

Early History Of Washington Avenue Baptist Church

In Early 1956, the Missions Committee of the First Baptist Church of Cookeville was charged with the responsibility of seeking possible sites to establish mission churches in the outlying areas of Cookeville. The Hilham Road area was experiencing rapid growth and it was determined that there was a need for a mission church to be located in that area. It was recommended that the North Hilham Road area was the most desirable site.

Vacation Bible School and revival began in a tent on mission property—August 9 through August 16, 1959. There was considerable interest on the part of the people in the Hilham Road area during Vacation Bible School and the revival, and it was decided to continue service at the mission to further meet the needs of the community. First Baptist Church would fully support the mission until it became a self-supporting independent church. John Brown, a member of First Baptist Church was our Missions Superintendent and led in many of our services.

Initially, the mission was called the Hilham Road Baptist Mission. Construction of the first unit was soon to begin. On August 26, 1959, Dr. James Seay Brown, Chairman of the Building Committee, reported that the estimated cost of building the first unit would be \$26,500.00. The mission moved out of the tent and into a garage building owned by Gaw Brothers Produce. Daniel Farris became the first song leader and his wife, Rozelle Farris, was the first pianist. Daniel continued as song leader/choir director for the next twenty-three years. Reverend Sam Brooks of the Rocky Valley Baptist Church near Lebanon, came as pastor of the Hilham Road Baptist Mission in November of 1959.

The Hilham Road Baptist Mission moved into the first unit of the building in May 1960. The Hilham Road Baptist Mission started August 9, 1959 and was organized into Washington Avenue Baptist Church June 4, 1961, with eighty-two charter members. Under the leadership of Bro. Sam, the church continued to grow and a temporary auditorium was constructed in July of 1963.

Our present sanctuary was built under the leadership of Bro. Paul Durham in 1968 and also Sunday School rooms above Brooks Chapel. On October 11, 1972, Bro. Paul Durham resigned as pastor of the church. On November 26, 1972. Bro. Sam Brooks, the former pastor of the church, was called as pastor. He accepted and moved on the field assuming his duties the first Sunday in January of 1973. Bro. Sam served an additional ten years.

The church called Bro. Bob Ward as pastor in 1984. The church continued to grow and the Family Life Center was built in 1992. Bro. Bob Ward resigned the latter part of 1997 to work as Missions/Coordinator for the Romanian Missions.

Bro. Mark Gaw became pastor in 1999, and continues to be our pastor. With continued growth, plans are being made for the Faith Building which will add seventeen Sunday School rooms.

In June of 1963, Washington Avenue helped sponsor Bangham Heights Baptist Church. It was constituted into a church May 1966. In addition to Bangham Heights Church, Washington Avenue sponsored Cummins Mill Road Baptist Mission in Jackson County. This mission was constituted into a church in 4December 6th, 1986.

The church is affiliated with the Stone Association of Baptists and cooperated with the program of TN Baptist and the Southern Baptist Convention, contributing to financial support of all Southern Baptist mission causes.

Over the years, God has used this fellowship to reach many souls to Christ. We look forward to the future in continuing to reach people with the gospel of the Lord Jesus.