

200th Anniversary Committee

1808

2008

Bob Baird
Chris Baird
Rosann Burchett
Ken Fey
Mary Harville
Carol McCleary
Mary Lee Marcus
Ray Moncrief
Dick Naber
Bob Welch

Banner - Mary Harville

History – Gladys Atkinson

Anniversary Booklet – Kathy Adkins and Vonda Barner

**Anniversary Service
and
History**

* * * * *

First Baptist Church Staff

Reverend Kenneth R. Fey, Senior Pastor
Reverend Carol L. McCleary, Associate Pastor
Christine Baird, Director of Music/Organist
Reverend Richard Casey, Sanctuary Choir Director
Cynthia A. Sparks, Director of the Day Care Center
Kathy Adkins, Church Office Secretary
Michael Mitsoff, Business Manager
Neil Pappas, Treasurer
Jim Orem, Financial Secretary
Larry Shoemaker, Maintenance Technician

**First Baptist Church
Middletown, Ohio**

August 10, 2008

The First Baptist Church

Middletown, Ohio

Bicentennial

1808 – 2008

“Little Prairie Baptist Church”

1800 – 1805

Pioneer men gathered together in the home of James Heaton and founded the Salem Baptist Church on August 9, 1808.

“Salem Baptist Church”

1811-1826

Enoch Drive and Tytus Avenue

First Baptist Church

1826-1854

No picture found of this church building on North Main Street.

First Baptist Church

1854-1905

105 North Main Street

First Baptist Church

1906-1972

119 South Main Street

First Baptist Church

1972 – present

4500 Riverview Avenue

200th Anniversary Sunday
August 10, 2008
10:30 a.m.
Morning Worship

Prelude: “*Resplendent Praise!*” Hymn Medley, arr. Don Wyrzten
Debbie Cummins, pianist; Christine Baird, organist

Greetings and Recognition of Special Guests

Responsive Call to Worship:

Pastor: I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name
for ever and ever.

**People: Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever
and ever.**

Pastor: Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no
one can fathom.

**People: One generation will commend your works to another;
they will tell of your mighty acts.**

Pastor: They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.

**People: They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I
will proclaim your great deeds.**

Pastor: They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing
of your righteousness. Let us worship the Lord!

Psalm 145: 1-7

*Opening Hymn: “*The Church’s One Foundation*” (omit vs. 3) 689

*Invocation and Lord’s Prayer

*Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom
come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day
our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is
the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Greetings from ABC/Ohio: Rev. Dr. Larry Swain, Executive Minister,
American Baptist Churches of Ohio

Ministry of Music: “*To God Be the Glory*” arr. Diane Bish
Karen Mail, soprano

Children’s Message given by “Mrs. Jenny Sorg” (Tina Breitenbach) and
“Mr. Francis J. Tytus” (Jim Orem)

Recognition of Our New 50-Year Members:
Jean Curlis, LaVonne Henderson, Frank Neal, David Curlis

Registration of Attendance and Exchanging of Greetings

Giving of God’s Tithe and Our Offerings

Offertory: “*Wake Up, Church, Wake Up*” Pepper Choplin
Sanctuary Choir, brass, piano

Prayer of Dedication of Our Offerings

Reading of the Word: Ephesians 2: 19-22 (p.950); I Peter 2: 4-9 (p.984)

Pastoral Prayer

*Hymn of Preparation: “*How Firm a Foundation*” 612

Sermon: “Living Word; Living Stones” Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley,
General Secretary, American Baptist Churches USA

*Closing Song: “*Not By Might, Nor By Power*” arr. Lloyd Larson
Sanctuary Choir, brass, organ and congregation
(Please stand and join in singing when directed.)

*“O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
be Thou our guide while life shall last, and our eternal home!”*

Benediction

Postlude: “*Built on the Rock*” arr. Robert Hobby

*Congregation stands as able.

**200th Anniversary
of
The First Baptist Church
Middletown, Ohio
by Gladys R. Atkinson, Historian**

As the Church Historian, I have the honor and privilege of continuing the last 25 years of our history leading up to the 200-Year Celebration. This will be written in a different way from that of our other three historians: Francis Jefferson Tytus, 1808-1881; Mary Doty Dell, 1831-1958; and Evelyn Baird Dell, 1958-1983. Their ways are hard to follow and as the old saying goes, "I have big shoes to fill."

I have read all the First Baptist Church's Statistical Report Books from 1838 and have copied them into notebooks for easier reading. Thus I have found several interesting events which made for a few corrections and additions that I have placed in previous histories. They are marked with parenthesis.

**The History of First Baptist Church
Middletown, Ohio
by Mary Doty Dell, Historian
Commemorating the 150th Anniversary
of the Church in 1958**

Introduction

The First Baptist Church of Middletown, Ohio was founded under the name of Salem Baptist in August 1808. No doubt the name Salem was chosen to honor Roger Williams who first preached the Baptist doctrine in America at Salem, Massachusetts.

In the year 1808, Thomas Jefferson was President of the United States. Our country was 16 years old. The Northwest Territory, organized in 1799, had been divided, and Ohio had been made a state in 1803 with the capitol at Chillicothe. General Anthony Wayne's crushing defeat of the Indians at Greenville in 1794 had paved the way

for the coming of pioneers into western Ohio. Marietta on the eastern border of the state had been settled in 1788. Land was being offered by the United States Government for as little as \$1.00 per acre in the Ohio country.

The rivers flowing west from the Allegheny Mountains were the arteries that brought the pioneers from the more thickly populated states of the East Coast. Making the first part of the trip by wagon train to Pittsburgh, whole families with a few cherished possessions then boarded flat boats and floated down the Ohio, the Indian name for beautiful river. The tributaries offered access to the innerlands so that they became dotted with the claims of these sturdy pioneers and the accompanying log cabins.

Daniel Doty had scouted this Miami Valley in 1792, returning to his home in Boundbrook, New Jersey with tales of the rich lands available here, inciting many of his friends and neighbors to later make the venture. Mr. Doty brought his wife and two small sons into this uninhabited portion of the valley in 1796, and built a cabin on the bank of the Miami River at what is now the vicinity of 11th Avenue.

(Several pioneer men and families had come to this uninhabited area before Daniel Doty. Dr. Calvin Morrell purchased land in 1791 and built a blockhouse known as Morrell's station. It stood until 1805, when all danger from Indian attacks was past. Then these came with Daniel Doty around 1795; James Brady, Cyrus Osbour, Elisha Wade, Richard Watts, Amos and Rhoda Potter, the Reeds and two sons of Stephen Vail.

Interesting events: The first baby born in the new settlement was Jane Potter on April 2, 1797. Her parents, Amos and Rhoda Potter, had come to the area with Daniel Doty in 1795. The second to be born here was Thomas C. Reed, on October 3, 1797, on a farm on Yankee Road, just north of Dick's Creek."

Soon there were several more families in this area besides the Dotys: the Freemans, the Vannests, the Taylors, the Suttons, the Clarks, and the Enochs. In 1800, Bamboo Harris, an African-American engineer, settled on the west-side of the river and built the first gristmill in the area.)

The Founding of Middletown

In 1800, four years later, came Stephen Vail, a Quaker from this same community in New Jersey. Being 63 years of age, his family consisted of grown sons and daughters with their families. Mr. Vail was a businessman rather than a farmer. He built a dam and erected a grist mill on the Miami River to grind the corn the settlers might raise on the surrounding claims. He laid out a portion of his land in city lots, 52 in number, including that ground bounded by the hydraulic, Broad Street, Manchester Avenue and First Avenue.

(He had these city lots surveyed by Isaac Ludlow, a well-known surveyor.) He drew a plat of these lots in 1802 and filed the same with the recorder of this section of the Northwest Territory in Cincinnati. A year later, when Ohio became a state, this plat was copied into the records of Butler County. (Another Baptist family of special interest is that of the Suttons, with five brothers, all in the ministry. One of these, Elder James Sutton, came to Middletown and his name appears below that of Stephen Vail as a co-founder of this city. But Sutton was a religious leader, and it was Vail who owned the land and sold the lots. So Middletown was laid out in 1802 by Stephen Vail and James Sutton.)

Believing this location to be midway between Columbia (Cincinnati) and Dayton, he named the place Middletown. (This was found in a history by Frank A. Jones: tradition tells us that the new town was named Middletown because it was considered to be about the middle point of navigation on the Great Miami River between Piqua and Cincinnati.)

The Forerunner of The First Baptist Church

The records say that early in the century, Daniel Doty rode horseback to Danville, Kentucky to persuade the Reverend Mr. Kemper, a Baptist preacher, to return with him to preach the Word of God to the settlers. In Mr. Crout's History of Middletown, he says: "Mr. Doty and other pious men brought the Reverend Daniel Clark, an old school Baptist, to the region in 1800." (Many of the settlers of Lemon Township were members of the Baptist Church. In 1800, they desired to have a building in which they could meet and hold religious

services. The "Little Prairie", that natural meadow following the meanders of the Miami on its eastern side, seemed to them the best site for the purpose.) After making several pastoral calls here, Reverend Clark decided to formally organize the Little Prairie Church late in 1800. (Members felled the trees, squared and hewed them into logs, and dragged them to the site. Jointly they laid log upon log, fitted them as closely as possible, filled the spaces between with clay, and erected a rough but capable roof. They tamped down the earthen floor and erected benches instead of pews. For an altar they used the larger logs. For the baptismal font, they used the river. Thus began the "Little Prairie Baptist Church". The exact location of this forerunner of the First Baptist Church is unknown. However, it is some west in the so-called prairie, east of the small settlement, on the banks of the Great Miami River. Their small church, built in 1800, had to be abandoned in 1805 because of the flood of 1804, which caused a great deal of damage to the building. The lifeline of the church was about four years.)

