

Williams Ready Mix Company received a contract from the church to pour a twelve-inch retaining wall around the church parking lot at a cost of \$1,200. This included steel reinforcements in the wall. An iron rail was placed on top of the wall at the side of the educational building, and the driveway was extended from Starling Avenue to the parking lot.

Nan Dalton resigned as church secretary in September.

On Sunday morning, December 15<sup>th</sup>, Reverend Webb read his letter of resignation to the congregation. He had accepted a call to become pastor of First Baptist Church in Crossville, Tennessee, and his resignation would be effective January 15, 1958.



1958

January 5, 1958 the pulpit committee was formed. W. O. Minter, chairman, E. F. Helms, Mrs. Maggie Ivey, Mrs. Jinx Roach, and James Bowles made up the committee. Mrs. Juanita Polk and Earl Wood served as alternates. They were not only responsible for finding a pastor, they were also responsible for filling the pulpit until a pastor was secured.

Mrs. Janie Griggs was employed as part-time church secretary to serve until a pastor was secured.

The church hosted the choir from Carson-Newman College Friday, February 28<sup>th</sup>.

Frances Helms was approved to be a representative from the church to the Baptist Youth World Conference in Toronto, Canada, from June 27 through July 2, 1958.

In April the church gave the house and grounds committee and the trustees the authorization to do necessary repairs to the church, the Hill property, and the parsonage.

The church also donated \$2,500 to a black family who were having a difficult time. The money helped them to build a place to live.

On Wednesday evening, May 27, 1958, Miss Via offered her letter of resignation. She had accepted the call to become minister of



*Bob and Louise Shuford at a fellowship*

music at First Baptist Church in Tifton, Georgia. A music committee of Mrs. Theresa Critz, Harry Barnes, and Claude Minter was approved. The church continued to operate without a pastor or a minister of music. Faithful members came together with love in their hearts to keep the operation of the church going. The pulpit committee kept the pulpit filled, and the music committee took care of seeing that music was a part of each service.

The pulpit committee recommended that the church call Reverend Thomas W. Fryer to once again become pastor of the church. The congregation gave strong support to the call, but Rev. Fryer, after careful consideration, declined.

Charity Mitchell, the church custodian, retired in August. The chairman of the deacons, the chairman of the house and grounds committee, and Charlie Biggs made up the committee to look for a new custodian for the church. Mrs. Beulah Marshall was hired.



Mrs. Frank Kitchell was hired to play the organ for the church and to work with the adult and youth choirs. Her salary was \$150.00 per month.

In September the pulpit committee felt that they had found the right person to fill the pulpit. They recommended that the church call Dr. Thomas O. Hall. Dr. Hall had been serving as a professor of Old Testament at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He assumed the pastorate on October 1, 1958.



A native of Conway, South Carolina, Dr. Hall attended Furman University and graduated from Hampden - Sydney College. He earned his B.D and Th.D. Degrees from Southwestern Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. He was married to the former Mabel Grooms of Charleston, South Carolina. Mrs. Hall graduated from Coker College and Southwestern Baptist Seminary with a master's degree. When they came to Martinsville, their son, Tommy, was nine years old.

*In 1958 thirteen professors at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville petitioned the board of trustees for changes in the administration of the school. The trustees refused and those who had not already resigned were fired, costing the school one-third of its faculty. A powerhouse of talent, they all went on to other seminaries, colleges and pastorates. Dr. Hall was one of these professors.*

*He would return to education a few years after leaving Starling Avenue, as chairman of the Department of Religion and Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University and the founder of the honors college there.*

### 1959

The church voted to once again begin observing the Lord's Supper once a month and to alternate between Sunday mornings and Sunday evenings.

In October the church was still without a minister of music and education. Ran Minter was asked to work with the choirs until one could be found. His salary was \$40 per month.



An anonymous member gave the church a new communion table and chairs.

