First Baptist Church of Jeffersontown: A History, 1833–2008

"Love Is The First Baptist Way"

Consolidated November 2026 · **Prepared By: Jan Brazley**

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First Baptist Church of Jeffersontown was organized in April 1833 among the Black Baptists who worshipped in the loft of a log church in Jeffersontown, a small town twelve miles from Louisville. The church's own histories describe a congregation that began with "a few members, one step up from slavery," and lost its first church to fire. By its own later count it has been served by twelve pastors, and by 2002 it had more than 1,600 members. Over those years its members organized the auxiliaries, choirs, scholarships and ministries that carried the church's work into the community. They bought their Watterson Trail lot for $175 in 1876–77 and have worshipped there since. They dedicated an Education Building in 1971, entered the present sanctuary on February 20, 1977, and dedicated a Family Life Center in 1990. In December 2002 the church purchased the Old Jeffersontown Colored School Building on Shelby Street. This history brings together the anniversary histories the church printed between 1983 and 2008 into one account.

SOURCES H1 pp. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 22, 24; H2 pp. 1, 2, 4. The Watterson Trail and 1876–77 details come from the church's website; see "About the Sources."

A NOTE ON REFERENCES "H1 p. 5" means page 5 of the first scanned history file and "H2 p. 4" page 4 of the second, as numbered in the transcript `history/transcript.md`. The sheets themselves are described at the end.

Before the Church: Louisville and Brunerstown

The church's 1983 and 2008 histories begin before the church itself. The 2008 history recalls that Kentucky joined the Union in 1792 as a slave state. Louisville was the largest city in the state, and its place on the Ohio River made the slave market there "accessible and profitable" (H2 p. 4).

The first Baptist church in Louisville was a white congregation, now known as the Walnut Street Baptist Church. It began in 1815, "just five years after Louisville became a city." Enslaved people were admitted as members "with very limited privileges" and were seated in the balcony (H1 p. 1).

Twelve miles from Louisville, Abraham Bruner was the first proprietor and settler of a small town known as Brunersville or Brunerstown, with records dating back to 1802. In 1816 a log cabin church named Union Church was built in Brunerstown, now Jeffersontown. The 1983 foreword says that four denominations were contracted to worship there, and it lists them as "German and English Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans and Baptists." Black worshippers were assigned to the loft (H1 p. 1).

In Louisville, Black Baptists were forming a church of their own. The 1983 foreword records that in 1828 eighteen enslaved members of Walnut Street Baptist Church were given letters of dismissal and the privilege of worshipping "under their own vine and fig tree." The Reverend Henry Adams of Georgia was called to pastor them, in the congregation now known as Fifth Street Baptist Church, "the first Black Baptist Church in Louisville" (H1 p. 1).

The sheets do not agree on these early dates. The 2008 history dates the dismissal to 1829, and in its next sentence says the members "formed the Fifth Street Baptist Church in Louisville in 1825," four years before the dismissal it has just described (H2 p. 4). The yearly sheets of 1989 to 2001 say that the first church of Black Baptists in Louisville was organized in 1829 and worshipped on a lot at Fifth and York Streets. The 1989 sheet calls it "The First Church of Black Baptists in Louisville" (H1 p. 5); the later sheets call it "the first church of Black Baptist" or "The First Church of Black Baptist" (H1 pp. 7–15, 17, 19; "Black Baptists" on H1 p. 10). Several groups left that site to establish churches elsewhere, and the sheets add: "Such was the case in Jeffersontown" (H1 pp. 5, 7–15, 17, 19).

The 2008 history also remembers a small group of free Black people in and around Louisville who worked hard to get education for Black people, and "with the Lord's help they got a church and school." It adds: "Also with all their efforts First Baptist was formed" (H2 p. 4).

SOURCES H1 pp. 1, 5, 7–15, 17, 19; H2 p. 4.

1833 The Founding, April 1833

Every anniversary history in the set dates the church's founding to 1833 (H1 pp. 1, 3, 5, 7–15, 17, 19, 21, 23; H2 pp. 1, 4), and the yearly sheets give the month as April (H1 pp. 3, 5, 7–15, 17, 19, 21, 23; H2 p. 1). The church counted its anniversaries from that year: the 100th fell in 1933, the 127th in April 1960, the 150th in 1983, and the 175th in 2008 (H1 pp. 1, 2, 5, 6; H2 p. 4).

The sheets tell the founding in two ways. The 2008 history also credits the free Black people of the Louisville area, as noted above: "Also with all their efforts First Baptist was formed" (H2 p. 4).

- **Organized by Rev. Henry Adams, with Rev. Summerfield as pastor.** The 1983 foreword says that in 1833 Rev. Adams came to Jeffersontown and organized the Black worshippers in the loft of Union Church into the Colored Baptist Church of Jeffersontown, with the Reverend Summerfield as pastor. "This congregation later became known as the First Baptist Church of Jeffersontown" (H1 p. 1). The 2008 history agrees. It says that "by the year 1833 blacks could select their own pastors," and that Rev. Henry Adams, "pastor of Fifth Street," came to Jeffersontown, "organized the blacks in the union church in the loft and left the late Rev. Summerfield as the pastor" (H2 p. 4).
- **Organized by Rev. Summerfield.** The yearly sheets of 1989 to 2005 say that Rev. Summerfield organized the church (H1 pp. 3, 5, 7–15, 17, 19, 21, 23; H2 p. 1). The 1989 sheet calls him "Rev. Summerfield of Fifth Street Baptist Church" (H1 p. 5). The sheets of 1990 to 1998 call him "Rev. Summerfield of First Baptist Church" (H1 pp. 7–14).

