

A SHORT AND WHIMSICAL HISTORY  
of  
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
BRANTFORD, ONTARIO  
1833-2008

IN CELEBRATION OF THE CHURCH'S 175<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

INTRODUCTION

*Where there is no vision, the people perish (Proverbs 29:18 KJV).*

Churches, like people, have life cycles. The difference is, of course, that Churches generally exist longer than people and can be renewed from time to time and last for hundreds of years.

One hundred and seventy-five years is not a long period of time in Church history but it is in the history of a congregation and in a nation like Canada. To put that in perspective, First Baptist, Brantford was established thirty-four years before Canada became a nation. The British colony of Upper Canada (later Canada West [1841] and The Province of Ontario after Confederation in 1867) was only being settled when the original church building for First Baptist was erected.

Muddy roads linked some of the rising major centres with each other but transportation was tenuous at best. One author described the early stagecoach rides in the following manner:

The ride from Woodstock to Brantford and Hamilton was an unforgettable experience. The coach carried 9 passengers on the inside and several on the outside. It was a slow, tiresome, inconvenient means of travel. Drivers changed horses every 15 miles, and they could cover 8 to 10 miles an hour. The roads were bad, and the horses could go barely beyond a walk. Many times, the passengers had to disembark and help pry out the coach with fence rails. (*A Glimpse of the Past, A Centennial History of Brantford and Brant County*. Brant Historical Society, 1966. pp. 16-17).

Little daunted, several of the early settlers of the era, came and established themselves as a community known as Brant's Ford on the Grand River. By 1825, there were sufficient numbers of settlers in the hamlet to cause the colonial authorities to authorize the opening of a post office. Brantford actually had its start in 1830 when the Six Nations' chiefs transferred 807 acres of land to form the Village of Brantford as the white settlers knew it. The population was growing but at this time it was no more than 500 people. Two years later First Baptist Church was started.

This booklet is not a comprehensive history of First Baptist Church. That is not its purpose. The booklet was written to try and engender an appreciation on the part of the reader for the rich and varied history as seen through the work and witness of some representative people, both lay and clergy, who were an integral part of the church's formation. They were people with similar strengths and weaknesses as we have today. They were visionaries and yet, could be narrow. They could be generous to a fault but penny-pinchers on other occasions. Their zeal for Christ would be hard to match but compassion was not a part of some of them. In short, they were people like us.

The authors have had to be rigorously selective regarding the people and stories they have chosen because of space restraints. It is something like skipping flat stones across the Grand River. The stone only touches the water at a few points on its journey.

Moreover, this is not only the story of First Baptist Church. It also includes the stories of the churches that now comprise the current First Baptist namely, Park, Calvary and Riverdale Baptist Churches. Each has its own history. First was the parent church of Calvary and Riverdale and had some influence in the founding of Park Baptist Church. Rather than follow a rigidly chronological order of one church and then move to another

the writers thought it better to digress on points of interest and where appropriate to consider the histories of the other churches and follow their trails that ultimately have led them to return to First. Additionally, we have weighted the bulk of historical evidence on the early days of the church simply because the early history has helped to form the church and set the tone for what would follow.

Finally and most importantly, our story is the story of God moving among his people and using them for his service despite our collective failings and foibles and the gifts and abilities he has bestowed on us. If the church depended solely on people's efforts it would not have survived the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. As the 19<sup>th</sup> Century hymn writer Samuel John Stone so eloquently and poignantly put it in his great hymn, *The Church's One Foundation*,

The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
She is His new creation by water and the word:  
From heav'n He came and sought her to be His holy bride;  
With His own blood He bought her, and for her life he died.

## *THE FIRST OF FIRST BAPTIST*

Baptists were not a large group of people in Upper Canada 175 years ago and still are not. There were a few congregations scattered throughout what is now called the Golden Horseshoe, Niagara Peninsula and Ottawa Valley areas plus St. George in Brant County\* (1824), Woodstock in Oxford County (1822) and a few including one of the oldest in our Convention, Vittoria (1803), in Norfolk County. Baptists would not explode in growth until the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

There were some Baptists in the Village of Brantford and in the area of Brant County surrounding the village who desired to begin a Baptist congregation.

An enterprising young Welsh preacher by the name of William Rees, agent for the American Home Missionary Society, was eager to start a work in an area where no Baptist work was. In fact, the only Church in the village was Grace Anglican (1830) (*Glimpse* p. 16). Before long William Rees and interested Baptists, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 1833 according to letter written by Rees to the *Baptist Magazine*, formed a Baptist Church in Brantford.

*Elder\*\* William Rees (1804-1884)*

Thomas S. Shenston, a man who played a very prominent role in the early days of First Baptist, portrayed Elder Rees in his book, *A Jubilee Review of the First Baptist Church*,

\*The County system had not been put in place by the colonial authorities in Western Ontario as yet but the writers use the name “county” because it is well known and defines the areas mentioned.

\*\*The title Reverend to signify an ordained minister was beginning to be used by Baptists at this time especially in England but more preferred in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in North America was the title Elder. Reverend would be virtually used universally by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

*Brantford, 1833 to 1884.* Shenston did not meet Elder Rees when the latter was pastor of First but it is likely that he interviewed several of the early members who did know him.

In one of those reflections, he wrote in rather a romantic vein:

The writer can imagine Elder Rees on his first arrival sitting on the bank of the Grand River, and gliding into a reverie and holding with himself a mental debate somewhat like this:--“Here I am, a stranger, and in a strange land, ten weeks travel from my native land, home and loved ones. I have come in obedience to what I think is Christ’s command.” (Shenston, p. 7).

Shenston went on to show the mental anguish of Rees as he wrestled with the issue of ‘should I be here or not?’ Then he noted some of Rees’ journey through the Niagara Peninsula and the Hamilton-Ancaster area.

I have passed through St. Catharines, Queenston, Hamilton and Ancaster, and found Pedo-Baptists\* in each of those villages; and they are also, I learn, in the villages of Guelph, London, Chatham, etc.; consequently, if I decide not to locate in any village where there are Pedo-Baptists, and all other Baptist ministers should follow my example, it would be virtually abandoning the best parts of the province to Pedo-Baptists. The Baptists greatly erred in allowing others to get a foothold in all those places before them. (Shenston, p. 8).

Whether Rees went through this travail of soul or not is really a moot point. His eldest daughter at a much later time stated in a letter dated May 5, 1881, “As regards, my father’s reasons for choosing Brantford. As he passed over the Grand River, on his first visit to Brantford, he looked into the clear water, and exclaimed: ‘Oh! What a grand place for a Baptist Church.’ ” (Shenston, p.7). Moreover, despite entreaties, a considerable financial inducement to build a chapel in Paris and two months of nursing Rees during a serious illness by Hiram and Mrs. Capron the founders of that town, Rees told Mr. Capron, “My dear Friend, I have consecrated my life and energies, both of soul and body,

\*Christians who practice infant baptism

to God on the banks of the Grand River at Brantford; and there I really *must go*” (Shenston, p. 7). There is not much doubt that Elder Rees had his eye fixed on beginning a Baptist work in Brantford.

Elder William Rees’ ministry was a fruitful one. He soon discovered that the only community meeting place in the village was the schoolhouse situated on the Market Square. After approaching the trustees, he was granted permission to preach here. Because of his style of preaching he was soon ousted from the building. Not to be defeated, Rees then stood on a barrel outside and preached to all who gathered round.

#### Early Days of Ministry

The second lot sold in the Village of Brantford after the survey of the town plot in 1830 by Lewis Burwell, was obtained by Jedediah Jackson. The lot was located on the north side of Colborne Street where Harmony Square is today. Jackson was a friend of Elder Rees and it was here in a small, unfinished frame building that First Baptist Church was organized on December 23, 1833 with a membership of twenty- six stalwart followers. During this time, services were held in Jackson’s building, members’ homes and along the banks of the Grand River just a short distance from the present Lorne Bridge. Baptism services took place in the river regardless of the time of year, including the depths of winter. A hole was chopped in the ice to administer the rite in this case. Miles Shaw and his wife were the first followers to be baptized. Both survived the icy immersion.

### The Meeting House\*

By 1834, a plot of land at Bridge and West Streets was donated by Mr. Biggar of Mount Pleasant for the purpose of building a chapel. In 1835, the members rented the pews for six, eight and ten dollars with a few that were free being left at the back. If two parties wished the same pew then the higher bidder received the contentious pew. By 1841, the membership had grown to eighty. Perhaps this was the time when Baptists were struck with the notion of sitting at the back of the church by wanting to avoid having to rent the pews. Even though the days of renting the pews have long passed, the tradition of sitting at the back remains. Ah, tradition. Alas, the practice of leaving the back rows rent-free ceased after a review by the deacons several years later. All pews were rented. Perhaps matters would have been different had our spiritual ancestors charged rents on an increasing scale from front to back with occupants of the last row paying the highest rent. Too late now; pews haven't been rented for well over a century and the practice of sitting at the back is long established.

It was in 1846 that two hymnbooks were purchased, one was for the pulpit and the other for the church and in 1851, a temporary gallery for the choir was erected above the pulpit. Elder Rees also began a Sunday School in 1841 and by the time of his departure for First Baptist Church, Simcoe in January 1842, the congregation had grown substantially. By the end of 1840, the congregation comprised sixty-seven members. Upon his departure, eighty people were enrolled as members.

\*The old church was destroyed by fire in 1864. On the north side of Darling Street between West and Bridge Streets, a fire started in the Smith and McNaught Carriage Works. Directly behind the factory was the former First Baptist Church structure that was being used as a storehouse for the carriage factory. The Town of Brantford had only two fire engines and relied on water from wells to battle the flames. Unfortunately, the carriage factory, the former First Baptist Church building and other surrounding buildings were destroyed. (Source: Augusta Gilkison, speech to the Brant Historical Society, March 1910).

*Rev. John Winterbotham (c.1795-1868)*

John Winterbotham\* came to Canada West (formerly Upper Canada) from Yorkshire in 1842 due to the fact that England was in a serious economic depression known as the “Hungry Forties.” The Baptist church he was serving simply could not afford to pay his salary. Although he had considered moving to the Canadian colonies for some time, the dearth of opportunity in his native land prodded him into making the change.

He did have a contact in Brantford, Canada West. James Cockshutt knew Winterbotham before he immigrated to Brantford in 1827.

The Cockshutts\*\* were members of a little Methodist sect called Inghamites (named after Benjamin Ingham 1712-1772) and Ignatius Cockshutt, who after receiving an inquiry from Winterbotham regarding the pastoral situation in Canada West, wrote him to let him know that the pulpit of First Baptist, Brantford would be available once William Rees left for Simcoe in early 1842. The following is a summary of the method of one way of calling a pastor in those days:

A minister in England, in whose mind lingered a desire to come to Canada, had written to the Deacons through the medium of Giles Hartley, a member this church (First), proposing to come out, if they thought proper if the church could wait two months until they might have the opportunity of hearing him, and forming an opinion of his gifts and doctrines. The said minister, John Winterbotham, sailed from England, July 30<sup>th</sup>, and arrived in Brantford on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September, Saturday, and preached on the following day. The church gave him a unanimous call, which he accepted. The church would remunerate him for his services, just as the Lord prospered them. The church intended to act on

\*The writer is indebted to Robin Greenwood of London, England for a sizeable portion of the information on John Winterbotham

\*\*The Cockshutts were early members of Farrington Church founded by an Ingham assembly across the Grand from the Village of Brantford. It is now an independent church.

the voluntary principle, but he might expect at least \$200.00 per annum. No covenant was drawn up and recognition (was given to the arrangement on) January, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1843. Mr. Winterbotham wrote to an old friend—Mr. Cockshutt—to know the state of the country. (The latter) induced him to write to the Deacons; this letter was brought to a prayer meeting, when the church was seeking direction from the Lord. Although shipwrecked (the craft was grounded on a sandbar off Long Island, NY) he was guided to his destination here (Shenston, p. 17).

Mr. Winterbotham seems not to have had as effective a ministry at First as Elder Rees did. One commentator put it this way: “Mr. Winterbotham was engaged and he occupied the pulpit in rather an unspectacular way from September 1842 until July, 1850” (*1858--Our Building's Centenary—1958*, p. 11).

It is often difficult to follow a well-loved pastor into the pulpit especially if it is the founding pastor. Even so, apparently Elder Rees had his detractors and their pressure likely hastened his departure for Simcoe (see *Our Building's Centenary* p. 15).

Personalities are different as are the spiritual gifts requisite for ministry. Emphases in ministry vary from pastor to pastor.

Winterbotham did some useful and necessary work during his tenure. He and a congregant named Dilsworth drafted rules for the formation of a missionary society (1846). The following year the pastor and the deacons laid out a scriptural code of ethics for the church. These activities were a sign that the church was maturing and preparing for future growth.

There were difficulties. Pastor Winterbotham resigned his position April 7, 1849. The deacons registered two main criticisms of his ministry. The one centred on a lack of unity in the church and the subsequent spiritual malaise or torpor that often accompanies that condition. The second was that Mr. Winterbotham did little visitation. No doubt, the deacons had received a number of complaints from parishioners on that issue. The two

parties could not reconcile their differences and their mutual decision was to part company but, not until July, 1850.

John Winterbotham went on to become the second editor of *The Christian Messenger*. He advocated the establishment of a Baptist college in Ontario and subsequently, the foundation stone for The Canadian Literary Institute (later Woodstock College) was laid at Woodstock under the leadership of a key player in Baptist higher education, Dr. Robert A. Fyfe\*. It was a forerunner of McMaster University. *The Christian Messenger* had a name change in 1858 and became *The Canadian Baptist* and served as an informant to Canadian Baptists until 1998. In his centenary history of *The Canadian Baptist*, the editor of the magazine, Dr. Harold Trinier, wrote, "...among the Baptists of Canada, [Winterbotham] was revered as "a father in Israel" and was widely known for this reason as 'Father' Winterbotham" (*A Century of Service*, p. 35).

*Rev. Dr. Thomas. L. Davidson (Pastor 1850-1860)*

The coming of The Rev. Dr. T. L. Davidson to the pulpit of First Baptist marked a significant shift in the growth of the Church. Not only was his ministry fruitful, it was extremely busy as well. Moreover, his time of service in the Church represented a major transition in its history. During the time of Dr. Davidson's ministry, First was transformed in several ways. In the first instance, the congregation grew significantly.

