

*First Baptist Church
of
Laurel Hill, Florida*

1896 - 2012



1917-1950s Sketch by Mark Curenton

Hall of Pastors

Reverend Wiley F. Martin: August 1896

Reverend J. W. Wheeler: Early 1900s

Reverend C. T. Culpepper: 1911-1913

Reverend D. F. Sutley: 1913-1917(?)

Reverend Pitt M. Scott: 1917-1921(?)

Reverend C. L. Perry: 1921-1922

Reverend F. C. Hawke: 1922-1939

Reverend Archie Smith: 1940-1948

Reverend E. C. Fleming: 1949-1950

Reverend C. O. Stewart: 1950-1957

Reverend J. A. Nichols: 1957-1962

Reverend Richard Adleman: 1962-1965

Reverend Jere Hendrix: 1965-1967

Reverend Albert Locke: 1967-1973

Reverend H. C. Rutledge: Interim April – Dec. 1973

Reverend Jim Boyd: December 1973 November 1975

Reverend H. C. Rutledge: Interim Nov. 75 - May 1976

Reverend Marvin Taylor: May 1976

Reverend Cecil Walker: 1977-1983

Reverend Burdette (Bud) Docter: 1983-1986

Reverend Ed McDaniel: Interim March - August 1986

Reverend Gary Younkers: August 1986 April 1990

Reverend Jeff Locke: April 1990 - April 1994

Reverend Mark McClard: Supply Preacher only

Reverend Jerry Everage: July 1994 - October 6, 1999

Dr. Ed Nichols: interim pastor November 26, 1999

Reverend Bud Docter: May 7, 2000 - February 25, 2001

Dr. Ed Nichols: called as interim January 14, 2001

Dr. Ed Nichols: Pastor July 22, 2001 – Sept. 30, 2004

Reverend Mike McVay: December 26, 2004 - Present

CHURCH HISTORY

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF LAUREL HILL, FLORIDA

Founded July 26, 1896

Charter

**Under the Articles of: The Faith of the
Graves Baptist Association**

Constituting the Presbytery

Rev. Wiley F. Martin Rev. L.P. Gordon

**Church Regular Conference
Organization**

Elected Church Officers

A. Campbell Minnie Barlow

C. C. Locke Sarah J. Locke

Abigail Faulkner Maggie Givens

**Officers named the church:
The First Baptist Church of Laurel Hill, Florida.**

After the church was organized in regular conference, Rev. Wiley F. Martin was elected as Moderator and Maggie M. Givens as church Clerk.

The first conference was held August 27, 1896. Rev. Wiley F. Martin was unanimously called as pastor.

The church services were held in the Masonic Temple, which stood on the grounds where the present building is now located.

In the early 1900s, the members conceived the idea of erecting a church building. It was decided the new building should be erected at Almarante; this was a central location for the greater number of membership. Leaving the Masonic Temple building and moving into the new church at Almarante, Rev. J. W. Wheeler was the first pastor.

In those days most of the congregation walked to church. A few came by horse and buggy. Rev. Wheeler lived in Flomaton, Alabama. He came by train, arriving on Saturday and returning on Monday.

As time marched on, the little community grew, church membership increased, and there was a need for another

church building to be built, and this time within the city. In 1911 the church was erected at the northeast corner of the intersection of First Ave and Third St.

Rev. C. T. Culpepper was called as Pastor. During this time, the Rev. P.M. Jones preached a revival and 17 candidates were received for baptism.

In 1913, Rev. D. L. Sutley was called as pastor, and was the first to be furnished with a home. The church agreed to pay him an annual salary of \$200.00 for the pastoral year.

In May 1913, still under Rev. Sutley's leadership, a revival was held and there were 15 candidates for baptism. Baptismal services were held on May 31, 1913. Among these were Gladys Givens, daughter of Maggie M. Givens, and Charles Barlow, son of Minnie Barlow, who were charter members of the church.

In 1916 the church building was destroyed by a storm. For several weeks services were held in a vacant building formerly occupied by the Peoples Bank of Laurel Hill.

