

N.B. The portion of this booklet dealing with the Church's history until 1967 was the basis for the approval of the State Historical Marker in 1970. - Ed.

# **First Presbyterian Church**

**Bryan,  
Texas**

**1867-1992**

**A HISTORY OF THE  
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
BRYAN, TEXAS**

ORGANIZED NOVEMBER 24, 1867

**DR. HASKELL M. MONROE, JR.**  
November 1967

**RUBY JAMES**  
January 1993

The Year of Our Lord eighteen hundred and sixty-seven was a precarious time for the people of the southern section of the United States of America. President Andrew Johnson faced a Congress dominated by powerful men intent on wreaking vengeance on the defeated states who had attempted to secede from the Union a few years earlier. In the region south of Mason and Dixon's Line, the citizens attempted to scrape a bare subsistence out of the ashes of defeat. Many of the finest fathers and sons of Dixie had not come home from the battlefield, for the casualty rate had been pathetically high in the gray regiments. Yet those valiant men who did come home brought with them a spark of religious fervor far deeper than most veterans. The Confederate Army, like few masses of fighting men before them, had experienced profound religious revivals during the struggle. As a result, countless thousands of men brought a deep spiritual concern back from four years of agonizing struggle. When they reached home, often they found few of the pleasures of life left to their now poor families. Such deprived circumstances only deepened the concern of these people for the Gospel-the belief that only God could bring the warmth and comfort which they sought so fervently, into their lives.

In Texas, most communities had been spared the effects of battle, but all suffered the sadness of injury and death to loved ones. Also, the economy of the region had been shattered by the effects of war, defeat, and dislocation. As an example of the impact of the war, the work on the railroad to link Houston and Dallas had been suspended in 1861. This line, the Houston and Texas Central, was planned to run from the junction of the Houston to Austin track at Hempstead, northward to Dallas, and perhaps even beyond the Red River in some

distant year.

By 1860, the track had been completed to the village of Millican, a few miles north of Navasota. The roadbed was in varying stages of readiness for some distance beyond that railhead. As soon as peace returned to the region, owners of the line began the work again and soon were laying the rails northward. This renewed activity helped to revive trade in the area, previously notable primarily for its rich cotton and corn crops. The pay of the workmen stirred businesses and the small towns along the railroad began to look forward to more prosperous times.

In Brazos County, the land between the Navasota and Brazos Rivers, south of the Old San Antonio Road, the coming of the railroad had changed the way of life sharply. Perhaps the most visible proof of this change was the movement of residents and businesses from Booneville, the county seat and principal town, toward the railroad to the northwest. These people now settled in the newly-surveyed townsite of Bryan City, as the new railroad depot was called for some years. The movement to the new location along the railroad was so swift that the economy of Booneville was disrupted as suddenly as that of Bryan City was increased. Soon, the county commissioners decided to move the court house location to land adjacent to the depot. These men also received many requests to license new businesses and the county clerk recorded many transfers of land titles. Into this modest little boom town, a number of religious-minded folk came-determined to prevent the growth of vice and irreligion, which so often had accompanied sudden growth in other locations.

Both Methodist and Southern Baptist congregations were well on their path to stability by 1867, the year in which Presbyterian and Episcopalian home missionaries came to the new town. The railroad had made it possible for the Reverend John Russell Hutchinson to come to Brazos County. This native of Pennsylvania, who had studied at Jefferson College before completing his theological training at Princeton Theological Seminary, had previously served congregations in Mississippi and Louisiana. On the eve of

the Civil War, this diligent Presbyterian divine had moved to Houston, where he preached at the First Presbyterian Church and taught a boys school throughout the period of the conflict. By the end of that awesome struggle, he recorded that he had become "deeply concerned as to my duty in reference to the spiritual desolations of the villages and churches within the bounds of Brazos Presbytery, and accessible by railroads." After corresponding with ministerial colleagues who gave him their enthusiastic encouragement, he began to prepare to serve as a sort of "railroad evangelist," preaching in the towns along the new lines radiating northwestward from Houston.