### 1960



Mrs. Janie Griggs was hired as full time secretary in January.

In 1960 the church organized its first food and clothes closet. [The clothes closet would continue till 1977. The food closet was discontinued with the establishment of Grace Network in 2006.]

In February the music committee, the deacons, and the finance committee jointly recommended the church call Mr. Keith Armatage to become minister of music. His salary was \$5,500 per year. At the time, he was minister of music and



education at Calvary Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia. In March, Mrs. Theresa Critz reported to the church that Mr. Armatage had accepted the call, but asked that he be allowed to come one month later than expected because there was a circumstance in Richmond that he felt he should see through. He was given the time. He came to Starling Avenue on June 1, 1960. Mr. Armatage had graduated from the University of Richmond and Denver Conservatory of Music in Denver, Colorado.

In the summer of 1960 the church no longer needed paper fans to keep cool those hot hours spent in church. Air conditioning was installed in the sanctuary and on the top floor of the educational building. The cost was \$23,000.

### 1961

Mr. Armatage gave his resignation July 16, 1961. He had accepted a position of minister of music and education at First Baptist Church in Petersburg, Virginia.

On August 20 Dr. Hall called the church to business session after the Sunday morning service to inform the members that a request was made to the State Board of Ministerial Aid on behalf of Dennis Gregory in the amount of \$150. The church also asked the associational examining committee to examine Dennis for ordination. With their recommendation he was ordained.

The music committee called Robert Wiggington to be interim choir director for the adult and youth choirs at a salary of \$25 per week.

The house and grounds committee found a good used gas stove with six top burners and a full size oven to replace the one that had been in the kitchen since the mid-fifties. The cost of the stove was \$150 and the cost of the top safety valve was about \$70.



*Pictured above is a WMU pool party at Clarence and Ora's Donovan's home.*

The back lots of the houses on Starling Avenue that the church had bought were cleared, paved and turned into parking lots. The church installed guard rails around the parking lot.

The church began having 5 o'clock Vespers Services Christmas Eve in 1961.

### 1962

A committee was appointed to look into buying a new communion table and chairs. In January, Mrs. Juanita Polk, chairman of the committee, informed the church that \$200 on had been donated to buy the table and chairs. The church voted to spend an additional \$75 to purchase the one Dr. Hall and the committee had selected.

Sunday morning, June 3rd, the deacons presented the recommendation to call Miss Mary Elizabeth Collums of Houlika,



Mississippi, as minister of music and organist with an annual salary of \$4,000.00. She was a graduate of Blue Mountain College, Blue Mountain, Mississippi and had received her Bachelor of Church Music degree with a major in organ from Southwestern Baptist Seminary. Prior to coming to Starling Avenue Church, she had been organist and children's choir director for Arlington Heights Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. The church

approved two weeks vacation and expenses to attend state and regional conferences each year. She began her duties with the church July 15, 1962.

In the summer of 1962 the garage behind the church annex was torn down to make room for more parking spaces. The back parking lot and driveway to Memorial Boulevard was cemented and paved. The cost of concrete driveway was \$974.95; the cost of paving the two parking lots was \$3,000.

The church bought the Hobson property from Dr. Fred Renick for \$15,000 at 5% interest. No payment was made on the principle for the first three years and Dr. Renick held the note. The church took possession of the property January 1, 1963.

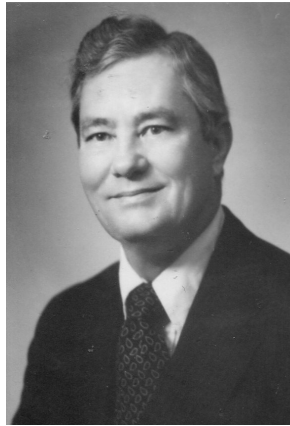
Sunday morning, September 30, 1962, Dr. Hall read his letter of resignation to the congregation to become effective October 31, 1962. He had accepted a call to become pastor of Webber Memorial Baptist Church in Richmond.

