

AN ABBREVIATED HISTORY OF TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH (1963 –2020)

Preface

This document is intended to provide a brief historical background of Trinity Baptist Church as part of a package to be sent to prospective candidates interested in becoming our Senior Pastor. While seeking to draft an accurate account, the present Search Committee admits this work omits many details and names that might otherwise be included if used for other purposes. It is our aim that the reader discovers the significant events in our local church – whether good or bad – and leaves with a better understanding of the journey endured by some and recently joined by others within our congregation.

The Early Years (1963-1976)

Mrs. Allen Tuck and Rev. William Heath compiled “The Beginning of the Willow Park Baptist Church, Calgary, Alberta”, a record of our church’s earliest beginnings. In 1963, members of Cambrian Heights Baptist Church (located in northwest Calgary) decided to start a mission church in the growing southeast area of the city where no other evangelical church was present. Their pastor, Rev. Cunningham, along with others, began meeting in the southeast home of one church family on a weekly basis for a month. After the fourth week, the family could no longer host the meeting since their employer was relocating them to Saskatoon. Nevertheless, the seed was planted.

In 1964, with a loan from the Baptist Foundation of Texas, Cambrian Heights purchased an acre of land at 9920 Fairmount Drive SE. That summer, they hosted a Vacation Bible School in a large rented tent erected on the property. They saw an overwhelming response; 190 children were enrolled. By October, another family had moved into the Willow Park area and a Sunday School program was started in their basement with 33 attending. This eventually led to the rental of the nearby Acadia Community Hall for regular Sunday services, with Rev. Cunningham preaching. After each sermon, Rev. Cunningham would leave to drive back to the north end of the city in time to preach at Cambrian Heights. By December, 56 were enrolled in a Sunday School with seven classes ranging from nursery to adults.

In January 1966, they relocated to the larger facilities at David Thompson School. A Women’s Missionary Society was started in February, augmenting the existing Girls Auxiliary and Royal Ambassador groups. Later that spring, the first baptisms were held: a mother and her two daughters who had been attending from the beginning.

In January 1967, Rev. Gene Hodge (from Spokane, WA) became the pastor, relieving Rev. Cunningham to focus on Cambrian Heights. Pastor Hodge started Sunday evening services in the home of one local church family. Two large tents were acquired and a small building erected at the purchased property to house the piano and other equipment used for VBS that summer. Rev. Hodge left in September of that year to return to seminary studies in Texas. Mr. Allen Tuck, in whose home the work began in 1964 and where evening services were being held, started leading the worship services. Sunday evenings took the form of a Training Union. By December, the church had 26 members with 72 enrolled in Sunday School.

In March 1968, Rev. B. L. “Billy” Heath (from Williams Lake, BC) became the pastor. The work continued to grow steadily. By April 1969, there were 150 enrolled in Sunday School. In the summer of 1970, the 77-voice Youth Choir from Calvary Baptist Church in Tyler, TX came to sing and assist in Vacation Bible School. With the team’s additional 94 workers, they held three VBS programs in one week: two at nearby schools in Calgary each morning and the third in Gleichen each afternoon.

VBS Enrolment:

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|------|-----|
| 1964 | 190 |
| 1965 | 258 |
| 1967 | 295 |
| 1968 | 251 |
| 1969 | 182 |
| 1970 | 447 |

In January 1971, city hall approved re-zoning of the purchased property. Half an acre was sold to Gulf Oil and the remainder was to be the site of a new church building. On May 13, 1971, the church became formally organized at an evening event meeting in Central Memorial High School. It was intended to immediately follow the Canadian Southern Baptist Conference, held that year at Cambrian Heights, allowing for seven pastors from sister churches to attend and participate. Rev. Henry Blackaby from Saskatoon was the featured speaker, giving the charge to the new church.

In September 1971, construction began on the new church. Children, teenagers, adult members and ex-convicts all donated more than 2500 volunteer hours to the effort. The recently released prisoners belonged to the Concern Society, a group dedicated to reintegrating these men into communities by providing labour for enterprises which otherwise might not get done for lack of funds; their wages were paid through a winter works grant from the federal government. In an undated article outlining the history and benefits of Sunday School published in a local newspaper, Rev. Heath described a special Stampede Sunday: “The church I work through has an annual Stampede Sunday. This takes place tomorrow at 9:45am. The children and adults are encouraged to wear Western dress and the theme will be carried out in rodeo events based on Biblical questions. Real horses will be brought to church to carry out the theme. To many of us the Sunday school is a glorious stampede that goes on every Sunday all year round.” Rev. Heath continued to serve Willow Park Baptist Church until October 1976.