No doubt Mr. Clark's influence, plus the fact that a few crops of corn had been harvested, insuring Johnny cakes on the hearths for the winter, inspired and allowed the settlers to think upon spiritual things. These folks were rugged individualists and instead of combining forces and establishing a community church, they began to think in terms of denominations. A group of Methodists established a church in 1805, the Baptists in 1808, and the Presbyterians in 1819.

We might imagine that men meeting at the Vail Mill, awaiting the grinding of their corn, may have conversed about the need for a Baptist Church. Or, it might have been at the post office, established a year earlier in 1807, while men awaited the arrival of the mail which came once a week by mounted carrier from Columbia. Or it may have been at the first pay school that was opened in a room of the Vail Mill in 1805. In the history of Butler County, we read: "These mills were the center of every movement of these early times."

This we do know, that on August 9, 1808, the Salem Baptist Church was organized in the home of James Heaton. We have every reason to believe that this house is still standing at 104 South Broad Street, owned by Miss Minnie Greter. It was claimed by some oldsters 50 years ago that this was the oldest house in Middletown. We wish

we knew more about this James Heaton. This much I found on his tombstone in the Middletown Cemetery: “James Heaton, ESQ. A native of Virginia. Born in 1779 and died in 1841 (age 62).” According to an early Butler County Atlas, he was our first County Surveyor in 1803, and a surveyor’s compass and level are carved on his tombstone. In Mr. Crout’s history, he tells us that James Heaton was Justice of the Peace. His father, David Heaton, a soldier of the revolution, who must have lived in the same house, is buried beside him. He was born in 1735 and died in 1829.

The location of our first church building on the Franklin Pike, about 1 and ½ miles north east of Middletown, might indicate that the first few members lived in the area between Middletown and Franklin. Some of the first recorded names are familiar in the early history of Franklin, Ohio.

The earliest business record we have of the church is 1838, but we have a priceless early history written by Francis J. Tytus in 1881. He had joined the church 18 years after its founding. His memory extended back to that date and his knowledge of earlier events we deem to be authentic.

The Rev. Mr. Ince, pastor of this church from 1880 to 1889, wrote a book entitled “Miscellany” and had it published. A few copies are still in existence. It contained a part of the history written by Mr. Tytus; some Baptist Theology; a history of Denison University; a tribute to some twenty of the more prominent members; poetry, etc. From this and Mr. Tytus’ historical sketch, also from a copy of the Middletown Journal of October 8, 1908, in which an unknown author brought the history up to that date, plus the addition of this bit of contemporary history of Middletown by your historian, we get the background history for our anniversary.

History of The First Baptist Church of Middletown, Ohio By Francis J. Tytus (1881)

(This is a copy of the original)

What is now known as The First Baptist Church of Middletown, was organized at the home of David Heaton on August 9, 1808. The names of the constituent members are not found in the record. They first took the name of “Salem Church”. The first business meeting was held at the home of David Heaton, August 27, 1808. James Denise was appointed Deacon and Nathan Canfield, Clerk. In June following they extended a call to Elder R. Stepelton and Samuel Denise to preach to them on the first Sabbath of each month attending at the home of Elisha Wade. One, among the first resolutions adopted, was that at every monthly meeting – the first business to be attended was an inquiry into “the fellowship of the Church”; and it was made the duty of each member to report any breach of covenant on the part of others. Both of these resolutions were called up at every regular meeting of the Church for many years. This Church was received into the Miami Association in the Fall of 1809. They continued to hold regular meetings at private homes until they built a house of worship.

On the 26th of June 1811, the Church resolved to build a house of worship and appointed a committee to select a place to build this house. The following were appointed: David Enoch, David Heaton, Isaac Robbins, Jacob Dearnorf, and Daniel McDonald. The committee reported they had selected a site on the road from Middletown to Franklin, about a mile from the former place; and advised the building of a frame edifice 24 x 30 feet. They also reported that Brother McDonald had made then the following proposition: (which the writer thinks is worth being preserved as a matter of curiosity, showing the manner of doing business 70 years ago). “I agree to build a meeting house 24 x 30 feet and 13 feet high and to weatherboard the same; and put on a lap shingle or sawed shingle roof; one double door; windows with sleepers; and two beams for a gallery; and find the nails for one hundred and sixty dollars, payable in whiskey and wheat that is merchantable, delivered at Abner Enoch’s Mill on the first day of

October next, at the price it sells for in Franklin, and to have the house finished by the first of next October.”

The Church resolved to take-up Brother McDonald at his offer. They continued to worship in this house until October 1828 when they moved their meetings to Middletown and met at the home of Thomas Royall. The old frame building after this was converted into a school building and occupied as such until 1848. At the first meeting held in Middletown, October 1826, the Church called as their pastor Elder Jacob Mulford to preach for them one Sabbath in every month. In July 1828, Elder Mulford being in bad health, Elder Burnett who was pastor in Dayton was invited to hold a meeting and some 10 or 15 persons professed and were baptized by him and united with the church.

On the 9th day of August 1828 at a regular meeting of the church held at the home of Thomas Royall, the following resolution was passed: Resolved that for several reasons, the name of the Baptist Church now called Salem, be changed to that of The First Baptist Church of Middletown, Ohio.

At this period and previously, there was no house of worship in Middletown owned by any denomination. There were three church organizations, Baptist, Presbyterian and Methodist. Each held their meetings alternately in a brick schoolhouse about 24 x 30. (This was a day of small things.) The Baptists, desiring to hold some meetings about this time, rented and fixed up the upper part of a copper shop, where they worshiped for sometime and where a number of souls were converted.

In the winter of 1829, the church resolved to build a house of worship and obtained an act of incorporation with the following persons as trustees: Jacob Deardorf, Thomas Royall and David Taylor. They soon secured a lot 100 by 200 feet for which they paid \$250.00 (the same lot on which the Church edifice now stands in this year of 1881). And then in the Spring of 1829, they erected a brick house of worship 40 x 60 feet and enclosed it and laid the floors. They were unable to finish it but worshiped in it during the summer months until the spring of 1832, when by a terrible effort they raised sufficient money to finish it at a cost of about \$3,000.00.

(In Reverend Ince's book, "Miscellany," he wrote about the Baptist Church on North Main Street: In this unpretentious building (40 by 60 feet), the constituent members of the church maintained the ownership of God for a quarter of a century. They did not have the luxurious surroundings of modern ecclesiastical buildings; no costly organ breathed its sweetness among adoring disciples; no choir exhibited its vocal gymnastics to attract the spiritually dead; no carpet deadened the sound of moving feet; instead of cushioned pews, they had plain wooden benches without backs, a capital cure for saintly somnolence; and cheap candles, instead of the delightful incandescent light.)

This building remained until the Spring of 1854 (25 years) when it was taken down and a larger edifice erected on the same foundation with a vestry for Sabbath schools, the same size as the old building. The vestry was ready to worship in by the 1st of September 1855, Reverend A. Guy then being the pastor. In November the Church invited Reverend T. P. Childs to aid the pastor in the protracted meeting, held in the vestry just dedicated to God. A glorious revival followed, during which the pastor baptized 70 happy converts. The main audience room was finished the following year. The entire cost was about \$10,000.00 and when it was completed, they were not in debt one dollar.

Twelve years after this, the church found themselves very much in need of more room for their Sabbath-school and in the Fall of 1867, they added a building 64 by 25 feet to the rear of the former house which makes the whole church cruciform in shape and added fully one third of its capacity. The lower part of which is arranged with special reference to the wants of the Sabbath-school. There is a suite of 6 rooms of different sizes so arranged that they can be thrown together for the opening exercises. The cost of this addition was about \$10,000.00. This left the Church with a debt of about \$2,500.00, which annoyed them for a number of years. They paid it off during the Centennial Year 1876. The Ladies Sewing Society contributed \$788.00 toward the completion of the last addition and about \$200.00 toward the payment of the debt.

In the Fall of 1861, the Church resolved to build a parsonage on the lot they had purchased adjoining their Church lot, and in 1862

completed a handsome brick residence at a cost of about \$3,000.00, there being but one or two better residences in the town at that time. And when completed, it was paid for through the faith and generosity of "Aunty King," who is now in paradise.

The Church and parsonage lot is 153 feet in front, running back 200 feet. It is centrally located and is a beautiful property. There are 10 sheds in the back of the lot for country members who need a comfortable place for their horses and carriages while they attend worship. It was protected by an ornamental fence with a base of Dayton stone.

