

150th Anniversary Celebration Part 1

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[0 : 00] Morning. I hope all of you know who I am. I'm the Director of Missions for the Nut River Baptist Association in Shelbyville, covering Bedford, Marshall, and more counties. And it is good to be with you this morning. And I want to congratulate you on 150 years. Okay? 150 years. Amen.

When I drove up, I saw Brother Wallace walking in, and he wasn't your first pastor. Amen? But he and I went for a search for just a long time. We found it. We found the cornerstone.

And how many of y'all know where the cornerstone is for the church? You need to go look for it. I thought it was on the front, but it's right here on this corner. And it's dated 1887. That's when this building was built. And I did not know that this building was built in 1887. This church was formed just a couple of years after the Civil War. And about 20 years later, this church was built.

And this church is one of the most beautiful buildings we've got in the association. And I'm so excited to be here with you this morning. I do have something I want to present to you. So Brother Billy, come up here, please. On behalf of the Historical Committee of the Tennessee Baptist Convention and from Duck River Baptist Association, you've been around a whole lot longer than the New Duck River Baptist Association has been around. But on behalf of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, we would like to honor you this day by presenting this church with a plaque of 150 years of ministry as a Tennessee Baptist church dated 2018. And I just want to congratulate you on that. And I want to say, may another 150 years come if the Lord tarries and you'll be stronger as your motto over here says, that you'll go deeper, grow stronger, and reach higher and be a light in this community for Jesus

Christ. God bless you. Amen. Thank you, Brother Tim. Don't worry, this isn't my sermon time. But this is, I didn't want to be the one you had to listen to the whole time. So I asked Brother Mark if he would kind of help us. But there was a portion that I wanted to do. I wanted to do this time where we kind of highlight and acknowledge some of that history. I have been very blessed because of the great records of some faithful members of the church and the hard effort put into that to have a chance to go over the history of this church. And it is a pretty phenomenal history to celebrate the faithfulness. I do know, and I know the newspaper article, I read the newspaper article about the cornerstone and about the items placed in a cornerstone. But I got to get this in the open. I know there's a Bible in there, a newspaper in there, some coins. But I was hesitant after only two and a half years of ministry here to be the pastor that knocked the corner out of a building this old. So I'm just being honest, okay? There were many that wanted to encourage me to do that. And I said, maybe on the 200th anniversary, if I've been there 52 years, by that time I may have earned the right to let's take some bricks out of the corner of the building. But maybe we can get to that sometime because I would love to see that. But on a more serious note, there are some things that I want to honor. Brother Tim is right. There was a group of Baptists that met around Horse Mountain Road up on the hill in Horse Mountain, sharing a building with two other groups of faith as well. They eventually gave that building over to the Methodists. We don't hold that against them. And the Baptists disbanded.

[3 : 40] Wartrace wasn't officially a town until 1851. And in 1868, Wartrace Baptist Church was officially launched. Not on this site, but on a different site that was eventually sold and turned into a personal residence. Wartrace's founding pastor would have been Pastor William Huff. His history is pretty amazing. And again, I'm not, I love history. So I share this with you because I think if we don't know our roots, we really don't know how we grow. But Reverend William Huff is originally from Virginia. Got his charge as a porter in the Civil War and spent his time during the Civil War distributing Bibles to the Confederate soldiers and mending to their spiritual needs. After his time of handing out Bibles and mending their spiritual needs, he ended up in Middle Tennessee and realized that the physical, spiritual, and even the terror of war struck harder here than it did in his own hometown in Virginia. So he stayed here. He pastored New Hope Baptist Church for some time, strengthened it, helped found and start the Wartrace Baptist Church in 1868, strengthened the

Baptist work in Shelbyville, and while Pastor here also started the Baptist Church in Bellbuckle because there wasn't a church there at that time. By the time he left Bedford County, he had strengthened the churches and encouraged the saints. But his heart began while serving his country and serving his fellow soldiers. Today is

Veterans Day, and I want to thank you for your service. I want to honor you for the debt you have paid to us, the families that have served, because I know just like in the ministry, it's not just the man who stands behind the pulpit, but it is the family who serves with him, and so much more so in our own land. We have one in our number that Brother Rodney Smead, I know I've shared this with you before, we asked, somebody's going to have to teach them how to put a slideshow together, but we don't hold that against you, Brother, who deals with some of the pain of this personally because not only did his wife's brother pass away as a result of PTSD after his tours, but he also takes his time ministering to soldiers coming home, taking them out to go hunting or to go fishing and spending some time with them. But I want to ask, if you are a veteran or you are a family member of a veteran, and I'm going to even ask if you are currently serving our nation, would you please rise so we can give you the appreciation which you so do deserve? So if you served our nation in any capacity, would you please rise so we can acknowledge your service to us? Thank you so much. You may be seated, guys.

