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Pastors of First Baptist Shelby

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Dr. Zeno Wall's Pastorate - written by Dr. Wall

Zeno Wall

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DR. ZENO WALL'S PASTORATE
(written by Dr. Wall)
First Baptist Church, Shelby, N. C.
October 1, 1925--January 27, 1948
written by Dr. Wall

In the spring of 1925 the Hon. O. Max Gardner called on me in Goldsboro where I was serving as pastor of the First Baptist Church, and told me about your church and its golden opportunities, saying: "It is a sleeping giant, and we believe you could wake it up and lead it forward to great things." He then asked if I would be willing to visit this field and see the people and let them see and hear me. I told him that I had never preached a sample sermon but that I would visit the church on August 30, 1925, as I would be on my vacation at my father's home then. I came that Sunday morning and preached from Luke 14:23 on "The Compulsion of Love." You gave my message a good hearing and one of the deacons came and asked me to go out with him. Brother J. H. Quinn called the church into conference, and in a short time some of the brethren came and said: "Our church gave you a hearty and a unanimous call and we hope and pray that you will accept."

After a few days, I felt definitely the call of the Lord and wrote you that we hoped to come to you by the first Sunday in October, 1925. We moved to Shelby on Friday, September 28, 1925--my wife, Zeno, Jr., Abbie Jane, Yates, Woodrow and Ada Ramsey.

I preached our first sermon Sunday, October 4, 1925 on Esther 4:14: "Coming to the Kingdom for such a time as this." We had an inspiring congregation and God gave me both freedom and power. I felt the presence of the Lord and felt it every time I went into this pulpit. Soon thereafter I preached on John 12:34: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you." This was the key text of my entire ministry here: preached at the beginning and at the close of my ministry on Sunday, January 25, 1948.

On August 5, 1928 Mr. and Mrs. Horace Eason united with our church, they coming from the First Baptist Church of Asheville, N. C. where he had been Director of Music and Education, to a like position here. He worked with us for nearly twenty years as Director of Music and Education, supplying our pulpit and visiting the sick. No church ever had a better man, and his wife was the capable

able

Superintendent of the Beginners Department.

May I call your attention to a few of the outstanding events of our years with you: Entrance into our new educational building and our enlarged auditorium, the depression, the dedication of our building, and our centennial.

The Entrance Into Our New Building

On Wednesday night, March 13, 1929 we had our first prayer meeting in the Young People's Department and this room was filled. I spoke on John 17--dwelling on two phases of this prayer: (1) Christ reporting to his Father, and (2) His requests from his Father. It was an inspiring hour. On Sunday, March

31, 1929 we entered the educational building at ten o'clock. *with 1,083*

present in Sunday School. The highest attendance in Sunday School during my pastorate was 1521 in April 1934 at the close of the Frankamer Revival.

In 1930-31 we had a very distressing depression when our banks and mills were closed and thousands were walking the streets saying: "We want work and we sorely need food for our families." My heart ached. On Christmas, 1930 we observed "White Christmas" when we brought clothing, and all kinds of food and money to our church. It was a touching sight to see the different departments and classes march by the large and circular platform and place thereon flour, meat, meal, sugar coffee, beans, peas, and clothing. For many months the pastor and Mr. Eason literally "fed the hungry and clothed the naked." That year we had the greatest revival our church had ever seen up to that time from the standpoint of additions. We held ¹⁶¹~~154~~ prayer meetings in ¹⁶¹~~154~~ homes before the revival came, and then I preached for one week and Mr. Eason led the singing.

Scores and scores confessed faith in Christ and were baptized. In that depression year we baptized 119 and received 135 by letter, making a total of 254.

The largest number to ever join the church in any one year.

New Churches

On Sunday afternoon, July 10, 1932 we organized a Sunday School in West Graham school building with 91 pupils. H. L. Toms was elected Superintendent.

Sunday afternoon November 10, 1935, this group was organized into Calvary Baptist Church with 30 charter members.