Saturday, August 26, 1809 the first delegate was appointed to the Miami Association, and the records show that delegates were annually appointed. In August 1836, Reverend Bryant being the pastor, the Church appointed four delegates with the pastor to meet with the Association that met that year with the Dry Fork of White Oak Church in Hamilton County. Our delegates were rejected by a majority of the Association and the Middletown Church, the 6th Street Church of Cincinnati and the Dayton and Lebanon Churches were, by resolution, dropped from the minutes of the Association – for aiding and supporting Sunday-schools, and Bible, Missionary, Tract and Temperance Societies. These four churches, as is known to at least seven now living, immediately met in a Methodist meeting house nearby in New Haven, and proceeded to transact the remaining business of the Association. And after closing the business they adjourned to meet in Middletown the ensuing October. October 29th the Association convened in Middletown. The Middletown Church then numbered 77 members. About this time the following letter, signed by six women members of the Middletown Church was handed in at a regular meeting of the Church: "We, whose names are hereunto set, being met together to consult on matters pertaining to the First Baptist Church of Middletown, Ohio, and now being of one mind that we have been burdened with many things in the Church not according to the Word, this we present you because you have departed from the faith and practice of the regular Baptist Church and following many ways and things burdensome to us, we intend to walk separate from all who will continue to walk. And we invite all our brothers and sisters to sit with us who will renounce them. Our meeting will be on

Saturday before the second Sunday in November next, and we invite all our brothers and sisters who are of the same mind to join us." Signed by (The 6 names have been xxxed out.)

This letter was supposed to have been written by a male member who had been excluded some time previous. Upon the reading of the foregoing letter, a resolution was passed, dropping these six members from the Church. This resolution passed almost unanimously, there being one dissenting vote. This ended all trouble in this Church with antinomianism and opposition to the benevolent societies of the day. Since the first meeting of the Association in October 1836, it has convened with this church 7 times, the last being in 1879, making an average of about once in 6 years.

Since the Church assumed its present name in October 1828, it has had 12 regular pastors, being an average of about 4 ½ years for each pastor. Six of them have gone to their reward, and we can say of them – "The memory of the just is blessed."

Since November 1855 the Church has enjoyed the services of fine evangelists, invited to aid the pastors in protracted meetings: Reverend T. V. Childs, Reverend Jacob Knapp, Reverend George Balcom, Reverend G. H. Dewitt and the Reverend A. P. Graves. The labors of the first four named were greatly blessed, and in each protracted meeting held, there were from 40 to 70 who gave evidence of being converted and were added to the Church to the great joy of both pastor and members; but we are sorry to have to say that the efforts of the last, Reverend A. P. Graves, were an entire failure, and the effect produced on the church and community was decidedly unfavorable to the cause of religion.

The records of the Church for several years having been lost, a correct list of Licentiales cannot be given. So far as ascertained, they are as follows: Muncie Jones, George L. Wrenn, Jr. who was ordained by this Church, Shubal Storms and John Storms. The first and last two named were ordained by other churches. The Reverend Lyman Fisher was ordained to the Ministry by this Church.

Owing to the loss of records for a number of years, the correct number to be received into the Church cannot be given. In 1836 when

the division in the Association took place, we reported to the Association 77 members. From 1830 to 1853, nearly a quarter of a century, this Church had a terrible struggle for existence. There were several precious revivals, but the young men (in consequence of the town at that period being small and dull) removed to other places of more activity, and thus kept the Church feeble and hardly able to sustain a pastor. The Church felt during these years that it was useful as a "Recruiting Station" where laborers were enlisted and trained for other fields of service and was encouraged by the fact that while they were losing active young men, churches in the West and North were receiving them. Many young men converted in this Church are now and have been for many years, prominent members in Western and Northern Churches. In June 1843, the Church granted letters of dismission to 40 members to form the Franklin Baptist Church, and in August 1869, it gave letters to quite a number of its colored members to form a Negro Baptist Church. They built for themselves a neat brick church edifice and have continued regular services. Since 1853 this Church has enjoyed several precious revivals and has grown steadily and has abundant reason to thank God and take courage.

There is now but one member living who was living at the time the Church assumed the name of The First Baptist Church of Middletown, August 1828, and that was the writer of this history. He united with the Church August 1828 when he was 22 years of age.

The Church has for more than a quarter of a century lived in peace and harmony. There has been scarcely a jar in the management of its spiritual and temporal affairs; in the calling or giving-up pastors, excluding members, etc. There is but little legislation about financial affairs.

Profiting by our own experiences as well as the experiences of other churches we have adopted the motto of "pay as you go" consequently there are no debts. We have adopted the envelope plan and take up collections every Sabbath morning and it works very satisfactory. For 73 years the Church has remained true to Baptist principals; the missionary spirit cherished; and very few of its members have been led away by any of the many "isms" of the day. It has never closed its pulpit against teachers of Antinomianism, Campbellism, Millerism, etc. etc. and yet but few if any have been led

away from sound Baptist principles. The missionary spirit cherished and the earnest labor for the conversion of souls reformed, furnished the best safeguard against such influence.

(signed) Francis J. Tytus

NOTE: As a conclusion to Mr. Francis J. Tytus' history, your historian has found a few interesting facts about the author in the "Butler Family" History.

"The early history of The First Baptist Church of Middletown seems to evolve around one great character – Francis Jefferson Tytus. He was a member for 60 years, a deacon for 47 years, Church Treasurer, Church Clerk, a teacher in the Sunday School almost uninterruptedly for 50 years. His prayer was: 'Give me neither poverty or riches,' and it certainly was answered throughout his life.

Mr. Tytus was born in Manchester, Virginia, on February 5, 1806. He came to Middletown at the age of 18 years and engaged in a dry goods business.

At the age of 22, he joined the Salem Baptist Church and for 60 years was a tower of strength to every pastor and a shining example to every member.

As a young man, he rode into Kentucky to attend a barbecue given in honor of Henry Clay. It was there that he met Miss Sarah Butler of Hanover, Massachusetts, who was visiting her sister in Georgetown, Kentucky. As a result of the meeting, she later married the young merchant and came to Middletown to live. Their children, Mr. John Tytus, Mrs. Colin Gardner, and Mrs. C. Monjeau, figured prominently in later Church history."

The original of Mr. Tytus' history of the Church, in his own handwriting, is in the Church's safety deposit box in the Oglesby Barnitz Bank.

Mary Doty Dell

First Baptist Church History From 1881 to 1958 (continued)

There are still 19 years of history to be accounted for in the last of the 19th century following this record of Mr. Tytus. These were years of growth; spiritual and physical. The city of Middletown was growing. She acquired an Electric Light Plant. New businesses sprang up. People came here to live and plans were formulating for the coming of the great American Rolling Mill Company. Those things help a church to grow, too. In the 1890's, the First Baptist Church began to have dreams of a new church building. This brought the generous offer of \$10,000.00 from Mr. Paul J. Sorg, with the understanding that the church raise \$20,000. This sum was startling! (On Monday evening, July 1, 1895, the Sorgs made their first offer of \$10,000 for the new church edifice this way: "After his wife Jenny had pledged \$5,000.00 for the new First Baptist Church edifice, Paul Sorg, 'not to be outdone by his wife,' also pledged \$5,000.00 for the new church... these two pledges were contingent upon the church raising \$20,000.00 for their building.")

The brick Church had cost \$10,000.00 nearly 50 years before, and had been cleared of debt by real sacrificial giving. This new idea had to be seriously considered. It took the enthusiasm of Dr. Rufus W. Weaver to spark the Church Building Program again at the turn of the century, and the record says: "Mr. Sorg's offer was accepted by the Church." (By 1900 the North Main Street Baptist Church was now an old building entirely inadequate to the growing needs of the church. It was poorly heated, the worship services were held on the second floor, the stairs were very difficult for the older members to access, and for various other reasons the church and parsonage were sold, as they decided they needed a bigger church building. The Sorg's first offer of \$10,000 was again pledged in 1900 and their offer was accepted by the church.)

A vigorous campaign was entered upon to raise the requisite \$20,000.00. Within 2 to 3 years the entire amount was paid in, thus securing from Mr. Sorg the promised \$10,000.00. (This interesting fact concerning the difficulty of selecting a site for their fourth church edifice, I, as the newest Historian, found worth adding. After securing

\$20,000.00 in pledges by December 17, 1902, they appointed a committee of twenty-one to consider the quest of a site. This 21-member committee presented seven sites for the consideration of the church, but all were voted down and not accepted. On May 17, 1903, this committee was dismissed and a five-member committee was appointed. On July 19, 1903, this five-member committee reported that the properties of Butler and Holloway, they were adjoining properties, had been purchased for \$10,000.00 on South Main Street. Report accepted.)

On October 11, 1904, the inscription stone was laid, and on January 21, 1906 the new stone church was dedicated.

A few things were brought to the new Church on South Main Street from the old church on North Main Street. The shield-shaped marble stone which bore the inscription "First Baptist Church 1854" was removed from the brick gable above the front entrance and placed in the stone wall of our present church building above the windows in the side porch. The lectern from the pulpit of the old Church was also placed in the new church and served the pastors for another fifty years until replaced only recently by a larger and more appropriate one. The communion table and a few chairs, which were so familiar to older members were also saved and used another half century. This reminds us of the incident of The Children of Israel carrying a few cherished reminders into the Promised Land.

In 1908, the church celebrated its 100th anniversary. Five special programs were enjoyed over a three-day period during which historical papers were read. The President of Denison University was one of the speakers, Dr. Robertson of the Louisville Seminary another speaker, also Dr. Williams of Granville and pastors of Baptist Churches in Cincinnati and Dayton. Coming just two years after the dedication of the new Church building, it was a gala occasion. The Reverend Mr. Briggs was the pastor.

