

(Remarks on the building program of Lithonia Baptist Church, made by John Caylor, Jr., on Sunday night, May 15, 1966.)

Those of you who know me very well, know that I am not much of a reminiscer in public. But tonight, bear with me as I reminisce a little about the building program at Lithonia Baptist Church that began in 1848, and will not end probably for another generation or two.

The Psalmist said, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." I can confidently say, as Jacob said at Bethel, "This is none other but the house of God." I believe that God planned it, built it, and dwells in it. I believe this because you are God's people and because you seek God's will in your ministry through your church.

But God did not set this building here on this hill, at this busy crossroads, without using human hands. God uses men and their abilities and their skills to build churches. The last two lines of a poem by Edgar Guest are: "The humblest church demands its price. In human toil and sacrifice." It is that human toil and sacrifice over the 118 year-history of the Lithonia Baptist Church that I would like to reminisce about for a few minutes.

You are now worshipping in the fifth meeting house of the Lithonia Baptist Church. The first meeting house was the old Lithonia School building where the church was constituted on February 18, 1848. It was a one-room log house with a dirt floor and was located across the street in front of the present Methodist Church. One week after the church was constituted, the members began talking about building a new building. They soon built a frame building which was used for a time jointly by the school and the church.

The school and the church soon built separate buildings, not because there was any difficulty about religion in the schools, but because both the school and the church had outgrown their building and both needed more space. A second frame building was constructed, that building being built on the same site as the present Methodist Church.

That third church building was used for only a few years by the congregation. The members of the church were looking for a larger and a more appropriate location for their church. Deacon John M. Born, who along with Pastor James R. George, had come from Macedonia Church to start the Lithonia Baptist Church, saw the need for a new location and he donated property at the corner of Stone Mountain and Main Streets.

On that large and, at that time, adequate piece of property there was constructed in 1861 that 40 ft. by 60 ft. building which was to serve so well for 105 years. That stone building was the fourth building used by the church, and the church was then only 13 years old. In 1895 they added a porch and a belfrey. In 1913 they, and some of you, added more space in the auditorium and provided seven more Sunday School rooms. In the 1940's, 13 more rooms were added in an annex. In the early 1950's, 23 more rooms were added in an educational building. There were 40 rooms that could be used for Sunday School in the four building on the corner of Stone Mountain and Main Streets, but these facilities were also outgrown and, by the end of 1959, plans were being made to provide more Sunday School and worship space.

Now all of the history of the buildings up until that time I learned about by reading, and by what people told me. But I have personal knowledge and involvement with all that transpired in those busy and useful years from 1959 to 1965.

In March 1960, architects Barker and Cunningham were engaged to study our building and to make suggestions for its future usefulness and expansion. Their report, made six years ago, recommended building a new building on a new site. In October 1960, the Lithonia Baptist Church turned down by majority vote a recommendation to remodel the old facilities. That was the milestone that really determined the future course of the building program. But, between October 1960 and July 1962, nothing concrete was done by the church in conference to further the building program.

In July 1962, the church authorized the Building Committee to negotiate for, with the purpose of buying, this seven acres on which your church building now stands. Remember now, that action was taken almost four years ago. At that time there was less than \$26,000 in the building fund. It took a lot of faith on the part of many church members to make the decision to try to purchase this property. It was to be one year and seven months before the purchase was completed, but on February 4, 1964, in an office in downtown Lithonia, these seven acres were purchased by the church.

In the meantime, in a business session of the church in January 1963--and I believe a newspaper account of that business conference called it a "stormy" session--at that conference in January 1963 it was voted to sell the old church property.

Now let me tell you some of my thoughts and sentiments about that old building. It was always a holy place for me. I stood every Sunday morning to preach in the same building where 31 other pastors had stood before me, not just in the same church, but in the very same room. You can imagine with what awe and reverence I approached my weekly preaching opportunities in that holy place. Continuous preaching services were held in that building for 105 years and I was a part of that continuity. Two weeks ago, I walked into that old building and they were tearing out the pulpit where I had stood more than 800 times. As I walked out, I said to the two college students with me, "You know, it's like losing an old friend."

