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Sixteenth Street Baptist Church

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Sixteenth Street Baptist Church

“Her Influence Blesses the Earth”

- Church motto

In June 1905, on the fourth Sunday of that month, a petition signed by forty-one members of First Baptist Church was read. The petition asked for letters of dismissal from the Church in order to organize and start a new church. Those forty-one people wanted to create a new church that better met the needs of the community. After a vote, with only one dissent, the news was delivered to the Church clerk on a Thursday in July. Participants in this meeting include: A.D. Brown, Alice Brown, Florence Brown, Wylie Brown, Guy Calloway, W.H. Harris, Victory Holt, A.B. Hughes, G.W. Hughes, J.W. Jackson, Mattie Jackson, Carrie Johnson, Fannie Johnson, Leota Johnson, William Johnson, Reverend A.D. Lewis (who led the drive to form the new church), A.D. Lewis Jr., L.B. Lewis, L.J. Lewis, Reverend L.O. Lewis, Charles McPherson, E.M. Manggrum, M.L. Manggrum, Sallie B. Miller, A. D. Mills, M.E. Mills, W.D. Mills, Anderson Odell, William Poindexter, David Watkins, John Watson, Castine Wilkins, Jane Wilkins, Sarah Wilkins, T.W. Wilkins, Florence Williams, Alex Winston, Belle C. Winston, and G.W. Winston.

The First Baptist Church members advised the founders of the new church as they met to plan for what would become the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. On Sunday August 26, 1905, or possibly on Tuesday August 28, 1905, the Sixteenth Street Baptist was established at meeting at 3pm at the Douglass School building on Eighth Avenue and Sixteenth Street. Esteemed members of the faith community came together to form an advisory council. The members of the council were:

Dr. R.J. Perkins	West Virginia Seminary and College, founder and President
Rev. R.D.W. Meadows	State Missionary (named Council President).
Rev. Nelson Barnett	Pastor, Second Baptist Church, Guyandotte, WV
Rev. S.E. Williams	Pastor, Baptist Church, Ashland, KY
Deacon T.R. Botts	Burlington, OH
Unnamed	Fourth Street Baptist Church, Ironton, OH

The first pastor, Reverend James Dunlap (J.D.) Coleman, was unanimously installed on August 31, 1905. A few days later, on the first Sunday in September, the Sixteenth Street Baptist Sunday School was formed with Superintendent G.W. Winston, Secretary Miss Sarah Wilkins, organist E.M. Manggrum, and Treasurer J.W. Jackson. Professor R.P. Sims, E.L. Barnett, Miss S.A. Wilkins, and Miss E.M. Manggrum served as teachers. Under Reverend Coleman's pastorship, the congregation grew to 150 members. Reverend Coleman was born in Halifax County Virginia on April 24, 1863.

He attended Wayland Seminary. He was married to Miss Amanda Miller from 1893 to 1895 and married Miss Luvenia Holley in 1908. Prior to pastoring at Sixteenth Street Baptist, Reverend Coleman led the First Baptist Church in Huntington.

By February of 1906, the congregation had purchased property and build and furnished the original church at 807 Sixteenth Street at the cost of \$5,000.00. The foundation was dug by B.W. Reed and G.W. Lee, who were church members, and Robert Murrell who was not a church member.

Reverend S. H. Thurston, born on July 11, 1878 in Louisa Court House, Virginia replaced Reverend Coleman who left to teach at the Bluefield Institute (now Bluefield College in Virginia). Reverend Thurston graduated from Virginia Union University in 1905. Reverend Thurston served from December 1906 until 1915 and under his leadership the church began a musical program and purchased a pipe organ. He also helped the church fully pay off its indebtedness and grew the congregation to about 400 members. He left West Virginia in October 1915 to assume the pastorate at the First Baptist Church in Lexington, Virginia. His term in Huntington has been describe as “years of peace and harmony”.

The church’s third pastor was Reverend Albert D. (A.D.) Lewis who led the church from 1915 until he retired in 1927. Reverend Lewis was born in Louisa County, Virginia on September 7, 1858. Prior to becoming a preacher, Reverend Lewis worked in construction and on the railroad. He married Miss L.B. Davis on January 9, 1884. Reverend Lewis guided the church as they built the church at 1657 9th Avenue for \$100,000.00.

Reverend Miles Mark Fisher took over the pastorate about a year after Reverence Lewis retired. Reverend Fisher was born in Atlanta, Georgia on October 29, 1899. He attended Chicago Public Schools (1904-1914), Morehouse College (1918), Northern Baptist Seminary (1922), and the University of Chicago (1922, summer school 1923-1927). Reverend Fisher, a former professor at Virginia Union University, emphasized community service and the church name was expanded to the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and Community Center. A community center and playground were added. Under Reverend Fisher’s leadership the church congregation grew to 850 and they raised money to pay a debt of \$37,000, perhaps as the result of the new church building. During this time, the church emphasized a program of education, recreation, health and housing, and information and employment. Reverend Fisher left Huntington in 1932 to move to Durham, North Carolina, where he became pastor at White Rock Baptist Church.