Another anniversary was observed in October 1954, when after 50 years the Inscription Stone was taken down from over the doorway of this Church, its contents noted, other articles added, and, after a special Church service, the stone replaced.

In the past 50 years this country passed through two world wars and a terrible economic depression which reflected upon the Church. There have been times of great spiritual uplift which the capacity of the sanctuary was strained and also depths in which we found ourselves when only the most faithful held fast. The past ten years have been a golden age when the membership has been at its peak, when the congregation included a large percentage of young folks, and when many young people have entered the ministry and Christian Educational fields. We should like to honor those young people by naming them, as follows:

Shirley Barr Bailey	William Evans
Betty Evans Knight	Ballard Blount
James Young	Ralph Knight
Frank McCullough	Robert Dieterich
Joan Kidd Young	

We want to add to this group the names of four young men who grew up in this church and who entered the ministry or missionary field some years ago. They are Mr. Albert Morris, Mr. Alfred Moore, Mr. Albert Thunn and Mr. Robert Noles.

We have tried to record important events, conscious all the while of subjects which have been omitted, such as the Young Peoples organization and the Women's Missionary Society, both of which grew right along with the church and are important to the full life of First Baptist today. We hesitate to mention the names of the great souls who have helped to make this Church what it is today. Those of whom we might recall in 1900 have given place to a host of other members who are serving so loyally today. We each play our small part and hope that he or she who follows will be able to play it better.

Today we thank God for our past, seek his benediction upon our present, and pray for his blessing in our future.

*Give me a book with records old,
To find a "Church's Story" told,
Let me, as long as life shall last,
Live for today, but revere the past.*

First Baptist Church School 127 years (1831-1958) by Mary Doty Dell, Historian

I copy here a report written by my grandmother, Lydia Vail Doty, for the 100th birthday of the church in 1908. She writes: "Of the organization of our Sabbath-school, there is no authentic record. We know it was organized some time during the year 1831. Of the first 40 years there is no record to be found, but it was during those years that the foundation was laid. Those were the days when our own Brother Tytus, Mrs. Josephine Mitchell, and L.D. Doty were giving the best of their lives in Christ's service. Mr. Tytus for 50 years was teacher of the Bible Class; Mrs. Mitchell, teacher of the Primary Class to which she gave her most ardent affection. Mr. and Mrs. William Moore, Mr. John R. Shafor, and Mr. Fisher have borne the burdens of the day.

In 1871 our Sunday School Library was started, with Miss Anne McAdams as librarian and Miss Mary Reis as Secretary. (All these remarks were found in the First Baptist Church Statistical Record Book pertaining to the start of the Sunday School Library. On March 21, 1852, the church voted to solicit donations from church members and other for the purpose of REPLENISHING the Sunday School Library. On July 23, 1859, "A committee of three was appointed to examine and review books donated or purchased for the church library." Brother J. W. Wrenn, appointed Librarian in July 1859, resigned as Librarian on October 13, 1859, to attend Baptist Theology School in Rochester, New York. Brother Barney was appointed Librarian October 24, 1859. Brother Edward Johnson was appointed Librarian on June 24, 1865. Sister Ruth Henderson was appointed Librarian on November 24, 1865. Brother Johnson had gone to college. On a motion, Miss Sarah Clough was elected church Librarian on November 9, 1866. Miss Anne McAdam as Sunday School Librarian and Miss Mary Reis as Sunday School Secretary. According to these records the Library was started before 1871, not as previously stated in the 150th Anniversary Program Book. And possibly before 1852, some 19 years earlier than 1871.)

At this time, too, Mr. Charles Wrenn began his long service as superintendent. In 1873 the average attendance for the year was 125,

and contributions amounted to \$277.00. The number of conversions from the school was 46.

In 1890, we had an orchestra which has not been surpassed in later years. Miss Maggie Collins, organist; Mrs. May Ling, pianist; Mr. Frank Moore, bass violin; Charles and Harry Shafor, flute; Arnold Shafor, Frank Holland and Frank Kemp, violinists.

In 1889 the Amanda Sunday School was organized with Mr. Sinkey as Superintendent, and Miss Harding, Mrs. Sinkey, Mr. Murphy and L. D. Doty as teachers. The Heno School in West Middletown was organized the same year. A brick building was erected through the efforts of John R. Shafor, L.D. Doty, Frank McFall, Mr. and Mrs. Donnelly, and other loyal members of that community.

Two other Sunday School missions were started in the 1890's under the pastorate of Mr. Henry Crane: one on 9th Street and one on Crawford Street. Mr. Charles Wrenn and Miss Mary Reis served faithfully in the Crawford Street Sunday School Mission. These two missions were closed after a few years.

(Correct information concerning the start of the Baptist Missions follows. Between 1872 and 1890, the Baptists were busy starting and supporting Mission Schools. Here are the ones listed in our record book: 1870 – Madison Chapel, some time before 1870; 1886- Amanda Chapel; 1889 – Heno School which became the West Middletown Baptist Church. It was sold in 1971. Also, 1890- the Ninth Street Mission, Crawford Street Mission and the East End Mission. These last three missions lasted only a short time.)

Those of you who are here tonight need not be reminded of the devoted service of Mr. Frank Moore as Sunday School Superintendent which extended over a period of seven years.

Between 1892 and 1898, our Sunday School flourished as never before under the leadership of our pastor, Mr. Crane, and the sweet influence of his devoted wife, Louise.

So we come to the present and find the sons and daughters of those pioneers ready to take up and carry the load of responsibility.”

She closes with the quotation in memory of those pioneers:

*“The stars shall fade away
The sun himself grow dim with age
And nature sink in years
But they shall flourish in immortal youth
Unhurt amidst the war of elements
The wreck of matter, and crash of worlds.”*

(signed) Mrs. L. D. Doty

To go on from there, your historian will depend upon her memory. In the brick Church on North Main Street, now the Elk's Temple, the Sunday School took up the entire first floor of the Church building. As I first remember, folding doors made about four private class rooms. Mrs. Martindale, who was Mrs. D. P. Gerber's mother, had a class of ladies; Mr. Lyman Fisher, a class for the men; Mrs. Frank Moore had a room for the Primary and Miss Lydia Sheafor had a class of teen-age boys in the Library. The half dozen other classes grouped themselves in circles in the big room. I am glad we have a good picture of this old room.

In 1906, we moved into the new Church (on South Main), into what then seemed a most modern and adequate Sunday School department. But, do you know, that in just fifteen years we had outgrown this plant and a large addition costing about \$13,000.00 had to be added to the back of the building. This was the time when the Reverend Mr. Stiles came to us as pastor with a reputation of having ability in teaching a Men's Bible Class. This class in four or five years grew to an attendance of 300. They had a chorus of about 20 voices. This group became quite famous and often sang in the surrounding territory.

The Philathea Class was formed in 1912 with Lydia Sheafor as teacher and under her influence for 46 years has kept strong and active. Miss Emma Shafor was a loved teacher. Mrs. Frank Moore was the first teacher of the Amoma Class which, under equally fine teachers in later days, has been an influential group. Mrs. Johnston, wife of our pastor, Frank Johnston, did much for the High School Department in 1940. She gave it a new dignity and charm. I am touching only the high spots and only mentioning names of teachers

who mean much to you, such as Arthur Stubbs, Bess Harkrader and Lillian Holman.

During these last 50 years in the stone church the Sunday School music must not be forgotten. Miss Ruby George first played the piano; then Bertha Noles Dallas. And this was when Mr. Nate Kunin led a wonderful orchestra which I think may even have surpassed the one my grandmother boasted of in the 1890's. In the last 20 years, Mr. Stalker's enthusiastic leading has kept our Sunday School singing.

Faithful superintendents, whom we will always remember, were Mr. Probst, Mr. Reynolds, Mr. Ervin, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Pearson, and our present efficient Mr. Webb.

Sunday School attendance and contributions have increased since this first record in 1873 when \$277.00 was collected and the average attendance was 125. Last year the attendance was 468 and collections amounted to \$3,590.00. So, the Sunday School which was persecuted at first has flourished.

Miscellany

A sketch by Mary Doty Dell

Odd Records

Because some of the Clerk's records in those early days seem so different from today's reports, your Historian has considered it of interest to note some of them.

One of the early records written by Mr. Tytus is a report of a monthly business meeting. He calls it "The Church Meeting on Saturday morning preceding the Lord's Day Services on Sunday."

The Great Miami River was the baptismal font for those who asked for membership in the First Baptist Church in the early days, and since comfort was not to be considered by those rugged pioneers, the season or the weather made no difference, so I find these items: "On Sabbath February 23, 1840, the congregations after the preaching repaired to the waters of the Great Miami River and in the presence of the same Brother Boynton baptized Brother Plummer and wife and

Miss Margaret Sharp. Sister Schenck decreed to be baptized in Franklin, her place of residence, so immediately after the ordination, Brother Boynton proceeded to Franklin, preached, and then baptized Sister Schenck in the presence (we are told) of a large and attentive assembly." In February 1842, we find 3 women and one man presenting themselves for baptism: Mrs. Mary Vail, Miss Frances Coleman, Miss Josephine Anderson, and Mr. Daniel Williamson. The record states: "Sabbath morning after preaching (having broke the ice on Saturday), Mr. Boynton attended to the ordinance of baptism in the presence of a crowd of spectators."

