



# PIEDMONT FIRST BAPTIST

***FEAR NOT, LITTLE FLOCK... LUKE 12:32***

*“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom,”* opened Elder Sterling Gresham Jenkins from the Gospel of St. Luke 12:32 as he began to deliver the first sermon to eleven charter members in attendance at the newly constituted Cross Plains, Calhoun County Baptist Church during the cold Saturday afternoon of January 8, 1870. Thus, 150 years ago on this very date (Wednesday January 8, 2020), the First Baptist Church of Piedmont, Alabama was started.

On Sunday, January 26, 2020, The First Baptist Church of Piedmont, Alabama will celebrate 150 years of faithfulness and service during the 10:00 AM worship service with former pastor Dr./Rev. Philip Cooper as guest speaker and Piedmont’s own Dr. Kelly Garner with special music for the Sesquicentennial Celebration.

## **January 8, 1870-1878**

The eleven charter members, which included John W. Ledbetter, Eleanor K. Ledbetter, E.B. Stephens, Jane Stephens, John H. Price, Matilda Price, S.D. McElreath, Helen E. McElreath, John White, Martin Tyler Ledbetter, and John H. Rounhet, would be humbled to know their faithfulness through Jesus Christ has grown to become the First Baptist Church of Piedmont with over 450 members today!

The path of the “Little Flock” has included 48 pastors and interim pastors at five different houses of worship at four different sites in Cross Plains or Piedmont, Alabama.

The Baptist as well as the Methodist and Presbyterians shared the Cross Plains Academy, a two story community building and school built in 1851 on a lot west of North Center Avenue and North of Alabama Street (128 feet north of the home of Jim and Kay Daniels) for their Bible Study and Worship Services. The Baptist “Little Flock” worshipped in the Cross Plains Academy from 1870 to 1878.

## **1878-1905**

Rev. Henry Augusta Williams, a missionary Baptist church builder, led in the building of a small, 25 foot by 40 feet, 120 seat wood-framed, one room, white-clad board first house of

worship for the growing “Little Flock” on Dailey Street in Piedmont in 1878. The Cross Plains Missionary Baptist Church was built by Rev. Williams for \$400 on land purchased from Mayor Jacob Forney Dailey.

As the turn of the 20th century put behind the Depression of the 1890’s, a greater vision of a larger house of worship and ministry was captured by the “Little Flock”. Thus, the Piedmont Baptist Church 1905 Sanctuary on the corner of Ladiga and Main Streets was built under the leadership of pastors Rev. George Dent Harris and Rev. Joseph Ray Wells. The 50 feet by 50 feet, wooden, larger (500 seat), more eloquent (\$3,650 cost) house of worship on donated land at the corner of Main and Ladiga Streets in 1905 was legally formalize as the Piedmont Baptist Church. The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century saw the “Little Flock” grow spiritually and numerically through the hardships of two World Wars and the Great Depression.

### **1906-1933**

As World War calamity of the 1910’s threatened, the “Little Flock” stood fast in its faith and the church lived on. The 1920’s with its financial and social problems; nor, the 1930’s with its Depression could stop the advancement of the Lord’s Kingdom at Piedmont Baptist Church as the church lived on through the “Little Flock”. Thus, the Sunday School Annex and Expansion of the 1905 Sanctuary occurred during the pastorate of Rev. Samuel Hill Pendley in 1933 at a cost of \$2,000.

### **1940-1954**

As its various ministries (Sunday School, Music, Women’s Union, Young People’s Union) grew; and, as the Lord blessed the faithfulness of the “Little Flock”, the challenge and vision to raise and save funds to build the present-day church complex were accepted by Rev. Robert Edgar Hood and congregation during the 1940’s. In spite of the “War to end all wars (W.W.II)”, the “Little Flock” had ‘nothing to fear’ for the pleasure of the Lord was with them. The “Little Flock” patiently planned and saved War and Victory Bonds during the 1940’s so that it could build and grow during the 1950’s.

The name Piedmont Baptist Church was officially changed to the First Baptist Church of Piedmont, Alabama on Wednesday, June 17, 1953.

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century saw the construction of the First Baptist Church Sanctuary, (a 5,600 square feet, 600 seat, brick veneer sanctuary structure with 8 large stain glass windows at a total cost of \$83,000) under Rev. Ralph Edmond Longshore in 1950.

The second phase of the 1948 Long Range Master Plan, was the construction of the two-story, 5,490 square feet brick First Baptist North Wing in 1953 under the pastorate of Rev. Frank Edward Bowman at a cost of \$52,500 for Sunday School and office space. And grow they did to record attendances that remains unsurpassed (548 High Sunday School Attendance, in 1954)!

### **1960s-70s**

Though the spirit of growth was threatened in the 1960’s by world and local issues that threatened the moral, social, and religious fibers of the nation and Piedmont, the “Little Flock of Piedmont First Baptist desired more fellowship and discipleship. The vision led to the

construction under the leadership of Rev. James Holland Thomas of a three story, 9,820 square feet, \$133,527 South Wing that included kitchen, fellowship hall, office space and Sunday School classes. Despite a growing attack and destruction of the nuclear family, the “Little Flock” held true to its faith during the restless 1960’s and 1970’s by continuing to spread the ‘Good News’ and ‘Sound of Love’ of Jesus Christ.

### **1980s-90s**

The 1980’s brought even greater and faster changes in the world and community around the “Little Flock”. Without fear but with faith, the “Little Flock” adapted its ministries to meet the spiritual and physical needs of its members and prospects.

As the “Little Flock” approached the 1990’s, the problems and ills (AIDS) of the world that plague men’s souls only intensified. However, God was faithful in caring for the “Little Flock” and the church accepted the challenge to build the 9,072 feet, \$471,000, brick West-Wing kitchen, fellowship hall, classrooms, and music suite complex in 1990 under the leadership of Rev. Randy Evers.

### **2000-today**

As the new millennium came, so did greater world tragedies such as the “9-11” terrorist attack on America and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Even with poor economic times, the “Little Flock” under the leadership of Rev. Derek Mallory Smith remained faithful in constructing in 2005 a 16,500 square feet, three story brick, \$1,200,000 Children’s Educational South West Wing to “to bring up our children in the way that they should go”.

With the approach of the Sesquicentennial Anniversary (Wednesday, January 8, 2020), the “Little Flock” will celebrate 150 years of rich Christian heritage and service on Sunday, January 26, 2020, with former pastor Dr./Rev. Philip Darwin Cooper as guest speaker and Piedmont’s own Dr. Kelly Garner with special music. The First Baptist Church of Piedmont, Alabama continues to faithfully seek God’s will and direction under the pastoral care of Senior Pastor Michael Todd Ingram.

Bro. Michael Ingram invites the community to celebrate with the “Little Flock” of Piedmont First Baptist at 10 AM on Sunday, January 26, 2020, the 150 Year Anniversary of The First Baptist Church of Piedmont, Alabama.