\*A very thorough and excellent treatment of Fyfe and the impact he had on Baptist education and formation is given by Dr. Theo T. Gibson in his book, *Robert Alexander Fyfe—His Contemporaries and His Influence*, Burlington, ON: Welch Publishing Company Inc., 1988.

The membership roll listed 242 members by the middle of 1856. In one year alone, he baptized 101 candidates. In fact, he wrote in his letter of resignation that he had baptized 340 people during his time as pastor. Moreover, his service in the Church represented a major transition in its history.

He oversaw the building of two separate church buildings in a span of slightly less than seven years. When he arrived to serve as pastor in 1850, the people met in the little frame building erected under William Rees' ministry. The numbers were growing before he came but the growth curve had taken a steep upward climb by the time of his departure. The earlier of the two buildings was destroyed by fire in January 1857 and is discussed below.

Dr. Davidson not only had the church to pastor, he was also very active in denominational affairs. The Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec did not exist at this point in our history. For years various Baptist groups in Canada East (Quebec) and Canada West (Ontario) tried to come together and form a larger denominational body to represent and promote their interests. What were those interests? The major one was the rapidly rising home and foreign missionary movements that were beginning to take hold as the church and secular press printed stories about the likes of David Livingstone and his travels in Africa. His ringing call to bring Christianity to the Africans was coined into a slogan of three words that resounded around the world, "Christianity, commerce and civilization." Livingstone firmly believed that the only way to break the slave trade in the Americas and indeed the world, was to cut off the source of supply in Africa. Although Britain had abolished slavery within the Empire by legislation 1833 (effected 1834), it

was still rampant in many parts of the globe including the southern US and in parts of Asia, South America and parts of Africa. One of the ways of cutting off the supply of slaves in Africa was to lead Africans to Christ as well as introduce them to Western civilization and commerce so that Africans too, could not only enjoy the benefits of that civilization but also work to bring prosperity and to be able to defend themselves against slave traders.

Africa was not the only continent that missionaries were beginning to enter. South and East Asia was also attracting missionaries. Our forbearers in this church gobbled up as much information as they could from various journals and newspapers.

The nineteenth century virtually exploded with new ideas, new inventions and innovations. People were becoming wealthier and a rising middle class was emerging and gaining more and more influence in society. It was so in Brantford as well. People with names like Harris, Cockshutt and Buck were moving out of the working class of trained mechanics to being industrialists and entrepreneurs. As their wealth increased, they were able to fund churches, charitable projects and subscribe substantial sums of money to missions work. It was a time of great optimism and growth. The 1850s were the vanguard years of this great period of expansion in Canada West and one that was take in more than half the North American continent in the years to come.

The above needs to be put into context. Much of the expansion was taking place in Great Britain and the United States as well as parts of Western Europe. However, the expansion could not have developed as it did without the Industrial Revolution that began in 18<sup>th</sup> Century England. That period was the springboard for the growth of the US and Canadian economies and the expansion of British colonies.

Two problems seemed always to get in the way of funding Baptist projects such as missions. One was transportation. The stagecoach and horse were the major means of transport up to this time. Travel was slow, tedious and a test of endurance as stagecoaches either bounced over dry and often rutted roads or became mired in the rain-soaked pikes and, it was expensive. The coaches could not travel great distances and people were required to stay at inns. The transportation issue would soon be resolved with the coming of the railway. Lines were built between the major centres and, compared with stagecoach travel the trip was swift and comfortable.

The second problem revolved around the fact that there were two major Baptist denominations in Ontario and Quebec in the period Dr. Davidson was pastor of First Brantford. Most Baptist Churches west of Kingston joined the Regular Baptist Missionary Convention of Canada West (1858) and those Baptist Churches east of Kingston including Quebec were members of The Canada Baptist Missionary Convention East. They were basically home missionary societies formed for the purposes of “employing evangelists, aiding feeble churches, circulating religious publications, and by other suitable means\*.” Nonetheless, foreign missions caught the attention and imagination of millions of parishioners in the Western world.

The second problem was more much more difficult to resolve for it centred on a theological issue that blocked unity and, at the time it was seemingly intractable. Ironically, it was a subject that should have compelled unity among Baptists. The issue was The Lord’s Supper of communion.

\*Harry A. Renfree, *Heritage and Horizons—The Baptist Story in Canada*, pp. 156-7.

One of two opposing stances was taken by congregations and as was said above, the line of demarcation was a line north of Kingston. Most churches east of the line supported “open” communion that is, anyone who was a baptized Christian regardless of mode, was invited to share the Lord’s Supper. The large majority of churches west of Kingston with the exception of the London area practiced “close” communion. That meant anyone who was not baptized by immersion as a believer would not be invited to share the Supper.

Harry Renfree has painted the following scene to illustrate the issue:

The dispute became increasingly sharp after 1840, dying down only after the formation of the Convention nearly fifty years later. Feelings at the time were so strained that on one occasion some refused visiting brethren a hearing in their assemblies. In his personal diary, the Reverend Newton Bosworth (an open communionist), tells of a painful visit on June 9, 1843: Went with Mr. Burtch and the above Dr. Davies, Messrs.- Winterbotham, Girwood and Landon) to the Long Point and Western Association. Disagreeable meeting—as much as last year. 2 or 3 hours occupied in debating whether we should be invited, as visiting brethren, to take seats at the meeting. Negatived by a large majority! No hope of coalition (*Heritage and Horizon* pp. 102-103).

Thankfully, attitudes began to shift in the 1860s and 70s. The change was no doubt in part due to the financial pressures for Baptists to fund foreign and home missions as well as institutions of higher education. Additionally, congregations were demanding better-trained ministers. They knew that salaries needed upgrading and that pastors should have some income once they retired. The day of the part-time pastor with limited training was drawing to a close.

Dr. Davidson played a significant part in those changes. While he was pastor at Brantford, he also served two years as the editor of the *Christian Messenger*. He then became the secretary of the Regular Baptist Missionary Convention of Canada West.

His departure from First, Brantford was not a happy one. He tendered his resignation in January, 1860 but it was rejected by the Deacons. They knew what he had accomplished but others in the congregation had had some disagreements with him. Their wills prevailed and in March of 1860, Dr. Davidson left with the ugly spectre of ingratitude hovering over First because of a few malcontents and became pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock.

Pastor Davidson's second resignation letter revealed poignant reflection on the way matters developed to necessitate its submission to the deacons:

Two months ago, when I resigned, I was requested to continue \* \* \* by a sweeping vote, which carried with it the whole church save *ten* of its members.

With an aching heart, I took again the Pastoral charge of the church. \* \* \* I was more encouraged in this hope, from the fact that those who labored to bring about my resignation, and who voted to accept it when tendered avowed their willingness and determination to work with the Pastor, if he would continue.

I can well afford to contend with the flesh and the Devil, without the Church; but I have neither the will nor the heart to contend against members of the same body.

I leave you with profound regret and sorrow; and wherever my lot may be cast, be assured I will never cease to love you, and think with pleasure of the years of peace and prosperity I have spent among you.

The Church was small and distracted when I assumed the oversight in 1850, and, of the members who were then in fellowship, only twenty-eight now remain. I have baptized 340; members restored, 30 (Shenston, p 52).

Dr. Theo Gibson caught something of the personality of Tom Davidson as a youth during the time when Robert Fyfe was on a summer preaching tour. He observed:

Several times during the tour—probably during the earlier weeks, of which no record remains—a young lad had travelled considerable distances to listen to the preachers. Fifteen-year-old Tom Davidson, although lacking nothing

in emotional warmth, was not the kind to make a lifetime decision in the exciting atmosphere of the meetings: instead he talked with the missionaries afterwards and then went home to weigh up what he had heard (*Fyfe*, p. 59).

Tom Davidson was careful, cautious, but deliberate and passionate when it came time to act.

### *Two New Church Buildings*

#### The Second Church Building

In May 1853, a building committee was appointed and instructed to buy Lot 4 on the west side of West Street. In August 1855, church meetings were first held in the basement of the unfinished building and by that winter the building was completed. One hundred and fifty – seven members moved into the new building.

On January 12, 1857, an hour after the morning service, fire totally destroyed the edifice. While shocked and saddened members gathered to watch the conflagration, one of the members stood on a barrel where the crowd of spectators were most numerous, and began to urge the people to begin, right then and there, to make donations and pledges for a new church. Temporary worship services were first held in a store occupied by John Cox on the south side of Colborne Street and later at the Brant County Court House.

#### Third Church Building and John Turner, Architect

After the fire that destroyed the second First Baptist Church in Brantford, the church leadership including Dr. Davidson, called upon the services of one of the best-known church architects in the area, John Turner.

Born in Wales in 1803, John Turner trained at Cubitts of London, England which was one of the most prestigious building firms of the day. He arrived in Brantford shortly after the village was surveyed and laid out by Lewis Burwell in 1830.

On February 17, 1857, the building committee chose Turner as the architect for the new building that he designed in Italianate style. The north half of Lot 3 was purchased from W. F. Chave for \$900 on April 21, 1857.

On the last Sunday in 1857, the congregation worshipped in the basement of the new church and with great rejoicing, the first service in the sanctuary was held on April 13, 1862.

In 1928, a Sunday school wing was added across the back of the sanctuary. The building erected in 1858 and the subsequent addition is the structure we worship in today.

### *Personalities and Events*

#### Thomas S. Shenston (1822-1895)

One of the leading personalities of this time not only at First Baptist Church but in the Town of Brantford was a layman, Thomas Shenston.

Thomas S. Shenston, son of Benjamin and Mary, was born in London, England on June 25, 1822. The family came to Upper Canada in 1831 and eventually settled in the Niagara area.

In 1837, Shenston moved to St. Catharines where he was to learn the saddle and harness trade but he joined Captain Mittleberger's Company under Colonel Clarke and fought in the Rebellion of 1837. He remained a Liberal the rest of his life.

After living in Chatham and Woodstock for a time, he came to Brantford on January 21, 1853. It was in this year that the County of Brant was formed and Shenston was appointed Registrar, a position that he held until his death in 1895. He immediately became involved in helping the religious and charitable institutions of the Town of Brantford such as the Children's Aid Society, The Bible Society, the Y.M.C.A., the Widows' Home and the Orphans' Home.

For 39 years, Shenston was a devout and generous member of First Baptist Church. During 29 of those years, he served as the superintendent of the Sabbath School being absent on only three occasions. He served on the Deacons' Board and many other committees. An example of his generosity appeared in the church minutes of September 18, 1865 where it states Brother Shenston proposed that if the church would raise three quarters of the entire debt by April 1, 1866, he would pay the remaining quarter. In the April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1866 minutes, it is recorded that the \$5,600 debt was paid off with the help of the members of the congregation. The Ladies Aid Society contributed \$700 and, of course, one quarter was contributed by Brother Shenston.

When the weather was agreeable, after Sunday school on Sabbath afternoons, Shenston stood at the gate of Greenwood Cemetery handing out tracts to those who passed in and out. At that time, it was customary for many people to stroll about the cemetery on a Sunday afternoon.

Shenston gave personal encouragement and funds to missionaries supported by the Baptist Church. For about eight or nine years, he was president of the Baptist Foreign Mission Society. Among the books that he wrote was a history of the mission to Telgus in India.

His willingness to encourage and assist the poor in establishing themselves helped them reach successful goals that they had never dreamed of attaining. Thomas Shenston was also the author of the first printed history of First Baptist Church. His *Jubilee Review of the First Baptist Church, Brantford. 1833-1884* is an invaluable work for those people interested in our early history.

### The Harris Family

Rev. John Harris, who was born in New York State and became a Baptist minister, came to the Niagara Region with his wife Catherine. It was here that Harris became a circuit rider forging his way through the wilds of Upper Canada to preach to all who would listen. After the War of 1812, the family moved to Ingersoll where Alanson, their son, was born.

Later, the family moved to Boston, Ontario, where a stained glass window is dedicated to John Harris in the Boston Baptist Church. From here, they moved to Mount Pleasant around 1839, where they purchased a farm on what is now the Pleasant Ridge Road.

Rev. John was not much interested in cultivating the soil as much as he was interested in cultivating souls. Alanson bore much of the farming responsibilities at the young age of nine or ten. To lighten the burden, his father worked on ways to make farming less labor intensive, thus inventing the revolving hay rake, the first Canadian made farm implement.

The first mention in Shenston's book about the Harris family attending First Baptist Church was on January 3, 1851, when the Rev. John Harris was received from Oakland Church. Alanson Harris was received from Townsend Church on February 22, 1852 and his wife, Mary Morgan Harris, was first mentioned on June 6, 1852.

Because of the demand for iron stoves and kitchen utensils after the Crimean War and the increasing number of farm implements being brought from the United States into the Niagara area, Alanson decided, in 1857, to take his family to Beamsville. It was recorded that Alanson and his wife, Mary, left First Baptist Church on January 29, 1857 and moved to the Beamsville Church. When in Beamsville, Alanson purchased a sawmill and converted it into a small factory where he manufactured farm tools and the revolving hay rake.

In 1871, after searching for a new location, the Alanson Harris family came to Brantford and built a new factory on the south side of Colborne Street near Bain Street. Early in 1872, the firm began manufacturing mowers, harvesting machinery, reapers and self-binding harvesters. Alanson took his son John and James K. Osborne into partnership naming the firm A. Harris, Son and Company.

The return of the Harris family to First Baptist Church took place on December 1, 1872 when Alanson, his wife Mary, Nellie, John (Alanson's son) and his wife Jane once more joined the congregation. Elmore Harris, another of Alanson's sons, came from Beamsville Church on December 26, 1873.

In 1882, a blacksmith shop and foundry were constructed on the west side of South Market Street and, by 1888 a large main building was built. In 1891, Massey and Harris amalgamated. Massey-Harris became one of the largest farm machinery manufacturers in North America.

## John Harris, Son of Alanson Harris

First Baptist Church was a most important part of John Harris' life as he served on the Board of Deacons for many years and taught the Bible Class that was one of the largest classes in Brantford. He was a man of temperance and was honored and respected by all who met him.

In the community, he was involved with the Y.M.C.A., The Board of Trade and served for three years as an alderman on the Brantford City Council from 1881 to 1883. He served as president of the A. Harris, Son and Company until his death in 1887 at 46 years of age. As a tribute to his memory, a beautiful stained glass window was installed in the office of the Company on South Market Street.

