

First Baptist Church
Santo

Remembering
into the
Future

Celebrating 125 Years

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN SANTO

It was November 3, 1872. The United States of America was just 98 years old. The siege of the Alamo was just 40 years before. The Civil War had been over only seven years. Texas had been a state just 27 years, including five years in the Confederacy. The Apache Wars were still going on. In 1872, Custer's Last Stand was still four years away, Geronimo's surrender 14 years away, and Sitting Bull's death still 18 years away.

Two days after this first Sunday in November, Ulysses S. Grant was re-elected to a second term as President of the United States. In that year, Confederate veterans were given amnesty. It was the year that Jules Verne wrote Around the World in 80 Days (an unbelievable rate of speed back in those days!). It was yet four years before Alexander Graham Bell patented the telephone, five years before Thomas Alva Edison invented the phonograph, 31 years yet before Orville and Wilbur Wright were to make their first airplane flight, and likewise 31 years before Henry Ford began mass-producing cars by the Ford Motor Company. The population of Palo Pinto County was somewhere between the 1,524 recorded in 1860 and the 5,885 in 1880. Edmund J. Davis was Governor of Texas, the last Republican to be elected before William Clements was elected in 1878. Only six years before, Oliver Loving and Charles Goodnight left Palo Pinto with 2000 cattle to blaze the Goodnight-Loving Trail. Almost exactly a year before, three cowboys had been killed by Indians near the present day community of Salesville; and a year before, a Kiowa Indian raiding party had attacked a wagon train north of Palo Pinto. Earlier in that same year of 1872, Chesley Dobbs, after whom Dobbs Valley is named, was massacred by Indians near the site of the present-day rest area at the top of the hill on Highway 281.

There was no town of Santo yet: the railroad would not reach there for another eight years. There was a community called Cottonwood just east of the present-day town of Santo, where J.D.T. Bearden ran a general store. It was in this community, under an oak near the Santo East Cemetery, that the First Baptist Church of Santo was first organized on November 3, 1872. The church minutes officially record the church's name at that time "the Missionary Baptist Church of Christ at Cottonwood Grove on Palo Pinto Creek." It was to become the longest continuously active Baptist church in Palo Pinto County.

Baptist work in the Santo area actually began years before a church was formally organized there. N.T. Byars, in whose blacksmith shop the Texas Declaration of Independence was signed in Washington-on-the-Brazos on March 2, 1836, was the missionary from West Park Baptist Association who started work in this area. He was determined to Christianize the Comanche Indians living in Palo Pinto County. Byars enlisted Sam Houston, in whose Texas Independence Army he had served, as Chairman of Indian Missions for the Texas Baptist Convention. In 1857, at the Texas Baptist Convention meeting in Huntsville, Sam Houston urged the Baptist to start schools and

missions to minister to both the Indians and the destitute whites who lived on the pioneer. Although this mission effort of educating the Indians never fully materialized, a group of

Baptists did meet in Gloconda (later Palo Pinto) to establish a school for the Indians, which was to be named after Byars. This school never became a reality, however.

Another missionary who was active in the area was Elder G.W. Slaughter. Slaughter was the chief scout in Sam Houston's army in the War for Texas Independence. He was sent by Houston to the Alamo with a message to its commander, William Barrett Travis. Travis sent Slaughter back to Houston with his famous "Victory or Death" message. Slaughter's heroism in sneaking past the surrounding Mexican army is memorialized by his picture hanging in the Alamo.

Slaughter began missionary work in Palo Pinto County with Byars in 1858. Slaughter, in a report to Palo Pinto Baptist Association in 1882, noted that a few other preachers had served in the area, but all except Slaughter had left "on account of the Indian raids, and murders, which were a weekly occurrence then." Slaughter was twice attacked by Indians himself as he preached throughout the area and started churches. Only his horsemanship and six-shooters allowed for him to escape. Slaughter usually preached with two Navy Colt pistols on his gunbelt and a Winchester Carbine rifle propped against the pulpit.

On November 3, 1872, eight people met together to form a Baptist Church in the Cottonwood community. Elder R.S. Tierce served as the moderator of the meeting, and C.F. Heifron as the clerk. The eight charter members were Robert Newberry, W.J. Littlefield, Sarah Littlefield, E.H. Ross, J.D.T. Bearden, Caroline Bearden, and Margaret Daves. A protracted meeting held soon afterward swelled the church membership to 35. Elder W.C.R. Brashear was elected the first pastor-moderator of the church. J.D.T. Bearden, who later built the sandstone building still used today by Thornton Mercantile, was the first church clerk. John Long was elected pastor in 1875, and J.A. Glenn was elected to serve the next year.

The church changed its name several times in its 120 year history. Its original name, the Missionary Baptist Church of Christ at Cottonwood Grove on Palo Pinto Creek, was changed in 1878 to the Baptist Church of Christ at Bethel. In 1880, the Texas and Pacific Railroad was completed from Fort Worth to the present site of Santo. This prompted the move of the Cottonwood Community to the present Santo town site, to the new village named Cresco. The church moved, too, its new name being the Missionary Baptist Church of Christ at Pleasant View. The town changed its name twice, first to Sparta, and then to Santo. By 1886, the name changed was recognized as the church changed its name to the Santo Missionary Baptist Church of Christ. In the 1920's the name was shortened to the Santo Baptist Church, and by the 1930's the present name of the First Baptist Church of Santo was being used in the church minutes.

