

SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH – THE 1ST 100 YEARS



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"... I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on a rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built..."
Luke 6:47-48

The history of Second Baptist Church demonstrates time and time again that its cornerstones are those of biblical faith, persistent prayer, willing submission, and an abiding strength that comes from knowing its worth in God's eyes. Those building blocks supported the Second Baptist founders, lifting them up as pioneers for a hundred year journey of struggle and victory, breathing life and godly purpose first into Boulder, Colorado's small black community and then, blessedly, into *any* soul that sought the one true Savior.

On January 7, 1908, Frank Lingham, Lulu Lingham, Daisy Horne (Lulu's sister and Robert's wife), Robert Horne, Thomas Rucker, Lula Gibson, William H. Willis, Virginia Goodwin, and Mary J. Reeves became charter members of Second Baptist Church of Boulder, Colorado. Every week, a handful of colored men and women honored God, worshipping wherever possible. Unused storefronts and vacant shops were filled with prayer and God's presence until He graciously provided a permanent home in a former carpentry shop at the corner of 24th and Pearl Streets. What better place to build the faith of God's children, the smell of wood and hard work reminding members that God's own Son was a carpenter? What better privilege than to utilize that place to follow Christ's example!

The early portion of the 20th century saw SBC band together with the Baptist churches of Denver, receiving part time pastoral and musical ministry support. Sister churches, like Macedonia and Zion Baptist, regularly sent a preacher to teach the word, building relationships that would last for decades. Finally, in the latter part of 1908, Rev. Brannon answered the call to become SBC's first shepherd, serving well until 1911.

The next quarter century was consumed with reaching out to the black community in Christ's love and with the task of maintaining and renovating the carpentry shop, as well. SBC grew through the decades, served by six diligent men called to lead: Rev. Wallace (2 years), Rev. Jackson (2 years), Rev. Tolliver (17 years), Rev. Bragg (2 years), and Rev. Houston. (5 years) By 1940, Rev. Houston, seeing the need for expansion, helped the church attain its first property at 19th and Canyon (formerly Water) Streets and a small parsonage located at 2005 Goss Street. The

congregation's efforts at that time set the stage for the next period of Christian faith building, physical growth, and financial blessing.

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"...the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything."
Hebrews 3: 3b-4

The SBC family, blessed and encouraged by their new place of worship, embarked on new ways of caring for each other and those they sought to reach for Christ. Following Rev. Houston's lead, Rev W. H. Hill, Sr. took the pastoral helm from 1940-1945. Pastor Hill heartened his congregation to grow in fellowship, taking charge in various necessary church business areas. It was at this time missions committees flourished as a valuable resource for church fundraising, outreach, and fellowship functions. The "Busy Bees", later renamed the Queen Alice Missionary Society for organizer, Alice Baskett, helped garner funds that kept the church well maintained and fiscally solvent during the early 40's. This group of diligent women took seriously their ministry and passed down a legacy of service, later becoming known as the SBC Benevolent Fund and Women's Ministry, which helped feed many of Boulder's hungry through its well-known Food Bank. During the first half of the 1940's the membership was inspired by God's blessings to be a blessing themselves and determinedly cared for the gifts the Lord bestowed upon them.

In 1944, Rev. Hill, Sr. stepped down, allowing Rev. BJ Washington to usher in an unforgettable period of growth. During Rev. Washington's term, SBC faithfully submitted the works of their hands to God's sovereign will and were blessed phenomenally. On September 8, 1944 a highly successful building fund was launched for the construction of a new, more accommodating church on the same site at 19th and Canyon. Local papers, along with several Boulder churches, chronicled the fundraisers, the construction of the \$5000.00 debt-free project, and the weeklong dedication services held in conjunction with old friends Macedonia and Zion Baptist Churches. Incredibly, the members themselves completed more than half the labor for the project. After long days at work, the men gathered together well into the evenings for an entire year to dig out the basement, pour the foundation, and frame walls. The women of the church joined them, providing meals and moral support. Rev. Washington himself was reported to have become an expert in concrete to help speed along the process. By June 9, 1946, plans to capably sit 140 members in a facility that housed a library, study, kitchen, dining room, choir room, and storage facility were realized. When the dust settled after just two years of struggle, a solid community pillar stood, its doors facing east to see a new day dawn on a band of unified and faithful followers of Christ. Those faithful 30-40 members surely knew what could be accomplished by submitting their efforts to God's purposes.

