

The 160-Year History of Second Baptist Church 39th Street

Second Baptist Church has a rich, 160-year history rooted in the tumultuous post-slavery era.

Foundation and Early Pastors

- **Founding (1863):** In 1862, following Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, hundreds of former slaves traveled to Missouri on their way to freedom. In this bold and dangerous environment, **Rev. Clark Moore** started a mission in 1863 for these "Exodusters" at "Stragglers Camp" near the Missouri River (4th St. and Troost).
- In October 1863, the converts chose their denominational affiliation, leading to the formation of **Second Baptist Church** (Baptist) and Allen Chapel A.M.E. (Methodist).
- **Rev. Clark Moore** became the first pastor. He was succeeded by **Rev. Joseph Strothers**, who moved the church "up the hill" to a small wooden building in "Walnut Grove," briefly known as the Charlotte Street Baptist Church.

Building and Expansion

- **Rev. Henry Roberson** (Served 27 years): Led the congregation to fund and build a larger brick edifice at **10th & Charlotte** for \$5,000, which housed over 500 members.
- **Rev. Samuel W. Bacote** (1895-1946): Organized groups to support the growing church, quickly paid off the remaining debt, and oversaw the erection of a new, larger superstructure valued at over \$100,000 by 1898. This building hosted the National Baptist Convention that year and was featured in a white newspaper for the "zeal" of the "colored congregation."
- In 1926, the historic church at 10th & Charlotte was damaged by fire. While rebuilding, the members worshipped at the YMCA.
- In 1941, Second Baptist moved to a new location at **10th & Park**, which was purchased for the sum of \$2,000 despite a value of over \$150,000. Rev. Bacote retired in 1946 after 51 years of service.

Modern Era and Community Focus

- **Rev. E. E. Chappelle** (1946-1960s): Introduced a new ministry focused on finance, with "Homecoming Day" as its flagship program to raise funds and host distinguished speakers like Dr. Benjamin E. Mays. In **1963**, the church moved to its present location at **39th & Monroe**. He was known for his community service, including hospital visits, and established the W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center and a bus ministry.
- **Rev. David O. Shipley** (1980-1998): A young minister who grew up in the church, he returned as Pastor. He reorganized the worship service and introduced new observances

(Advent & Lent, Black History). He was the first pastor to welcome and encourage **women to serve in the pulpit**. In 1988, the church celebrated its 125th anniversary.

- **Rev. Kendall Jones** (1998-2008): Focused on contemporary worship, adding a praise and worship team and praise dancers. He organized a Block Fellowship ministry and established Prison and Nursing Home Ministries, defining committees as focused, scriptural "ministries."
- **Rev. Vernon P. Howard, Jr.** (2008-2014): Began planning "The Miracle on 39th Street" (M39) to erect a new sanctuary and established a "Ministers of the Miracle" Training and Development Series.
- **Rev. Kevin L. Nelson** (2016-2018): Focused on modernizing church operations, completing a New Membership Orientation Manual, and launching a **Social Media ministry** with online streaming and video screens in the sanctuary.
- **Rev. Joe L. Callahan, Jr.** (2020-Present): Called as the tenth Pastor on March 1, 2020. His wife, Dr. Tamara Callahan, is a child of the church.

Second Baptist Church has a rich legacy, with families dating back to its 1800s history, and continues to be guided by faith.