

Peachtree Baptist Church
2108 Briarcliff Road
Atlanta (DeKalb County) GA 30329

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PEACHTREE BAPTIST CHURCH

This is the story of a special people, the story of the people of God who lived between the two branches of the Peachtree Creek in the west central area of DeKalb County.

Peachtree Baptist Church was born in revival. Tradition of long standing holds that Peachtree Baptist Church began at a "camp meeting" revival in 1847. This tradition finds validation in the minutes of the Indian Creek Baptist Church, then located in nearby Decatur, GA. The minutes tell of a ten day revival held in the area. One of the six ministers who led that revival, in which forty-one people were baptized, was Rev. David Gonto Daniel. Rev. Daniel was a Baptist missionary serving in the north Georgia area, and was a member of the Indian Creek Baptist Church.

Rev. Daniel was born in 1808, and was the grandson of Robert Daniell, a colonial governor of South Carolina. He was reared in Laurens County, GA, and after his conversion and call to the ministry was known to ride as many as 40 miles on horseback to meet his ministerial appointments. He later served the Georgia Baptist Convention as a missionary to southeastern Georgia, then was transferred to the northern area, with his base of operations in the Stone Mountain Association. There is little doubt that Rev. D.G. Daniel was the first and founding pastor of Peachtree Baptist Church. He was also the first pastor of the First Baptist Church in Atlanta, organized in 1848, and he served there for two years. In addition, he was pastor of the First Baptist Church in Griffin, GA in 1848-49. During those years Baptist churches normally had worship services on Saturdays and Sundays one week-end a month, and one pastor would serve four or more churches.

Circumstances providentially were ripe for the beginning of a new church in the area. Oral tradition refers to a "Peachtree Bartering station" located nearby, where river traffic and trading were common. As the men gathered to do business, it was natural that the spiritual needs of their families would also be a subject of concern. Small farms were being established in the area, and travel followed old Indian trails. A decade earlier railroad tracks had branched out from Savannah and Augusta and into Macon. About ten miles to the west another settlement had come into being, initially called Terminus. Shortly thereafter it was named Marthasville. By 1847, the name of the village was changed again - to the City of Atlanta.

Earlier, as land-seeking settlers poured into the area, the land which was to become DeKalb County was relinquished by the Creek Indians. In December, 1822, DeKalb County was formed from parts of Henry, Fayette and Gwinnett counties. Soon the citizens organized a county government, elected county officials, established a court system and built a log court house and jail. These early settlers were small farmers who cleared their own land, built their own homes and raised their own food. Few of them were wealthy enough to own slaves. Among the church membership, only the Lively family is known to have owned slaves. Most had little formal education, but were concerned for the education, moral and spiritual upbringing of their children.

Religion was a vital part of the lives of these early settlers. Baptist were still a small part of the population, and had spread northward from Savannah and Augusta. Itinerant preachers came by periodically to proclaim the gospel message. Baptists in the southern part of the state saw the growing need for an organized work to share the faith with the growing state of Georgia. In 1828,

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they joined together to form the "Baptist Convention of the State of Georgia." After a little more than fifty years in Georgia, Baptists had grown from its first church (Kiokee Baptist Church, established in 1772) to more than 200 Baptist churches, 100 ordained ministers, and about 18,000 members.

As usual, Baptist growth in Georgia was not without controversy. The 1830s were marked by disagreement and conflict regarding ministerial education, establishing Sunday schools, alcohol consumption and missions. The anti-missionary and anti-education groups were strong, and loudly opposed the efforts of the state convention in its missionary and educational projects. These conflicts reached the level where some associations sought to interfere with the decisions of local churches. Eventually, ill-will and dissension rose to the point where associations were divided and some churches split over these issues.

These conflicts were resolved to some degree when the convention amended its constitution to make clear that the convention had no right or power of control over and could not infringe in any way upon the sovereignty and independence of the local church. The result was a united Baptist convention working in harmony to spread the gospel throughout the state.

Following shortly on the heels of the internal conflicts and subsequent resolutions of the 1820s, tension through the state began to grow over slavery and the abolition issue. Baptists, however, were strongly united in opposition to "northern interference," and the harmony of Baptist work in Georgia was undisturbed. The result was that in 1845 the Southern Baptist Convention was formed at a meeting in Augusta, GA. This gave further impetus to the missionary minded Baptist leaders of Georgia, who served with local associations like the Stone Mountain Association, and with churches such as Indian Creek, to preaching the gospel in nearby communities.

The mid-summer revival of 1847 was the catalyst which brought together the pioneers who lived in the area. They agreed to form a Baptist church and to meet in an area close by to the bartering station. According to oral tradition, the members built a "brush arbor" following the mid-summer "protracted meeting" to serve as their first place of worship and to accommodate services once a month of Saturdays and Sundays. They took their name from the nearby creek, and organized their small congregation as the Peachtree Baptist Church. Baptist missionary and pastor D.G. Daniel apparently participated in this effort and became the first pastor of the church.

Details of these early years are lost due to normal human negligence, for in those days most church minutes were kept in the homes of church clerks. Some records which may have been preserved may also have been lost in the fire of 1942 which destroyed the church building. Records preserved from the Stone Mountain Association, the First Baptist Church in Atlanta and other nearby churches, and from DeKalb County legal and historical sources provide some information about these times.

Other than the names of Rev. D.G. Daniel and Rev. Thomas Usher Wilkes, none of the other early members are known by name. Rev. Wilkes served Peachtree in 1852, and later (1855 and 1860) was pastor of the First Baptist Church in Atlanta. Historical records name Rev. William Henry Robert as the moderator of a Peachtree church conference in 1854. This indicates that he was likely the third man to serve as pastor of the church. He, too, served First Baptist Church in Atlanta in 1852-55. The

first recorded names of laypersons for which there is reliable historical information appear in DeKalb County records and in the minutes of the First Baptist Church of Atlanta. Five names are listed in the deed at the time when the land for the first permanent church building was purchased. The deed is recorded in DeKalb County Deed Book O, page 210, and is dated July, 1856. The following are listed as the trustees of the church: William Harris, William More, Moses Neel (Keel?), George Fleming and Josiah Mitcheal (Mitchell).

Earlier names appear from First Baptist Church of Atlanta minutes of May, 1854, which list Rev. William Henry Robert as moderator. Letters of Dismission were granted to the "arm at Peachtree" for Z.R. Dempsey and his wife, Elizabeth. Also at that time, Daniel Johnson presented the new church with a pulpit Bible. At the July, 1854 conference the Peachtree church voted to begin a series of meetings in August and ordered that a collection be made to purchase hymnals.

The land for the building was bought from Ammi Williams, a prominent Atlanta developer, and was "one acre more or less." It is also noted in the deed that the acre purchased was one "on which said Baptist church now stands." This reference means that the first permanent building of Peachtree Baptist Church had already been built, and thus was constructed sometime prior to July, 1856. The actual date of construction is unclear, but available information suggests that it was a small one room building constructed in the summer of 1852. There are also indications that the building was also used by traveling school teachers for tutoring children during the summer months. Oral tradition indicates that the congregation at first met for worship in the "brush arbor" and, perhaps in bad weather, in the bartering station itself. There is little doubt but that the first building was constructed of split logs, and built consistent with the pattern of the times.

Like the homes of those days, church buildings were simple and unadorned. Meetings were usually held during the daytime only, one weekend a month. Pastors would serve several churches, and travel to them by horse-back, wagon, and on foot if the weather permitted. In winter, a box-like wood-burning stove gave warmth to the worshippers, helping to overcome the cold air seeping through the cracks. When a night meeting was necessary, light was provided by tallow-dipped candles. As was usual in Baptist churches, the pastor would begin the service by "lining out a hymn." Often the preacher would have the only song book available, or else he knew the words and tunes by memory. He would call out two lines at a time, and when those were sung, he would give two other lines. Few people in DeKalb county had slaves, so it is unknown whether or not slaves were included in the early group of worshippers.

The minutes of the Atlanta First Baptist Church imply that there was a supportive relationship of that church with Peachtree Baptist Church. Since three of the same men served as pastors of both churches in these early years, such a relationship is likely. The 1853 minutes of the First Baptist Atlanta refer to a committee of six who were appointed "...to attend, on tomorrow, on Peachtree, near Danl. Johnson's where a religious meeting is now progressing and receive on behalf of this church such members as may present proper credentials and to hear the orations of experience of any who may desire baptism." The property of Daniel Johnson referred to was on the west side of present-day Briarcliff road where the south fork of Peachtree crosses. With the creek nearby, it was a logical place for a "protracted meeting."

The minutes of a conference on December 2, 1854 records that the Atlanta church granted letters of dismission ".....to the following list of members of the arm of the church at Peach Tree for the purpose of constituting a church at that place....." Those listed were George Fleming, Sarah M. Fleming, Nancy Mann, William Harris, Polly Ann Harris, Josiah Mitchell, Nancy Rabun and Rebecca Mitchell." George Fleming, William Harris and Josiah Mitchell are the same men who are named in the July, 1856 deed of purchase as trustees of Peachtree Baptist Church. These references provide strong evidence that in its early years Peachtree Baptist Church was quite small, that it shared pastors with the Atlanta First Baptist Church, and that the Atlanta church provided needed help and support.

Little is known about the church's early life. Other pastors known by name to have served the church following Rev. W.H. Robert are Rev. James J. Wallace and Rev. J. Maxfield. Since few owned slaves, it is unknown how strongly the people of DeKalb county opposed or favored secession during the Civil War. It is known, however, that the two county seat delegates to the Georgia secession convention (a Mr. Murphy and a Mr. Smith) voted for secession. Support for the Confederacy appears, however, to have been strong. Although no historical records support the conclusion, it is likely that the members of Peachtree heartily endorsed the resolution adopted at the Georgia Baptist Convention meeting in Athens, GA in 1861. The resolution declared, "That we consider it to be at once a pleasure and a duty to avow that, both in feeling and in principle, we approve, endorse and support the Government of the Confederate States of America."

The impact of the Civil War was devastating upon the people of DeKalb county. In the summer and fall of 1864, Federal troops marched through Georgia. In July, Stanley's 4th A.C. Division was in the vicinity around the church (cf. marker on LaVista road), and religious services at Peachtree were interrupted. Oral tradition from grandparents of older members indicates that Federal forces took over the building and used it for military purposes, perhaps even for a hospital. As a result, the building was seriously damaged, but not destroyed. In November, General Sherman set fire to Atlanta and began his march to the sea. A swath of utter destruction some sixty miles wide was cut from Atlanta to Savannah.

The people of Peachtree church, along with their neighbors, suffered severely during the cold winter of 1864-65. The occupation of the church building and the resulting damage meant that Christian worship during these months took place in home gatherings for prayer and worship. Families composed mainly of women, children and the elderly struggled to keep body and soul together. In the spring they began to repair and rebuild their homes. Devastation among Georgia Christians was great, many churches were burned, and some were subsequently disbanded because the people were too destitute to rebuild. The Baptist Convention of Georgia was almost paralyzed and could offer no help.