Under either account, every full list of the church's pastors begins with Rev. Summerfield (H1 pp. 3, 5, 7–12, 21, 23; H2 p. 4). No sheet records his first name.

The yearly sheets describe the first house of worship as a log structure serving three congregations: Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians. "The Black Baptists were required to worship in a loft" (H1 pp. 3, 5, 7–15, 17, 19, 21, 23; H2 p. 1; the loft is mentioned on H1 pp. 5, 7–15, 17, 19). The 1983 foreword names four denominations, listed as five groups, at the Union Church, while the later sheets name three congregations (H1 p. 1). The 2008 history remembers what came next: "Later when the whites moved out the blacks moved down from the loft and with God's grace we grew" (H2 p. 4).

SOURCES H1 pp. 1, 3, 5, 7–15, 17, 19, 21, 23; H2 pp. 1, 4.

1876–77 The Watterson Trail Lot, 1876–77, and the First Church

The church's website records that the congregation bought its property on Watterson Trail in 1876–77 for $175, and that it has worshipped on that site ever since.

The anniversary sheets also record a purchase for $175. They give no year or street for it, so the matching price is the only link to the website's account. They do name the people involved. "Through the leadership of" Isaac Lacky, Harrison Taylor, Lou Enders and George Lewis, a plot of ground was bought from John Tucker for $175 (H1 pp. 3, 5, 7–15, 17, 19, 21; the price without the seller's name on H1 p. 23 and H2 p. 1). The church recorded these names in different ways. Harrison Taylor appears only in the sheets of 1989 to 2001 (H1 pp. 5, 7–15, 17, 19, spelled "Harrision" on p. 14). Isaac Lacky's name also appears as Lackly (H1 pp. 5, 7–9), Lucky (H1 pp. 15, 17), Lackey (H1 p. 19) and "Issac Lacky" (H2 p. 1).

The first church stood on the site of the present structure (H1 pp. 3, 5, 7–15, 17, 19, 21). The sheets record that it was burned to the ground. The sheets of 1989 to 1993 say the Ku Klux Klan burned it (H1 pp. 5, 7–10). From 1994 on, they say the Klan "allegedly" burned it (H1 pp. 3, 11–15, 17, 19, 21, 23; H2 p. 1).

The 2008 history adds details from the county records and from memory. "From the deed log and from the accounts given by older blacks in Jeffersontown, it is almost certain that the Union Church stood on a lot toward Taylorsville Road and the lot bought later is the site of the present church building, which was the log cabin." It also cites the deed records in these words: "According to the records and deed in the Jefferson County Courthouse, the other white Baptist Church came out of the black Baptist Church, in deed book 70, page 447 is recorded" (H2 p. 4). The sheet does not say which lot that deed describes.

The two sources describe the lot differently. The church's website calls it "the old Union Church property." The 2008 history puts the Union Church on a different lot, toward Taylorsville Road, and calls the church's own lot one "bought later." The other sheets do not say whether the log structure the church shared with other congregations stood on the $175 lot.

SOURCES

H1 pp. 3, 5, 7–15, 17, 19, 21, 23; H2 pp. 1, 4; the church's website (About page) for Watterson Trail, 1876–77 and "the old Union Church property."

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to 1933

The Early Pastors and the Long Pastorate of Rev. Richard Reynolds, to 1933

After Rev. Summerfield, the sheets name four pastors before Rev. Richard Reynolds: Rev. Elias Anderson, Rev. James Enders, Rev. Phillip Alexander and Rev. James Wilson. The 1989 sheet records how long each served: Rev. Summerfield ten years, Rev. Elias Anderson five, Rev. James Ender sixteen, Rev. Phillip Alexander eleven, and Rev. James Wilson twelve (H1 p. 5). The 2008 history gives the same terms, except that it lists Rev. James Wilson, with no length of service, before Rev. Phillip Alexander (H2 p. 4). No sheet gives the years in which these pastors served.

In 1907 Sister Luthia Smith organized the Ladies Sewing Circle, which the sheets call the oldest organization or auxiliary in the church (H1 pp. 3, 7–13, 21, 23; "one of the oldest" on H1 pp. 14, 15, 17). Its members worked with the pastor and deacons in the

physical care and upkeep of the church, and cared for the sick, needy and shut-in of the community (H1 pp. 3, 7–15, 17, 19, 21, 23). They met in each other's homes, "often walking several miles or traveling in horse-drawn wagons" (H1 pp. 7–12). Nearly a century later the Circle was still at work, preparing dinner for bereaved families after funerals (H1 p. 23; H2 p. 1).

Between 1920 and 1925, five deacons were ordained and three members were added to the church roll (H1 p. 19).

Rev. Richard Reynolds served as pastor for forty-six years (H1 pp. 3, 5, 19, 21, 23; H2 p. 4). A newspaper obituary kept with the church's histories tells his story. The copy in the set does not show the newspaper's name or date, and it carries the handwritten date "4/27/03," the same as the 2003 history (H1 p. 2). Rev. Reynolds was born May 11, 1857. He was converted at eighteen and called to the ministry at twenty-one, and he pastored churches at Pewee Valley, LaGrange, Park Ridge, Little Flock and Jeffersontown, "where he was in active service up to his death." He baptized more than 2,000 people, preached hundreds of funerals and married a great many couples. In 1880 he married Miss Alexinia Hughes. They had nine children, three of whom survived him: James Reynolds, Helen Reynolds and Mrs. Biddle (her first name is uncertain in the copy, possibly Fay). For thirty years he was a trustee of Simmons University, and for thirty years treasurer of the Central District Association (H1 p. 2).