Gifts to the church from the Harris family included pews and windows by Alanson Harris and in 1892, a memorial organ in memory of John Harris was given by his wife. When the organ was refurbished in 1911, it was dedicated by Dr. Elmore Harris. Lloyd Harris, at the same service, presented a set of chimes for the organ in memory of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Harris. These chimes were installed on the present organ. The legacy left by the Harris family still lives on in the church today. (Sources: "The Work of Our Hands" Mount Pleasant, Ontario, 1799-1899: A History by Sharon Jaeger *Harvest Triumphant; The Story of Massey-Harris* by Merrill Denison; *Jubilee Review of the First Baptist Church, Brantford, 1833-1884*, by T. S. Shenston; *The Expositor*, September 28, 1887.)

## John William Dungy, An Ex Slave

The speaker at one of the Brant Historical Society's meetings was Dr. Brooks Bertram whose lecture was about the ex slave, John William Dungy. His life is tied directly to First Baptist Church. .

On page 155 of T. S. Shenston's book *Jubilee Review of the First Baptist Church*, Shenston noted that Brother Dungy was recognized as being received on April 22, 1862, by first mention. He is referred to again, in 1862, as a colored brother who was appointed sexton at a salary of \$100 per annum.

The following information is a summary of Dr. Brooks Bertram's account of Bungy's incredible journey.

In 1833, John William Dungy, son of William and Susan Dungy, was born a slave on the Tyrell family plantation, Sherwood Forest, in Charles City County, Virginia, where he grew up and learned to read and write.

In the middle of the 1850s, slavery was a burden for the state and the economics of it were not paying off. Slaves were loaned to other families to do work so John was hired out to serve as a steward in the dining room of the former governor of Virginia, Gregory Munford. During this time, he watched the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 pass which made it legal for anyone anywhere in the United States to accuse any black person of being an escaped slave. Heavy penalties were imposed upon persons who interfered with the return of a runaway slave or aided in his escape. People, particularly in the Union States, were outraged by this act.

From 1854 to 1858, widespread massacre of slaves took place on many plantations as there was great fear that the white families would be poisoned. John Brown, in 1859,

launched his attack against the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia (West Virginia in 1863 and after when it was brought into the Union as a Northern state) and people in Slave States, especially Virginia, were very fearful because there were eight black people to one white person. The Civil War was beginning to loom on the horizon.

Dungy was observing all of these events. In his diary he wrote that for five years he had been looking for an escape and he knew that he had to find it soon. One day a message was sent from the Tyrell family plantation to Governor Munford to tell John that his entire family was going to be shipped to Alabama and that he was to be sent home immediately. He knew that if he were shipped that far south his chances of escape would be next to impossible.

In 1859, he decided to run. He visited Governor Munford and told him that his mother was very ill on a plantation and that he had to go see her. Dungy asked Munford for a pass guaranteeing him freedom to walk the roadways without being arrested. He was given the pass along with five dollars. He also brought along all of his earnings. Dungy immediately headed in the direction of the people involved in the Underground Railroad who could help him as, in Virginia, many stations and informants were connected to the Railroad. It is likely that he didn't leave here immediately but was hidden for a while. He finally walked across the frozen James River at night and once again went into hiding. At Norfolk, Virginia, he then boarded a steamer and hid for three days and nights crouched in a cup and saucer closet.

Upon his arrival in Philadelphia County in 1860, he was met by the Abolition Committee headed by William Still who put him up for the night. It is believed that he was led through New Jersey and New York State by Harriet Tubman to the home in Rochester,

New York of the prominent abolitionist Frederick Douglass. It was Douglass who led him across the wooden Niagara suspension bridge into Canada.

In several letters written to William Still, Dungy wrote about his arrival and stay in Canada. He arrived in Toronto to see elephants and giraffes in the streets belonging to the Barnum & Bailey Circus. He rode the Grand Trunk Railroad train to Brantford to meet his friend Stephanie Brown who was staying at the Kerby Hotel. Fugitive slaves did stay here. He opened his own barbershop and hired someone to help him and, while in Brantford, he married Martha Washington.

The people in Brantford laid the groundwork for him to move to the next step. He returned to the United States after Emancipation, received a degree from a college and went to Harper's Ferry where he joined the American Home Baptist Missionary Society. He then went to a college in Virginia where he worked as a business and financial manager representing the Missionary Society.

Dungy married Lydia Ann Taylor who joined the Society. Together they decided to travel throughout the United States building churches and educating Blacks in these churches. More than 20 Baptist churches were built. The first church was built in Augusta, Georgia and it is said that it was built in the style of First Baptist Church, Brantford.

In the early 1890's Dungy and his family joined his brother in the Oklahoma Territories that were just being settled. In Oklahoma City, Dungy immediately had the Tabernacle Baptist Church built, which was a magnificent structure.

When Dr. Bertram visited Apache Junction, Arizona, in search of the Dungy family, she was fortunate in meeting Laura Harris, the last remaining granddaughter of John Dungy. She had his scrapbook from 1870 that revealed his involvement in the reconstruction of the

South, letters from former slaves, letters to the U.S. Congress and Congressional records complaining about the carpetbaggers coming from the North and interfering with the South, some of his sermons and notes and photos of his children.

Throughout his journeys in the United States, he collected over 3,000 fine books making his library the largest in the Mid-West.

Dungy died in 1903 leaving behind a dynamic historical journey which included the worshippers of First Baptist Church and the community of Brantford.

### *Vignettes of Early First Baptist*

#### The Cheapskate Who Donated—On Paper

Arunah Huntington was one of life's characters and notorious for his miserly ways. He was not a Baptist. Indeed, it was highly unlikely that he attended any church. Had he been born in England he could have easily been a model for Charles Dickens' iconic character of Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*. He did participate enough in town life to be elected a town councilor (1852) and mayor (1853).

F. Douglas Reville who wrote a history of the County of Brant includes two stories that give us a picture of Arunah Huntington. The first has to do with First Baptist Church and the second illustrates the old saying 'money talks.'

Arunah Huntington was a character. He came here from the State of Vermont and in addition to running a shoe shop he sold tea and other commodities. He was of a very penurious nature, also possessing keen business instincts, and as the years rolled on he amassed a large estate, which he greatly increased by loans at high interest. At the time of the American Civil War he bought Northern securities and Northern money at a cheap rate, adding a vast sum to his fortune by this foresight. In appearance he was a typical Yankee with a spare figure and a keen eye. He used to make his boys work at the cobblers bench during school

holidays and after school hours. It is related of him that he was once called upon by a deputation seeking funds for the erection of one of the local churches (First Baptist). A good deal to their surprise he promised something if they would return at a certain hour the following day. Speculation was rife as to the probable amount, and members of the delegation were promptly on hand. Huntington handed them some outlawed notes (outstanding bills owed), and in response to the crestfallen looks of his callers remarked, "Surely they are perfectly good gentlemen, for they were issued by a member of your own congregation." (*History of Brant County*, p. 70).

The second story revolved around a small firebell that was used to alert people to a fire and it was also tolled for funerals. Huntington did not like it being used for the latter and, as F. Douglas Reville put it in his *History of Brant County*:

The latter practice was abandoned, when old Arunah Huntington declared it must cease, or he would withdraw his annual contribution of one pound towards the salary of the bell ringer. Whether Huntington objected on the score of getting too often excited with regard to his own property, or because he hated to be reminded of his own inevitable end, history deponeth not (p. 155).

At any rate, when the old fellow died he left the bulk of his estate not to charity, not even to family but to the State of Vermont.

#### A 'Hoarey' Story of Hoarded Treasure

On April 3, 1863, *The Expositor* (Brantford) reported an incident involving T. S. Shenston in his position as Registrar of the County of Brant and 23 year-old Thomas B. Hoare who had recently come from England. Even though Shenston did not know much about the young man, he hired him and appointed him as Deputy Registrar. The newspaper described him as being so bland, so polite, so gentlemanly and so religious, that he gained Shenston's confidence. He trusted him with the whole office and the keys to it and the safe.

While on a business trip for a few days, Shenston sent back, by express, a box of silver worth \$1,700 to be stored in the safe. Another \$1,000 was already stored there for safe-keeping. When Shenston returned to the office, he discovered that Hoare, the silver and the money has disappeared. Fortunately, Hoare had missed another \$4,000 in gold that was also in the safe. Hoare supposedly had caught the Great Western Night Express out of Paris station. Shenston had a wanted poster (see picture) printed that offered a hundred dollars reward to anyone who had information leading to Hoare's detection. Detectives worked on the case but there was no report that the reward was collected nor that the silver, money and Thomas B. Hoare were ever found. Hoare with the hoard was on the lam.

*Reaching into the Community, by Compulsion and by Choice*

The 1860s saw a number of pastors come and go. As one observer put it,

... we cannot escape the conclusion that as preachers came and went with such regularity there must have been weaknesses somewhere. Salaries remained close to standard so the stipend couldn't have been the main factor. Perhaps the trouble was to be found in the various discords, not with the pastors only but also between the members themselves. (*Our Building's Centenary* p. 17.)

Despite the upheavals and the spinning of the revolving door as pastors came and departed, First Baptist continued to grow. In June 1862 the Sunday school had 200 scholars. Church membership was 332, not including adherents. June 1863 saw 325 members on the roll; there were 329 in 1864. Although Shenston does not cite membership statistics from 1865-1871, a period of decline had set in undoubtedly due in part to the instability of pastoral leadership. In 1871, 225 members were registered on the roll. Some of the loss was the result of a new church formed in 1870. It was to become

Park Baptist Church and would for many years play an important role in Canadian Baptist life. Once pastoral and leadership stability had returned to First, the membership list began to look much more promising. Within five years it had grown to 448 and there were 310 Sunday school pupils. Beginning with Park Baptist Church we digress into the branches of a number of Christian Baptist works that First Baptist influenced or played a direct part in founding.

### Park Baptist Church

The formation of Park Baptist Church was not without difficulty. It could be deemed the first daughter church of First Baptist but it was birthed with some controversy. The issue began formally on March 15, 1870 when 29 members of First sent a letter to the Church Clerk suggesting "...it best leave and form another Church" (Shenston, p. 81). This group, however, had been meeting at least since 1869 and believed that it was time to form another church. The group's numbers were growing and the interest was certainly there.

The deacons postponed the matter. A week later a report was made and adopted on the issue stating:

*Whereas*, twenty-eight members, in our judgment, have too hastily withdrawn from the membership of this Church, and have sent in a requisition for letters of dismissal, in order that they may form a Church of *baptized believers*. \* \* \* Notwithstanding that this Church fails to see the necessity for the formation of a second Regular Baptist Church in the Town of Brantford; and, notwithstanding that there is a lack of friendliness in the requisition, we grant the twenty-eight members *certificates of Christian character* up to the 22<sup>nd</sup> March. (Shenston, p. 81.)

It was an interim measure and satisfied no one except those who drafted the report. It is likely that the twenty-eight were already meeting separately and in fact within a month were joined by another fifteen. In their eyes, the letters of dismissal (dismissal-meaning that they were members in good standing) were a formality. Their departure was a *fait accompli*. On April 14<sup>th</sup> of 1870, the formal letters of dismissal were granted to the forty-three people who wanted to form their own church.

A later commentator on the issue took umbrage at the way those leaving handled their departure.

Right at this time a cleavage occurred and twenty-eight members applied for dismissal to enable them to form a new church—to be known as the Church of Baptised [*sic*] Believers! Are we to think that First Church members are not considered to be Believers? After much petty wrangling over certificates, and so on, they departed. These dissidents wandered about for some time and then finally settled down to the building of a church of their own—Park Baptist (*Our Building's Centenary* p. 17).

The “dissidents” hardly wandered: certainly no more than the founders of First Baptist. They had to settle for places that they could afford just as the people of early First Church did. Initially the church was named Tabernacle Church. A building had been erected but numbers grew and it proved inadequate. Finally they were able to secure a prime piece of property on the north-east corner of Darling and George Sts opposite Victoria Park.

Thomas Shenston saw the hand of Providence at work in the separation. He offered this reflection:

I well recollect reading in one of our Sunday School books an address of Father Knapp's of Nova Scotia, in which, among other things, he said:-- “It often happens that when large churches were too selfish to branch out as they ought, of their own accord, that God sent the Devil among them to separate.” With deep sorrow and humiliation I am obliged to confess that to a limited extent this was true in this case. . . All has, however, been mysteriously over-ruled for good. The final result of the separation is the erection of the prettiest Church building in the city, and beyond all question

in the best locality” (Shenston, p. 82).

By 1879 the membership stood at 229 (*Condensed History of Park Baptist Church, Brantford 1870-1960*, p. 1) and “the prettiest Church building in the city” was completed at a cost of \$24,000 in 1883. The architect was John Turner, the same person who designed the current First Baptist building in 1857. His inspiration for the design was Exeter Cathedral in England (built 1328-1375). By 1900, 477 were listed as members and the minister, The Rev. Dr. David Hutchinson, had served as the President of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec.

The next pastorate under the ministry of The Rev. Vernon Cowsert (1900-1906) witnessed renovations, all indebtedness including the initial mortgage was paid in full, the deacons would be elected for three year terms and were increased in number from eight to twelve and, the membership stood at 535 (1904). Additionally, a new mission was begun in Eagle Place (1901) and it became a full-fledged church (Immanuel Baptist) in 1903. In 1905 14 members left Calvary to help form Shenstone Memorial Baptist Church. Wisdom is indeed justified by its deeds.

#### Calvary Baptist Church

Brantford was growing quickly. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century it was the third largest exporter of manufactured goods in the country. The agricultural sector was positively booming. Verity, Harris and Cockshutt farm equipment was sold across North America. The Harris family was prominent in the affairs of First. The stoves made by the Buck Stove Works—the Buck family was linked with First and Park Baptist Churches—could be found in many countries of the world. Brantford itself had passed the 20,000

population mark in the early 1900s. That is small by today's standards but it was sizeable in those times. The churches were growing to meet the expanding population with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

On April 18, 1875 the Deacons met to consider a vision of Thomas Shenston to begin a work in growing East Ward area around the current Dalhousie-Park Sts vicinity.