In 1841, five new members were voted upon for baptism and membership. One exception was made in the case of Mr. and Mrs. John James, as they had been immersed by the Radical Methodists.

During those early days, members were dismissed for what we would consider very private matters. In fact, the number dismissed sometimes exceeded the number received during that year. Often, the commandment broken by the member, causing his dismissal, would be noted by the Clerk as "for breaking Commandment Number so and so."

In March 1839, the case of Samuel Baker was taken up and passed unanimously: "Whereas this Church is satisfied by testimony that Samuel Baker has pursued an unfaithful course toward his employer and his customers by a heedless and reckless course in management of The Middletown Mill, as agent for Mr. Piner, has wounded the feelings of his customers and the members of this Church and has brought a reproach upon the cause of Christ, therefore, be it resolved that he be excluded from the membership of this Church."

A sad little item in November 1879 listed the names of the following small children who had died in an epidemic of scarlet fever: the three little Shartle girls, Eddie Corson, Tommy and Carrie Lawrence, Ada Reed, Clara Bonnell. In this age when our children are protected from those diseases by medical science, it may be well to pause and appreciate the blessings we have.

Another quaint little matter of business recorded in 1839: "A resolution was passed that the members of the Church seat themselves

promiscuously, male and female together.” Undoubtedly, the men and women had been seated separately before this.

Interesting Notes

One of our late members, Miss Edna Jewell, could recall attending the school at the site of that little Salem Church which in 1828 was sold for school purposes. The school she attended may have been a replacement of that first frame structure, but the location was the same. She could remember sitting on a fallen tombstone of the adjoining cemetery to eat her noon lunch.

When the Raymond Bag Factory was built at this site some 20 years ago, the remains of that cemetery were discovered and mention made of the fact in the Middletown Journal. Now, it seems to your Historian that care should have been taken at that time and the discovered remains given a second burial in Woodside Cemetery. A sort of “Grave of Unknown Members of the Little Salem Church.” But sometimes we do not remember until it is too late.

Another interesting little story which is vaguely connected with our Church is that of the small stone marker just north of the old brick Church, now the Elks Temple. This marker has the name Victor Galbraith. His home had been about 100 feet north of the location of the marker, and the stone was placed there by interested citizens. Victor Galbraith was the bugler who, against the walls of Monterey, was shot by a firing squad during the Mexican War. He had been unjustly court marshaled and the whole country had been aroused by the act. He was immortalized by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in the poem entitled “Victor Galbraith.”

(The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks remodeled the building with a new front in 1909, which gave it a Greek Revival façade. It was used this way for over 90 years, when in 2000, it was bought by the Manchester Hotel for a parking lot and demolished in that year.)

(An interesting note concerning Francis Jefferson Tytus: “On March 14, 1886, by vote the church made their Senior Deacon, F.J. Tytus, an honorary member for life of the American Baptist Missionary Union, by payment of one hundred dollars.”)

In November 1851, ten years before the Civil War, our Church passed a resolution renouncing slavery.

In a biography of Mrs. William Moore, whose husband had followed Judson on the Burma Missionary Field, I find that she was the first president of our Foreign Missionary Society. Mrs. Moore was the mother of Mr. Frank Moore. (The first circle of our Baptist Church started in 1856.)

I am inserting here a part of the final report of the Building Committee after the completion of our present Church, as the costs seems so small in comparison with building costs of today.

The lots on which the Church was built cost about	\$13,000.00
The stone work was contracted at	8,700.00
Carpenter	14,261.00
Plumbing	728.00
Electrical work	305.00
Furnaces	780.00
Plastering	1,511.00
Roofing (much of it tile)	1,856.00
Organ cost	5,000.00
Windows (stained)	2,250.00
Architect fee	2,000.00
Decorating	1,000.00

These prices seem comparable to those charged for a nice 5-room residence today.

First Baptist History 1958 through July 1, 1983

Our former Church Historian and my mother-in-law, Mary Doty Dell, passed away in 1980 at the age of 89. For our 175th Anniversary Celebration, I will attempt to record the events of the past 25 years – aware of the improbability of matching her dedication and love of transcribing events for future generations. How fortunate we are to possess the wealth of information concerning our past, so faithfully recorded by previous historians.

Of primary importance in our past 25 years, and a once-in-a-lifetime experience for most of us, was the construction of a new church building. After much soul-searching, 1967 found us dedicating a 7-acre site on Riverview Avenue in the recently developed north-eastern section of Middletown. After four years of surveys, capital fund raising campaigns, architectural design approval, etc., the necessary majority voted affirmatively to break ground for our fourth church home.

(Correction: Ground was broken for the fifth house of worship. The second building was built on North Main Street. The same foundation was used for the third edifice on North Main Street (where the Elk's Temple was), and the church building on South Main was the fourth First Baptist Church building. The church building talked about in 1972 is the fifth First Baptist Church building. This excludes the forerunner of the Baptist Church, the "Little Prairie Baptist Church.")

Eleven months, \$826,000.00 and 265,000 bricks later, (Palm Sunday, March 26, 1972) the congregation gathered around the Crusader's Cross (which had been brought from the South Main Street Church, and placed in the traffic circle at the new church entrance). While palms flourished – flown in from California for the occasion – and trumpets sounded, we processed into our new home while the choirs sang Hosannas!

Flexibility is the key word of the contemporary structure of brick, wood and steel. There are movable partitions in several areas and a choice of seating arrangements in the sanctuary. Suspended 8 feet above the brick platform to the right of the baptistry is the dominant symbol – a 22-foot aluminum and brass cross. The use of warm earth tones throughout blends the structure into the hilltop terrain. A "memorial" carillon atop the building is enjoyed daily by the community.

As of December 1982, the balance owed was \$280,000.00. This debt reduction was accomplished by the dedication and devoted service of so many, I hesitate to name one person or group over another in fear of omitting or slighting anyone.

The task of financing the new structure and meeting the monthly commitments has been a greater challenge because of the severe recession which followed a period of run-away inflation. Hopefully the worst is over and 1983 appears to be bringing a brighter economic forecast. Our Church has maintained a relief food pantry for needy families during this period of high unemployment.

Ministry of Music

In August of 1959, Mr. Nate Kunin, civic leader and musician, passed away. A Russian emigrant, he played his violin for the first time in Middletown in 1906 at the Baptist Church. His beautiful offertory violin solos and his spirited direction of the Sunday School "orchestra" enriched our Sunday mornings for many years, and his death seemed the end of an era.

Helen Gerber Ramsdell resigned her position as Director of Music in September of 1972, after 32 years of dedicated service. A tribute dinner was given by the entire Church membership and plaque placed in the Narthex in her honor.

In 1975, Doris Phillips (Mrs. Howard) accepted the position and during her 8 year tenure expanded the number of vocal choirs, and was instrumental in acquiring a set of "memorial" handbells, and organizing choirs for their use. The Phillips family will be leaving in August for their new home in Virginia.

Our new Allen Digital Computer organ was first played on Palm Sunday, 1976, by Gladys Atkinson (Mrs. Joseph, Jr.) our organist since the death of Edith Hughes in 1965. The organ was constructed with technology developed by the U.S. space program – a contemporary organ for our contemporary church! The cost was \$28,640.00, approximately a third the price of a church pipe organ.

Christian Education

Our Church School, in 1982, consisted of 300 participants according to an updated membership list. There are four departments: pre-school, elementary, youth and adult.

The Baptist Youth Fellowship continues to be an active enthusiastic group, showing community responsibility and spiritual growth. A new program, “Mission Tours and Work Projects” was instituted in 1962. Our high-school age students, with chaperones, traveled to American Baptist Mission projects to view the field work first hand and complete assigned work projects. The cost was defrayed equally by the church, the parents, and student-earned monies. Over the years they visited Mexico, Nicaragua, San Salvador, Guatemala and American Indian Schools, gaining understanding and respect for peoples of other nations and cultures. The program was discontinued after 1972 due to the political unrest in many areas and the new church being our major priority.

Just a few of the many Christian Education projects are – the co-ed softball team, our Vacation Bible School, and the sponsorship of a Cub Scout Pack.

The Church Library has been culled, catalogued, reorganized, and relocated. New books have been purchased with private donations and additional volumes were received from Reverend Weber’s personal collection. It will be named the “G. Walter and Mary Weber Library”, in their honor.

Child Day Care Ministry

Our Day Care Ministry began with eight children in September 1971 in the South Main Street Church. In this era of the working mother, the center hoped to provide care and training of children in Christian love as well as support of the family unit.

In 1982 it served 104 children from 92 families and also worked with “special need’s” children. Other than the location, equipment, and utilities, the center has grown to be self-supporting through tuition. Not only is the Day Care Center State-licensed, it meets stringent standards to qualify as a federally approved center. This permits us to serve all economic levels. It is operated without Federal aid.

American Baptist Women

(formerly the Women’s Missionary Society)

This very active group consists of two circles and the Women’s Social and Service League. The purpose of the recently organized League is to enrich the relationship of church women with one another, with others in the community, with God, and with oneself. They meet four times a year to promote fellowship and work on service projects.

The largest and newest fund raising project was begun in 1969 when the First Baptist Women held an International Fair. It evolved over the years into a Biennial Bazaar, earning over \$8,000.00 in 1982. Half of the profit was given to State and National American Baptist Mission projects, and the remainder was held for local special expenditures. The day-long Bazaars feature all hand-made items, including much sought after quilts and a very popular luncheon. Our church parking lot will have lighting installed this year as a result of the Bazaar profits.

