

The 26 Pastors Of The First Baptist Church From Its Organization In 1847 To Present—Able And Consecrated Men

(Written by J. H. Quinn).

Death has claimed so many of our earlier pastors and their co-laborers in this church and our records of that period are so meager that I am unable to do them justice even in this brief sketch.

The organization of this church in 1847 followed a series of revival services in 1846 conducted by Rev. Drury Dobbins, the pioneer Baptist preacher who laid the foundation for the Baptist cause in this territory, and by Rev. James M. Webb, his noble co-worker and pioneer preacher of the adjoining county of Rutherford. These faithful soldiers of the cross long since passed to their reward but we are today enjoying the fruits of their labor.

Rev. James M. Webb was the first pastor and held the position for three years. He was for many years a leading member of the Broad River and Green River associations, serving both as moderator and clerk. He was a man of great ability as a debater, a leading pastor and served for sixteen years as clerk of the superior court of Rutherford county. He was the father of Rev. G. M. Webb, who labored so long and so faithfully in the King's Mountain association and was the grandfather of our own brethren, Judge James L. Webb and Judge M. Y. Webb.

The second pastor was Rev. M. C. Barnett who served three years and was later recalled for a second pastorate. He was what the world calls "a self made man," but a man of rare ability and learning. He served both as moderator and clerk of the Broad River association. After many years of faithful and successful service for the Master, he died in this town on the 20th day of September, 1873, at the age of 55 years and on the night previous to the opening of the 21st session of the King's Mountain association. He was the father of our late brother T. K. Barnett and the grandfather of Miss Fannie Barnett, Mrs. C. N. Lattimore and Mrs. Joe Wray.

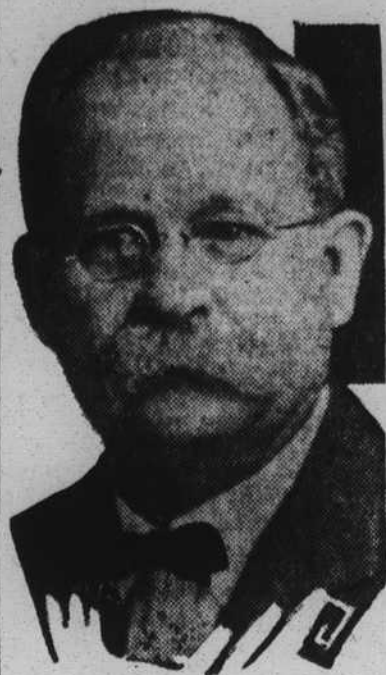
Third Pastor, Rev. Wade Hill. The third pastor was Rev. Wade Hill who served only one year but was twice recalled to the pastorate for short terms. With limited opportunities for an education but with great native ability and a burning desire to serve his Master, he became the leading preacher in this entire section during his active life. Always sound in doctrine and fearless in condemning evil, he won the hearts of his hearers. He was a pioneer champion of temperance at a time when it required moral courage and stamina to be such. Like all men of conviction with courage to stand for the right, he had critics but criticism did not swerve him from the path of duty. He died in 1878.

The fourth pastor, Rev. A. J. Canaler, served about five years. A graduate of the State university, he was educated for a lawyer but, under the influence of Rev. Wade Hill, he entered the ministry and enjoyed many years of useful service. He published for a time in this town "The Eagle" which was the first newspaper ever published in this county. He removed to the state of Alabama where he died on February 24, 1872, the same year in which a former pastor, Rev. M. C. Barnett, died.

Thos. Dixon Fifth Pastor. Rev. Thomas Dixon, the fifth pastor, served two one-year terms with an interval of one year between the two pastorates, there being no pastor in the year 1858. Brother Dixon was often referred to as the "Successor of Drury Dobbins," as he came actively into the ministry about the time of the death of the lamented Dobbins, and carried forward with great success the work of evangelization and church building so successfully prosecuted by that "Prince of the Cross." Surmounting numerous difficulties in his youthful days, Bro. Dixon became a tower of strength in the Lord's Kingdom. He was largely instrumental in organizing more than 40 Baptist churches in this and adjoining counties. He baptized thousands of people and, up to some years prior to his death, had married more than 5,000 couples. He served New Prospect church, where his ashes now rest, for about sixty years. He was the father of Dr. A. C. Dixon, one of the world's greatest preachers; of Thomas Dixon, the brilliant playwright and author, of Rev. Frank Dixon, the distinguished Chautauque lecturer; of Dr. Della Dixon Carroll, the resident physician of Meredith college; and of Mrs. Adie Thatcher, of Norfolk, Va.