In 1940 we saw an opportunity to organize another Sunday School in an old unused potato house on Highland Avenue. It was heartening to see the interested people clean out the old building, wash the walls, scrub the floor, provide benches, chairs, a pulpit, song books; and by and by, this group was organized into Highland Baptist Church.

Dedication of our Church

In building our new educational building and enlarging and beautifying our auditorium we had to borrow \$50,000.00. For nearly five years we paid on it. Finally we paid it off, and on June 13, 1943 we entered our church with thankful and rejoicing hearts. Dr. Charles H. Durham of the First Baptist Church, Lumberton, N. C., brought two appropriate and uplifting messages. He is one of the "preacher boys" of this church.

Our Centennial Celebration - 1847 to 1947

We felt that since this was the one hundredth anniversary of our church we should bring some more of the outstanding personalities to our church and have a week's celebration:

Sunday, June 15, 1947 at 10:00 a. m. Judge E. Y. Webb spoke.

Sunday, June 15, 1947 at 11:00 a. m. Dr. Ellis Fuller preached.

Sunday June 15, 1947 at 8:00 p. m. Mrs. J. M. Dawson of Washington, D. C. spoke. We held a baptismal service.

Monday, June 16, 1947 at 8:00 p. m. Dr. M. T. Rankin spoke.

Tuesday, June 17, 1947 at 8:00 p. m. Dr. J. B. Lawrence preached.

Wednesday, June 18, 1947 at 8:00 p. m. Dr. W. F. Powell preached.

Thursday, June 19, 1947 at 8:00 p. m. Dr. Louie Newton preached.

Friday, June 20, 1947 at 8:00 p. m. Dr. Duke McCall preached.

Sunday, June 22, 1947 at 11:00 a. m. Dr. Charles H. Durham preached.

Sunday, June 22, 1947 at 8:00 p. m. Dr. Sankey Blanton spoke.

We again baptized.

A Remarkable Growth

We saw this church grow from 763 members to over 2,500, and gifts increased from \$28,000.00 our first year to \$131,255.57 our last year. We received into our church 1484 by baptism and 2095 by letter, ^{making} a total of 3579; and gave to all causes \$1,135,785.00 and established two missions which grew into churches.

Honors which Came to ~~our~~ Pastor and Church

~~Our~~ ^I pastor was elected President of the Baptist State Convention in Charlotte in November, 1932 and for three succeeding years making four terms. ~~He~~ ^I presided over the Convention:

In 1933 First Baptist Church, Greensboro

In 1934 First Baptist Church, New Bern

In 1935 First Baptist Church, Asheville

In 1936 First Baptist Church, Durham

MY NAME

~~He~~ is found in the 1948-49 edition of "Who's Who in America" Vol. 25.

The Broadman Press of the Sunday School Board, Nashville, Tennessee. published three "books of merit" from ~~his~~ ^{MY} pen which have had a wide circulation:

"Heartening Messages"

"Verities of the Gospel"

"A Day for God-Called Men"

I delivered the commencement sermon at Wake Forest College and held revival meetings at Mars Hill College and Campbell College, and spoke for a week at Meredith College; made chapel talks at Wingate College and many talks at Gardner-Webb College. For two years I served as president of Gardner-Webb College.

In my long ministry covering over fifty-six years I have preached in hundreds of churches in Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Virginia, and Washington, D. C. I have seen hundreds and hundreds and hundreds confess Christ and join the churches,

and God has used us in "calling out the called." Scores and scores have responded to the call to preach, sing, do educational and secretarial work.

Seven of our preacher boys - here and elsewhere - have made college presidents.

On August 20, 1963 we reached the 81st milestone on the road to our eternal home. Our race will soon be run, and the crown of victory won. We thank God for you, and are deeply appreciative of all you have done for us, and we urge you to go on -with courage and faith - to the end of life's journey, and to hear the Lord say: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matthew 25:21) Brethren, pray for us.