

History of Trinity Baptist Church 1953-2003

Early Years—SPIRIT

The spirit of love undergirded the faith and prayers of 65 people who met on Wednesday, February 4, 1953, in the Colquitt Hotel dining room. They came to seek God's will as to the need for another Baptist church in Moultrie. After an extended session of prayer and personal testimony, the group felt led of the Lord to take the first steps as directed by His leadership.

Weekly prayer meetings were held in the new Huber building at the corner of Second Avenue and First Street, Southwest which was generously offered for this purpose. From the beginning, the movement was sparked by a feeling of individual obligation to accept any job, whether menial or executive. The slogan was "No one says no."

As plans progressed, advice and counsel were sought from several Baptist ministers, but final decisions were always based on what the majority felt to be leadership of the Lord. By the time the church was finally

constituted on Wednesday, April 15, 1953, the meeting place had gradually assumed the appearance of a dignified place of worship, and the people were ready to assume the spiritual and financial responsibility delegated them by the Organizing Council.

Rev. Tom S. Roote, Field Worker for Colquitt Baptist Association, served as moderator for the council; Rev. Guy Atkinson, President of Norman College, preached the sermon; Rev. Garnie Brand, pastor, Norman Park Baptist Church, offered the dedicatory prayer. One hundred thirty members answered roll call and forty-three absentee letters were presented.

The first Sunday worship service was held April 19, 1953. Dr. John Jeter Hurt of Atlanta preached the sermon "Adventuring with Jesus." Earlier that day 168 members attended a fully graded Sunday School. Classes and departments met in adjacent offices, the YMCA, Colquitt Theater, and nearby homes graciously offered by neighbors. That evening Training Union enrolled 64, and next day

WMU met with 47 ladies. Sunbeams, Girls' Auxiliary, and Royal Ambassadors formed soon afterward.

Deacons were elected and new deacons ordained on April 29 with Rev. Douglas Jackson, pastor of First Baptist Church, West Point, preaching. During the following church conference a budget of \$22,000 for April-October was adopted, allocated equally between local expenses and missions.

On May 6, 1953, it was voted unanimously to name the new church Trinity Baptist Church. New members joined the fellowship until close of charter membership, August 9, enrollment 323.

In conference, May 13, it was decided to purchase a lot on the corner of Second Street and Twelfth Avenue, Southeast. Two lots opposite the property were given to the church for the Pastorium; two other lots, north and east of the church property, were presented for a parking lot and expansion.

Several distinguished preachers filled the pulpit in the modest store building church until Dr. T.F. Callaway, retired minister from Thomasville, became the first regular supply

pastor on June 3, 1953. Dr. Guy Atkinson, Norman College President, succeeded Dr. Callaway on August 1 and supplied until Dr. Montague Cook of First Baptist, LaGrange, was called as our first pastor.

October 4, 1953, was a day of joy and thanksgiving as Dr. Cook preached the first sermon to the new congregation. His theme was "An Ideal Church: Working, Witnessing, Waiting on the Lord." The following quotation from the church bulletin expresses the spirit of the people so recently called to a new undertaking for the Lord:

"To the visitor within our gates, to those who need courage, to those who need comfort, to those who need Jesus, to those who wish to serve, to those who want rest, peace, and happiness, this church extends a warm WELCOME."

All members had a proportionate share in the glorious task of organizing and developing Trinity Baptist, but those who served in places of direct initial responsibility deserve special recognition on

Silver Anniversary day.

† Moderator—Marion Sirmans, Steering Committee elected February 4, 1953: Nat Hughs, chairperson; Charlie Powell, Jack Spivey, Mrs. Leroy Dubberly, Mrs. Hiller Gammage, Sr.; Charles Smith, Jr.

† First Deacon
Chairperson—Nat Hughs;
First Sunday School Superintendent—Marion Sirmans; First Training Union Director—Brax Batson; First WMU President—Mrs. Leroy Dubberly; First Chairperson, Music Committee—Mrs. James Hall; First Choir Leader—Miss Jean Herritage (Mrs. Henry Davis, Jr.); First Church Pianist—Mrs. Nell Harris; First Church Clerk—Fondren Draffin; First Church Treasurer—Leroy Dubberly; First Vacation Bible School Principal—Mrs. Leon Pippin.

