

Sunday, April 3, 1955—Sunday, April 5, 2020

65th Anniversary

St. Andrew/Beck Avenue/Jenks Avenue Church of Christ

The ST. ANDREW CHURCH OF CHRIST began meeting for worship on April 3, 1955. Through the courtesy of the Bay County School Board and the principal of St. Andrew Elementary School, the congregation was permitted to use the auditorium of the school building.

Attendance for the first opening service was fifty-three and the contribution amounted to \$131.32. There were thirty-one members of the church of Christ who began to worship at St. Andrew at that time.

The ST. ANDREW congregation met in the elementary school from April 1955, to the last Sunday in May of 1956. During this entire time brothers Gerald McCalister and Gil Wilson preached for the congregation. It was during this period of time that the Palo Alto Church of Christ purchased a parcel of land at the corner of 17th Street and Beck Avenue in the St. Andrew section of Panama City, and deeded it to the newly formed congregation. During the fourteen-month period (April 1955—May 1956) that the St. Andrew congregation met in the school building, the members constructed a minister's home at the Beck Avenue location. Inside walls were left open in order to accommodate a meeting place for the new congregation.

On June 3, 1956, the opening service was held in the minister's home at the Beck Avenue location. In August of 1956, Hugh and Betty Tucker moved to Panama City to work with the church. Hugh became the minister of the St. Andrew congregation and was also employed by the Bay County School System.

On September 2, 1957, a building fact-finding committee was appointed, as well as, a finance committee to secure some means of financing a building program.

In March of 1958, the Paden Construction Company of Cleburn, Texas began actual construction of the church building at the corner of 17th Street and Beck Avenue.

Opening services in the new building were held on June 1, 1958, with brother James Bates of Nashville, Tennessee holding a week's Gospel Meeting.

With the increase in numerical growth, the need for a full-time minister was evident. On November 11, 1958, a minister's fact-finding committee was appointed with Hugh Tucker as chairman along with Buford Dye and Ed Grim.

On June 21, 1959, brother Byron Laird and family from Jonesboro, Arkansas moved to Panama City succeeding Hugh Tucker as minister and becoming the first full-time minister for the congregation. During his tenure the congregation grew to a membership of 175.

From April 1955 to June 1973, eight different men served as ministers to the congregation: Gerald McCalister, Gil Wilson, Hugh Tucker, Byron Laird, C.C. Arquitt, Gerald Robinson, L.E. Wright, and Doyle Smith.

In July of 1973, the Jack Reece family moved to Panama City. Brother Jack Reece and his wife Pam faithfully served this congregation for over forty-one years.

Renfro Lloyd and Gil Wilson served as the first elders of the congregation along with deacons John Coburn, Matt Stedham and Denny Whitehead.

In 1973, the name of the congregation was changed from ST. ANDREW to the BECK AVENUE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

On August 15, 1984, the BECK AVENUE CHURCH OF CHRIST purchased a five acre tract of land on Jenks Avenue with additional acreage added later.

In January of 1992, a steering committee with Bob Backus as chairman, was appointed to explore plans for the construction of the new church facilities.

April 12, 1992, preliminary plans were presented to the congregation and accepted. A challenge to give \$135,000.00 on May 10, 1992 was reached with a special contribution.

Ground breaking ceremonies and dinner on the Jenks Avenue grounds were held on October 18, 1992. The new facility was completed on July 9, 1993, and the first service was held on Sunday, July 18, 1993.

Thus began the JENKS AVENUE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

In February 1997, the elders requested of W.J. Commander that he form an Exploratory Building Planning Committee to formulate plans for a Family Activity Center (FAC) at Jenks Avenue.

On Sunday afternoon, November 2, 1997, chairman Hugh Tucker met with the elders and deacons on behalf of the Planning Committee to present a ten-page document and outline of the proposed building.

Sunday morning, June 4, 2000, Bob Backus (chairman of the Steering Committee) along with Hal Burlison presented to the congregation the final architectural plans and estimated cost of the entire facility.

Sunday, November 12, 2000, groundbreaking ceremonies were held for the FAC followed by dinner-on-the-ground.

