



Grace Baptist Church

CELEBRATING

ITS FIRST 40 YEARS
(1958-1998)

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH OF BRYANS ROAD

Grace Baptist Church is one of three Baptist Churches in the immediate Bryans Road area. Grace Baptist is the only Southern Baptist Church and is affiliated with the Potomac Baptist Association and the Baptist Convention of Maryland and Delaware.

Grace Baptist Church is located about one mile north of the intersection of Marshall Hall Road (227) and Indian Head Highway (210) at 7345 Indian Head Highway, Bryans Road, MD.

How did Grace Baptist Church come to be?

The first record indicating the need for a Baptist Church in this part of southern Maryland, specifically the Indian Head area, was found in Maryland Baptist Church Life, August, 1918. Dr. A. J. Fristoe of the Maryland Baptist Department of Evangelism wrote:

“Down in Charles County, down on the Potomac where the humidity is highest, and summer heat is the hottest and the chiggers and ticks are thickest, meetings must be held even amidst August inconveniences... There is Indian Head with swarms of humanity pouring in from all quarters and we Baptists waiting, waiting, waiting. Indian Head ought to have an organized Baptist Church in the next twelve months and can have it if we put a man there to stay and serve notice on the population that a Baptist church will be established there. There are Baptists enough at Indian Head to organize a church before this number (issue) of Church Life comes from the press if we mean business. Why not hold meetings at Indian Head? I am just aching to do that thing.”

The history of Indian Head Baptist Church states the next documented article regarding a Baptist church was written by Rev. H. P. Vinson of Cross Roads (Nanjemoy), Maryland, in the September 1918 issue of Church Life. Excerpts from the article state: “I do not mean to place the blame on any particular persons but I must say that we Baptists have been negligent as to Indian Head, the Government Proving Grounds here in Charles County. We ought to have a church at Indian Head by all means. We should have had one there at least three years ago ... let us do something at Indian Head at once.”

In October (6-13), 1918, under the direction of a Charles County Temporary Committee, Rev. W. Nathan Wesbroom, Pastor, Marbury Baptist Church and Educational Secretary of the Maryland Baptist Union Association, conducted evangelistic services. These eight services were held in the Town Hall, which was located next to the gate to the Naval Proving Grounds, now the Naval Surface Weapons Center. “A local quartet conducted the music. A census was taken where approximately thirty Baptists were located and others heard of. A permanent work was planned to be established.”

The Maryland Baptist Union Annual Report dated October 1918 reported, "...During the past year Rev. E. L. Gross has been employed, in connection with his pastorate at Havre de Grace and Fountain Green, to develop other Mission points. ... He is now making a survey of several places, which we believe will ultimately result in the formation of churches. We are planning to establish a mission at Indian Head near the Government reservation. ... The resident Pastor at Marbury will serve this point. Mr. Walter Henry Thomas pledge to donate land for a Baptist church in Indian Head and to guarantee the requested pastor's salary."

From early histories it has been concluded that from October 1918 until May 1919 this small core of Baptists were meeting as an organized Sunday School under the leadership of W. H. Thomas. These early accounts report that the Baptists of Indian Head worshipped with the Methodists, meeting in the Masonic Hall.

As to Baptist churches in Charles County, The Times Crescent, March 28, 1919, advertised these two: Marbury Baptist Church, preaching 2nd and 4th Sunday, 11 A. M. and 3 P. M., Communion on the 4th Sunday; and Port Tobacco Baptist Church, 1st and 3rd Sundays, 3 P. M., Communion on 3rd Sunday.

The earliest extant Minutes Book from the Indian Head Baptist Church records that officers were elected in May 1919 for the Baptist Mission at Indian Head. Early historians have numbered the Mission membership between fifteen and eighteen people. The mission was organized as the Indian Head Baptist Church on May 6, 1920 having a membership of fifty-six charter members with Rev. Walter K. Allen serving as pastor.