† First Board of Deacons: Nat Hughs, chairperson; Henry Barber; Brax Batson; Bill Clark; Cecil Clifton;

James Cotton; Nelson Linder; Bill Mathis; Dr. R. E. L. Pattillo; Homer Ray, Jr.; Erle Taylor; Roland Turner.

† First Pulpit Committee: Mrs. C. C. Brannen, Bob Cheshire, Mrs. H. Gammage, Mrs. John Hall, Jr., Nat Hughs, Marion Sirmans.

† First Church Trustees: Bob Cheshire, Walter DeLoache, Dr. F.M. Gay.

Activity for the next six months centered on the building program. Those responsible for this undertaking were Charlie Powell, Chairperson, Building Committee; Carl Huber, building supervisor; Bill Clark, pastorium supervisor.

Construction on the pastorium began December 3, 1953, and was completed April, 1954. On April 26, ground-breaking ceremonies were held. These two important events marked the first anniversary of Trinity. From a membership of 173 and budget of \$22,000, the church had grown to 413 members and a \$98,086 budget, including \$75,000 building fund. On wings of faith, this small congregation assumed a debt of approximately \$380,000.

Another highlight of 1954

was recognition for the first Standard Vacation Bible School in Colquitt County Baptist Association. One hundred thirty-six children had eighty-seven percent attendance.

By the second anniversary, a spiritual dream had become reality. The congregation left the little store building with many happy memories and moved into the magnificent new church building on Twelfth Avenue, Southeast. Many evidences of generosity throughout the building included brass memorial plaques on furnishings, musical instruments, and equipment.

On Dedication Sunday, May 22, 1955, Dr. T. W. Tippet, Georgia Baptist Sunday School Secretary; Gainer Bryan, Training Union Secretary; and Janice Singleton, WMU Secretary, brought greetings from the Georgia Baptist Convention. Dr. Guy Atkinson preached the dedicatory sermon. A Girls' Auxiliary Coronation service climaxed the day, recognizing four Maidens, eight Ladies-in-Waiting, seven Princesses, four Queens, and one Queen with Scepter.

The spirit of the joyful people on that Dedication Sunday was reflected by a

paragraph in the program dedicated "to the Glory of the Lord":

"On this day, May 22, 1955, as we formally enter our church building, we have reached the goal we set. . ., only to realize this is not our goal at all, but only a stepping stone toward greater service to God, whose goodness. . .made this achievement possible."

The end of two years' history found Trinity with 414 members, a standard Sunday School enrollment of 429, Training Union of 130, a standard WMU with 116 and 95 children in Sunbeams, GA's, and RA's.

Later Years—PROGRESS

In 1960, the DeLoache Memorial Chapel was added, a gift from the DeLoache family. This beautiful small replica of the church sanctuary was dedicated September 21, 1960. The educational building was built at a cost of \$300,000 and dedicated May 14, 1969.

Through the years, the

buildings were maintained satisfactorily. In 1987, the fellowship hall and kitchen were enlarged and totally renovated by Barber Construction Company. New carpet was installed in the sanctuary. A major overhaul of all buildings was accomplished in 1997. Renovation recommendations were made by David Maschke Architect Associates of Albany and the job was put out for bids. The church voted to accept the low bid of \$402,830, by Osborn Construction Company, Valdosta. Later that year, \$25,769 for furnishings was added. With John Mobley, Deacon Chairperson, and Pat Tomlinson, Property Committee Chairperson, overseeing, the work began in April 1997 and was completed in October 1997. The theme "Rejuvenate, Renovate, Rejoice" was adopted and funds for the project were successfully raised with Joyce Barber as head of fund raising. Dedication of the refurbished facilities was October 19, 1997. June 13, 1999, was a red-letter day for Trinity with the note burning which retired the renovation debt. The building and grounds are now in prime condition.

Pastoral leadership of Trinity throughout her history has been outstanding. Each pastor, with unique personality and abilities, has made a lasting contribution to the spirit and outreach of Trinity as she continues to grow in a sense of mission from God and ministry to others. These men of vision, courage, and deep spiritual commitment have been led of the Lord to accept calls to service here.