The Middle Years (1976—1995)

Without the aid of newspaper articles and source documents, the years from 1976 to 1995 are described using notes from and conversations with Mrs. Diane Kilbride.

During this period of time, portables located on the church property were used to house a Christian School, staffed by John and Diane Oliver. Dr. Robert “Bob” Tucker from Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary in Cochrane started a Hispanic congregation using the sanctuary of Willow Park Baptist Church on Sunday afternoons. Dr. Tucker spoke in English while the

congregants listened, some with hearing devices plugged into pews and listening to the Spanish equivalent as spoken by the translator sitting in the sound booth above the auditorium entrance. An interim pastor, Dr. Wayne Cook, also from the Seminary, led the congregation for a brief time.

Dr. Duane Garrett, from the Seminary, led the congregation through recovery from a time of significant turmoil. He shared pulpit supply duties with Dr. Cook. During this time, it was recommended that the name of the church be changed to Trinity Baptist Fellowship, later altered to Trinity Baptist Church. In 1991, Shafer Parker came as pastor and led the church until 1993. Under Pastor Parker's ministry, Trinity began to grow again numerically. Shafer Parker later pastored Hawkwood Baptist (a North American Baptist church) in northwest Calgary. Dr. Garrett again served as interim pastor until 1995. Dr. Garrett later resided in Louisville, KY and teaches at Southern Seminary.

In June 1995, Dr. Robert "Rob" Blackaby came as pastor and led the church until 2008. Rob's brother, Peter, joined the staff as an associate pastor in 1996 in a part-time capacity while attending the Seminary in Cochrane; he would later serve full-time until 2009. Over the intervening years, other ministry staff members would include Nigel Wheeler, Patou Zeleke, Tim Williams, Ruth Blackaby (Rob's sister), and Michael "Moose" Mitchum (Ruth's husband). The Blackaby years were characterized by biblical teaching and numerical growth. Eventually, the congregation grew to a size that precipitated them to relocate worship services to a nearby school for two years. They would later return to the 9920 Fairmount Drive SE property.

The Recent Years (2002–2020)

In 2002, Trinity modified its policy to incorporate an Elders Team, sharing the burden of church governance with the pastoral staff. In 2006, the portables on the property were replaced by a double-size portable unit, thereafter used as Christian education classrooms and for other events. Mission church plants were launched in different communities throughout southern Alberta, all using Trinity as an anchor for financial purposes. Some thrived and some collapsed. They included works in Coaldale, Lethbridge, Pincher Creek, Nanton, Okotoks, and Calgary (Vietnamese). A new church planting strategy was developed under which Trinity would serve as the anchor church to fund and support a SouthTrails Network of sister churches in south Calgary. As part of this plan, Trinity began a two-service format on Sunday mornings, not only to accommodate the increased attendance but to prepare for the launch of a church plant. Rob Blackaby would preach first at Trinity then at the new work.

Several mission teams from Southern Baptist churches in the United States of America came to assist summer ministry efforts at Trinity (VBS, Basketball Camp, Stampede BBQ) and in communities targeted for church plants (neighbourhood block parties, Soccer Camp). Southwinds Church was launched under this strategy in 2007, with Trinity returning to a single service format. Several of Trinity's members volunteered to leave and form the core of Southwinds.

Trinity continued to host office space and administrative services for Southwinds. Dr. Rob Blackaby left Trinity to become the president of the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary, assuming the role left vacant by his cousin, Dr. Richard Blackaby. Rob continued to preach at Southwinds but also filled the pulpit at Trinity for part of the next year. Within a year, the SouthTrails Network dissolved but Trinity continued its cooperative relationship with Southwinds. Dr. Wilson Nelson came from the Greenville area of South Carolina as an intentional transition pastor in January 2009 and left in June 2011. Wilson's ministry emphasized relationships and rebuilding foundations. Dr. Nelson later worked on staff at North Greenville

University and area churches as interim pastor. Miss Jamie Daughtry joined the ministry staff as Director of Student Ministries in early 2009 and left in late 2011.