There is another reason that I especially loved that old building. My two youngest children, Janet and Jane, were baptized in that auditorium, in that same old baptistry which was moved to this new building and which serves so beautifully. The only two members of my family that I have had the privilege of baptizing, were these two little girls who were baptized in that old building. These, along with the other 141 people that I baptized in that baptistry, made the old church very meaningful to me.

But that old building was not adequate for the Lithonia Baptist Church, so on May 5, 1964, in the Mayor's office in Lithonia, that 116 year-old property was sold. The next month, June 1964, the church voted unanimously to adopt the architects' plans for this magnificent new structure in which you are now worshipping. It was to be a year before construction actually began, but this present church building became a reality for Lithonia Baptist Church on that June night in 1964. It was the first unanimous vote on the building program that had been made in

five years. The Lord was leading the members of Lithonia Baptist Church and events of these last two months, since March 20, have borne out the wisdom of the relocation of this church.

Now, you have moved into a new building, but you are not through. If a church grows spiritually, it will grow in size. As Lithonia Baptist Church grows, you will need more facilities. You are in the midst of a building program that began one week after the church was organized in 1848 and which will go on as long as the church lives and grows. My prayer is that as you continue your remarkable and solid growth in size and facilities, that you will continue to grow in grace, and in spirit, and in the knowledge of God, and in the service of Christ.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF LITHONIA

On December 31, 1847, a meeting was held at the Lithonia school house to make arrangements for constituting a Baptist church in Lithonia. Rev. James R. George was appointed chairman of the small group, and J. G. Snead acted as secretary. After an initial meeting for constituting the church failed, plans were made for another gathering. On February 18, 1848, Elders James George and Henry Collins formed a presbytery and J.G. Snead again served as secretary. The meeting was again held at the Lithonia school building, a one room log house with a dirt floor, one door, two windows and heat provided by a fireplace. The building was located approximately at the present site of the Lithonia Housing Authority. Articles of faith were submitted and approved. James R. George was chosen as the first pastor. One week after the church was constituted, the members began talking about building a new building. At the end of the first year of existence, the Lithonia Baptist Church had grown from eight charter members to a total of twenty-seven, a threefold increase. Members soon built a frame building across the street, which was used for a time jointly by the school and the church. This location is the present site of the First United Methodist Church of Lithonia.

In July, 1849, a minister's conference was held and a protracted meeting was begun. As a result of this revival, forty-three members were added to the church. By the end of the second year the membership totalled seventy-two. On May 24, 1851, the church agreed to hold a meeting for the purpose of organizing a Sunday School; the church has had Sunday School continuously ever since. In 1853, Deacon John Born donated property for yet another church building. This time the location was at the corner of Stone Mountain and Main Streets, approximately where Winn Dixie and Eckerds are located. The building was built of field stones and mortar, and the rocks were brought from the hill where the Antioch Baptist Church on Parkway Drive now stands. Every effort was made to finish it and to hold a service for the soldier boys who were going away to war in 1861. This was the fourth building, and the church was only thirteen years old. This building served the church for 105 years.

In 1964, the downtown property was sold for the purposes of the Urban Renewal Project, commonly known as the Lithonia Shopping Center. On April 17, 1966 dedications services were held in our presently facility. In 1968, the name of the church was legally changed from the Lithonia Baptist Church to the First Baptist Church of Lithonia, Georgia.

During our 145 year history, the church has had 43 pastors, with our present pastor, Jim Martin having the longest tenure of 13 1/2 years.

(Material adopted from "A Brief History of Lithonia Baptist Church, Amy Wesley Bruce; "Remarks on the Building Program of Lithonia Baptist Church," John Caylor, Jr., May 15, 1966)

LITHONIA FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HISTORY

The Year of Beginning 1848

On today, February 18th, 1973 the First Baptist Church is 125 years old. Its illustrious past is a blessing of God upon those who worship "where the saints have trod."