Our church has a unique key to our 125-year heritage: almost the entire set of church minutes are intact, going all the way back to 1872. Reading through the minutes can very interesting, and at times, amusing. Of course, there have been a few spelling errors, especially in those early years. The minutes of one meeting duly record that the minutes of the previous meeting were "red and reprov'd." After one particularly successful revival, which was begun by the pastor and completed by an evangelist and singer, the minutes record that the love offering was divided as follows: "51.25 to the evangelist, \$25 to the singer, and church gave great praise to the pastir, but little contribution." One business meeting began with the reading of the "minuets" of the previous meeting. Another time, the pastor's salary was raised by "\$25 weakly"!

Many of the older minutes have lengthy discussions of charges brought against church members for unchristian conduct. This usually involved drinking, dancing, profanity, or "heresay" (usually for holding to "Holiness" or "Campbellite" doctrines). After the charges of immoral or compromising conduct were brought against a church member, a committee would be formed to confront the individual about this actions. If he is repentant, he would be restored to full fellowship. If not, he was held "in contempt of the church" and his name would be withdrawn from the church membership rolls. One heresay was so bad that the church voted unanimously to "withdraw out fellowship forever"!

One particular concern of the church in 1896 was betting or gambling with dominoes. The church enacted the following resolution:

Whereas there is a great evil growing out of the games known as dominoes, pool playing, and other games in public and private places, such games being contrary to the Word of God and misleading young men and especially boys, therefore be it resolved that every member of the Baptist Church of Christ at Santo absent himself from all such places at home or abroad, and will not permit a set of dominoes to be kept in our homes among our children, and that each member is hereby requested not to enter any public place for the purpose of playing at any such games for past-time, for it is the first step towards gambling and is condemned by the word of God.

A couple of years later, the church extended the prohibition even to "baseball gaming".

The church often experienced hardship in those early years. In August, 1877, no meeting was held because, as the minutes record, "well ny all members being in persute of an outlaw." The April, 1878, meeting was postponed in order to help John Bearden rebuild his house after the old one burned. And the February, 1903, meeting was canceled because of a smallpox quarantine.

The church early in its history sought to become involved with other Baptist churches in the area. In 1874, the church sent messengers to the Brazos River Baptist Association meeting. In 1879, there was interest in starting as association made up of churches just in

Association was organized. J.A. Glenn, the Santo pastor, was the first moderator of the association.

Two pastors went directly from the Santo pastorate to serve as Associational Missionary for Palo Pinto Association--O.F. Gragg in 1882 was the first Associational Missionary for the association, and R.E. Lambert in 1946. Another early Santo pastor, John Lamson, did missionary work in the association in the 1880's.

As early as 1899, the church sent messengers to the Texas Baptist State Convention meeting in Dallas. The Santo church was the site of the meeting in 1902 when representatives of several churches met to organize the County Line Baptist Association. Then, in 1905, the church voted to support the union of Palo Pinto and County Line Baptist Associations, thus doubling their numerical strength. In 1927, Palo Pinto Association joined with Jack County churches to form Palo Pinto-Jack Association, until Jack Association became independent in 1932. In 1964, churches from Palo Pinto and Parker counties joined to form the Palo Pinto-Parker Baptist Area. This cooperation was discontinued in 1968, but renewed in 1976. The union is still operant today.

The church originally met on the first Saturday and Sunday of the month. The meeting times varied for almost the next century: they began meeting on the third Sunday in 1893, the second and fourth Sundays in 1939, the first and third Sundays in 1941, back to the second and fourth Sundays in 1942, and finally every Sunday beginning in 1948. The pastors were only expected to be in Santo on the days of worship until 1907, when C.H. Ray went on a half-time salaried basis. He went back to fourth-time in 1909. The church waffled between half-time, three-fourths time, and full-time pastors until Bob Cochran became full-time in 1948, after which it has always remained a full-time pastorate.

Until the 1940's, the church voted annually on the pastor's employment for the next year. Unfortunately, this often resulted in divided opinions. For example, in 1931, the first ballot resulted in the long-time pastor C.H. Ray getting 15 votes, 12 votes for Harryman, 11 for Wydick, and one for Stewart. Ray, the moderator, took his name off the ballot, resulting in Harryman being elected on the second ballot. The next year, then-pastor Harryman garnered 31 votes, with four for McQueary and one for Lauch, but nine voted to postpone calling anyone! For the first time in 1917, and continually since 1944, the pastors have been called for an indefinite period of time..