The sixth pastor was Dr. E. A. Crawley, who served a little more than two years, and at a later date finished out an unexpired year of another pastor. Little is now known of Dr. Crawley except that he was a man of culture and ability.

Old Seminary Recalled. The seventh pastor was Rev. Timan R. Gaines, who served less than two years, organizing in the meantime an educational institution in Shelby known as the "Roberts Female Seminary." The unex-



J. H. Quinn
Former Deacon Who Wrote
Church History In This
Issue.

pired year of this pastor was finished out by Dr. E. A. Crawley, above referred to, who also had charge for a time of the "Seminary." Nothing further is known of this "Seminary." A man of culture and marked ability, he was yet very eccentric. In his later years he turned his attention from the ministry to other lines of activity, at different times being engaged in newspaper enterprises. He did effective work in turning home seekers from the North toward the South in the early years following the Civil war.

Rev. Needham B. Coob, the 8th pastor, served three years and during the time was also engaged in teaching school. In his earlier manhood, he was a lawyer by profession and, in the year 1859, severed his connection with the Episcopal church and joined the Baptist church and became very active in the councils of this church. With Dr. J. D. Hufham, he published for a time the Daily Record of Raleigh. After that he served as corresponding secretary of the state Sunday school board. He possessed marked ability as a writer of prose and poetry, some of his poems are still extant and show marked poetical talent.

The ninth pastor was Rev. A. L. Stough who served for a term of four years. A native of Germany, he was educated for the Catholic priesthood. He was an able minister and a distinguished scientist. While pastor of this church he served as moderator of the King's Mountain association and was held in very high esteem by all the churches of this association.

Rev. J. A. White, then principal of the Shelby high school, was the tenth pastor, having accepted the pastorate temporarily as the pastor elect had declined to accept the call. For a few years Bro. White retired from teaching and gave his entire time to the ministry, serving at that time the church at Blacksburg and Antioch but in later years he resumed his work of teaching as well as preaching and was recognized as one of the leading educators of this state. He died in April, 1922.

Dr. Nelson A. Ripe Scholar. Dr. W. A. Nelson, the eleventh pastor, served three years. A ripe scholar, possessed of a keen and logical mind, fervent in piety, and sound in theology, it is not surprising that he made a profound impression upon this church which parted with him with great reluctance. While here he was largely instrumental in the organizing and establishing of the Shelby Female college which, for a number of years, rendered great service to the young womanhood of this section. It was during this pastorate that the church and Sunday school first took a decisive step forward. The secret of Dr. Nelson's success as a pastor was that he found a place for every member to work and put the member to work in that place. He was at one time president of Judson college and held many prominent pastorates in late years. He died in DeLand, Fla., on the 20th day of April, 1909, while addressing an audience, thus dying in harness. Following the resignation of Dr. Nelson from the pastorate here, Rev. R. D. Mallory, then president of the Shelby Female college, supplied for a few months pending the calling of another pastor.

The twelfth pastor, Rev. W. B. Bussy, a native of Georgia, served a little less than two years when he resigned to accept a pastorate in his native state. Much of the spirit of progress manifested by the church under the pastorate of Dr. Nelson continued under Bro. Bussy. The Christ-like spirit of this faithful servant of the Master won for him the love of all who knew him.

Our thirteenth pastor was Dr. W. H. Strickland who served about one and a half years. While he was a man of marked ability and of learning, his pastorate was too short to accomplish much in church progress. Little is known of his work after leaving here. He has been dead several years.

Rev. J. M. McManaway was our fourteenth pastor and retained this position for about three years. It was during this pastorate that the first brick house of worship was erected on this spot. He was remarkably successful in leading the church to do greater things financially as well as spiritually. He was a good pastor and preeminently a Bible preacher, calling to his aid the scriptures to sustain every proposition. He held later a number of prominent pastorates but was an invalid for a number of years and died in Virginia in April, 1922, the same month in which a former pastor, Rev. J. A. White, died.

Rev. G. P. Hamrick was the fifteenth pastor and served nearly two years. He was a good pastor and faithful in the performance of every duty. A native of this county he served many churches in the two Carolinas with marked ability and success. He was especially successful in evangelistic work. He is now dead.