He fell ill on May 29 and died on June 1 at 4:40 p.m. (H1 p. 2). The church's 1989 history records that he died during the church's 100th Anniversary, in June 1933, at the age of 76 (H1 p. 5). His body lay in state at the church from 10 to 1 on the Monday, and the remains were not shown at the funeral service. The funeral was held at Green St. Baptist Church, of which he was a member. The choir from his Jeffersontown church sang, his deacons served as pallbearers, and the trustees of Simmons University were honorary pallbearers. The Masonic lodge at Jeffersontown had charge of the funeral. Rev. W. H. Craighead, pastor of Zion Baptist Church and a lifelong friend, preached the sermon; the two men had agreed that whichever of them survived would preach the other's funeral. Several ministers spoke, many resolutions were read from various organizations, and friends gave many floral designs. Mrs. Caroline Blanton read the obituary. The church was crowded inside and out, and cars lined both sides of the street in double rows (H1 p. 2).

The obituary calls Rev. Reynolds "pastor of the Jeffersontown Baptist church" (H1 p. 2). It also says he died during the 100th anniversary of the church he pastored, which agrees with First Baptist's own record of his death (H1 pp. 2, 5). Readers should not confuse that wording with Jeffersontown Baptist Church, a different congregation whose member Sis. Jane Eddleman helped organize the Sunbeams in 1968 (H1 p. 20).

SOURCES H1 pp. 2, 3, 5, 7–15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23; H2 pp. 1, 4.

1933–1955 Building the Church's Life, 1933–1955

After Rev. Reynolds died, Rev. J. H. Lewis served as interim pastor. The 1989 sheet says he served for two years (H1 p. 5). Later sheets say three years (H1 pp. 3, 19, 21, 23; H2 p. 4).

Rev. Arvel Carroll served as pastor from 1935 to 1948, thirteen years (H1 p. 19; thirteen years also on H1 pp. 3, 5, 21, 23; H2 p. 4). His name is also spelled Arvil (H1 pp. 5, 7–12) and Arvell (H1 pp. 3, 21, 23). In January 1942 the first trustees were recommended to take care of the church's business: Joshua Williams, Harry Ray, Arthur Harris and William Brown. The brotherhood was organized in 1943. In the summer of 1944 the church held its own first Vacation Bible School under the direction of Sis. Sadie Abstain. Before that, Vacation Bible School had been held jointly with the St. Paul Methodist Church (H1 p. 19).

On February 4, 1945, the Usher Board was organized under the direction of Sis. Mildred Green (H1 pp. 3, 21; H2 p. 1). The 2001 sheet says she "was granted permission to organize an usher board" on that day (H1 p. 19). On June 28, 1945, the senior choir and choral group presented a religious play, "A Dream of Queen Esther." In 2001 the church named these cast members as still belonging to the church: Robert Burks, James Burks, Francis Bullitt, Fannie Rudy, Elsie Burks, Millie Burks, Elamaven Carroll, Mary Ruth Courtney and Hattie Young (H1 p. 19).

The sheets also name Rev. Melvin Morrow and Rev. William Richardson. Every full list places Rev. Morrow between Rev. Carroll and Rev. Richardson (H1 pp. 3, 5, 7–12, 21, 23; H2 p. 4); the 2001 sheet names him separately (H1 p. 19). No sheet gives the years of his service. The sheets describe Rev. Morrow's service differently: "(affiliate) served one year" (H1 p. 5), "one year (Interim)" (H2 p. 4), and an Associate Minister who "served various times as interim pastor" (H1 pp. 3, 19, 21; similarly H1 p. 23). Rev. William Richardson served six years according to the 1989 sheet (H1 p. 5) and seven years according to later sheets (H1 pp. 3, 19, 21, 23; H2 p. 4).

On January 4, 1952, in a business meeting, the church voted that "women of the church would have all the rights and privileges of any member" (H1 pp. 3, 21; similarly H1 p. 19; H2 p. 1).

SOURCES H1 pp. 3, 5, 7–12, 19, 21, 23; H2 pp. 1, 4.

1955–1982 The Coleman Years: Growth and Building, 1955–1982

In November 1955 the church called Rev. Thurmond Coleman, Sr. to be its pastor (H1 pp. 3, 5, 7–15, 17, 19, 21, 23; H2 p. 1). The 2004 and 2005 sheets call him the 11th Pastor (H1 p. 23; H2 p. 1). He served forty-five years. The sheets credit him with the growth of the church, with continuing the ministries already in place and with starting new ones (H1 pp. 3, 5, 21, 23; H2 p. 1). The new ministries begun under his leadership "included: a Singles' Outreach, Drug Awareness, Girls Ministry, Junior Brotherhood, Scholarships,

Tutoring, Library, Family Life Center Sports Ministry, Computer Center, Adult and Children Bible Studies, Audio Visual/Communication Ministry and Senior Citizen's Ministry" (H1 p. 3; similar lists on H1 p. 21 and H2 p. 1). The church's facilities grew to include "a larger sanctuary with a baptismal, and educational wing, a family life center, several parking lots, an annex, and the acquisition of property for future growth" (H1 p. 3; similarly H1 pp. 21, 23; H2 p. 1).

1960. In April 1960, during the 127th Anniversary Celebration, ground was broken for a building project (H1 pp. 5, 7–15, 17). The sheets describe the project in different ways:

- "the foundation and brick veneering of the auditorium" (1989, H1 p. 5);
- "the foundation and brick veneering of the new auditorium" (1990, H1 p. 7);
- "the foundation of our new brick church" (1991 to 2000, H1 pp. 8, 9, 11–15, 17; "the foundation of new brick church" on H1 p. 10);
- "the foundation and brick veneering of the exterior of the old building" (2001 to 2004, H1 pp. 3, 20, 21, 23);
- "the foundation and brick veneer building" (2005, H2 p. 1).

