

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF DUDLEY STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

On the 9th of March, 1821 a little company of believers, twenty-three in number, desirous of promoting the cause of Christ in this vicinity, having already voted to form themselves into a church, unanimously adopted a covenant and declaration of faith, and thereby carried their vote into effect. In 1817 there was but one religious society in this part of the town, the one worshipping in the old house on the hill. Owing to the change in religious views which was then taking place in many congregations and pulpits, Mr. Beza Tucker, a member of the Old South Society, Boston, secured the use of a large room in a building nearby and converted it into a hall for religious services which was called The Whitewash. Mr. Tucker generously offered the hall free of expense to the Baptist if they would supply preaching.

In the spring of 1819 a Sabbath School was gathered in the brick building adjoining the hall.

Near the close of 1819, active measures were undertaken to build a house of worship. Seven thousand dollars were subscribed, and on the 10th of May, 1820, the building was raised. On Wednesday, November 18, 1820, the house was dedicated to the worship of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, Mr. Lincoln preaching the sermon.

The first baptism occurred on May 13, 1821, Rev. Mr. Gemmell of Medfield baptized seven persons in Stony Brook. This was the first administration of baptism in R006Ftury, and about 2,000 persons were present to witness it.

In 1822, Rev. Joseph Elliott was given a unanimous call to become its pastor, and he became the first pastor of this church. There is reason to believe there was something unusually attractive in his sermons and his manner of preaching the Gospel.

After Mr. Elliott's resignation, the Rev. William Leverett accepted the invitation to become pastor on January 1, 1825 and he served 14 years. During Mr. Leverett's pastorate there were many and great changes. In 1828 the Brookline Baptist Church was organized, and 21 of our members, including both of the deacons, were dismissed and their removal seemed a heavy loss from the small body of believers.

Until 1832 four Christian Denominations were represented in our congregation. In 1832 the Episcopalians separated from us to establish a church of their faith, and two years later the Congregationalist families in a spirit of goodwill withdrew to organize and build a house of worship for themselves. However, in 1835 the congregation had so increased that the house of worship was enlarged and substantial chapel was erected.

In 1839 Rev. Thomas F. Caldicott became the next pastor of this church. His coming and preaching were immediately blessed by the outpouring of God's Spirit in a remarkable manner. During the year 1840 one hundred and one persons were received into the

church on profession of faith, and in 1842 again the special tokens of God's favor were enjoyed, and the pastor baptized the same number as in 1840.

During Mr. Caldicott's pastorate two new churches were organized by members dismissed from this church - the Jamaica Plain Church in the summer of 1842, and the Tremont Baptist Church, Roxbury, in the fall of 1845.

After Dr. Caldicott's resignation the Rev. Thomas D. Anderson accepted in August, 1848, the unanimous call of the people to become their pastor. The church entered upon a new era of prosperity and growth, and the thirteen years of his pastorate held many precious memories for all who enjoyed his ministry.

In 1857 - 1858 it became evident that a large sanctuary was necessary to meet the needs of the congregation. Early in 1852 it was decided to dispose of the old house of worship and erect a new one. The corner-stone was laid June 30, 1852.

Dr. Anderson, after a long and successful ministry, resigned the charge of the church December 28, 1861. In November, 1862, Rev. Henry M. King, who was then teaching in Newton Theological Institution, accepted a call to the pastorate and entered upon the pastoral service the first Sunday in April, 1863. During Dr. King's pastorate we enjoyed several seasons of revival, but none was more notable than that of 1877, when Dwight L. Moody was holding his first wonderful campaign in Boston. In 1857 we were again called upon to dismiss a band of brethren and sisters to the Dearborn Street, which became the Bethany Church, and following the total destruction of the church building by fire on December 30, 1958 united with the Stoughton Street Baptist Church. In 1882 Dr. King left to take charge of Emmanuel Church, Albany.

Very soon after Dr. King left us, a call was extended to Dr. John M. English, pastor of the Baptist Church, Gloucester. He came to this church in April, 1882, and his stay however was brief; after four months of pastoral service he resigned his charge that he might accept the urgent call from the Theological Seminary at Newton.

In April, 1883, Dr Albert K. Potter came from Springfield. For four years he was a faithful pastor, carrying the interest of the church a Sunday School on his heart.

Rev. Thomas Dixon was the next pastor, coming from Raleigh, N. C., in the fall of 1887, and remaining with the church till the spring of 1889. It was at this time, 1889 that it was found needful to supplement the labors of the pastor with those of an assistant, and Rev. Charles L. Page was called to begin his term of service with the church: a term which lasted nearly thirty years, and which was full of blessing to the church.

As founder of the Page Class, his work is one that cannot be measured and will not be forgotten.

After 19 years of outstanding service to this church and the community, Mr. Page resigned and after serving in various denominational capacities for several years became an assistant at the Tremont Temple, Boston at which post he remained until his death.

In January, 1890, our next pastor was Rev. Adolph S. Gumbart who continued with us nine years. Those years were marked by increased activities and a growing membership. Over seven hundred members were added to our list.