After a few weeks, the Presbyterians, having services on alternate Sundays, tendered the use of their church building.

In 1917 another church was built on the same grounds, with Rev. Pitt M. Scott as the new pastor. Being a carpenter by occupation, along with deacons and brethren of the church, they readied a new building for occupancy in just a short time. He received a generous salary of \$8.00 per Sunday, with services being held twice a month. A verse of scripture sums up Brother Scott's faithfulness to the Lord:

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

The church, being a recipient of the Home Mission Board, received a gift of \$300.00 to help pay the debt incurred in the new building.

The minutes of the September 9, 1923 meeting shows dedication ceremony of the new church and the mortgage being burned on the alter by Brother Scott.

Brother C. L. Perry, served in 1921 - 22. Also, Brother F. C. Hawke pastored the church around 1922 to 1939. One

thing that really impressed the members about Brother Hawke was how faithful he was. He held the honor of having served as pastor for the greatest length of time. He served a total of 17 years, traveling a distance of 75 miles. He was a real missionary. A verse of scripture to describe Brother Hawke is Matthew 25:21:

"Well done, thy good and faithful servant."

Rev. Archie Smith served as pastor from 1940 to 1948 and Rev. E. C. Fleming served for a brief period of time in 1949.

It was around 1950 when Rev. C. O. Stewart was called as pastor. He was a crusader, a builder, a leader, and a devoted servant of the Lord. Under his leadership, the members of the church looked beyond the walls of the old building and envisioned a larger and more modern building. Being encouraged and working together, they put their ideas in motion, and with the help and guidance of our Heavenly Father, they located a site to erect a building. In May 1951, the church negotiated with the Laurel Hill Masonic Lodge to purchase the property

where the church is presently located at a cost of \$800.00. The site for the present building is "your old stomping ground," right where it began in an old Masonic Temple in 1896. "Thank you, Lord, for your guidance and knowledge with which you endowed these Christians." Members of the church donated trees, which were carried to a saw mill and cut into material that was used for the roof. The men did the work and the ladies prepared lunch. It was said that Brother Stewart commented: "I am a servant and a builder. Where there is building to be done, the Spirit of the Lord directs me into the field. When the mission is accomplished, then it is time for me to move on into another field.

Brother Stewart resigned in 1957.

Time moves on. Brother J. A. Nichols moved onto the field and pastored the church following Brother Stewart. It was during his pastorate that the pastorium was built. Brother Nichols resigned in 1962.

Then Brother Richard Adleman came on the scene. He was a student from Baptist Bible Institute in Graceville,

Florida. He was also the first to occupy the pastorium. He resigned in 1965 after a two-year tenure.

Brother Jere Hendrix followed Brother Adleman. He ordained a panel of deacons, namely:

Bruce Boyette	John W. Harrison
Doyle Carroll	Shelby McCart
Chester Carter	Douglas Rogers
Bruce Caton	Rayvon Steele
B. F. Edenfield	Joe Wynn

Brother Clayton Peters came as a deacon from Svea.

It was under Brother Hendrix' leadership that remodeling of the church was undertaken. The first carpet was laid and the old slatted benches were replaced with new padded pews which added much beauty and comfort to the sanctuary. Also, the church debt was liquidated, and a bond burning service was held. Brother Hendrix resigned in 1967.

Then Brother Albert Locke became the pastor. The church grew tremendously in membership. Young married couples and youth outnumbered middle aged and seniors. Again, there was a lot of work done; great

improvements were achieved. It was during his pastorate that the fellowship and activities building was built. A presentation and dedication ceremony was held with Brother M.A. Fortune presiding. The challenge lay ahead for new members, spiritual outreach, and dedicated Christians to carry on the work that had been placed before them. Brother Locke resigned April 29, 1973.

Brother H. C. Rutledge was our interim pastor for about eight months.

Brother James Boyd, a very fine and faithful servant of the Lord, became the pastor on December 30, 1973.