In the year 1847, Deacon John M. Born and Rev. James R. George, members of Macedonia Baptist Church, talked about the propriety of a Baptist Church in Lithonia. As a result of their conversation, a public meeting was held in the Lithonia school on December 31, 1847. Four ministers were invited to the meeting to constitute the church, but Rev. James R. George was the only minister to attend. Another meeting was set for February 18, and a fifth minister was invited. The church was constituted on February 18, 1848. Rev. James R. George and Rev. Lewis Flowers formed the presbytery. J. C. Snead, who had acted as secretary for both previous meetings was elected church clerk. Rev. James R. George was chosen as the first pastor. In May, Andrew Wells was ordained to the office of Deacon.

Charter members were Andrew Wells, Mary Wells, Deacon John M. Born, Emily Born, and Andrew Johnson all bringing their letters from Macedonia; Eliza F. Born from Canton; Michael Marbut from Canton Grove; and William Wingate from Rockdale.

Lithonia Baptist Church continued to meet in the Lithonia school house for about one year. It was a small log building with a dirt floor, one door, two windows and was heated by a fireplace. It stood approximately where the Lithonia Housing Authority office is now. During the first year plans were made to construct a new building to hold the meeting house and school. There were 25 members at the end of the first year.

Land was purchased and a new building was built on the site where the present United Methodist Church stands. End of second year membership was 75.

In May 1849, the church adopted the Baptist Hymn Book. J. C. Snead was the "singing clerk" or song leader. In June 1852 Rev. George gave a parcel of song books to the church. The reed organ which now stands in the choir room was also purchased at this time.

As far as our records show we have supported a Sunday School continuously from

May 24, 1851.

By 1853 the church had outgrown its facilities, with a membership of 141, so again they made plans to move. The building and lot were sold. J. M. Born gave the land on the corner of Stone Mountain and Main Street for the new church. The first building to be erected on this site was 40' wide and sixty' long. This church was constructed by slave labor. It was built of rocks and mortar. The rocks were brought from the hill on which Antioch Baptist Church now stands. In addition to a sanctuary and an auditorium the church contained a balcony entered by a side door, where the slaves worshiped.

Every effort was made to finish the building in order to hold a service in it for the soldier boys who were going to war in 1861.

As with many churches there are no records available for the war years.

The Woman's Missionary Society was organized in the early nineties. They presented the Communion Service to the church in July 1890. According to associational minutes of 1897, gifts for missions were regularly being received from Lithuania. The Lubears were organized in 1899. Church membership at this time was 149.

The first annex was a vestibule and belfry added in 1895. The bell, purchased by the women and young people of the church, was hung on November 27, 1897. It could be heard for five miles. In October 1965 it was moved to our present location.

Another annex was added in 1913. It consisted of several class rooms, a baptismal pool, and dressing rooms. Prior to this addition the believers were baptized in a natural pool located on the property of what is now the Lithuania City Park.

The beautiful "Good Shepherd" stained glass memorial window was given at this time. It was installed as an outside window at the rear of the sanctuary. On December 17, 1965 it was installed behind the baptistry in this sanctuary.

The Baptist Young Peoples Union (BYPU) was organized in 1901.

In 1902 funds were solicited for a Sunday School Library.

The Royal Ambassadors were formed in 1913, Young Women's Association in 1914,

Girl's Auxiliary in 1917.

The first parsonage was purchased in 1902. It was a six room house with 1/2 acre of land on Church Street. The second parsonage was built in 1912. It had eight rooms and was built on the west side of the church lot. This was used as a parsonage until 1947.

By 1929 there were 322 members. In 1931 a one room building was constructed to the north of the church to house the growing Men's Bible Class.

In 1941 the last annex was added on the north side. It consisted of classrooms and assembly halls, a kitchen and recreation facilities. Furnace heating was installed. A stone wall three feet tall was built around the grounds at this time.

