

Early on the morning of February 5, 1950, Mr. R.F. Readette, a member of South Main Street Baptist Church in Greenwood, was lying in bed meditating and it seemed that the Lord revealed something to him about starting a mission church. As he meditated and thought about it, the areas of Laurel Road came to his mind and even a building was focused before him-the store building belonging to Mr. J.L. Leary. Later that morning, Mr. Readette went to see Mr. Leary and after hearing what Mr. Readette had to say, Mr. Leary expressed willingness to make his building available for this purpose. The following Sunday a group from South Main took a census of the area that would be involved. Two weeks later a Mission Sunday School was organized with people from South Main Church leading. Sunday school was held at 3 o'clock in the afternoon until June of that year when a morning Sunday School was organized by J.L. Leary as superintendent and the people of the area as workers. During this time Johnnie Shearer, a ministerial student, and member of South Main Church, served as mission pastor. In January 1951, South Main Church engaged J. Leonard Partlow as full time Mission Pastor. Under his leadership the mission grew rapidly.

The mission was organized into a church on May 27, 1951 with 25 charter members. At this organizational meeting J. Leonard Partlow was elected Pastor. One Jun 17 the following church officers were elected: Sunday School Superintendent, J.L. Leary; Assistant Superintendent, W.O. Wood; Secretary, Mrs. Grace Hanna; Sunday School and Church Treasurer, Miss Byrta Nantz; Church Clerk, Sara Wells (Cogburn); WMU Predient, Mrs. L.S. Corley (Mullinix); Deacons: J.L. Leary and W.O Wood. Other memorable events during that first Summer were the Bible School with an average attendance of 42 and the purchase of the building site on Sample Road for \$1,800. On June 24, the church adopted its first budget in the amount of \$750, and on July 1, a committee composed of W.O Wood, J.L Leary, Miss Byrta Nants, and Mrs. Dan Still, was elected to raise funds for a church building. The first revival was held from July 22 to July 29 with Rev. B.J. McIver preaching.

On August 5, the church voted to apply for admission into the Abbeville Baptist Association. The Training Union was organized on September 9 with 25 members present. The following officers were elected: Director, Miss Doris Partlow; Associate Director, Mrs. W.O. Chastain; Secretary, Miss Sara Wells; Junior Leaders, Mrs. Hugh McCravy and Mrs. John Harley; Beginner Story Hour

Leaders, Mrs. J.L Leary and Mrs. W.O. Wood; Primary Story Hour Leaders, Mrs. L.S Corley and Mrs. J.S. Chastain; Song Leader, Miss Byrta Nantz; Pianist, Miss Jean Still (Tommie).

Ground Breaking for the first building was held on March 9, 1951 and the first service in the new building was held August 10, 1952.

Rev Partlow resigned on September 7, 1952 and on November 2, 1952, the Rev. Herbert Neely was called as pastor. Rev Neely served until March 1, 1954.

On August 22, 1954, the Rev. Ralph Cowan was called as pastor. As a growing church, additional facilities were needed and in 1956 the first addition to the church was built. Rev Cowan served as pastor until May, 1958 when he resigned to become pastor of First Baptist Church in Westminster, South Carolina.

On August 7, 1958, the Rev. Lewis W. Gibson was called as pastor. During this time the church grew and the need for additional facilities became evident. The second addition to the church was built in 1963. After ten years of faithful service Rev. Gibson resigned on December 8, 1968. Dr. Carl English served as interim pastor until Rev. A.L. Tumblin was called on November 9, 1969.

The church continued to grow and in April, 1971 the church voted to build a new 800 seat sanctuary for the Glory of the Lord.

In 1972 after the new sanctuary was built, the old sanctuary was divided into Sunday school rooms. In September 1972 our adult choir recorded a 500-33 1/3 album for \$425. A long play stereo album was recorded by our Adult choir in September 1973. The Rev. Tumblin resigned as pastor January 27, 1974.