You know, in 1942, again, just looking at the history, in 1942 at the business meeting of this church, it was suggested and passed vote, which I'm so thankful for, that the church collect Bibles to send them to the boys in the war that were from this church. This church has always had a heart for the soldiers and had a heart for those of its number who have served, and we still do today. We'll acknowledge you later on. We've got a small gift, just a gift of appreciation for each one of you, so at the close of service, we ask that you would see us. I know I can't find my wife. The crowd's gotten so much bigger, but there she is in the very back. We will have someone looking for you just to show you our demonstration of support and thankfulness. A couple more things, and then I will be done. This site was purchased in 1887. The work on the current church building that you sit in right now began that year. February 5th, 1888, was the first service held in this church. The bell that is hanging in our bell tower and the Bible that is in the back in the case, which I almost got out for today, but determined I probably didn't need to do that because I know me and I would have probably tore a page. That bell has been hanging since 1888.

It has rung over the city of Fortress ever since. It doesn't ring as much as it needs to, though I would like to ring it when we get through with our service, if your pastor can get done on time today. It was a gift. The Bible in the case in the back was a gift given to the church, and the bricks of this original building were all manufactured at a brick kiln, which the records show was seated at the place of the high school, which I think is right across the street.

It was a work of the community. The pulpit itself, the tables, and the sides were all made by J.W. Gallagher in the 60s. This is a church the community has poured into for years and years, and the community has looked to, as Brother Mark said, for hope. It has not only been that, but it has also been one of constant work. The history is good. It's great, and you get to see those things. This building erected in 1888, a number of additions given to it. In 1994, the Fellowship Hall, the building that we'll go to in just a minute for the best part of the service where we eat, was completed with its bowling alley or archery range upstairs as well. If you've never been upstairs, you need to go to the bowling alley. I'm joking. It's not really a bowling alley, but it's long enough for that, okay? The Sunday school rooms, all that was completed in 1994 because of the work of this church. In 2006, this building, the sanctuary, was remodeled. It was completely done and did a great job, by the way, when Brother Jimmy, I remember when Brother Jimmy was here because I was pastoring in Normandy at that time. This church has had a rich history of work.

[9 : 17] Not only has it had a history of that, but it's also been a rich history in missions work. Not only did its founding pastors serve in missions to the soldiers, the second pastor of this church was a gentleman who had just returned from the mission field in Nigeria, Africa, where his wife and daughter both had passed away as a result of complications of being on the mission field.

He came here and served for seven years, or six years, I believe it was, as pastor of this church and started what was called the Widow Mites Society, which eventually turned into the WMU. This church has been active in missions ever since. You read not only of Bibles being sent to troops, but you can also read of collections being sent across the other side of the Mississippi. I read something of great note in there to me personally, maybe not to anyone else other than my

family.

This church financially supported a missions work in 1982 for the mission in Normandy that was not yet a church. So for those of you that know me, I ended up being the pastor of First Baptist Church for 10 years. That church was started as a missions by a church in Shelbyville, which never financially supported it because Emanuel Baptist Church didn't have the finances to support a mission, but somebody needed to name it. The only church that I know that every financial supported the mission in Normandy was War Trace Baptist Church. And I had the privilege of being the pastor of that church for 10 years.

I came to Christ in that church, was baptized in that church, ordained a deacon in that church, licensed as a pastor in that church, and ordained into the ministry in that church and served in that church. So I want to say thank you for your mission's work. Throughout the years, a number in this body, still actively present, have served on the mission field. Recently, we have started a missions team, and we have discussed in that mission team something I want to introduce to you today, though I don't have a presentation for it. I just want to make you aware of it. We are going to begin giving what we want to call a legacy missions scholarship. It'll be a scholarship of a thousand dollars for someone that is going on a mission trip for the first time. If we have more than one, we'll divide that between them. But we're going to start this as a legacy to remember those who have served in our body today. I know we have a number of you that went and served long tenure, some in disaster relief, some you served in other lands, but you did a great work and you served. And we want to honor you for your service to the mission field by continuing to encourage others to go serve on the mission field as well. The Legacy Memorial Mission Scholarship will be something that this church awards. Hopefully, each year as we send other people for the first time on the mission field, and who knows, they too may catch a fire for missions because this church has had within it two missionaries reared up. We know that Mr. and Mrs. Odle's daughter, Valerie, served on the mission field, as did Dehenna Mahaffey, who went to France and served on the mission field. Some of you may remember her from Cascade. This church has ordained, it says in the history, one gentleman into the pastorate ministry, Mr. Christensen, whom I believe would be the grandfather of Mr. Billy Ray Gage sitting in the back. A book from his library is on the wall back there around the coffee. If any of you look up on that shelf and there's a little book up there and you don't know where that book came from, it came from that library because Brother Billy Ray Gage has given me some of those books. It is a joy to see how the Lord has used this church throughout the years. I want to take time and just give you some pretty amazing dates. When you read the history, some of you are very familiar with Brother William

[13:00] Albert Odle, who could not be here today. I'd love for him to be here. He would love to have been here, but he could not for health reasons, and Miss Maxine made the decision to stay and support her husband. But William Albert's mother was a part of a Sunday school class called the OKH Sunday school class.