Beginning in January 2001, construction work commenced on the FAC with Gene Wishum as the general contractor/superintendent. The construction of the FAC was completed in October of the same year.

Daniel and Rachael Cherry and family moved to Panama City in February 2006. In January 2015 Daniel became the pulpit minister for Jenks Avenue Church of Christ.

Hurricane Michael struck the panhandle on Wednesday, October 10, 2018. Due to damage sustained to the main building, services would be held in the Family Activity Center, which also sustained damage.

January 12, 2020 was the first Sunday back in the main building after fourteen months in the FAC.

Former Elders of the Congregation:

1. Gil Wilson
2. Renfro Lloyd
3. Jim Holley
4. Denny Whitehead
5. George Breegle
6. Clip Knapp
7. Vern Justice
8. M.C. Pippin
9. Dale McKeand
10. Wayne Wegner
11. Hugh Tucker

A LOOK BACK

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not grow weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)

Prior to 1936 there were no congregations in Bay county. In 1932 Sister Bessie Green and family moved to Bay County from Garvin, Oklahoma to Millville. She was the only member of her family that was a member of the Church of Christ. Her husband was employed by the Paper Mill after the crash of 1929. It was the only work in town in the midst of the Depression.

For four long years she searched in vain for other members of the Church of Christ. During her search, Sister Green ran across two families that were once members of the Church of Christ but were no longer interested. Her faith never wavered-she never failed to pray daily.

In 1935 Brother and Sister D.B. McKey and their daughter moved to Bay County (her husband transferred for work at the Paper Mill).

They had formally worshipped with the West Hill Church of Christ in Pensacola, Fl. Finding no Church of Christ-A Macedonian Call went out to the eldership of the West Hill Church of Christ in Pensacola. To their credit, the elders gave the matter much consideration. On December 1, 1935 they sponsored a gospel meeting in the Bay Harbor section of Panama City. Brother Paul Simon conducted the meeting until December 22-the result was one baptism.

The West Hill Congregation sent Brother Paul Simon back on January 1, 1936-and supported him until May, 1939.

During the year 1936, services were conducted in the Bay Harbor community building on Sunday afternoons. This was the only time the building was available for use by the congregation. In order to have services on Sunday morning and evening, the congregation moved its services to the rented home of the Simons in Springfield. The living room of the Simon's home was used for services.

The congregation continued to meet in the Simon's home until the Bayline Railroad donated land in Springfield to the church.

A brother from the West Hill Church in Pensacola, assisted brother Simon and his father in building the first meeting house. The lumber for the meeting house cost \$1000.00. The church had to pay this in monthly payments. There was no indoor plumbing in the building.

Some of the early members' children who worship with us today are:

- A. The Ervin Griffis family-son-Billy Griffis
- B. The Roy Jackson family-daughter -Shirley Jackson
- C. The Wesley Jenkins family-daughter-Freida Martin. Brother Jenkins later became an elder of the Palo Alto Congregation.
- D. Sister Burlie Miller-daughter-Mickye Sheidler
- E. The D.J. Anderson family-daughter-Juanita Whitfield. Brother Anderson later became an elder of the Springfield congregation.
- F. The George Palmer family-son-Rex Palmer
- G. The Brooks family-son-Dwayne Brooks

The Church of Christ in Springfield became self-supporting in 1939, and at the time brother Simon and his family moved back to Pensacola. The church continued to meet in the Springfield area until 1946. Land had been purchased the previous year in 1945 on Highway 98 and Palo Alto Avenue in Panama City. The building was constructed and the first service was held in the late summer of 1946. The Springfield congregation having moved in its entirety from Springfield, Florida to Panama City now became known as the Palo Alto Church of Christ.