Shenston was willing to contribute to and back the new mission. The Church took the mission seriously for not only did Shenston throw his influence behind it, two prominent members of the Harris family were also invited to be part of the committee to oversee the work. A joint committee of people living in the community but attending East Ward Mission\* and men from First was formed to do a feasibility study concerning the viability of a Baptist church in the area. On September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1875, their report was submitted to the First Baptist board of Deacons:

The East Ward Committee reported, that the parties who were most interested in the new undertaking, were perfectly unanimous for the formation of a new Church in connection with the chapel, and that your committee has no hesitation in recommending that a Church be formed there at once; and that this Church give prayers, sympathy and aid to the new Church when formed." The report was adopted (Shenston p. 102).

Twenty-five people left First Baptist to become the nucleus of the new work. The church could not afford its own minister and one was shared with Burtch Baptist. The Church eventually was renamed Calvary Baptist Church and a new building erected situated on Dalhousie St. East of Park.

Eventually it did grow. The early 1900s saw 428 members on the roll. In 1905 The Rev.

\*The people would still be members of First Baptist. That status would not change until East Ward became a Baptist Church on its own and they desired dismissal to the new church.

J. B. Chapman became pastor. Unfortunately he became involved in a dispute over whether or not Calvary should build a new parsonage beside the church. Many in the congregation did not think that they could afford it. As one observer put it, "... then something happened, the lid blew." Ninety-two members were dismissed and the membership ultimately declined to 328. Calvary Baptist Church was to witness a number of internecine disputes in its history. They would take their toll on the viability of the church.

### The Orphans Home

On January 1, 1869, the Orphans Home was formally opened on Sheridan Street near Queen Street, across from what was then known as the Widows Home. Ignatius Cockshutt built the home and furnished it to house up to twenty-five poor children under the age of fourteen years. It was then leased to Thomas Shenston for ten years and his sister, J. Shenston, volunteered to serve as the matron for those years.

During this time, citizens from the community were very kind to the children who were mostly girls. C. B. Heyd, whose grocery store was on the northwest corner of Market and Sheridan Streets, supplied nuts, candies and other goodies as Christmas treats. Good hats, clothing and dolls were a few of the items donated to the children. From time to time other caring members of the community invited all of the children to spend a memorable day or half day in the town or country as a little holiday.

Dr. Corson cared for their medical needs with Dr. Griffin filling in when necessary.

On February 2, 1869, the minutes of First Baptist Church stated that it was resolved that room be appropriated in the gallery for the orphans from Deacon Shenston's Home.

At the end of the first five years, Shenston was having difficulty in meeting the financial obligations of operating the Home, so an arrangement was made with Ignatius Cockshutt that they would equally share the expenses for the next five years. Shenston and his sister remained until the lease ended on December 31, 1878 when Cockshutt took over the care of the Home (Source: Scrapbook compiled by T. S. Shenston, Canadian Baptist Archives).

### The North Star Mission

Thomas Shenston was a man of vision to be sure. One of his colleagues on the Board of Deacons, Thomas D. Crawford, saw the need to establish a Christian work in the Terrace Hill area (known then as Sand Hill) of the City as the population increased considerably when the Grand Trunk Railway moved its car shop from Montreal to the station area in Brantford.

In 1876, a Union\* Sunday School, known as the North Star Mission, was established with Thomas D. Crawford in charge of the meetings which were first held in the Kinney home. There was some evidence that between 1876 and 1884, a small chapel was built. In the *Jubilee Review of the First Baptist Church of Brantford*, T. S. Shenston stated that for eight years Deacon Crawford conducted three services a week and that he was absent but twice in the five years. Living three miles from the Sunday School, he made the journey in winter and in summer, through pelting storm and scorching heat. No person ever heard him say that he was tired or discouraged. Regrettably, he died eight years after he began the work.

\*Union meant that leadership and funding would be provided by different Protestant groups.

On February 22, 1884, the day of Deacon Crawford's funeral, Deacon Shenston advertised for tenders for the construction of a brick chapel, 15 feet by 30 feet, on the North Ward Plateau.

The building was erected at a cost of \$2,000. Shenston donated the funds for the building.

On Sunday August 31, 1884, the dedication of the chapel was held. The September 1884 issue of the *Canadian Baptist* stated that Mrs. R. Donnelly of Chicago and Mrs. E. Harris of Toronto gave a pulpit Bible and hymn book, Wm. Pierce gave an armchair and a desk cushion, Allanson and John Harris gave all the rest – 200 chairs, pulpit lamps, carpets, and other necessities. Ignatius Cockshutt, George Foster, John Brown and John Hext gave the bell, and when approached, it was hoped that Wm. Buck would donate two small wood stoves.

The Mission did become a Baptist work in November of 1890 and the Rev. A. E. de St. Almas was called by First to be the mission pastor to the Terrace Hill (Grandview) area work. Mr. St. Almas left in Sept. 1891 and was replaced by Pastor W. J. Thompson. The Mission was recognized by the Convention as a Regular Baptist Church in 1891 as the North Star Baptist Church. It had a membership of 50.

The church grew over the next few years. The *Canadian Baptist* (January 12, 1893) published the following excerpt sent by the new church:

On Sunday, Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, after the communion service, three received the right hand of fellowship. There are more to follow. Truly the Lord is in our midst. We have this year doubled our membership. The cause at present is in a most helpful state, a special feature of the work being the interest which has awakened our young people.

The new church's state seemed to have peaked in 1893. Nothing more is heard until 1896. By that time the mission was reduced in numbers and was being served by a student pastor and relegated to mission status once again.

It is possible that the Mission was hit by an economic problem not of its own making.

David Webber\* explains the issue:

One possible reason that the North Star Mission ceased to exist was that of an economic one. The July 29, 1897 edition of the *Brantford Weekly Expositor* stated that the removal of the G. T. R. (Grand Trunk Railway) shops to London threw a large number of men out of employment in the Grandview vicinity. Due to the fact that most people lived close to where they worked, they would in turn move to wherever they could find employment. This, in turn, would take them away from the Terrace Hill area and therefore the North Star Mission. (*The History of the Christian Outreach on Terrace Hill 1876-1905*, p. 4.)

The last pastor recorded was a student minister by the name of I. G. Matthews (1871-1959). He was to gain significant notoriety a decade hence. The North Star Mission was placed under the purview of First Baptist Church. In 1904, the work was renewed and subsequently named “Shenstone Memorial Baptist Church in honour of the redoubtable Thomas Shenston\*\* who had given so much of his time and treasure to the work of the kingdom.” Mr Shenston died in 1895.

\*The authors are grateful to David Webber of Shenstone Memorial Baptist Church for clarifying several historical errors made by earlier writers of the Shenstone Baptist Church history. Although there is a connection between North Star Baptist Church and Shenstone Memorial Baptist Church, it appears that North Star Baptist Church was faltering by the mid-1890s and was placed under the leadership of First Baptist. It likely reverted to a mission staffed by First Baptist people for there are no reports of its existence in the Oxford-Brant or the BCOQ yearbooks from that point on. A new entry under Shenstone Memorial Baptist Church is shown in the BCOQ yearbook in 1906. Webber concludes that North Star and Shenstone were in fact, two separate churches.

\*\*It is noted that the name Shenston is spelled in two different ways. It was after Shenston's death that the “e” was added to the name. David Webber of Shenstone Memorial Baptist Church, found that articles printed around the time of Shenston's death, stated that he was related to the poet William Shenstone (1714-1763). Webber did get in touch with the great-grandson of Thomas Shenston who said that this was the reason for the name change. It was later discovered through genealogical research, that there was no proof that the poet was related and that the name change was in vain. (D. Webber, *History of the North Star Mission and Thirty Years' History of First Baptist Church, Brantford, 1884-1914*, compiled by the Church Clerk.)

There is an ironic twist in the juxtaposition of First and Shenstone Memorial Baptist Churches and The North Star Mission in that some of the personalities involved in those institutions would become embroiled in events leading to the fracture of the Baptist Convention in 1927.

Following his work at the North Star Mission as a student missionary likely in the employ of First Baptist and a student at McMaster University, Mr. Matthews went to the University of Chicago and completed his PhD. He returned to McMaster and joined The Faculty of Theology where he taught Systematic Theology. It was a time of theological conflict when modernism in theology was marked by a belief that the Bible should not be taken literally and held to the view that several parts of the Bible, including the first eleven chapters of Genesis, should be seen as myth not fact. What later became known as fundamentalism held to a literal interpretation of Scripture including Genesis 1-11.

Matthews was a theological modernist and was accused of heresy by a leading member of the McMaster Board of Governors, The Rev. Elmore Harris (1854-1911), pastor of one of Toronto's leading Baptist churches, Walmer Road. Harris was also one of the founders and supporters of Toronto Bible College (now Tyndale University College and Seminary). Theologically, he was conservative and stood for the veracity of the Bible in every word recorded in the original manuscripts of which none is extant. Elmore Harris was a member of First (1873) and a scion of the Harris family renowned for their manufacture of agricultural machinery.

Dr. Harris lost his battle in trying to have Dr. Matthews found guilty of heresy.

Nonetheless, the matter would flare up again in the 1920s under the leadership of The Rev. Dr. T. T. Shields who, ironically, was a member of the McMaster Board of

Governors at the time of the Matthews controversy did not dispute Matthews' acquittal as far as we know. Matters were different less than two decades later. Shields, who abhorred any whiff of theological modernism or liberalism, would lead one-seventh of all Baptist Convention Churches out of fellowship in 1927. Shenstone Baptist Church would follow and is today a member of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada.

## THE MIDDLE YEARS (1900-1951)

By the late 1890s, the Brantford Baptist Churches were doing quite well. First had 440 people on the active roll, Calvary 309 and Park 421. All in all, 1174 people belonged to a Baptist church in the city and there were dozens of adherents in each church as well.

The dates of the middle years are purely arbitrary on the part of the authors but they do help in putting events and issues in perspective. This period does mark the time of the highest number of membership in each of the churches mentioned thus far and it was a time of pastoral stability. There were four major pastorates during this period at First—Rev. S. J. Farmer (1900-1910), Rev. Llewellyn Brown (1910-1918), Rev. Dr. W. H. Langton (1919-1933) and Rev. Dr. Wayman K. Roberts (1933-1941, 1945-1951). Dr. Roberts served as a RCAF chaplain during WWII. His pastoral duties were ably carried out by Dr. L. C. Kitchen until he returned from the war in 1945. While the church enjoyed exceptionally strong pastoral leadership and a prolonged period of pastoral stability, the times were anything but stable. The era was fractured by two world wars and sandwiched between them, the Great Depression. It would never be the same again; nor would the Christian church in North America and Western Europe.

This period would mark the greatest impact of Calvary, First, and Park Baptist churches had on the City of Brantford. Politicians, industrialists, business people and professionals could be counted among their ranks. The number of members peaked in the 1930s in First Baptist. By 1919, First had 617 members enrolled. The figure climbed to 679 by 1923 and to over 700 by 1929. In that same year, the Sunday school listed 410 scholars and

had 34 teachers and officers looking after them. 1933, the year of Dr. Langton's death at age 50, the membership stood at 774 and the Sunday school had 550 students on its roll. Park Baptist Church seems to have peaked a little earlier than First. In 1904, there were 535 members, more members than First at this time. 581 appeared on the roll in 1910 but by the post WWII period, the number had declined to 403. Although there was a marked interest in Christian beliefs in the 1950s, the Christian Church in Canada experienced a time of steady decline in the following years. It is a matter that will be discussed briefly in the chapter, "The Later Years" and the impact it has had on our churches.

#### Riverdale Baptist Church

Brantford was growing in population and expanding its territory. In 1891, the city annexed the area of Holmedale (named after William Holme, who settled the area in 1829). Even before the annexation, a small group of Christians came together to form a new mission called the Holmedale Mission in the hopes of one day becoming large enough to develop a church. The group grew and it became evident that its members could no longer meet in individual homes. Land was purchased at the corner of what is now St. Paul and Grand River Avenues and "on October 9, 1887, the new Mission was opened for morning, afternoon and evening services." (*History of Riverdale Baptist Church, 1912-1987* p. 2). Riverdale would be the final significant Brantford mission outreach of First Baptist Church.

It was decided in 1890 that First Baptist Church should take responsibility for the work and, indeed, take over the property, land and furnishings. In 1912, The Holmedale Mission was organized as a Regular Baptist Church.

The part of Holmedale closest to the Grand River at the time was a well-industrialized area. There were a number of cotton and wool mills, grist mills, soap factories and the Brantford City Waterworks. The waterworks are still there. Trains made their way along the riverfront to service these industries whose wares were transported to the rest of Canada, the US and around the world. Many of the people who lived in this part of Holmedale worked in the mills and other industries located there. In some respects, the fortunes of Riverdale Baptist Church were tied to the economic survival of the mills and industries. As long as the industries prospered, the workers who attended Riverdale prospered the church. Often though, these industries are cyclical in nature and go through boom and bust cycles and eventually close. Certainly when there were hard times economically, Riverdale had its financial problems too. Nonetheless, the people of Riverdale faced and met the challenges for over a century if the Mission stage and its status as a full-fledged church are combined. As far as its membership was concerned, it influenced hundreds of people over the years and many were won to Christ. In 1922, the membership was 158. Forty years later the membership was 141 and had an average Sunday school attendance of 143. It held its own for a long time, even surviving the Great Depression. Riverdale was never a rich church but it had a strong will to survive and serve Christ in Holmedale. Regrettably, the mills and industries, especially the agricultural plants closed down and after a protracted struggle, the Church closed in October 2003. A number of its people joined First Baptist prior to that event.

A church is more than economics. It is comprised of people who desire to serve Christ and humanity. Many children came to know the Saviour through the work of the Sunday school. Many adults were introduced to Christ through the ministry of the gospel, the

music of the church and the witness of committed lay people. Many people who have never had the privilege of hearing the Word of God in the past did hear because of church supported missionaries. Riverdale was no exception.

One family that was greatly influenced by Riverdale Baptist Church and who in turn influenced that church for five generations was the Harcourt family. Olive Stefanysyn (nee Harcourt) summed up her experiences and feelings about the church in a document she called "Riverdale Heritage" (Sept. 28, 1997) as she expressed her gratitude for those experiences and the work of Riverdale. Her words reflect similar thoughts of many people who have been influenced for good by the church.

Our family tree is deeply rooted in Riverdale and extends back as far as the history of the church itself.