Now the OKH Sunday school class stands for the Order of Kind Hearts. Now I don't want any of you men to get upset at this because that class is still ongoing. It is the women's Sunday school class that, according to my math, has been going for over 90 years now. And you ladies, though you are no longer called the Order of Kind Hearts, I don't know why. That did not change while I was here, but have been meeting as an ongoing Sunday school class. I have heard of ongoing Sunday school classes, but a Sunday school class meeting for over 90 years is pretty amazing to me. So I want to commemorate you ladies for continuing that work, and I want to commemorate you for your work in that. On August 19th, 1947, there was a baptism here as a result of a revival. On August 19th, 1947, Miss Aileen Cunningham Bush joined the church by baptism. Miss Aileen, would you please stand, and Miss Judy, would you stand with her?

I want you to commemorate Miss Aileen and show your appreciation. This lady... Stay standing if you don't mind. I'm waiting on my wife. I lost where I was supposed to be finding.

It is also from my understanding that Miss Aileen, I know the Sunday school class used to be up there in the balcony, but you taught Sunday school here for 50 plus years. Am I correct? Well, Miss Aileen, we want to honor you, and we want to thank you for your service here.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[15:08] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. One more date, and I want you to see this as well.

Because there was a youth revival held at the high school. You know, this church has always had a heart for the schools as well. And there was a youth revival held at the high school right across the tracks, and as a result of that youth revival, six youth were baptized on June 12, 1949.

And in that name of six youth was one young lady named Miss Labby Walker, who we now know as Miss Labby Fan.

Miss Labby joined the church as a result of that revival held at the high school and was baptized June 12, 1949. Brother Doris, if you'll stand up with her. Brother Doris has served this church, served it since 1982, I believe it was, as a deacon before going inactive.

And we want to honor the fans and their commitment to the church. Thank you. I know there are a number of others that I could call out, but we're going to get through here, and I'm going to let us continue on.

[16:45] But I just want you to know that I began pastoring here to be three years in February, February 7th. But I am honored to stand on the shoulders of those of you that have served this church so well.

Recently, Carrie and I went and we attended a pastor's retreat. And the pastor that was speaking at that pastor retreat, I said recently, it was several months ago, was Brother Jim Henry who served at Two Rivers and also serves down in Orlando right now.

And he made a comment to the pastors. All of us gathered there were pastors. He made a comment that stuck with me. He said, Pastor, he said, wear your church lightly. He said, because there are people that have been there a long time before you got there, and they'll be a long time after you leave.

This church, I am the 37th pastor of War Trace Baptist Church, counting a double tenure by a couple of pastors prior to me. But while there have been 37 different pastorates, there has been one faithful body.

And God has just honored the men he's called to serve this church. So I want to, as your pastor, say thank you. Thank you for your service. Thank you for your display of missional desire.

[18:00] Thank you for the work that you've given. Thank those deacons that have served at great transitional times, especially during times of pastor change. There are, I know, at least two deacons that have served this church here today.

Brother Doris served this church as a deacon when the church was transitioning as pastor. Brother Ronnie Sutton has served this church as a deacon during the times of pastor transition.

I was a deacon for a while before I was a pastor, and I want to tell you that the work of a deacon is a very hard work. And these guys have done a phenomenal job so that we can stand up today and we can celebrate 150 years of his faithfulness.

Thank the Lord he's been faithful. We can thank him that they decided to put water in the building. We can thank him they decided to put electricity in the building so that they didn't have to put antifreeze in the toilets anymore.

It's in the records. It was brought up, we need antifreeze in the toilets because the bathrooms keep freezing. And we can thank him for the faithfulness he's shown through his people.

[19:02] Would you pray with me? And then Brother Trace Marshall is going to come. He's going to sing. Let's pray together. Lord, we thank you so much. Lord, for all these events that have been called out. God, your faithfulness that has been displayed through your people.

We thank you for the work you have accomplished at War Trace Baptist, and we look forward to what you're going to continue to do. Thank you for those men and women, those families that have served you so faithfully here throughout the years.

God, what a heritage of faith they lead. Lord, we pray that the remainder of this time gathered today would be glorifying to you and honoring to them. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amazing grace has been sent That sick or rich like me I once was lost, but now I'm not Was mine, but now I see Was grace that scarred my heart to me And I see my fears relieved How precious the evil that blessed me The hour I first made My chains are gone

[21:18] I've been set free My God, my Savior Has ransomed me And I remember His mercy reigns Unending love Amazing grace Oh, my God, my God The Lord has promised good As He holds His Word My hope secures He will heal my shield And I will bless you

