

The Early Years - 1885-1924

When the First Baptist Church was formed, it was a part of the Lorain Association and the Ohio Baptist Convention. It later became a part of the Northern Baptist Convention, which was not formed until 1901. During its first 40 years of history, there were a total of 12 pastors. Other than A. G. Wall, who pastored for 10 years, the average tenure of these men was less than 3 years. During these 40 years the church was organized, grew, and built its first building.

J. H. Smith (April 1, 1885 - September 26, 1886)

Rev. Smith was the first pastor of the church. Under his tenure the church was organized, officers were elected, and committees were organized. A total of 7 members were added to the church, 4 by baptism and 3 by letter. The church's first baptism was held on May 10, 1885, at Charlemont Creek.

The pastor's salary was set at \$300 per year, but the Ohio Baptist Convention appropriated \$200 annually to increase it to \$500. (Notice that the church was supported financially by the state convention.)

C. C. Erwin (October 24, 1886 - October 1, 1889)

While Pastor Erwin served at First Baptist, 33 members were added to the church (10 by baptism). On Sept 5, 1887, a lot was purchased for a future building on East Herrick at a cost of \$1050. The loan was paid for and the lot was deeded to the church on March 18, 1889.

On March 6, 1890, (between pastors!) the church incorporated as a non-profit corporation under Ohio law. The official name of the corporation was the First Regular Baptist Church of Wellington, Ohio.

"The purpose for which said corporation is formed is to promote the worship of Almighty God, the study of the Holy Scriptures, and the promulgation and defense of the doctrines and practises of the religious denomination known as Regular Baptists." (*Articles of Incorporation*)

A. G. Wall (April 1, 1890 - October 1, 1900)



Pastor A. G. Wall

During the ten years of Rev. Wall's pastorate, 44 were added to the church (20 by baptism). Plans were laid and preparations were begun for building a permanent building. The church building, located on E. Herrick Avenue, was dedicated on December 5, 1894. An offering taken that day, combined with various pledges, resulted in the church being dedicated with virtually no debt.

"As a result of many prayers, many heartaches, much anxiety and determined efforts of Pastor and people, money came pouring into the Church treasury. Liberal contributions came in from many people in Wellington, Elyria, Oberlin, Litchfield, Penfield, Huntington, Avon,



Our Articles of Incorporation
March 6, 1890
Located in the church office

LaGrange, and Lorain. Many persons, attending the State Convention, which was in session at Circleville in 1893, sent liberal subscriptions to help the cause along." There were also donations of lumber and stone.

-- Rev. Alexander Moore,

"History of the First Baptist Church of Wellington, Ohio," 1926

The speaker for the Cornerstone Laying Ceremony was Rev. G. E. Leonard, from Norwalk. A newspaper article from 1894 reported the following about Rev. Leonard's remarks.



*Our Original Building
Dedicated in December, 1894
Located on the south side of
E. Herrick Ave.*

"He said, different emotions were, undoubtedly, stirring the hearts of those present. That in the company gathered there was a little band who for three or four years had been looking forward to the time when they would have a church home, and the deep feelings of their hearts might break forth in songs of gladness or tears.

"There were others, who, although not agreeing with them in belief, still sympathise (*sic*) with them in their efforts, and he trusted there were none who looked on with disapproval, yet it might be asked what need of another church at Wellington? Are there not enough already? Let us, for the moment, grant it, and yet I think we shall find sufficient cause for this little church.

"In the first place, a little band of Christians have been kept together and enabled to work with more zeal than they would otherwise have done. In the second place, another Sunday school has been maintained for the teaching of the word of God, and this without materially affecting the other churches. By the aid of others outside of this village, another pastor has been supported in your midst, the church has thus added to the moral force of the community. Again, the church upon one of your most beautiful streets may be an inducement to other Baptists to move here; it will thus aid in the increase of your numbers and even those who may say there is no need of another church will point to it with pride and be secretly glad in their hearts that it is here; and no man or woman, or child, for that matter, in the village, should fail to contribute something to it and thus have the gratification as they pass and look upon it of feeling that they own an interest in it.



*The interior of the
original building*

"You may not agree with them. You may even think they are wrong, yet you must respect their fidelity to the truth as they hold it. I have far more confidence in the man who differs from me in belief, no matter how wrong he may be, if he grounds his belief upon what to him is an honest interpretation of God's word, than the man who agrees with me in interpretation and yet says it does not matter what you believe. The one may be wrong, but he is the friend of truth. The other may be in the right, but he is the enemy of truth."

A. P. Boyd (November 1, 1900 - August 3, 1901)

Pastor Boyd ministered here in Wellington for just 9 months - yet there were 39 new members, of whom 32 came by baptism!

E. Chesney (August 31, 1902 - January 28, 1906)

Twenty-three members were added to the church roll during Pastor Chesney's ministry.

E. G. Stanley (March 25, 1906 - April 1, 1908)

Pastor Stanley had formerly served as a missionary to Africa.

V. D. Willard (September 15, 1908 - May 5, 1912)

Pastor and Mrs. Willard were greatly loved in the community because of their pleasant personalities and godly example. For a portion of this time Pastor Willard also served as pastor of the Huntington Church.

W. P. Napier (September 22, 1912 - July 26, 1914)

Pastor Napier came to Wellington as a single man. During his pastorate several significant improvements were made to the building: A gas heating system was installed, the basement was remodeled for Sunday School purposes, a piano was purchased, and a choir was organized. Twenty-three members were added to the church, 12 by baptism.

Rev. Alexander Moore, in his 1926 history, concludes his discussion of W. P. Napier's ministry with the following statement: "In conclusion he married one of our S. S. girls and took her away with him."

E. C. Meyers (October 4, 1914 - April 30, 1916)

E. C. Meyers instituted an envelope system for financing the church, and for the first time in the history of the church, support was no longer needed from the Ohio Baptist Convention.

L. R. Wilson (October 19, 1916 - May 23, 1918)

While L. R. Wilson served as pastor of First Baptist, the church purchased a parsonage on Forest Ave. The Wilson family moved in on March 28, 1917.

J. W. Ely (July 21, 1918 - March 31, 1921)

During his pastorate the parsonage was paid for, with the help of the sale of the Huntington Church property for \$937.59.

J. C. Ford (September 1, 1921 - September 1, 1924)

Pastor Ford and his wife were well-loved, but Mrs. Ford began experiencing some very significant health problems. Pastor Ford eventually resigned in order to care for his wife. Her death was a real source of grief to the church.

During his pastorate the parsonage was improved with the installation of city water, a bathroom, and a garage.