In 1912, the year the church was organized, our grandparents came from England with their 2 children. The son became our father and his sister, our aunt. Upon settling 108 Grand River Ave., they began attending Riverdale and made this their church home. When the woman who would be our mother arrived in 1916, she eventually married the man who would be our father. The Riverdale pastor who conducted the service was Rev. T. E. Richards.

Subsequently, I was born into the church in 1923 and my brother Jack in 1926, the eldest and youngest of 3 children our parents would have. A sister in-between (Frieda d. 2008) had made her home in Woodstock for the past 30 years. Consequently, there has never been a time when Riverdale has not been a part of our lives.

Jack and I are the third generation of the family to make this their church home that is now entering into the fifth generation to serve here. We were fortunate to be part of a loving Christian family and raised in a home where we were taught the Christian faith and Baptist tradition throughout our childhood.

Some of our earliest recollections are of the Sunday morning church services, afternoon Sunday School sessions and, on occasion an evening service when usually one or another of us would fall asleep and have to be carried home.

During our school-age years, we looked forward to the exciting Sunday School picnics and Christmas concerts. The more serious BYPU (Baptist Young People's Union) meetings also became part of our lives.

As we further matured and participated in the various activities of the church, we also grew in understanding and the realization that with the decision to accept and follow Christ, there also comes the responsibility to serve him. Whatever talents or gifts we possess are gifts from God to be used to honour and glorify Him whenever, wherever and however we can. Riverdale has provided us with the opportunity and for that we are grateful. We have been privileged to be a part of the spiritual blessings and prosperity the church has experienced and for that we are grateful. We have chosen to stand with the church during times of difficulty and differences it has encountered and for that we are grateful as well.

We are thankful for the legacy passed down by previous generations of the family who faithfully served God in this place. One day we too shall leave and pass our heritage on to the generations coming after us trusting in God that it will fill their needs and satisfy them as much as we have been satisfied and fulfilled.

Olive's brother Jack as well as his wife Helen and Olive herself were key players in the life and work of Riverdale Baptist Church for several decades. Between them, they served in just about every lay office in the church and knew the church and its people so well.

### *Personalities and Events of the Period*

#### All People's Mission\*

In February, 1924, Mrs. Margaret Baird of Park Baptist Church, suggested at a meeting of the ladies of the Mission Board of the Oxford – Brant Association of Baptist Churches, that there was considerable need to support Home Missions, as in Brantford alone, there were more than 4 000 immigrants. She also said that next year, her own association at Park Baptist Church would begin a work among these people.

At the Association meeting held on June 10, 1925, Miss Mabee, who was a missionary in Toronto, heard Baird's ideas. She later wrote a letter to Mrs. Baird suggesting that she

\*Includes First, Calvary, Park and Riverdale Baptist Churches where applicable.

call upon the Kaczowka (Ka-choof-ka) family who lived at 128 Pearl Street in Brantford. When she and her daughter visited the house on a Monday evening, they found Mr. Kaczowka teaching a group of 35 to 40 children the Polish language, history and literature of their parents' country. The Baird's invited them to attend Park Baptist Church with them on the following Sunday where they were baptized at the evening service.

### Establishing the Mission

It was arranged that Rev. Edmond Lipinski come from Hamilton for Sunday services that were held in the Kaczowka home. They gathered their friends, one by one, to join the little group. At first it was four, then six, then nine and the number continued to grow. The first Sunday school was held on Sunday June 29th and it continued until the Mission closed in 1968.

After asking for assistance from the members of the Home Mission Board with setting up a Daily Vacation School, a young inexperienced Polish student was sent. That summer he held an outstanding Vacation Bible School.

In 1925, Mr. Kaczowka decided to go to McMaster University to become a minister. Rev. and Mrs. Adamczyk and their three children came and settled into the Kaczowka's house and began their ministry here in on November 25, 1925. All services were held in the front room of their home – two services and Sunday school on Sunday, prayer meeting on Thursday night, a sewing club and children's groups representing over 30 families. In January 1927, the Women's Mission Board sent out Miss Margaret King as the first missionary to work at this mission.

As the group grew in numbers, a dairy, called “the milk stop” by the Polish community, was rented in the neighbourhood and was used until 1928. It was that year that the Baptist churches of Brantford, together with the General Home Mission Board, purchased a cottage at 124 Pearl Street which was converted into a meeting house.

On March 1, 1928, the opening celebrations were conducted in Polish both at the morning and evening services. Another dedicatory service was held on April 1<sup>st</sup>, this time in English. The doors were open to all who wished to attend – Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Hungarian and English. The Russians held their own Sunday services here and also conducted prayer meetings on Saturday nights at eight o’clock.

#### Operating the Mission

Information from the 1951 – 52 report outlined how the Mission operated. It was under the control of the Women’s Home Mission Board who appointed and paid the salary for a missionary. A volunteer supervisor was also appointed who, for many years was Mrs. Foulds from First Baptist Church. She was automatically chair of a committee made up of two representatives from each of the five Baptist Churches in Brantford. This committee looked after necessary repairs on the building and equipment, finances, paid the high annual coal bills, provided Sunday School and church supplies and raised funds wherever possible. The Toronto Board paid for larger expenses such as a new furnace, alterations to the building, and the salaries of the missionary and caretaker.

### Activities at the All People's Mission

Volunteers from the Baptist churches in the City of Brantford and the appointed missionaries wholeheartedly supported and worked with the Mission community. In the 1940s, the Mission could hardly accommodate the number of mothers who came with their preschoolers to attend nursery school. Mission Band, Junior Hi Fellowship, Girls' Explorers, C.G.I.T., Boys' Club, and Women's Auxiliary were all well attended.

Mrs. Foulds was among the dedicated workers at the Mission. Once a week English lessons were taught by herself, her husband and Mary Edmondson to about 20 students. Mrs. Foulds gave piano lessons and on Friday evenings, about 16 members of junior choir gathered with her for practice. Once a year, a music recital was held where the groups shared their talents. These groups also participated in special celebrations throughout the Christian calendar.

### Closing the Mission

On May 6, 1968, a meeting of the All People's Mission committee met and a motion was moved by Mrs. Steedman that the All People's Mission at 124 Pearl Street, Brantford cease to operate on July 3, 1968. Seconded by Mrs. Cleaver and carried. (Sources: "Brantford New Canadian Mission" by Mrs. W. T. Steven. *Our Work at Home* from the *Link and Visitor*, May, 1928. Report of the "All People's Mission", 1951 – 1952).

### John Widdup

John Widdup devoted forty years to the work of First Baptist Church. Born in 1871, he joined the church by baptism in November 1892. Many positions in the church were held

by Widdup including clerk of the church, trustee, treasurer, membership on the finance committee and on the board of deacons. He was also a member of the Publications Board of the Ontario and Quebec Baptist Convention. He received his greatest pleasure from working in the Sunday School Department where he began as a teacher and from 1921 to 1926, he served as the superintendent.

In 1931, after Widdup retired, he volunteered to become the executive head of the Brantford Community League at the urgent request of fellow citizens. This League looked after financial relief for Brantford citizens during the Depression. Because of his financial expertise, the needy citizens received steady and substantial relief.

When John Widdup died on November 11, 1932, an editorial written on November 12 in *The Expositor* stated that he was a Christian gentleman, noble-hearted, and a public spirited citizen, staunch churchman, a capable and intelligent man of affairs, lover of his fellow man, respected for his integrity in everyday life, trusted by his associates, revered by his friends, loved by his family and esteemed by the entire community.

What better testimony could be written to honor the life of John Widdup. (Source: Obituary and articles from the Expositor, November, 1932)

### The Light of the World

The primary focus in the sanctuary of First Baptist Church is the stained glass window above the baptistry entitled “The Light of the World”. This window was dedicated in memory of John Widdup by his family.

In 1851, an English artist, Holman Hunt, painted the picture “The Light of the World”, which was inspired by the Biblical passage found in Revelation, chapter 3, verse 20,

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock! If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Over the years, Hunt painted three versions of the picture with the third one being hung in Saint Paul’s Cathedral, London, England.

This third painting shows Christ knocking at the door symbolizing the closed conscience of the world while untended plants depict chaos. Christ is shown knocking at the door of the negligent in order to bring forth salvation to humanity. In order to obtain the light that fills the picture, Hunt painted at night, sometimes using moonlight.

When Holman Hunt died in September 1910, his ashes were placed in Saint Paul’s Cathedral. (Source: Robert Fulford, National Post, December 24, 2007).

#### George S. Matthews

In 1903, George S. Matthews came from Peterborough, Ontario, to Brantford to operate the George Matthews Packing Company of Montreal, Peterborough and now Brantford. This company, one of the largest companies in Canada, cured and packed pork and was especially known for its “Red Rose Brand” boiled ham and lard.

Matthews and his wife joined First Baptist Church on April 3, 1904. Because of his deep appreciation of music, he became chair of the music committee and held the position from 1906 until his death in 1933. He also served as a trustee and a member of the finance committee. Matthews was a leader in the Ontario and Quebec Baptist Convention and was involved with McMaster University where he was a member of the Board of Governors.

In the community, he was a member of Rotary, the Board of Trade, chair of the Parks Board and the Ontario Parole Board of Ontario.

On March 22, 1936, the Matthews family presented a new pipe organ as a memorial to George S. Matthews' keen interest and dedication to the music of First Baptist Church. This gift continues to keep on giving and is a major part of First Baptist Church life. (Sources: A Brief Historic Sketch of the Music of the First Baptist Church, 1833 to 1936 *The Expositor*, May 22, 1933).

### Christopher Cook

Christopher Cook, who was baptized in First Baptist Church on March 4, 1888, was a stalwart son and a faithful steward of this church serving actively for over 40 years on the Deacons' Board. He also served on the Mission Committee and on the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee as chair of the General Committee. Cook wrote the introduction to the book, "First Baptist Church, One Hundred Years of Advancement, 1833 – 1933". In 1929 – 1930, he was president of the Baptist Convention.

In the City of Brantford, Cook was first affiliated with Cook, Harris and Company. Cook had married Mabel Harris, daughter of John and Alice Harris. Later he became the president of the Royal Loan and Savings Company that was joined with the Canada Permanent where he later was chair of the Advisory Board of the Brant County Branch. Cook gave faithful service to the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A., the Brant Sanitorium, Children's Aid Society and the Brantford City Council where he served as alderman in 1912.

When Christopher Cook died in 1935, he left behind a legacy of serving God and his fellow man. (Source: *The Expositor*, November 18, 1935).

Rev. Dr. Wayman K. Roberts (1904-1954).

Dr. Roberts (his doctorate, a Doctor of Divinity was awarded to him in 1953 by McMaster University), was unique in his ministry at First Baptist in two ways. First, he was raised in First Baptist and sent into ministry from the Church. Second, at age twenty-nine he was the youngest minister to assume the pulpit of First Baptist, Brantford. His years of service at the church were: 1933-1941, 1945-1951. The four-year gap was spent in the RCAF as an Air Force chaplain in WWII. Dr. Roberts was particularly popular with the young people. During his ministry, the Baptist Young People's Union (BYPU) was always large and very active. BYPU was a powerhouse for getting people involved in the ministries of the church and there is a number of current members of this church who were greatly influenced by that movement. Indeed, many of the young men who became ministers in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, began their new lives in Christ as a result of BYPU. He was also active in the community (YMCA) and in denominational affairs. In fact, Dr. Roberts served as President of the BCOQ in 1948-49 while he was pastor of First. Not only was he a competent preacher, he must have had great energy to accomplish what he did. Shortly after leaving First Brantford for the pulpit of First Baptist, Vancouver, he contracted cancer and died in January, 1954.

Adelaide Waghorne

In an interview, Muriel King, daughter of Adelaide Waghorne, recorded the following information about her mother's life.

Adelaide Waghorne lived by the motto "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might as unto the Lord" (from Ecclesiastes 9: 10). She had become a deaconess and,

when her father died, Mrs. Waghorne went to the Village of Harvey in New Brunswick where she found a Baptist Church in need of a pastor. First Baptist Church in Brantford gave her a license to preach, she also played the little organ and did everything but take up the collection. The church flourished under her leadership.

Each Sunday evening, she walked along an unlit country road to conduct evening services. One evening she fell into a ditch and cut her leg, got up and continued on to church. It was not until after the service that she had time to bandage the cut.

Mrs. Waghorne lived in a fourteen-room parsonage owned by a local sea captain. Finding this space too large for one person, she closed off all but four rooms creating a cozy apartment. In season, she tapped the sugar maple trees around the parsonage and boiled the sap to make her own maple syrup.

When she returned to Brantford, she again became very involved in the work at First Baptist Church. For a number of years, she taught the Kate Marquis Bible Class which was made up of a group of young ladies. Because Mrs. Waghorne also wished them to know about the wonderful work that the Canadian Baptist missionaries were accomplishing in India and Bolivia, she organized the Edna Down Mission Circle.

#### Baptist Port Worker

In 1950, at 70 years of age, Mrs. Waghorne journeyed to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where she worked as a Baptist Port Worker at Pier 21 greeting the European immigrants as they disembarked from the ships. Even though she didn't speak their languages, she made them feel welcome, helped them find their luggage, gave each of them a bag of necessities that she had prepared and guided them to the correct train. If they were

Baptists, she wrote to the ministers of the churches to which these people were going so that they could be assisted.

The first family whom she greeted was the Sissings, who became members of First Baptist Church in Ingersoll. Jurien Sissing married Nancy Young, a former member of First Baptist Church, Brantford.

From July 4, 1952 to 1953, Mrs. Waghorne met 160 ships carrying 360 Baptist families. Parcels from Baptist churches across Canada were sent to her for distribution to the immigrants. She wrote 390 letters mentioning what to include in these parcels and thank you notes to the churches. Mrs. Waghorne had to give up this position due to illness and returned to Brantford where she continued to worship at First Baptist Church until her death in 1973.

Throughout her life, Mrs. Waghorne followed her motto by letting her hands work for the Lord.