Over the next thirty plus years Indian Head Baptist had its good times and its lean times. The current church building was dedicated in May, 1949. Church membership rose to the mid-300s in the 1950s. It was at this time that Indian Head Baptist sponsored two mission churches of its own that soon became organized churches: Potomac Heights Baptist in 1954 and Grace Baptist Church of Bryans Road in 1957.

It has been written that the late Dr. Paul Bard (1913-1986), Area Missionary for the Southern District Association, saw the need to start new church work in the Bryans Road area. On April 11, 1957, he, and his wife, Rosa, met with a small group of interested people from the Indian Head Baptist Church at the home of William and Ruby Almagene Kremer to discuss this need. Those at this meeting also included Helen and Braxton Lawrence; Ralph and Maragret (Peggy) Cary; Paige, Madolyn and Janett Dozier. Out of this meeting, and with the complete support of the Indian Head Baptist Church, the Bryans Road Baptist Mission was about to become a reality.

The minutes of the May 6, 1957 Indian Head Baptist Church's Business Meeting, report that the Church approved the motion by Mr. Ralph Cary and seconded by Mr. Lewis Neff, that Indian Head Baptist Church sponsor the mission work at Bryans Road. It was determined that missionary preachers will be utilized and their compensation would be "board" only. It was also recommended that a Sunday School be started as

soon as possible with the literature to be furnished by the Mother Church for the first quarter.

The Articles of Cooperation were read and approved naming Homer H. Gatewood, William D. Kremer, and Charles Paige Dozier as the Bryans Road Mission Steering Committee. Mr. Martin Baicar, Mrs. Bertha Bledsoe, and Mr. Ralph Cary were appointed Indian Head Mission Committee. The Steering Committee was charged to seek suitable property for a future church.

A suitable place to hold worship services as well as Sunday School classes was solved by Mr. Donald Brown who was able to rent the Pomonkey Grange Hall for three dollars a Sunday. The Grange Hall, which was torn down in the early 1960s, was located near the present day entrance to the Matthew Hensen Middle School on Route 227.

On May 19, 1957 the first Sunday service of the newly formed mission was held in the Grange Hall. Rev. Zane Grey Ross, the pastor of the sponsoring Indian Head Baptist Church, preached the first sermon. However, the soon departure of Rev. Ross caused Dr. Paul Bard to be called upon to fill the pulpit many times in subsequent months.

Mr. Ralph Cary wrote the following about those early day services: "The Grange Hall was our first place of worship. Lacking modern conveniences, we endured rudimentary plumbing, a roof that leaked so bad when it rained we used buckets to catch the water, and floor cracks large enough to let the cold air in. Heat was furnished with potbelly stoves. Members of the mission, under the leadership of Don (Brown), would go on his property and cut firewood and haul it to the Grange Hall."

Homer Gatewood, Chairman of the Bryans Road Mission Steering Committee reported on August 5, 1957 the following members were received on professions of faith: Maude (Spud) and Hertchel Patton, Sheila Patton, and Douglas and Sharran Wilson. He also reported that Charles R. Wilson came by letter from Potomac Heights Baptist Church and requested that Rawley S. Kline be placed on the Mission roster. Also reported was that July average attendance was 47 compared with June's of 45.

It was also reported on August 5 that Indian Head Baptist Church, on the motion of Mr. Skinner, seconded by Mr. Lister, voted that the Mission Steering Committee with Mr. Donald Brown, proceed with the purchase of property at Bryans Road for the purpose of building a church. The land purchase committee included Donald Brown, Homer Gatewood, William Kremer, Charles Paige Dozier, and Ralph Cary

The Treasurer's report for the month of August 1957 stated: Total Offerings received from the Bryans Road Mission - \$494.15. Expenses for the same month for the Mission were \$313.36. The Mission Land Fund carried a balance of \$700.00 and the Piano Fund had a balance of \$37.98.

The Sunday School Superintendent reported: The Sunday School Enrollment of the Bryans Road Mission for July 1957 was 103 and at the end of August 1957 it was 104. Average attendance was 51.