Our pastor of 28 years, the Reverend G. Walter Weber and his wife, Mary, will be starting a new way of life in Sun City, Arizona, when he retires on July 31, 1983.

Rev. Weber’s holistic concept of ministry – belief in the total person, care and love for all people – has always been manifested through his work with organizations in Middletown as well as his church. He has been very involved with the Alcoholics Anonymous group, has served on the Board of Directors of United Way, served on the Civil Service Commission and is one of the founders of the Council on Human Relations. He served on various boards of American Baptists at the State and National level and was president of the Middletown Ministerial Association – to name a few!

This is not intended to be a list of credits and accomplishments – that can be found elsewhere. Perhaps, historically, we Baptists of Middletown are looking back and remembering with fondness the “total person” who guided our congregation through 28 momentous years with spirit, energy, enthusiasm and love – a very positive,

“nothing is impossible” person. We are remembering Mary’s devotion as teacher, advisor, motivator, and good, kind friend.

We wish them many years of good health, much happiness and continuing service to others in their new way of life. Our Minister of Christian Education, Reverend Revis Turner and his wife, Denise, will be supporting us as we begin the process of acquiring a new pastor.

Upon completion of the retirement festivities, and the 175th Anniversary Celebration, the final documents will be added to the Inscription Stone Box (from the Main Street Church). It will be sealed and placed in a prepared receptacle beneath the cross in the Sanctuary. When we think of the monumental accomplishments of the past 25 years – a man walking on the moon and a man-made object sent into deep space beyond our solar system! – who knows how much more “science fiction” will have become “science fact” when next our Inscription Stone Box is opened?

Evelyn Baird Dell
Church Historian

First Baptist History 1983 - 2008

First A Look Back

On April 12, 1843, The First Baptist Church of Middletown, Ohio, was incorporated as a church.

And on June 24, 1843, The First Baptist Church of Middletown, granted letters of dismission to 40 of their members to form the Franklin Baptist Church of Franklin, Ohio. August 22, 1869, letters of dismission were granted to 11 of its members, at their request, to organize a “colored Baptist Church” here in Middletown, to be known as the Second Baptist Church. Their request was granted. (The church is still flourishing and is now located at 116 South Verity Parkway.) The devastating flood of 1913 struck Middletown on March 26, 1913. It caused considerable damage to the church building which

necessitated unusual expenditures as the church building needed to be redecorated and overhauled. While they suffered from the Great Flood, yet compared with some of the other downtown churches the financial loss to the Baptist Church was small and the members were able to raise the money to redecorate the sanctuary and replace articles that had been damaged.

On March 27, 1921, Robert H. Patton and Edward C. Murphy, were made deacons (for life) by order of Pastor Franklin A. Stiles.

The first Mother-Daughter Banquet was recorded in 1942. Although it has gone through several name changes, this banquet is still held on the Monday after Mother’s Day. A few years were missed in the past, but it has now been an annual banquet for over 60 years.

At the suggestion of Reverend John I. Paar (1947-1955), the First Baptist Church’s Sunday Morning Worship Service was aired the first time over Middletown’s radio station, WPFB, on September 7, 1947. The Sunday worship service is still being broadcast over WPFB, with many improvements in technology over the past 60 years.

In 1949 the First Baptist Church had for the first time, in 140 years, a Board of Christian Education. Nine members were elected on November 16, 1949.

When the inscription stone inscribed “First Baptist Church – 1854” was removed from the South Main Street First Baptist Church, a copper box was found in back of it. The contents had been undisturbed since 1904. When opened, found inside was a copy of the Daily Signal newspaper dated October 11, 1904; a copy of the Journal newspaper dated October 11, 1904; and a copy of the Daily Signal printed on cloth, almost completely disintegrated; a small United States flag with forty-six stars; and a list of names of members, who were trustees, and officials. Some of those early members are related to present day members. The copper box is now located under the brick platform that is under the 22-foot aluminum and brass sanctuary cross of the First Baptist Church on Riverview Avenue. The Inscription Stone was placed in the hill on the ground that is at the back of the children’s Sunday School rooms. Although broken in four

pieces when taken down from the South Main Street church, it was repaired and placed where all can see it.

On June 9, 1954, the Building Program Committee met and reported that the culmination of a long period of planning by many of the people was summarized by a motion that was passed providing that The First Baptist Church of Middletown, Ohio, had authorized its Board of Trustees to proceed with the installation of the proposed heating and ventilating system and the development of the basement area of the church for class rooms, a kitchen and a Fellowship Hall. The completed work and development of the basement area of the Baptist Church on South Main Street cost approximately \$91,000.00 which was within the \$95,000.00 authorized by the church. The ladies of the church held their first Christmas Breakfast on the first Friday in December of 1958. The Christmas Breakfast is now an annual tradition, and the fifty-first Breakfast will be held in 2008.

The church sponsored two displaced families, the first in 1960, a Hungarian couple and the second in 1964, a couple from India.

In 1969, women were first elected to serve on the Board of Deacons. Soon women were able to serve on other boards of the church, as well as eventually being able to usher on Sunday.

In 1970, after 19 years as church treasurer, Owen "Dutch" Albaugh, resigned. Neil Pappas took over in 1971 and has served now for 37 years.

The Philathea Class for women disbanded in 1975 after being in existence for sixty-three years. It had been formed in 1912 by Miss Lydia Sheafor who had previously taught a class of young boys in the library of the Baptist church on North Main Street from 1895 to 1902.

And Now 1983 to 2008

On August 7, 1983, the church celebrated its 175th Anniversary with an impressive morning worship service. At 5:30 p.m. there was a meal in the narthex, followed by ice cream and Anniversary Cake. Afterwards, a Historical Drama was presented, which portrayed one of

our church families looking back through the history of Middletown and how the First Baptist church was founded on August 9, 1808.

Reverend Dr. Sterling Price served as Interim Minister beginning September 1, 1983 until April 1984 when Reverend John P. Dick and wife, Paula, along with sons, Andy and Jamie, answered our call and began their ministry with us. He instituted a Shepherding program and "Share the Dream" Capital Funds Campaign to retire the mortgage and also an "Exceeding Expectations" campaign to refurbish the building and grounds. B. P. Allen and Helen Ramsdell were co-chairpersons with a goal of \$380,000 for a 3-year campaign for Share the Dream. On Wednesday, January 30, 1991, the retirement of the church's building debt was celebrated. Laura Mary Kitchen had the privilege of burning the mortgage. Her husband, Ben Kitchen, now deceased, led the congregation in relocating to this site.

In the Summer/Fall of 1989, the men and women of the church built a garage and storage area at the back of the church building. Air conditioning of the entire church building was completed in 1990.

In 1990 our organist, Gladys Atkinson, retired after twenty-five years of faithful and dedicated service. The Fine Arts Committee held a reception in her honor on August 17, 1990. Christine Baird became church organist and began her ministry with us at the Shepherd Dinner on September 30, 1990.

Mrs. Lineta Wilkins generously donated her Steinway grand piano to the church. A very successful fundraising campaign raised the needed dollars to refurbish it. The "new" piano was dedicated in worship on Choir Sunday, June 2, 1991.

In 1992, a Food Pantry was started which serves many families during the year with food and other basic items to help needy families. In the first year 68 families were served and the number has grown during the passing years.

A Nicaraguan Mission Encounter Team was formed in 1992 for a trip to Nicaragua in 1993. Twelve people went under the sponsorship of The First Baptist Church. Other trips followed in 1995, 1997, 1999 and 2001.

On his first Sunday as Pastor, March 1921, Reverend Frank A. Stiles started the Men's Stiles Bible Class with 12 young men in attendance. By 1928 the class had grown to over 235 members which included Baptist men as well as men from Middletown and surrounding communities. Because of declining membership the class finally decided to dissolve in 1993 after 72 years.

Reverend Martin J. Carney served as Minister of Youth & Singles from June 1988 to 1990; and served as Associate Pastor to Reverend John P. Dick from 1991 to 1995. Reverend Carney resigned to accept a call to be an Associate Pastor in Newark, Ohio in April 1995. He was ordained in Lincoln, Illinois on October 23, 1988. Mrs. Karen Helton became Coordinator of Youth Ministries in 1994 and Assistant Worship Leader from 1995 to 2000. On November 14, 1999, the ordination of Karen Helton, as an American Baptist minister, was celebrated. The afternoon service featured organ music and songs of inspiration sung by the choir. Church members and guests filled the sanctuary in support of Karen. Pastor Karen answered the call of Price Hill Baptist Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, to be their Senior Pastor in August 2000.

After 12 years of dedicated leadership, Reverend John P. Dick accepted a call to First Baptist Church in Worcester, Massachusetts to begin there in January 1997. Reverend C. Roland Marcus began as Interim in January 1997. He served one year as Interim Minister and was called to be our Senior Pastor effective January 1998. Under Reverend Marcus' leadership we refurbished the building and grounds with new carpet, tile flooring and drainage repairs to the grounds; and began a planning process for the future. Janet Horton led a series of meetings giving everyone an opportunity to voice their dreams. The first of many committees were formed and plans began to take shape for a building expansion program. Reverend Marcus retired on September 30, 2002.

