

Abridged History of Fifth Street Baptist Church

The story of Fifth Street Baptist Church has its humble beginnings at a small house about two miles west of Hannibal. In the home of Stewart Self on November 25, 1837, eight people gathered to become the charter members of Zoar Baptist Church. Those first members of that little church, led by pastor Robert Hendren, shared a burning desire for missions. For the first two years they met in a stone school building northwest of Hannibal near Clear Creek.

In 1841 the Zoar church moved its meeting place to Hannibal and worshipped in the old schoolhouse that stood in Central Park just across the street from our present church. Several churches of different denominations used this log schoolhouse, and the first minister to arrive on Sunday morning preached to the entire assembly. It was at this time that the name of the church was changed to Hannibal United Baptist Church.

In 1845 the congregation changed its name again to First Baptist church of Hannibal, erecting its first church building at the northeast corner of Fourth and Church Streets. The church numbered just over two hundred members at this time. With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Hannibal endured tough times, and First Baptist Church did well. Despite declining numbers, the church survived those tumultuous years. At this time another Baptist Church appeared in Hannibal, the Harmony Baptist Church.

In 1869 First Baptist Church and Harmony Baptist Church dissolved and the congregations joined to form the Fifth Street Baptist Church. The old building at Fourth and Church streets was sold and a lot was secured on Fifth Street between Broadway and Center Street. On this site was built the first building of the Fifth Street Baptist Church. It was dedicated on January 2, 1870. The next few decades were a period of growth in Hannibal, and Fifth Street Baptist grew also. In 1893 the old church was razed and replaced with our present church building at a cost of \$26,000. In 1957 the Educational Building was added, and the property that has become our parking lots was acquired in the 1980's. The church interior was completely remodeled in 1968.

Fifth Street Baptist Church has touched the Hannibal community for Christ in many ways over the years. Both Calvary Baptist Church and Prince Avenue Baptist Church began as missions of our church. Fifth Street Baptist has ordained many individuals to serve in the ministry and on the mission fields of the world over the years. The church that began with eight souls as a vision continues today with a vision. The history of Fifth Street Baptist Church is still being written.