

HISTORY OF TABERNACLE BAPTIST CHURCH

A little more than 2000 years ago a small group of disciples met in an upper room. They were confused, discouraged, filled with fear and doubt. But all this would change soon, for we read in John 20:19 that Jesus came and stood in the midst of them and said, "Peace be unto you." He breathed on them and they received the Holy Ghost. History records what happened after that. And in the rest of John and Acts, and in the other books of the Bible, we read a fantastic story of how those filled with the Holy Ghost went throughout the land doing mighty works for the Lord.

Just three years ago this month, March 16, 1967, a group of people (about 150 men, women, boys and girls) met for a fellowship dinner on a beautiful Sunday afternoon at Wickham Park. Among this group were many who were discouraged, disheartened, disillusioned and weary. And yet, there was joy, hope, faith, love and understanding. Most of all there was a sense of trust in each other - something most of these people had not felt in a long time.

Most of these were members of a local congregation. However, God had spoken to many and through a series of circumstances had brought them to the knowledge that His desire for this group was that they separate themselves from the local body of which they were members - begin a new work. It was to be a new local congregation with Him as the Head - one where His love would bind the hearts and bring peace, understanding, trust, happiness, completeness to the fellowship of believers.

We listened as Jamie Buckingham read from the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:13-16. "Ye are the salt of the earth: But if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is

set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick: and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Hearts that were heavy were lightened. Hopes renewed, and a vision of what this could all mean began to take place in the hearts and minds of many people.

We had no place to meet, but plans were made to seek a place to meet the following Sunday for Sunday School, preaching services, etc.

Immediately God began His work, making available for lease the building which we still occupy. Homes were opened for Sunday School and Training Union classes. Intermediates through adults scattered abroad in the community meeting and studying the Bible. Children in the nursery through Junior age were cared for at the central building.

Immediately all offices were filled and we moved into the new church program with interest. New hopes. And most of all a new desire to seek God's will for our lives - and for this church. We knew it must truly be a light - bringing not only those who were already attending out of the darkness which had engulfed them, but most of all guiding those in this community and the surrounding area who walked in darkness into His light. All was done that they might see Him and know Him and come to have an abundant life through fellowship with Him daily.

There was a real sense of need for each of us to be loved, to be understood, to be trusted, and accepted. To find in this new church an environment in which we could be ourselves and still be loved signaled the beginning of the fulfillment for which we so long had dreamed - yet somehow had been missing in recent years.

Somehow, God knew our frustration and anxiety better than we. He began a process of growth in each of us. As we each worked in our different places of service we were all made aware of our great need to know what God's will for us was. Many began seeking more earnestly than ever before, and God began to break through.

During the first year many good things happened. We enjoyed many times of fellowship at church and away from the church building, particularly in the dinners which were frequent at Wickham Park. Also, we held several baptismal services at Wickham Lake and even our Bible School became a day school at the park. We had a wonderful time out in the open with all the beauty of God's creation around us. We shared His Word and His world with boys and girls and taught them the wonderful truths that are found therein.

There were those rough times, too, when instead of walking with God we tried to put our own plans into being. When this happened God chastised us and forced us back into His direction for our lives. He wanted us to be His people, and we had to learn to walk with Him in the small light we had if this was to be accomplished.

The first year found us giving ourselves the name, "Tabernacle Baptist Church." We also drew up a loose-knit constitution which was accepted by the group without dissent. We began to move into a full church program trying to minister to all ages.

In February, just before the first anniversary of the church, our Pastor attended a regional convention of the Full Gospel Business Men in Washington, D.C. As he stepped into the pulpit the following Sunday morning, even before he spoke it was evident that something had taken place in his life. There was a radiance that had never been there before, and the Holy Spirit's presence was so strong it was as though a warm cloak had been placed around each of us in that little church. It was one of those times when we just wanted to be still and know that God was there.

When he spoke it was to give one of the most outstanding testimonies we had ever heard. He told us how, while he was in Washington, God had spoken to him and had baptized him with His Holy Spirit. He testified of a filling which had given him a new release and a new power within that he had never known. Oh, praise the Lord. It was a wonderful day. The angels must have all been singing in heaven as they witnessed what was taking place here in this little spot of God's earth. Yes, it was wonderful. My cup runneth over as I go back to remember that day in our church.

But, oh, praise God, it was just the beginning of the glorious times we were to have in the years that have followed. God moved into the lives of so many through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Many were seeking to be empowered with His Spirit. No longer was it enough just to attend the services at the church. We needed more. We needed to be ministering daily to the needs about us.

A coffee house which the church was sponsoring gave opportunity for some to serve where they could witness to youth in the area. However, it was costly, and as the church group decided to expand the building which we were in to minister to the smaller children, we had to drop our coffee house ministry.

It had provided for a need we had for extra room and for the Pastor's study as well. It had provided room for our Bible School that year, one in which we saw the Holy Spirit moving in a marvelous way, convicting boys and girls of sin and bringing them into full salvation.