Two years later, God honored SBC by allowing the pieces to fall into place for a much celebrated mortgage burning. On May 23, 1948, Deacon Howard Akers presided over the services, praising God with the flock, thanking Him for honoring the submission of their time and money with financial freedom and a completely debt-free church. B.J. Washington stepped down later that year, having served industriously and with excellence, leaving the congregation undoubtedly blessed.

Over the ensuing decade, the worshippers enjoyed the momentum provided by God's faithful provision. Rev. Leon Garcia (1948-1949) helped introduce Wednesday night prayer services, which were said to help grow the faith of the black community greatly. Rev. L.R. Agent (1949-1951) blessed the body with an emphasis on personal responsibility and accountability, further encouraging service and teamwork. The church celebrated 42 years together during Rev. Agent's tenure adopting the motto "Stand Up for Jesus" and accepting the call to be "A Church Captured by the Missionary Call."

Rev. Reece helped round out the 1950's, ushering SBC to the eve of the 1960s, an era that held new challenges for the black community at large and more so for those blacks called to carry Christ's cross whatever the cost, whatever their race.

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"But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast."
Hebrews 3:6

On July 2, 1959, Rev, Robert Nesby, Jr., a CU graduate with a degree in Philosophy, left his assistantship at Macedonia Baptist Church in Denver to fulfill God's call to pastor SBC. God used him greatly to bring the followers along side him with modern church practices. Rev. Nesby's administrative talents and scholastic gifts were of great benefit as he helped SBC institute its first official budget, financial plan, and successful operations as a parish system. Modern administrative procedures were also adopted at this time, office equipment was purchased, and weekly and monthly bulletins and reports were published and made available to parishioners. Beyond his impact on the business aspects of the church, members were blessed often by duets performed by he and his wife during services. When Rev. Nesby left Second Baptist in 1961 to accept a fellowship in Rochester, New York, he had been marvelously employed by God to secure a more organized and dynamic future.

Rev. Walter H. Hill, Jr. took his place in SBC pastoral history in November 1961. Over the course of his eleven-year term, his immense faith and personal desire to see the church body draw closer to Christ during changing times galvanized a heart for outreach and improved race relations. Against the tense backdrop of the nation's political and cultural scenes, Rev. Hill led by example, using the Boulder community's focus on its "black church" to stand for Christ and against any form of human degradation. Rev. Hill overcame adversity personally, losing his left hand in a work-related accident, working a job full-time in Denver in addition to pastoring the church, and serving tirelessly in the tiny black community that was suddenly facing blatant discriminatory practices within Boulder society. He led the church with grace and purpose. His efforts to lead a godly life were well regarded. He was recognized as a founder of the Boulder Human Relations Commission and an organizer of "church swaps" with area white churches, even hosting Human Rights Week at SBC. The church, under his leadership, went out of its way to reach beyond the black community to those in need or who felt disenfranchised, infused with the power of God's love.

During the 1960s, membership was steady, and many exterior and interior improvements were made. Memorials like the Rose garden honoring the Lingham family were established; appliances, service ware, and stained glass windows were purchased, and upgrades to the parsonage were made as well. Those years also birthed an exciting obedience to God's commands for a church dedicated to tithing as a means of supporting the church, consistent attention to spiritual growth in the form of regular revivals, and organized musical praise. To the delight of the congregation, on January 23, 1961, Sister Elmira Davis organized and directed SBC's first senior choir, blessing the fellowship with hymns and musical accompaniment provided by Sister Cleora Reeves and Haywood Hobbs. Furthermore, the Queen Alice Mission was instrumental in preparing the church for better use. The women held dinners and bazaars, raising funds to purchase furniture and décor items, working together to dress the new pulpit and the SBC sanctuary. They were also able to purchase new stoves and youth furniture for other areas of the church. As the 1960s drew to a close, the growing church bade farewell to Rev. WH Hill, Jr.

upon his death in 1971, forever grateful for the spiritual bricks he laid to further strengthen SBC's foundation.