During his time serving the church, a lot of work was done, both physically and spiritually. During his time, the front was extended and the steeple installed. He ordained as deacons, P.P. Cadenhead, Jr., Rick Epperson, Dick Steele, and Keith Free.

The church continued to grow with a large membership roll. Brother Boyd resigned November 26, 1975.

Again, Brother H. C. Rutledge was the interim pastor.

Brother Rutledge was truly a man of God.

Psalms 40:2 explains how his foundation and his walk matched his talk.

"He brought me up also, out of a horrible pit, out to the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."

"Wherever He leads, I'll go," was his Christian motto.

The church called Brother Marvin Taylor as pastor on May 24, 1976. During his pastorate he ordained Brother Walter A. Marion as a deacon. He also led Brother Walter Owens to the Lord and baptized him. He only served for a short time.

In 1977 the church called Brother Cecil Walker as pastor. Brother Walker was also a good shepherd. He brought the church to a closer walk and better understanding of the Lord. During his pastorate he ordained Brother Walter Owens and Brother Harry Kelley as deacons. He resigned in 1983.

Then Brother Burdette (Bud) Docter was called to pastor the church. Brother Bud was a quiet man. He was strong in his faith and a very mission-minded pastor. It was

during his pastorate the building fund for bricking the church was started. He moved on to a new field in March 1986.

Brother Ed McDaniel served as interim pastor from March 1986 to August 10, 1986.

On August 10, 1986, the church called Brother Gary Younkens as pastor. During his pastorate, much work was done. The church building was bricked and central heat and air installed.

Brother Younkens resigned April 1, 1990.

Brother Jeffrey Locke came on the scene. Brother Locke was interim until he was called as pastor on November 11, 1990. Brother Locke was the youngest pastor ever called. Once again, there was a lot of work that needed to be done. The pastorium was carpeted, painted inside and out, and central air installed. New carpet was laid in the sanctuary and new baptistery drapes hung. This had been a long-awaited pleasure. During his pastorate 15 candidates were baptized. He performed two marriages and recommended two brothers as Gideons. They were Chester Carter and Bill Ansley.

Brother Locke resigned April 19, 1994. He, his wife Debbi, and their two daughters, Mandl and Becca, moved on to another church field.

Brother Mark McClard supplied the pulpit until July 17, 1994 when Brother Jerry Everage accepted a call to serve the church. He had envisioned and helped carry on a lot of things in the church and association. There was also some repair work done. The church and pastorium were damaged on October 4, 1995, when Hurricane Opal swept through Northwest Florida and played havoc on the little town and surrounding community of Laurel Hill. Brother Jerry baptized three candidates and performed three weddings. He also became a student at the Florida Baptist Theological College in Graceville, Florida, on January 15, 1996. He was very excited about being our pastor when we celebrated our 100th birthday. Brother Jerry and his wife Joyce were able to mark this celebration down in their church diary as a reminder of the great joy they had as the pastor of First Baptist Church of Laurel Hill.

Second 100 years
First Baptist Church
Laurel Hill, Florida
1997--

As the second hundred years dawned, we saw the need to establish a youth director. Brother Gerald Ward was the first to accept this position from June 1997 until his resignation in January 1999. Brother Harold King was ordained as deacon in July 1997. A period of upgrades were accomplished from December 1997 to February 1998, which included a new lighted sign in front of the church, repair of the steeple, and the completion of the Pastorium storage shed and a lawn mower shed at the activity building. Brother Jerry Everage resigned as Pastor October 6, 1999.

November 26, 1999 Dr. Ed Nichols was called as interim Pastor until Bro. Burdette (Bud) Docter was called into the Pastoral position May 7, 2000.

An ordination service for Shelley Reeves, Earl Jernigan and RJ Brown was held in September of 2000. The process of installing metal roofs on the church buildings

was started in October of 2000 and was finally completed in April of 2002. Tommy Ward, a previously ordained deacon, was made a Deacon of Laurel Hill Church February 7, 2001. February 25, 2001 Bro. Bud Docter resigned as Pastor – to become “House Parents” at the Baptist Children’s Home in Pensacola.