After serving twelve years, during which Trinity doubled its membership, our first pastor, Dr. Montague Cook, accepted a call to First Baptist, Washington, Georgia, September 30, 1965. He was succeeded by Dr. Thornton Williams of First Baptist, LaGrange, on January 16, 1966. Dr. Williams served five years, then returned to LaGrange in November 1970. On June 1, 1971, Dr. John Bledsoe of First Baptist, Calhoun, became our third pastor. Dr. Bledsoe served here ten years, resigning January 1, 1981, to go to Toccoa First Baptist. Dr. James (Jimmy) C. Elder was called to serve as pastor in April 1982. Dr. Elder also served ten years, leaving for First Baptist, Thomson, Georgia,

in December 1992. In November 1993, Dr. Charles (Chuck) Moates accepted our call and served until July 1995, when he went to Smoke Rise Baptist, Stone Mountain. Now Dr. Michael Helms serves as pastor, having been called in July 1996 from Hartwell, Georgia.

Trinity Baptist has been fortunate in securing outstanding retired ministers to serve as interim pastors. Dr. Grady Feagan, a Trinity member, served February through June, 1971. Dr. C. Earl Cooper of Jacksonville, Florida, capably filled in from September 1981 to April 1982. Dr. Robert McMillan of Tallahassee First Baptist served from January to October 1993. Dr. Ches Smith of First Baptist, Tifton, served September 1995 to July 1996. All these were loved and revered by the congregation.

In addition to Dr. Feagan, Trinity has had several ordained ministers: Dr. R. C. Gresham, former pastor of the early Trinity group, was a member for two years before his death in 1972; Rev. Tom Roote was a member of Trinity while a Field Worker for Colquitt Baptist Association and returned after retiring; Rev. Gordon Pittman, his successor,

belonged to Trinity; Rev. Perry Edwards, Rev. W. H. Patch, Rev. Ben Newell also belonged after retiring. Rev. R. W. Jenkins, Associate Director of Education Extension, Georgia Baptist Convention, was a member; Jorge Houed, Colquitt Baptist Association minister to Hispanics, is a vital part of Trinity today. Each of these has blessed the church with his presence, counsel, and service.

In 1966, a need was seen for more staff assistance. The church has employed many capable young people, some temporary and others permanent: 1966, Jean Cox, youth director; 1966-69, Daniel K. Shaddock (later ordained), Youth Director and Assistant for Church Ministry; 1969-71, Joe Glisson, Director of Education & Youth; 1978-79, Edwina Mill (later Rowell), Minister of Education; 1980-83, Miss Lynn Clark, Minister of Education & Activities; 1988-93, Royce Railey, Director of Youth, Young Adults, Activities; 1995, Sara Brown, Minister of Education; 1997 to present, Brad McWhorter, Minister of Youth & Activities; 2001, Allen Edwards, Assistant Minister, Summer Intern.

One cultural and spiritual hallmark of Trinity has been her outstanding music ministry. From the start, the members realized the importance of quality leadership. Miss Joyce Parrish (later Mrs. Hiller Gammage, Jr.), Director of Music at the Base Chapel, Spence Air Base, served as supply choir director during 1954. In September of that year, the church called Neta Belle Scarboro of Moultrie, Gastonia, North Carolina, and Miami, Florida, as organist and choir director. She was consultant for the installation of the beautiful Schantz organ, which remains in the sanctuary. The first formal program was Easter 1956, when DuBois' "Seven Last Words" was performed by a choir of 42 and 3 soloists. Miss Neta Belle remained at Trinity as organist and sometime choir director for 32 years until her resignation in 1986. Trinity will always be indebted to her for her superior musical knowledge and taste.

Trinity Baptist Church has been fortunate to have excellent musical instruments donated for use in the sanctuary of the church. These were given by loving and faithful members of the church, often in memory of one who had died. In 1955, the

magnificent Schantz organ was donated by the C. O. Smith family. Also, in 1955, the grand piano in the sanctuary was given by Mr. and Mrs. F. R. Pidcock. In 1974, the Hand Bells were a gift from the family of Mrs. F. R. Pidcock, in her memory. In 2001, Rose and Marvin Cochran gave a Yamaha grand piano, replacing the previous one.

