



## **First Baptist Church of Blackville, South Carolina**

*A Historical Perspective Compiled  
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A group of people met at the Samuel Reed home northeast of Blackville on November 8, 1846, for the purpose of organizing a new church. Nine men and seven women, along with their first pastor Reverend Darling Peeples, signed the charter to constitute a church in the town of Blackville.

Twenty-seven men and women had withdrawn from the Healing Springs Baptist Church for this purpose. The church continued to meet at the Reed home until April, 1847, when their first building was erected in the town of Blackville on the lot where the third church building stands. Members Lewis and Martha Nevils gave land for the church. The first building has been described as a simple 30' x 50' one room wooden structure with a porch and four columns across the front.

Blackville Baptist organized its first Sabbath School in 1855. This program experienced a rapid growth and is still an integral part of the church that is now called Sunday School. There were few able-bodied men left in town during the Civil War, but the church continued to function. Records show that this Blackville church contributed \$822 in 1864 to supply Confederate troops with tracts, testaments and preaching services.

February 7, 1865, Federal soldiers took control of Blackville. Churches were used as barns and dance halls and it is said that a dance was held in this Baptist Church. Invading troops left Blackville to continue their journey to the state capitol on February 12th after destroying railroad tracks and burning buildings. However, the small wooden Baptist Church still stood and people began rebuilding the town though many were almost destitute. Federal troops were finally withdrawn from South Carolina in 1877. Minutes of the 1877 associational meeting referenced hard times and the financial crisis, but registered gifts to the student fund of \$50 and fifteen bushels of corn. The Barnwell newspaper reported "a splendid crop and good prices" in 1870. Evidently the Blackville Baptist Church felt prosperous enough to plan extra repairs on the building and buy a new musical instrument.

During the 1800's, baptism was conducted at Storne's Pool, located at the east end of Carroll Street. It is said that red-hot pieces of iron were dropped into the cold waters to warm them for the shivering baptismal candidates. Few churches had baptisteries within their buildings before the twentieth century.

With respect to behavior of members, exclusion was often employed as a means of church discipline. Some of the "notorious sins" considered were lying, gaming for amusement, drinking alcohol, dancing, and being fractious and stirring up strife.

All forms of gambling were prohibited. It was concluded “all such indulgences are prohibited” by Christ’s admonition. The excluded member might be restored after repenting his/her ways and promising to live a more godly life in the future.

Members decided a new building was needed and construction was completed in 1898. There was a struggle to raise the necessary funds but Dedication Day finally arrived. The building was of wood, set on a brick foundation. There was a square tower rising to fifty-eight feet, and two front entrances leading into vestibules. There were two Sabbath School rooms, a furnace beneath the floor, and a unique ceiling of pine boards lay lengthwise and crosswise to suggest a dome. There were three imposing windows called “Rose Windows” and also art glass memorial windows. The first church building had been moved to the north side of the property to make space for the new building. That first building was then renovated to serve as a parsonage. This parsonage was used until 1955.

Congregations took their Church Covenant very seriously in the 19th century. It was considered a Christian duty to encourage Godly living by all means available. In 1890 a booklet was published which contained the Church Covenant, Articles of Faith, Regulations, Rules of Order, Rules of Decorum, and the Articles and Rules of Discipline. Rules specified only men could constitute a quorum for business and that all male church members were required to vote on church issues. The Baptist Church in Blackville first decided to permit women to vote on calling a pastor and electing associational delegates in 1896.

A third house of worship was dedicated in 1921, the second building having been declared to have inadequate space for the congregation. This building is of red brick construction. Over the years people have come to lovingly refer to it as “The Big Brick.” Plans included an 80’ x 100’ sanctuary with an inclined-plane floor. There was to be a basement to house a steam heating system, a kitchen with hot and cold water, and multiple rooms for the Sabbath School. A baptistery would be located in the floor of the rostrum.

New programs were begun. The Woman’s Missionary Union and Brotherhood flourished and a Vacation Bible School was held each summer. A series of revival meetings were held in April of 1922, which continued for two weeks. Good crowds attended despite the almost constant rain. There were sixty additions to the church, most by professions of faith. The church had some lean years during the depression, but continued to be a vital part of the community.

Blackville Baptist's one hundredth birthday was celebrated with a three-day series of meetings November 6-8, 1946. Former pastors brought morning and evening messages around the theme, **The Place of the Local Church in the Advancement of the Kingdom**. There were several other guest speakers and musicians for the well-attended occasion.

A change of name was made on November 12, 1952, when "Blackville Baptist Church" became known as "First Baptist Church of Blackville, South Carolina."

A large number of people moved into the Blackville community during the construction of the Savannah River Plant. Church membership reached 535 with 570 enrolled in Sunday School in 1955. Also in 1955, the church built a new brick parsonage located on Carroll Street.

Since church membership had escalated to 626 during the 1960's it was decided additional classroom space was needed. The annex was completed in 1966 and the educational section of the older building was renovated and fully air-conditioned. The sanctuary had been air-conditioned prior to that time. A steeple was added in 1987.

The second Sunday in November is officially designated "Homecoming Day" each year. In November, 1996, the church celebrated its one hundred-fiftieth anniversary. For that occasion improvements were made to the church auditorium and stained glass windows and chandeliers were installed. This was a well-celebrated day with many former members attending from out-of-town.

The population of the town has declined as has church membership, but the First Baptist Church, Blackville, South Carolina, continued to strive to honor the Great Commission, engaging in mission outreach at home and abroad.

**The Baptist Courier** carried a report about Blackville Baptist Church on September 12, 1921. "We were deeply impressed with the zeal and Christian faith of our brethren and sisters and with the genial hospitality of the citizens of Blackville. Their Christianity is not carried upon the Sunday coat to be lain aside during the work days and to be donned the next Sunday, but it is shown in their daily work..." It is the hope of the First Baptist fellowship that this warm commendation written long ago will continue to be earned by every generation in this church until the Lord comes.

## References

Minutes of Blackville Baptist Church

Minutes of First Baptist Church, Blackville, SC

Barnwell People

Baptist Courier