The Santo church has been blessed with exceptional spiritual leaders through the years. There have been 51 pastors serving in 56 different pastorates (some serving two or three times) in the 125 years. Their names and dates of service are the following:

W.C.R. Brashear (1872-1874)	W.A. Harryman (1930-1933)
R.S. Tierce (1874-1875)	C.R. Wydick (1933-1934)
John Long (1875-1876)	C.G. Sewell (1934-1936)
J.A. Glenn (1876-1878)	R.E. Bass (1936-1938)
O.F. Gragg (1878-1880)	K.C. Edmond (1938-1939)
James Ray (1880-1882)	W.H. McQueary (1939-1943)
W.C.R. Brashear (1882-1883)	S.E. Sparks (1943)
John Lamson (1883-1886)	Robert E. Lambert (1943-1946)
J.T. Eaton (1886-1887)	W.H. Rucker (1946-1948)
John Lamson (1887-1890)	Bob Cochran (1948-1950)
W.E. Newbrough (1890)	W.A. Hand (1950-1951)
E.M. Tate (1890-1892)	O.A. Graves (1951-1952)
H.B. McGee (1892-1893)	Harvey Kimbler (1952-1954)
C.H. Ray (1893-1897)	Kenneth Jones (1954-1956)
J.F. Blackman (1897-1898)	A.A. Farley (1956-1961)
F. Estell (1898)	Charles Barber (1961-1963)
C.H. Ray (1898-1909)	Jere Mitchell (1963-1965)
L.A. Bagley (1909-1912)	Dalton Young (1965-1968)
W.H. Fortney (1912-1913)	Paul Watson (1968-1970)
Charlie Williams (1913-1915)	Tom Satterwhite (1970-1972)
C.L. Sansing (1915-1917)	Charles Nestor (1972-1975)
Tom Tomlinson (1917-1921)	Mark Brister (1975-1977)
C.J. McCarty (1921-1922)	Carl Clinton (1977-1979)
W.H. McQueary (1922-1925)	Steve Lemke (1979-1984)
Sam Morris (1925-1926)	Mark Tolbert (1985-1987)
J.E. Black (1926-1927)	Jerry Tidewell (1987-1990)
M.H. Lauch (1927-1929)	Larry Huffman (1990)
C.H. Ray (1929-1930)	Gary C. Nunn (1991-present)

The pastor serving longest in Santo was C.H. Ray, who served in all 16 years (1893-1897, 1898-1909, 1929-1930) over four decades in three pastorates, the longest being 11 years from 1898-1909. W. H. McQueary had a total of seven years (1922-1925, 1939-1943) in two different pastorates. John Lamson served six years in two pastorates (1883-1886, 1887-1890). A.A. Farley served a tenure of five years from 1956-1961.

The church has also licensed and ordained an impressive number of men to the gospel ministry, as well as ordaining numerous deacons in the church. Men licensed or ordained to the gospel ministry in our church include J.W. Mershon (1878), T.C. Ray (1878), J. Wattershorn (1878), M.P. Irvin (1916), J.J. Gilbert (1922), B.B. Light (1925), Elbert Dale Holder (1963), Bill Patterson (1974), Dennis McNaughten (1982), Alan Fruge (1986) and Matthew Hamilton (1997).

The deacons who have served in the church, and the approximate year that they began serving as a deacon, include the following:

J.H. Butler (1874)	C.H. Gilliam (1957)
J.D.T. Bearden (1874)	Max Wheeler (1959)
J.A. Glenn (1877)	Sam Ford (1962)
K.L. Keen (1877)	Jim Rucker (1966)
G.H. Mowden (1877)	*Robert Jones (1966)
Parker Thompson (1878)	W.O. Wheeler (1966)
J.T. Williams (1879)	Dwight Chesnut (1967)
John Johnson (1877)	Arvie Hamilton (1970)
J.A. Castleman (1900)	Charles Prichard (1973)
J.H. Latimer (1901)	Pat Patterson (1974)
Alvie Black (1920)	Millard Johnston (1974)
Cecyle Johnson (1920)	*Kenneth Long (1974)
Claude Hatchett (1920)	Dean Stewart (1978)
Matt Irvin (1920)	Kelsie Wylie (1978)
Mr. Pierce (1920)	*Harvel Pitman (1980)
J. Finney Myracle (1920)	Roland Bennett (1981)
J.T. Cantrell (1923)	*Mark Edwards (1982)
Lee Roy Green (1923)	**Ronnie Patterson (1982)
J.M. Gilbert (1927)	*Charles Kitchens (1982)
Melvin McClish (1937)	Bill Patterson (1982)
B.A. Buzbee (1937)	*Phil Colvin (1986)
Leonard Johnston (1937)	Don Rash (1987)
Lloyd Stevens (1937)	*Leonard Edwards (1992)
Forest Turpin (1939)	Marcus Allen (1992)
O.B. Bradford (1942)	*Harold Rucker (1994)
Lott Walker (1942)	*Emmit Smith (1994)
Joe Steen (1942)	
*Bobby Edwards (1957)	

*Actively Serving at Present Time

**Chairman of Deacons

The first full time Music & Youth who served in the church included the following:

Jim Courson (1983 - 1986)
Alan Fruge (1986 - 1989)
Ken Hindman (1989 - 1990)
Bart Poole (1991 - 1994)
Philip Garvin (1994 - 1996)
Paul Ingram (1996 to present)

Several other young men and women have served as either Music or Youth Minister on a part time basis. Before the above ones served.