Bryans Road Mission W.M.U. Officers for 1957-1958:

Mrs. Vivian Gatewood, President
Mrs. Maude (Spud) Patton, Vice President
Mrs. Madolyn Dozier, Program Director
Mrs. Helen Lawrence, Sec-Treasurer
Mrs. Ruby Almagene Kremer, Community Missions
Mrs. Hilda Gallahan, Mission Study
Mrs. Peggy Cary, Youth Director
Miss Janette Carol Dozier, GA Counselor
Miss Billy Rae, Sunbeam Counselor

On Oct 1, 1957 Indian Head Baptist called a new pastor, Rev. Parker S. Hooper to replace the departed Rev. Ross. Rev. Parker, as had Rev. Ross, performed double duty by performing the early Sunday service for the Grace Baptist Mission at the Grange Hall and then returned in time to perform the regular time Sunday service for Indian Head Baptist. He did this for over a year until Grace was organized as a church and was able to call its own full time pastor.

Minutes of the October 7, 1957 business meeting report plans were being finalized for the purchase of a parcel of land from Mr. Downs for the Bryans Road Church. The financial report shows that \$1500 was expended for land purchase.

Mr. Ralph Cary has written, "Don (Brown) had eyes on the lookout for land, so we could have a building to worship in with more favorable conditions. Don's boss, Mr. Downs, had some property but was in no hurry to sell. Don kept after him and he agreed to sell us the land (this was the only way to get Don off his back). The price of the property was small and affordable. That started Don out to get the members on a roll. Two members went to the bank to make the loan. A contract was made with Leonard Hyde."

On Thanksgiving Day, 1957 a well was dug for the church to be built. Mr. Cary has written, "We needed water so Don (Brown) gathered a group of seven to eight men and the digging began. The ground was very hard but Don wouldn't let that stop him; he kept at work until water started to flow in and it was good water."

A letter dated July 2, 1958 to the Indian Head Baptist Church reads:

The Deacons of the Indian Head Baptist Church, and the Mission Committee of the Indian Head Baptist Church, meeting with the Steering Committee of the Bryans Road Mission of the Indian Head Baptist Church, after much discussion and consideration to the matter, and a motion by Deacon W. W. Haynie, and a second by Deacon E. H. Dudley, it was unanimously voted to make the following recommendation to the Indian Head Baptist Church: We recommend that the Bryans Road Baptist Mission be constituted as a Church, contingent upon approval by the Indian Head Baptist Church of the Constitution, Covenant which is to be prepared. This recommendation was approved at the regular business meeting of July 7, 1958 on a motion of Donald Brown, seconded by B. (William) Kremer.

At the Regular Business meeting in August, 1958 the Indian Head Baptist Church approved the Constitution and Covenant of the Bryans Road Mission. The Bryans Road Mission was organized as Grace Baptist Church of Bryans Road on September 14, 1958 with eighty charter members.

In November 1958 Grace Baptist Church called its first pastor, Rev. Eugene Brotherton, who told the Pulpit Committee, "Don't worry about my salary, God will provide."

The minutes dated April 8, 1959 report that Indian Head Baptist Church authorized a transfer of deed for the land purchased for the Bryans Road Mission to the newly constituted Grace Baptist Church. This action was taken on a motion by Mr. Elton Dudley, and seconded by Mr. Earl Wright.

In January 1960 Grace broke ground for its present church building and in June held its first Worship Service in the newly constructed building.

In April 1961 the late Don Smith, son-in-law of one of our church members, Mrs. Campbell, painted the mural over the Church's Baptismal Pool.

On December 5, 1965 Grace began a Jail Ministry under the leadership of Rev. Stouffer and Wilbur Moore. Mr. Moore was appointed Director of Jail Ministry and also as counselor to jail inmates. Working with him were Mrs. Moore, John Hartman, Guy Parks, and the Gleaners, a youth group from Grace. The Jail Ministry continued for ten years and during that time many decisions were made for the Lord.