From the beginning the church has provided, as it was able, furniture, lights, carpets, hymn books, and pianos to add to the efficiency of the work and the spiritual well being of its people.

By the church's 100th birthday, February 18, 1947 it had been blessed with the service of thirty four men. These men loved God and their fellowmen. Often they rode horseback many miles after a hard week's work on the farm or in the shop. Later on as times grew better, they were better paid and were able to prepare for better service. All were faithful and the world is indebted to them for preaching the gospel which "is the power of God unto salvation; to everyone that believeth."

Total membership in the 100th year was 593.

On February 22, 1948 a new electric organ and chimes and a set of carpenter's tools which the church had purchased were dedicated. Also dedicated were a set of new pulpit furniture and chairs and the pulpit Bible which is on the communion table in the front of the church. The 1948 pulpit furniture is presently in the assembly room downstairs in the wing building and the matching communion table is in the front lobby downstairs. The old communion table is a pulpit Bible which was given to the church in 1936 by the Men's Bible Class.

On February 29, 1948 the church proudly celebrated its Centennial at the location on Main Street which had served it so well since 1861. This was a time of thanksgiving and

rejoicing for the blessings which God had so bountifully bestowed on His church and its people. The Reverend Earle F. Stirewalt was pastor at that time and it is very fitting that today - twenty-five years later - he is to be our speaker.

The church continued to grow and prosper. In April of 1951 a Mission Sunday School was started at Collinsville and in September of that year our Brotherhood was organized. In 1954 an educational building was finished and the old pastorium torn down.

In 1955 the first Watchnight service was held. The next April saw the beginning of Youth Week. That same year a memorial baptistry was installed replacing the old one that had been located under the pulpit area. In December a church secretary was employed. In July of 1956 a weekly newsletter was begun and that same month the church voted to start a kindergarten. In 1957 the rotating plan for deacons with associate board was initiated. During this time a gift of a communion service was presented to the church.

Through the years as the church has grown the need for more adequate facilities was realized. On February 4, 1964 the church purchased seven acres of land on Hillandale Drive to construct a new church plant. On June 20, 1965 ground was broken for the new buildings. On December 31, 1965, as a part of Watch Night activities, a Communion Service was held in the unfinished building. Many of the members walked away from the old location where the first activities of the evening began. The people sat on piles of insulation material or whatever else was available and were warmed by blowers furnished by the construction company. At the stroke of midnight the historic old church fell apart, forth beginning a new year and a new era in the life of Lithonia Baptists.

The first service in the completed building was on March 27, 1966, and the dedication service took place on April 17, 1966.

Shortly before we moved to the new building a new member orientation program was begun for those new Christians and those who had moved their memberships into our church. This program continues today.

In a business meeting of the church on September 18, 1968, a new constitution was

adopted in which Article I states: "This body shall be known as the First Baptist Church of Lithonia, Georgia, Inc." Article II states: "The purpose of this church shall be to maintain public worship of God, to exalt the Christian standard of living, to cooperate in promoting Christian brotherhood and extending the Kingdom of God through the world."

In October, 1970, the church started a mission on Coopers street in a rented building and in November 1971, the church purchased the home which we call the "Mission House."

The present membership of Lithonia First Baptist Church is 947. Dr. Charles W. Drake is the 39th pastor to serve this congregation.

In I Corinthians we find this passage: "How we thank God for all of this! It is he who makes us victorious through Jesus Christ our Lord! So, my dear brothers, since future victory is sure, be strong and steady, always abounding in the Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever wasted as it would be if there were no resurrection."

April 14, 1983

The Christian Index GBC Departments Make Changes

File
CHURCHES:
BAPTIST —
LITHONIA
FIRST
BAPT. CH.

Charles R. Skidmore resigned as Sunday School Department associate and Jimmy F. Terrell joined as associate in Stewardship Promotion and Annuity Ministries Department in Georgia Baptist Convention personnel changes last week.

Mr. Skidmore joined the Sunday School Department in March 1981 and is leaving to become minister of education at The Rock church in Rex, effective April 29. Previously he was minister of education at Chamblee First, Morningside in Columbus and Fayetteville First churches.

