

The Early History of Brooks Avenue

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Emol Fails, Raleigh

The progress of the church in Raleigh has been encouraging to those who have known it and been a part of it from the beginning.

In the summer of 1947, three people met at the YMCA on the campus of North Carolina State University to form the nucleus of the church. Allen Marsh-burn was instrumental in contacting former Christians and those interested in the growth of the church in this mission field. These meetings at the "Y" were of short duration, as we were asked to meet else-where. Being of limited funds and lacking leadership, we met in the Bamboo Room in the old Andrew Johnson Hotel for two dollars a week.

My wife and I arrived in August of that year and could readily see that the field was "white unto harvest." Brother and sister Newton Lorren and their four daughters extended their hospitality and love to all those who came. Coming from Oklahoma and having grown up where the church is well known, it did not take long to realize that God would take over where we needed strength if we would but do our part. Letters were mailed back home and others sent letters to persons they thought might be interested in the establishment of a church in North Carolina's capital city. The Christians back home opened their pocketbooks with generous contributions. One church emptied its treasury for the cause.

Preachers came and left at the rate of every month to every six months. We did not know if they just did not like us or if this was too hard an area to sow the seed. We thought maybe we lacked prestige or were too small, or perhaps it was because we did not have a building — or some-thing. The Akin Foundation out in Texas heard about our plight and sent an evangelist along with a large tent to conduct a month's meeting. Tents were in disrepute in this part of the world . . . and May was the "monsoon" season. Six of our twelve members were either in school or teaching, making it a difficult time for participation, but we were there every night though the tent poles sank deeper and deeper in the wet earth. Bryan Vinson proclaimed the gospel in its fullness and completeness. There were only three baptisms and one could have easily chalked it off as a failure, but we remember that one of those conversions is responsible for the church that is in Rocky Mount today.

By 1950 people had learned that we were here and Christians commuted from Dunn, Fayetteville, Louisburg and other nearby towns. We could see prospects of purchasing a plot of ground and eventually getting into a permanent building. This would aid in growth and enable us to help others. The Cary church grew out of the Brooks Avenue church, as did Henderson. Christians from Raleigh drove to Louisburg every Sunday to help with the worship and during the week for home Bible study. We were really so small that had it not been for faith in God that He would give the increase, we would have despaired. One tends to forget that he is strengthened whenever he helps others.

In 1952 we were happy and thankful to be in a permanent location with Bob Sorrell as our

first full-time evangelist. Do not think for a moment that this came easy. We had had our problems . . . but the love, prayers, and commitment to the Word helped us weather those many crises. How well we learned the meaning of "faith, hope and love . . . but the greatest of these is love!" Contentious as one may have been about his belief, after prayerful study coupled with love for God and His church, none would divide the body over his opinions. May this al-ways be true!

Sidney Astin followed Bob Sorrell and worked with us five years. With the coming of the Triangle Park Research Center, Raleigh experienced a boom similar to the gold rush. Several families came to work at the Triangle and established homes in Raleigh. This doubled our membership and brought good, solid leadership. The turnover of preachers for the next five or six years could have been discouraging, but there must have been a reason. Bob Carroll, Bill Shelton, Olan Hicks, and Max Miller made up the list. Our first elders were Hubert Adams, Clyde Cherry (deceased), Henry Reynolds, Dave Pullias and Ebern Watson. It looked as though we were not supposed to have elders as they were all transferred from Raleigh except Ebern Watson.

The arrival of Al Bergeron and the employment of campus ministers was one of our best moves. Young Christians coming to the university were contacted and given spiritual encouragement. Kent Brand was our first campus minister, followed by Charles Kiser and Wyndham Shaw. Wyndham has worked diligently with the college students since 1974 and through Bible studies on campus has converted many college students to Christ. Dan Allison, another zealous young minister, joined us in 1977 to work with the teenage students. The efforts of these young men have sparked more interest in the church and increased our attendance considerably.

Our new building was dedicated last September. Already there is need for expansion. Each time the budget needs increasing we wonder where the funds will come from. The Lord asks us to do all we can and He will help — and He always has. Thirty years ago we could not have envisioned an average attendance of over 500 and contributions of \$3,500 per week, but true to His word, He gives the increase!

Full-time Ministers that have served (to 2009):

Dan Allison (youth, college)
Sidney Astin (pulpit)
Martin Bently (youth)
Al Bergeron (pulpit)
Kent Brand (college)
Bob Carrell (pulpit)
Otis Castlebury (pulpit)
Dennis Conner (body-life)
Mike Dublin (special)

Eddie Field (youth)
Bailey Forrest (college, temp-pulpit)
Lindsey Garmon (pulpit)
Mike Gifford (youth)
John Greenwood (outreach)
Olan Hicks (pulpit)
Brian Knoerl (youth)
Steve Kinnard (special)
Charles Kiser (college)

Alan Marshburn (pulpit)
Kent Massey (outreach)
Dale McCorkle (youth)
Max Miller (pulpit)
Andy Peddycord (special)
Phil Pugh (college)
David Riggs (family)
Wyndham Shaw (college)
Bill Shelton (pulpit)
Greg Smith (youth)

Robert Sonell (pulpit)
Ernie Stewart (missionary-in-residence)
Ross Thomson (pulpit)
Bill Turner (pulpit)
Doug Vance (college)
A.F. Wailer (pulpit)
Benny Weast (youth)
Donnie Williams (college)
Jim Wyndham (pulpit)

Elders that have served since this article (1978 to 2009):

Lancelot Bailey
Al Bergeron
Ray Brock
Larry Claxton
Bill Culverhouse
David Duty
Dennis Esch
Ken George
John Greenwood
Jack Harris
Edd Hauser
Alton Holland
Jim Holt
Adam Hudson

Jesse Lasley
Ron Lawing
Harold Lile
Bob Lowry
Don Moore
David Mills
Rocky Nelson
Mike Ogburn
Jerry Smiley
Lee Solomon
Bill Stuart
Richard Thompson
Ed Warner
Ed Woodhouse

(send corrections to office@brooks.org)