The sixteenth pastor was Rev. J. L. Sproles who served about two years. Bro. Sproles was a young man of striking personality and a good preacher. Since leaving here he has held many prominent pastorates and is yet in the active ministry.

Servant Of God.

That saintly and beloved servant of God, Dr. J. D. Hufham, became the seventeenth pastor and served for a little more than two years. Though advanced in years, he made a profound impression upon the church and association as he was a man of marked ability and piety. For many years he was a leading and active member of the Baptist state convention, holding thereunder many positions of honor and trust. On account of age and affliction his recent years were spent in retirement at his home in Mebane, where he died in 1921.

Our eighteenth pastor was Rev. R. P. Treadway, who served for five consecutive years, one of the three longest pastorates in the history of the church. It is unfortunate that we have had so many short pastorates, unfortunate both to church and to pastor. Bro. Treadway was called to Mansfield, La., where he labored very successfully until his death about the year 1911-12. Under his pastorate here, the church advanced along all lines of activity. He was not only loved and esteemed for his piety and faithful service by his church but by the entire association.

Dr. W. D. Hubbard, after resigning the pastorate of the Tabernacle Baptist church of Raleigh, became the nineteenth pastor, holding the position a little over one year, it being understood at the time he came that it was only a temporary pastorate. During his brief ministry here, he endeared himself to every member of the church and to all citizens of the town. Few who heard it will ever forget the introductory sermon that he delivered at the King's Mountain association which convened at Pleasant Hill church during his pastorate here.

The twentieth pastor was Rev. M. E. Parrish, who served nearly five years, one of the three longest pastorates in our history. He accepted a call to a church at Portsmouth, Va., which he served with marked success up to the time of his death about 1909-1910. A man of marked ability and enthusiasm for any cause that he espoused, he accomplished much for the Master while with this church. He greatly desired to build a new house of worship while here but the church seemed unwilling to undertake the task at that time.

Jenkins A Builder.

In calling Rev. C. A. Jenkins to the twenty-first pastorate, the man and the opportunity met. Preeminently a builder of houses of worship, he came to us at a time when our need on this line was greatest. As in the case of David and Solomon in building the temple, Bro. Parrish desired to build this house of worship, but the duty was left to Bro. Jenkins, and it was largely due to his initiative and enthusiasm that this building was erected at that time. It is a monument to his memory. Be it said to the credit of our members that, in the main, they heartily cooperated in the work. Bro. Jenkins was an excellent preacher and a fearless and courageous champion of the right, as he saw it.

Pastor Swope To War.

Our twenty-second pastor was Rev. L. W. Swope, a native of West Virginia but who previously held prominent pastorates in both Carolinas. He served the church most faithfully and successfully for about four years. For some time prior to termination of this pastorate, he was chaplain of the First North Carolina regiment. There was then no war in sight, but when war was eminent and his country called, he could not afford to resign his commission in the regiment. When his regiment was sent to the Mexican border he tendered his resignation as pastor, believing that the interest of his church would suffer in his absence, but the church declined to accept his resignation. Later when the World war began and he was called into the service he again



B. T. FALLS
Sunday School Superintendent.



HENRY EDWARDS
Church Clerk.

tendered his resignation which was accepted. After retiring from the army, he served for about two years as pastor of the Bolling Springs church and teacher in the Bible department of the high school.

Rev. Lee McB. White, son of our former townsman and beloved brother, Dr. J. Lee White, was our twenty-third pastor and served a little less than two years—a period too short for marked advance along the lines of church activities, unfortunately both for pastor and church. Bro. White was a good pastor and a good preacher. He is now pastor of a church in Jacksonville, Fla., where he is greatly beloved by the membership.

Our twenty-fourth pastor was Dr. J. Marcus Kester, one of our own county boys, who served the church most successfully and efficiently for four years, closed his pastorate on Oct. 29, 1922. Scholarly, deeply consecrated, always aggressive, and greatly beloved by all, the church made the greatest progress in its history to that date. He stressed with all the earnestness of his soul the pressing need of the church for enlarged equipment to handle its rapidly increasing possibilities. We failed him then but soon saw our mistake. He is now pastor of the First Baptist church of Wilmington.

