

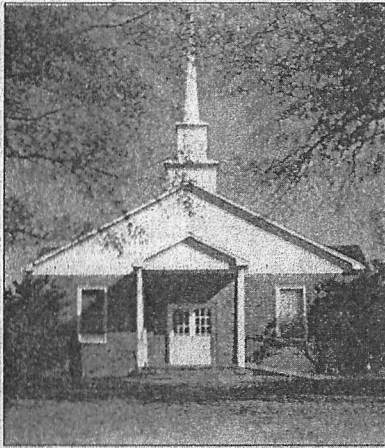
## **Florida Baptist Historical Society Biography Collection**

**This link provides the specific resource information which documents and undergirds the biographical resource information on a specific Florida Baptist pastors, church staff or significant laity leaders.**

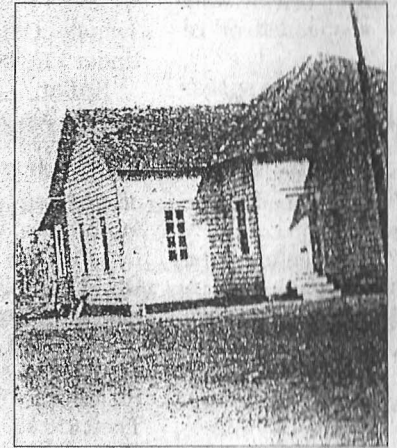
The link you have chosen connects to the specific individual's resource files that provide the basis for information which the Historical Society has used to develop the respective biographical profile. The sources attached may include copies of articles gleaned from back issues of the *Florida Baptist Witness* and other news publications. Other resources include books, historical journal articles and church histories that are cited as documentation for the biography.

Visit our website at [FloridaBaptistHistory.org](http://FloridaBaptistHistory.org)

**Stevens, Brian** served as pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Milton.



## WORSHIP FOR THE CENTURY



### Cavalry Baptist Church in Allentown to celebrate 100 years on Sunday

By OBIE CRAIN

obiecrainjr@bellsouth.net

*"And I say to thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."*

Matthew 16:18

What a promise!

And nowhere has there ever been a more loyal and dedicated congregation than that of Cavalry Baptist Church in Allentown, established in this thriving, farming community a hundred years ago this week.

This coming Sunday morning will be an extra special occasion for its members and loyal friends who, along with an expected throng of

lingering events that supported the church's commitment to outreach.

After meeting in the old "solid block" school for nine years, the church formed a building committee charged with finding a way to meet the physical needs of a growing congregation. From 1919 to 1925, the land the church owns today was acquired and development begun.

The church debt was paid in 1925 as well. All in all, it was a monumental year for Southern Baptists as the cooperative program was adopted to underwrite home and foreign missions. From the beginning, Cavalry Baptist's vision extended beyond its community as people gave to missions through this program.

But in every ointment there's

building committee was appointed to begin the building the congregation uses today.

During 1945, the church began holding two preaching services monthly, just one month, incidentally, after the allied victory in Europe.

In June 1946, the congregation voted to build a two-story sanctuary, but the minutes do not reflect why those plans were abdicated. The first service to be held in the new church was in 1948.

In 1949, the church began weekly services, and the property of J.A. Carnes was purchased for \$4,500 for a pastorium. Other highlights reflect that a church dedication with notes burned, dinner on the grounds and a great day of rejoicing occurred on Thanksgiving Day of 1951.

In 1978, a new media center was dedicated under the direction of Mrs. Kay Collier, and the congregation's oldest member, Cary Phillips, was celebrated.

Calvary has hosted two missions that have resulted in independent churches, including Mt. Calvary and Woodbine churches. Tape ministry to the homebound began in 1991 and is still in operation today.

Calvary Baptist's church constitution was revised in 1996 to better relate to the advances in time and technology, and in 1999, the first computer was purchased. Cavalry Baptist moved blithely ahead in preparation for the 21st century.

"The year of 2010 has been very eventful also," said Mrs. Betty Ward, who led the centennial committee.

its members and loyal friends who, along with an expected throng of visitors, will celebrate a century of worshipping as a church body that has met, withstood and overcome every challenge it ever faced.