In 1998, Christine Baird was appointed Director of Music for the Church. She began her new duties on June 1, 1998, which also included her continuing as church organist.

In 1999, the 1976 Allen Digital Computer three-manual organ was sold and replaced with a rebuilt 1932 Kilgen three-manual pipe

organ from St. Louis, Missouri, a gift to the church from Perry Thatcher in memory of his wife, Janet, who had been a member of the choir for many years. The glorious and magnificent sounds of this "new" pipe organ were heard for the first time on Sunday, May 2, 1999. It was dedicated on June 13, 1999, and on October 24, 1999, our organist, Christine Baird, presented a recital in celebration of this wonderful pipe organ.

During the Spring and Summer, the renovation of the kitchen was started with Ray Moncrief and his committee in charge. New cabinets, shelving and arrangements for storage were added. The new kitchen was dedicated during morning worship on August 29, 2000.

In 2001, Reverend Jennifer Easley became Minister of Program and Outreach. She resigned in 2005 to pursue other interests.

Of primary importance in our past 25 years was the construction of an addition to our building. After many meetings and much discussion, on April 8, 2001, the Board of Trustees presented to the congregation, for their approval, the Board's resolution, "to move forward with a much needed Building Expansion Plan." Members of the church decided to once again embark on a new building program.

In 2001, Tom Taylor accepted the call to be the leader of the church's building expansion campaign, a building project that the congregation believed was needed for the physical facilities necessary for our growing church family activities.

On May 4, 2002, a "Capital Celebration" was held for First Baptist Church members, at the New Life Center of the Christ United Methodist Church. This was the "Kick-off Dinner" and program for the First Baptist Church's building fund and was an evening of good food, fellowship and entertainment. "The Need is Great---The Time is Now" became the campaign slogan for the church's building project. The cost was projected to be \$2.5 million.

Faithful members, Reverends Alvin and Rachel Lee, accepted the call to be our Interim Ministers following Reverend Marcus' retirement. The Lee's are retired ministers from the New Jersey area who had relocated in Ohio. They began their ministry with us in October 2002 and continued through June 2004.

In December 2002, Tom Taylor, leader of the church's building campaign, died suddenly, and in 2003, his wife, Jeannine, and Phil Davis were appointed General Co-Chairs to fill Tom's place. Mike Taylor served as Building Chairman for the expansion campaign.

The Pastoral Search Committee presented Reverend Kenneth R. Fey as candidate for Senior Pastor on May 1 with a "Meet and Greet" Open House. We welcomed Reverend Fey, his wife, Debra, and their two daughters, Andrea and Kimberly. On May 2, 2004, Reverend Fey brought the message. Following the morning worship, members voted to extend the call. Pastor Ken Fey preached his first sermon as our new pastor on Sunday, July 4, 2004.

Much discussion, meetings, plans, hopes and prayers went on regarding the building of the new addition and finally a groundbreaking ceremony for the new addition was held after morning worship on October 24, 2004. Members were invited to bring shovels and take part in the digging.

In 2005, major changes were made in the sanctuary sound system. The old system was removed and new equipment is now in operation under direction of Mike Golden.

On January 6, 2006, the building expansion program, "The Need is Great...The Time is Now", was completed. This program which was started in 2000, resulted in a 19,000 square-foot addition and has been named the Tom Taylor Celebration Center. It has a kitchen, a music room, classrooms, storage areas, a walking track on the second level above the basketball court and an elevator.

The Celebration Center was dedicated on February 19, 2006. Many members of the church, as well as many workers who had helped to build this large center, were present for the dedication. Approximately 300 men, women and children attended the catered lunch which was held after the morning worship service.

In February 2006, a Steinway grand piano was given to the choir for rehearsals by Gladys Atkinson. The piano had been used in her piano studio. In addition to being used in the choir room for weekly rehearsals, the piano can easily be moved into the Tom Taylor Celebration Center.

During the morning worship, May 7, 2006, Bill and Susan Childers were officially licensed as Baptist Lay Pastors.

The Annual Maundy Thursday Dinners in 2005 and 2006, were followed by a service in the sanctuary. The inspiring living tableau of daVinci's painting, "The Last Supper" was featured. Men of the church represented the 12 disciples and Jesus, in costumes as well as in speaking parts.

The Celebration Center Committee reported in July 2006 that matching padded chairs had been purchased for all areas of the Celebration Center. In the new choir room, Christine Baird, Director of Music/Organist, made this report: "the huge, new choir room has a large rehearsal space adequate for a 40-member choir rehearsal, 24 feet of handbell tables, all music equipment, file drawers, handbells, robes, costumes, etc. What a blessing this Celebration Center has been for all."

In 2004, a group of people from American Baptist Churches under the leadership of Reverend Dr. Wayne Paulsen, traveled to Thailand to assist Baptist missionaries serving in that area of the world. Various projects including construction of a church building were completed during their stay. Several members of First Baptist Middletown were a part of the group. Additional trips were made in 2006 and 2008, again under the leadership of Dr. Paulsen. The participants felt their trips were productive and their work was rewarding. Members of First Baptist continue to support the House of Love located in Chiang Mai.

A second mission group traveled to Muskogee, Oklahoma, to the Murrow Indian Children's Home in 2006 and 2007. The group was able to interact with the children through crafts and games. The children were treated to a day at the waterpark each visit. Lasting friendships were formed. Many repairs and maintenance projects were completed during their stay.

In 2006, the Search Committee presented Reverend Carol L. McCleary to fill the position of Associate Pastor. She began her ministry with us on September 1, 2006.

In September 2006, the beautiful stained glass rendering called “Shine Jesus Shine” was placed in the entrance canopy. Installation of this latest addition was made possible by two families of the church. Dedication of this beautiful stained glass of the Tree of Life was on October 29, 2006. The “Shine Jesus Shine” glass rendering is a window into the “vision-goals-hopes” for The First Baptist Church.

For the first time, The First Baptist Church was able to be one of the eight local churches that hosted the SHALOM ministries partnership in the year 2006. We’ve continued this ministry in 2007 and 2008 with members providing breakfast and dinner. Evening time and sleeping arrangements were all held in the Celebration Center, a perfect place for them. Donations of personal hygiene items were also available. The Stitches for Christ ladies donated caps, scarves, gloves and mittens.

An afternoon tea for the dedication of the newly decorated church parlor was held on Saturday, May 12, 2007. Tributes to several special members, alive and deceased, were placed in a Book of Recognition and Remembrances by the Parlor Committee. After a short program, refreshments and fellowship made for a lovely festive tea.

The Ordination Service for Reverend Carol McCleary was held at The First Baptist Church of Middletown, Ohio, on Sunday, May 20, 2007. The service concluded with the laying on of hands by all. A reception followed in the Celebration Center.

On Sunday, June 3, 2007, a celebration, “With a Voice of Singing”, was held to honor the 100th Birthday of Helen Gerber Ramsdell. She was the church’s choir director for 32 years, from 1940 to 1972, when she retired from directing the choir but not from her teaching voice students. Singers from First Baptist Church, First Presbyterian Church, St. Luke Presbyterian Church, Church of the Ascension, Breiel Boulevard First Church of God, First United Methodist Church, and communities throughout Ohio sang in the Mass Choir. Friends and students who had studied with Mrs. Ramsdell also came from Tennessee, Virginia, Arizona and Hawaii. The mass choir was directed by our choir director, Reverend Dick Casey, with our organist, Christine Baird at the organ. There were several special

soloists on the program, voice, trumpet, piano, and a trio as well as a slide presentation of Helen’s life put together by Reba Casey. There were also tributes, proclamations and remarks by Reverend Kenneth Fey and Reverend Carol McCleary. A catered dinner followed the concert.

Beginning in 2006, First Baptist ladies and their friends have enjoyed a summer tea party. This fun day was a chance to dress up with hats and gloves and enjoy an old fashioned time of fellowship. Finger sandwiches and fancy cookies were enjoyed along with tea and lemonade.

In September the Board of Trustees announced that the Memorial Committee had obtained sufficient contributions to establish the Serenity Garden. This lovely garden, located just outside the Prayer Room, was dedicated on Sunday, October 7, 2007. Also, the Trustees announced that the Prayer Room was now complete, utilizing funds that had remained from the Parlor designated giving fund. Both of these rooms are open for use on a daily basis.

Miscellany

During these last twenty-five years, our country has experienced several great disasters. On September 11, 2001, the World Trade Center Twin Towers in New York, New York, were destroyed by terrorists crashing airplanes into them. At the same time an airplane was flown into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and one was diverted from its target, the White House, into the ground in Pennsylvania.

Another tragedy occurred in 2005 when Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit New Orleans and the Gulf Coast area within 3 weeks of each other, causing so much damage and loss of homes that over a half million people were displaced.

Another unfortunate event happened on June 13, 2006. The former First Baptist Church on South Main Street (our 4th building) was set on fire by an unknown arsonist. The fire destroyed the back section of the church building. Thanks to the hard work of the Middletown firemen; the sanctuary, the stained glass window at the entrance and the bell tower were saved. We hope that the owners will

be able to rebuild so they can continue their “Rachel’s House” community center for young people. Rachel was one of the teenagers killed during the Columbine (Colorado) School massacre in 1999.

Activities for 2008 – Our Bicentennial Year

Many new as well as many traditional activities are taking place in 2008, our Bicentennial year at First Baptist.