Dr. Ed Nichols was again called to interim on January 14, 2001 until he accepted the call to Pastor on July 22, 2001. As the city of Laurel Hill was in need of a new polling place, the Supervisor of Elections was granted the use of the Fellowship Hall as needed in July of 2001. All the rooms located in the east wing underwent major renovation in June and July of 2002, producing a great environment for education and office space. Throughout 2001 until December of 2002 a Food Pantry was operated, providing nearly 500 pounds of food per month to over 25 families in the Laurel Hill community. While a great good of feeding those in need was being accomplished, the greater good of feeding souls was waning and the Pantry was closed. In January 2003 the sound system of the church was relocated and upgraded.

By April of 2004 central heat and air was installed in the Fellowship hall and an A/C upgrade was finished in the Sanctuary.

September 30, 2004 Dr. Ed Nichols resigned.

Rev. Mike McVay was called to Pastor on December 26, 2004. A short time later we started a Youth/Recreation night every Friday at 6pm. The program quickly expanded to include the whole community of Laurel Hill offering recreation, food, and Bible study. In the spring of 2006 we were given the opportunity to computerize our recordkeeping systems into the 21st century. Four used computer systems were bought and networked together, with capabilities of file interaction and internet. The Ola Richbourg property was purchased in February of 2006, and later in May the two 100' by 100' lots located on the NE corner of First Ave. and First St. were donated to the church anonymously. In June of 2006 we saw the purchase of a new professional Allen organ for the Sanctuary. A 1991 15 passenger Dodge Van was donated to the church in October of 2006. While it does get used regularly by the youth, there have been a few

outings where adults have put it to good use. We believe the Lord is the author of the recent growth and for this reason we have initiated a search committee for a full time Youth Pastor which is expected to be filled soon.

2006-2007 has seen major renovations with the completion of the addition and remodeling of the front of the church to include a new foyer, restrooms, covered drive thru and a concrete circle driveway.

Homecoming, 2007 Rev. Jerry Everage spoke in the a.m. service, followed by lunch in the Fellowship Hall. The Bryan Brothers provided music in the afternoon service.

Dan Johnson was called as Youth Pastor in November '07. The land across from the pastorium was cleared to make way for a ball field in May 08 and in June the

Youth Extreme MounTEEN Challenge went to

Tennessee with about 23 youth and 9 adults. Bro. Dan resigned as Youth Pastor on July 13, 2008 and Stacy

Williams was soon elected as Youth Director. By

October 2, 2008 the, 'Richbourg House' was refurbished sufficiently for the pastor to move in. September 2007 –

October 2008 had 12 Baptisms. Those in Memoriam

were Junior Cadenhead, Velma Adams, Alma Smith, and John Harrison.

Homecoming 2008, Rev. Mike McVay spoke in the a.m. service, followed by lunch in the Fellowship Hall.

Samantha Purvines and Sweetwater Run provided music in the afternoon service. The new new sound system and sound booth work started in June. The OBA fall associational meeting was held at LHBC October 20th and we fed over 200 people. In February, 2009 we received our second church van free of charge from Live Oak Baptist Church. Youth motivational speaker Willie Spears from Atlanta and J.D. Compton Concert were among those supporting our church youth outreach.

Youth Camp was held at Sunset King Lake during the week of June 19th with 10 youth, and 3 supervisors.

In June we held the Baccalaureate Service for graduating seniors and fed the seniors, their families and friends.

Approx. 170 were in attendance. We also provided meals for each of our Hobo Sports teams. 30 September 2008 – 1 October 2009 had 16 baptisms and those in Memoriam were B F Edenfield, Pearlie Strickland,

Estelle Pridgen, Glen Busby, Lola Mae Peters, Henry Jones, Rufus Armstrong, Eloise Stokes, and Alice Minker.

Homecoming 2009, Rev. “Bud” Docter spoke in the a.m. service, followed by lunch in the Fellowship Hall.