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"The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."
Psalm 85: 10-12

On April 23, 1972 Rev. Hansford F. Vann began his tenure as pastor, a term exceeding 35 years. As an energetic and humble servant of the Lord, his desire to offer the service and will of the church to God's ends were evidenced by SBC's growth and spreading renown throughout the 1970s and 80s. God used Rev. Vann's giftings of encouragement and a dynamic personality to engage church members and draw visitors of all colors and backgrounds. Reverend Vann invited Boulder's collegiate and occupational transfers to services and church activities. Known as a "church of transition," the church welcomed families transferred to Longmont, Denver, Broomfield and more, becoming an extended family to the faces that changed every semester and season.

The veteran members of the congregation kept the musical, missionary, and youth ministries moving forward, adding educational components namely, Sunday school and Vacation Bible School, a motivated Food Bank outreach, and a church bus to further serve the community. Grace Lingham was SBC secretary for over 50 years. Pastor Vann and the church were often recognized in the Boulder Daily Camera newspaper for their service and activism within the Boulder Community.

Music was also fundamental to SBC's ability to reach the greater population and share God's glory and the gospel. The SBC Community Choir never failed to command attention as it had grown exponentially with an influx of members desiring to praise God musically. The efforts of musicians Sam Bryant, May Snowden and Alma Jones were of great benefit to director John Coker, even eventually leading to the recording of an album entitled, "The Lord Is Speaking." Brother Coker directed the choir amid accolades and statewide recognition until 1979, then handing over the reigns to Sister Alma Jones.

Rev. Vann pastored the church, edifying its body through the 70s and 80s. His sermons were punctuated with his real-life Denver childhood and Navy experiences, growing the faith of the body and engaging anyone who listened. The church was blessed with the capability to offer tape recordings of each service, expanding the church's ministry to the homes and cars of anyone, anywhere willing to listen. Through the years, even Colorado University football and basketball coaches valued Rev. Vann's services as chaplain. Soon, like the SBC congregations of the first half of the century, the 1980s congregation saw itself outgrowing a building that had served them well for over 40 years.

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"Therefore my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." Psalm 85:10-12

As the 1990's commenced, the senior membership continued to explode. Veteran parishioners, fluctuating transfers, enthusiastic youth, and a multitude of visitors every week, meant a tight fit for 180 members in the 1946 building that only ever sat 140. Parking on site became impossible and the small plot of land left nowhere to expand. After years of folding chairs in the aisles, and a

crowd of members listening to the service via loudspeaker from the basement, prayers were being offered up for a new church dwelling. For almost a year, SBC church services were held in the multipurpose rooms and auditoriums of Boulder High, Baseline Jr. High and Casey Junior High Schools to ease the discomfort and accommodate the need. Parishioners diligently tithed and pledged all they could to aid the building fund campaign, even holding a large garage sale in July of 1991 to help raise funds. Blessedly, in August of 1991, by miraculous means, the Lord saw fit to provide a new site for the SBC church home.

At Casey Junior High, on "Miracle Sunday", as it is now known, SBC members witnessed a supernatural offering of Christian love across cultural and racial lines, as University of Colorado Head Football Coach Bill McCartney and Vineyard Church Pastor James Ryle donated a check for \$20,000 dollars as the down payment toward the purchase of a new church site. Though unknown to them, it was exactly the amount needed the following Monday to move forward with the purchase. In September of 1991, SBC, moved into a new era and a new building, purchasing the former site of Boulder Valley Christian Church for approximately \$800K+ dollars. By god's grace, the church once again celebrated a debt free future by burning the church mortgage at a Praise Service held on September 8, 2002.