It was with a little sadness that the coffee house project was dropped. Many had felt it could be worth a great deal toward reaching young people, but we had tried, and it seemed that God would have us do otherwise at the time. There were hopes we would sometime in the future be able to build a building where youth could come

for fellowship and for help, where they would know they were loved and where we would seek to understand and fill the needs in these young lives.

It was not long until prayer meetings were begun in some of the homes. They were well attended and many were brought to a closer walk with Christ. Many received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and received the gift of speaking in tongues. God was doing something that most of us did not understand, and many found hard to accept. But when we seek to follow our Lord, He will bring us into His light and reveal to us what we should do - and when we should do it. As we discovered this we began to find a peace that literally did pass all understanding. We discovered something of His love and how it could free us from all bondage and fear.

This is what has happened to the folks at the Tabernacle.

This last year, particularly, has opened new doors, brought new opportunities for ministry, and given opportunity for us to share the love that we have through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ with our fellow Christians of other denominations. We have gained strength from them and have given help when needed. In truth, to be in the very presence of God as we worship with all His people has been one of the greatest blessings ever experienced. God has done wonderful things for us, and we are only three years old.

Can He depend on us to allow Him to continue to be our God and show us the way? Are we ready to walk with Him all the way? How big is your God? Is anything impossible with Him? Then what do we as a people at Tabernacle Baptist Church want Him to do for us this year and in the years ahead? Believe in the impossible because God is limitless and He has great things ahead for each of us. How deep is the water? Are you willing to walk upon it for Jesus' sake? If we trust Him and obey His

command to follow Him, the love of Christ will be made manifest and He will be glorified. LOOK OUT! You may not be able to contain the blessings coming our way. We serve a risen Saviour and a Mighty God...let's get ready for what He has to offer.

AMEN AND AMEN.

--Inez Thompson
March 4, 1970

LOOKING AHEAD.....

Praise the Lord! Isn't it wonderful to serve a God who is so great. We cannot possibly imagine the blessings He has for us. The past year at Tabernacle has been a day by day, week by week experience with God. Watching with excitement and anticipation as He has brought into being something most of us would have said was impossible. And He is continuing to do a work here that we cannot comprehend.

Logically it cannot be, and yet in Jesus all things are possible, and we are seeing the impossible become reality. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is doing a work in each of us which we do not understand but praise God for anyway.

Folks at the Tabernacle have learned to love more as Jesus loves, they have learned to listen, to seek, to pray, to study, to put self aside and to begin to want to do something worthwhile for Jesus and others. We have begun to look inside ourselves and face what we find, knowing that Jesus, through the gift of His Holy Spirit, can make us different, change us, and help us become like Him.

God has increased our number beyond all expectations. He has brought people from all denominations into our midst. His Spirit has been the binding force. The power that has penetrated barriers and brought us to the place where we can love, trust and praise God for our Christian brothers and sisters in Christ.

It has brought specific changes to the original group that formed Tabernacle Baptist Church. Seeing the need to have a more perfect union with all our fellow Christians, God led in changing the name of the church to the Tabernacle Church--a people seeking as best we can (under the leadership of the Spirit) His Way.

God has blessed in this decision. He has filled the building to overflowing and then made it possible to enlarge it, to provide space for the overflow. He has sent workers and opened homes where again our young people are being cared for. He has provided talent for Bible study so that all may have a knowledge of His Word. All this has been done that the name of Jesus might be made known in all His glory. Jesus is beginning to have the proper place in the lives of Christians.

None of us are committed to Him as we should be, but neither will we ever be the same as we were before. God has made known to many of us that this is truly His work. We are privileged to be partakers of what He is doing. It is exciting to stand in His presence. To feel the power so strong that you find it unnecessary to reach out to touch it. It simply engulfs you. This is the feeling so often in the services, as we become aware not only of His presence, but of His Power--miracles, healing, faith, salvation. Indeed, it has become the exceptional service when a miracle is not performed.

We have been blessed with God's messengers coming from many lands, bringing Word of the Spiritual revolution going on everywhere. God is doing a wonderful thing in these latter days and we have been chosen to be a special part of it. HALLELUJAH!

Who can predict what tomorrow will bring? Who would dare try? Each day is so blessed with God's miraculous beauty, the wonders of His creation, the joy of His presence, the utter amazement of His love, mercy, patience and kindness to each of us. Who has not experienced His healing power? Who has not been awed by His greatness? Who has not been on the receiving end of his bountiless provision? Who has not thrilled at the daily testimonies of those who have found salvation?

Yet He desires so much more ^{FOR} us. Can we possibly understand a love so great? Do you believe you can think big enough to imagine what is waiting for us in the year ahead? I do not believe any of us capable of realizing what it is God has planned for us. I only know this, I don't want to miss a moment of it. Read James 4:7-8,10,17. God has great things planned for us if we but study His Word, seek His Will, and Obey Him. Praise God. Amen and Amen.
--Inez Thompson.