The sheets do not settle whether this was a new church or a re-facing of the old one. The 2001 sheet, which says it was compiled partly from business-meeting minutes, uses the "old building" wording (H1 pp. 19–20).

On October 15, 1961, a mortgage burning service was held for the project. The church officers then were trustees James Cook, William Brown, Carl Fulton, Oliver Sanders, Joseph Williams, Irvin Young, Walter Wilson, William Wooten and John R. Williams, and deacons Elijah Hughes, John H. Williams, Andrew Johnson, Edward Jessup, Irvin Young, James Burks and Oliver Sanders (H1 p. 20).

1961 and 1968. In 1961 the choir began the "Harvest Sing" under the direction of Sis. Freda Gatlin, with Sis. Cassandra Robinson as pianist. At first all the church choirs in the Jeffersontown area were invited to take part. Later it featured only the First Baptist choir. In August 1968 Sis. Odessa Anderson was given permission to organize the Sunbeams, with the help of Sis. Jane Eddleman of Jeffersontown Baptist Church (H1 p. 20).

The Education Building. Ground was broken for the new Education Building in October 1970, and it was dedicated in June 1971 (H1 pp. 5, 7–15, 17, 20; the year without the month on H1 pp. 3, 21, 23; H2 p. 1). Some sheets call it the Educational Building.

A new sanctuary. "We continued to try to make the old historic building adequate, but it just would not suffice. As Jeffersontown began to grow, so did First Baptist" (H1 p. 5; similarly H1 p. 7). Late in 1975, Rev. Coleman received the message from "Somebody bigger than You and I" that the church should build (H1 pp. 5, 7).

The sheets give two dates for the last service in the old building. The sheets of 1989 to 2001 give May 1976 (H1 pp. 5, 7–15, 17, 20). The sheets of 2002 to 2005 give May 1974 (H1 pp. 3, 21, 23; H2 p. 1). Until the new church was built, the congregation held its services in the Garland Cochran Elementary School. The name is spelled Cochran (H1 pp. 3, 21, 23; H2 p. 1), Cochrane (H1 pp. 5, 7) and Cocharne (H1 pp. 8–15, 17).

On Sunday, February 20, 1977, the congregation entered its present building and celebrated with an Entry and Dedication Service (H1 pp. 3, 5, 7–15, 17, 20, 21, 23; H2 p. 1). At that service a solo, "He Lives," was sung. "Because 'He Lives', our church will be kept alive" (H1 p. 5). The church has remembered the day every year since. Earlier sheets call it the Day of Thanksgiving (H1 pp. 8–15, 17, 20), and later sheets call it the Day of Thanks, observed in February (H1 pp. 3, 21, 23; H2 p. 1).

In 1980 a second floor was added to the Education Building (H1 pp. 3, 12–15, 17, 20, 21, 23; H2 p. 1; "about 1980" on H1 p. 11). The 1994 and 1996 sheets say this completed "the third phase of building" (H1 pp. 11, 12).

SOURCES H1 pp. 3, 5, 7–15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23; H2 p. 1.

1983–1989

The 150th Anniversary and the Years After, 1983–1989

In 1983 First Baptist celebrated its 150th Church Anniversary. Beginning on April 11, a guest minister preached each night. A Grand Reception followed, on April 16 according to most sheets (H1 pp. 6–9, 11, 12) and on April 19 according to the 1993 sheet (H1 p. 10). Members who had belonged to First Baptist for fifty years or more were recognized and honored, and the Souvenir Program included a pictorial history of the church (H1 pp. 6–12).

The 150th Church Anniversary Committee was Reverend Thurmond Coleman, Sr., Pastor; Joetta Robinson, Chairman; Hattie L. Young, Co-Chairman; Irvin Williams; Patsy Worldlow (listed as deceased); Jean Jackson; Aline Talbott; Joanne N. Johnson; Walter Tytus; Alberta O'Bannon; Cherry Brooks; Emmer Kinnard; and Pauline Alexander. Their foreword spoke for the generations before them: "It is virtually impossible for us to even imagine the tribulations, frustrations and setbacks of those faithful Christians who labored untiringly to insure the very existence of First Baptist Church. We are most grateful for their efforts" (H1 p. 1).

The Scholarship Committee was organized in 1983 (H1 pp. 3, 11–14, 16, 18, 20, 21). The Nurses' Guild was organized in July 1983 (H1 p. 8). The scholarship fund itself was established in 1985. Under the direction of Edwina F. Flood, with the help of the Youth Committee, a plan was presented to the church at the May 1985 meeting, and a fund of $1,000 was established (H1 pp. 3, 21–22; the 1985 fund also on H1 pp. 11–14, 16, 18, 20, 23; H2 p. 1). The fund grew to $2,500 (H1 pp. 11, 12, 13), then "equals or exceeds $2,500" (H1 pp. 16, 18; similarly H1 p. 14), and later "well over the initial $1,000" (H1 pp. 3, 22). It was renamed the Sadie Abstain and Dwayne Woodruff Scholarship (H1 pp. 11–14, 16, 18; the 2001 sheet says one of the annual scholarships "has been officially named" for them, H1 p. 20; written "Sadie Abstain/Dwayne Woodruff" on H1 pp. 22, 23 and H2 p. 1, and "Sadie Abstain/Dwyane Woodruff" on H1 p. 3). In time the church added the Burks' Family Scholarship, the Remiller and Freida Washington Scholarship and the Tommie Howard Scholarship (H1 pp. 3, 22, 23), and by 2005 the Janice Smith Scholarship (H2 p. 1).