The sectional division of Presbyterianism in the United States slowed his efforts a bit. The Corresponding Secretary of the Board of Domestic Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, the branch of the denomination from which the Southern congregations had departed in 1861 to form a sectional unit in the Confederacy, wrote Hutchinson about the planned missionary effort. This official informed the Houston clergyman that "on evidence of loyalty" to the Union, a "sufficient salary" would be provided by the Northern denomination. By this time, Hutchinson had become a staunch member of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, the name adopted late in 1865 by the Southern branch of Presbyterianism. The determined evangelist refused the offer from Philadelphia and located two laymen, one each from Galveston and Houston, who promised to fund his work. Thus, the self-appointed missionary, with the promise of a salary of \$50 per month, began his work in the railroad towns. First, he revived the congregation at Hempstead and then helped to organize the new flock at Navasota. In the midst of the work in those localities, he began to inquire about the interest among Presbyterian families in Bryan City, Hearne, and Calvert.

Hutchinson's work in Bryan City began with the small number of Calvinists already living in Brazos County. In his reports to Brazos Presbytery, the denominational judicatory which included the southeastern portion of Texas, he noted the rising interest in the area. His work soon culminated on the fourth

Sabbath in November, 1867, when he and the Reverend James Wilson, officially constituted the new congregation.

The twenty-four charter members of the flock came primarily on transfer of letter from congregations elsewhere, but a few made professions of faith in order to be a part of this enlargement of the Kingdom. Without a sanctuary of their own, the little group met twice each month to hear Hutchinson's fervent sermons in a warehouse owned by Guy M. Bryan, near the railroad. This arrangement continued for more than three years, while members looked forward to purchasing land and erection of a building. Finally, this goal was attained on April 10, 1871, when the trustees of the congregation, J. P. Mitchell, Isaac Fulkerson, A. Allen, Charles I. Evans, and J. M. Stockton, purchased Lot 1 in Block 5 in the little city that was becoming known more simply as Bryan. The lot had cost \$200 and the congregation, although short on funds, proceeded with construction of a modest frame sanctuary.

L. D. Stockton served as foreman of the members of the congregation who labored to construct their own temple. A Negro carpenter, Henry Johnson, sawed the window and door frames for this structure, which rose on the corner of Tabor and Twenty-ninth Streets. Soon comments were made at the meeting of Presbytery about the zeal and energy of the young congregation. In 1872, the denominational weekly in South Carolina, *The Southern Presbyterian*, described the work of the Bryan congregation and labelled the account, "The Way to Build a Church" "At Bryan, Texas, a little over a year ago, the congregation had no house of worship. The people felt the need of one and rose up to build. Money and labor were required. Some gave both money and labor. One man, though not rich, except in good works, nor yet poor, gave a hundred days labor with his own hands, and another seventy-five, and yet another, though he had not two hands to work with, yet with the single hand and the single eye which Providence had preserved to him he could wait on and encourage the workmen with his daily presence. Surely such a people cannot fail of success. The house, though incomplete, accommodates comfortably the congregation and Sabbath school."

According to the records of the General Assembly of 1869, the Bryan church still numbered only twenty-four members, and during the previous year this group had contributed \$465 for congregational expenses. By the time the building was completed, Hutchinson had answered a pastoral call elsewhere, and was followed by John Morton Cochran. This former Confederate chaplain served as stated supply in Bryan for about a year, before W. H. Vernor came to minister to this flock. This native Tennessean ministered in the community from 1873 through 1877. Early in his local tenure, the congregation's trustees bought Lot 2 in Block 5, adjoining the previously-purchased property, for a sum specified emphatically as "one hundred gold dollars."