Our twenty-fifth pastor, Dr. Robt. L. Lemons, was called to the pastorate on Jan. 14, 1923, and entered upon his duties on March 1, thus leaving us without a pastor for four months. He served the church about two and a half years, his ministry closing Sept. 1, 1925. His ministry was too brief to show marked results, but his exalted Christian character, his charming personality, and his support of every movement for the betterment of the community, won for him the love and esteem of all with whom he came in contact.

Present Pastor, Dr. Wall.

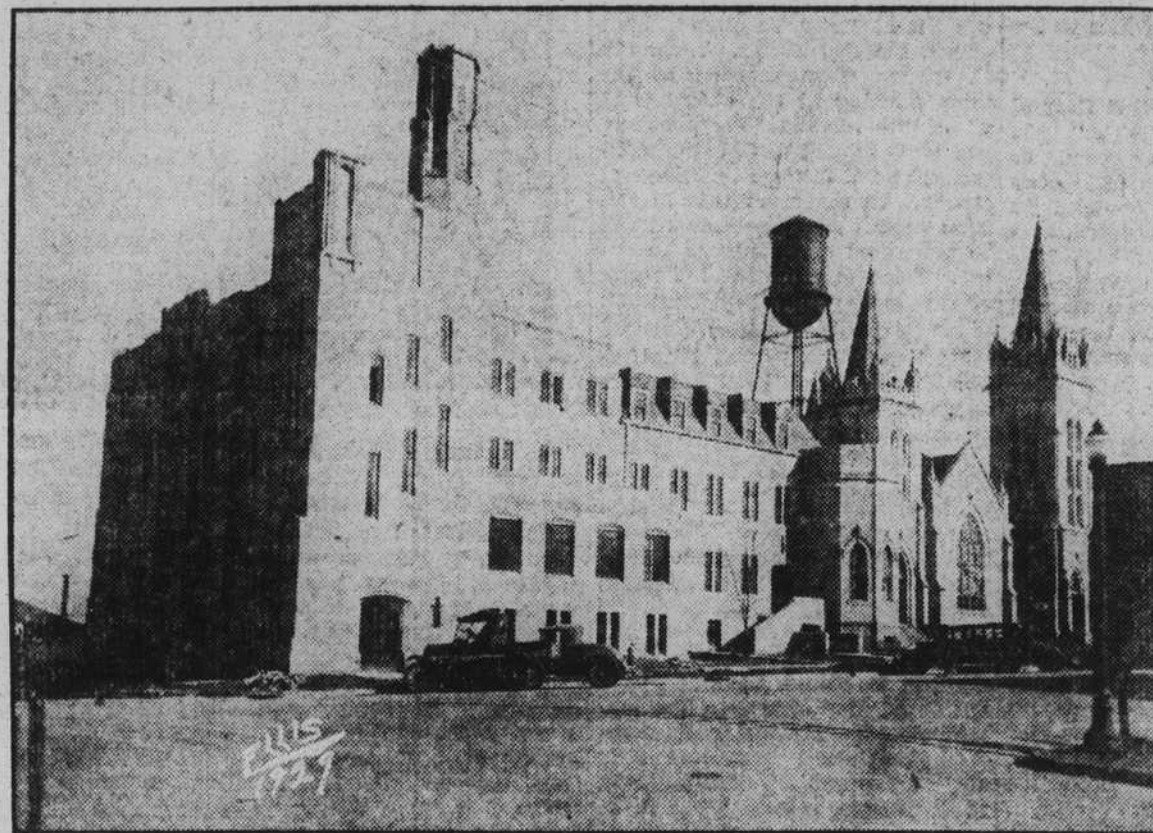
While this sketch has reference primarily to our former pastors, it would be incomplete were it not to refer to our present beloved, most efficient, and most successful pastor, Dr. Zeno Wall, who is our twenty-sixth pastor. He began this pastorate Oct. 1, 1925, thus having served to date about three and a half years. Soon after he came to us he said he was praying for three things in particular—first, for the erection and equipping of a church building fully adequate to our growing needs. This we now have. Second, for the erection and equipping of a junior college at Bolling Springs. This we now have in its first stages. Third, the coming to this section of a great spiritual revival that will spread throughout the land. Like the others, we believe this will come in due time. Never in the history of this church has the membership been so thoroughly united and never has the spirituality been so marked as now. With Divine guidance invoked at every movement of the church, we can not fail.