In spite of these hardships, however, the Peachtree congregation began to gather once again in their damaged church building. As the men returned from war service, there was a strong determination to set things in order and to continue regular worship. The log building was repaired and regular monthly services were resumed. A Rev. Adams was pastor of the church immediately prior to the coming of Rev. G.B. Allen in 1870. He served for several years, followed by Rev. Frank Clements from nearby Tucker, GA.

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Little is known of events between the end of the Civil War and the early 1880's. In 1881, Rev. T. A. Aikens of Madison, GA became pastor. Available historical information indicates that Peachtree Baptist Church was typical of other Baptist churches in DeKalb county during these years, with pastors serving several churches for once a month week-end services. Many lived many miles from the congregations they served. Usually there was a Saturday "divine service" followed by a church conference. All members were expected to attend. Baptist churches during these years were known to be quick to "disfellowship" members for such behavior as dancing, drinking, using foul language and for failure to attend worship. It was not unusual for a member to be dismissed at one conference, repent the next month and be reinstated. Persons were received into membership either "by letter" or "by experience." Those received by experience were shortly thereafter baptized by immersion in a nearby creek. Most of the pastors who served during these years typically accepted their churches under an "annual call" agreement.

The 1880's were a time of building and growth for the DeKalb county, the State of Georgia and the nation as a whole. Normalcy began to return as the Reconstruction Era came to an end. The small farmers and share-croppers in DeKalb county began to enjoy a better life. To the west, the City of Atlanta was becoming a prominent center in the southeast. In 1883 the Atlanta Journal published its first edition, and the state legislature appropriated one million dollars for the capitol building.

Historical and genealogical information that has been gathered about 19th century members of Peachtree show that they were mostly farm families. Most had small farms and some were tenant farmers, although one family owned over 1,200 acres. There were a few non-farmers, including a carpenter, a blacksmith, and a wheelwright. Generally they had migrated into DeKalb County from other Georgia counties to the north and east, such as Gwinnett, Hall, Forsyth, Oglethorpe, Greene, and Putnam counties. One family originated in Liberty County on the Georgia coast. A few came from such counties to the south and west as Coweta, Campbell and Cobb. Many told the census takers that they or their parents were born in South Carolina. Thus, they fit well into the migratory pattern that prevailed in DeKalb during these decades. Some could neither read nor write, but census data show that most of the children age 15 and under were in school - at a time when school attendance was not compulsory.

Peachtree's sturdy log building was by now showing the ravages of time. Over thirty years of exposure to the elements resulted in serious decay in the foundation and over-all structure. With the coming of Rev. A.J. Goss, who followed Rev. Aikens in 1882, the church entered a new period of growth. Described as "a youthful pastor," Rev. Goss was warm in his words of admiration for the people of the church and what they had achieved. He expressed pleasure at the church's new pews, which had been donated to the church by sawmill owner and church member John F. Wallace. He pointed out, however, that the build was in serious need of major repair or replacement.

Rev. Andrew Jackson Goss was a graduate of Georgia Baptist's Mercer University. He believed strongly in an educated ministry and in the work of the Georgia Baptist Convention. He is also known to have served as pastor of the Corinth Baptist church, (later Chamblee First Baptist, and now Johns Creek Baptist Church) in 1885 and 1892-93. At the church's annual "protracted meeting" in August, 1882, Rev. Goss determined that it was time to address the deteriorating condition of the church building. He chose as the topic for one of his sermons the single word, "Building." He is reported

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to have told the congregation that "the Lord needs a new church." He pointed out that God had planted enough trees near the church to build a large auditorium. He declared that God would not cut and haul logs to the mill nor saw them into lumber and build a house, for that is what God's people would have to do. "God has done His part. We will have to do ours," he said.

The challenge of the pastor inspired the congregation to act. Soon plans for the new building were drawn by "Brother Tedder." (The only known church member with the name "Tedder" who was old enough to do this was William V. Tedder.) That fall and winter the men of the church began to cut the trees and haul them to the mill. There Brother J.F. Wallace sawed them into boards for construction. In 1884 (or 1886?) the new building was completed to the rejoicing of the church. (Historical note: Based on research he did, Rev. Ted Jones wrote that the building was completed in 1886. Recorded memories of Mrs. W.J. Brownlee give the date as 1884. Later Uniform Letters to the Atlanta Baptist Association also give the date as 1884.) It was during this period, in the summer of 1885, that the Sunday School was organized, under the leadership of Dr. E.P. Smith, a dentist from Atlanta.

In 1887, Rev. A.H. Latimer became pastor. Under his leadership, a basement room was added to the new building, which for many years served also as a community school. Available records are unclear, but it appears that a Rev. W.A. Davis was also pastor during the late 1880's. Rev. L. Thomas Reid became pastor in 1890, and at the same time also served as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Decatur. Rev. T.T. Twitty became pastor in 1892, the year of his ordination by the Corinth (Chamblee) Baptist Church. He also served as pastor of the Corinth church from 1893 to 1897 and was pastor of the Norcross Baptist Church from 1894 to 1905. (Historical note: Rev. Twitty died in 1919 while holding a revival meeting at the Harmony Baptist Church in Gainesville, GA. When he stepped down from the pulpit, he collapsed and died.)

In 1888, Peachtree Baptist Church purchased from George Hillyer for five dollars three acres of land adjacent to the church property. The likely purpose of this purchase was to provide space for a cemetery, since tombstones show no burials prior to 1888. The earliest grave in the cemetery is that of Nancy Finch. Oral tradition indicates that there were already some unmarked slave burials that had taken place on the property. However, there are no known historical records which support this tradition.

Eleven known veterans of the Confederate Army were buried in the church's cemetery. The names of these Civil War veterans are:

Joseph Marion Chambers - Company I, 52nd Regiment, Georgia Volunteer Infantry
Sanford P. Haynie - Company E, 20th Regiment, South Carolina Volunteer Infantry
Winder Marion Huff - Company C, 64th Regiment, Georgia Volunteer Infantry
Ransom Jones - Company B, 8th Regiment, Georgia Volunteer Infantry
James A. Landrum - Company F, 37th Regiment, Alabama Volunteer Infantry
William S. Lanier - Company K, 36th Regiment, Georgia Volunteer Infantry
Jonathan Pinnell - Company B - 8th Regiment, Georgia Volunteer Infantry
William M. Pinnell - Company F - 36th Regiment, Georgia Volunteer Infantry
James Cook Shaddox - Company B, 16th Georgia Cavalry
Isaac F. Smith - Company D, 15th Regiment, Georgia Volunteer Infantry

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Caleb W. Stephens - Company C, 19th Regiment, Georgia Volunteer Infantry
A twelfth person, Thomas N. Paden - Company A, 10th Regiment, Cavalry, Georgia State Guards, was possibly also a member of the church, but he is buried in the nearby Rock Springs Cemetery.

Several of the descendants of these soldiers are members of the church in 1997. W.M. Huff was the Great Grandfather of Margaret Stephens Appleby, and J.C. Shaddox was her Great Uncle by marriage; Ransom Jones was the Grandfather of W.R. Lively, Mildred Jones Davis, Hazel Jones Smith, and the Great Grandfather of Slaton Tuggle, III and Joe Hewell, Jr.; Jonathan Pinnell was the Great Grandfather of Ina Wilson Greer; and Caleb Stephens was the Great Grandfather of Jeanette Lively Turner; Isaac F. Smith was also the Grandfather of W.R. Lively.

In September, 1895, the fifty-fifth annual session of the Stone Mountain Baptist Association was hosted by the Peachtree Baptist Church. Representatives from churches from as far away as Social Circle, Willow Spring and East Point gathered for the three day meeting. Shortly thereafter, Rev. W.S. Hubbard became pastor in 1896, and served during the closing years of the 19th century. The second Sunday in the month remained the usual "preaching Sunday." A small piece of ledger paper has been preserved which refer to a church conference on January 22, 1896. It reads (original spelling maintained) as follows: "After a short talk from the pastor the church met in conferene and cald over the regelor items of business and their being non conference gernerd. W.S. Huberd, Mod., G.R. Hopkins, C."

By the first years of the 20th century, the neighborhood around Peachtree had begun to experience noticeable changes. Many of the small farms had merged into larger holdings and a dairy industry had begun to develop. At the same time, the neighborhood was showing the first signs of what was to come later as a few suburban type homes sprang up. Non-agricultural occupations were pursued by a growing number of residents. This was especially so along Briarcliff (then known as Wallace Mill Road) and LaVista (then known as Atlanta Road). Although farmers still predominated the area in the first decade of the new century, the church members included a streetcar conductor, an electrician for the telephone company, a grocery store salesman, and a butcher. The family names of Akins, Greer, Hopkins, Huff, Ivey, Jones, Lively, Pinnell, Stephens, Tuggle, and Wallace were common.

The beginning of the 20th century also marked an historic new beginning for Peachtree Baptist Church. The membership numbered 48 in 1900 when the church called Rev. William Franklin Burdett to shepherd it into the new century. He preached his first sermon as pastor on Sunday, April 9. He remained as pastor for the next thirty-three years, until ill heath forced his retirement. He preached his last sermon as pastor on November 11, 1933.

The church began a strong period of growth under the leadership of its dynamic and beloved new pastor. Membership began to increase following the revival of 1903. Twenty-seven new converts were baptized in the creek near Wallace Mill following that revival. At this time the population of DeKalb County had increased to about 22,000. Over four-fifths of the total land area in the county was in small farms of about sixty acres or so. The primary crop was cotton, but the growing of tobacco was on the increase. Nearby Atlanta was growing more and more prominent.

Under Rev. Burdett's leadership the church grew steadily. The membership grew to 125 by 1912.

In 1914, the enrollment in Sunday School was 89, and adequate space for Sunday School became a concern. As a result, church members excavated an additional area under the building for Sunday School rooms. Later a third excavation was undertaken, and a kitchen was added. It was apparently during this period that a vestibule was added to the front of the church, which eliminated the separate entrances for men and women. All known extant pictures of the 1886 building show the vestibule, which enhanced the beauty of the building considerably.

The earliest extant list of those who served as deacons of Peachtree Baptist Church appears in the church conference minute books for the period 1911 to 1923. These men were: W.J. Brownlee, J.S. Buchannon, J.M. Greer, G.R. Hopkins, C.M. Huff, E.A. Jones, C.M. Lively, W.L. Perdue, W.W. Stephens and W.L. Tuggle.