Trinity has been privileged to have many talented people to serve and enrich our spiritual lives through music: 1967-68, Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Tyler organized a youth choir; 1972-74, B.C. Carr, first full-time minister of music, started a fully graded choir program; 1974-76, Bruce Hartgrove started handbell choir, which continues. He was also minister of music. From 1976-78, Alan Bowen was minister of music; 1979-80, interims Loren Hildebrant, Tony Webb, Dr. Carl Nosse (Florida State University), Bobby Apon (youth music). From 1980-81, Phillip McGraw, music; 1984-93, Rev. Larry Michael Feltman, minister of music & activities; 1986-93, Mrs. Jimmy Massey (Sue) of Adel, organist. After resigning, she died of cancer within a year. From 1993 to present, Ken Collier, organist. Ken is from a talented musical

family in Moultrie and has seminary training. From 1994-97, Ed Scruggs was music director while working on his doctorate at FSU. John Grobe, 1997 to present, serves as Minister of Music and Outreach.

Mrs. C. O. Smith (Ester Cutts), a charter member of Trinity, served as state WMU president from 1957-1961. She, along with other charter members of Trinity, were mission-minded and the WMU (now Baptist Women) was organized the first year, 1953. This grew to be a vital missions arm of the church. We have continued to have mission organizations for all ages. Several families in Trinity were already financially supporting missionaries appointed by the Southern Baptist Convention Mission Board, and several young people grew up in Trinity and went on to the mission field:

- † China—Dr. & Mrs. Alex Herring and Miss Pearl Todd (prior to World War II).
- † Japan—Pearl Todd (held prisoner by the Japanese, she returned there to serve later).
- † Africa—The Allbrights.
- † Bangalore, India—Dr. &

Mrs. Fox, Dr. Rebekah Naylor (School of Nursing was built and later named for her) and Mrs. John Wikman, RN.

All of these were sponsored by individuals and families. The following were commissioned by the FMB (SBC):

- † Africa—Dr. & Mrs. John McCoy and family (John grew up in Trinity and was ordained to the ministry. Trinity sponsored him as a medical missionary to Eku, Nigeria); Lynn Bell (Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Fred Bell, grew up in Trinity and served as Journeyman; and Larry, Edwina, and Parker Rowell (Larry grew up in Trinity, son of Mr. & Mrs. Lonnie Rowell; Edwina was Minister of Education here. They have served in Burkino Faso, Ivory Coast, and Nigeria).
- † Australia—Myrtle Louise (Kiki) Barber grew up in Trinity Baptist Church, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Robert Barber, and served as Journeyman.
- † Japan—Jody Stone (grew up in Trinity, daughter of Mr./Mrs. Bobby Stone) served one summer

assisting the minister in a church.

† Honduras—In January 2003, Daniel Dunn and Brad McWhorter took part in a mission trip to Honduras to assist in building a church.

Home Missions holds an equally important place in the heart of Trinity. Many of our own have served. Dr. C. G. Watson, as a member of Trinity, assisted in establishing Crestwood Baptist. Dr. Tom Roote, Jr., grew up in Trinity and served in associational work. Dr. G. Carswell Hughs, son of Mr. and Mrs. Nat Hughs, grew up in Trinity and entered the Presbyterian ministry. Suellen Batson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Brax Batson, grew up in Trinity Baptist Church and served Native Americans in the Midwest. Jody Stone Graham, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bobby Stone, and her husband Dale serve in the ministry in California. Lynn Bell Armour and her husband Joe serve in the ministry. Currently in Tennessee, she is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Bell. Ruby and Bob Bowermeister served through the Home Mission Board in New Mexico. Betty and Fred Bell, current members of Trinity,

served in Alaska in summer 1998 as interim pastor/worker. A Youth and Adult mission team from Trinity worked with campers in resort ministry, Helen, Georgia, summer 1999. Michael Helms, Al and Deloris Shuping, Hank and Jean Spain—all present Trinity members—went to New York City in February 2002 to assist in offices handling the 9/11 tragic aftermath. Peyton Montooth served in the mountains of Kentucky as a college summer missionary. Andrea Savage traveled with Jubalheirs of the Georgia Baptist Convention to several small churches in France where they sang and gave personal testimonies, providing tracts and Testaments. Brad McWhorter, Minister of Youth & Activities at Trinity, served in Hawaii as head of Centrifuge camps, summer 2001 and 2002.

The Colquitt County Food Bank, begun in 1981, by Van Platter and Jimmy Elder (then our pastor), has become an ongoing successful project for distribution of food to needy families. Trinity helps staff the Food Bank and gives food and donations.

