

***First Baptist Church in Transition: Featuring the
Photography of Tom Frey***

compiled and edited by Larry and Rebecca Holder,
Martin, Tennessee, November, 2012.

This little volume of about 40 pages is a product of love and respect. The Holders, long-time First Baptist members, love their church and respect the work of Tom Frey. Appropriately they admiringly dedicated this book to both Tom and Thelda Frey who operated a photography studio until their retirement and who have worshiped and served at First Baptist since the 1970s. Understandably most color photos were done by Mr. Frey between 2010 and 2012 when construction began toward a new auditorium and removal of the old 1905 auditorium and adjacent old structures. The Holders acknowledged historical contributions by Dr. Roger S. "Sing" Oldham who pastored between 1986 and 2007, the late James "Jim" Tice was church treasurer for most years between the 1940s and the 1990s, the late Lanier Ferguson who wrote a JPHS article about the first 30 years of FBC, and Dr. Marvin Downing, a retired UTM History Professor and FBC Archives chairperson. Likewise, Larry and Rebecca appreciated the text reviews of Ken Cavin, the FBCM construction chair, and Reverend Larry Washburn, who is the church's Minister of Education and Administration. Quite compassionately and mission minded, the Holders designated book income beyond expenses to the recently formed disaster relief team.

At the Holders' request, Downing briefly sketched First Baptist's history from its 1876 beginning to 2012 on the first two pages beyond the title page. Thereafter, pictures covered the 1905 auditorium construction, the 1914 addition of a pipe organ, and the groundbreaking for the first designated education wing of 1957. A few pages later an interesting contrast exists in the 1946 black and white image containing a center aisle and the 2011 color picture without a middle entry after the 1970 renovation. The compilers include a bit about the large church bell purchased around the time of the pipe organ. They add that the bell rings a "G" note. They also assist readers with a listing of different construction and renovation efforts from the earliest years to the present His Kingdom First auditorium, choir room, and parlor. In addition, with a numbered and colored diagram by Dr. Oldham they clarify property acquisitions from the beginning through 2010.

Demolition photos showed some previously covered facets of the 1905 sanctuary. There was the 1914 horizontal beam used to prevent the north wall from crumbling. Also exposed was the "sunken" baptistery used prior to the 1940s renovation. The cornerstone contained such tidbits as a small chalky Bible and fragments of 3 periodicals published in Martin. A piece of the *Martin Mail* showed a drawing of the Hall-Moody Institute, then a five-year old Baptist Bible College basically created by FBCM.

Perhaps half the publication concerns the construction leading up to completing the 2012 sanctuary. In the numerous Frey photos one views

developments starting with clearing old structures and already used spaces right on from the ground upwards. Just hours before the carpeting was added, members could write a favorite Scripture on the cement floor. A particularly noteworthy morsel is inclusion of the photo of Hebrews 12: 1-2, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." Near the end this book section three pages show worship scenes of the first service in the sanctuary March 25, 2012. At that point the Holders fittingly chose a blurb from *The Baptist and Reflector* of May 31, 1906, "The church at Martin, Tenn. After worshiping 23 years in the old building, have held the last service in it, and are now snugly housed in their handsome new structure..."

Larry Holder concludes the volume with his own night photo of the lighted church grounds and his song:

TOGETHER, LET US BUILD

(His Kingdom First)

The very same Creator
Who made the sea and lands
is working still today to raise
A church not built by hands
By God's own Spirit and His Word
We join in one accord

To reach the world around us
And glorify the Lord.

We know our Lord is working
And we follow where He leads
The world will see our faith in God
When mirrored by our deeds
So let us reach beyond today
To see God's word fulfilled
Upon this firm foundation
Together, let us build.

For the hands and feet of Jesus
Are you and I today
As we seek to put His Kingdom First
In all we do and say...

May Jesus find us faithful
In answering the call
To witness of the Gospel
And to share with one and all
And as we put His Kingdom First
Our calling is fulfilled
Upon God's firm foundation
Together, let us build.

Reviewed by Marvin Downing