Problems related to the maintenance and care of the building and grounds continued to demand the attention of the church's leadership. The roof was replaced with composition shingles. At the time, lighting was provided with oil (kerosene) lamps. These were both inadequate and required constant upkeep and repair. In 1920, a committee reported that they had located a used Delco generator which could be obtained for \$300, while a new one would cost \$450. They also reported that new oil lamps could be purchased for \$45.50. The church voted 9 to 0 to buy the used generator. This brought the first electric lights to the church. In 1923, the church was able to connect with a utility company for power. As early as 1913 the church had a well, but there was no indoor plumbing. A pump was installed in 1926. As an interesting aside, the report to the Atlanta Baptist Association in 1926 reveals that the total church budget that year was \$1,140.10 and gifts to missions were \$311.40. For providing one week-end a month services, the pastor's annual salary was \$400.

The Woman's Missionary Union was organized by Mrs. Alonzo A. Ivey in January 1914, with the organizational meeting held in the home of Mrs. C.W. Forrester. It was known then as the Ladies Aid Society. The society met twice each month, and a second circle "for young matrons" was organized in October, 1933. The WMU has continued since that time as a vital aspect of the church's life and a strong advocate for the support of giving to mission causes. Through the years the full program of WMU missionary education programs were developed, including various circles, Sunbeams, GAs, RAs, and Young Women. Others who served as President of the WMU during Rev. Burdett's pastorate were Mrs. C.W. Forester, Mrs. W.R. Lively, Sr., Mrs. D.F. Plunkett, Mrs. Paul H. Huff, Mrs. W.W. Stephen, Mrs. H.A. Burton and Mrs. C.A. Austin.

Rev. Burdett also encouraged the organization of the first training union, then called the Baptist Young People's Union (BYPU). Miss Eula Stephens was the first leader of the BYPU. The Peachtree organization was one of the first active groups in the Atlanta Baptist Association. (Historical note: Mrs. Eula Stephens Gibbons was the oldest living member of Peachtree Baptist Church at the time of her death in 1995.)

New members who came into the church during these years were baptized in an outdoor pool. Earlier, the church had baptized converts at Wallace's Mill. Later the outdoor baptismal pool was built on the property of Paul H. Huff. Following baptisms, those who were baptized would go to the Huff home to change into dry clothes. They would then gather at the church where they were presented, and were given "the right hand of church fellowship." (Note: The "right hand of Christian

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fellowship" was given at the time of their profession of faith.) Several members still active in 1997 were baptized in that outdoor pool. A baptistry was not installed in the church building until 1936.

In November, 1909, with the blessings and support of the Stone Mountain Association, the Atlanta Baptist Association was organized. Peachtree Baptist Church was among the 38 charter churches forming the association. Rev. Burdett was one of the leaders in this movement, and was elected as a member of the first Executive Committee of the new association. One year later, Rev. Burdett was chosen to be the preacher for the 1911 Annual Session.

During this period, Baptists churches tended to hold members to a high standard of support and conduct. Minutes of the church conference of October 6, 1928 refer to Article 4 of the Peachtree decorum. The decorum (which most likely had been formulated many years earlier) stated: "It shall be the duty of each member to support the church morally, spiritually, and financially. Any member failing in these for a period of six months shall be placed on the inactive list and such member shall be notified and allowed (after acknowledgments have been made to the church) to have their letter or be restored to active membership in the church. After six months if no action is taken by the member, the church shall withdraw fellowship from them." The decorum also provided that fellowship was to be withdrawn from persons whose conduct was unbecoming that of a Christian. Many names were removed from the church rolls by this procedure.

Article 9 of the decorum stated that "Any member having a charge, or complaint against another shall pursue the course prescribed in the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses of the 18th chapter of Matthew before preferring the church, and if any member has ought against another member of this church or of a sister church and fails to make it known to such a member before he speaks of it to others, he shall be liable to be dealt with . . ." There are a few references in the minutes of a committee being assigned to meet and "labor" with members who disagreed with each other. Usually the disagreeing parties resolved their differences and ask for forgiveness by each other and by the church in conference. Harmony was thus restored.

During the years of Rev. Burdett's ministry many changes were taking place in DeKalb County, Georgia and the nation as a whole. In 1900 the Coca Cola Company was granted a license to sell the beverage in glass bottles. The first voice radio transmission was also made in 1900. The Wright Brothers flew their plane in 1903. Buggies and wagons began to disappear with the invention of the automobile, which changed transportation patterns and created the need for paved roads. Ford Motor Company sold the "Model T" in 1908 for \$850.

DeKalb county population continued to grow. The 1910 county census reported 27,881 residents, a thirty-two percent increase in ten years. The large dairy industry was growing, replacing many farms. World War I broken upon the nation, with President Woodrow Wilson declaring on April 6, 1917, "America is privileged to spend her blood and her fight for the principles that gave her birth and happiness, and the peace which she had treasured." In May, 1917, construction began on nearby Camp Gordon for the recruiting and training of soldiers. DeKalb county men began registering for the draft, while many other volunteered for service in the armed forces. In 1920 two amendments to the US Constitution were approved, the Prohibition Amendment (the 18th), and the 19th, which read, "The right of citizen of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United

States or by any state on account of sex." Christians throughout the United States were strong in the support of both amendments. The 19th Amendment laid the foundation for the rising influence and participation of women in the life of the church. Most Baptist churches in Georgia, however, were at this time still discussing and disagreeing over whether women should be allowed to speak in church meetings.

Among Baptists in Georgia, much progress was being made. The Georgia Baptist Children's Home moved to its new fifty-acre campus in 1901. The Laymen's Missionary Movement (later the Baptist Brotherhood) was commended to all churches in 1907 by the Georgia Baptist Convention. In 1912 the Georgia Baptist Hospital came into existence. In 1919 the Convention authorized the purchase of The Christian Index from Dr. J.B.W. Graham for \$40,000. Also in 1919 the Southern Baptist \$75 Million Campaign got under way. In 1925, the Cooperative Program (then called "Kingdom Causes") was voted into being by the Southern Baptist Convention. Church's minutes indicate that during this period the Peachtree congregation was eager to support funds for the "orphan's home" and for other mission causes, but refused more than once to contribute funds to the Georgia Baptist Hospital.

Following World War I, the entire country experienced a period of unexcelled prosperity. Businesses were growing. Aviation became more important, and in 1925 Atlanta entered the commercial aviation era with the opening of Candler Field in Hapeville. There was a widespread feeling that Georgia lagged behind in growth due to the impassibility of her highways. As a result, the state created the Highway Board which launched a massive program for paving roads. WSB, the first commercial radio station in the South, was founded in 1922. The upsurge of hope and prosperity with which the decade of the twenties began came tumbling down with the stock market crash of 1929.

Beginning in about 1920, the church paid a janitor to fire up the furnace, fill and light the oil lamps, clean the building, mow the grass and to "use fly spray" before church services. Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s there was apparently much confusion and some disagreements over ownership of plots in the church cemetery. The minutes reveal that numerous efforts were made by the Deacons and the church to solve the problems. At one point, the church hired a surveyor to determine the corners of the cemetery, and the corners were marked "with Ford axles."

Although the deacons remained the primary leadership body, it appears that up until about 1935 the church governing structure was implemented largely through four standing committees: The Finance Committee, the Membership Committee, the Cemetery Committee (sometimes called the Building and Grounds Committee) and the Social Committee. It appears that a deacon was always the chairman of each committee, although non-deacons were also included, along with a few women. Later, a Music Committee was added. Also, various ad hoc committees were used from time to time. Two men known to have served as Music Director for the church during Rev. Burdett's ministry were A.J. Hall in 1925 and Frank A Woods in 1929.

At Peachtree, the usual second Sunday a month preaching service continued until 1927. With the steady growth of the church, members made the decision that year to begin holding Sunday services two times each month. On October 9, 1933, Rev. Burdett tendered his resignation as pastor. The

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resignation was accepted with great sorrow, and a motion passed to cause a tribute in his honor to be printed in The Christian Index. He preached his last sermon on Sunday, November 11, 1933. At the end of his ministry at Peachtree, church membership had grown to 163. After fourteen years of his leadership, Sunday school enrollment in 1914 was 89. By 1933, Sunday School enrollment had grown to 186.

Frequent references in church records make it apparent that Peachtree members had a great love, admiration and respect for Rev. Burdett. References of tribute appear in the minutes for some years after his resignation. Shortly after his death, the church held a special memorial service in his honor on March 7, 1949. A stone marker was placed on the church grounds noting his service. The marker sits today in front of the sanctuary accompanied by a beautiful flower garden.

In May, 1932, the deacons divided the membership of the church among the nine deacons. Each deacon was assigned responsibility for a group of members. The deacons were to see that those on their list made contributions for the work of the church and that they honored their pledges. It appears that there was little change in church leadership during Rev. Burdett's ministry. Church records from 1911 to 1935 record no ordination of new deacons. The list of deacons remained the same through this period, except for one deacon who died and another who was dropped for unexplained reasons. Following a deacon ordination in 1935, the following men are listed as deacons: DeWitt Adams, W.J. Brownlee, Perry Folsom, C.M. Huff, Joe J. Hewell, Sr., E.A. Jones, C.M. Lively, H.A. Stephens, W.P. Simmons, J.T. Tuggle, E.A. Wilder and Frank A. Woods.

In December, 1933, the church extended a call to Rev. William Howard Sentell to become pastor. He responded that he could accept the call only if preaching services were changed to meet on the second and fourth Sundays of each month rather than the first and third. The church approved this change, and Rev. Sentell preached his first sermon as pastor on the second Sunday in January, 1934. It was that year also when the church began to hold regular weekly prayer meetings on Wednesday evenings.

Many new members were added to the church under Rev. Sentell's ministry. On July 8, 1934 a total of forty people were received for church membership, thirty-five of whom were baptized. W.R. Lively Sr., who has served many years as a Deacon of the church, is the only person converted in that revival who is still a member of the church in 1997. The church made another significant step forward in response to the growth of the church. At the church conference on September 23, 1934, W.W. "Wash" Lively proposed that the time was at hand when Peachtree should have preaching services every Sunday and thus become a "full-time" church. A motion was made by DeWitt Adams, seconded by Paul M. Huff that this be put into effect immediately, and that Rev. Sentell be called as full-time pastor for twelve months. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Rev. Sentell resigned in 1935, and in October it was proposed that the church extend a call to Rev. L. Earle Fuller to serve as pastor. He responded that if the church extended him a call, he would accept only with the understanding that he would be guided entirely as directed by the Holy Spirit. The church then extended him a call by unanimous vote, and he served for the next four years.

During Rev. Fuller's ministry, a canvass was taken of the Peachtree neighborhood. The results

revealed that there were 41 members of other Baptist churches living in the area, there were 58 homes with no church membership, and 17 members of Peachtree who were not attending nor supporting the church. The church then launched a program to reach these people. Rev. Fuller resigned in 1939. At that time, J. Hal Armstrong was serving his first time as the church's Music Director.