From its initial 33 charter members in 1910 to its current membership of 381, the Calvary Baptist congregation has been shepherded by 37 pastors and blessed with a history that reflects an unwavering devotion to the faith, a genuine commitment to the community and a heartfelt, charitable outreach to the downtrodden beyond its borders.

Looking back, one might visualize travelling missionary E.T. Pitts as he arrived by horseback or wagon on a beautiful October morning in 1910 at the rural home of Allentown minister W. A. Phillips, bringing with him his chosen task of ministering to the spiritual needs of those wherever he visited. Little did he realize, his sermon that night was the spark that lit the fire that blazed the way for the success Calvary Baptist Church enjoys today.

It was an event that underscored the organization of a church that was to be called Calvary Missionary Baptist Church with E.T. Pitts as its first pastor.

The first Sunday following the Rev. Phillips' service, an offering was taken and sent to an orphan's home, which although unclear from historical documents, might have been the Florida Baptist Children's Home. This was the first of many

programs. But in every ointment there's a fly, and Calvary Baptist was not to escape what today is a trivial and amusing incident. As church history reveals, everything did not go altogether smoothly. In 1923, charges were brought against some members "... for revelry, profanity, lying and dancing," and church fellowship was withdrawn. But forgiveness is a core of the faith, and church fellowship was later restored to those who made acknowledgment of the charges.

In 1932, the church voted to allow the church sanctuary to be used for school plays, because there was no auditorium. This action is a vivid reflection of the church's concern for community affairs.

The next 15 years saw the church ministering in the midst of the country's worst economic depression and global war. Though preaching services were only held once a month, in April 1938, the church voted to purchase a new Aladdin lamp. To the relief of the congregation, however, the old one was repaired for 76 cents.

There must have been a collective sigh of relief!

Then in 1939, arrangements were made for electric lights. And as reflected in the minutes of 1942, a finance committee was created to raise funds to build Sunday school rooms. Church membership during the '20s and '30s fluctuated between 65 and 86.

Relying on God's strength, the church ministered through World War II, and in 1945 a

great day of rejoicing occurred on Thanksgiving Day of 1951.

Also during the early to mid-'50s, Women Missionary Union was noted, the first library was established with volunteer donations and bathrooms were installed. Finally, it was 1954 that the outhouses were removed!

The church built an education building in 1956, the part that now includes the fellowship hall. A radio broadcast was sponsored, and new pews were purchased, with the old ones being donated to Stump Springs Baptist Church.

Unfortunately, church history is vague for the early 1960s because the minutes from October 1961 to September 1965 are missing. Records do reveal, however, that the Rev. James Hicks was pastor from 1961 to 1964 and that the Rev. Robert E. LeMay was pastor from 1964 to 1967.

Although the last 40 years have seen an active congregation with a host of activities and programs proposed and completed, they have been tempered by more modern ideas and new technology.

The church auditorium was remodeled in 1965, and a beautiful scene in the baptistery created that year by Pastor Robert E. LeMay remains on display today. Air conditioning was added to the church that year also, and a new pastorium was built. And although work was guided by professional contractors, much of the actual labor was done by the comprehensive church family.

eventual also, said Mrs. Betty Ward, who led the centennial committee in its public relations endeavor. "Many renovations have been made, including air-conditioning for the fellowship hall and Sunday school rooms, painting of the fellowship hall, new carpet in the sanctuary and remodeling of choir and pulpit area."

She also reminisced about the changes that have occurred over the years, including services that began as once-a-month affairs and now are conducted weekly and advancements such as a full-time pastor, a music director and a youth director.

Many generations have been touched over the years by the values that were set by their ancestors over the past 100 years, and church history celebrates relevant times of rejoicing, sorrow, births, deaths, marriages and souls saved.

Centennial celebration will be the theme of the Oct. 10 program that will begin with morning worship at 10:30 a.m. A guest music director and guest pianist will perform with the worship message to be presented by the Rev. Alan Moore.

After a savory luncheon planned and hosted by the church at noon, music and memories will continue well into the afternoon.

Pastor Brian Stevens and his congregation invite all their friends to join them for the celebration of "100 years of God's Grace!"

(Mrs. Betty Ward and her husband Bluford played a significant role in the research for this story. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.)