James Wittin Sexton, a Virginian who had studied at Hampden-Sydney College and Union Theological seminary, ministered in Bryan during two periods in the last years of the nineteenth century. He first came to the county in 1879, only three years after leaving the Old Dominion. Soon the pastor's energetic wife had led the formation of a Ladies Aid Society for the congregation. After Sexton departed in 1885, J. J. Daniels supplied the Bryan congregation, along with the flocks of worshippers in Bremond, Hearne, and Wheelock. Sexton returned in 1890 for a second pastorate which extended for two more years. Joseph Alexander Hall, an Alabamian who had migrated westward to the Lone Star State, followed Sexton in a brief pastorate. Hall was notable for being one of the first graduates of the new Presbyterian seminary for the Southwest, then entitled Austin School of Theology.

By the thirtieth anniversary of the formation of the congregation, James Durham West was the shepherd of a growing congregation. In the last years of the century, Bryan and the surrounding area was enjoying general economic prosperity from the bountiful cotton crops produced in the Brazos and Navasota valleys. Under West's inspiring leadership, the Bryan Presbyterians prospered spiritually and began to plan for a larger sanctuary. Late in 1904, the congregation acquired title to a third lot adjoining the previous property on Washington Street for \$800. Within a few months, plans had matured enough to necessitate the appointment

of a building Committee. This group guided plans and work on a larger and more attractive sanctuary, built of buff colored brick. By September 1906, worship services were held in the new structure, but the congregation delayed dedication of their new home for almost eight years. Although the membership was not capable of building the structure as their predecessors had done four decades before, these communicants did determine, however, to pay for the building in full before dedicating their sanctuary. This cherished ceremony came on March 29, 1914, when Dr. West returned from his Mississippi home to deliver the dedicatory sermon for a church home noted for its attractive sanctuary interior and windows.

Two ministers, J. G. Coughley and J. R. Finley, followed Dr. West's long pastorate with comparatively brief ministries. Charlton Henry Storey, a determined young minister came to lead the Bryan congregation in 1914. This pastorate which lasted six years was the first for Storey, but he guided the program of spiritual growth and enrichment, which soon was evident among the communicants. By 1918, the membership was 218 and the congregational budget was \$5,384. The Men's Bible Class, which begun in 1908, enjoyed growth which the new Women's Bible Class soon equalled. William N. Sholl, also an Alabamian and graduate of Union Theological Seminary, succeeded Storey and also served six years in the Bryan church.

Thomas Gordon Watts came to lead the congregation in 1926. From that time until 1944, this patient and careful shepherd headed a congregation which was growing gradually. Born in Alabama, Watts had studied in England, earned a theological degree at Columbia Theological Seminary, and ministered in Georgia, before coming to Texas. During his long tenure the membership experienced the frustration of long economic depression, a gradual business recovery, and the dislocation of World War II. These years also brought the completion of a new manse alongside the church building and redecoration of the interior of the sanctuary. Removal of a wall adjoining the church school rooms added to the auditorium capacity, for membership reached 300 in 1939. During this pastorate, the

congregation also demonstrated its concern for outreach by assuming responsibility for one-half of the financial support for a missionary coup in Brazil. World War II brought military service to most families in the congregation and young men from other parts of the country to the nearby airfield. Watts and the congregation worked diligently to meet these two opportunities for service. Forty-nine members of the Bryan congregation entered military service during this conflict.

Late in 1944, A. T. Dyal, a product of the University of Texas and Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, began a ministry which extended for the following decade. In an effort to extend the faith, the congregation soon began to hold outpost services in the Woodville schoolhouse. Similarly, a student loan fund was created and a group formed to call upon prospective communicants. Under Dyal's efficient guidance, the congregation enjoyed enough numerical growth to extend the physical facilities on the Washington Street site. As a possible answer to that potential need, three sisters, Misses Ethel, Edith, and Esther Cavitt, and their brother, Fred, gave the congregation a tract of land in the Woodland Heights subdivision. The expected noise of traffic on that location soon persuaded the generous donors to exchange the first gift for an eight acre plot, south of Gordon Street, between Thirty-first and Thirty-second Streets.