The church building required renovations along with its congregation. During this period, a multi-year plan of refurbishment was launched, starting with interior re-painting throughout and replacement of the foyer flooring with ceramic tiles. Our facilities were made available on a weekly basis to two ethnic congregations: one of eastern European heritage and another of messianic Jews.

Rev. Bobby “Bo” Stevens came from Jonesboro, GA to be the pastor in July 2011. Bo’s ministry was characterized by an emphasis on discipleship. Bo left Trinity in September 2013 to pursue leadership of his family businesses in Texas. Robbie Booth joined the ministry staff as Youth Intern in early 2012 on a part-time basis as he continued studies at the Seminary in Cochrane. He left in December 2013. Miss Leticia Frenette joined the ministry staff as Director of Children’s Ministries from May through December 2013.

In September 2014, Trinity had the pulpit filled by Gordon Grieve for around six weeks. He was brought on full-time on April 1st, 2015 where he stayed until the end of December 2020. During his tenure, there were some additional staffing needs filled by Christy Nova (as the head of children’s ministries), Nicholas Frenette (as a summer student intern), and Blaise Kemna (as the head of youth ministries). The team from Fairview Baptist Church in South Carolina continued to come to Calgary to help with basketball camps, a high number of children being registered from the community. There was also a steady growth in the church, especially from younger couples.

What is Trinity Baptist Like Today?

Trinity Baptist is a small church of 140 congregants, 82% of which are members, 6% of which are out-of-town congregants. Our average attendance for adults in 2019 was 91 per worship service, while our average attendance for children was 10. Our gender breakdown is evenly split and we have a diverse makeup, 20% Filipino, 56% of European descent, African 9%, and 15% of other ethnicities (approximate numbers). Our youth make up 16% of our church.

Our church is known for its warmth and inviting fellowship, mixing all generations of people together. Sunday school classes are a Trinity staple and the attendance is very consistent. Between the Sunday school classes and the service, Trinity has a time of fellowship known as *Interlude* where the congregation has an opportunity to catch up and build each other up. Our church is blessed with several worship teams, each bringing a different style to the service. The first Sunday of every month, after sharing in the Lord’s Supper, the congregation participates in a “Soup and Bun Lunch,” which has become a church favourite event.

The COVID-19 situation has forced the church to put many of these traditions on pause, but we all look forward to when everything returns to normal. The church’s in-person attendance shrunk considerably because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the church readily adapted to online church services, *Zoom* meetings, and other such methods of staying in touch. We stream services but have some in-person services as well. We plan to open at full capacity once government guidelines allow us to do so.

Our church has no mortgage and is debt-free.

While our church has had discussions about wheelchair accessibility, we have none installed at present.

Willow Park Community:

Trinity Baptist is located at 9920 Fairmont Drive SE, an Italian Market, a Tim Hortons, and a gas station across from it. Its relative proximity to the C-train and the two bus stops around our

church (bus routes 10, 106) make it accessible for transit users. Willow Park is one of Calgary's communities that skews older in the age of its citizens than other Calgarian communities. 20% of its residents are immigrants, 56% of that total being economic migrants. However, 55% of Willow Park residents are third generation immigrants. The community feels lived in and established.

| Willow Park | | |
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| | Number | Per cent |
| Immigrant population in private households | 1,050 | 100% |
| By continent | | |
| <i>Americas</i> | 140 | 13% |
| <i>Europe</i> | 385 | 37% |
| <i>Africa</i> | 90 | 9% |
| <i>Asia</i> | 430 | 41% |
| <i>Oceania and other</i> | 10 | 1% |
| By country | | |
| <i>Philippines</i> | 210 | 20% |
| <i>United Kingdom</i> | 140 | 13% |
| <i>Germany</i> | 70 | 7% |
| <i>United States</i> | 70 | 7% |
| <i>China</i> | 45 | 4% |

Continent and country of birth of immigrants (Top 5 countries)

The median household income before taxes in 2015 was \$96,837, although the percentage of the households spending 30% or more on shelter in 2016 was found to be 18%. The percentage of owner households is 78% to the renters' 22%. The average household size being 2.4 persons, there is a significant percentage of single people within the community (39% to the 53% of married or in common-law). The employment rate is 60%.