The church has been led in revivals and supply preaching by such outstanding pulpiteers as Lee R. Scarborough, Dr. E.D. Head, Dr. Huber Drumwright, Dr. Scott Tatum, Dr. Boo Heflin and Dr. Tommy Lea.

Early in its history, the Santo church committed itself to missions and Christian work beyond the immediate Santo area. As early as 1884, the church voted to send an offering to the Buckner Orphan's Home, as well as to give \$2 monthly to home missions. By 1904, the church was pledging \$50 a year for missions. This tradition has continued throughout the history of the church. In the 1981-1982 church year, First Baptist Church of Santo gave over \$4000 to missions through the Cooperative Program, over \$1200 to associational mission efforts, and over \$2000 in special missions offerings. The church placed in the top ten churches in Palo Pinto Association in both dollar amount and percentage giving to both the Cooperative Program and associational mission work.

At least two churches have been formed as missions out of the First Baptist of Santo. In 1886, 17 church members went from the Santo church to form a church in Dobbs Valley. Three years later, several members from Santo went to form a church at Oak Grove.

From its organizational meeting under the oak tree near the Santo East Cemetery, the church began to meet in a series of homes and buildings. In 1877, the church was meeting under an arbor. In 1878, having been forbidden to meet in the building they had helped build for school and church use, the church began meeting in another house to avoid the winter cold. They met at Ray's school house during the winter of 1880. By 1885, they had moved to the Cresco school house, before the city's name was changed from Cresco to Sparta to Santo.

The church met for a while in an old store building near the present-day Texaco service station. Then, in 1891, a church building was built at present location. This building burned, but was replaced by another building. A parsonage was purchased in 1904, and a tabernacle was built just east of the present building in 1905. The current red rock building was built in 1924. The education building and fellowship hall was added in 1953. The Baptistry was built when the church was remodeled in 1956. Before the Baptistry was built the people were baptized in the Brazos River at Beans Camp on highway 281, as well as other places. The parsonage was sold in 1970, and another parsonage across the street from the church was purchased. A second educational building was added in 1972. The sanctuary was renovated in 1974. The church parking lot was paved in 1978. The church also built a beautiful new parsonage and remodeled the main education building in that year. A mobile home was purchased in 1981 for the Minister of Music and Youth and later sold in 1986. The Music & Youth House was built in the same year. A new sound system was purchased in 1987, as was the portable classroom building. A building fund was started in 1988 for a new sanctuary. A Youth Building was donated by Robert Jones in 1989. The nursery was moved and remodeled in 1989.

In 1993, upon the recommendation of the Future Planning Committee, the church voted to inquire with Mrs. Mytle Wallis about the possibility of purchasing the land south of the existing church property. She was excited about the church purchasing and using her home place for future expansion. In August 1994, shortly after Mrs. Wallis's death, the church purchased the property and dedicated it for future expansion.

In October 1995, the Future Planning Committee began meeting to discuss the space needs brought about by the wonderful growth that the church was experiencing. After much prayer, research, and investigation the committee requested a business meeting for Sunday night, March 3rd, 1996. It was at this meeting that the Future Planning Committee recommended that the church elect a Building Steering Committee. The church elected the following: Susie Chesnut (Chairman), Leonard Edwards, Woody Bandy, Randy Parker, Phil Colvin, Emelie Edwards. The church also approved, upon the committee's recommendation, the remodeling of the lower education building. The work was completed shortly thereafter by men and ladies of our church.

The Building Steering Committee began their work. The church employed an architect, and the committee prepared a proposal for the church. On August 11th 1996, the committee recommended the following: The church enter into a two-phase building program. The first phase would consist of a new sanctuary, offices, and nursery space. The second phase would consist of educational and fellowship space. The first phase would begin immediately. The second phase would not begin until the first phase was completed and paid for. The church decided to use the Texas Baptist Men to help with construction beginning January 13th, 1997.

On Sunday October 6th, 1996, a special outdoor worship service was held on the future site of the new building. A ground breaking ceremony was included in the service. On December 20th, 1996, the slab foundation was poured. On January 10th, 1997, the Texas Baptist men began arriving. On the 13th, with snow on the ground and a large group of local help, the framing of the new facility. On June 22nd, 1997, the First Baptist Church of Santo dedicated their new place of worship. There were more than 500 persons worshipping together on that great occasion.

God continues to bless First Baptist Church Santo. On Sunday October 26th, a new attendance record was set for Sunday School with 223 persons present. The churches average Sunday School attendance has grown by 54% from October 1995 - October 1997.

The membership of First Baptist Church of Santo has shown steady growth over its century-plus of existence. From the 35 members in 1872, the church had grown to 133 members by the turn of the century. The membership had gone over 200 by 1945, and had topped 300 by 1970. The church membership in the 1980's topped 400, and currently stands at 465.

The history of the First Baptist Church of Santo records a proud tradition of service and ministry in the name of Jesus Christ in Palo Pinto County. For 125 years, has led in ways disproportionate to its size. Its past is distinguished by vision and achievement; its future is promising with anticipation and opportunity.

MEMORIES

MEMORIES OF THE PAST AND A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

EARLY MEMORIES

We asked several of our members to recount for us their earliest memory of our church--a building, a special occasion, old custom, and so forth. Here are some of the replies:

"The tabernacle where we had the summer "big meeting", then last Sunday of the month we had dinner there."

