

Faith

Gulf Breeze NEWS

First Baptist turns 50, celebrates mil

SUBMITTED BY JOE GILSTAP
First Baptist Church

January 2007 marks the 50th birthday of First Baptist Church, Gulf Breeze. Please join the congregation as First Baptist celebrate this milestone in the march toward the century mark as members accept the past as only a prologue to a greater and brighter future.

Members of First Baptist are grateful for the precious memories they have of days gone by and are especially thankful for those living and deceased who have been a part of this body of Christ. The great American Poet, Oliver Wendell Holmes made a profound statement that well portrays the churches position; "What lies behind us and what lies before us are what matters compared to what lies within us."

As members reflect on these memories we need to do so as the Apostle Paul, as he wrote to the church in Philippi, "I give thanks to my God for every remembrance----"

The same as members today, those who started the church fifty years ago, experienced joys and sorrow of life, yet they managed to keep their eyes focused on the future with a strong hope in the promise of a better tomorrow. As they take a look backward, they do so with the wisdom of Sir Winston Churchill who said: "History with its flickering lamp stumbles along the trail of the past, trying to reconstruct its scenes, to revise it's echoes and kindle with pale gleams the passion of forever days."

As in the past, members continue the strong focus on missions, both in the community and around the world. Rev. D. R.



Franklin Hayes/ Gulf Breeze News
First Baptist Church will be celebrating its 50th birthday this Sunday, Jan. 21.

Inset: First Baptist Church after construction in 1955 with the help of Billory Baptist Church.

Tucker and the good people of Billory Baptist Church of Holley had a vision in 1955 of what First Baptist could become. They put feet to that vision and the first step involved holding a tent revival. Salvation Army Major, Rev. Bugin stepped forward and gave permission for the tent to be erected where the Youth Building now stands. The tent revival in May 1955 led the early congregation to meet next under the trees at the Futrell residence. They continued to meet at this location until the Futrells moved from Gulf Breeze. It was there that plans were made to start a mission church.

God continued to provide; the Graham Renfro family then opened their home. Soon the group outgrew this space. It was

then that Mr. Mark Benson a good Methodist friend stepped forward and offered the use of the back part of the Benson Building. Rev. Tucker, pastor of Billory continued to conduct Worship services on Wednesday nights. In June of 1955 construction began on a concrete block building on the property given by Rev. Burgin. Money was furnished by the Florida Baptist Convention (FBC) to finish the building and in September, 1955, and Rev. J. C. Shell became Mission Pastor and continued as pastor after the mission was officially constituted as Gulf Breeze Baptist Church in January, 1956.

After becoming a church, FBC money made available for the pastor's salary discontinued. The FBC salary supplement was

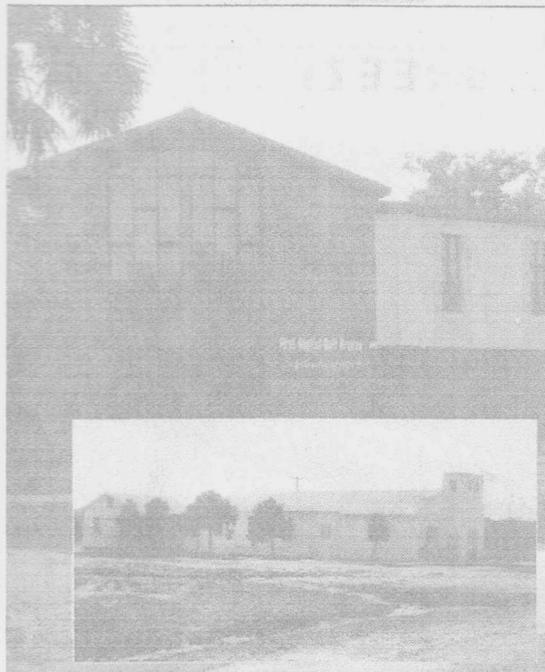
only available for 1972; mission churches. 1972 Hackne Because of this financial difficulty Wende the church found it Dr. He necessary in Rev. M March, 1956 to revert again to mission status. The Brownsville Baptist Church of Pensacola delayed their pending building plans and accepted the sponsorship of the Gulf Breeze mission. At this time, Rev. Shell resigned as pastor and the Brownsville church sent Rev. Bob Jones to serve as interim pastor. In August, 1956 Rev. Arthur Haylock became mission pastor.

Under the leadership of Rev. Haylock the congregation experienced rapid growth and the mission was again constituted, January, 1957 into what is now, First Baptist Church of Gulf Breeze. Rev. Haylock continued as pastor until he surrendered to go as a Missionary to Honduras and later Dominican Republic.

First Baptist Church of Gulf Breeze continued to grow under the continuing leadership of the following pastors:

Rev. Robert H. Glass, 1960 - 1971; Rev. T.D. Lide*, 1971 -

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1972; Rev. J. Lester Hawkins, 1972 - 1977; Dr. James W. Hackney, 1978 - 1991; Dr. Wendell W. Ray, 1992 - 2000; Dr. Henry Willett*, 2000 - 2001; Rev. Michael Cosgrove, 2001 -

2004; Rev. Jeff Spooneybarger, 2004-present. * - Interim Pastor
Celebrate the anniversary with First Baptist Church, the Lord's Day on Sunday, January 21.