

## FBC Buildings 1940 to Present

Throughout the Depression years FBC membership grew slowly, yet steadily. Dreams of new buildings and improvements to old ones were stymied by a persistent debt that had been incurred from the construction of the 1925 Education building. Finally, in the early 1940's that debt was retired and building dreams began to flourish.

### **1940's**

A desire for a Chapel and more classroom space was at the top of the list. An old home next to the 1925 Education building was purchased. After use by the church for a short time, it was torn down. Rome architects, Montgomery and Turner, designed a new Chapel and adjacent Annex building. Rome contractor and church member, Robert L Townsend, constructed the building for \$98,000 and it was dedicated on November 20, 1949. Some debt was incurred but was quickly repaid within 3 years.

The Chapel is used frequently today and the Annex is presently used as the Community Room and choir room. The top floor attic space is cherished by the Flower Committee and a home for many FBC 'treasures.' Of note is a walk-in safe that was included in this project. It would have been a challenge for any of the 'Butch Cassity's' of ancient times.

The original windows in the Chapel were of an amber color. In the early 1970's the Barron family donated the stained-glass window that are present today. They were designed to resemble the stained glass in the Darlington chapel. The religious objects in each window represent the significant events of Jesus life.

### **1950's**

In the 50's the church, either by purchase or gifts, was able to acquire the remaining properties surrounding the church campus. As the church steadily grew from 1000 to 1700 members, the 1884 sanctuary with a capacity of 900 was inadequate. During the pastorate of Forest Lanier in 1952, a building committee was formed and chaired by Fred Johnson, Sr. The Atlanta architectural firm of Cooper, Barrett, Skinner, Woodbury, and Cooper was hired to design a new sanctuary with a seating capacity of 1400. The intention was to provide a seat for every church member on each Sunday morning. J P Roberts and Sons Contractor of Rome was the builder.

After two years of construction. The Day of Dedication was June 15, 1958. The total cost was \$917,909 of which approximately 50% was a loan. The loan was retired 10 years later.

The 1884 sanctuary was soon after demolished, but only after the old Meneely bell was transferred to the new 140-foot-tall steeple.

## 1960's

In 1962, the balcony ceiling collapsed one Monday morning thankfully when the sanctuary was empty. The roar of the collapse made a lasting impression on the staff in their next-door offices. The ceiling support was redesigned and repaired at no cost to the church.



*The collapsed ceiling of 1962*

Under the leadership of Pastor Floyd Roebuck, expanding education space now became the top priority. In 1962, another building committee was formed and chaired by Norman Burnes, Jr. The same architectural and contracting team that had worked on the sanctuary was employed. Construction began and the new, and present Education Building, was dedicated on July 26, 1964. The total cost was \$400,000 and almost three

quarters of it was financed with a loan. That loan took 10 years to retire.

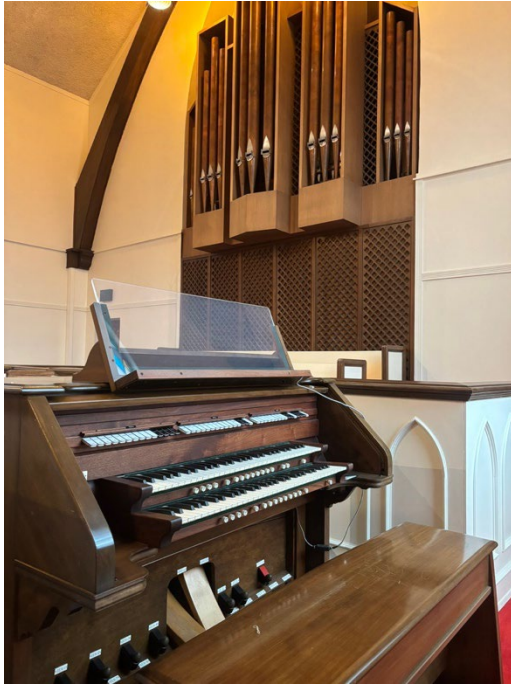
In 1955, the church began leasing a beautiful home on the corner of Fourth Avenue and Second Street known as the Starr/Gaillard house.. In 1960 we began using it as church offices and Sunday school space. In 1964, we bought the home outright and shortly thereafter tore it down. The lot is now the site of the outdoor basketball court.



This photo shows the Starr/Gaillard house (discussed earlier) to the left of the sanctuary before the Education building was constructed. Notice on the left the space created by the removal of the 1884 sanctuary. The old Harbin Hospital stands in the background.