On September 7, 1969 Rev. C. R. (Rudy) Davenport arrived on the field. Shortly thereafter, Grace voted to establish a church kindergarten and day-care center. Mrs. Janet Davenport served as the first Director.

In August 1971 preliminary plans for a new Sunday School addition were approved by the church. Dedication of the new addition and its carillon was held on January 7, 1973. The carillon was "dedicated to the Glory of God and the service of man" in memory of Rawley S. Kline, a departed member.

In December 1974 Rev. Philip F. Hopkins was called as Pastor. He had just recently graduated from seminary. At about this same time Mrs. Nan Linville became the second director of the church kindergarten and day-care center and continues in that capacity today.

In May 1979 Rev. Henry G. Laube was called as Pastor. During the 1980's under Rev. Laube's tenure, a week long Spring Revival was held almost every year. In December 1984, "A Christmas Carol", the largest Christmas program production ever at Grace Baptist was performed thanks to the imagination, talent, and direction of Mr. Ron Webb. The supporting cast from the church was equally talented and hardworking.

In early 1984 Rev. Laube began championing a building expansion program. Expertise on how to raise money to pay for this new addition was brought in which resulted in a fund raising program based on "Building for the Future on the Foundation of Faith". Rev. Laube stated, "WHAT GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH CAN DO OR CANNOT DO DEPENDS ON WHAT WE DO IN THIS CAMPAIGN, "CHALLENGE TO BUILD." In summary he further stated, "I really believe in this Church, and know that you are ready for this challenge that this Campaign offers. So we WILL get behind "Challenge to Build and pray with enthusiasm and faith. "All things are possible to him (or that Church) which believeth." Mark 9:23." Mr. Darrell D. Linville became the Program Director. The program consisted of calendar of events that led up to a "Building Banquet" held in the Holiday Inn, Waldorf and culminated in a Victory Day celebration on Sunday, November 4, 1984. This program's goal was to obtain 3 year pledges to obtain the money. The goal was realized and the building of the second edition began in 1988. The new edition was dedicated on April 29, 1990.

It was on this same date that Rev. Laube retired from full time ministry and as pastor for Grace Baptist Church at the age of 65. Rev. Earl Blansfield was called again, for the third time by Grace, to serve as its interim pastor until Grace could again find a permanent pastor. He most gracefully heeded the call. During his first call as an interim pastor at Grace Baptist, he called Grace, "an anointed church, one called by God for great things."

On Oct 28, 1990 Rev. Stephen A. Trice was called as Pastor. During the 1990s, to date, out reach programs have been instituted such as the "Christian Connection" program initiated by Wayne Cooper to bring manpower and talent to needy church projects. Spring Revival meetings have continued. A second (early) Sunday morning service was added on July 12, 1992 to help alleviate any overcrowding in the previous single morning service. And many improvements and enhancements have been made to the church building itself. Some of these improvements were painting of the sanctuary painted and updating the fixtures; creating a youth room, completely remodeling the community room; and painting the education wing. In addition, the church's secretary was provided a computer to help perform church business.

On September 13, 1992 at Grace Baptist Church's 34th Anniversary the "Burning of the Mortgage" for the new education wing was held. Rev. Logsdon, the Director of

Missions for the Potomac Baptist Association was the Anniversary guest speaker and presiding official for "Burning of the Mortgage" program. Other church members participating in this happy event were Darrell Linville, Chairman of the Deacons, Trustee Richard Wood, charter members Don and Pauline Brown, and Pastor Steve Trice.

In 1997 and again in 1998 Sunrise Easter Services were held with other churches on the grounds of Mount Aventine located on Chapman's Landing fronting the scenic Potomac River below Bryans Road.