By 1948 the Palo Alto congregation had grown to a membership of 125, and regular attendance of more than 200 on Sunday.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's, the minister of the Palo Alto congregation was Tolbert Fanning Vaughan, Jr., affectionally known as "Buddy." It was he who baptized both Gil and Beth Wilson. Buddy, who is now deceased, was a brother of Shirley McCalister and a first cousin of Hugh Tucker. His father, T.F. Vaughan, Sr., having previously lived in New Orleans had moved to Panama City where he had purchased the Tom's Peanut franchise that extended from Pensacola to Tallahassee. In order to help with this new business his daughter Shirley and son-in-law Gerald McCalister moved from Salinas,

California to Marianna, Florida. In addition to working in the business he also preached for the church in Marianna before moving to Panama City.

The two men who convinced the Palo Alto eldership to sponsor the mission endeavor in St. Andrews were Gerald McCalister and Gil Wilson. Wesley Jenkins, father of Freida Martin, was one of the Palo Alto elders at that time. Later on Paul Martin, father of Larry Martin, became an elder at Palo Alto.

Additional Congregations

In 1952, a group from the Palo Alto congregation decided to re-establish the church in the Springfield/Parker area. They first met in the home of Sister Miller and later the original church building was purchased by the group. A new building was build at a later date.

In late 1958, 27 members from the Springfield congregation began a congregation in Parker. The original members met in a building. adjacent to the property where the church was to be built.

East Side Church of Christ

In June 1977, the Parker and Springfield congregations merged and became the East Side Church of Christ. Both of the former buildings were sold and land was purchased for construction of a new building. They constructed a building on Highway 22 in the Callaway area in 1978. There were approximately 160 members in attendance at this congregation. Later it became known as the Cherry Street Congregation.

Lynn Haven Church of Christ

The Lynn Haven Church of Christ was begun on August 28, 1977. Its initial members were approximately 17 adults and 4 children present for the first Sunday Service. Brother Gerald McAlister preached in 1977 brother Stephen Teel ministered to the congregation in 1978, and in January, 1982, brother Hugh Tucker became the minister for the congregation. Louie Consoli, formerly of the Jenks Avenue congregation, previously ministered to the Lynn Haven congregation, which no longer exists.

Emerald Beach Church of Christ

In the 1990's Gerald McAlister along with John Whitfield established this congregation on the beach as a mission effort of Jenks Ave.

The above article was first delivered on Sunday, January 12, 2020 during morning worship.

Reprinted here on request. *Hugh Tucker*



NEW CHURCH OPENING TODAY—The recently completed St. Andrew Church of Christ will have its formal opening today at morning services with an open house from 2 to 4 p. m. (Staff Photo)

House of God That 'We' Built

St. Andrew Church of Christ Has Official Opening Today

The House of God that "we" built has its official opening today.

Since April 1, 1955, the St. An-



JAMES E. BATES
... evangelist

drew Church of Christ has been struggling with "jury rig" places of worship. The date marks the first meeting of the present congregation under the guidance of ministers G. T. McCalister and Gilbert Wilson.

During the original year the present site at Beck and 17th, St. Andrew was purchased and a pastor's home built.

In the ensuing 24 months the congregation has held services in the minister's home, planning, scrimping, and saving to build its church.

Today the efforts of the building committee, professional construction men, and the 22 male members of the congregation, who have donated their services nightly for the past two month's, will be realized.

At 10 this morning the church doors will be thrown open for the first regular Bible class. At 11 preaching services will be held with the Evangelist James E. Bates of Nashville, Tenn. in the pulpit. This will open a six-day gospel meeting. Weekday services will be held at 7:30 nightly. Dinner on the grounds follows at



NEW ST. ANDREW MINISTERS—In the pulpit of the new St. Andrew Church of Christ's opening today will be lay-speakers Hugh Tucker (left) and G. T. McAllister (right) (Staff Photo)

12 and open house for public inspection will be held from 2 to 4 p.m.

In September of 1957 the Church building committee consisting of R. L. Lowery, T. F. Vaughan, Murich Mace, James Hastings, and John Day contacted the nationally famous G. V. Paden construction

firm of Cleburne, Tex., specialists in Church of Christ building. lay plans for building the \$45,000 place of worship. The entire financing was done by means of "Broadway Church Financial Bonds" with Bond sales spearheaded by sales chairman Buford Dye.