

The History of Macon Baptist Church

1891 – 2023

On May 31st, 1891, the following persons met together in Egerton's Warehouse in the village of Macon, Warren County, NC, for the purpose of organizing a Baptist church. Elder N. B. Cobb, D. D., pastor of Gardner's Baptist Church and Sharm Baptist acted as moderator and Brown Rodwell acted as clerk pro term. Letters of demission from Gardner's Church were then handed in and the names of those presenting them were recorded as follows: James Nowell, Sallie N. Coleman, Robert Bobbitt, Joseph Bobbitt and his wife, Samuel Bobbitt and his wife, Brown Rodwell and J. Hawkins Rodwell.

These members resolved to organize themselves into a church, and they adopted a covenant and articles of faith after which they were recognized as Macon Baptist Church by a presbytery consisting of Elders A. G. Wilcox, N. B. Cobb, T. J. Taylor, and Deacons J. H. Nicholson, W. E. Bowers, J. W. Riggins, and W. A. Shaw. J. H. Bobbitt was later elected Church Clerk and J. H. Rodwell was elected as Treasurer. The services were held in the warehouse for some time and then in the Public School House. Dr. Cobb served as the missionary pastor.

On December 24th, 1893, a church meeting was held in the home of J. Lawrence Coleman. At this time the church was without a pastor and the members were discouraged. At this meeting Mr. J. H. Nicholson was received by letter from Gardner's Church to help in calling a pastor.

J. K. Fant of Littleton was called as pastor; he accepted and preached his first sermon in January 1894. At this service brother J. H. Nicholson was elected a deacon of Macon Baptist Church having been ordained years before at Gardner's.

About this time a building committee composed of Rev. T. J. Taylor of Warrenton, Rev. J. K. Fant, J. H. Rodwell and J. L. Coleman were appointed. In order to solicit funds, a committee composed of J. H. Nicholson, Mrs. Sallie Coleman, and Mrs. J. B. White was appointed, and J. J. Nowell was appointed church clerk.

With a renewed hope and courage – and with a stronger faith in God – the little band of believers set themselves about the task of building a house of worship. Mr. B. I. Egerton, the first settler in the village of Macon, donated an acre of land upon which to build.

In July, 1894, the finance committee reported that the lumber for the building had been contracted for and that the specifications for the building would be done the next day. During the next several months the 15 faithful members were using their time, energy, prayers, and money working to build a house in which to worship. In March 1895, the church met for the first time in its newly constructed church building and enjoyed a wonderful day of worship. On that day they also elected church officers.

Sunday School Superintendent – Mr. Walter Bobbitt

Church Secretary – H. A. Nicholson

Teachers – Miss Charlotte Nicholson, Miss Lula Roberson, Miss Mollie Novell, Mrs. J. B. White and Mrs. Sallie Coleman

From December 1895 until July 1896 the church was without a pastor. However, the church called Rev. R. G. Kendrick, a young pastor freshly out of seminary. He remained in the pastorate at Macon Baptist Church until 1897, and was succeeded by Rev. A. (Archibald) Cree, who served at MBC from 1898 – 1901.

In 1902, Dr. T. J. Taylor of Warrenton provided pulpit supply for the church, now seeking their fifth pastor. Dr. Taylor would become the next pastor at Macon Baptist Church and serve faithfully until his death over 25 years later.

In August 1903, a young people's union was formed with 20 members, and in July 1906 the church met with the pastor and organized a Woman's Missionary Society with 15 members. The Women's Missionary Society (now called the Woman's Missionary Union) of Macon Baptist Church is still meeting and actively serving our community today.

In 1916, a committee was appointed by the pastor to consider the necessity of building a new house of worship. At a service in September a vote was taken and unanimously carried to build a new church building. Within two months, the chairman of the building committee reported having \$2,800 subscribed for the building by 22 members – a great testament to God's faithfulness and the generosity of the MBC people.

In the following year a splendid brick veneer building was completed. This was the fulfillment of Dr. Taylor's dream, and he enjoyed several years of pastoring in this new building before his death in 1925.

In 1926, Rev. R. E. Brickhouse received a call to come to Macon Baptist Church. During his tenure, the church had the pleasure of burning the note for the building. Robert Lee Daniel struck the match and little Edith Tarrington, the youngest member of the church, held the notes while the audience tearfully rejoiced in the faithfulness of God.

In its 39 years, the church had been wonderfully blessed by the line of consecrated men who had served so diligently and so prayerfully. Scholarly Dr. Cobb so willingly gave his services when the church was in its infancy. Rev. Archibald Cree, the genial Scotch gentleman labored ardently during his short pastorate to pay for the house which had been built before we came by the beloved pastor Rev. R. G. Kendrick. And Dr. Taylor's 25-year tenure at MBC endeared him not only to his members, but to the community at large. There was a feeling of sympathy for the young Rev. Brickhouse who came to fill Dr. Taylor's shoes in 1926, but he took up the work in earnest and proved his worth by advancing the kingdom work on all fronts.