The period from 1991 until the present was one of indescribable spiritual growth and phenomenal dedication by those that loved Second Baptist, its pastor, and its people. Pastor Vann and his wife, Elle, worked tirelessly to meet the needs of those they served. Community involvement continued to flourish, and the pews were filled with an active body willing to support a myriad of SBC ministries.

The music ministry continued to distinguish itself during the 90s, drawing visitors to worship weekly. The acclaimed Community Choir Annual Winter Concerts were an exciting celebration of the Savior's birth, helping to wondrously expand the church's mission field. With the guidance of musicians like Chuck Abernethy and Cheryl Tolbert, the choir had opportunities to sing with the Longmont Chorale, Dr. Horace Boyer and the Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Madame Andrews at Chautauqua Park in Boulder, and to musically support Second Baptist's annual Black History program, reaching hundreds for Christ. Mentored by the Community Choir, the Shekinah Glory Youth Choir also grew in faith and recognition as Ms. Tolbert, drummer Chuck Snowden, Jr., and director May Snowden, accompanied an enthusiastic and unashamed group of young people in the praise and worship of the Lord. Shekinah Glory's Annual Good Friday Concerts and involvement with the gospel choirs of Denver churches and the University of Colorado continually blessed the community. The Angels Without Wings Children's Choir under the direction of Willia Miller developed as well, delighting worshippers and bringing even younger children together for Christ. Moreover, Angels Without Wings has groomed a wealth of talent for the older choirs for years. As the music ministry transitioned into the new millennium, Rev. Ernest Hargett emerged on the scene offering his musical gifting to the SBC family. As Minister of Music Rev. Hargett brought harmony to the music ministry on every level.

The church youth were a true beneficiary of the time. Rev. Vann's popularity on the college campus, Second Baptist's attention to young families, and activities geared toward Christian youth development and involvement were instrumental ways youngsters were brought to Christ during those years. Solid leadership and monetary support allowed for Youth advances, workshops, "rap" sessions, topical home groups, and a scholarship fund for the purposes of training faithful young people. Many members stepped up to guide the youth in a variety of forums, working hard to combat trying cultural times and opposing religious views. The 1990s gave rise to praise dance and step teams, dramatic presentations and plays, guest speakers and choirs, and youth trips to local entertainment; forging strong bonds among the youth, youth leadership, and grateful parents.

Parents and other adults were not to be left out of God's provision for spiritual refreshment and teaching. Men's and Women's Advances were and still are well received and eagerly anticipated every year. Members willingly gather together at beautiful sites throughout Colorado to learn

more of God's word, pray with each other, and return to SBC with a renewed desire to do His will. The fellowship, strengthened by those experiences, continued to see needs and fill them. Committees of men and women helped develop annual Women's and Men's Day celebrations, Vacation Bible School programs, and monthly Men's Breakfasts, all the while reaching outside SBC doors, encouraging a history of pulpit swaps with First Presbyterian and other churches, inviting speakers from around the country, and supporting Pastor Vann's role as a community leader.

Now, settled into the new millennium, Second Baptist Church is still laboring determinedly to bring Christ to increasingly freethinking and liberal Front Range communities. The vibrant and forward moving members of this "church of transition," still come and go as striving ambassadors to a world dealing with the war on terrorism and the impact of religion on everyday life. Still pressing toward the mark, Second Baptist, Rev. Vann, and believers seek to fulfill God's will daily by simply continuing to welcome people in and send people out with the promise of Christ's love.

Though the year 2008 presents struggles and challenges for Second Baptist as did the year 1908 for its faithful few, blessedly, the current fellowship has the benefit of a varied and victorious past to act as encouragement toward new victories in Christ. As we lower the curtain on the 1st centennial and embark upon the next 100 years, we are fully persuaded that God is able to keep all that has been committed to him against that glorious day. Hallelujah, Our God Reigns!

This historical document has been developed and coauthored by: Aisha Geaither Simmons and Glenda Strong Robinson. It will be placed in the archives as a legacy to future generations.

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