

Historical Summary of First Baptist Church of Los Gatos

How old are you? Have you passed your first decade of life? What about your second, or third, or fourth, or....? Ok, you get my point! Anyone reading this has lived long enough to be able to read and think. Maybe for some of us we have passed beyond that ability. :-)

What would you do if you get to celebrate being 100 years old? Would you have a birthday party? Would you celebrate with your family or your close friends? If you are turning 100, do you even have any close friends left!

For First Baptist Church of Los Gatos we get to celebrate our 100 year anniversary of being assembled as a church. At this point in the life of our church we have a past, a present and a future. Please read along to get a sense of who we were, who we are and who we will hope to be.

Our church began at a time in history that seemed to be known for troubles. Trouble was brewing in Europe that would lead to the assassination of the Archduke of Austria. This event brought about World War 1. April 14, 1912 was an event etched into the annals of history. This was the day that trouble came upon 1503 of the initial passengers upon the Titanic. And in the religious world trouble was treating the belief in the fundamentals of the faith.

Into this morass of trouble, some 18 people chose to leave the familiar church they had been part of to establish a new church. Why would they do this? They came together around a solid belief in the Word of God. By 1916 these folks had called a pastor and built our first building at the corner of College and Main in downtown Los Gatos.

Over the next eight years our church would see four different men be the pastor of this young and fledgling church. Not much of any certainty is known about these men. One thing that we know about them is that they preached the Word of God and saw folks being saved and added to the church. This young church was maturing and was ready to call a pastor who would lead the church for the next 28 years.

Pastor B. F. Stump was called to the First Baptist Church of Los Gatos from the First Baptist Church of Cavalier, ND! You might wonder how this was possible. The answer is that many folks had moved from Cavalier to California for a better life. When they became members of the church and were in need of a pastor, they turned to the man who had been their pastor in North Dakota. So, Pastor and Mrs. Stump packed up all they had, along with their young family, and came to pastor our church.

For the next 28 years, from 1924 to 1952 Pastor Stump gave his heart and soul to this ministry. He saw souls saved and a church that grew. His leadership saw the church stay rooted in the Word of God and reaching out to the world through missions. By looking through material provided by the Stump family I found that the church gave great sums of money to missions and missionaries. Pastor Stump led the church to a vision for the lost around the world.

When Pastor Stump left in 1952 we saw three men come after him. The next pastor to come was John C. Defelt. He had been a well known fundamentalist leader in California for many years. Unfortunately at the age of 51 he was suffering greatly from diabetes. After only being here a little more than a year he left due to health reasons. He would go home to the Lord soon after leaving Los Gatos.

The next pastor was a young man, Lyle DeFord, who was saved and baptized in our church. He had gone off to study for ministry and was planting churches in Iowa. Due to a need for money, he and his young wife moved back to Los Gatos to earn some money. It was during this time that the church was in need of a pastor. He was asked to be their pastor. Because he and his dear wife had a burden for the midwest they did not stay long. They are still active in ministry and their sons have followed their lead!

Pastor Hilary Marckx followed Pastor DeFord. His ministry, also, was a bit abbreviated. Yet, it is because of his ministry that one of our longest members came to our church. Dave and Mary Lee

Gillies came to our church as a newly married couple and have stayed for these past 58 years. Pastor Marckx kept the focus upon the Word of God and continued in the legacy that had been handed to him.

Next, Pastor Al Rutledge came to pastor our church. He built up the church through evangelism and discipleship. It was during his days that it was obvious the church needed to vacate the building that had been their home since 1916. The town of Los Gatos would not give the church the permission to expand, so Pastor Rutledge lead the church to build a new building. This building was built by men in the church and was dedicated in 1963. Pastor Rutledge left to go to south San Jose to plant the Sunrise Valley Baptist Church.

Our next pastor was a man of great statesmanship and history in fundamental Baptist lore. Dr. H. O. Van Gilder had retired as the president of Western Baptist Bible College then in El Cerrito, CA. Dr. Van Gilder had served as the first National Representative of the GARBC from 1944-1948. He had been a successful pastor and educator. In 1966 he would hire a secretary to help him in the office. This secretary, Gladys Davis, would serve for the next 50 years! Dr. Van Gilder was known as a dear, fatherly, loving pastor. He also was a brilliant man.

In 1970 Pastor Irv Penberthy came to be our pastor. He had served for many years in Fresno and had been greatly used by the Lord to reach folks with the gospel. When he came he was burdened to continue our outreach both locally and globally. In 1973 an opportunity was presented to him that has turned out to be such a blessing to us. The Los Gatos Christian Church was vacating their buildings for a new facility on Hicks Road. Though the church was already sold and under contract Pastor Penberthy reached out to the church leadership about us buying this facility. This tremendous step of faith is simply a story of God's miraculous provision.

After serving the church for nearly nine years, Pastor Penberthy left and Pastor Jerry Moses followed. Unfortunately his ministry was to be short lived. But in his time he kept the focus upon the Word as his predecessors had done.

Following Pastor Moses was Pastor Frank Emitte. Pastor Emitte had been a long time pastor in Woodland, CA. The Lord had used him to build the church and a fully functional Christian School. His ministry centered upon the Word of God. And he would lead the church to upgrade much of the building plant. He became ill and needed to step away for the pastorate after nearly 12 years. The fellowship hall was remodeled and named after him. Today we have "Emitte Hall" as a reminder of his faithful service.

In 1996 the Lord led Roger McCarty and his family to come to be our current pastor. Pastor McCarty concluded 25 years of ministry this year. He has sought to keep the focus upon the Word of God and the world of the lost.

Throughout the years God has led men to come alongside our senior pastor to be on staff. Some of these men were part time and some full time. Each one was used by the Lord to impact our ministry.

Many things have changed from 1916. In 1916 only 8% of homes had a telephone! Today, some home also don't have telephones. But that is normally because it has been replaced by the cell phone. In 1916 a car cost \$400. Today, a car can average \$20,000. Costs have changed dramatically in 100 years. Communication has changed. Population statistics have changed as well as the make up of our country. Anyone can look at pictures from 1916 to see the difference. Yet, some things have not changed; the need of man and the Word of God.

Our church was birthed in a time of religious confusion. We have stayed the course throughout these years because of our focus and commitment to the Word of God. May the next 100 years be just the same.

Dr. H. O. Van Gilder said this on our fiftieth anniversary in 1966, " The believer is not on a fixed stairway, where he can stop frequently to relax. He is walking up the down escalator! Let him stop short of the top floor, and he may find himself back where he started."