The decision to leave the site of so much tradition and so many cherished memories was not easy for many members of the First Church in Bryan. In 1955, however, the congregation began a canvass for building funds. Communicants now numbered more than six hundred and the budget for 1956 reached \$37,025.

In 1957, the membership proceeded with plans for the new church plant. On April 14, groundbreaking ceremonies were held and work began on the first section of a unit containing a fellowship hall, offices, and twenty-four church school classrooms. In little more than a year, this unit was completed to the point that worship could be offered from the new sanctuary. On June 15, 1958, Drs. Watts and Dyal returned to join with Charles A. Sheldon, a Georgian who had moved to Bryan following Dyal's

acceptance of a call elsewhere in 1954, in dedicating the new structure to the service of God. Under Sheldon's leadership, the membership made steady progress in paying for the structure which had cost more than \$362,000. Sale of the former church building on Washington Street contributed a portion of this sum.

When Sheldon accepted a call to lead an Oklahoma City charge in 1960, he left behind a flock which was nearing payment of the remaining debt on the new building, increasing in numbers, and funding a budget of almost \$50,000. In the absence of a pastor, Arlen Fowler, the campus Presbyterian minister at Texas A&M, filled the pulpit. Soon, Richard H. Thomas, agreed to accept the call of the pulpit committee which contacted him in Pawhuska, Oklahoma. In April 1961, Thomas arrived and began an energetic pastorate. This ministry marked a period of rapid growth and community activity for the congregation. Soon, plans for completing the church plant began to form. A new manse was completed and attendance at worship services in fellowship hall indicated that the need for an enlarged sanctuary and additional church school facilities was present.

Although the cost of an additional structure meant assumption of a debt of more than \$350,000, the congregation decided that the need was great enough to warrant the belief that the time was appropriate for completing the planned structure. Once more, as on three previous occasions, members of the flock watched as dirt was turned to mark the determination to enlarge the physical facilities necessary to minister to the communicants. The increasing sophistication of construction made it impossible for the twentieth century members to follow the precedent of the workers in 1871 and actually construct the building with their own hands. Instead, the modern churchmen signified their intent to contribute the funds necessary to sustain this work. Along with this stewardship of worth, the communicants also demonstrated frequent understanding of the need for stewardship of talent and time.

As the centennial of the First Presbyterian Church at Bryan, Texas, approached, the members of this outpost of Zion worshipped in an elegant sanctuary which offered

dignity and beauty to Sabbath services. A melodious organ bolstered the music provided by a talented choir. At the dedication of these facilities early in 1966, a sense of pride filled the hearts of members of this congregation-pride that they had raised a spire of physical dimensions to represent their spiritual concern and devotion to the Kingdom of God. Although the Reverend Thomas accepted another pastoral call late in 1967, Allen H. Brown, the assistant minister, remained to serve this flock.

From the vantage point of a century, gazing back over the years of service and devotion, this group could not help but note the words of the writer who summarized the Bryan group in 1872. Hopefully, this congregation may still be recognized and admired because it has learned "The Way to Build a Church"-not simply a structure of beautiful proportions, but a body of believers who represent a zealous portion of the Kingdom of God.

Haskell M. Monroe, Jr.

## 1967 - 1992

The second century in the life of First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas, began in a time of great national unrest. A war in Vietnam dragged on with a bleak outlook for its favorable resolution. Demonstrations against the war, some quite violent, gave voice to the frustration felt by the citizens. As the nation struggled to fulfill the premise that "all men are created equal" race riots were rampant throughout the land. An atmosphere had evolved in which it was felt that dissatisfaction with individuals could be resolved by physical assassination; this was a sad and turbulent time.

In 1968, as the nation prepared for a man to walk on the moon, the church had 796 active members and an operating budget of \$72,232. Annual payments were being made on the building in the amount of \$30,936. There was a staff of four full-time employees (pastor, associate pastor, secretary, sexton) and four part-time employees (bookkeeper, organist, choir director, housekeeper).