Reverend J. Carl Mitchell succeeded Reverend Fisher and served from May 1933 until his death in 1970. During his 37 years at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church he oversaw the building of the parsonage (designed by Carl Barnett) as well as men’s, women’s, and youth choirs. Most significantly, Reverend Mitchell labored to create better race

relations in Huntington and to eliminate the remaining mortgage debt paying it off in 1945.

Succeeding pastors were:

Reverend Robert Jackson (interim)

Reverend Everett D. Knight (interim), Reverend Parker Lewis (Assistant)

Reverend T.L. Stewart of Dayton, OH (1974-1975)

Reverend Isaac Steward (1975-1978)

Reverend Lavin Williams (1979-1985)

Reverend Dr. A.K. Surrett, Sr. (1986-

Other notable people and dates:

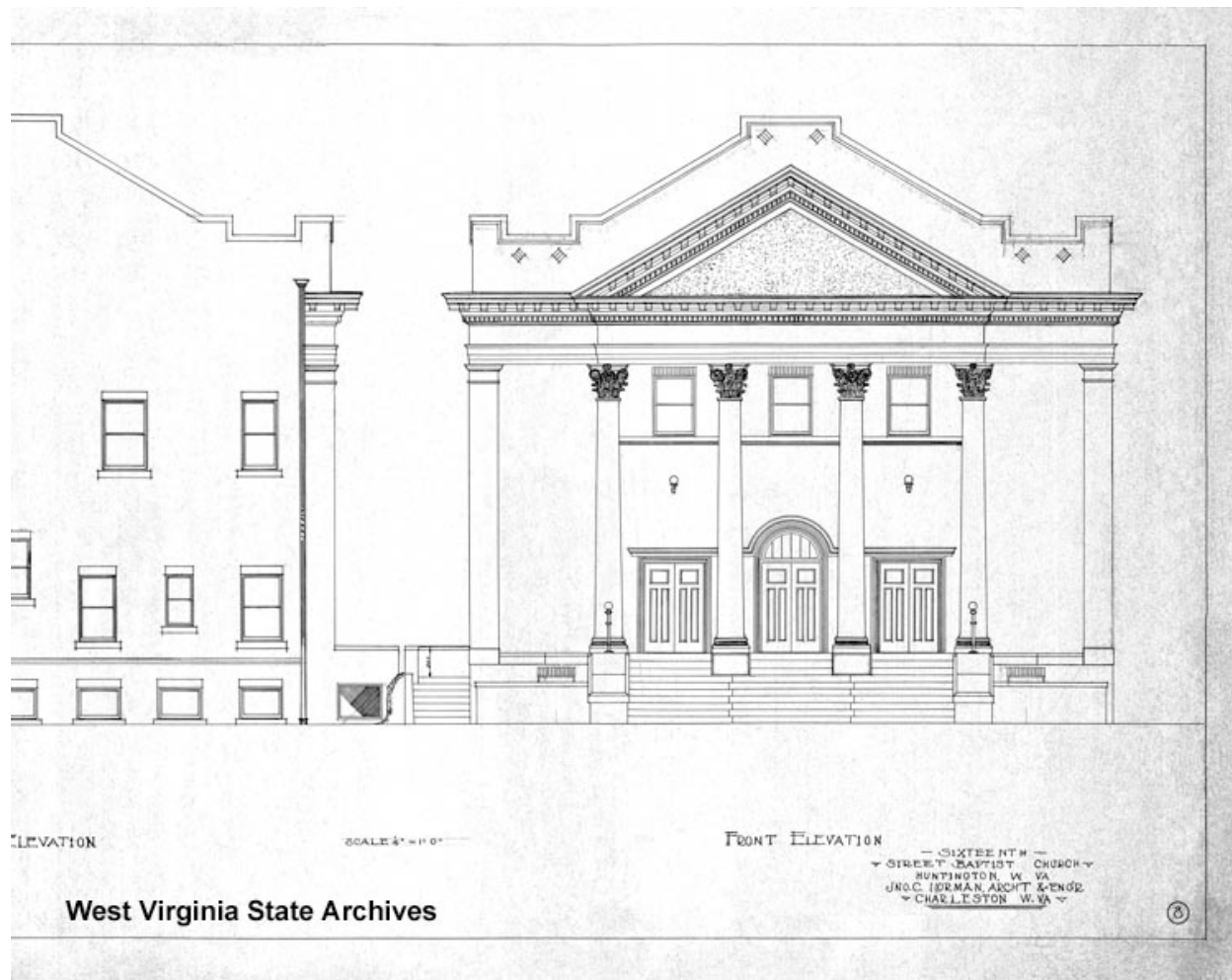
First Deacons: Brothers Alex Winston, T.W. Wilkins, J.W. Jackson, G.W. Winston, W.H. Harris, C.S. McClain, B.W. Reed, John Watson, G.W. Hughes, G.W. Lee, Charles Lee, and Charles McPherson.