On April 28, 1974, Rev. J. Allen Smith was called as pastor and served until July 2, 1978, when he resigned to return to the mission field. In November 1974 our first full time custodian, Beauford Williams was hired. In 1975 average Sunday school attendance was 558 people. Mark McNeil was called on August 3, 1975, as our first full time combination music and youth director. On January 5, 1977, three of our members were ordained for the gospel ministry, they were; Glenn Bryant (now pastor of a Church in Greenville, SC.0, Mark McNeil (now missionary in Poland), and Stan Smith (now missionary in the Phillipines).

July 1, 1979 Rev. Calvin Smith was called as pastor. In 1980, Laurel along with Callie Self co-sponsored a mission in the Country Homes Parkland Place area. Rev. Joe Black was the first pastor at Parkland Baptist Mission. It remained a mission of these two churches until it was fully constituted as Parkland Place Baptist Church in 1995. Mrs. Sara Wells Cogburn, a charter member, served as a faithful employee of the church until her death on February 10, 1981. In July 1981 Rev. Calvin Smith resigned as pastor.

Rev. Michael Jenkins was called as pastor on January 3, 1982. The first Christmas project started in February 1985. Church members made the Christmas ornaments. Rev. Michael Jenkins resigned May 1985.

Rev. Darrell Rooks was called as pastor in 1986. For several summers our church along with Rice Memorial, Emerald, and Northside combined our evening worship services. In 1989 the first Long Range Planning Committee was elected. In the next few years, the church underwent several structural changes. The nursery was relocated from upstairs to downstairs. The upstairs nursery was turned into classrooms. The classroom wall partitions in the old sanctuary were removed and remodeled into our present social hall. Then the old social hall downstairs was remodeled to be used as children's classrooms. Additional classrooms were built between the sanctuary and the educational wing. At this time the atrium area was enlarged. It was also furnished in memory of Mrs. Fannie Leary. A covered drive through was also built to accommodate the handicapped.

In 1987 the Youth Director, Eddie Burdette, was ordained into the ministry (now Pastor of Youth in Belton, SC). On May 3, 1992, Jamie Burdette, the Youth Director, was ordained into the ministry (now Pastor of Youth and Singles in Charlotte, NC).

In 1993 Rev. Darrell Rooks made his first trip to Russia, which later led to his starting Master Missions. In June 1993 Rev. Darrell Rooks resigned as Pastor.

In October 1993 Rev. Kenny Stone was called as Pastor. In 1994, an Allen organ, which is still being used, was donated anonymously. In May 1995 our Long Range Planning Committee proposed to open a daycare. The daycare was opened in August 1995 with Mrs. Brenda King as director. Mrs. Brenda King and Mrs. Tammy Wood became co-directors in 2000. In 1996, Mrs. Carolyn Leslie, who had

been the organist for over twenty years resigned from that position. Rev. Kenny Stone resigned as pastor in March 1996.

On April 20, 1997, Rev. Calvin Moore was called as pastor. During his time the AWANA Club started with Mr. Bill Cook as director, which is still a very strong ministry in the church today. Rev. Calvin Moore resigned in August 1998.

For the next 2 ½ years Rev. Billy Huff served as interim pastor. In 1999, Mrs. Patsy Whatley retired as church secretary after 30 years of dedicated service to our church. In May 2001 there was a mural painted in the baptistry in memory of Mrs. Marie Thompson. A mural was painted in the children's department in memory of Hubert Griffin, Ruth Burnett, Walter and Doris Trail, and Tom Rodgers.

Laurel Baptist has a rich heritage. The past saints, those still here and those already with the Lord, have given Laurel a strong foundation because of the past and present faithful servants of God. A strong future of joyfully serving Him is visualized.

In 2022 Pastor James Rodgers was voted in as pastor after 3 years of being an interim pastor. He started his full-time duties as our pastor on January 1, 2023. Great things are expected under the leadership of Pastor James Rodgers. We are excited for many more years to come and to see what the Lord has in store for us and Laurel Baptist Church.