He is former director of religious education and youth ministries at Lithonia First church and Athens Drive church in Raleigh, N.C.

He has worked at several other jobs including eight years with a Toccoa lumber company. He is a graduate of Piedmont College, Carson-Newman College, Southeastern seminary and Luther Rice seminary and also has studied at University of Georgia and DeKalb Vocational/Technical School.

He also has completed several courses in clinical pastoral education. His wife is the former Joyce Ledford of Toccoa, and they have two daughters.

Mr. Terrell succeeds Manget Herrin who is unable to work full-time due to illness. Mr. Herrin, Georgia native and former Southern Baptist missionary to Grenada and other Caribbean areas, will continue to serve on special projects with the department.

The Herrins are continuing to live in Decatur in a home provided by Briarlake church.



Mr. Skidmore Mr. Terrell

He is a graduate of The Citadel and Southern seminary. He served as minister of education at 18th Street church in Louisville while attending seminary and was engaged in insurance sales and management before beginning denominational work.

Mr. Skidmore is married to the former Nancy Crozine, and they have three sons. Julian Pipkin is acting director of the Sunday School Department after resignation of R. Robert Riddle last month (*Index*, March 17).

Mr. Terrell has been minister of education at Forest Park First church since March 1980 and joins GBC staff effective April 25. He previously was associate in GBC Sunday School Department from 1978-80.



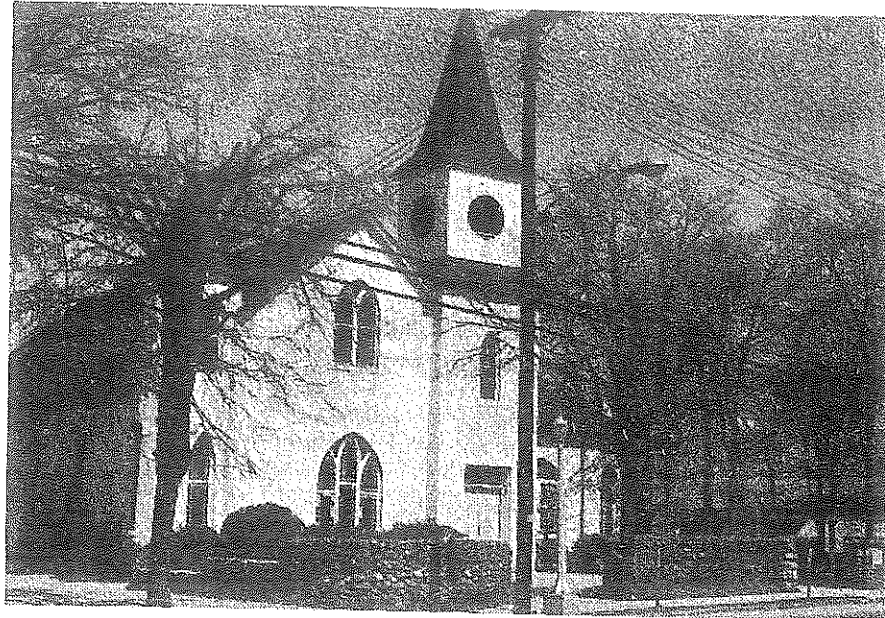
MR. AND MRS. Fred W. Cox Jr. were honored with a reception at Mercer University in Atlanta as he retired as pastor of Northwoods church in Chamblee after 28 years' service. Shown with the Coxes (at left) are their children, Fred III of Decatur, Mary Ann Cox Bower of Athens and Sara of Chamblee, and deacons' chairman Randall Nobles.

April 14, 1983

Indexed

Mrs. J. W. Grantham
5060 Thompson Mill Rd. Rte 3
Lithonia Ga 30058

First Baptist Church Will Celebrate 125th Anniversary



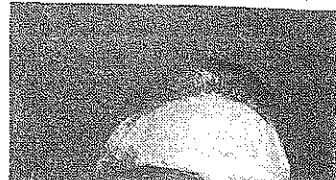
The old Lithonia First Baptist Church 1860 - 1966.

