

In mid-2000, the Church called Dr. Tom Moore as her 50th Pastor. Tom came to the Church with direction from the Pastor Search Committee and an urgent personal desire to lead the church to continued growth, especially reaching out to younger families in the community who had yet to be reached. A difference in ministry philosophy between the Pastor and church leaders led to Tom's early departure in mid-2001.

The Church had called Joe T. Odum as Minister of Music and Education just prior to Brother Tom's resignation, and Joe served faithfully, holding the church together during a difficult period. He was a retired Air Force Officer who had recently graduated from the Baptist College of Florida with dual Bachelor's degrees in Music and Education and was perfectly suited for this staff position. During the interim period without a full-time Pastor, Dr. Jim Davis served as Interim Pastor. The church borrowed the remaining funds needed to complete the construction of the new Worship Center. Construction began in April 2001, and it was completed and dedicated in November 2001.

In July 2002, Rev. Paul H. Russell was called to lead First Baptist Church of Punta Gorda as Pastor, and Joe Odum was ordained to the Gospel Ministry shortly after Pastor Paul's arrival. Joe established an orchestra soon after Paul came, including keyboard, violins, trumpets, trombones, baritone, saxophone, flute, guitar, bass guitar and drums. Joe's son, Rev. Brian J. Odum, was called as Minister to Students in February 2003, completing the ministerial staff of three and poising the Church for what we expect will be systematic and steady growth in the coming years as God pours out His blessing on His church here in Punta Gorda!

The former sanctuary was renovated early in 2003, with the addition of a commercial kitchen, two large bathrooms and two large storage closets. Following three hurricanes in 2004 that devastated Charlotte County and did significant damage to the Church's facilities, additional renovations were completed, including a new steeple to replace the one Hurricane Charley blew off the building, and more improvements are in progress even now.

Rev. Joe Odum resigned in May 2005 to attend Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY, to prepare himself for even greater future ministry, and the Church elected a Search Committee to locate another staff member. Mr. Brad Duckworth directed our choir and led us in worship in the interim period, having served as a choir and orchestra member under Joe. Brad's wife, Sylvia, has been our organist since 1999. In July 2006, Rev. John McDonald came to be our new Minister of Music and Families, a new focus for reaching a new generation of worshippers for God. He and his family moved to Punta Gorda from Lafayette, Georgia, after serving a church there for five years.

Rev. Brian Odum resigned in January 2006 to be part of a team planting a new church in a fast-growing area of Pasco County (north of Tampa, near New Port Richey), and the Church elected another Search Committee to recruit a godly man for that position. In March 2007, we called Scott Doran as our bi-vocational Director of Youth Ministries. His

FBHSPT1

From: Paul H. Russell [pastorpaul@comcast.net]
Sent: Wednesday, November 05, 2003 4:14 PM
To: FBHSPT1
Subject: Information

We'd be delighted to add your name and photograph. The bio should list where you were born, your date of birth, spouse' name, children, where you were educated, where you have served, and any honors you have received

Paul Huston Russell

Born December 14, 1962, in Florence, Alabama

Married to Karen Lynn (Beckham) Russell on September 20, 1986

No children

Earned BS in Information & Computer Science from Georgia Tech in September, 1986

Earned MDiv from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in May, 1992

Pastored Taylor Baptist Church in Taylor, Mississippi, from June, 1992 – August, 1995

Pastored Sunridge Baptist Church in Sebring, Florida, from August, 1995 – July, 2002

Current Pastor of First Baptist Church of Punta Gorda, since July, 2002

Served as Florida Alumni President of my seminary 1998-2000

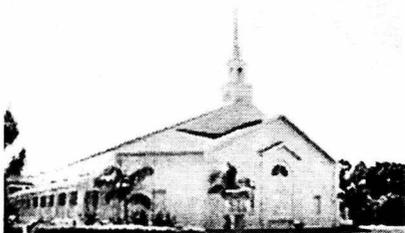
Nominated twice for 2nd VP of the SBC in 1999 & 2000

Held many leadership positions in my local associations, including Moderator

The picture I attached is about the best one I have on my computer. If it won't do, let me know, and I'll take another one and send it to you.

Pastor Paul

Check out our web site! Just click on the picture or the church name below.



Paul H. Russell, Pastor

First Baptist Church

459 Gill Street

Punta Gorda, Florida 33950

941.639.3857 Voice

941.639.0045 FAX

E-mail us at firstbaptist@comcast.net

"Reaching People Where We Meet Them"

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