## THE LATER YEARS (1951-2008)

### *A Gradual Decline*

The authors of this work stated at the outset that churches have life cycles. The middle years were the period of adult maturity and stability but, as so often happens, organizations like people settle in their comforts and routines. As a result, little growth takes place except perhaps around the girth and the once well-oiled machine begins to squeak and get a little rusty. This happens under ordinary conditions but when compounded with the great social, economic and political turmoil that have taken place the last half-century, it wreaks devastation on traditional institutions such as the church. People began to leave the churches *en masse* by the end of the 1960s. Society was changing as was the culture and the economy. Canada was becoming richer but more and more secularized. The Church increasingly was being seen as irrelevant and marginalized. It did not matter if one belonged to a church or not whereas in the not too distant past, most political and business leaders were church members. Church membership stood them in good stead in their respective communities. The economy was changing as well and greatly affected cities like Brantford. The mills that dominated the lower Holmedale area that Riverdale Baptist Church served, had pretty well disappeared by 1970. Next to go would be the manufacturers of agricultural machinery. The brownfields of Eagle Place still reveal the skeletal remains of a once thriving agricultural industry that dominated the Brantford economy a half century ago. The Christians who once worked in those places and who could not find jobs in Brantford moved on and out of the churches here.

The churches themselves were locked in their denominational pasts in an era that saw denominationalism becoming increasingly irrelevant. Many churches adopted a “hunker down” mentality and were more interested in protecting their human and financial resources than outreach.

Compounding the issue was the fact that due to the influences of modernism and fundamentalism a great divide existed in church relationships. Churches that once shared their pulpits with each other no longer did so. Moreover, the penchant for Protestant churches to split and form new sects or independent churches when a theological issue could not be resolved occurred more frequently as the cult of individualism spread. A pallor of negativity cast its smothering blanket over churches that once thrived. Dr. Harold Stibbards, pastor of Park Baptist Church observed in an article written for the Sept. 15, 1967 issue of *The Canadian Baptist* observed:

Lastly, a word about an area of deep concern. It is the prevailing custom of roundly criticizing the Church. The most remote outsider can say searching things about the Church and for doing so be regarded almost with reverence in our day. The study of theology for many today seems to me to be an exercise in cleverness, the ability to shock, rather than a pursuit of truth. Young men who have apparently lost their faith, in the period of readjustment, instead of waiting till more evidence comes in, write books which are pounced upon as being the latest leadership in theology. Negation has become tragically popular (p. 9).

Dr. Stibbards hit the nail on the head. Negativism as it has affected the church, has resulted in the denial of accepted beliefs that have been held for nearly two millennia. It has been “tragically popular” and has certainly contributed to its decline. Nonetheless, the work of the church did go on and is still going on even though its influence is not what it once was.

### Calvary Baptist Church

Calvary Baptist Church weathered much of the first half of the Twentieth Century quite well. Numbers had risen; the church was stable and it was served by several able and talented pastors over the years including the Rev. Dr. Minton Johnston who ministered in BCOQ churches so creatively and capably and the Rev. Dr. Lance Morgan who later was called to First Baptist Church, Prince George BC where he pastored for over 25 years and became renowned for his abilities and generous spirit.

The church was also known for its music. Its choir competed for several years in the Kiwanis choral church music competitions in Toronto and won nine of ten of them.

Janice Corke, now of First, was raised in Calvary. She joined the junior choir in 1943 and sang until the church closed in 1972. In 1973 she joined the First Baptist choir and sings in that choir currently. Janice remembers the very good spirit of choir members as they prepared their anthems.

Janice also recalls the time as a young woman sitting in the front pew with her friend Rosalind Peper (nee Campbell). As they listened to the Rev. Mr. Burgess, the minister at the time, Janice was moving her tongue around her mouth. She inadvertently made a popping sound and her friend thought this very funny. In fact, Rosalind began to laugh but she caught herself and tried to stifle it. The mood was contagious. Janice wanted to laugh as well and she tried to stifle it. Both women began to shake as they tried to keep from bursting out laughing and disrupting the service. They shook so hard that the pew moved. The minister looked up, slammed his sermon notebook in disgust and ended the service.

Regrettably, discord arose at the end of the 1950s. Thirty-three members and four adherents left in 1958, leaving 170 members on the roll at the end of the year. In 1959, another split occurred where several people left to form Temple Baptist Church on Grey St. The building is now used for the ministries of Friendship House whose purpose is to do outreach to the community around it. One of the founding and supporting churches of Friendship House is First Baptist Church.

From that time on, Calvary Church struggled and finally closed its doors in 1972. Its assets were transferred to First Baptist.

Marg Farley, formerly of Calvary and now of First, wrote an article in the monthly newsletter, *Arise and Shine* entitled, “ A Walk Down Memory Lane with Marg Farley.”

She briefly summarized some of the highlights for her as she recalled her time at Calvary.

These are some of my early memories of Calvary Baptist Church. I remember being in a primary Sunday school class with my brother John. There was a little organ that our teacher (Miss Yule?) used to play the hymns. We took up our collection in a lined wicker basket while we sang " Hear the Pennies Drop". To start Sunday school, each class sat in a row, boys on one side and girls on the other. After graduating from primary class, Mary Campbell was my teacher for the rest of the time and her husband taught the boys. We had great social times together such as tobogganing and skating parties near the Campbell's.

At one time there was a band that included Bern Knowles, Oc Mallinson and Jack McWhirter. Jerry Taylor and Ford Robison led rousing singsongs.

Bob and I were married at Calvary, and after the War, each of us led a Sunday school class. Our daughter, Susan, would walk along to church with us, carrying a little Bible and dangling her little white fur muff.

For years, Emma and Ford Robison headed up a highly organized and well-attended Christmas concert. Ford's decorating was elaborate and Emma was in her element directing the three choirs.

Many Calvary members later found a new church family here at First.

Memories, memories.

### Park Baptist Church

Good things did happen in the churches under discussion. The stalwarts rose to the occasion when needed and the ministers still fed the hungry but diminishing flocks for which they were responsible. Missionaries were sent to foreign lands to share their knowledge and experiences of Christ with others. Muriel Harrington left for Bolivia in 1950 where she served for forty years with distinction. Muriel conceptualized the school of music at the seminary in Cochabomba and it is now named in her honour. She also taught English and Religious Studies and music in elementary and secondary schools, was programme director at the Southern Cross radio station in La Paz and was engaged in women's and children's work in Oruru. Shirley Knight, who was raised in Park Baptist as Muriel was, and her husband, the Rev. Ken Knight, spent their ministry careers with the Canadian Baptist Foreign Mission Board (now Canadian Baptist Ministries or CBM) in India. Dr. Stuart Barber of Park served in India as a medical missionary for several years. Our own Dr. Fred Bullen pastored Park Baptist Church for over ten years and had a significant impact on the church and the community. His ability to use the radio as a ministry tool enabled him not only to share the gospel of Christ with many who did not or could not come to the church but it also opened the door to meet with many business people, some of whom came to Christ and began attending Park.

Moreover, he was successful in tying Park more closely to the BCOQ and McMaster University. One result was that in modern times, Park likely contributed more presidents of the Convention than any other church during this period. Included are Norman Moore, Dr. Stuart Barber, Amy Saunders and Winnifred Stibbards.

Through Fred's leadership, Park gave leadership to the community churches, namely Zion United Church and Central Presbyterian Church. Every year for five years, the churches organized an annual Sunday school parade. Participants met at Mohawk Park and paraded along Colborne St. marching to the music of ten bands. Their destination was Lorne Park where a rally was held. This type of event was becoming increasingly rare as the years passed.

Following his ministry at Park, Fred took up the reins as General Secretary of the Canadian Baptist Federation an organization dedicated to unifying and speaking for Canadian Baptists belonging to the four Baptist unions and conventions across Canada. In his retirement years, among other things, Dr. Bullen established the Canadian Baptist Federation room at McMaster Divinity College in conjunction with the College.

Regardless of the good work done, Park Baptist Church closed in October of 1991.

Before the congregation ceased to meet, Michele Renwick, now of First, was baptized.

She was the last person to be baptized at Park Baptist Church.

Bill King, a trustee of Park (currently Chair of the Board of Trustees of First) and responsible for overseeing the closure recalls the work of two men who were not prominent in the leadership of the church until the last few years of Park's existence. Asa (Ace) Winegarden and Clifford Cronkite had never been elected to a major board prior to the departure of many of the deacons a few years before the church closed. They did not have much formal education and did not travel in the upper echelons of society but they stuck by the church until the last light was turned off and the doors shut for the final time. They were elected to serve as deacons and they took the job seriously. In the last days,

they visited parishioners and saw to their needs on a regular basis. They rose to the occasion.

Finally, the church did not forget the pastor when the doors were closed. The last minister, the Rev. Robert Wilkinson, was offered the parsonage for half its market value as well as \$3000 a month for a year to look after the scattered flock and see to their spiritual needs until they could relocate to a suitable place of worship.

When the church was closed, its assets were distributed to McMaster Divinity College, BCOQ and work in Bolivia.

### First Baptist Church

First Baptist Church was and is not immune from the changes in society. The membership of the church declined from the late 1960s to the early days of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It stands at 119 active members up to the time of writing and has been holding around that figure for the last several years. We have been served by several capable ministers and the church workers have been steadfast and true in the use of their God-given gifts with which he has equipped them for the tasks they fulfilled and indeed, still fulfill. First Baptist has enjoyed great stability of pastoral leadership for over a century. The years of service for ministers of the period under consideration are: the Rev. Cyril Squires (1951-1977), the Rev. Thomas G. Caldwell (1977-1988), the Rev. Fred Demaray (1988-1997) and the Rev. Dr. J. Daniel Gibson (1998-2007). The Church has ministered to the community and to the saints but the times are very different than in the halcyon days of the early Twentieth Century. Attrition has taken its toll over the years for reasons stated earlier in this booklet. The population has changed markedly in the area as many of

the older and more established families have moved to the suburbs and attend churches there while newer families have moved in. Many are immigrants and are more transient because of their employment circumstances. Two generations of people who have moved into the area have not been schooled in the church either because their parents dropped out or they had no interest in the first place. Additionally, there is a suspicion among people that the Church is irrelevant to their lives. Interestingly, First's current mid-week programme, Kid's Club, started during the ministry of the Rev. Dr. Dan Gibson, is quite successful in terms of numbers of children participating. Several computers have been contributed by individuals and companies to help the children learn how to use them effectively. These children live in the community close at hand whereas the Sunday school only has a few children in attendance. The children are brought by church members or adherents. These circumstances reveal the shift that has taken place in families over the last several decades when Sunday school was the major tool of evangelism for children.

The congregation is aging to be sure but First Baptist is in a strategic position to minister effectively and is doing so. The energy and creativity of many of the over 65 group is a marvel to behold! They serve on committees and boards, volunteer in a number of important ministry functions such as pastoral care, Kid's Club, Sunday school and choir just to name a few.

#### The Parish Nurse Programme

In addition to the Kid's Club, another outreach ministry was started during the time of Dr. Gibson's ministry. It is the Parish Nurse programme.

The Parish Nurse function was a result of the vision of one of our long-term members, Donna Summerhayes, CM, RN (ret). Mrs. Summerhayes was invited by a friend to attend the first Parish Nurse course at McMaster College (1999) and from her training saw need for the work of a Parish Nurse in First Baptist Church. People could not always get out to have their blood pressure taken or they needed counseling and many could not afford the fees of a professional counselor. When Donna presented the idea to the Church Council, it was accepted however, it was turned down by the church at an annual meeting. That did not deter her. She sought support from Dr. Dan Gibson who saw the need for it as well and talked to groups in the church stressing how useful such a project would be.

It appears that the Lord was behind the Parish Nurse concept as well. The Rev. Dale Soble, Area Minister at the time, was instrumental in securing \$5,000 in funding from the BCOQ. Donna herself, in her second attempt to have the project passed by the church membership, volunteered her services as Parish Nurse without salary for a year on a trial basis in order to establish the programme. The congregation approved the proposal. As it turned out, one of the people who was helped by the church (Mary Wood) died and left a legacy for the use of the Parish Nurse programme. The project was well funded.

One of the projects Donna began was ministering to a group of people suffering the effects of cerebral palsy and other debilitating conditions who lived in an apartment building close to the church (11 West St.) When Donna retired, the reins of the Parish Nurse programme were handed over to Carol Bonney, RN who worked with Dr. Gibson in the Cambridge church they both served. Carol consolidated what Donna began. Carol and volunteers help prepare meals and programmes. Several residents now worship with

us and others attend social functions at the church because they sense the love of Christ being shown to them.

There are many others who contribute to the well-being of First Baptist and give hope for the future of the Church. One would be remiss not to mention the years of unceasing labours of Dennis and Debra Duce and Dennis and Joan Foster on behalf of Christ and his church and as representative of the many others help make the Church continue to function.

### *Personalities and Events*

#### When the Ceiling Fell

On the Friday before Mothers' Day, (May 12, 1972) plaster and lath weighing well over 1,000 pounds came crashing down from the sanctuary ceiling onto the pews and floors below. A six meter square section of the ceiling, complete with a two meter rosette weighing about 60 pounds fell 27 feet demolishing 20 pews and other furnishings. Consulting engineers stated that a weakness in the roof had developed causing the problem. Steel beams were used to reinforce both the roof and ceiling before the interior of the sanctuary could be restored.

Once again the congregation of First Baptist Church worshipped in the basement of the church until Sunday May 27, 1973 when a service of rededication and restoration was held in the beautifully restored sanctuary.

The above recount of the ceiling collapse is not meant to be a metaphor for the condition of First Baptist Church, Brantford but it did result in a renewed sanctuary

## Lorne Berry

Lorne Berry was truly a son of First Baptist Church. In his youth, Lorne, along with his family, faithfully attended church and Sunday school. As he grew older, he became a Sunday school teacher and later, a superintendent. When the Board of Christian Education was formed, it was natural that he serve on that board.

His love of children carried over into his career as a teacher, a vice principal and principal in Brantford and The County of Brant. In this role, he enjoyed his involvement with the students as he coached sports teams, chess clubs and even became involved in drama for which Lorne always had flair. During his years at the Brantford Collegiate Institute and at Hamilton Teachers' College, he was a member of the drama clubs. These experiences carried over into his teaching, for when he was at Prince Charles and Greenbrier Schools, Lorne, fellow teachers and students staged the operettas "The Dandelion" and the "Mikado". Many of his school choirs entered the Kiwanis Festival and came back to the school with awards.

Lorne's hobbies are well remembered as many members of the congregation have pieces of furniture that Lorne meticulously refinished.

As a young lad, he took accordion lessons, and the highlight of this venture was when he participated in an accordion marching band event at the Canadian National Exhibition. When the teachers of Brant County formed a choir, Lorne was there, adding his clear, true voice to the bass section. For well over 40 years, junior, intermediate and senior choirs at First Baptist Church were blessed with Lorne's voice both as a choir member and a soloist.