The church was without a pastor for nineteen weeks. Thirteen different visiting ministers preached during that time, until the church extended a call to Rev. C.H. Mount in March, 1940. In a letter to the deacons dated February 3, 1941, Rev. Mount stated his philosophy regarding church finances and proposed a financial policy for the church. In essence, the policy involved the use of envelopes to be marked by members as contributions for the support of the pastor, for missions, for church expenses, for the general fund or for special needs. The deacons adopted his suggestions at their next meeting. W. Roy Green in 1941 served with him as Music Director.

At a later meeting that October, Rev. Mount acknowledged that there had been "estrangement between himself and the young people." He then left the meeting so the deacons could freely discuss the matter. After discussion, a committee of three was appointed to meet with "the young people" to seek to bring about reconciliation. Continued church growth created the need for more educational space, but Rev. Mount personally objected to the church going in debt for a building program. In January, 1942 he resigned in a strongly worded letter, stating his belief that the spirit in which building plans had been put through "makes me fear that it is not of the Lord, and therefore cannot bring much of a blessing."

The church immediately formed a Pulpit Committee to secure an interim pastor and to begin the search for a new pastor. The committee was composed of W.W. Lively, Chairman, Hal Armstrong, E.M. Hiscock, Paul H. Huff and W.P. Simmons. Rev. G.J. Davis served as Interim Pastor until the church extended a call to Rev. B.L. Bond of Louisville, KY in May, 1942. Shortly after he became pastor, Rev. Bond advocated the holding of a Vacation Bible School, and proposed that the church set aside \$10.00 to cover the cost. Ninety-two children were enrolled in the church's first VBS. L.E. Munday served as Music Director in 1943. Also under Rev. Bond's leadership, the church adopted "the Dowis rotating deacon plan," in which twelve members of the "Active" deacon board would serve three year terms.

During World War II, which began on December 7, 1941, the church displayed a banner with a star representing each member of the church who served in the armed forces. One gold star represented the church only casualty - Lee Pendley, who died in the army in 1943. (Note: In 1947, the service banner was removed with instructions that a bronze plaque be placed in the vestibule and that the flag be preserved.)

Disaster struck the church on Sunday morning, December 6, 1942. Mrs. Julia Huff Goza in her memoir recalled that as she was dressing for Sunday School she saw from her bedroom window that the church was on fire. The blaze had already been reported by a passer-by, and the Druid Hills fire department responded. The fire chief later reported that the fire apparently began in the basement of the church near the furnace. Only one of the church's seven pianos and a few chairs were saved.

The church held a called conference that afternoon at the W.D. Thomson school to determine what

action the church would undertake. Three alternatives were proposed. The first was to build a temporary structure immediately. The second option was to begin work at once on a permanent structure. The third alternative proposed was to begin a building fund and to wait to rebuilt until World War II ended. The courageous vote of the membership was to begin work at once on a new building. That afternoon \$2,185 was pledged for the new structure.

The wooden structure which burned was valued at \$7,000, and was insured for \$3,000. The church resolved to take three immediate steps. First was to request the DeKalb School Board to grant permission for the church to use the W.D. Thomson school (then located on the corner of LaVista and North Druid Hills Road) for services until the new building was completed. The request was graciously granted. Second, contact was then made with the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, TN to determine what types of building plans might be available. The Board's recommendation was that a brick structure be built and a general outline of plans was provided. The third step was to seek permission from the appropriate office in Washington, DC in order to secure the necessary steel and other building materials that were restricted due to wartime shortages.

The church asked the deacons to appoint a Building Committee. Those appointed on January 3, 1943 were: Milton C. Lively, Chairman, W.P. Simmons, E.M. Hiscock, P.H. Huff and L.B. Huston. The committee immediately employed an architect. Blueprints showing preliminary plans are dated March 15, 1943. A Finance Committee was also appointed. The Building Committee worked with dispatch, and the new structure was completed in a little over one year.

On January 1, 1944, Rev. Bond, Deacon Chairman W.P. Simmons and church clerk Harold R. Simmons wrote a letter of appreciation to the members of the Finance Committee commending them for their dedicated work in getting the new building completed. The letter stated that friends and members of the church had contributed \$16,722.69 to the Building Fund. On February 6, the church borrowed another \$8,000.00 to cover further indebtedness caused by the construction of the new building, improvements of the church grounds and the purchase of equipment.

The exterior of the new building resembled Monticello (home of Thomas Jefferson). It was a two-story red brick building with traditional porch and white columns. It was constructed in such a way that it could be converted later into an educational building when a permanent new sanctuary was constructed. The consecration service for the new building was held over a three day period, January 16-18, 1944. Later in the year, the church began the practice of presenting a Bible to children who had entered the first grade in school.

In June, 1944, the church conducted an Ordination Service for Bertis L. Watson into the Gospel Ministry. He and his wife, Marjorie, met while students at the Bible College. Together they decided to devote their lives to missionary work. Bert and Marjorie Watson were appointed by the South America Indian Mission to serve among the natives of Peru. They departed for their new work in June, 1946, and served in the jungles of Peru for 35 years.. Since that time the church has regularly through the years given support to their work, and continues in 1997 to provide support for Marjorie Watson in her retirement.

In December, 1944, Rev. Bond resigned as pastor. The church then requested Dr. S.F. Lowe to

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serve as interim pastor, and he remained in that position until August 5, 1945. Earlier, in January, the church received a request for the ordination of L.B. Huston, who had united with Peachtree on profession of faith and baptism on March 15, 1942. He had served as a member of the Church Building Committee, as a deacon of the church and as Training Union Director. His ordination to the Ministry of the Gospel was held on Sunday, February 4, 1945. The Ordination Sermon was delivered by Dr. Lowe. (Historical coincident: On March 29, 1949, Rev. L.B. Huston served on the Ordination Council and spoke at the Ordination Service called by the Sylvan Hills Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA for the ordination of Perry Ginn. Dr. Ginn is retiring as Pastor of Peachtree Baptist Church at the end of this Sesquicentennial year.)

at which time the church extended a call to Rev. Ted M. Jones, of Key West, FL. Rev. Jones assumed his responsibilities in September, just as World War II ended.

With the beginning of the post-war boom, the neighborhood around Peachtree church grew at an astounding rate. Over the next few years farms and dairies began to disappear, being replaced by new housing subdivisions. The whole area began to take on a decidedly suburban look. A small shopping center was built on a nearby hill where members had previously looked out of church windows to see cows grazing. Before the war began, church membership was 233. By 1949, membership had grown to 384. Sunday school enrollment, which was less than 200, grew to 427 over the same period of time.

In June, 1947 the church observed its first Youth Week, with all church offices held by young people. The youth pastor was Bob Davis. The minutes record a special deacons meeting dinner held at the Candler Hotel in Decatur, to which the youth pastor and all youth deacons were invited. Plans for the Youth Week emphasis were presented. Youth Secretary Lester Greer recorded the minutes, and Youth Deacon Milton Foster led the closing prayer.

The church celebrated its 100th anniversary on August 10, 1947 under the theme "Climax a Century for Christ." Church membership had then reached 354, with 345 enrolled in Sunday School. The celebration was featured as "an old-fashioned all-day meeting with dinner served to all who attend." An afternoon memorial service was held that day, and a revival meeting conducted following the celebration. The oldest living member of the church at the time of the Centennial celebration was Mrs. W.J. Brownlee (nee Stephens), who was baptized by Rev. A.J. Goss in the summer of 1889. Roland Henry served as Music Director in 1947.

Rev. Jones took the initiative in preparing a brief history of Peachtree Baptist Church in time for the Centennial celebration. In his introduction to the history booklet Rev. Jones listed his sources. He wrote, "This History of Peachtree Baptist Church was prepared by the Pastor, Rev. Ted M. Jones, after consulting 'The Inventory of the Church Archives of Georgia.' Other references used were: The Minute Books of the Stone Mountain Baptist Association . . . The minute books of the Atlanta Baptist Association of Baptists from its beginning in 1909; the Minutes of Peachtree Baptist Church, from consecutive dates 1912 to 1940 and of the current year; a brief History of Peachtree Baptist Church, written by Mrs. Claude Davis in 1940." He further wrote: "I have interviewed the old members of the church: Mrs. E.A. Akins, Mr. C.M. Lum Huff, Mrs. Eva Kelley, Mrs. W.J. Brownlee, Mr. W.W. Stephens, Mrs. Ernest A. Jones, Mr. & Mrs. J.S. Lord, Mrs. Anna Houston and

Mrs. W.R. Lively. It is possible that some of the earlier dates are approximate since no actual church records are in possession of any members prior to 1909."

In January, 1948, Rev. Jones proposed that the church purchase the fifteen and a half acres of the Selman estate, which was located directly across LaVista Road from the church. He reported that the heirs had offered to sell the land to the church for \$15,000. He also reported that he had secured a fifteen day free option for the church to purchase the land. A committee was immediately appointed to investigate the matter. The committee, composed of Kenneth G. Weimer, Chairman, J.J. Hewell, Sr., H.W. Mauldin, W.W. Lively and Paul Goza, recommended to the church on January 11 that the land be purchased. The church's by-laws provided for a two-thirds majority vote for such transactions. By secret ballot vote the church declined to approve the purchase. In the light of the historical developments, it appears the church made a tragic mistake in rejecting the recommendation of the committee.

Rev. Jones abruptly resigned on May 16, 1948. The church minutes for the May 31 conference record the following: "Brother W.P. Simmons gave a lengthy talk as to actions taken by the Board of Deacons which led to the Pastor's resignation. A lengthy discussion was had with regard to the actions of the Board." Dr. G.J. Davis was invited to serve as interim pastor, and he remained in that position for a year.

In May, 1949 the church extended a call to Rev. Cary C. Wood of Columbus, GA, and he remained with the church for the next ten years. His ministry was marked by continued growth of the Peachtree family. When he came in 1949, church membership was 384. Four years later it had grown to 525. It became obvious to the membership that the building completed in 1944 had to be enlarged. At that time, the main auditorium was in the general area which is to the rear of the present sanctuary. The front entrance to the auditorium was on the Briarcliff side of the church. In 1950, plans were developed and the first phase of the enlargement program began. This was an educational annex on the LaVista road side, which provided space for twelve classrooms. Before this annex was completed, the church approved in 1951 a plan to begin work on an annex on the Briarcliff road side to approximately duplicate the new annex on the LaVista side.

Prior to 1949, the church had rented a house on Houston Mill Road for a pastorium. In January that year, Mrs. Lawrence Benson donated the church a large lot on North Druid Hills Road on which to build a pastorium. Claude Foster drew the plans, and construction began immediately. Rev. Wood and his family moved into the new pastorium on June 8, 1949. In 1972 the church sold the property, and applied the proceeds to the loan taken out to purchase the LaVista Road house, which in 1997 is the Activities Building.

The Women's Missionary Society continued as a strong force for missions from its beginning in 1914. A third circle, the Business Women's Circle, had been organized in 1943 by Mrs. B.L. Bond. Now the whole WMU program began to grow even more through the Sunbeams, Girls Auxiliary, Royal Ambassadors, and Young Women's Auxiliary organizations. In 1951 the GA's and RA's held their first Recognition Service, and the first GA Coronation was held in 1952. By 1963 the WMU had seven circles (four day and three night circle), two Sunbeam groups, two Junior GA's group, and one YWA group.