A call was extended in 1968 to H. Harold Wells, Jr., a graduate of Union Seminary at Richmond, to lead the congregation through these challenging times. Mr. Wells was a man of compassion who emphasized optimism and brought a sense of calm to the congregation. To confront some of the issues head-on the Session adopted a policy for action should a demonstration take place at a worship service and they adopted an "open door" policy which officially made the church worship and membership accessible to all races and creeds.

Mr. Wells made it a top priority to establish a strong support system among local churches, including the black community. The churches with their ministers closed ranks to bring about peaceful resolution of racial tensions. He also instigated close ties with neighboring Presbyterian Churches. In the church, nurture was emphasized with dedicated ministry to the individual members. People in all areas were made a top priority. This proved invaluable for the years ahead.

An event to note is the ordination of women to serve as church officers. In 1967 Ruth Davis Alter became

the first woman officer when she was ordained as a deacon. In 1969 Frances L. Barber was ordained as the first Ruling Elder. These pioneers in the faith led the way for other women officers to follow.

Allen H. Brown, assistant pastor, resigned in 1968 taking his creative talents to work in the secular community.

In 1969 Henry A. Roberts, Jr., a graduate of Columbia Seminary, accepted the call to be associate pastor. This lovable man found a place in the hearts of the members. In 1971 he accepted a call to be the senior pastor of the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Ottawa, Kansas.

The first black member was received into First Presbyterian Church in 1971 without incident.

William C. Poe, a promising graduate of Austin Seminary, was ordained and installed as associate pastor in 1972, the year the first class graduated from the newly integrated high school.

The sudden death of Mr. Wells on September 10, 1973 after he suffered a heart attack following morning worship on September 9 brought a crisis the members had not foreseen. The stunned, bereaved congregation functioned as a unit in their support of the Wells family and of each other. As the prayer at the memorial service stated "our grief was great because our loss was great."

Mr. Poe rose to the occasion and the church responded well to his leadership. Forrest K. Whitworth, a graduate of Austin Seminary, accepted the pastoral role in 1974. This man of deep commitment faced many challenges in the ministry at this church just as the nation faced challenges as the conflict in Vietnam came to an end and a president resigned in shame.

Mr. Poe resigned in 1974 to become senior pastor of the Braeburn Presbyterian Church of Houston.

James L. Collier, Jr., a graduate of Austin Seminary, was installed as associate pastor in 1975. His vivacious energy was directed toward the educational programs of the church.

In 1976 the ever-present spirit of evangelism became very real as the congregation opened its heart to a refugee family from Chile, giving them a home, love and



support and a new beginning in this country. The family later relocated to California.

As part of its nurturing program, the church became involved in Lay Renewal/Spiritual Discovery Weekends in 1976. The basic focus of this program was teams of Christians who came into a congregation and spent a weekend giving testimonials to the presence of God in their lives. These weekends were followed by small study groups meeting in homes for several months. This fundamental approach was a departure from the usual Presbyterian practice; this church, however, adhered to its Presbyterian doctrine and expression although concessions were made in the matter of church school curriculum. In 1978 a small faction which shared the fundamental views split from First Presbyterian Church and organized the Westminster Presbyterian Church affiliated with the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). The initial withdrawal of thirty-six members was joined by others in subsequent days. Several church officers withdrew their membership from the church to become charter members of the new congregation.

A very vital part of the ministry of First Church has been its ministry with students at Texas A&M University. The student ministry, originally known as the United Campus Christian Fellowship (UCCF), was reorganized in 1978 and renamed the United Campus Ministry (UCM). This co-operative ministry of the Disciples of Christ, the United Churches of Christ and Presbyterians had over the years drawn pastoral leadership from the different denominations at random. This church has benefited from several Presbyterian ministers who have led this ministry. In 1979 Michael N. Miller, a graduate of Austin Seminary and a Presbyterian Minister, was installed as the campus pastor. Under the leadership of this versatile man the ministry has become a strong voice for Christ among the students. The close ties between Mr. Miller and this congregation have resulted in his being named Parish Associate in 1987.