By 1989 the church had grown "from a few members, one step up from slavery, in 1833 to more than 1,000," and it was planning for more room. The plans included enlarging the nursery, church office and Pastor's Study; building a new Women's Lounge, fifteen classrooms, a Choir Room and a Library; and a Gymnasium for the Family and Community, with roller skating, basketball, fellowship dinners, dramas, volleyball, shuffleboard, ping-pong and aerobic exercise. Ceramics and day care facilities were planned for later. "We are striving to minister to the whole man." The expansion was financed from the Building Fund and members' pledges (H1 p. 6).

SOURCES H1 pp. 1, 3, 6–14, 16, 18, 20–23; H2 p. 1.

1990–1999

The Family Life Center Years, 1990–1999

April 22, 1990 "will always be remembered in the history of First Baptist." The church celebrated its 157th Church Anniversary and dedicated its Family Life Center (H1 pp. 8–14, 16, 18; the dedication also on H1 pp. 3, 20, 22; H2 p. 1). The day opened with a Continental Breakfast given by the Sunday School Department. It was also High Attendance Day, and 426 people attended Sunday School (H1 pp. 8–10). The dedication took place outside, with a Processional, guest speakers, the Litany of Dedication, a tour and a reception (H1 pp. 8–12).

Rev. John O. Crittenden, Jr. was hired as Director of the Family Life Center (H1 pp. 8–12). The later sheets date his joining the staff to June 25, 1990 (H1 pp. 13, 14, 16, 18), and he is remembered as its first director (H1 pp. 3, 20, 22; H2 p. 1). The Grand Opening was held on Saturday, September 22, 1990 (H1 pp. 3, 8–14, 16, 18, 22, 23). In a typical week the Center offered arts and crafts, youth basketball, volleyball, Bible study, coed aerobics, men's basketball, cheerleaders' training and prayer meetings (H1 pp. 8, 10; a shorter list on H1 p. 9). On September 8, 1991, at a renaming ceremony, it became the Thurmond Coleman, Sr. Family Life Center (H1 pp. 3, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 23; H2 p. 1; "1991" on H1 pp. 11, 12; "later changed" on H1 p. 10). The church paid off the mortgage on the million-dollar building within five years (H1 pp. 3, 12–14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 23; H2 p. 1) and burned it on February 18, 1996 (H1 pp. 12–14, 16, 18).

Black History Month. In February 1991 the church held African-American study programs each Wednesday night and history quizzes each Sunday, chaired by Ken Morris and Paul Smith. The quiz winners were Adrienne Fedrick, Linda Cain and Nat Brown. The Brotherhood/Sisterhood Award went to Freida Washington, and the Youth Brotherhood/Sisterhood Award, a tie, to Kenna Morris and Darnell Johnson. Earlier recipients were Mary Williams in 1989 and Antoinette Davis in 1990. An African-American Quiz Bowl was held on March 1, and the church's youth came second in the AKA Black History Bowl. The awards were given "for unselfish devotion and distinguished service to our church and community." That year Joetta Robinson received the Roy Wilkins Certificate of Life Membership ($500.00) in the NAACP (H1 p. 9).

In February 1992 Ken Morris and Paul Smith again chaired the activities: weekly study sessions from pre-school to 12th grade, weekly history quizzes, and an African-American Celebration and Banquet. The Cora E. Coleman Brotherhood/Sisterhood Awards went to Donna Curry and Kevin Trice (H1 p. 8). In February 1993 the African American Awareness and Enrichment Committee, chaired by Lutitia Papailler and Ken Morris, presented speakers each Sunday on their life successes and the obstacles they faced as African Americans: Dr. Madeline Hicks, Lohelen Hambrick, Judge Ernest Jasmin and Henry L. Clay. Young people of the church took part in the AKA Black History Quiz Bowl, and the Cora E. Coleman Brotherhood/Sisterhood Awards went to Deacon Floyd Smith and Tiffany LeMay (H1 p. 10).

Ministries and staff.

Rev. Richard Gaines was hired as Director of Outreach Ministry and Pastor of Children's Church (H1 p. 8), called Minister of Children's Church the next year (H1 p. 10). Children's Church met every Sunday for children in grades one through six (H1 pp. 8, 10). The Male Chorus was organized in 1990 under the direction of Sis. Shirley Mucker (H1 p. 10). On Sunday, March 15, 1992, Brereton Jones, Governor of Kentucky, worshipped with the church. Rev. Coleman and the church family presented him with a plaque, and the Governor named Rev. John O. Crittenden, Jr. a Kentucky Colonel. On April 12, 1992, the church celebrated the Grand Opening of the First Baptist Library (H1 pp. 8, 10).

On November 14, 1993, during Rev. Coleman's 38th Pastoral Anniversary, 467 people attended Sunday School, the highest attendance the sheets record (H1 pp. 11–14, 16, 18). The 1994 and 1996 sheets thank Rev. Gaines, Outreach Leader; Sis. Mary Williams, Director of the Sunday School; and Sis. Linda and Rev. Ken Fentress of the Single and Youth Ministry (H1 pp. 11, 12). In July 1997 Charles Coleman joined the staff as Director of the Family Life Center (H1 pp. 14, 16, 18), and in 1998 Keith Hackett became its Director (H1 pp. 16, 18). By 1998 the church had bought additional structures and property on Old Taylorsville Road and Watterson Trail, and renovation made room for a computer lab and an expanded library (H1 pp. 14, 16, 18, 20). The church also co-sponsored the JCPS Tutoring Program, which was housed at the church (H1 pp. 14, 16, 18).

Women on the Trustee Board.