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In 1951 the church was operating two nurseries during Sunday morning services, and the deacons approved the purchase of two additional baby cribs and the securing of additional nursery workers. In his annual report in October, 1952, Sunday School Superintendent Dr. Lee B. Malone reported that even with the two new annexes "our growth is proceeding faster than we are providing space." He also expressed concern regarding the large number of people the church was failing to reach because of inadequate space to accommodate them. He also urged Sunday School teachers to be more diligent in addressing the spiritual needs of class members.

During the ten years of Rev. Wood's ministry Peachtree engaged in a number of outreach and fellowship activities. Sunday School enrollment reached 898 in 1955. A mission Sunday School, the Mayson Mission, was operated on Bankhead Highway. The men's brotherhood was reactivated and reorganized. The church sponsored a Boy Scout troop as well as baseball and basketball teams. A Youth Council was organized to promote activities among the youth. The young people developed a movie, "Ways of Spiritual Growth" showing the various activities of the church's youth. The Vacation Bible School in 1953 enrolled 297 children, and had an average attendance of 278. The budget for missions grew from \$767.52 in 1949 to \$9,602.93 in 1957. In 1953, the church employed Miss Gwen Miles as the church's first Educational Director. She was succeeded in 1957 by Charles B. Veach, who remained for two years. Those who served as Music Directors during Rev. Wood's ministry were J. Hal Armstrong, Dr. Wayne Saylor, W. Roy Green, Rowena Sessoms and Blanche Threatte.

The most significant material event during Rev. Wood's ten year ministry was the construction of the new sanctuary. The present beautiful sanctuary would not have been possible had not both Briarcliff and LaVista roads been re-routed. Prior to World War II Briarcliff road was moved about forty feet eastward to its present location. In 1951, LaVista road was also moved. Originally it had curved into the area where the chapel and parking lot are located. It was through an agreement with neighboring property owners and the cooperation of both DeKalb County and state highway authorities that the road was moved. The new route cut through land owned by Max H. Kessler, which put about half an acre of his land on the church side of the road. Mr. Kessler generously donated that small area to the church.

At a business conference on October 7, 1953 the church adopted a "Five Year Program of Stewardship" and set aside \$12,000 in the 1954 budget for the Building Fund, with the aim "to begin construction of the sanctuary by January, 1959." The congregation's response to the challenge was greater than had been assumed and plans for the new sanctuary were launched much earlier. The Sunday church bulletin of October 30, 1955 expresses thanks to those who had accepted responsibility to serve on the Building Committee to undertake construction. This committee was composed of J. Walter Thomas, Chairman, Robert L. McKay, Secretary, Kenneth Weimer, H.W. Mauldin, Sr., W.P. Newman, David K. Wells, W.P. Simmons, J.L. Robinson, Mrs. J.J. Thomas, H.O. Hamby and Rev. Cary C. Wood. Other information indicates that at various later times David E. Buck, Thomas M. Shaw, D.A. Pirkle, Harry Gault, H.R. Williams, W.W. Lively, J.T. Tuggle, Lee Malone, Gwen Miles, Mrs. W.W. Lively, Mrs. H.R. Williams, Mrs. W.R. Kilpatrick, J. Claud Foster and Roy Queen also served on the "General Building and Planning Committee" when it was divided into Finance, Construction and Equipment sub-committees.

Construction of the new sanctuary was undertaken in 1956. John M. Peterson, an immigrant from Sweden living in the community, laid most of the brick for the sanctuary. New Building Dedication Day was held on August 18, 1957. By that time, resident church membership had risen to 750, and the average attendance in Sunday School reached almost 550. Rev. Cary Wood resigned as pastor, and completed ten years of a most fruitful ministry in December, 1958

The church was now ready for a new period of growth. Rev. Jon A. Pirtle, a well-known evangelist, was invited to serve as Interim Pastor for the month of January, 1959. The pulpit committee investigated several candidates during the next several months, and by fall agreed to recommend that the church extend a call to Rev. Pirtle to become pastor. Also, in September, 1959, the church called Duke K. Lake as Minister of Education. He served in this position until he retired in 1975. He was later designated as "Minister of Education Emeritus" and has remained an active member of the church in 1997 at age 94..

Church membership continued to grow rapidly under Rev. Pirtle's evangelistic leadership, with average attendance in Sunday School reaching almost 700 in 1963. At a church conference on August 21, 1963 plans for a new Educational Building were presented for discussion and adoption. By 1965, the three story educational building was completed. Lamar Savage was employed as Church Organist in August, 1962, and the church called Dayle Grose as Minister of Music in late 1963. He followed Glenn Mauzy, who had come to the church in 1962. The new structure housed a suite of offices, ladies parlor, and a new chapel in addition to educational classroom space. The church enjoyed a full program of activities during these years. Children's church was begun, and strong Bible study and activity programs were developed. The music program and Training Union grew as well, and strong support was given to the church's baseball team.

As always when God's church is reaching people for Jesus Christ, Satan is also at work. In 1969, various rumors and allegations began to circulate regarding some aspects of Rev. Pirtle's personal conduct. By the fall of 1970, average attendance in Sunday School had dropped to 435. The matters came to a head when Rev. Pirtle wrote an open letter to all church members, dated October 28, 1970, in which he stated that a committee of deacons informed him that the Active Deacon Board had voted 11 to 8 to ask for his resignation as pastor. He wrote that when he asked for their reasons, they listed the following in writing: (a) Lack of leadership ability, (b) loss of the congregation's confidence and respect, (c) lack of progress in coordinating church programs with the church staff, and (d) lack of interest in the entire church program. He also called for a special church conference to deal properly with the matter, and insisted that the vote be taken by secret ballot. The upshot of this controversy was that Rev. Pirtle submitted his resignation as pastor, and preached his last sermon on December 6, 1970.

Following these events, Wesley Combs, Chairman of Deacons, wrote on December 21st, a letter to the membership in which he stated: "We have just experienced one of the greatest tragedies in our church that can come to any church fellowship . . . This has not been a division in which one side has won and another lost. All of us have lost because God's work has been set back at Peachtree, and His Kingdom is the only really important and eternal consideration with which we are faced. We need to come together in His name and for His sake and continue the building of a great church." He urged the congregation to heed the admonition of Jesus, "Love one another, as I have loved you,"

and to continue to support the church. (Historical footnote: Rev. Pirtle at first attempted to form a "New Life Church" in the community, but the effort was soon abandoned. He later divorced, remarried and moved to Texas.)

The church invited Dr. Monroe F. Swilley, Jr. to become interim pastor. He remained in that position for the next 11 months, during which time he shepherded the church through a time of healing. The church then extended a call to Rev. Dan M. Hodges, who at the time was serving as Pastor of First Baptist Church, Perry, GA. He assumed the pastorate of the church in February, 1972. Later that year, Nathan Cook joined the staff as Youth Director.

In 1973 the church appointed a Long-Range Planning Committee to project the work of the church for the balance of the decade. On July 30, Committee Chairman, Charles House, presented a statement of purpose for the church and recommended a plan of implementation. Specific goals for outreach and ministry were approved for Bible study, mission organizations and the music ministry. The plan also included programs for recreation, social activities and the "application to life" of Christian principles. Those who served with Mr. House on the committee were Bob Cole, Wes Combs, Lewis W. deJarnette, Mrs. Ruth Hewell, John H. Sawyer, Jr., Herbert Schuette and Mrs. Herb Traylor. In 1973 also, the church called Wes Bryan to serve as Minister of Education, who continued in that position until October, 1976. In January, 1974, Bobby Sims was called as Minister of Music and Associate Pastor, and in August Mrs. Pat Preston was employed to serve as Hostess for the Wednesday evening Family Night suppers.

Rev. Hodges formed a new class for Bible study during Sunday School which was for both couples and singles, and which had no age restrictions. The group was called "the Pastor's Class." The class was later known as the "Fellowship Class," and was for many years taught by Bob Myers. (Max Johnson followed Mr. Myers as teacher for a brief time, then Mrs. Myrtle Rolader became teacher and has continued teaching the class to 1997.) On March 27, 1974 the church voted to convert the LaVista road residence into an "Activity and Recreational Building." The next January the residence was designated as the "Wash and Cecilia Lively Building" in appreciation for the many contributions to the church made by this outstanding couple. At that same March conference, the church voted to ordain Tommy Traylor to the Ministry of the Gospel.

The community surrounding Peachtree was beginning to change considerably. A strong Orthodox Jewish congregation, with the Beth Jacob synagogue on LaVista Road as its center, continued to grow, with new Jewish families occupying many residences as people moved away. New apartment buildings began to be constructed in the area. The population in the area began more and more to reflect the diversity of new ethnic and racial groups. To communicate more effectively the Gospel message, the church adopted the motto: "In essentials, unity; In non-essentials, liberty; In diversities, charity; In all things, Christ first."

As second generation children grew up, married and moved into their own homes, and their parents retired the area around the church also became more and more a neighborhood of senior adults. Two recent retirees, Emory Stewart and Amogene Oliver, suggested to the pastor the need for more specialized programs for older adults. Bettilu Hodges, the pastor's wife, expressed great interest in the idea and took the lead in planning activities for the group. The church then appointed a special

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committee to consider the establishment of a special ministry for senior citizens. The committee chairman, T.R. Myers, presented a recommendation to the church on February 28, 1976 that the church establish a special department for this purpose, which was heartily approved. For inspiration the department took the name "Young at Heart," and Amogene Oliver was elected as the first president. Fundraising under the leadership of YAH made it possible for the church to purchase its first van. The group also produced the church's first cookbook. As the years passed, the YAH group has become the "supporting back-bone" of the church's continuing ministry in the 1990s. Later YAH presidents were Sandra McNeil, Marjorie Parker and C.L Adams. Mrs. Parker was elected as president again in 1996.

Rev. Hodges resigned as pastor effective in July, 1977, and the church immediately requested Dr. Monroe Swilley to serve once again as interim pastor. The annual report to the Atlanta Baptist Association in September, 1977 revealed a resident church membership of 820. Sunday School enrollment was 667, and the average attendance for the year was 283. The church received 36 new members during the year, 18 of whom came for baptism.

On April 9, 1978, the church extended a call to Rev. Al H. Craft to become pastor. That year also the church voted to add a third full-time minister to the staff, one who would have a strong "emphasis in education and youth work that is strong in outreach." At a special conference in June, 1979 the church adopted a revised Constitution and Bylaws. In July, Ralph E. (Gene) Lovelace, Jr. became Minister of Education and Youth. Bobby Sims resigned as Minister of Music in June, 1980. At that time the church voted to change Mr. Lovelace's job responsibilities to that of Associate Pastor. In January, 1981, Terry Taylor was called as Minister of Music and Youth., and Max Johnson became Minister of Evangelism. As a part of its new outreach efforts, the church in September that year appointed Rev. Stephen Kio as Minister of Internationals, to serve on a voluntary, non-salaried basis.