--L.M. Gilbert

"I remember the old plank church, which was before the one that burned down before we built the present church sanctuary. It looked like the old Church of Christ building presently used by the Santo Water Supply Corporation, except it had a steeple with a bell in it. I remember I used to climb up in the attic, chase out the bats, untie the rope, and ring the bell."

--Ruth Phillips

"The old tabernacle and the good revivals that were held under it. It was located east of the present church."

--Erma Vaden

"When my dad, Pat Patterson, helped remodel the sanctuary--in approximately 1951 or 1952."

--Ronnie Patterson

"My first days here were in the year of 1926 and they were good ones."

--Nora Wheeler

"Going to revival services in the summer under the old tabernacle where the east parking lot is now. We were visitors then."

--Eunice Jones

"I went to a Christmas tree in the old plank building in 1919. I remember the rickety steps on the front before they built the new building that burned down. The church had a steeple and a bell, and the Sunday School classes were divided by wires covered with sheets."

--Delana Sparks

"My earliest memory is when Brother McQueary was pastor here. I remember sitting on the front seat with his children."

--Ora Mae Sparks

"The earliest preacher I remember was Al Hand. The earliest building was the tabernacle. I remember when the "wings" of the sanctuary were class-rooms."

--Bobby Edwards

"My most precious memories of First Baptist Church in Santo was the day I became a member. The church I was a member of had ceased to meet and I was in need of Christian fellowship. The warmth and love of the people filled the void."

--Pearl Chesnut

"My earliest memories of our church are that it was built of lumber and it had a steeple that was built in a tall point and that was where our church bell hung. A rope hung from the bell down into the vestibule and it was rung at 9:30am and then at 10:00am to notify members it was time for services. The bell would ring and the bats and birds would fly from the steeple. The expression, "poor as a church mouse", must be true because during services they would run up and down the aisle of the church much to the delight of the younger folks and scared some of the older ladies. They also ate or built homes in our church literature. The women and children would sit on one side of the building and the men on the other.

Mrs. Stella (Brannon) Gurganious and her sister Olive played the organ. Mr. Claude Hatchet was one of the Sunday School teachers. One remark he made in his teachings I will always remember was that you did not have to pray out loud for God to hear you because you carried the prayer in your heart."

--Mona Young

SPECIAL MOMENTS

Another questions that was asked was what was one of the most special or significant moments in the history of the church to them. Here are some of the responses:

"It was the day I was saved and W.O. was saved here under the old tabernacle just east of the present church. Brother Riddle was the one doing the preaching. It was in the year of 1927."

--Nora Wheeler

"The most special moment for me was when Joe went in with our oldest by to be baptized. Brother Bass was the pastor then. The baptism was held in a tank by the cemetery."

--Delana Sparks

"For me, it was when my husband became a Christian."

--Ruth Phillips

"Seeing some of our elderly people converted and join the church."

--Erma Vaden

"It was the note burning for remodeling the church sanctuary as it is today."

--Ronnie Patterson

"A very special day in our church history was the 100 birthday of the church."

--Pearl Chesnut

"I have been a member of the First Baptist Church since I was eleven years old. I was baptized in Sunday Creek down by the bridge. I was baptized by Pastor C.L. Sansing. We would go across the road to Mr. and Mrs. Jim Gilbert's house to change clothes. We had to watch walking bare-footed to their home, for there were plenty of grass burrs and red ants."

--Marie Littlefield

"Being in a service where a large number of young people were baptized--the excitement of everyone at that time--of 'Training Union' classes we used to have when everyone came--of fellowship after services at our homes--seeing people go down the aisle accepting Christ that we had prayed for--good Sunday School classes--good singing."

--Eunice Jones

"Witnessing the salvation of all my sons in this church."

--Bobby Edwards

"The time when I was saved. I was about twelve years old. I was baptized in Sunday Creek down by the bridge near Jim Gilbert's. Shorty was baptized in the Brazos River, not long before we built a baptistery in the church."

--Ora Mae Sparks

"When my dad, Kenny, married Jeana here."

--Brad Poynor

"When I asked to be a member of this church."

--Shalena Taylor

"The day I was baptized."

--Mark Hamilton

"When I became a Christian and when I was baptized."

--Lydia Colvin

"When my mom and dad joined the youth club."

--Zack Mauney

"When I got baptized."

--Walton Carter

“My special memory is when we first moved in to the new church.”

--Tyler Nunn

“When I was baptized in the old church and when we had the first church service in the new one. The new church is very beautiful.”

--Amanda Price

“Becoming a Christian and having a good preacher.”

--Brittani Ingram

“When the new church was completed. It is beautiful. The baptistry is really pretty. Also when I was baptized in the old church.”

--Jamie Lynn Johnson

“When we moved to the new church.”

--Jill Madison

“This church is special to me because I was baptized here, surrendered to the ministry here, and will be licensed as a minister here.”

--Matthew Hamilton

“Some of the most special memories of this church are the fifth Sunday Night Singings. To hear God’s people united in praise to Him is such a special blessing. Also the fellowship and Godly example so many of the people have shown me. Several of those have gone on to be with the Lord, but will always be remembered and honored in my memories.”

