

Reverend Norman H. Hunt  
was installed as 13th Pastor,  
and served from 1999 to  
2002.







# REVEREND WILLIAM J. WRIGHT

On November 17, 2002, First Baptist installed their 14th Pastor, Reverend William J. Wright.

Reverend Wright was moved by the Spirit of God, bringing lost souls into First Baptist, having a 2003 theme entitled,

"Reconciliation, Restoration & Renewal (Relationship, Family, Community, Christ, Church, God).



# REVEREND TONY ARMSTEAD

In July of 2008, Reverend Tony Armstead was installed as the 15th Pastor of First Baptist Church. We were blessed to also welcome Mrs. Tara Armstead and their two sons, Tony and Tyler, as the new first family of First Baptist Church!





# THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORICAL TRADITION



African-Americans settled in the United States not by choice, nor to pursue economic opportunity, nor to escape religious persecution in our ancestral homelands. The majority were transported to America to under the worst of conditions to labor for other ethnic groups and countries other than our own.



# AFRICAN AMERICAN MIGRATION TO PITTSBURGH



**Junior Missionaries**

Upon the abolishment of institutional slavery, people of African ancestry migrated north from the southern and mid-western parts of the United States. During the emergence of the industrial revolution, and after building and enlarging the economic base for others to reap benefits, former slaves began to acquire new skills or utilize existing skills in new environments. The migration to new locations increased our numbers in the urban areas surrounding industrial centers such as Pittsburgh, PA.



# FOR A BETTER LIFE



**Senior Missionaries**

The original members and visionary planners of First Baptist were just a few attempting to better their lives by moving north for job opportunities who eventually settled around Pittsburgh, PA, where jobs were available.



## ORIGINAL MEMBERS

Reverend S. A. Johnson and  
Mr. Morris Perkins, Sr.  
of Lynchburg, Virginia



# ORIGINAL MEMBERS

Mr. John Mitchell  
of Charleston, West Virginia



## ORIGINAL MEMBERS

Mr. James Hoston, and  
Mr. Maryland Copeland  
of North Carolina



## ORIGINAL MEMBERS

Mr. and Mrs. H.L. Keen, Mr. Frank  
Miliner, and  
Mrs. Leathie Hoston of Danville,  
Virginia

## ORIGINAL MEMBERS

Through the years,  
active members of First  
Baptist were direct  
descendants of the  
original organizers of  
the church.



# PASTORS OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF BRIDGEVILLE, PA

Rev. R.H. Robinson - Unknown

Rev. Payne - 1906-1918

Rev. W. Paine - 1918-1921

Rev. William Gibson - 1921-1928

Rev. G.E. Saunders - 1929-1930

Rev. F. Billingsly - 1930-1933

Rev. H.S. Edwards - 1934-1942

Rev. Hiram Washington - 1942-1943

PASTORS OF FIRST BAPTIST  
CHURCH OF BRIDGEVILLE, PA

Rev. S.A. Johnson - 1943-1954

Rev. William C. Burnett - 1954-1961

Rev. William E. Davis - 1961-1993

Rev. Canard S. Grigsby, Jr. - 1993-1998

Rev. Norman H. Hunt - 1999-2002

Rev. William J. Wright - 2002-2007

Pastor Tony Armstead - 2008-Present



THE ORIGINAL  
ORGANIZERS

Rev. J.E. Johnson

Ono Kemp

Morris Perkins, Sr.

James Hoston

Leathie Hoston

# THE FIRST CHARTER MEMBERS

Morris Perkins, Sr.

Rev. J.E. Johnson

Louis Keene

Mrs. Louis Keene

Frank Milliner

James Hoston

Leathie Hoston



# THE FIRST BOARD OF TRUSTEES

H.L. Keene

John Mitchell

Ono Kemp

James Hoston

# THE 1950 FIRST BAPTIST INCORPORATORS

Viola Purnell

Addison Whittle

Herbert McCormick

John D. Wilson

Louis Brown



# THE FIRST DESIGNATED BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Herbert McCormick - Chairman of Board

Henry Perkins

Arthur Partee

Morris Perkins, Jr.

Louise Adams

Ellen Sloan

The Reverend S.A. Johnson

**We, the members of  
the present-day  
First Baptist Church,  
are proud of our  
heritage, and with  
the help of God, will  
leave this blessed  
heritage to those  
who will follow us.**

**April 30, 2017**