The church also undertook support for the building of a Baptist church in Chin State in Burma, and for the training of the future pastor. A note from Stephen Kio in September, 1983 stated, "the Falam Baptist Church extends greetings and thanks to the members of Peachtree for your faithfulness and generosity." At that time the church had already given \$3,590 for the construction of a 60' x 125' sanctuary building. In addition, the church sponsored the education of James Tial Dum at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. On Sunday, May 31, 1987, upon the completion of his training, the church had a commissioning service for Rev. Dum as he prepared to return to his native Burma.

Encouraged by Gene Lovelace, the "Christian Singles" group was organized in late 1979. Alice Griffin served as the first Director of the group, with Terry Stevens as Co-Director and Fay Rosso as Social Chairman. For the next several years the group sponsored supper meetings, a variety of interesting programs, attendance at Atlanta Hawks and Atlanta Braves games, and attendance at cultural events such as the Atlanta Symphony. Later Directors to lead the groups were Dot Wright, Don McClair and Joyce Gould.

In December, 1983, the church voted to allow the Spanish Baptist Mission to use the facilities of the church at no cost for worship and Bible study. This mission was later constituted as a separate Baptist church under the name Templo Bautista Hispano. This Spanish language church continues to hold Sunday School, worship and other services in Peachtree's facilities, and has led in the establishment

of other Hispanic churches in Georgia and in other states. In 1994, as the congregation continued to grow an agreement was made for Templo to begin sharing the cost of utility expenses. By 1996, growth required more space for worship, and Templo was given permission to use the main sanctuary for worship on Sunday afternoons.

It was becoming obvious that the new Sanctuary was in need of major repairs. The decision was made in January, 1982 to begin receiving designated contributions to be used for repairs on the church steeple and the renovation and replacement of windows in the sanctuary. In November, the church approved a ten-year loan in the amount of \$140,000 to renovate the sanctuary, paint the entire exterior of the church buildings, put storm windows on the educational building, construct a new circular drive on the Briarcliff road side, and to renovate the kitchen and eating area. In May, 1983 the decision was made to change the windows in the sanctuary to stain glass windows, and to permit designations for the windows to be memorialized.

In November, 1983 Gary Harmon was ordained to the Ministry, and in December the church approved a contract in the amount of \$30,900 for the repairs, alteration and completion of the Sanctuary organ. The Moeller organ had been partially installed in 1958. At the Homecoming Service on September 11, 1983, a special dedication service was conducted for the completed organ. The guest recitalist for the service was noted author and hymnal editor Dr. Donald P. Hustad, Professor of Organ at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

In October, 1984 the church voted to establish the week-day Child Development Center program. Authorization was given to borrow up to \$30,000 to make the necessary construction modification and provide start-up costs to begin the center. That fall the church also adopted new job descriptions for all persons serving on the church staff. Bob Burroughs was then called to serve as Minister of Music effective in January, 1985 and David Shenning was called as Associate Minister of Music and Students. Bob Baggott resigned in May, 1985, and in August, Rodney Arp was called as Minister of Education. After 24 years of service, Lamar Savage resigned as Church Organist in August, 1986.

The focus of the Homecoming Celebration on September 8, 1985 was a dedication ceremony for the newly installed sanctuary stained glass windows. The dedication litany proclaimed "Splendor and majesty are before Him. Strength and beauty are His sanctuary." Dr. Monroe Swilley spoke on "Through These Windows," explaining the story of the life of Christ as depicted in the new windows: (1) The Birth of Jesus; (2) Jesus in the Temple at Age 12; (3) The Baptism of Jesus; (4) The Calling of the Disciples; (5) The Sermon on the Mount; (6) Jesus and the Children; (7) Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane; (8) The Crucifixion; (9) The Resurrection; and (10) The Ascension. The three smaller balcony windows depict symbols of "The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit." The three smaller stair windows depict "The Word of God," "The Cross and the Bible," and "The Cross and the Crown." Above the baptistry is the depiction of "Jesus, the Good Shepherd."

Computers were given for use in the church office in 1986, and in May the church authorized the purchase of a new Kawai 7'5" Grand Piano for the sanctuary. In April, 1987 the church voted to redesign and renovate the pulpit area of the Sanctuary and to re-carpet the chapel. David Shenning resigned, and Dean Oliver became Minister of Youth and Music Associate in May, 1987. Rodney Arp resigned in June, and Wes Bryan was called to return to the church as Minister of Education in

October. On July 26, 1987 the church ordained Chris Church to the Ministry of the Gospel.

The church began a Conversational English program in 1978, with the assistance of the Language Mission Division of the Georgia Baptist Convention. Rebecca Collins was the Director of the program, she had five teachers on the staff, and nursery facilities were provided for participants. During the years, students ranged in ages from 20 to 80, and twelve countries were represented, including Japan, Iran, Russia, Cuba, Columbia, China, Chile, Korea and Hungary. At the conclusion of each session, each student was presented with a Bible in his/her own language. Under the leadership of Katherine Harmon, this English as a Second Language program continued until 1991. She took the initiative to revive the program in 1996.

A significant action regarding the future leadership of the church was taken by the congregation at the Morning Worship Service on Sunday, March 15, 1987. Previously, on June 5, 1983, the deacons recommended that a vote be taken "offering opportunity to change the wording of Article IX of the decorum relating to male deacons and change to neuter gender." The purpose of that recommendation was to permit the election of women to serve as deacons. Being an amendment to the By-laws, the motion required a three-fourths vote for approval, and failed to pass. At the 1987 meeting the church was asked to approve another revision and updating of the Constitution and Bylaws. Included was a recommendation that the Bylaws be made gender neutral, and that female members of the church be afforded the opportunity to be considered for election to all church offices, including that of deacon. Consequent to the adoption of this proposal by the church, the name of Agnes Church was included on the deacon election ballot in 1988. Later that year, Mrs. Church was elected, ordained and assumed office as the first female deacon in the history of the church. (Historical footnote: During her second term of office, Mrs. Church was elected in 1994 to serve as the church's Chairman of the Deacons for the calendar year 1995.) Other women subsequently elected and ordained as deacons are Joan House, Ann Bryant, Susie Parker, Dolores Maxon and Annette McNaron.

The year 1988 proved to be another serious crisis year for the church. Rev. Al Craft resigned as pastor in June. Internal controversy had developed, and in November Bob Burroughs abruptly resigned as Minister of Music and left the church. The annual report of the church to the Atlanta Baptist Association in September, 1988 revealed a church membership of 593, a Sunday School enrolment of 403, and an average Sunday School attendance of 203. After the Burroughs' resignation, a number of members transferred their memberships and several deacons resigned. Overall, the church that fall lost some 53 active members, including several middle aged adults and their children.

Dr. Perry Ginn had been asked by the Pulpit Committee to preach several Sundays in the fall, and was requested to consider becoming interim pastor. In December, 1988 the Pulpit Committee and Deacons recommended to the church "that Dr. Ginn be called as our pastor for the 1989 calendar year on a bi-vocational basis," with him remaining in his position as the Executive Director of the Christian Council of Metropolitan Atlanta. Pulpit Committee Chairman Mark Parker reported that the consensus of the committee was that the church was not yet ready to call a new pastor, and "that we have some sorting out of ourselves to do first and to straighten out before calling a new pastor." Dr. Ginn accepted the invitation to serve for one year as bi-vocational pastor.

During the late 1970's and all the 1980's vast changes were taking place in the neighborhood surrounding the church. More and more apartment complexes were being erected. Home ownership turn-over continued unabated. A survey taken in late 1991 revealed that 53% of the population within a three miles radius of the church was composed of single people - young adults, divorced persons, and widows and widowers. Not only was the population single, but it was more and more diverse. Hispanic and African-American populations increased steadily. Many immigrants from Central and South America, Africa, Asia and Russia moved into the neighborhood. Gay and lesbians groups began to flourish, and peoples with differing cultural life-styles became commonplace. During the 1990s, various Atlanta area churches, both Southern Baptist and those of other denominations, began to disband.

During 1989 the church extended a call to Rev. William E. "Woody" Parish to be Minister of Music and Senior Adults. Later in the year, Belinda Paul was employed by the Personnel Committee to serve as Director of Children's Ministry and the Child Development Center. Following much prayer by the congregation, Dr. Ginn agreed in December to allow his name to be presented for consideration as permanent pastor. The Pulpit Committee and Deacon recommendation was presented to the church on Sunday morning, February 11, 1990, with the vote taken by secret ballot. Dr. Ginn was called as pastor by a 97% vote of the congregation, and assumed the office of pastor on a full-time basis on March 15, 1990. The annual report to the Atlanta Baptist Association in October, 1989 records a resident church membership of 493 and a Sunday School enrollment of 352, with an average attendance of 154.

Dr. Ginn became pastor strongly convinced that God wanted the church to assume a greater sense of stewardship responsibility for its buildings and grounds. He also felt a strong call of God to lead the church through the difficult period of transition it faced in the decade of the 1990s. He was convinced that this difficult transition was necessary if the church is to survive and become truly the Body of Christ in the changing community about it. During Dr. Ginn's pastorate at Peachtree, Tabernacle Baptist Church in downtown Atlanta disbanded, and First Baptist Church began its move from the inner city to the suburbs. Both North Atlanta Baptist Church and Emory Baptist Church also disbanded, and near-by Morningside Baptist and Scott Boulevard Baptist churches experienced inner discord and declining memberships. Dr. Ginn declared his conviction that God has a great future for Peachtree Baptist Church in the emerging 21st century. He shared with the congregation that God had laid upon his heart that the prophet Jeremiah was to be the model for his ministry at Peachtree. Jeremiah served God in a time of profound change and difficult transition in the life of Israel, and proclaimed God's promise of a new future for the People of God.

Under Dr. Ginn's leadership, the church undertook a large program of repair and renovation of the church's buildings and grounds. This was made possible by the generosity of the members and a large bequest from the estate of the late W.W. "Wash" and Cecilia Lively, who had been outstanding dedicated leaders during their lifetimes. Mrs. Lively left to the church in her will \$30,000 for the Cemetery Trust Fund, and \$275,000 for other needs. (Previously, Mr. Lively at his death had left \$15,000 to the church.) These renovation projects were also aided by a \$50,000 bequest from the will of Sunday School member, but non-church member, Louise Arnold. A new roof was put on the sanctuary building, the Sanctuary ceiling was replaced, the interior redecorated, and a new sound system installed. A new phone system and computer system were installed in the church offices. The

entire exterior of the church buildings, including the steeple, was painted and rotting windows were replaced. A new heating system boiler and a new air-conditioning system were installed in the Sanctuary. The first floor day care area of the educational building was completely remodeled and upgraded. The Fellowship Hall was remodeled and redecorated. A new roof was put on the Activities building and both exterior and interior were painted. The main parking lot was resurfaced, and a new parking area was built for handicapped and older members on the Briarcliff road side of the sanctuary.