--Janet Colvin

“Mr. O. B. Bradford’s attendance and one of his little sayings. (In those days came John the Baptist tearing out of the wilderness of Judea with his hat in his hand.)”

--Ken Long

“The excitement of seeing the men and women working on our new sanctuary and the spiritual growth that came before the time of construction. Our church had waited for God’s time to build.”

--Sandra Long

“It is good to have a church to come to and people who love the Lord and express His love through living for Him and sharing for Him. For without love for one another God would have no place in us.”

--Priscilla Brannum

"In October, 1995 I visited First Baptist Church Santo. That was truly a blessing for me. I'm thankful for this church and my church family."

--Lena Mae Carter

"I grew up in Santo in the nineteen thirties and my parents always took me to church. My father was a deacon here. In later years God brought me back to Santo where my husband and I and two of my children and their families attend church."

--June Barbee

"My special day was when the new church was built."

--Kade Kelso

"What is special to me is learning about Jesus and God."

--Ryan Ingram

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The final question was about what our vision was for the church's future. Here are some of the answers:

"To help people and to grow."

--L.M. Gilbert

"I would like to see a greater spirit in our church as well as greater numbers."

--Erma Vaden

"To grow in numbers and in spirit."

--Marie Littlefield

"Growth and outreach in and through Sunday School and to remain a religious and moral source of strength to this community through Jesus Christ."

--Ronnie Patterson

"A full-time witness through our Sunday School to our community."

--Bobby Edwards

"To get bigger and go forward for the Lord. Each year we get bigger. We have so many more things than we used to have."

--Ora Mae Sparks

"To grow very much."

--Nora Wheeler

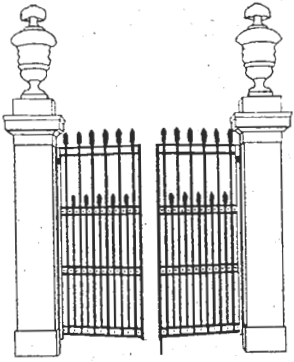
"That the church would not only grow in numbers, but that the warmth of the church would reach out in the area round about to those who don't know my Jesus. That we would hold up the blood-stained banner to those who don't know Him."

--Pearl Chesnut

"That we would be a rock, a beacon for our community; that we would hold up our Pastor in prayer so that he might do the work the Lord has for him; that we might see more young people in church; that they might be saved; that we would have young couples in our community to attend; that I might do what I can that these visions might become a reality.

--Eunice Jones

LETTERS



New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

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October 30, 1997

Dear Christian friends in Santo,

It is with great joy that I join you in the celebration of First Baptist Church in Santo of serving the Lord and the people of Palo Pinto County for 125 years. Many churches are not able to stand the test of time. The fact that the First Baptist Church of Santo has continued to minister in the same town through so many years is a testimony that you've got to be doing something really right!

We stand, of course, on the shoulders of those who have come before. There were pioneer Baptists who began churches in Palo Pinto County over a hundred years ago at great personal risk. But it was vital that the people living in this area hear the Word of God. Things haven't changed. People still need the Lord.

It was my privilege to serve your church at one point along this pilgrimage. I still think of those days with great fondness, and with great love for those of you who were there then, as well as some great saints who have gone on to be with the Lord. Much that I teach young ministers at seminary grows out of what you taught me as a young minister at the First Baptist Church of Santo. I thank you for your patience, your love, and your investment in me as a person.

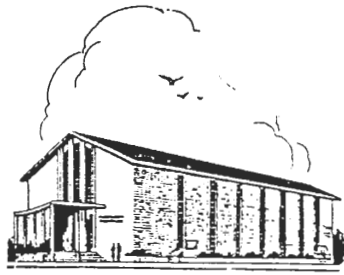
It's good to celebrate the past, but I also celebrate your future. God has not done all He has to do at the First Baptist Church in Santo. There are some great days ahead, as bright as the promises of God. I look forward to hearing what God is doing among you in the days to come. God bless you all.

Sincerely,

Steve W. Lemke

The School of Providence and Prayer

*Morgan Avenue
Baptist Church*



DR. PAUL WATSON
Pastor

A CHURCH WITH A CITY-WIDE MINISTRY

1525 Morgan Avenue, Corpus Christi, Texas 78404 Phone: 512-884-4086

October 14, 1997

Reverend Gary C. Nunn, Pastor
First Baptist Church
P. O. Box 68
Santo, Texas 76472

Dear Brother Gary:

It is refreshing to be reminded that organized Baptist work in Palo Pinto County is one hundred twenty five years old. First Baptist Church of Santo is the first constituted church in Palo Pinto Association. This is a tribute to the members of the Church for their loyalty to the cause of Christ.

It seems impossible that thirty years have passed since I served at First Baptist, Santo. I rejoice with you that God has so richly blessed your efforts in God's vineyard. I know that many have passed on and have been replaced by new faces with as deep a commitment as their forebears had. This is what the future is made of, folk who step into the gap unhesitatingly.

I will be unable to attend the celebration, but I will remember you in my prayers.