I believe we can say, without fear of successful contradiction, that no other Baptist church in North Carolina ever had for a similar length of time an able or a more consecrated array of pastors than those who have served this church since its organization.

This the 23rd day of March, 1929.
J. H. QUINN.

WE SINCERELY CONGRATULATE THE GOOD BAPTIST PEOPLE OF SHELBY AND CLEVELAND COUNTY FOR SUPPORTING THE ERECTION OF SUCH A MAGNIFICENT PLACE OF WORSHIP.

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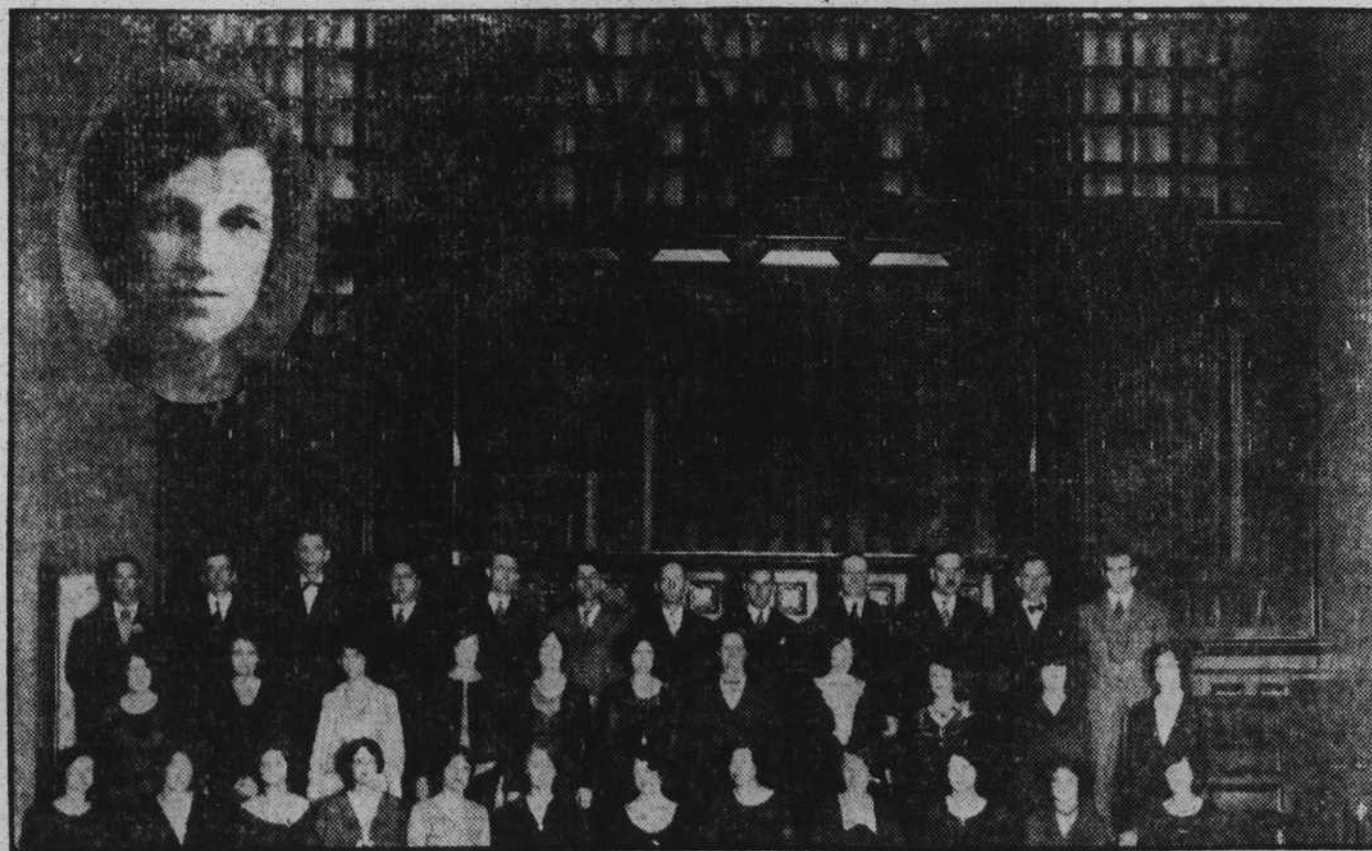
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