A portion of the bequest funds were placed in the Building Trust Fund, and the grounds around the church were landscaped, with beautiful seasonal flower gardens placed in front of the sanctuary and chapel buildings. New and attractive outdoor signs were erected on both the LaVista Road and Briarcliff Road sides of the church. The LaVista sign was installed with an electronic readerboard. Later, a designated gift from Mrs. Margaret Head made possible the addition of an electronic readerboard on the Briarcliff sign as well. These signs provided the church with two "wayside pulpits" from which to promote its programs and proclaim twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week to passers-by the truths of the Christian faith.

In 1987-88 the church had voted to establish a Cemetery Maintenance Fund for the perpetual care of the cemetery grounds. Generous contributions were made to the fund from lot owners and church members. Under the leadership of Deacon Chairman James Bracewell, this fund was placed with the Georgia Baptist Foundation as the Peachtree Baptist Church Cemetery Trust Fund. Funds from the trust are paid quarterly, and may be used only for the care of the cemetery and surrounding grounds. This trust fund is valued at \$112,995 as of March 31, 1997. The church also established with the Georgia Baptist Foundation in 1992 a Peachtree Baptist Church Building Trust Fund. Funds from this trust are also restricted, and may be used only for major maintenance and capital projects for which the church must supply a minimum of 20% of the total costs. As of March 31, 1997, this trust fund is valued at \$98,442. Dr. Ginn prepared a special brochure to encourage members to leave a bequest in their wills, at least a tithe of the value of their estates, for the on-going work of God's Kingdom at Peachtree. He suggested that by the end of the year 2000 the church should have \$1,000,000 committed to the Building Trust Fund, and \$250,000 to the Cemetery Trust Fund.

The writing of a Personnel Manual for the church had been started by deacon Wes Combs, prior to his death in 1989. Dr. Ginn worked with the Personnel Committee in completing this task. In 1991 the church approved and implemented the Policies and Procedures Manual for Church Employees. Adaptations of this manual were later approved for the Ministerial Staff of the church and for employees of the Child Development Center.

In the 1990s, Peachtree Baptist Church found itself located in the midst of a mission field. The community had undergone such significant changes that there were more lost, unsaved and unchurched people living around the church than ever before in its history. These were peoples of various ethnic and racial cultures, hosts of single parents and their children, and numerous divorced and widowed people. With working parents, there are many "latchkey" children in the apartments and housing areas in the community. Due to the increasing age of many of its members and to the reality that most of its newer members were less prosperous, the church began to make the needed adjustments in its budget. The church voted to reduce the number of full time ministers on its staff

from three to two, and to refocus its spending for mission causes beyond the community. Wes Bryan was encouraged to secure employment elsewhere in the fall of 1992, and his responsibilities were reassigned to the two remaining ministers.

Representatives from Peachtree Baptist Church participated in the July, 1991 organizational meeting of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The next year, the church voted to amend Article III of its Constitution to read as follows: "Insofar as it is practical and not contradictory to its own policies and beliefs, the Church will cooperate with and support the local Baptist association, the Georgia Baptist Convention, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Southern Baptist Convention." While continuing strong support for the mission programs of the Georgia and Southern Baptist Conventions, the church in 1993 incorporated in its budget and special mission offerings regular support for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The church shares with the CBF a deep commitment to the historic Baptist principles of the Priesthood of the Believer, the Autonomy of the Local Church, the Separation of Church and State, an Inclusive Fellowship of Believers in both service and ordained Ministry, and the Authority of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God. The church also reaffirmed the declaration of Article II of its Constitution: "The Baptist Faith and Message as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963."

Mission tour groups from other churches were utilized for Vacation Bible School leadership and for Backyard Bible Study programs. In order to eliminate any discrimination or distinction between rich and poor, the church voted to provide the family night meal on Wednesday evenings at no charge to all children and youth who participated in the music, educational and mission programs. Following the resignation of Belinda Paul in the summer of 1994, the church voted to employ a Director of Children's Ministries whose leadership and salary would be shared by the church and the Child Development Center. Mrs. Patricia Griffin was employed by the Personnel Committee and began her work in January, 1995. Mary Jo Nichols resigned after serving as Director of the CDC for a year and a half, and Susan Meunchen became CDC Director in September, 1996. Earlier, in 1993, the church had voted to secure a Minister to Students to serve on a part-time basis. The Personnel Committee employed Jonn McDaniel, who had grown up in Peachtree church, to fill this position. Already having been licensed by the church, Jonn was ordained to the Ministry of the Gospel on January 9, 1994. At that same service, Guy Pujol, Jr., an Emory University graduate student who had received his ministry degree from the Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, was also ordained.

As the membership of the church continued to become more diverse, the church took a singular historic step in the Spring of 1996. Upon unanimous recommendation of the Active Deacon Body and by unanimous action of the church in business conference on Sunday evening, March 25, the church voted to ordain Mrs. Harriet Tucker Watkins to the Ministry of the Gospel. At an ordination service on Sunday afternoon, June 2, 1996, Rev. Watkins became the first African American woman to be ordained to the ministry by a Baptist church with a long-standing cooperative relationship with the Georgia and Southern Baptist Conventions. In June, upon unanimous recommendation of the Active Deacon Body, Rev. Watkins was elected by the church to serve as Assistant Pastor on a volunteer, non-salaried basis.

The church also undertook another innovative step in the spring of 1996. The church entered into an agreement with the Georgia Baptist Health Care System to become the first church in Georgia to inaugurate the new "Congregational Nurse" program. A Health and Wellness Committee was established, and Mrs. Nancy Jones was invited to join the church staff as Congregational Nurse in June. Mrs. Jones earlier had served as a missionary nurse in Africa under appointment by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. The church sponsored with the Georgia Baptist Medical Center a very successful community-wide Health Fair in November. Programs of aerobic exercise have begun, and the First Place program combining diet control and exercise with Bible study and spiritual growth is in progress.

Under the leadership of C.L. Adams, President, the Young at Heart group took the lead in 1994 in seeking to raise sufficient funds to purchase a bus for the church. Fundraising was restricted to individuals who were willing to make gifts over and above regular tithes and offerings. The church voted in mid-summer 1995 to contribute \$10,000 from reserved funds to this effort. In May, 1996, the church rejoiced in the purchase of a new 29 passenger Champion bus with comfortable seating for use by the various organizations of the church. In June, policies and procedures for the use of the bus were adopted.

At the Homecoming service on September 10, 1996, the church presented special recognition plaques to Herbert W. Traylor and Duke K. Lake honoring them for their many years of service. Resolutions regarding their service which had been previously adopted by the church were also framed and presented to them. Herb Traylor was honored for his service in numerous positions of leadership in Sunday School and as a deacon, and especially for rendering "special and outstanding service in the Financial ministry of the church for over 30 years." Duke Lake was commended for his continued "humble fidelity" in his 94th year in spite of illness and increasing age, and for "his regular attendance, support and dedication to his church and to his Lord."

The annual report of Peachtree church to the Atlanta Baptist Association in the fall of 1996 indicated the continuing struggle to reach the host of lost and unchurched people living in the increasingly diverse community. The reported resident church membership was 450 and Sunday School enrollment was 306, with an average attendance each Sunday of 141. Total additions to the church numbered 27, 10 of whom came upon professions of faith and were baptized. Nineteen members were lost by death and transfer of membership. Under the guidance of Constitution Committee and Deacon Chairman James Hansard, the church on Sunday evening, February 23, 1997 approved a complete updating and revision of the bylaws to the church's constitution.

God's blessings upon Peachtree Baptist Church and His commitment to its future was demonstrated again in the first months of 1997. The church received a bequest from the will of Emory and Alma Stewart in the amount of \$22,500 designated for the repair of the sanctuary organ. Mr. Stewart had long served in the music department and as a deacon of the church. The church added to this amount an additional \$10,000, which is sufficient to accomplish the needed repairs to restore the organ to its full capability. This work will be completed prior to the church's sesquicentennial in September. The church was then informed of a unrestricted bequest of approximately \$30,000 to be received by July from the will of one Robert Ray Morris of Texarkana, Texas, who remains unknown to any current member of the church. The church also was informed of a sizeable bequest from the wills of

Harry and Grace Gault, longtime faithful members and leaders of the church. In addition to service as a deacon and in other positions, Mr. Gault served as Church Clerk for almost 30 years. On April 22, 1997 the church received \$141,000 from the estate, with an additional amount to be received in 1998.

These three God-sent gifts will enable the church to complete the various projects needed to prepare the physical facilities of the church for continued service into the 21st century. In addition to some minor needs, those projects are (1) major structural work on the chapel building; (2) the complete renovation of the interior of the chapel, including a separate heating and air-conditioning system; and (3) the installation of a new heating and air-conditioning system for the three floors of the educational building. These three projects are scheduled for completion by the time of the Sesquicentennial celebration in September.

The final stage of the program will be the installation of an elevator for the educational building. This will be accomplished, hopefully, in 1998 after the church receives the final portion of the bequest from the Gault estate. As the population of persons over age 65 continues to increase, the installation of the elevator will witness to the commitment of the church to minister to all segments of the community. Easier access to all three floors of the educational building and from the Fellowship hall to the main floor will make the church more "user-friendly" to older members and to other senior citizens of the community.

This brief history of Peachtree Baptist Church is being completed in May, 1997. The focus of church attention and planning is centered on the completion of the building projects and plans for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the church. The Sesquicentennial Homecoming Service will be held on Sunday, September 14th. This new Church Family Pictorial Directory, including this brief history, will be distributed to the membership on that occasion. In this anniversary year, Mrs. Mildred Davis, "who got saved in August, 1925" during the annual August revival and was baptized in the old cement pool, is the member with the longest (72 years) continual membership in the church. Mrs. Margaret Appleby, who joined the church on September 2, 1928, is the member with the second longest years of membership. Mrs. Margaret Beavers joined the church in 1933, served in the choir for 52 years and taught in various departments of the Sunday School for 51 years. Mrs. Leila Lake has taught Sunday School grades 1 to 3 for 46 continuous years. Dr. J. Hal Armstrong first served as Music Director in 1938-39, and was ordained as a deacon in September, 1946. At age 81, he continues active in the music program in 1997. He is the pianist for the Wednesday evening prayer service, sings in the choir, and provides prelude music on his accordion for Sunday evening services. Mr. Luther Oliver, who was ordained on July 27, 1947 in the church's centennial year is the member with the longest period of continuous service as a deacon. (Dr. Armstrong was away from the church for 9 months to receive his PhD degree.) These persons are representative of the love for Jesus Christ, the devotion to the church, the compassion for the lost and unchurched and the dedication to the work of the Kingdom of God which characterize the history of Peachtree Baptist Church. These qualities of devotion guarantee that Peachtree Baptist Church will continue to stand on this same corner for another 150 years, giving glory to God and witnessing to the saving power of Jesus Christ.