He was very involved in the church through the boards, serving on the Board of Deacons and the Board of Trustees, the Music Committee and Moderator of the church, a position that he held for several years. A man of integrity, known for his quick wit, Lorne selflessly devoted his life to serving First Baptist community. (Source: Lorne's wife, Mary Berry).



## DEDICATIONS

### *Dedication of the Stained Glass Window and the Pipe Organ*

On Sunday, March 29, 1936, at the morning and evening services, the congregations filled First Baptist Church to capacity for the dedication of both the new pipe organ and the stained glass window, “The Light of the World”.

On behalf of the George S. Matthews family, James Matthews, the eldest son, presented the pipe organ to First Baptist Church in loving memory of their husband and father. The gift was accepted by the Rev. Wayman Roberts. After the dedication, the organ played for the first time as the congregation sang “Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven”.

Frederic Lord was the organist.

Miss Ellen Widdup presented the stained glass window, “The Light of the World”, to First Baptist Church on behalf of her mother, Mrs. John Widdup in memory of her husband John William Widdup. Placed over the Baptistry at the front of the church, Miss Widdup remarked that they had chosen the subject carefully with the hope that throughout the coming years, a message would be brought to all those who look upon it. The window was then illuminated for the first time.

As the morning service came to a close, the congregation rose as the choir sang the “Hallelujah Chorus”. What a joyful, appreciative ending!

Both gifts continue to remind us of the Christ that both men served. (Source: “A Brief Historic Sketch of the Music of the First Baptist Church”).

### *Dedicated Flags in First Baptist Church*

During the summer of 1942, a voluntary contribution was made by every member of First Baptist Church to purchase the flags that grace the wall behind the choir loft. These flags represent the Army, Navy and Air Force and the country of Canada itself. They were approved, ordered and purchased by the members of this congregation.

On November 11, 1942, these flags were dedicated by Dr. L. C. Kitchen, who was the minister of First Baptist Church at this time, along with Lieutenant John (Jack) Bragg and Flight Lieutenant Ernest Tribble who, on June 19, 1944, was killed in action over Boulogne, France.

As men and women of Baptist faith entered Canada's Armed Services, small booklets were given to them from the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec. Jack Bragg received his from Dr. L. C. Kitchen who penned a short note inside which reads in part -

Dear Jack,

This little booklet will carry with it, my grateful appreciation of your part in the Service of last Sunday, and be a reminder that you are among those who are kept before our attention and in our affectionate remembrance, by the flags we dedicated.

Sincerely yours  
L. Clayton Kitchen

These flags remain in the church as a constant reminder to all generations of the enormous sacrifices made by others so that we can live in peace and can enjoy the freedoms won at great price.

### *A Pulpit Story*

For almost one third of the history of First Baptist Church the pulpit at the front of the sanctuary has been a fixture used by our pastors and observed by our members, adherents and those attending our services. Have you ever questioned what the history of it may be or who presented it to the church?

Following the death of The Reverend Dr. Wayman K. Roberts, his mother indicated that she wished to donate a pulpit to the church in memory of the many years that he had served as pastor. He was the pastor of this church from 1933 to 1941, when he took a leave of absence and left to serve as a military chaplain during the Second World War. He then returned to this church as our pastor from 1945 until 1951, when he accepted a call to pastor at First Baptist Church in Vancouver, B.C.

When approached to build a pulpit for Mrs. Roberts to present, Mr. William H. Summerhayes, a long time member of this church and owner of a lumber company with a wood working shop, gladly agreed to do this at no cost to Mrs. Roberts. He assigned Mr. Donald Coombs, a young man who was one of his best carpenters, to undertake the task. The pulpit was uniquely designed to allow the appendages at each side to be easily removed, thus allowing the pulpit to descend to floor level on a section of the floor that was spring loaded. This allowed an unrestricted view of the baptismal tank by the congregation. It could then be quickly reassembled, while the pastor returned to his formal attire to close the service. It was constructed in a very simple way from mahogany plywood and mouldings over a framework of pine materials.

The pulpit was subsequently dedicated by the Reverend Cyril Squires A plaque placed on it reads:

“To the glory of God in memory of Reverend Wayman K. Roberts M.A., B.D., D.D.  
Faithful pastor of this church for many years. Presented by his mother and family”

During the pastorate of The Reverend Fred Demaray, he indicated to the Deacons that he would like to be closer to the congregation during the service. The Deacons conducted a survey of the congregation regarding moving the pulpit down to the front of the church and received a strong indication of much concern over this matter. They then quietly decided on an experiment by placing a lectern in front and to the west side of the choir loft to commence the service and then have the sermon preached from the original placement of the pulpit.

When the pulpit became vacant in 1998, the Pastoral Search Committee once again broached the subject of moving the pulpit to a location in front of the choir loft to the Board of Deacons. When the Reverend Dr. Daniel Gibson was called to be our pastor, he enquired if it would be possible to preach his sermons from a position much closer to the congregation than where the pulpit was then located. He and Lorne Berry, who was chair of the Deacons and church Moderator, decided that they would move the pulpit down to its present location as an experiment and beg forgiveness rather than ask permission.

The rest of the story is history, in that the congregation determined that it was a much better location that they came to like and where it remains to this day. (Written by Douglas & Donna Summerhayes – September 27, 2008).

## WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS

The first mention of a women's group at First Baptist Church was in the 1849 minutes when "the Brantford Baptist Ladies Sewing Society" was formed. George Foster wrote out their constitution which consisted of 16 long articles and the second article stated "that proceeds of the Society's labors shall be devoted annually to some object in connection with the Brantford Baptist Church".

Even though no minutes were found for the years 1850 to 1861, the Society did meet, as it was recorded that the group gave money to the church.

The next minutes appeared in 1861 when, on January 30th, fifteen ladies attended the meeting. They were Mrs. Shenston, Whitham, Jackson, Broughton, Foster, Pilsworth, Harrison, Powley, Tisdale, Sherwood, Young and Misses Rockey, Fisher, Martin and Cousin. Attendance increased with each meeting.

### Tea Meeting

On New Year's Day, 1851, Thomas Shenston attended the evening Tea Meeting held at the church that was on Bridge Street at this time. When he arrived, he found the ladies very busy in a shanty near the door preparing the food that was served before the meeting. Then, the congregation listened to several speakers throughout the remaining part of the evening.

On November 4, 1888, the ladies of the church protested against the discussion of financial matters on the Sabbath Day. The church was \$600 behind in running expenses, so a committee of 14 ladies was appointed to consider the financial state of the church. After five weeks, the ladies reported that they had collected \$543.70.

The Poor Fund of the church was placed in the hands of the Ladies Aid on February 1, 1892 and, in 1896, the Deacons recommended the renovation of the basement at a cost of \$75 provided that the Ladies Aid paid all of the costs.

### Women's Mission Circles

The first missionary organization, known as "The Gleaners", was organized by a group of young ladies in the church on April 23, 1881. Its first president was Mrs. Cameron.

In 1915, the annual report under the title of "The Women's Mission Circle" stated that Mrs. George S. Matthews was the president.

In 1928, Adelaide Waghorne organized the Young Women's Mission Circle with many of the members of her Sunday school class forming the nucleus for this group. Mary Edmondson was its first president. Several years later, the name was changed to the Edna Down Young Women's Mission Circle, named in honor of Baptist missionary Edna Down who served in India. The Circle's aim was to raise funds to support missionaries sent to India by the Baptist Foreign Missionary Society. On December 14, 1981, the Edna Down Mission Circle held its last meeting.

The Kay Golbeck Mission Circle was organized on March 1, 1936. As a young woman, Kay Golbeck found the love of Jesus that gave her the gift of faith. It was through her faith and obedience that she was healed from her first grave illness. She later became the chaplain at a women's prison in Virginia where she worked for eight years. Golbeck became critically ill once more, but trusted in God to heal her again, which He did. She became the founder of an internationally nondenominational retreat in Orangeville, Ontario, known as Singing Waters, which reached out to people seeking restoration and

healing through safe, consistent and unconditional love. The women of the Kay Golbeck Mission Circle faithfully supported this work.

Among other works carried out by the women were assembling of hospital bandages that were sent overseas through the White Cross during World War II. They also assisted at the John Noble Home and visited shut-in members of the congregation.

In the 1959 annual report, it was mentioned that the Muriel Harrington Mission Circle filled candy bags for the All People's Mission.

The present Women's Group supports all of the mission work organized under the Baptist Women of Ontario and Quebec.

#### The Women's Association

In order to rejuvenate the Women's Association, Anne Bowman asked Ada Near if she would be able to get a few girls together to form a Junior Women's Association. In 1965, a group of five or six girls met at Ada's home with Anne present explaining the responsibilities.

As the group grew, their projects increased. Christmas bazaars, fashion shows, church dinners and bake sales raised funds to support the kitchen at the church and parsonage which, at that time, was located at 14 Nelson Street. A stove, refrigerator, large coffee pots, serving containers and wagons improved the kitchen. Each year a thorough cleaning was given to the kitchen and its cupboards.

Over the years, membership became smaller until, in 1997, the group disbanded. In September, 2003, a cheque for \$2,588.34 was given to the church for the kitchen renovation fund.

Throughout the last 175 years, the women of First Baptist Church have contributed in many meaningful and helpful ways to fulfill God's work.

### Elsie Fletcher

For over fifty years, Elsie Fletcher was devoted and involved in the life of First Baptist Church in a grounded, practical but deeply spiritual way. As a young person, she joined the Baptist Young People's Union and it was here that she met her husband, John.

Elsie's leadership skills were most valuable in working with the Explorers, Canadian Girls in Training and teaching Sunday school.

A paid part-time position as coordinator of Christian Education was created at First Baptist Church. Margaret Whitehead was the first leader followed by Elsie. With a group of volunteers, she worked in co-operation with the Children's Aid Society, planning and operating programs to help young mothers with sewing, food preparation and childcare, especially with infants. These programs were operated from the First Baptist cottage at 19 Pearl Street that has since been demolished.

For several years Elsie led the Kay Golbeck Mission Circle serving as its president and also supporting "Singing Waters", the Christian retreat established by Kay Golbeck. When she died, Elsie and her husband, John, acted as interim associate directors of "Singing Waters". Dr. Dan Gibson, a former minister of this church referred to her as the "Queen Mom" of the church. (Sources: *Jubilee Review of the First Baptist Church, Brantford, 1833-1884* by T. S. Shenston; Ada Near, Lorna Stratton).

## MUSIC

### *Let Heavenly Music Fill This Place but No Fiddling Please*

In 1834, when the first church was built on Bridge Street, there was not a musical instrument available, although the small gathering did sing hymns that would have been started by Elder Rees or by a member of the congregation or a precentor using a tuning fork.

On New Year's Day in 1851 when Thomas Shenston attended the annual tea meeting, he stated in the 1851 minutes that "Notwithstanding the great height of the pulpit, a temporary gallery was erected above it for the accommodation of the choir. This gallery was well filled with singers. John W... who was the choir leader, entertained the waiting congregation by fiddling some popular songs and dance tunes. This so vexed the righteous soul of the late Deacon William Moyle that he rose to his feet and, in a mild and dignified manner, objected to such fiddling in the House of God."

This stopped the fiddling with "awful" suddenness and the fiddle box came down with a 'whop!' The fiddle was placed therein with a 'whack!' The lid brought down with a 'bang!' and the fiddler solemnly declared his intention to do a lot of naughty things and to leave undone some very amiable ones.

Mr. William Buck calmed the troubled waters and the fiddling and singing continued for the remainder of the evening. More appropriate church music was then played.

It can be imagined, that it was with great caution, on December 3, 1854, that the choir asked permission to introduce a melodeon to the chapel. The answer was, "The church concurs, provided that they do not introduce new music so fast that the congregation cannot keep pace with them, and join in the singing."

When the congregation had outgrown the chapel, it was sold and worship began in 1855 in the basement of the new building on West Street with Martha, Alice and George Foster leading the singing. They continued to lead the singing for several years thereafter. So strong was their faith that they walked two and a half miles each way to and from their home for both the morning and evening services. It wasn't until 1865 that the choir was organized.

### The Pipe Organs

In 1865, a new melodeon was purchased as the first one, owned by T. S. Shenston, was destroyed on January 12, 1857, when the first church on this site was consumed by fire. When the second church was erected here in 1858, A. W. Smith played this instrument but, in August 1866, requested that the church purchase a pipe organ for \$1,000. This instrument was tucked into the tower in the gallery. In order to accommodate the organ consol and the choir, the centre of the gallery was extended.

Here it remained until 1887, when major renovations were made to the church. Once more, the organ and the choir were moved to lofty heights, but this time, at the opposite end of the sanctuary over the baptistry.

By 1891, the twenty – five year old organ had done its duty and had almost played its last note. A new organ was offered by Mrs. John Harris in memory of her husband who died in 1887, on condition that the choir be moved from the high gallery to a platform in front of the pulpit. Rev. Dr. Fulton of Montreal dedicated the organ in 1892.

In 1911, when the present choir loft was built, the organ was refurbished and Dr. Elmore Harris, son of Alanson Harris, dedicated it on April 3, 1911. In memory of his parents,

Lloyd Harris, son of the late Mr. and Mrs. John Harris, presented to the church a set of chimes for the new organ.

A letter was read on October 9, 1935, from Mrs. George Matthews and family, offering the installation of a new pipe organ on behalf of the Matthews family. This was a fitting memorial to the late George Matthews because of his love of music and his serving on the church music committee for 27 years.

Service of dedication took place on March 29, 1936, with the organ being presented on behalf of his mother, by the eldest son, James Matthews. Following the dedication, the organ sounded forth for the first time as hundreds of worshippers sang "Praise My Soul, The King of Heaven". Frederic Lord, the church organist, in consultation with the organ builders, was responsible for the specifications and general plan of the organ. The chimes that were dedicated in memory of Mr. and Mrs. John Harris, were installed in the new organ. Seventy-two years later, this organ still fills the church with its majestic sounds.

### Hymnaries

The first minute pertaining to the music of the church, was on March 22, 1846, when the church resolved to procure one hymnbook for the pulpit and one for the church. In 1874, the church agreed to substitute the "Baptist Hymn Book" for the "Psalmist" and, in 1885, the "Psalmist" was replaced with a new hymnbook, "The Calvary Selection." "The Baptist Hymn Book" was adopted by the church in 1903.

