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First Baptist Church Anniversary Celebrations

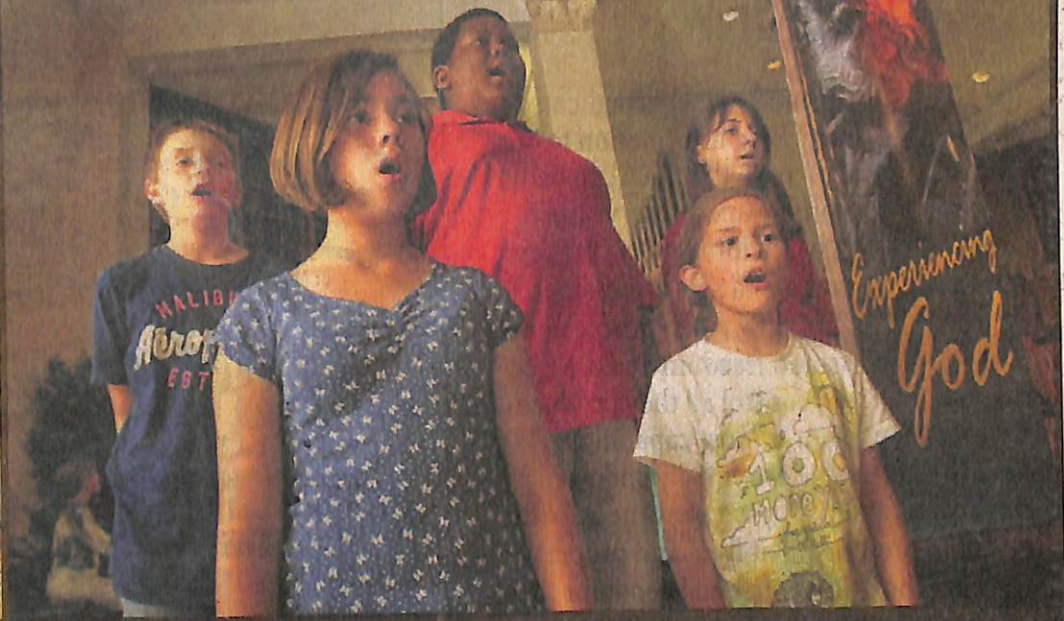
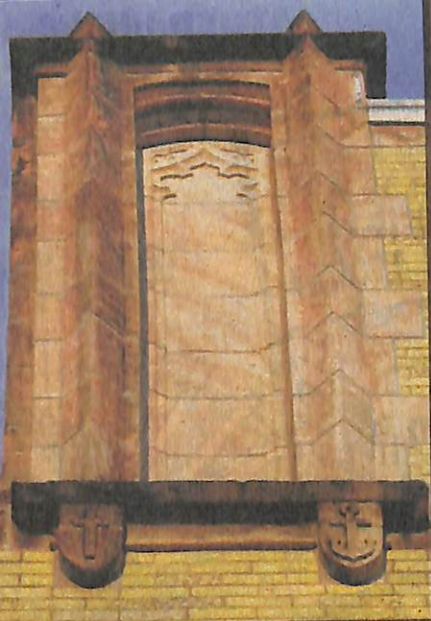
First Baptist Church (Shelby, NC)

2012

Clipping - 2012 - 165th Anniversary

Jackie Bridges

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LOOKING UPWARD

Shelby church has been spreading the good news for 165 years



Star photos by Brittany Randolph

Above left, top of page: A cross and anchor can be seen on the northwest side of First Baptist Church in Shelby. The cross represents 'Jesus' victory over sin' and the anchor represents Jesus as the 'anchor through the storms of this life,' said the Rev. Tony Tench. **Above and above left, top of page:** The choir rehearses for 'Experiencing God: The Musical' at First Baptist Church. The performance will be Sunday.

Jackie Bridges
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Towering above Lafayette Street on the northwest corner of First Baptist Church in Shelby is a cross and an anchor.

“For several years, I have walked from my parking space and into the church without ever noticing these symbols in the concrete,” said Pastor Tony Tench, “and then one day Mr. Czerr came in to ask their significance.”

The significance of these symbols for a Christian church, Tench explained, is the “good news of Jesus’ victory over sin on the cross, and that in Jesus we have an anchor through the storms of this life.”

As the church prepares to celebrate its 165th anniversary, Tench said the symbols have a more profound significance to him.

“That just goes to show that life is not to be lived just simply focused down here on our next steps, but we are meant to look up and bring our focus to Jesus — our anchor, our Lord — so that he shows us what our next steps are to be,” he said. “That’s why I am thankful for our church family here at First Baptist Church. It is a fellowship that has encouraged an upward look to Jesus across its 165-year history.”

The church has many reasons to celebrate, said Dot Hicks, chairwoman of the Heritage team. One is the willingness of church members to reach out and start churches in other areas of the county and to support mission work nationally and internationally.

“As we were going through the church minutes, I noticed that they granted 540 letters to other churches,” Hicks said. “They were going to help organize other churches. First Baptist sort of gave away our members. It’s always been an evangelistic church that sought to win others to Christ. It’s a missionary Baptist church. We have good leaders, good

► **First Baptist Church 165th anniversary celebrations**

- Sunday — 10:30 a.m., ‘Experiencing God: The Musical,’ presented by the Sanctuary Choir
- May 27 — 165th Anniversary Homecoming Day; worship at 10:55 a.m. in the sanctuary; dinner on the grounds (\$5 per person, call 482-3467 for reservations); music by The Envoys Quartet

pastors and faithful members who not only contributed their time, but their money.”

Historian Polly Causby was instrumental in getting the church’s second history book published in 2008. The book, written by church member J.A. West and edited by Causby and Becky Hamrick, was a team effort involving many other people, who spent a year studying church newsletters, business meeting minutes and deacons’ meeting minutes. The printing was accomplished by Wes Westmoreland, also a church member, and Westmoreland Printers.

At the 2009 session of the North Carolina State Baptist Convention meeting in Greensboro, West was presented with the first-place church history award in the “church character” category by the Historical Committee of the North Carolina Baptist Convention. The award carries the names of West, Causby, Hamrick and Westmoreland, but Causby said they don’t see it that way.

“It was a team effort with a lot of people and time,” she said. “Everybody on the committee was in agreement from the beginning that it was all for the glory of God.”

Causby said attending First Baptist Church helps her stay focused on living a Christian life.

“Sunday School lessons and guidance from the pulpit help me grow in knowledge of the Bible,” she said. “My participation in the choir for approximately 57 years has been a highlight for me.”