In July, 1998 Grace Baptist Church developed this "vision" statement to guide the future direction of the church: "We As Followers of Jesus Christ Led By The Holy Spirit, Will Pray, Worship, Serve And Love To Glorify God The Father." Grace Baptist Ministry's six Guiding Principles are based on Evangelism, Discipleship, Missions, Fellowship, Worship, and Stewardship. Grace Baptist Church is "A friendly Church", "A Bible Teaching Church", and "A Growing Church."

On Sunday, September 13, 1998 Grace Baptist Church celebrates its 40th year with a special anniversary program. Rev. Earl Blansfield will be returning as the featured speaker.

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The History Committee is indebted to charter members Mr. Ralph Cary and Ms. Janette Dozier, other church members, and especially to the Indian Head Baptist Church for allowing us to copy information pertinent to the beginnings of Grace Baptist Church from their church's 75th Year History published in 1995. We believe this latest update is a work in a progress. There is still so much more information to obtain about our church and put in a future edition. The History Committee is seeking input from all.

(Sep 98)

PASTORS OF GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH

Brotherton, Dr. Eugene
Nov 26, 1958 - Dec 3, 1961

Swinney, Rev. Spurgeon D., Jr.
Feb 11, 1962 - Jul 1, 1964

Stouffer, Rev. Charles K.
Nov 22, 1964 - Jan 21, 1969

Davenport, Rev. C. R. (Rudy)
Sep 7, 1969 - Nov 1974

Hopkins, Rev. Philip F.
Dec 1974 - Jan 1976

Bangs, Rev. Edwin L.
Jul 4, 1976 - Jul 1, 1978

Laube, Rev. Henry G.
May 13, 1979 - Apr 29, 1990

Trice, Rev. Stephen A.
Oct 28, 1990 - Present

Bard, Dr. Paul Leo, Area Missionary for the Maryland Baptist's Southern District Association, helped start Grace Baptist as a Baptist mission in April, 1957 under sponsorship of the Indian Head Baptist Church. It is claimed that Dr. Bard was involved with starting 100 missions.

Ross, Rev. Zane Grey, Pastor, Indian Head Baptist Church (Jun 1, 1950 – Jun 7, 1957) preached first sermon for the Grace Baptist Mission on May 19, 1957.

Hooper, Rev. Parker S., Pastor, Indian Head Baptist Church (Oct 1, 1957 – Aug 31, 1964) and at Grace until Grace obtained its first pastor.

Blansfield, Rev. Earl, served as Grace's interim pastor three times: Feb 1976 – Jul 1976, Aug 1978 – Jun 1979, and Apr 1990 – Oct 1990. Rev. Blansfield called Grace, "an anointed church, one called by God for great things."

Barkley, Jr., Dr. William (Bill) I., was the Director of Missions, Potomac Baptist Association (1971 – 1991). The Potomac Baptist Association was created in 1961.

Logsdon, Rev. Richard D., is the current (1991 to present) Director of Missions, Potomac Baptist Association

(Sep 98)

History of Building & Improvement Activities at Grace Baptist Church

- 11 Apr 1957 - Church founded in William Kremer's home
- 19 May 1957 - First church (mission) service in Grange Hall
- Jan 1960 - Ground broken to begin building at present location
- Jun 1960 - Held first worship service in new building
- Apr 1961 - Don Smith (Mrs. Campbell's son-in-law) painted baptismal mural
- 1972 - Construction started on new Sunday School education wing
- 7 Jan 1973 - New Sunday School education wing and carillon dedicated
- 1974 - Parsonage purchased by Church
- 1982 - Church resided
- 1985 - Sound system installed in sanctuary
- 1987 - Church re-roofed
- Jul 1989 - Shell of 2nd new Sunday School education wing completed
- Aug 1989 - Parking lot paved
- 29 Apr 1990 - New Sunday School education wing dedicated
- 1995 - Youth room created
- 10 Sep 1995 - New Church sign dedicated
- 1996 - Car runs into church causing considerable damage to the 2 wings
- 1998 - Community room remodeling completed
- 11 Jul 1998 - Wing towers refurbished

(Sep 98)