Following the split in the congregation, the Session soon realized that time was needed to assess the church programs and goals and that the members needed to be nurtured. By mutual consent of Mr. Whitworth, the

congregation and the Presbytery, Mr. Whitworth resigned in 1979 to shepherd two parishes in Waco, Texas.

Also in 1979 the church had employed a Director of Christian Education. Barbara Ridlen joined the staff and took responsibility for the Christian Education programs. This marked the beginning of consistently having three professionals on staff to direct and develop programs of the church.

Under the guidance of Mr. Collier, First Presbyterian Church established a Child Care Center in 1979 as a companion program to the Day School which had begun in 1967. Eventually, in 1988, these two programs were grouped together and were called "The First Presbyterian Children's Center."

In 1980 Mr. Collier resigned to become the senior pastor of the Lakeview Presbyterian Church in New Orleans, Louisiana.

A very significant historical event occurred in 1980. In a time when nuclear war threatened to put asunder all life on this planet, there was a coming together of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) and the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA). These two factions had split during the Civil War and now reunited and became the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). First Presbyterian Church of Bryan was organized under the Brazos Presbytery, PCUS, in 1867 and now as that presbytery united with its counterpart, the Gulf Coast Presbytery (UPCUSA), First Presbyterian Church became a part of the Presbytery of New Covenant (PCUSA).

To provide the needed pastoral care as this church reassessed its position, the Session contracted with Melville D. Nesbit, Jr. to serve as Interim Pastor. Mr. Nesbit entered the life and the hearts of the congregation in 1980. His lively, joyful personality proved to be just what the members needed; and in 1981 the church was ready to call Robert H. Leslie, Jr., a graduate of Austin Seminary and McGill University, to become the Head of Staff.

It should be noted here that the church was endowed in 1978 by two families: Don Lee and Misses Edith and Ethel Cavitt. The endowment, which would

eventually total over a million dollars, held promise for an expanded ministry. The availability of these funds coincided with the beginning of Dr. Leslie's ministry.

Dr. Leslie is an energetic, multi-talented man with many ideas for new programs and reorganization of church boards. Church programs soon doubled and a fresh new spirit moved through the pews. The partnership of Dr. Leslie and the congregation proved to be just the right blend to bring new life to the church and new growth became the focus.

In 1983 Barbara Ridlen resigned as Director of Christian Education and Pamela P. Engler assumed this position in 1984.

John P. McGarey, a graduate of Vanderbilt, became the associate pastor in 1983. Mr. McGarey served this congregation diligently and resigned in 1988 to undertake a co-pastorate with his wife at the First Presbyterian Church of Logan, Utah.

The church formed the First Presbyterian Church Foundation of Bryan, Texas, Inc. in 1984 to handle the investment of the endowment funds. Nine trustees, all members of the church, serve on the board of this Foundation.

Dr. Leslie participated in a pulpit exchange in 1985 with Ewen Nicoll, a Presbyterian minister from Scotland. For six weeks the congregation enjoyed a meaningful association with this man of the soft spoken brogue.

Ray A. Hickman, a graduate of Austin Seminary and the Presbyterian School of Christian Education, was installed in 1989 as Associate Pastor. This talented young man brought with him an assurance that the church, as we know it, would indeed continue for yet another generation. He approached his ministry here with creativity and commitment. In 1992 Mr. Hickman accepted a call to be senior pastor of the Atascocita Presbyterian Church of Atascocita, Texas.

In 1992 the church had a membership of 1,032 active members, a budget of \$606,000.00 and a staff of nine full-time employees (Pastor, Associate Pastor, Business Manager, Director of Christian Education, Director of Music/Organist, Administrative Assistant,

Receptionist/Secretary, Janitor and Housekeeper) and three part-time employees (Handbell Director, Junior Choir Director, Co-ordinator of Services with Older Adults). John H. Brannon was employed by the session to serve as a part-time interim associate pastor.