A pulpit committee was appointed to look for another pastor. They were W. O. Minter, chairman; Edgar Huddle; James Bowles; Juanita Polk; and Ruby Morris. Wade Lawrence and Percy Gunter served as alternates on the committee.

A pulpit supply committee was formed to fill the pulpit for all services until a permanent pastor was called. They were Earl Helms, chairman; James Wagoner, Claude Minter, Maggie Ivey, and Nan Dalton. These people worked hard to supply the church with excellent leadership.

The building and grounds committee used the time that the parsonage was empty to paint and repair any area that needed it.

Dr. John Eddins, professor of theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, was called to be interim pastor. He preached two sermons on Sunday and visited in the hospital and homes of the sick and



homebound on Sunday afternoons. Dr. Eddins conducted weddings and funerals if he was notified in time because he taught classes full-time Tuesday through Thursday weekly. If for any reason he could not conduct a Sunday service, he sent a seminary professor to fill in for him. Dr. Eddins's salary was \$75 per week.

In December Elizabeth Collums was busy with the choir getting the Christmas cantata ready when she received the news that her brother had been killed in Vietnam. Elizabeth was granted emergency leave with expenses plus \$100 to go home to be with her family. Ran Minter conducted the choir for the Christmas cantata.



*Elizabeth Collums with her assistant Marilyn Bowles (Spencer)*

*Dr. Eddins would return to Starling Avenue several times over the coming years. He was as professor of theology at SEBTS until that school fell victim to the SBC takeover. He then would become one of the first professors at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond until he retired.*

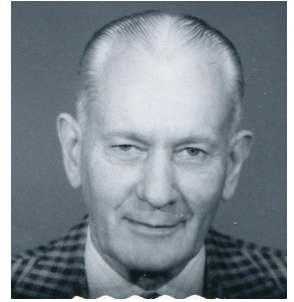
*Other SEBTS professors who graced our pulpit and who were friends to the pastors included Dr. John Carlton, Dr. John I Durham, Dr. Furman Hewitt, and Dr. Alan Neely. In 1987 Dr. Carlton, who had known SABC since the 1940s, commented that Starling Avenue had impressed him as having some of the most farsighted lay leadership of any church with which he had worked.*

## A Collection of Memories



*Addie Chappell brought her luscious elaborate cakes to church meals. Not everyone knew that, being diabetic, she never could eat her own creations.*

*Forest Hall and his wife ran a confectionary near the church. Youth were known to go there before and after church gatherings. Forest installed the wooden arch above the choir while he was working at American Furniture.*



*Doris and Henry Warren lived on Park Street. While sitting long hours in his wheel chair he befriended a squirrel which would open the screen porch door, crawl onto his shoulder and eat nuts out of his hand.*

*Lottie Newman always walked to church, arriving early to greet the toddlers she cared for in the nursery.*



*Sam and Edna Craig lived on Forest St, which some of the early residents described as "out in the country." He, like many of his neighbors, was an avid gardener, but always liked to do things in a big way. Once he cleared a stump out of his backyard with enough sticks of dynamite to blow it across Forest Street.*

*W.O. and Ethel Smith both loved midweek Bible studies. W.O. had gone alone one wintry day and snow was falling on the parking lot as he and Vergie Byrd were walking back to their cars. Vergie slipped on a patch of ice and fell behind W.O.'s car. "Lord," she prayed, "please let Mr. Smith drive forward and not back up or he will kill me and himself."*



*Before air conditioning the only cooling at church was an open window. One hot Sunday Wayne Poindexter and a couple of his buddies shimmed out the window of the boys' class while the teacher*



*was looking the other way They went to the store to buy cold sodas before worship. Wayne always was seizing opportunity.*



*Walter Bowles collected and repaired old clocks, a patient work for a patient man. Fannie was noted for her homemade rolls.*