Rev. Charles W. Drake, pastor of the Lithonia First Baptist Church, announced today that the church will celebrate the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of her institution on Sunday, February 18, 1973. This is only

the beginning of a year of celebration and jubilation. Later in the year there will be a homecoming and drama of the beginnings of the church, according to Mr. T.D. Brown, Chairman of the History Committee.

In the Sunday Morning Service a brief history of the church will be presented. In next week's issue of The Observer a more detailed history of the church will appear.

It is appropriate that two



former pastors will be guest speakers Sunday, February 18th.

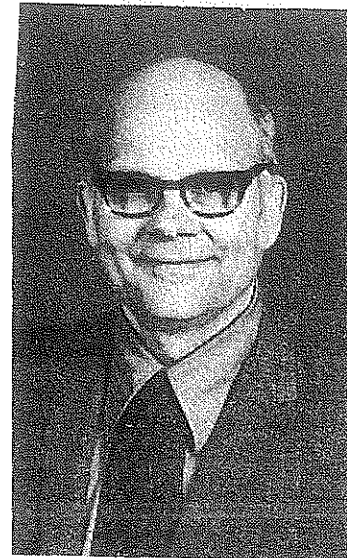
Rev. Earle F. Stirewalt will be the speaker for the Morning Worship. Mr. Stirewalt born in Macon, Georgia, spent his early childhood in Waycross, Georgia. At nine years of age he moved to Douglas, Georgia, where he remained until he completed studies at South Georgia College.

Following his graduation from Mercer University, Macon, Georgia, he continued his training at the Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, Massachusetts.

He returned to Georgia in 1940 and served Georgia Baptist churches in Nahunta, Hoboken, Dublin, Lithonia (1947-1950), Madison and Millen. In 1961, he left the pastorate of the Millen Baptist Church after eight years to take the position of associate secretary in the Department of Evangelism of the State Mission Work of the Georgia Baptist Convention.

On January 1, 1967, Mr. Stirewalt was elected Secretary of the Program of Work with National Baptists, a phase of State Missions of the Georgia Baptist Convention. This program is jointly supported by the Home Mission Board of the

ministry is to more than 2,500 Baptist students on the Carrollton campus.



John Caylor

Mr. Caylor is a graduate of Louisiana College and has a Master of Arts degree from Texas Christian University. He also has a graduate theological degree from Berkeley Baptist Divinity School in California and has done graduate work at Louisiana State University.

Mr. Caylor's pastorates have been in Louisiana, Florida, Texas, and in Georgia at Blue Ridge and Lithonia. He served as a Navy

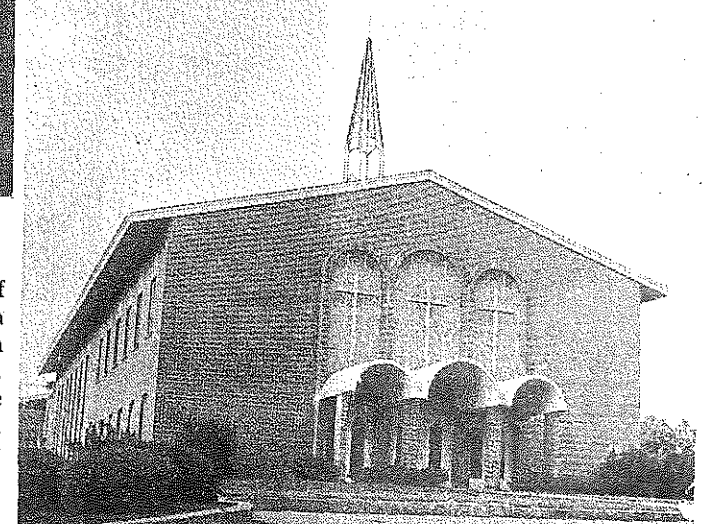
Teaching positions held by Mr. Caylor have been at Texas Christian University, Hardin-Simmons University, and at Georgia State University. He also has taught in the University of Georgia Extension, Mercer University Extension, and American Baptist Seminary Extension.