Through the years the church members have striven to be good stewards in all areas but particularly in maintaining the church property in good order. During these twenty-five years by their generous over and above giving the church has been made accessible to handicapped individuals, the sanctuary has been renovated, the main kitchen has been remodeled, the Möeller pipe organ has been revoiced and enlarged, an echo organ has been installed in the balcony, a carillon now chimes the hour and plays hymns, gifts of handbells have enabled the formation of bell choirs, the narthex has been given a new look, an outdoor basketball court/recreation area has been built and a porte cochere has been constructed at the Gordon Street entrance. All of these additions have been offered to the Glory of God to be used to enhance and further the mission of First Presbyterian Church.

As the church celebrated its 125th anniversary in November 1992 the members paid homage to the "cloud of witnesses" who had brought the church to this time in its ministry and acknowledged the saints who will be a part of the continuing ministry of First Presbyterian Church.

A good friend of First Church, composer Jane Marshall, wrote these words in an anthem which was sung at the 125th anniversary celebration:

*"Give thanks for the past, for those who had vision,  
Who planted and watered so dreams could come true.  
Give thanks for the now, for study, for worship,  
For mission that bids us turn prayer into deed.*

*Give thanks for tomorrow, full of surprises,  
For knowing whatever tomorrow may bring,  
The Word is our promise, now and forever.  
We rest in God's keeping and live in God's love."*

May the Lord bless our going out and our coming  
in from this time forward.

Ruby W. James

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". . . go therefore and  
make disciples of all nations,  
baptizing them in the name of  
the Father, the Son, and the  
Holy Spirit." The figure  
of Christ is shown in  
bold stance; in His right  
hand is the scroll emblazoned  
with the symbols Alpha  
and Omega, the beginning  
and the end. His left  
hand is extended, beckoning  
all to follow Him.  
Beside Him grows a  
myrtle bush, an allusion  
to the Gentiles who  
were converted by Christ.

Above and behind Him are  
the catacombs where early  
Christians gathered to escape  
persecution and to worship.  
Higher yet are two  
structures representing the  
cathedrals of the Eastern  
Orthodox and the  
Roman Catholic Churches.

Farther up in the panorama is  
a replica of the old First  
Presbyterian Church of Bryan,  
and above this the  
commanding new structure  
of the church as it  
stands today.

## ROLL OF PASTORS

Rev. J. R. Hutchinson.....	1867-1871
Rev. J. M. Cochrane.....	1871-1872
Rev. W. H. Verner .....	1872-1877
Rev. J. W. Sexton.....	1879-1885
Rev. I. J. Daniel.....	1886-1888
Rev. J. W. Sexton.....	1890-1892
Rev. J. A. Hall.....	1893-1894
Dr. J. D. West.....	1895-1908
Rev. J. T. Coughley.....	1909-1911
Rev. J. R. Finley .....	1912-1914
Rev. C. H. Storey .....	1914-1920
Dr. W. N. Sholl.....	1920-1926
Rev. T. G. Watts .....	1926-1944
Rev. A. T. Dyal.....	1944-1954
Rev. Charles A. Sheldon .....	1954-1960
Rev. Richard H. Thomas .....	1961-1967
*Rev. Allen H. Brown .....	1966-1968
Rev. H. Harold Wells, Jr.....	1968-1973
*Rev. Henry A. Roberts, Jr. ....	1969-1971
*Rev. William C. Poe.....	1972-1974
Rev. Forrest K. Whitworth.....	1974-1979
*Rev. James L. Collier, Jr. ....	1975-1980
*Rev. John P. McGarey .....	1982-1988
*Rev. Ray A. Hickman.....	1989-1992
Dr. Robert H. Leslie, Jr.....	1981-

\*Assistant/Associate Pastors