Samantha Purvines and Sweetwater Run provided music in the afternoon service. The Sound Booth was fully operational by Christmas. We sponsored appreciation dinners for our LHS Cross Country, Boys Basketball, Girls Basketball, Volleyball, Softball and Baseball Teams. First Baptist Laurel Hill led the way to start Good News Bible Club at LH School and we started Cub Scouts Pack 505. The Richbourg House received a new roof. Many observed the 59th annual National Day of Prayer on May 6th with a Prayer Walk around the city and school. We held the Baccalaureate Service for graduating seniors on June 9th and fed approx. 170. We held another prayer walk around the school on Tuesday, Sept. 21st in preparation for “See you at the Pole” which was held on Sept. 22nd.

30 September 2009 - 1 October 2010 had 5 baptisms

and in Memoriam Helen Cadenhead, Faye Hart, Wilma Jones, Sybil Harrison.

Homecoming October 2010, Rev. Melvin Kilpatrick spoke in the morning service, followed by lunch in the fellowship hall. Samantha Purvines and Sweetwater Run provided music in the afternoon service.

Stacy Williams resigned as youth director. We called Bro. Dewayne Geohagan, Nov. 3, 2010, as Youth Director. The AM and PM services are now available on CD by request and via computer on our Web-site.

A community-wide Easter sunrise service was held at Gene Clary Park with Bro. Bob Smith, pastor of Magnolia bringing the message. On May 18th we held the Baccalaureate service for graduating seniors and provided a meal afterward. The youth went on a beach retreat June 24-26 to Panama City. We led a community-wide prayer walk at the school with 5 churches represented. The church provided meals for the boys and girls Hobo sports teams throughout the year. Began the renovation process for the old Pastorium. 1 October 2010 ~ 30 September 2011 had 5 baptisms,

In Memoriam were Clara Hussey, Joe Wynn, Odessa McCart, and Bobbie Baggett.

Homecoming, October 9, 2011, Rev. Earl Thompson spoke in the morning service, followed by lunch in the fellowship hall. Samantha Purvines and Sweetwater Run provided music in the afternoon service.

On February 19th our youth held a dinner/movie for the adults. The movie was entitled “Courageous”. On February 24th the Youth attended BSHOC in concert at Florala. Also in February the church bought a 2011 van and donated both of our old vans to Ebenezer Baptist. Youth attended Winter Jam on March 4th. Missionary Thomas from Zambia was carried to LHS to speak to both FCA groups and spoke in the PM service on March 11th. A community-wide Easter sunrise service was held April 8th at Gene Clary Park with Rev. Ferguson of Laurel Hill Assembly of God bringing the message. Our choir sang at Ebenezer Baptist Church at a Doctrinal Study led by Fran Picker on April 17th. On May 9th we honored the school athletes with a dinner. Held Baccalaureate for the class of 2012 seniors on May 30th

and provided a meal after the service for seniors, their families & friends. The youth went on Beach Retreat June 22, 23 & 24. The Youth attended the Enfuego concert in Montgomery, AL on August 25th. September 9th the Youth attended BSHOC in concert at Florala.

We participated in ‘See You at the Pole’ on September 26th, a student led event which is growing yearly.

1 October 2011 ~ 30 September 2012 had 9 baptisms and In Memoriam was Barbara Busby.

Since Pastor Mike’s arrival almost 8 years ago, we have seen tremendous growth in activity, people, and property. He has tirelessly traveled long distances to visit the sick, grown and harvested crops to feed the hungry, and earnestly sought the souls of the lost in every venue. While the leadership of Pastor Mike has been instrumental in our growth, he will be the first to remind everyone that it is God who gives the increase. May God continue to give him the strength.

Thank You

Over the years, several men have been ordained as ministers of the gospel. Many others have accepted the call to serve the Lord as dedicated teachers, directors, and workers in the field. All are saints in the ministry, for through these doors have passed some of the best and most consecrated Christian people in the world.

May this day at First Baptist of Laurel Hill be an enjoyable and memorable day that you will never forget.

Thank you all for coming, and as we prayerfully move forward to reach another soul, may the Spirit of the Lord richly bless you in this church family.

Amen