The sheets of 1990 to 1992 honor the women who had served as trustees. The 1990 sheet names eight: Peggy Hite, June Burks, Ora Livers, Barbara Cook, Patricia Williams, Shirley Burks, Antoinette Davis and Ann Pleasant. The last two were still serving in 1990 (H1 p. 7). The 1991 sheet names ten. It gives "Jean Burks" in place of June Burks and adds Mary Craft and Stephanie Mudd (H1 p. 9). The 1992 sheet names eleven, adding Carolyn Harris (H1 p. 8). The sheets do not say whether June and Jean Burks are the same person.

The newest organizations.

Each year's sheet named the church's youngest organization as of that year: the Nurses' Guild in 1992 (H1 p. 8), the Male Chorus in 1993 (H1 p. 10), the Single Adult Ministry and Senior Adults in 1994 and 1996 (H1 pp. 11, 12), and in 1999 and 2000 the "Crusaders," an arm of the Adult Brotherhood for boys aged 10 to 12, led by co-directors Bro. Bill Robinson, Bro. Romallis St. Cyr and Lic. Larry Watkins (H1 pp. 16, 18).

Membership. The sheets record the congregation's growth: more than 1,000 in 1989 (H1 p. 6); 970 in 1990 (H1 p. 7); 1,081 in 1991 (H1 p. 9); 1,178 in 1992 (H1 p. 8); 1,221 in 1993 (H1 p. 10); 1,264 in 1994 (H1 p. 11); 1,371 in 1996 (H1 p. 12); 1,481 on the 1997 sheet (H1 p. 13); 1,553 on December 31, 1997 (H1 p. 14); 1,639 on December 31, 1998 (H1 p. 16); and 1,737 on December 31, 1999 (H1 p. 18). The 1990 figure is lower than the 1989 one, and the sheets do not explain why.

SOURCES H1 pp. 3, 6–14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 23; H2 p. 1.

2000–2002

A Pastorate Closes, 2000–2002

On August 30, 2000, Rev. Thurmond Coleman, Sr. submitted his letter of retirement as pastor, effective November 12, 2000 (H1 pp. 4, 20, 22; H2 p. 1; the effective date also on H1 p. 24). The church honored him and his wife, Sis. Cora Coleman:

- **October 21, 2000:** an inspirational tribute and reception in honor of Sis. Cora Coleman.
- **November 11, 2000:** an anniversary and retirement celebration and banquet in honor of Rev. and Sis. Coleman at the Galt House.
- **November 12, 2000:** a 45th Anniversary and Retirement worship service in their honor, followed by the unveiling of the Thurmond Coleman, Sr. Boulevard.

(H1 pp. 4, 20, 22. The unveiling is recorded on H1 pp. 4 and 22.)

The sheets give two dates for the declaring of the pulpit vacant: November 28, 2000 (H1 pp. 4, 20, 22) and November 12, 2000, the day the retirement took effect (H1 p. 24; H2 p. 1). A Pulpit Search Committee was formed. The 2003 sheet says it was approved after the Deacons presented it to the church (H1 p. 4). The 2002 sheet says it was "selected from numerous applications submitted" (H1 p. 22). Its members were Deacon Floyd Smith (Chair), Deacon Richard Carr, Joe Wiley, Pat Childs, Theresia Colbert, Omicah House, John R. Williams, Francis Rankin (called the church clerk on H1 p. 4 and the church Secretary on H1 p. 22) and Lic. Keith Hackett (H1 pp. 4, 22).

Meanwhile Rev. Kevin Nelson, Sr. served as interim pastor. He also applied to become pastor, the first time an interim pastor had done so (H1 pp. 4, 22). To allow it, on December 14, 2001, the church voted to change the wording on the "Selection of the Interim Pastor," page 17 of Part F of its Constitution and Bylaws, from "should not" to "may." The change passed with a two-thirds majority of members present (H1 pp. 4, 22, 24; H2 p. 2).

On January 4, 2002, at a church meeting, Bros. Billy Williams and Anthony Silmon reported on the procedure the Pulpit Committee had used to select possible candidates. At the same meeting the Church Trustees "again" brought before the church the possibility of buying the Old Jeffersontown Colored School, with a feasibility study. After some discussion, the church voted not to buy the school building (H1 p. 4).

SOURCES H1 pp. 4, 20, 22, 24; H2 pp. 1, 2.

2002–2008 The Dawning of a New Era, 2002–2008

The church's histories gave this period the heading "The Dawning of a New Era" (H1 pp. 4, 24).

2002. On July 14, 2002, at a Special Called Meeting, the members elected Rev. Kevin L. Nelson, Sr. as the church's 12th pastor by majority vote of those present (H1 pp. 4, 24; H2 p. 2). On August 2, 2002, the church began a retirement package for all full-time employees, the first in its history. On September 20, 2002, Rev. Nelson presented his short- and long-term vision for the church, "A New Vision of a New Day" (H1 p. 4; H2 p. 2). A week of activities and celebration began on October 13 and led up to the installation on October 20, 2002 (H1 p. 4; H2 p. 2). Rev. Charles Duncan is named as the installation speaker in one sheet and as officiating in another. The 2004 sheet calls the October 20 service, held at 4:00 p.m., "Pre-installation Services" (H1 p. 24; H2 p. 2).

In December 2002, Lics. Dana Davis and James Matthew Kinnard preached their initial sermons. The 2003 sheet calls them "Bros." (H1 pp. 4, 24; H2 p. 2). That month the church created a new position, Director of Church Auxiliaries, and appointed Bro. Billy Williams its first director (H1 p. 4; H2 p. 2). Also in December 2002, "the church purchased the Old Jeffersontown Colored School Bldg. on Shelby Street (Thurmond Coleman Sr. Blvd.)" (H1 p. 4; also H1 p. 24; H2 p. 2).