In 1985-86, Trinity Baptist Church sponsored Grace Baptist in Doerun. Today we give

monthly to the following: Cooperative Program, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Hope House, Crossroads Mission, Georgia Baptist Children's Home, Hispanic Mission of Colquitt County, Mercer School of Theology (McAfee), Colquitt County Baptist Association and Colquitt County Counseling Center, Department of Family and Children's Services, Colquitt County Food Bank, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Liberian Baptist Seminary, and Southwest Community Action. Other projects are Seeds for Liberia (1999 to the present); Henry Peabody, a Liberian student who attended Mercer University; Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child (gift boxes for children overseas); Chrismon Tree Angels (needy local children and elderly); Gideons; World Hunger (rice bowls). As Trinity Baptist Church looks to the future with renewed purpose and determination to serve the Lord, this strong heritage of being mission minded will serve us well.

The ministry of Trinity has included other opportunities for service and fellowship: the church picnic, a tradition, began

in 1953 on the site of the new church building. In recent years, it has moved to the country homes of various members. Vacation Bible School has been held since summer 1954. For several years, it has met in the early evening, allowing more parents to participate. It serves as outreach as well as strong spiritual training. A nursery school was sponsored in 1970 and expanded to include kindergarten from 1973-76. A three-year-old Preschool Program began in 1995 with Jan Smith as director/teacher. Four-year-old preschool was added in 1996; both have continued to be successful in outreach. In 1976, a coordinated Wednesday night schedule was begun: all youth; children's missions; children's, adult, and handbell choirs; and adult Bible study meet before, during, or after Family Night Supper. A ladies' prayer group has faithfully met at the church since 1981, giving prayer support to Trinity members, those in need in the community, nation, and world. They place special emphasis on missions. Since 1978, the Plus 55, a group of senior adults, meets monthly for a meal and program. They also go on day and occasional

overnight trips.

The Deacon Ministry program began in 1996 under interim pastor Ches Smith. It was organized and put into operation in 1997 by Dr. Helms. This program divides the church members up among deacons who minister to their group throughout the year.

Sunday School, newly renamed Bible Study, includes extension classes at Moultrie Fire Department, and Cobblestone and Brownwood Nursing Homes. These classes are taught faithfully by Trinity members.

The children's sermon was initiated by Lynn Clark in 1981. It became the Happy Club under Dr. Ches Smith and continues. Children's Church began in September 1997 under direction of John and Amy Grobe.

Hanging of the Green, a Christmas service held to begin Advent, began in 1982 under Dr. Elder. The Christmon tree angels were added in 1998. This is a popular, beautiful family service. Christmas Eve communion began in 1994 under Dr. Moates and continues. The Living Nativity pageant was held in 1988 and continued for several years.

Men's softball teams have participated in summer church leagues for over 25 years.

Music Camp for children began in 1998 under the Grobes direction and continues as another form of outreach.

In 1997, bylaws were adopted by the congregation, allowing legal incorporation.

There have been 199 weddings held in the sanctuary and chapel since 1953.✿

In 2001, Sunday evening home Bible study groups began, alternating with regular Sunday night services. Attendance has been very good.

The current membership of Trinity is 399 resident and 256 non-resident members, making a total membership of 655.✿

Trinity has operated with a full ministerial staff since 1996. Dr. Michael Helms, pastor, feeds our spirits with meaningful sermons and messages. His warmth and love for all are contagious. Michael directs the ministerial and office staff efficiently. John Grobe, Minister of Music and Outreach, does an outstanding job directing Chancel Choir, Ladies' Handbells, and graded preschool and children's choirs (helped by volunteers). He works diligently

with the Bible Study (formerly Sunday School) director in developing a quality program and is active helping +55. Brad McWhorter, Minister of Youth and Activities, effectively leads children, youth, and young adults, planning many project and retreats. He assists in church-wide recreation and fills the pulpit in Michael's absence. These young men perform excellently, individually and collectively, forming an exceptional team.

As we stand at the threshold of a new millennium, we praise God for the men and women who bravely, prayerfully brought Trinity to where she is today, and as we face new

challenges in this new century and millennium, may we remain united in our common purpose*:

To be a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ, dedicated to following His example of ministry through

- (1) Spiritual worship,
- (2) Faithful discipleship,
- (3) Christian fellowship,
- (4) Evangelistic outreach.

* The church purpose was adopted by Trinity Baptist Church in 2000, as proposed by Team 2000.

⊗ These statistics are correct as of December 2002.