First Trustees: Brothers G.W. Winston, W.H. Harris, J.W. Jackson, and G.W. Hughes.

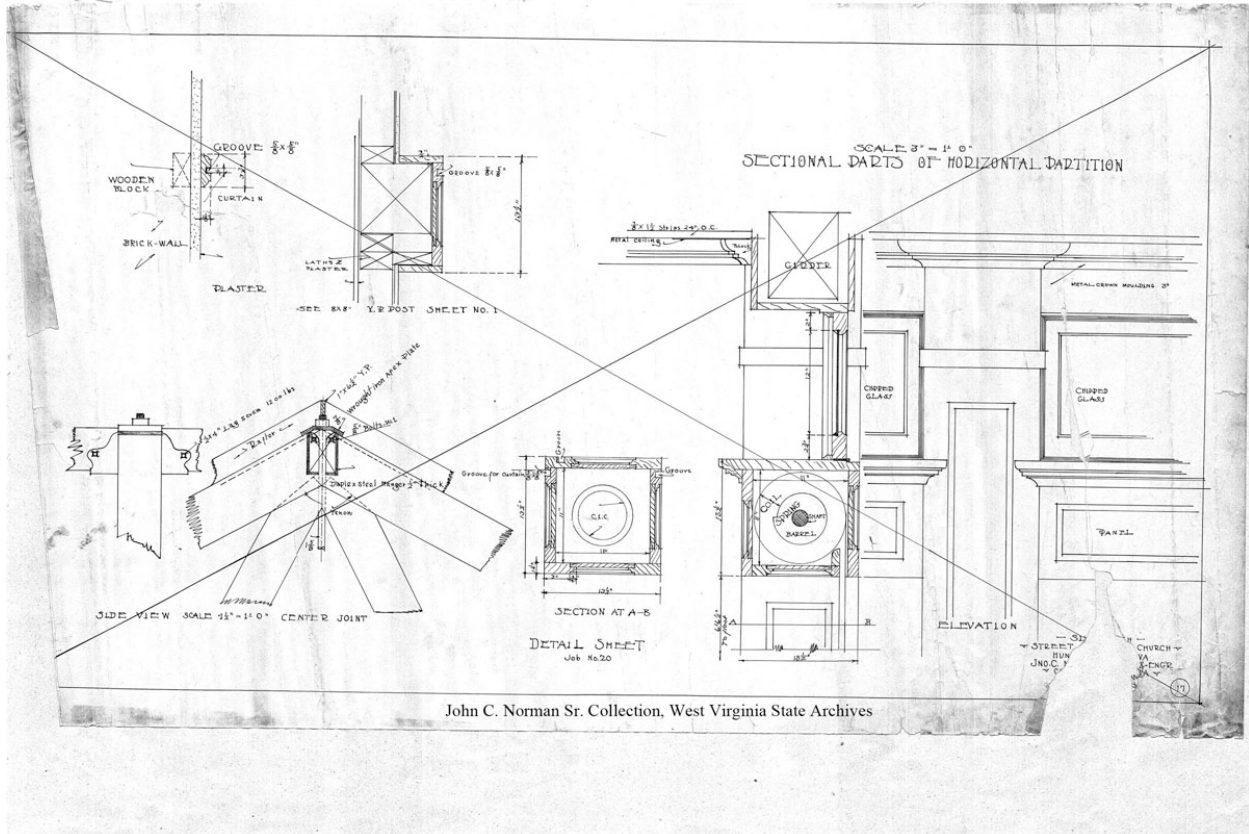
First senior choir organized in 1905 with President G.W. Winston and organist Sister G.W. Hughes.

Memorial plaque honoring deceased members unveiled under Reverend Dr. A.K. Surrett, Sr.

Reverend John Spencer and his wife participated in a missionary trip to Liberia where they supervised a farm from surveying the land, to planting the crops (rice, corn, sweet potatoes), to harvest. Although they had financial difficulties, Reverend Spencer had the honor of baptizing 62 people. The church motto was adopted in their honor.



Architect's drawing of Sixteenth Street Baptist. Building designed by African American architect John C. Norman. Photo courtesy of the West Virginia Division of Archives and History.



John C. Norman Sr. Collection, West Virginia State Archives

Architect's drawing of Sixteenth Street Baptist. Building designed by African American architect John C. Norman. Photo courtesy of the West Virginia Division of Archives and History.



Photo courtesy of Cabell County Schools.

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