2003. At the April 25, 2003 church meeting, Alex Jones recommended that the church buy "the property at 10404 Shelby Street for $65,000.00." Walter Tytus moved to buy the property and Jerry Williams seconded. The sheet does not record the outcome of the vote, and it does not say whether 10404 Shelby Street is the school building bought the previous December or another property. At the same meeting Harold Minor and Billy Williams reported that they were arranging the purchase of a church bus, which began running in August (H1 p. 24).

On September 26, 2003, Rev. Nelson began the 7x7 Plan. Each member would be asked to give $7.00 a week in addition to tithes and offerings. The 2004 sheet says that at the end of seven years the building fund should hold $1,694,000.00, and with a further $70,000 the church "would be able to build another sanctuary without going into the general fund or accumulating more debt" (H1 p. 24). The 2005 sheet says the funds would exist "for another sanctuary if necessary" (H2 p. 2). On November 23, 2003, Brother Dan Hall preached his initial sermon. Parking lots were being cleared, new office equipment was bought, and property was being made available for future expansion (H1 p. 24; H2 p. 2).

2004. The church sanctuary was refurbished in 2004 and other capital projects were completed. The church mourned the death of Sister Janice Smith, and Sister Carolyn Love became Preschool Director in June 2004. On November 21, 2004, Brother Adam Carter preached his initial sermon and Sister Barbara Williams announced her call to preach. Sister Mary Williams stepped down as Sunday School Director "after many years of service," and Sister Lohelen Hambrick succeeded her in December 2004 (H2 p. 2).

2005. By the 172nd anniversary in April 2005, the Old Jeffersontown Colored School Building was "now known as the First Baptist Church Enrichment Center" (H2 p. 2). Membership stood at over 1,600, the figure also given in 2002 and 2003 (H1 pp. 4, 22; H2 p. 2). The 1999 figure had been 1,737 (H1 p. 18); the later sheets do not give an exact figure or explain the difference.

2007. On Sunday, February 4, 2007, the Greeters Ministry began. Its mission was to offer "each individual a warm welcome with a positive and friendly greeting and handshake," and so to "show that LOVE is the First Baptist way" (H2 p. 3).

2008. In April 2008 the church celebrated its 175th Church Anniversary under the title "We Made It." Rev. Kevin L. Nelson, Sr. was pastor (H2 p. 4). The anniversary history closed with these words: "Through all the trials and challenges that life has brought us, through the power of Christ we can say 'We Made It'!" and with Psalm 124:1a: "If it had not been for the Lord who was on our side" (H2 p. 4).

SOURCES H1 pp. 4, 22, 24; H2 pp. 2, 3, 4.

1833–2008

The Pastors of First Baptist Church, 1833–2008

The list follows the order given in the sheets of 2002, 2003 and 2004, and the twelve names they share with the 2008 sheet. The 2008 sheet reverses the fourth and fifth names (see "The order" below). Terms of service are as the sheets record them. The sheets give no starting or ending years for the first six pastors.

	PASTOR (AS RECORDED)	SERVICE AS RECORDED	PAGES
1	**Rev. Summerfield**	Ten years. First pastor; organizer of the church in the yearly sheets	H1 pp. 1, 3, 5; H2 p. 4
2	**Rev. Elias Anderson**	Five years	H1 pp. 3, 5; H2 p. 4
3	**Rev. James Enders (also "Ender")**	Sixteen years	H1 pp. 3, 5; H2 p. 4
4	**Rev. Phillip Alexander**	Eleven years	H1 pp. 3, 5; H2 p. 4
5	**Rev. James Wilson**	Twelve years (H1 p. 5); no term given in H2 p. 4	H1 pp. 3, 5; H2 p. 4
6	**Rev. Richard Reynolds**	Forty-six years; died June 1, 1933	H1 pp. 2, 3, 5; H2 p. 4
7	**Rev. J. H. Lewis**	Interim; two years (H1 p. 5) or three years (H1 pp. 3, 19, 21, 23; H2 p. 4)	as cited
8	**Rev. Arvel Carroll (also Arvil, Arvell)**	Thirteen years, 1935–1948	H1 pp. 3, 5, 19; H2 p. 4
9	**Rev. Melvin Morrow**	"(affiliate) served one year" (H1 p. 5); "one year (Interim)" (H2 p. 4); Associate Minister who served "various times as interim pastor" (H1 pp. 3, 19, 21, 23)	as cited
10	**Rev. William Richardson**	Six years (H1 p. 5) or seven years (H1 pp. 3, 19, 21, 23; H2 p. 4)	as cited
11	**Rev. Thurmond Coleman, Sr.**	Called November 1955; retired effective November 12, 2000; forty-five years; "11th Pastor"	H1 pp. 3, 4, 23; H2 p. 1
12	**Rev. Kevin L. Nelson, Sr.**	Interim pastor ("eight months" on H1 pp. 3, 21, 23) until his election as 12th pastor on July 14, 2002; installed October 20, 2002; pastor in 2008	H1 pp. 3, 4, 21, 23, 24; H2 pp. 2, 4

WHERE THE SHEETS DIFFER ON THE PASTORS:

- **The order.** The 2008 history lists Rev. James Wilson before Rev. Phillip Alexander (H2 p. 4). Every other list puts Rev. Alexander first (H1 pp. 3, 5, 7–12, 21, 23).
- **The count.** The sheets of 1989 to 1992 say the church had "only ten" pastors before Rev. Coleman, the present pastor (H1 pp. 5, 7–9). The sheets of 1993 to 2000 say eleven, including Rev. Coleman (H1 pp. 10–15, 17). The sheets of 2002 to 2008 say twelve, including Rev. Nelson (H1 pp. 3, 21, 23; H2 pp. 1, 4). Read together, these three counts agree with one another, and all of them count Rev. J. H. Lewis and Rev. Melvin Morrow among the pastors. The same counting makes Rev. Coleman the 11th pastor and Rev. Nelson the 12th, as the sheets call them (H1 pp. 4, 23, 24; H2 pp. 1, 2). The 2001 sheet does not fit: it says "only 10 pastors" while naming Rev. Coleman among them (H1 p. 19).