The Chapel was regularly used by the Scrap Iron class and its members felt a responsibility for its upkeep. In 1969 the Chapel was upgraded, and beautiful stained-glass windows were donated by the WF Barron family.

## 1970's



The Scrap Iron class loved music worship and in 1973 they began a quest for a new organ for the Chapel. It took several years to raise the funds and solicit a builder. Lawrence Hawkins, who had been a student of our Minister of Music Kenneth Moyers, agreed to design the pipe organ and install it in the alcove area in the front of the Chapel. Some of the pipes Mr. Hawkins recycled from other organs that he had worked on. A church member, Bill Krape, built the cabinets housing the pipes. The cost to the church was a much reduced \$18,000. Finally, on November 25, 1979, a dedication service celebrated the project completion.

*Chapel Organ Pipes designed and made by Lawrence Hawkins.*



The historic Noble/Nunnally home stood next to the Chapel and the church had been renting space there for various activities. In 1968 the church purchased the property. Even though it was an historical building, the Downtown Historical Society allowed the church to tear it down in 1986. It is now the site of the Chapel parking lot.

In 1974, our first Memorial Garden was created to remove an eye-sore area created by the removal of the 1884 sanctuary some 15 years earlier. That Garden was enlarged and redesigned during the Touching Tomorrow campaign of 1999.



As with all downtown churches, parking was becoming a major issue. In the early 70's the lot, presently the corner parking deck, was put up for sale. A group of church members privately purchased the lot in hopes that the church could eventually use it as a parking lot. The Floyd County government quickly made a generous offer to the men for they needed parking as well. The sale agreement stipulated that First Baptist would have access for parking on Sundays. That

agreement is still in effect today.

For years the church had also eyed the lots next to the Old Post Office/Courthouse building for parking. Persistent backdoor diplomacy by Pastor Roebuck finally led to the purchase of several of those buildings in the late 90's. The buildings were demolished, and the present parking lot was created. Ironically, we now allow county employees access to our lot during the week for a small rental fee.



### **1980's**

One major project was completed in the 80's. The church had long desired an elevator. With creative design and construction ingenuity, a spot was found between the 1925 Education building and the new sanctuary for an elevator. The elevator was installed in 1988 for a cost of \$45,000.

### **1990's**

In the mid 90's Dr. Joel Snider became our new pastor and within a short time the Touching Tomorrow campaign began. It was the most comprehensive capital campaign since the building of the 1958 sanctuary. Chaired by Andy Davis and Wade Monk, the committee conducted an extensive study to determine the needs of the church. With a plan in place, a capital drive began to fulfill the \$5 million dollar goal.

A Building committee was put in place chaired by Bob Hortman. Their first meeting was held in January 1999. Two non-negotiable principles led the committee. First, the elevator could not be moved. Second, a prayer room was to be built near the center of the church, to symbolize that prayer was the center of our faith. That led to the present location of the Prayer Room. The architects were the Foxhall-Goodson Group of Nashville and the builder was Smithson Builders of Rome.

The 1925 Education Building was demolished and replaced with a new structure housing a new Office suite, Activity gym, Prayer room and Conference room. The sanctuary was renovated with a redesigned pulpit platform, angled pew layout, and conversion of the 'Crow's Nest' into a new TV control center. The organ was refurbished and moved from the middle of the choir section to the side of the platform. The seating capacity was reduced by almost 300 seats. Also included was a new Community room and renovated music suite. The classrooms in the Education Building were completely redesigned. This campaign also included the construction of a new Memorial Garden.



*Original 1958 sanctuary*



*Sanctuary - post-Touching Tomorrow*



This picture shows the First Floor of present Office Building under construction with the preserved elevator shaft in background. The two men are standing in the present gymnasium.

Dedication Sunday was celebrated in the refurbished sanctuary on October 7, 2001.

The total cost for the project was \$5.5 million. The debt was totally repaid and celebrated by the church on Achievement Day -- May 17, 2009. The church has been debt-free since that day.

One final comment is appropriate concerning the Dove in the baptistry. We view it every Sunday. It represents the presence of the Holy Spirit not only during baptisms but also every time we gather in

God's house. It was the vision of Pastor Forest Lanier when the sanctuary was built in

1958. He enlisted a company in Rome, Italy to carve the dove from white marble. The cost was \$350.

When the new sanctuary was built, the only cross in the sanctuary was on the pulpit. That pulpit was replaced in the Touching Tomorrow refurbish. Several years later, the idea of a new cross in the baptistry was conceived. Designed by Frank Murphy and guided by Susan Seagraves, the present white marble cross was installed in 2005.