Yours truly,

Paul E. Watson, D.Min.

4909 W. Wethersfield Rd.
Glendale, Az 85304

November 2, 1997

Reverend Gary C. Nunn
P. O. Box 68
Santo, Texas 76472

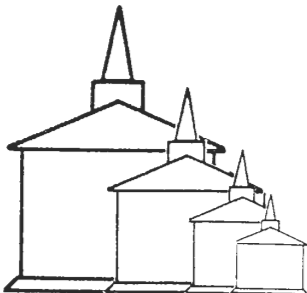
Dear Gary:

My wife and I enjoyed meeting you. It was a real thrill to see your beautiful new building and I rejoice in how the church has grown. I remember fondly the time spent at Santo and I made many friends.

I rejoice with you on your 125th anniversary as a church. I am sorry, but previous commitments will not allow me to attend. Please give my regards to your people and extend my best wishes.

Sincerely,


Harvey Kimbler



Parker-Palo Pinto Baptist Area



Bob Tremaine
Director of Missions

P. O. Box 1207, Weatherford, Texas 76086 □ Telephone 817-599-6586
Fax 817-599-6588 □ E-mail parker.dom@airmail.net

October 14, 1997

Gary Nunn
P. O. Box 68
Santo, TX 76472

Dear Gary,

Thank you very much for your invitation to attend the 125th anniversary of the First Baptist Church of Santo. The theme "Remembering Into The Future" will present a good look at the past and a challenge for the future.

I am sorry because of a previous seminar commitment I will not be able to attend the actual celebration. I do want to commend you and your congregation on the way your church is building the kingdom of God in the Santo community.

I also want to express our appreciation for your support of the Palo Pinto Baptist Association and the Parker - Palo Pinto Baptist Area.

Yours in Christ,

Bob Tremaine

BT/dh

First Baptist Church

P. O. Box 228
De Leon, Texas 76444
254-893-6593

October 21, 1997

Rev. Gary Nunn
% First Baptist Church
P O Box 68
Santo, TX 76472

Re: Letter of Oct. 9, 1997

Dear Gary:

Thanks so much for the above captioned letter and the invitation to participate in the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the church.

Unfortunately, our visit on the morning of June 22nd is the only time this year that I'll be able to be there. I'm very thankful for your leadership and ministry to the community through the church there, for as you know, that church and area are very special to us.

I will send a separate letter for whatever purposes.

Thanks again for the invitation.

Yours in Christian service,


Tom Satterwhite, Pastor

TS/gw

Young Evangelistic Association

MAKING TIME FOR ETERNITY
DR. DALTON YOUNG/PRESIDENT

736 JACQUELYN LANE NOBLE, OK 73068
(405) 872-8080

Gary,

I Just missed the 100th anniversary
by going to Cleveland, Ohio to do
5 years of Home Mission work.

I'll have to miss the 125th because
I'll be in Revival at Mayfield, Ok.

Santo, Texas & 1st church held
Nothing but sweet & precious
memories for me. The church kept
me in the Baptistery most of the
time. Some hoped I'd draw ^{the}

The love & encouragement of
those days has kept me going.

Please, Tell everybody "Thanks,
For helping a young preacher 30 years ago

Last week at Kennett, Mo. 226 people
were saved as I preached a Revival at 1st
Church. Santo, 1st Put me there by Stanley
By me. Love you Dalton

DR. MARK A. BRISTER, PASTOR

BROADMOOR BAPTIST CHURCH

4110 YOUREE DRIVE

SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA 71105

PHONE: 318-868-6552 FAX: 318-868-0004

October 15, 1997

Gary C. Nunn
P. O. Box 68
Santo, Texas 76472

Dear Gary:

Thank you so much for your gracious letter. I am indeed honored to be invited to share with you and the dear people there at First Baptist for you celebration November 16. However, I will be unable to attend because of previous commitments.

God's richest blessings on you and the precious people there as you celebrate your 125th anniversary.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Brister". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" and last name "Brister" clearly distinguishable.

Mark Brister, Ph.D.

MB/bh



West Jackson Baptist Church

Dr. Jerry N. Tidwell, Pastor

October 15, 1997

Gary C. Nunn
First Baptist Church of Santo
P. O. Box 68
Santo, TX 76472

Dear Gary,

Thank you for the very kind invitation to come and be present with you and the great folks at Santo on November 16. I know you are doing a tremendous work as pastor of the folks that Kathy and I grew to love so much. Please convey to the congregation our warmest and enthusiastic congratulations on the recent achievements in ministry.

I am sorry that I cannot be with you and the folks at Santo on this short notice. We, here at West Jackson Baptist Church, have just completed a three-year relocation plan on 50 acres in the northern part of our city. It would be very difficult for me to be away on such a short notice.

I am including a copy of our recent newsletter celebrating our first Sunday in our new facility at West Jackson Baptist Church. I wanted you and the people of Santo to know just how much I appreciate the role they have played in my life and ministry, even today. Keep up the great work, and may God continue to bless you in all that you do in His name.