### Other Things Musical

In June, 1905, the minutes stated that a music committee of three be appointed, whose duties were to co-operate with the choir leader and have full charge of the musical part of the services.

When the music committee requested gowns for the choir in 1912, it was granted permission to get them provided that the money was raised by private subscription.

### Organists

The first mention of a choir director was in June 1865, when A. W. Smith was asked to play the melodeon and to form a choir. In August 1866, the first pipe organ was installed under his leadership.

Subsequent organists are:

Mr. Lockwood, L.F. Heyd, G. Fisher, Professor Day, Miss Shannon, C. Passmore, W. Haddlesay, David L. Wright, F.H. Gee, J. Schofield, J. Allen, Dr. F. Thomas, T.A. Partridge, Frederic Lord, John Lee Morgan, Mrs. Gunn, George Fox, John Younger, Ethel Lewis, Emma Robison, Geoffrey and Nancy Bullivant, Paul Chappel and Nancy Bullivant. (Sources: *Jubilee Review of the First Baptist Church, Brantford 1833-84* by T.S. Shenston. "A Brief history Sketch of the Music of First Baptist Church, 1833 – 1936" Compiled by the Church Clerk from the Church Record.

### Frederic Lord, Musician Extraordinaire

Frederic Lord, born November 15, 1886, at Bingley, England, was the eldest of three sons born to Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Lord. The whole family was musical. Lord told of a

time when he was nine or ten years old, when he had slipped off to bed without any piano practice only to be pulled out of bed by his father who watched over him while he practiced the proper length of time. At age eleven, he was appointed organist at Embsay Primitive Methodist Church. The family moved and, at the age fourteen, he was organist at St. James Church in Baroldswick. Three years later, he moved to the Wesleyan Church, one of the finest in the district.

After studying music for a year in Switzerland, he returned to England where he went back to the Wesleyan Church as organist and newly appointed choirmaster. In 1912, this choir became one of the best in England.

Lord was a born conductor rarely using a baton but with his hands he was able to control a choir as one voice. His fingers and the expression on his face spoke messages to his choir. To watch him was a revelation.

In 1923, Frederic Lord with his wife, Dorothy, an accomplished violinist, accepted a tempting offer to come to Canada as organist and choir director at First Baptist Church in Brantford. In 1924, Lord became Director of Music at the Ontario School for the Blind, now known as the W. Ross McDonald School, a position that he held until his death in 1945.

Lord became involved in the musical community of Brantford. In 1929, he established the Canadian Choir of Brantford for the specific purpose of competing with the finest choirs in the world in the famous festival at Blackpool, England. Through public subscription in 1930, the citizens of Brantford helped raise \$25,000 to send the choir on a two-week British tour. Highly successful concerts were presented in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester and Leeds.

Then came the test at Blackpool. The choir placed fourth out of 23 choirs and earned gracious praise from the critics. An impressive finale under royal patronage, given by His Majesty King George V, took place at the Albert Hall in London. The next day, the music critics for the London newspapers lavished praise on this choir. The Evening Standard critic stated that “this choir was well worth sending for in beauty and in precision they are equals to any choir that I have heard anywhere.” The tour was often referred to as the “Tour of Triumph”. On its return to Canada, the choir continued giving concerts throughout the area, including Massey Hall in Toronto.

On October 29, 1937, the Canadian Choir gave a recital in the historic Town Hall in New York City and received rave reviews in the New York newspapers. Ethel (White) Lewis, an accomplished pianist, who studied under Lord, played two of his compositions. John Merriman reported for The Expositor that Miss White attracted the attention of the critics, one of whom referred to her as “the highlight of the program”. For the following two years, the choir was invited back to New York City but, with the outbreak of World War II, members began to join the Armed Forces thus causing the choir to disband.

The Grand Opera came to Brantford in 1942 under the auspices of the Music Club. This was the first time that it had been presented in English by local musicians. Frederic Lord, whose idea it was, formed a small local orchestra and was assisted by his students.

Soloists for the grand opera favorites of Faust and Rigoletto were Ethel White, John Lewis, William Acland, Muriel King and Fred and Irma Lewis, all from First Baptist choir.

In the First Baptist Church music library are two anthems composed by Mr. Lord – “Eventide” and “Jesus, To Thy Table Led”. “Eventide” was sung at his funeral in August,

1945 and on his tombstone in Farringdon Cemetery are etched these words, “In Peace Will I Lay Me Down”.

The works of Frederic Lord are found in Special Collections under Music Archives at the National Library of Canada, Ottawa. (Sources: Ethel (White) Lewis, a very close friend of Frederic and Dorothy Lord, generously shared her memoirs and memories of Frederic and Dorothy Lord. Information for this article courtesy of *The Expositor*, February 26, 2005).

### *Tales from the Choir Loft*

First Baptist Organists and choir members have always been, and continue to be, a devoted group. The reminisces of a quartet of choristers, Douglas Game, Thrya Gerow, Mary Haller and Ruth Sheffield revealed many memories.

All four members began under Frederic Lord, who was organist and choir director from 1923 until his death in 1945. Lord was a talented organist and choir director who composed and arranged anthems and symphonies.

Some of the works performed over his years at First Baptist Church were the oratorios “Elijah” and “Saint Paul” with choir members meeting to practice at his home on Brant Avenue. Frequently, the Christmas portion of the “Messiah” was presented. Lord always paid attention to enunciation and was very proud that the choir could sing “Belshazzar”.

If choir members didn’t attend Friday evening practice, they were banished from the choir for the next Sunday morning and evening services.

Among the choir an orchestra was formed that played the “Poet and Peasant” overture by Von Suppe. The piano was played by Ethel Lewis while Lord conducted the orchestra wearing a suit that included Bermuda shorts and knee socks.

One of Lord’s favorite expressions was “Where are my glasses”? He would eventually find them on top of his head.

Under Lord’s direction, Emma (Ruth) Robison organized and directed the Junior Choir while Connie Hines played the piano. As a member of the choir, Mary Haller remembers that they usually sang from the balcony.

The next organist was Lee Morgan who also challenged the choir musically stating that they could do it, and they did. Once in a while he was known to play a Scottish number as a prelude or postlude rather than the usual sacred or classical music. Morgan was a small man and, during the summer, he could be seen walking along the street in his white ice-cream suit with the trouser cuffs dragging on the sidewalk.

From the Isle of Man in England came the next organist who also obtained excellence from the choir. When George Fox arrived, he wore an Air Force great coat that was often open and flying as he strode along. He composed many improvisational arrangements and anthems for the organ. Under his direction, a junior choir was formed with Mary Haller as the pianist. He was sometimes known to go up to his office for a wee nap while Mary continued with the choir.

Following George Fox was John Younger who came from Scotland. He was a very gifted musician and teacher who composed anthems that our choir still sings today. When he left the church, he worked for the Frederick Harris Music Company and the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. Ethel Lewis was hired temporarily when Younger

left, but stayed well over ten years making an outstanding musical contribution to the church. She was an excellent pianist who taught herself to play the organ. Some advice that she gave Mary Haller when playing the organ was “if your feet get tangled up, keep your hands moving!” The choir presented the Christmas portion of The Messiah many times. Mrs. Lewis worked with both junior and intermediate choirs.

Emma (Ruth) Robison continued the excellence of our organists and choir directors. She enjoyed working with the members of the Junior Choir helping many of them find their voices and smile with their eyes. Emma and her husband, Ford, were famous for their Christmas parties.

When Geoffery and Nancy Bullivant came to First Baptist Church, one of Geoff’s remarks was that the organ would be heard to the train station three blocks away. Organ and piano duets by Geoff, Nancy and Joan Foster enhanced many Sunday morning services. Geoff’s excellent playing and Nancy’s capable directing made the anthems most meaningful.

Geoff introduced the bells to the congregation while Dennis Foster assisted him. When Geoff left, Dennis directed the bell ringers and now Nancy directs this capable group.

Paul Chappel was another excellent organist and composer. While here, he wrote the Good Friday anthem ‘Mary Wept’, dedicating it to the First Baptist Choir. This anthem was published, and eventually ordered by St. George’s Chapel in England, where Queen Elizabeth II often worships. The choir was honored to sing many anthems composed by Paul.

Nancy Bullivant, our present organist and choir director, enhances our services through her excellent talents on the organ and the piano. She continues the excellent musical program for which First Baptist Church is known.

Since 1865, when the choir was first organized, the congregation at First Baptist Church has been privileged to have faithful, devoted choir members and musical leaders. This tradition still rings true today.

### *First Baptist Choir in the Present Tense*

The present First Baptist Church Choir represents over half a millenium or 668 years of dedication.

While Susan Gibson was in the choir, she took a poll asking how many years each current member had been associated with the choir. What a surprise! These are the individual number of years served up to and including 2008. The leaders are Thyra Gerow, 69 years; Doug Game, 68 years; and Ruth Sheffield, 64 years. What faith and dedication!

The forties are represented by Jean Stewart, 45 years and Nellie Barna, 43 years.

Next, the thirties include Joyce Robinson, 39 years; Mary Haller, 38 years; Janice Corke, 34 years; and Ruth Lefler, 33 years.

Those in the twenties are Lorna Stratton, 28 years; Kent Hutchinson, 24 years and Bob McVittie, 23 years.

The teens in the choir are Dennis and Joan Foster; Mike Saunders, 18 years; Muriel Harrington, 15 years; and Lillian Jones and Doris Myhal, 14 years.

The youngsters of this group with less than ten years involvement are Cathy Gibson, Don and Barb Potts, Michele Renwick, Lyle and Amy Saunders, Paul Westbrook, Mike Elwood and Kate Brown. It should be noted that a number of the above choristers sang in other churches prior to coming to First Baptist.

Throughout all of these years, the organists and choir directors have shared their talents and expertise with the members and have cheerfully guided them to soar to their highest heights .

## WHERE TO FROM HERE?

*They sought God eagerly and he was found by them (2 Chronicles 15:15 NIV).*

The above passage from the Old Testament is a summary of a significant revival of religion that took place under King Asa of Judah and as the passage further reads, *So the Lord gave them rest on every side*. The key to his success was that the people turned to God and sought him with all their heart. But Asa himself first set the example. The Church is no different in this respect in that capable, godly leaders who have their eyes on God and the good of those around them are going to help the congregation develop a vision for the future as well as maintain the good of the present.

There are signs that this is happening. In January of 2008, the leadership met and formed an outline of a vision in part to guide them in their search for a new pastor. Part of that goal was reached in mid-summer and The Rev. Deborah Dempsey, formerly of First Baptist Church, Ottawa has commenced her duties at First Baptist Church, Brantford, on October 15, 2008.

The vision is much more than finding a pastor. It involves pastor and people of the church striving to discover first what God wants of us and second, putting our discovery of God into practical ministry. Part of the vision is fulfilled in serving the community.

Tracey Winter recalled some happy memories of First Baptist in an article entitled “Tracey’s Journey” written for the April 2005 edition of the *Arise & Shine*. It sums up part of what a church is about.

As a young child I was often found wandering around my neighbourhood, and amongst my traveling I befriended some special people who helped me out. One of them was Mr. John Strong. It wasn’t long before I became a regular visitor to his bible stories, memorizing verses and his thoughts on God and religion.

This all led me to more curiosity: what was Sunday School all about? Could I go to church? Which church? Mr. Strong had spoken of First Baptist before. I wasn't exactly sure where it was. So I thought about standing on the street corner near my house, which was Market and Chatham Sts., and then going to the first church I could see. Well, Chatham St. led to a church and I decided "That's the church I'll go to!"

I felt nervous walking up, and then discovered it was First Baptist Church, the one Mr. Strong had talked about!

I don't remember too much, except I was told that a parent needed to be with me, so I tried to convince my mom to attend, which she did, and she fondly remembers Rev. Caldwell shaking hands and saying "Hello Mrs. Winter", after the services.

The few things I remember as a child was being captivated by the singing of the choir. Later on, I joined the Junior Choir led by Emma Robison, who taught us kids to "smile with our eyes." I remember also, always visiting Derek Stratton's little library corner, borrowing and returning books. I was disappointed when the library had to end. I started attending Girl Guides, which met at First Baptist, and Joyce Robinson was our Guider. I loved seeing her warm and smiling face. I made friends with Muriel Merritt. We usually sat up in the balcony and doodled away during church, or we sat right down in the first couple of pews as we both loved listening to the choir.

As I grew older I remember the picnics at Apps Mills and the candy throws and games, teen group and making our own pizzas, lunches that were held at the Sherwood, Hawaiian Day in the winter, joining the Senior Choir, and being baptized and becoming a member of this church.

Throughout the years I have come, left, and returned. But in my heart First Baptist is my home church, the foundation of which was started by Mr. John Strong and the curiosity of a child, and was helped to grow by a warm church family.

What more can be said? Our future rests in the hands of God and our commitment to him.

May we follow him with love and purpose. Who knows what God will do? Whatever it is, it will be amazing and we will rejoice in it.

## FALLEN HEROES

During World Wars One and Two, many men and women who joined the Armed Forces,  
lost their lives that we may live and enjoy freedom.

We remember and honor those men from First, Calvary, Park and Riverdale Baptist  
Churches who made the supreme sacrifice.

### **World War I**

Ernest Aitchison  
James Bruce  
Arthur W. Danskin  
William F. Fuller  
James Lowes  
L. H. McLellan  
John Orr  
H. Rogers  
John Smith

M. Bancroft  
Wyn Colquhoun  
Richard B. Draper  
Percy Gill  
Bert Markham  
Percy O'Neil  
Howard Pennell  
Edgar Simpson  
Archie Tyrell  
Matthew Wilson

William C. Biffin  
Roy Craig  
Gordon Edmondson  
Arthur I. Greenaway  
George F. Matthews  
Vernon O'Neil  
Frank C. Perry  
Victor L. Small  
Benjamin C. Williams

### **World War II**

E. E. Burrows  
Thomas William Cooper  
Keith Odabas  
Harold Schultz  
E. E. Tribble

Everett William Chalk  
Edward Davis  
Wilmott Pettit  
Roger J. Sinden  
E. A. Wakely

Leonard Frank Cooke  
Norman T. Edmondson  
Thomas Russell Sherrill  
R. W. Thomson  
Norman S. Woodley

... To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high...

John McCrae

