

Museum News: First Calvary Baptist Church

By C. W. (Bill) Smith

In December of 1978 an organizational meeting was held and Sanderson Baptist Temple was formed, electing Paul M. Ray as pastor. In March of 1979 a revival meeting spurred hearts and a concerted effort by new members and old started the Church on its present course. Due to an infamous incident with the People's Temple in Guyana, it was decided to change the name to Calvary Baptist Church, but that name was already chartered in the state of Texas. With the simple addition of the word "First", First Calvary Baptist Church was born.



The church held its first meetings upstairs in the old Cooke's Meat Market building at 2nd and Oak. Shortly, remodeling downstairs produced the present sanctuary, and a fellowship hall was added in 1984, honoring the memory of Bill Rose, a faithful member killed in a tragic plane crash in 1982.

First Calvary is a mission-centered congregation. From the beginning it has been an independent congregation, not associated with a national denomination. Since no funds go to a national organization, the church is free to sponsor its own local and world-wide ministries.

Locally, the church began First Calvary Prison Ministry in 1984 that presently sends Bibles and Bible study courses to prisoners incarcerated around the country, and ministers to their families. The church also sponsors a nondenominational Kid's Club on Wednesday nights throughout the school year, available to all children of the community. The church also supports the West Texas Food Bank and indigent traveler assistance.

In addition to maintaining its local work, the church directly assists missionaries around the world at all times.

The church has had six pastors during the time of its existence, with the Reverend Paul M. Ray coming for two terms:

- Rev. Paul M. Ray 1978-1984
- Rev. Charles Pierson 1984-1986
- Rev. Gary Pokorney 1986-1991
- Rev. James Riggins 1991-1997
- Rev. Paul M. Ray 1997 - 2010
- Rev. Dan Botterbolt 2010 - 2012
- Rev. Bob Welch 2012 - present