During Rev. Brickhouse's pastorate the church was remodeled to add Sunday School rooms and change the exterior of the church front. The church continued to grow under his leadership until he resigned and retired on July 1, 1956.

After Rev. Brickhouse's departure, Rev. John Howell, from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary was called as interim pastor. During this time much work on the church was accomplished including refinishing the pews and floors.

In cooperation with Warren Plains Baptist Church, Rev. Trenton Bruce was called as pastor in August 1957. Neither church was full time. He served at MBC from 1957 – 1961. He was succeeded by the Rev. Dan Parker, who remained until August 1963. Rev. Grady Haynes succeeded him and remained until June 1970, when he resigned.

In October 1970, the Rev. James Michael Simmons became pastor of the church and remained until December 1972. Under his leadership the sanctuary was remodeled and the new carpet was installed.

In March 1973, the Rev. Guy Kelley was called as pastor. During this time the Lawrence Coleman home was sold to Macon Baptist Church to be used as a parsonage by Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Russell's daughter, Ethel. Rev. Kelley resigned in April 1975, and was succeeded by Rev. Kenneth Howard, who served from July 1975 to August 1978. Rev. Robert Blanton accepted a call to the church and remained until 1981, and during his ministry the church grew and was very much loved.

Rev. Michael Watford came in July 1981 and served as pastor until June 1984. The church then called Rev. James Green of Wake Forest Seminary to serve as interim pastor. He served until March 1985 when Rev. Kennard (Ken) Beacher was called as pastor. It was during his pastorate that the old parsonage was sold in 1985 to Mr. and Mrs. Benny Hilliard and the new parsonage was built and completed. Rev. Beacher resigned in July 1986 upon the completion of his seminary studies.

In 1986 the Rev. Steve King, also of Wake Forest Seminary, became the pastor at MBC. He graduated and was appointed as a missionary to Argentina by the Foreign Mission Board, prompting his resignation on Christmas Day, 1988.

On February 26, 1989, the Rev. Larry Hornbuckle accepted the call as pastor of Macon Baptist Church. In 1990, the parsonage he and his family were staying in was paid off and the note for the home was burned. Through his leadership and work, an addition of 4,000 sq. ft. was begun in 1990. This included a large fellowship hall, kitchen, three restrooms, and several Sunday School rooms. The existing Sunday School spaces were remodeled as well in preparation for our centennial celebration.

In May of 1991, "*100 Years in Christ*" was the theme for MBC's two-day centennial celebration. Many dressed in the 1891 period outfits and even rode in horse drawn wagons. The Lord had blessed the church and congregation and had added many believers in the past 100 years. All of its pastors were dedicated Christians and had worked diligently for the Lord during their pastorates.

A new steeple was added in November 1991, and was funded by memorial gifts. Rev. Larry Hornbuckle departed in 1992, and that same year, Rev. Robert Evans, III was called to shepherd the church. A few years later in 1996, the Lord protected the church and its members when hurricane Fran swept through the area, causing much damage.

In February 1997, Rev. Larry Hornbuckle returned to celebrate the burning of the note for the last building addition, which he had been so much a part of. In 2000, the sanctuary was enlarged to accommodate more people and in 2001, the addition of beautiful stained-glass windows were given in memory or honor of loved ones.

Needing more land for building additions, the church purchased over 5 acres behind and beside the church. The church then converted the fellowship hall into classroom space, and proceeded to build a new fellowship hall, kitchen, and Sunday School rooms. The work was overseen by one of MBC's own members, Jerry Bolton.

In 2015, after 23 years, Rev. Rob Evans was called to another church. One year later, MBC celebrated its 125th year of serving God and the Warren County community. In 2017, Rev. Bobby Harrell was called as pastor at MBC. Bobby is highly regarded in the community as a man with high integrity, a servant-heart, and a diligent work ethic. In July, 2022, he would resign after five years of faithful service at MBC.

That same month, a lightning strike would cause significant smoke and fire damage to much of the building. For the next five months, services were held at the Macon Rural Fire Department while damages were assessed, and repairs made. In October 2022, the church called Rev. Ben Williams, a student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, as pastor.

On December 18, 2022, MBC returned to the church building to hold services in the fellowship hall. This day was named "Celebration Sunday" and Christmas-themed services were held throughout the day, including a beautiful Christmas Cantata entitled "*Joy in This Place*" by the MBC choir. There was much rejoicing as the people of MBC were thankful to worship once again in the building God has entrusted them with.

As we enter 2023, work is still being completed in the building. We have yet to regain access to the education hallway or the sanctuary, but we rejoice in God's faithfulness. We have seen Him answer many prayers. We have seen His hand powerfully at work in our lives. And we have seen His faithfulness proven time and time again.

For over 125 years, MBC has enjoyed a rich Christian heritage. This is largely due to the dedication and diversity of its many pastors. We owe each of them a great debt of gratitude. Each has brought his own brand of ministry and has given to the church the gifts that God has bestowed upon them. Our sincere prayer is that in the next 125 years, God would continue to bless this church as we strive to be "a family church that cares."