Mrs. Caylor is the former Katie Dorsey of Savannah. The four Caylor children are Johnny (of Augusta with two children), Linda (Mrs. Aubin Cumbie, Jr. of Carrollton,

with one child), Janet (Mrs. Mike Branon of Carrollton), and Jane (a high school sophomore.)

A special group known as the "Here and Now" singers from the West Georgia College, Carrollton, Georgia will bring special music on Sunday evening.

Dr. Charles W. Drake, pastor and the congregation, extend a very warm welcome to members, former members, and friends to worship God on this happy occasion.



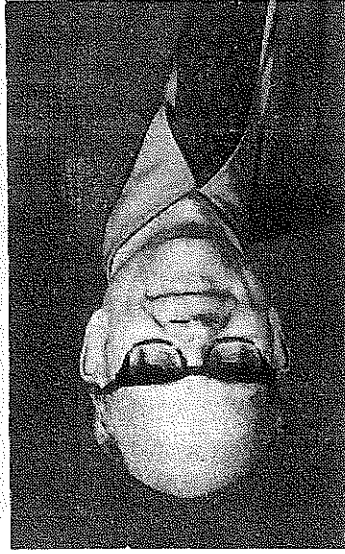
First Baptist Church - 1973

Please turn over.

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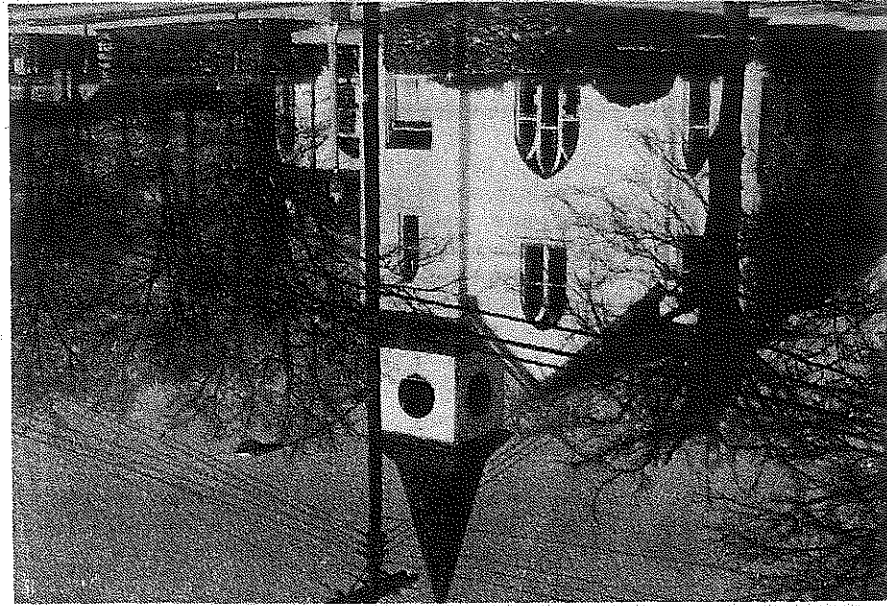
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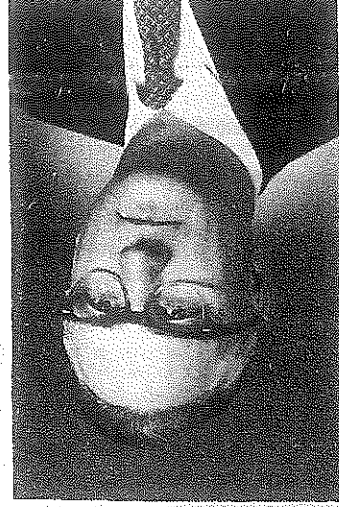
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Rev. Earle Stirewall

First Baptist Church - 1973