It was a sad day for the church when on Sunday morning, March 19, 1899, as the people were assembling for service, they were met with the announcement that Dr. Gumbart had just passed away. He was expecting to preach that day, but was stricken with heart disease, and the Lord called him home. His death was an occasion of grief in the community, and the crowd that attended his funeral service testified to the high esteem in which he was held.

William W. Bustard came to us in January 1900. The years of his pastorate, like those of his predecessors, were years of prosperity and growth. There were large additions to the church roll.

Dr. Charles A. Fulton received and accepted the call to fill the office of pastor after Dr. Bustard's resignation, and for five years served the church. While he was with us material changes and improvements were made in our church building.

In January, 1917, Rev. George R. Stair accepted an invitation to become our pastor. This was at the time when the evangelist, Billy Sunday, was holding a campaign in Boston, and the whole community was spiritually awakened. During the World War I, one hundred and thirty-eight of our young men enlisted in the national service, and six of them made the supreme sacrifice. During Mr. Stair's pastorate one hundred and forty new members were added to the church by baptism. He resigned in April, 1920.

Rev. Arthur T. Brooks, of New York, assumed the charge of this people in February 1921 to their great joy and satisfaction. During Dr. Brooks' ministry a three manual Hook and Hastings Organ, called the Frank Ferdinand Memorial Organ was installed in a redecorated sanctuary fully equipped with new pew.

The church property was transferred by vote of the church to the Boston Baptist Social Union which became effective December 7 1925. Thus a mutual alliance was agreed upon which has resulted in the strengthening of the Christian witness in the community.

Our present Community Building, containing modern Sunday School rooms and gymnasium was dedicated with elaborate ceremonies in May 1927. The Boston Baptist Social Union gave hearty cooperation in the construction of this building, paying considerably more than one-half its \$225,000 cost.

The staff of the church was enlarged to meet the needs of what had now become "The Seven Day Church" with an "Open Door" that created a wide interest and filled our church to capacity for many years.

Miss Rosella V. Bishop became Director of Religious Education at the opening of the Community Building in 1927. She directed pageantry, set up an up-to-date Christian Educational program including the programs for the physical, social and spiritual work of the various groups of the Church and Sunday School.

During World War II, 295 of our members were in service, seven of them making the supreme sacrifice.

A portrait of Dr. Brooks now hangs in the vestry and his strong energetic pastorate produced a highly efficient program which will have a lasting influence on the life of our church.

After serving the church for twenty-five years, Dr. Brooks resigned and the Rev. Thomas Eugene West, D.D. became pastor. For five years he served the church, during which time the sanctuary was redecorated, and today we worship in one of the most beautiful Gothic Sanctuaries in this area.

During his regime the work of the "Seven Day Church" was maintained in spite of increasing difficulties due to a changing population in a changing community.

Dr West resigned assuming the pastorate of the First Baptist Church in Marion, North Carolina.

In June 1952, the Rev. Percy Gladstone Beatty, began his ministry. During this pastorate, many property improvements were made including extensive landscaping of the grounds surrounding the church and the purchase of an attractive six room parsonage at 3 Lombard street, Dorchester. In spite of the many changes that were rapidly taking place in our Roxbury Community, the church continued to be a Christian witness and welcomed over 350 people into its membership during Rev. Beatty's pastorate.

In February, 1961, Rev. Beatty resigned to become Associate Pastor of the Broadway Baptist Church in Patterson, New Jersey.

Rev. Percy Clark served as interim pastor until the end of 1962 and Prof. William L. Lane became interim during 1963. During this time the church entered into many discussions with the Social Union and the Boston Redevelopment Authority concerning the church property.

In January of 1964, the Rev. Joseph I. Mortensen accepted the pastorate and initiated a program of increased awareness and service to the spiritual and physical needs of the

congregation and community. He also was deeply involved with the membership for charting the future of the church.

On Sunday, December 27, 1964, a congregation of 379 members and guest participated in a final service to be held at the old church. Midway through the program, the Bible was removed from the pulpit, and Pastor Mortensen led the procession to Putnam Chapel of the First Church, Unitarian, of Roxbury, where the Bible was re-opened and the program was concluded with the service of dedication for our temporary quarters. It was an unforgettable day which recalled many old memories and increased the resolve that Old Dudley would continue to serve our God with the vision and courage that characterized our fore fathers.

While at the Chapel, Dudley Street Baptist Church continued its religious services and planned for the future. In March of 1966, the congregation reviewed various proposals, voting to have union services with the Centre Street Baptist Church of Jamaica Plain and to consider merger. Rev. Mortensen was a guiding force to implement a successful merger, and knowing that his congregation appeared ready to approve the merger, he resigned early in July of 1966 to organize a new church in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

At a special simultaneous but separate meeting of the Dudley Street and Centre Street Baptist Church Churches on July 31, 1966, both churches approved merger and a new era of Christian Service was initiated with Rev. Gordon Kehrein of the Centre Street Church as interim pastor.

On May 11, 1967, the merged church was legally incorporated as the United Centre-Dudley Baptist Church of Jamaica Plain and Roxbury, Inc.