On Sunday morning, April 13, 1997, Dr. Ginn announced to the congregation his plans for retirement

from the full-time pastorate and presented his resignation as pastor to be effective on November 30, 1997. He also shared with the church that he and his wife, Betty, would remain as supporting members of the church after his retirement. A Special Pulpit Committee will be named by the Deacon officers, James Hansard, Agnes Church and Chris Belser. They will serve on the committee along with seven other members who are representative of the church membership. This committee will seek out and recommend the new pastor to lead the church in 1998.

The year 1998 will thus mark another new period of transition for Peachtree Baptist Church in its long years of faithful service to God. The church remains situated as a lighthouse to the glory of God on the same corner on which it was founded 150 years ago. A new era will dawn with the beginning of the 21st century with the future of Peachtree church "as bright as the promises of God." The commitment of the church remains firm, and is printed on the front of its worship bulletin each Sunday:

"Peachtree Baptist Church is an evangelical Christian fellowship of free and faithful Baptists. The church is committed to being the Body of Christ in this community, demonstrating Christian love and non-judgmental acceptance to all persons. The church focuses emphasis upon the Holy Scriptures, the centrality of the Cross, authentic Baptist heritage and intellectual as well as spiritual integrity. The church implements its mission beyond the community through support and cooperation with the Atlanta Baptist Association, the Georgia Baptist Convention, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.."

(This history of Peachtree Baptist Church was prepared by Dr. Perry Ginn and is based on the historical work of Rev. Ted Jones in 1947, the memories of older members, information preserved by the late Ruth Hewell, information gathered by previous Church Historian Amogene Oliver, and additional research by present Church Historian Harmon Smith, retired Archivist from the Georgia Department of Archives and History, and by Dr. Ginn.)

John W. Morgan, Song Leader
"Christ Is the Answer"

SUBJECT FILE: CHURCHES
PEACHTREE BAPTIST

PEACHTREE BAPTIST

Dedication Set For New Building

By KELLY MANSFIELD

The Peachtree Baptist Church which held its first services in a brush arbor almost 120 years ago, will dedicate its new \$300,000 education building Easter Sunday.

Dr. Jon A. Pirtle, pastor of the church will conduct the ceremonies beginning at 2:30 p.m. and following the theme of "Peachtree Baptist Church: Her Past, Present and Future." Also participating in the dedication ceremonies will be three other leading Georgia Baptist ministers.

They are, Dr. Monroe F. Swilley, pastor of the Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church and president of the Georgia Baptist Convention; Dr. Louie D. Newton, pastor of Druid Hills Baptist Church and a former president of the Georgia Baptist Convention and Dr. Searcy S. Garrison, executive secretary of the Georgia Baptist Convention.

Myers headed the church's building committee.

The education building has been built on land made available by one of the church's former members, the late J. L. Mabry. He was active in five Roads since its founding in 1847. Peachtree Baptist building programs.

The church has been located at its current site at the intersection of Briarcliff and LaVista. The site was then a remote wooded area far from the city and the name Peachtree Baptist was derived because the church is midway between the north and south forks of Peachtree Creek.

THE NEW EDUCATION BUILDING is attached to the main church building and contains 40 classrooms, six nurseries, assembly areas, church offices, a chapel and a prayer room. Architects for the building were Barker and Cunningham and the contractor was J. C. Barrett Construction Co. T. R.

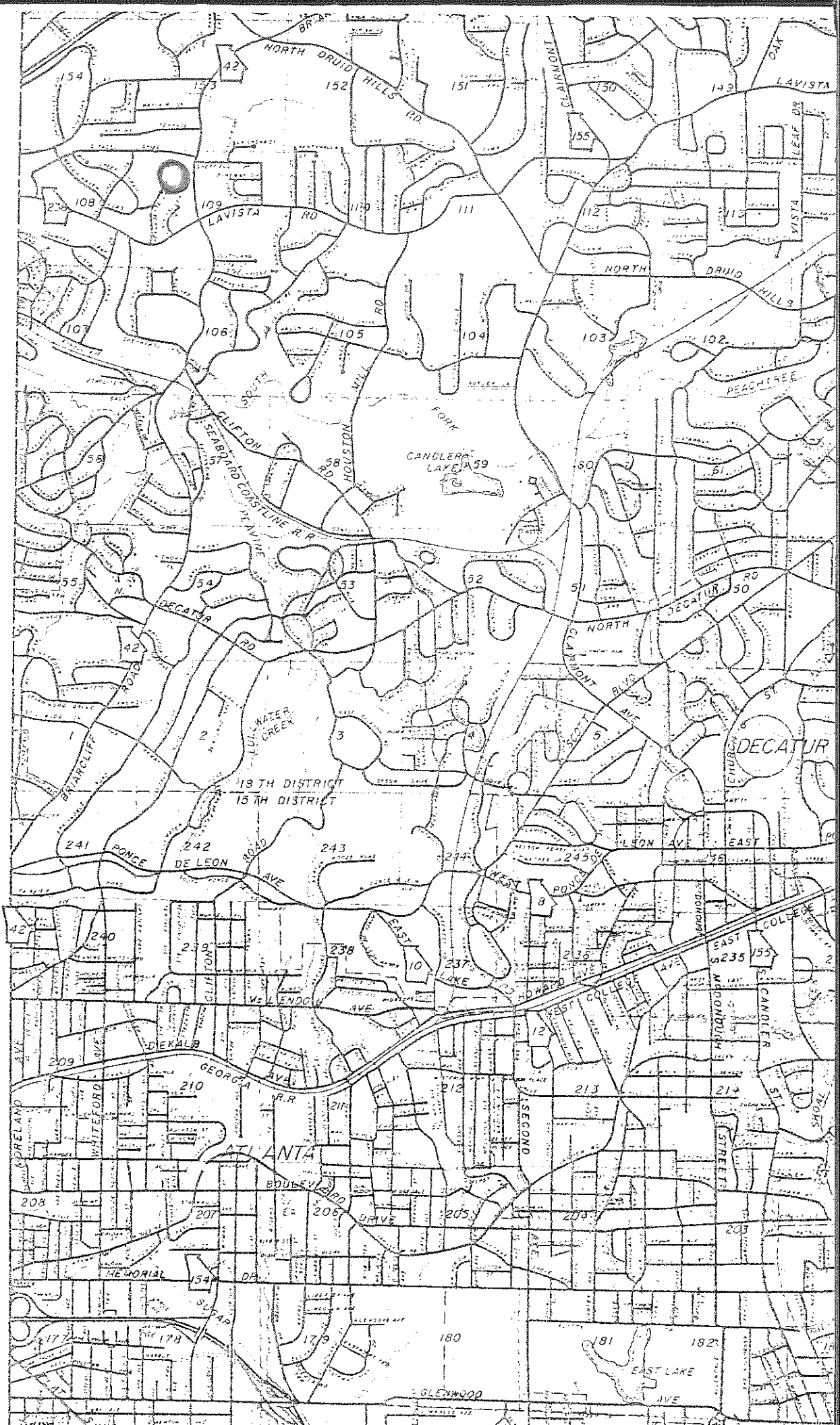
AFTER MEETING beneath the brush arbor for five years the church members constructed a one-room meeting house in 1852. This building was damaged severely during the Civil War but was rebuilt shortly afterwards.

A more modern church was built in 1886 and served the congregation until it was destroyed by fire in 1942. The present sanctuary was completed in 1958.

Peachtree Baptist is the oldest church in the Atlanta Baptist Association and has a membership of 1,375. Dr. Pirtle has been pastor of the church since 1959.

Saturday, April 17, 1965

THE GREAT 1985 HISTORY ROUNDUP
DEKALB HISTORICAL SOCIETY



"We have examined the fiscal concerns of the County and are happy to state that our County Treasurer, James Lemon, Esq., has discharged the duties of his office in a manner highly creditable to himself and satisfactory to us. We find in his hands \$572.01 in Cash and a further sum of \$2437.64 in Notes which we believe to be good.

Thomas W. Slaughter, Foreman."

Presbyterians in north DeKalb County organized their first church on August 11, 1836. Prosperity Presbyterian Church was organized on Peachtree Road, near Prospect Methodist Church, by the Rev. Thomas Turner, pastor of the Hopewell Presbyterian Church in Newton County. The organizers, five families from a community called The Waxhaws in Mecklenburg County, N. C. and later from the Anderson District of South Carolina, met at the home of Samuel McElroy Sr., the "Grandpap House," at what is now the corner of Central Avenue and Buford Highway.¹²

The 12 charter members, in addition to McElroy and his wife Mary, were John Stevenson, Joseph Stewart and his wife Mary, Samuel McElroy Jr. and his wife Nancy M., John McElroy and his wife Margaret, William Stevenson and his wife Sarah, Elizabeth McElroy and her daughter Rachel, and William McElroy. Samuel McElroy Sr., Joseph Stewart and Samuel McElroy Jr. were ordained ruling elders, and William Stevenson and John McElroy were elected deacons.

On August 1, 1849, Stewart, whose home was in what is now the "old Chamblee" business district, gave the church a parcel of land "18 rods square." The original church building is thought to have been near the entrance to the present cemetery on Peachtree Road. Trustees were G. Chesley Campbell, William McElroy and Robert P. Jeffers. The second sanctuary, in the same location, had a wood stove which "furnished comfort, not only for the worshippers on Sabbath, but for the covered wagoners who used the church for an overnight camping place."¹³

The church moved to the corner of Central Avenue and Church Street in Doraville in 1871 on land donated by John Y. Flowers. The old church building later was sold to David Chesnut, who converted it into a cotton gin house. The name of the church was changed to Doraville Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in 1890. From its inception until 1936, the church punished misconduct on the part of its members by barring them from communion until they "appeared before the congregation and declared repentance." Among the punishable infractions were fighting, use of profane language, intoxication and adultery.

Prosperity played a role in organizing two other Presbyterian churches in the area: New Hope in Dunwoody and Antioch, later Tucker, near Embury Hills.¹⁴

Several families allied with the organizers of Prosperity Presbyterian Church in Doraville were involved with beginning the Oak Grove Methodist Church in 1836. As was the case with many area churches, Oak Grove held services under a brush arbor until a log structure was built on Oak Grove Road. Original families were Akin, McElroy, Lively, Pennell, Jones, Loyd and Anderson. Alvin Dempsey, a circuit rider, was the first preacher. In 1888, James Francis Akins sold two and one-half acres of land on Oak Grove Road for \$1 to church trustees J. M. Loyd, Jonathan Pennell, W. M. Henderson, J. M. Akins and W. B. Justice.

The church continued to meet in a one-room building until 1914. A curtain was hung around the walls