Expecting a miracle,

Jerry N. Tidwell

JNT:rs

Enclosure



October 15, 1997

Reverend Gary C. Nunn
P. O. Box 68
Santo, TX 76472

Dear Gary,

Thank you so much for the invitation to attend the very special 125th Anniversary of First Baptist Church of Santo. I do regret that I will be unable to attend due to the fact that we will be hosting our own Homecoming at Sharon on that very day.

Congratulations on a great year and we wish you and all of our friends at Santo many more years of serving the Lord in Santo. We have great memories of our 3 years in Santo and cherish the friendships and relationships which were developed during that time. There were so many special events in our lives while we served in Santo and two that really stand out were my ordination by FBC in February 1997 and our daughter Hanna was born in August of that same year. These are great memories which we share only with you and we're grateful for those memories. Even though we've not seen many of you for quite some time now, you are all still very dear to our hearts. We feel that we stay in touch through the newsletter and through letters from friends from time to time. God is continuing to bless Santo and our prayer is that you will continue to seek His face and His leadership in each endeavor you undertake. God will bless our efforts when they are done according to His will.

Once again, congratulations on 125 great years of serving our Savior. May God continue to bless you. And finally, thanks for 3 wonderful years of getting to know you folks and for the timeless and enduring friendships which you have extended myself and family.

Yours in Christ,

Bro. Alan Frugé
Nora, Jonathan and Hanna

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

320 W. BORDEN • (512) 364-2645

October 23, 1997

Rev. Gary Nunn,

Greetings in the Lord! It is great to hear that God has so richly blessed First Church, Santo in so many wonderful ways. Although we will be unable to attend the celebration, we want to send our encouragement and our thanks to the people First Church for remembering us in this time of rejoicing. May God continue to bless the ministries of the church and the faithful ones that carry out His work there in Santo, as we all anticipate His soon return.

God Bless and Keep You!

The Garvins



Jim & Becky Courson
Yung Ping Street, Lane 32, Alley 69, #3, 5F
Lujou 247 Taipei, Taiwan R.O.C.
中華民國台北縣蘆洲鄉永平街32巷69弄3號5樓

Phone/Fax: (02)847-9668

Email: jcourson@tpts1.seed.net.tw

October 29, 1997

First Baptist Church of Santo
P.O. Box 68
Santo, Texas 76472
U.S.A.

Dear First Baptist Church Family,

Greetings from Taiwan! How we wish we could just drop in for a visit to celebrate your 125th anniversary and see your new worship facilities. Unfortunately the distance makes that impossible. But please know that we are rejoicing with you as you celebrate 125 years of God's providential care.

On this side of the world, God is blessing the work being done. In the past few weeks we've welcomed some new faces to our chapel. Please continue to pray for our work here as we labor to shine God's light in a place of terrible darkness. Progress is so very slow, but we see God at work in the lives of both Christian and non-christian friends.

It seems like such a long time since we left Santo. Rachel was just a few months old. She's eleven now and beginning to look more like a teenager than a sixth grader. Joshua is nine and enjoying life as a fourth grader. Becky and I are doing well and enjoying our ministry though it provides constant reminders of our weaknesses and inadequacies. I'm not sure we'll ever master the Chinese language.

On this special day we pray that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit would be richly known among you.

Prayerfully Yours,


Jim, Becky, Rachel & Joshua Courson

Jagerskamp 26
6932 BW Westervoort
The Netherlands

November 6, 1997

First Baptist Church of Santo
P.O. Box 68
Santo, Texas 76472
USA

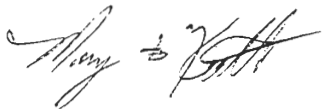
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are very excited to hear about the church's 125th anniversary and about the dedication of your new worship space. We would love to see a photo!

Keith has fond memories, of course, of frequently visiting FBC Santo during his growing up years. He enjoyed Vacation Bible School and holiday programs while visiting his grandmother, Mrs. Valera Walker. In the early 1980s he also did a stint as "interim hand-waver" if not exactly "interim music director." Fifth-Sunday Sings were especially memorable. And the friendship and support you all offered while we were caring for Keith's grandmother made a deep impression on our entire family.

We appreciate your on-going support, especially your prayers. We met many "missionaries" while we were worshipping with you. Their willingness to follow the Lord serves as models to us now that we are in our own mission field. The Lord is providing opportunities to share His love with the Romany (Gypsy) people here in the Netherlands as well as in Eastern Europe, the same love and faithfulness you are showing to those around you. Ellen (now 5 and attending Dutch kindergarten) and Rebecca (at 3, the only born Texan among us) join in sending you our warmest wishes on this very special day.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mary & Keith".

Mary and Keith Holmes

October 28, 1997

Rev. Gary C. Nunn
First Baptist Church of Santo
P. O. Box 68
Santo, Texas 76472

Dear Gary,

I rejoice in the wonderful things which have taken place at the First Baptist Church of Santo.

It was my privilege to serve as interim pastor for near two years. I found your members to be Christians of the highest order. I believe for this reason God has blessed your work so greatly.

I wish for you a wonderful 125th Anniversary. As you recall the blessings of the past, God has even greater things for you in the future.

Sybil and I love you and will continue to pray for you.

Your friends in Christ,

Woodson Armes

Woodson and Sybil Armes