

## **SALEM BAPTIST CHURCH HISTORY**

The Salem Baptist Church was organized in the year of 1872 as the First Baptist Church. Prior to that time, prayer meetings were held in the home of Brother Robert Ross and his wife Mary. Sister Fannie Boyd served as their assistant. These two Sisters in Christ continued in their small way, by holding such meetings and receiving great spiritual blessings. Sending up their prayers, wishes and desires to the Almighty God, eventually they were led to move their meeting place from the Ross home to "The Old Academy", which in later years became the residence of a Mr. Watts. Afterwards it became the home of Mr. Jesse Richards, located on Warrenton Road directly in back of the Ford Motor Company which was next door to the building where Mr. Frank Ford maintained his shoe repair establishment. Today the building is controlled by the Fauquier County Historical Society.

With a spiritual and courageous determination, they called a preacher named Jim Carter to preach for them. He preached several times to the small group of community inhabitants in the town of Salem. In the year of 1872, Sisters Mary E. Ross and Fannie Boyd organized the "First Baptist Church" the predecessor to today's Salem Baptist Church. The plot for the first church building was donated by Brother Robert and Sister Mary E. Ross, down by the railroad track. There they worshipped and served God for 7 years. It being the will of God, the First Baptist Church saw fit to procure land from Mr. Frank Ford on Rosstown Lane. There they built the present day structure we are worshipping in today. With spiritual determination, a faithful and dedicated membership of 67 members at that time, they were able to make a \$500.00 down payment on the new church building, which cost approximately \$4000.00. The church was built and dedicated May 12, 1929.

Since that time Salem has had seven pastors: Rev. Webb for 20 years, followed by Rev. Dawson, Rev. Gibson, Rev. Minor, Rev. Brooks, Rev. Manly, Rev. Sherman W. Phillips, who served from 1926 until his passing in 1968. Under his leadership the church made its greatest progress at that time. His wife, Sister Ora Phillips was dedicated and loyal to Pastor Phillips, the church and their family.

Pastor Wendell R. Grant was the eighth pastor at Salem. He built upon the strong foundation of the previous pastors. He led the church as directed by God. With the help of God, his faithful wife First Lady Shirley Grant and a committed Church family much was accomplished under Pastor Grant's leadership. The Church building was expanded to include a Kitchen, dining room, restrooms, heated baptistry and an office for the Pastor. Additionally this included new padded pews, pulpit furniture and a raised Choir loft. A new chair lift for the handicapped, an electric organ and a PA system were added. New sanctuary lighting, emergency exit lights and a cold water fountain were installed as well. Externally, a wheelchair ramp was installed, the parking lot was paved and fenced, outside night lights and new road signage were added. Pastor Grant wrote, directed and produced numerous Christian plays for the Christmas and Easter seasons. Members throughout the Marshall community participated in these plays. Occasionally, these plays were performed outside of the Marshall community. Also under Pastor Grant's leadership the church was instrumental in organizing and contributing to the Marshall community Vacation Bible School for over twenty years. Additionally the Church hosted the International Seminary classes taught by Pastor Grant.

Currently, the church is led by Rev. Leroy Stewart, our ninth pastor. During his tenure the church services were increased from two to four Sundays monthly. During the COVID lockdown he instituted teleconference phone service for weekly Bible study and Sunday worship service.