- **Terms of service.** The two- or three-year term for Rev. Lewis, the six- or seven-year term for Rev. Richardson, and the different descriptions of Rev. Morrow's service are shown in the table. Three sheets give Rev. Nelson's interim service as eight months (H1 pp. 3, 21, 23); none says when it began.

About the Sources

This history was consolidated in November 2026 from the history sheets First Baptist Church printed for its anniversaries between 1983 and 2008, preserved as two scanned files and transcribed page by page in `history/transcript.md`. Most sheets carry a handwritten date and anniversary number at the top. The sheets were reprinted year after year with small additions, so this history tells each event once and cites every sheet that records it.

WHO WROTE THEM.

- The foreword to the 150th anniversary program, 1983, was signed by the 150th Church Anniversary Committee (H1 p. 1).
- The sheets of 1989 to 1996 were signed by the Church Historian, Freida C. Washington, later signed Freida Washington (H1 pp. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12).
- The 2002 sheet was signed by the Historian, Edwina F. Flood (H1 p. 22).
- The 2003 sheet was credited to Jerry Williams and the Church History Committee (H1 p. 4).
- The 2004 and 2005 sheets were signed by the Church History Committee (H1 p. 24; H2 p. 2).
- The sheets of 1997 to 2001, the 2007 Greeters Ministry sheet and the 2008 175th-anniversary history are unsigned (H1 pp. 13–20; H2 pp. 3, 4).

What they drew on. The compilers said their history was drawn "from previous programs, personal memories and church minutes" (H1 pp. 4, 22) and "from church history books, minutes of business meetings, and old programs" (H1 p. 20). The 2008 history also draws on the deed records at the Jefferson County Courthouse and "the accounts given by older blacks in Jeffersontown" (H2 p. 4).

The obituary clipping. The 1933 obituary of Rev. Richard Reynolds is a newspaper clipping kept with the sheets. It does not show the newspaper's name or date (H1 p. 2).

One source outside the sheets. Three details about the church's lot do not appear in the anniversary sheets: that the church's original $175 lot lies on Watterson Trail (the sheets mention Watterson Trail only for property bought by 1998), that it was bought in 1876–77, and that it is "the old Union Church property." They come from the church's own website (First Baptist Church of Jeffersontown, About page), which was approved as a source for this history in November 2026. The sheets record that, while the present building was being built, services were held for a time at the Garland Cochran Elementary School (see "The Coleman Years"). Everything else in this history comes from the anniversary sheets.

What the set does not include. The surviving set has no sheets for 1984 to 1988, 1995 or 2006. Of the 1983 souvenir program, only the foreword survives in the set; its pictorial history is not included.

HOW THIS HISTORY HANDLES THE SHEETS' OWN COUNTS AND DATES.

- Some sheets carried forward an earlier year's figures without updating them. The 1992 sheet repeats the 1991 sheet's "158 years" and "36th year" (H1 pp. 8, 9). The 1996 sheet

says “161 years” (H1 p. 12). The 2000 sheet repeats the 1999 text word for word, including “This year, 1999,” with only the membership figure changed (H1 pp. 15–18). The 1993 sheet’s title reads “1883 - 1993” (H1 p. 10). This history does not use any of these running counts to date events.

- The sheet whose text covers 1997 carries the handwritten date of 1998 (H1 p. 13). This history treats it as the 1997 sheet.
- The honorary street appears as “Thurmond Coleman, Sr. Boulevard” (H1 pp. 4, 22), “Thurmond Coleman Sr. Blvd.” (H1 p. 4) and “Thurmond Coleman Sr. Boulevard” (H1 p. 24; H2 p. 2). These are forms of the same name.
- Names are kept as the church recorded them. Where a name is spelled more than one way, the text uses one form and notes the others. Obvious typing errors in the sheets have not been reproduced in this history.

Not Included

The following material from the sheets is not retold above:

- **Scripture, poems and closing words.** The scripture verses that head and close most sheets; the poem “I am the Church” (H1 p. 6); the poem “His Guiding Hand” by Juanita R. Davis (H1 p. 7); the running header “The Church + The Armor Of God = Destined For Greatness,” Ephesians 6:10–18 (H1 pp. 21–22); and the sheets’ closing thanksgivings and blessings.
- **The full Greeters Ministry flyer.** Its opening reflection on greetings in the New Testament, its full mission statement and its list of New Testament greetings (H2 p. 3). The founding date and mission are summarized in the 2007 entry.
- **A bulletin notice.** The correction moving the Sista’s Corner from August 28 to August 21, 2004, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., because of the annual church picnic (H1 p. 24).
- **Running counts.** The yearly numbering of the Day of Thanksgiving (for example, the 15th in 1992), the count of Rev. Coleman’s years as pastor on each sheet, and each sheet’s “during the period of ___ years” figure. These numbers repeat what is dated elsewhere, and some were carried forward without updating (see “About the Sources”).
- **Parts of the 2008 history.** Its tribute to Rev. Kevin L. Nelson, Sr. as “a man of God with integrity and love for the church,” “sent here by God to take us to higher grounds,” and its remarks on white Louisville “growing rich fast” and “busy getting rich” (H2 p. 4).
- **Marks on the copies.** The handwritten dates and numbers, pen strokes, and the torn fragment of a neighbouring article above the obituary clipping (H1 p. 2).