We have four boards: Board of Trustees, Board of Deacons, Board of Christian Education and Board of Missions. Each of these groups handles a specific part of our responsibilities.

The Trustees are responsible for the church building and property. In 2007, a subcommittee of the Trustees, the Memorial Committee, raised funds and implemented the planning and planting of a Serenity Garden just outside the doors of the Prayer Room. The Trustees also coordinate a Grounds Committee of volunteers who mow and take care of the flowerbeds.

The Deacons assist with our worship services and baptisms, sponsor Lenten suppers and services, Easter and Christmas special activities, as well as their normal duties. This year we also had a dinner before the Maundy Thursday service which was “A Walk Through Holy Week” with various stations along the way. We also had a Good Friday service.

The Music Ministry offers choirs for all ages as well as handbell choirs for both adults and beginners. On May 18, 2008 we were treated to an Anniversary Celebration Concert. In 2006 a new Sunday night service, Casual @ 6, was begun. Reverend Richard Casey coordinates this praise and worship service.

The Board of Christian Education plans and oversees many family activities and special events. We have an active Sunday School Department with classes for all ages, plus a nursery and Children’s Church for children up through third grade. A Children’s story is also part of the worship service. This board is also responsible for the church library and for Vacation Bible School, which has been an evening program for the last few years and includes a family meal and

a class for adults. We had 83 children attend this year. Joy Hour, a 15-minute program before Sunday school is also planned by the Christian Education Board for the second Sunday of each month.

Our newest board, the Board of Missions is an active, hardworking board. Among other things they coordinate the collection of school supplies for disadvantaged children, Christmas boxes for Shoebox Ministries, Valentine boxes for college students and military persons, collection of coats and clothing for SHALOM and other agencies. They also manage the meals and volunteers to work with SHALOM during their time in our church building and secure volunteers to take a meal to Hope House on the first Sunday of each month.

The American Baptist Women, while not an official board of the church, are also very active in the life of our church. There are two missionary circles at this time. The ABW also sponsors the annual Mother-Daughter Banquet and the Christmas Breakfast. They celebrate Love Gift Sunday, as well as Women’s Sunday along with their support of various mission activities. We also have an active American Baptist Men’s group. The men enjoy meeting for breakfast once a month and are generous in providing help with church dinners.

Our church is always a busy place with many committees and special groups at work. Some of those are Stitches for Christ, Upward Basketball, American Baptist Youth, Cub and Boy Scouts, several exercise classes, and Health Ministries, to name a few.

First Baptist Day Care continues to hold a prominent place on the list of day care facilities in our area. The Day Care, under the direction of Cynthia Sparks, serves 126 children between the ages of 18 months and 12 years.

This is not meant to be an all-inclusive list of activities, but is just a sampling of the many programs and events enjoyed at First Baptist, Middletown. We are blessed by the leadership of Pastor Ken Fey and Pastor Carol McCleary. Our 200th Anniversary Celebration will conclude with a covered dish dinner on Saturday evening and a catered dinner after worship on Sunday. Several former pastors will be present as we take a look back and prepare to move forward.

Final Remarks

Many wonderful and new things have been accomplished in our world during these past twenty-five years. We now have computers, laptop systems, iPods, cell phones, space ships and a space station. Also, there are heart and other organ transplants available, as well as prostheses for hip, knee and shoulder replacements. We can only imagine what the future holds.

Before closing this history of The First Baptist Church's 200th Anniversary, there are many names that stand out in the memory of this Historian, but unfortunately, too many of them to mention individually.

May the First Baptist Church of Middletown, which was founded on August 9, 1808, continue to grow and prosper as it has during these past two hundred years.

Let us not forget to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength, as He has loved us.
Deuteronomy 6:5

As Francis Jefferson Tytus, a long and faithful member of our early church wrote at the end of his 1881 Church History, *"This church has abundant reason to thank God and take courage for the future."*

If he could see us now, how proud he would be.

Gladys R. Atkinson
Church Historian

Shine Jesus Shine

In September 2006, a stained glass art panel was created by Beau Verre Studios of Middletown, Ohio. This colorful panel was placed as part of our new canopy at our front door.

The glass panel is a symbolic design based on the following concept. At the top is the sunburst of light rays that reach out to all corners of our neighborhood and city. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit together are the light over us all – they guide our way, warm our hearts and teach us to spread the Good News to all who will listen. We celebrate God's gift to us and strive to use it in His name for His glory.

The Tree of our lives grows in the light and represents our lifelong struggle to grow up strong and proud in our faith and trust in Jesus. We spread our canopy of leaves over our community and bear fruit to feed the hungry who yearn to learn more about Christ. We strive to let the Light of Jesus fill our bodies and to show these hungry spirits the way of the Lord so that they too can grow with us in the Tree where they can bear fruit and spread their light to others.

The tree exists because of the life-giving Water that flows down the hill, around us and through us, helping us to grow and see the light in the water's reflection. As Baptists, the water has special significance to us as it washes away our sins and gives us new life in our ritual of baptism. Without the water and our faith we would all wilt and eventually die a meaningless death.

And finally at our base are the lilies that God has created to show us the simple perfect beauty that outshines the gold and jewels of Solomon and all the earthly kings. We are told not to worry about food and clothing and worldly possessions but to trust that our God will give us all we need.

When you step back and see the BIG picture, the whole window of glass is held together by the shape of a cross. Through this cross and the death of Jesus, God promises us that our sins are forgiven and we are all offered the gift of eternal life simply by believing in and following the Light of Jesus. This completes a perfect picture and promise that we all strive to live up to and obtain.

Jeannine H. Taylor - 2006

Pastors of The First Baptist Church of Middletown

Jacob Mulford	1826-1830
Daniel Bryant	1830-1838
William T. Boynton	1839-1844
John Finley	1844-1847
J. Blodget	1847 interim
J. A. Bullard	1848-1849
J. G. Bower	1849-1853
Albert Guy	1853-1859
D. S. Watson	1860-1864
F. L. Chapell	1864-1871
J. W. T. Boothe	1871-1873
Thomas Cull	1874-1880
Edward A. Ince	1880-1889
C. H. Kimball	1890-1892
H. T. Crane	1892-1899
Rufus W. Weaver	1899-1903
E. T. Stevens	1904-1906
Frederick F. Briggs	1907-1910
D. F. Rittenhouse	1911-1919
James S. West	1919-1920
Franklin A. Stiles	1921-1939
Frank E. Johnston	1939-1943
S. S. Feldman	1943-1946
A. M. Bailey	1946-1947 interim
John I. Parr	1947-1955
G. Walter Weber	1955-1983
Sterling Price	1983-1984 interim
John P. Dick	1984-1996
C. Roland Marcus	1997 interim
C. Roland Marcus	1998-2002
Alvin R. and Rachel Lee	2002-2004 interim
Kenneth R. Fey	2004- present

Assistant/Associate Pastors

Rev. Lyman J. Fisher	Assistant Pastor	1888-1890
Rev. H. F. Chaney	Assistant Pastor	1903-1905
None recorded from 1905-1953		
Rev. Earl Dale	Minister of Education	1953-1955
Miss Ruth Dreyer	Director of Christian Education	1955-1957
Miss Pat Newland	Director of Christian Education	1957-1964
Rev. Raymond B. Farrow, Jr.	Assistant Pastor	1958-1964
Rev. Duane Sisson	Assistant Pastor	1965-1967
Rev. Robert P. Hardy	Minister of Education	1968-1970
Rev. Ronald L. Shelton	Associate Pastor	1970-1972
Rev. Robert G. Moore III	Associate Pastor	1973-1976
Rev. Revis E. Turner	Minister of Christian Education	1979-1987
Rev. Martin J. Carney	Minister of Youth and Singles	1988- 1991
	Associate Pastor	1991-1995
Rev. Karen E.J. Helton	Director of Youth Ministries and Assistant Worship Leader	1995-2000
Rev. Jennifer Easley	Minister of Program and Outreach	2001 – 2005
Rev. Carol L. McCleary	Associate Pastor	2006 - present

Sanctuary Choir Directors

Helen G. Ramsdell	1940-1972
Warren Parker	1973-1974
Ken Amburgey	1974-1975
Doris Phillips	1975-1983
Louise Hill	1983-1985
Debbie Cummins, Lana Harner	1985 - 1986
Karen Hill	1987
Debbie Cummins	1987-1998
Karen Hill Mail	1998-2002
Reverend Dick Casey	2002-present

Anniversary Banner

It was decided that a banner would be constructed to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of Middletown First Baptist Church. Since we had just recently finished the new addition to our present building, I became more aware of the actual buildings that the congregations of First Baptist have worshiped in over the 200-year period. Though there have not been many, each has been different, from the tiny 24 x 30-foot “meeting house” in 1808 to the large contemporary building that is our house of worship in 2008. The colors, white and green, were chosen as white symbolizes light, joy and glory, and green symbolizes growth, praise and flourishing. Also, the satin material that had draped our large sanctuary cross was no longer being used for that purpose, so we were able to recycle with chosen colors. Change has been a constant over the 200-year period, with one exception, First Baptist began as a church built on the word of God, and that continues today. No matter how much the brick and mortar may change, from our past into our future, we are **Still Building On God’s Word**, which is our firm foundation.

Mary Harville