

# **The History of Grace FWB Church**

## **June 17, 1960 - 2008**

A meeting of Free Will Baptist members in the Lake City area was held on June 17, 1960 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Sullivan for the purpose of organizing a church in Lake City.

The Rev. Walter Jernigan, pastor of Bethany Free Will Baptist Church had felt led of the Lord to conduct a survey in this area and had done much of the foundation work leading the group to this point.

The meeting was opened by singing "Take the Name of Jesus With You" followed by prayer led by Rev. Watford. The church creed was discussed by Rev. Clarence Lambert. The following voted to organize a church thus becoming charter members: Marion Coker, Althea Coker, Genevieve Rogers, Kenneth Miles, Wilma Gaskins, Betty Lou Thompson, Robert Sullivan, Dorothy Sullivan, Blondell Buckles, and J.W. Gaskins (as a candidate for Baptism).

A presentation of the Holy Bible was made by Rev. Jernigan. Rev. Watford discussed the Church Covenant and the group voted to adopt it. Rev. Julius Vause led the prayer of consecration. The names of Grace and Mr. Herman were submitted by Rev. Walter Jernigan. The group agreed on Grace.

During this first meeting, Mrs. Genevieve Rogers was elected church clerk; Althea Coker elected treasurer; Kenneth Miles, Marion Coker and Robert Sullivan were elected Trustees; and Robert Sullivan and Marion Coker were ordained as Deacons.

It was decided that Sunday School would begin as soon as possible. A committee was appointed to look for a suitable lot and building. Rev. Bobby Poole was called to work with us until he leaves for the mission field. The first collection was \$24.00.

The church was organized and started with a ten day revival conducted by Rev. Willard C. Day at the Lake City Elementary School auditorium.

The first Sunday School was held July 3, 1960 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Marion Coker with an attendance of 19. Soon afterwards church services began to be conducted at the Masonic Building on West Main Street.

Members met after Sunday School on August 28, 1960 and voted to call Rev. Roger Tripp of Sumter as the First Pastor. He would minister the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday's of each month and his salary was \$20.00 per week. His first service was Sunday Morning, September 4, 1960.

During the regular business meeting of Oct. 1960 plans were well under way for securing property. There was some disappointment because of opposition from local residents about building a church in the middle of a residential area but God graciously removed the obstacles and the present location on Lawrence Street was purchased. By this meeting, Mid and Dolly Driggers had joined the fellowship of the church and Mid Driggers was elected the first Building Fund Treasurer.

An actice League was begun on October 16, 1960 with 30 members. In January of 1961 the church purchased its first 50 song books and agreed to raise the pastor's salary to \$29.40 per week. Mrs. Wade Whitehead, Bobbi Jean Whitehead and Gene Coleman had joined the church by this time.

The Ladies Auxiliary gave its first report at the April 20, 1961 business meeting with a membership of 14. The building fund was \$2894.97 by this date.

The first Vacation Bible School was held the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in June of 1961. Carl and Eulalia Jordan had joined the church by the August 1961 meeting. On July 26, 1962 the church accepted plans for the church building with a low bid of \$19,650.00. Carl Jordan was treasurer at this time and Arnold and Jackie Lowder had joined the fellowship of the church. The church met again on August 19, 1962 and adopted the bond plan for the financing of the new building.

With much help from outside and with much hard work by the members the new church was completed and dedicated June 17, 1963.

Rev. Conrad Wilford came as pastor in September 1965 and remained until September 1967. Then in October of 1967, Rev. Ned Pattillo came as a supply pastor and remained until 1972. During his ministry the church built its parsonage with much of the work being done by the members.

Rev. Dennis Lowry became the pastor in 1972 and remained until 1973. Rev. Mike Jones assumed the pastorate of the church in July 1973 and remained until February of 1977. In February of 1975 the church voted to purchase new pews and carpet for the sanctuary.

Rev. Van Powell became the pastor of the church in March of 1977 and remained until September of 1978. Rev. Mike Jones then came back as pastor. The church began construction of a new fellowship building addition in August of 1979 and it was dedicated in June of 1980 once more with members doing much of the work.

Rev. Carey McElveen became the pastor from 1980 to 1981 then in 1981 Rev. Robert Rose became the pastor until 1984. In 1984 Rev. Mike Jones became pastor and expanded the church outreach to newsletters, radio, audio and video all with the goal of reaching people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In 1995 Rev. John Keen became part time assistant pastor aiding Rev. Jones with the youth ministry of the church. Rev. Keen left in 1997. Then in June of 1997 Rev. Carroll Bazen became part time assistant pastor of Grace FWB Church and on September 1<sup>st</sup> became full time assistant pastor.

In 1998 the church constructed a Children's Church room again with much of the work being accomplished by its members.

In December of 1999 Rev. Mike Jones resigned as pastor of the church to become the South Carolina State Promotional Director and Rev. Carroll Bazen assumed the responsibilities of pastor which continue to this day.

Grace began an extensive remodeling project in 2001 that included a foyer, new carpet, pews, lights, sheetrock walls, the addition of over 900sq. ft. of stage area, new restrooms and an upgrade on all of our audio and video equipment. Through the faithfulness of God and many generous donors all this was paid for less than a year after completion of the project.

In November of 2005 construction was begun on a new 110' x 80' gym, dining area and commercial kitchen. Again with the dedication of many wonderful people and the goodness of God this facility was dedicated to God in September of 2006 and is being enjoyed by Gods people.

As we ponder over the rich history of Grace FWB Church we must not forget that nothing would have been possible without Gods leadership and blessings. It is upon Him that Grace continues to equip and reach people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ into 2008.