

# Celebrating 175 Years

June 20, 1843-2018



Building 1889 Drawing by Lena Rieppel

## **The Pastor, Rev. Cheryl Filson**

Cheryl Filson has worked as a medical lab technician for 28 years, serving her community at the Chambersburg Hospital for the last 26 years. In 2000, Cheryl received her call to ministry and enrolled in the Certified Lay Minister program at the first Harrisburg/East Church Leadership Institute class. In 2003 she graduated with her certificate from ABCOPAD CLI, becoming a Lay Minister. From there Cheryl continued her education through Wilson College, Chambersburg, PA, graduating in 2008 with a Bachelors of Arts. Finally in 2012 Cheryl graduated from Palmer Theological Seminary, Wynnewood, PA with her Masters of Divinity.

Prior to serving at First Baptist Church Mansfield, Rev. Cheryl Filson served as an Associate Pastor and the Pastor of Christian Education at Martin Luther King Baptist Church in Harrisburg, PA. She was introduced to Martin Luther King Baptist Church in July 2009. At that time Rev. Dr. Lavette R. Paige agreed to mentor Cheryl through her theological field education. Upon her graduation from Palmer Theological Seminary, Cheryl was offered her current position of Pastor of Christian Education and was recommended for ordination. In December 2012, and after satisfying American Baptists Churches of PA and Delaware, ABCOPAD's requirements for ordination, MLKBC ordained Cheryl Filson. Rev. Cheryl Filson is also an active member of ABCOPAD. She has served on the ABCOPAD board as the Harrisburg Association representative. Cheryl has also served as the ABCOPAD Minister's Council's secretary and currently holds the position of second vice president.

Rev. Cheryl Filson is a devoted and loving wife, mother, and grandmother. She has been married to her husband Douglas (Doug) Filson, for 30 yrs. Doug is a Pennsylvania State Constable and Armed Security Supervisor. Together they have three children, Abigail (Abbi) 27, Caleb 25, and Katherine (Katie) 24, and three grandchildren Caiden James 4, and Jobii Teil 3, and Alba Senay 9 months. Abigail currently divides her time between Maine and Pennsylvania to work as a traveling nurse.. Caleb and his wife Marissa live in East Berlin, PA with their daughters Jobii and Alba. Caleb is enlisted in the Marine reserves and currently works for Amazon. Katherine and her son Caiden live in Chambersburg. Katherine currently works as a CNA.

In the past three years Pastor Cheryl has jumped feet first into the local ministry opportunities in Mansfield. She is the treasurer for the Mansfield Ministerium and the president of the Protestant Campus Ministry Board. Rev. Filson has spearheaded fund raising efforts to purchase, install and utilize smart screen TVs in the sanctuary and is currently trying to raise enough funds to purchase and install a new outdoor sign. Her vision is to increase the visibility of First Baptist Church Mansfield in order to minister to and share the Gospel message with young families.



**Rev. Cheryl Filson**

# **First Baptist Church 7 Sherwood Street Mansfield, Pa.**

Certain Baptists residing in and about the Mansfield area on the 10th of April 1840, asked to be dismissed from the congregation of the East Sullivan Baptist Church in order to form a local branch.

Deacon Daniel Sherwood is credited with taking the first steps toward founding the church. Twelve persons are said to be the founders, although others were certainly among the members: Daniel Sherwood and his wife Anna, with their son Rev. Abijah Sherwood and wife Maria, Hon. Daniel L. Sherwood and Caroline his wife, E.P. Clark and his wife Fanny, Oliver Elliott, Thomas Jerald, Martha Utter and Lorena Ripley. All but Rev. Abijah and his wife had been members of East Sullivan.

Although early settlers were accustomed to such travel, "roads" traveled by horse and buggy at the time were not much more than a path by modern standards and a journey to church and back must have been nearly an all day event.

Many churches got their start with meetings in small buildings or at the home of one of the prominent members. Until a building was constructed, they met at the home of Albert Sherwood, located on the West side of the Tioga River. Surely Albert was involved and was listed as a deacon in 1883 but was not listed as a founder. There were 35 persons listed as the charter members.

On April 10, 1843, the Baptist Church of Mansfield was recognized by the Tioga Baptist Association. The town was not yet incorporated, and would not be for another decade, 1857.

The first church building was erected in 1848-49 on the Sherwood and Main Street site at a cost of about \$1,112 and was paid in 1848-1849. Repaired and improved several times before the current building was built, the church building had brass chandeliers, later a balcony and a steeple. A contract authorized by the Trustees in 1870 was one improvement.

That building was moved, according to some reports, up the street to Sullivan Street when the new building was constructed.

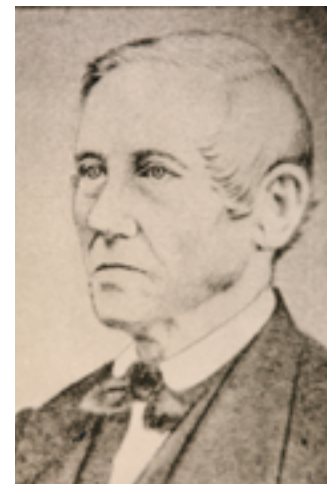


**Remains of the East Sullivan Baptist Church on Rt.6, about 8-1/2 miles east of Mansfield. A winter storm brought it down in 1995.**

Local pastors joined for consumation excercises: Reading of the Scriptures, Rev. S. Bullock; introductory prayer, Rev. J.L. Coffin; sermon, Rev. T.S. Sheardown; constituting prayer, Rev. M. Rockwell; right hand of fellowship, Rev. G. Spratt; charge to the church, Rev. S. Grinnell; concluding prayer Rev. A. Sherwood; benediction, Rev. S. Bullock.



**Rev. Sheardown**



**Rev. Rockwell**

Although a chapel and horse shed was added to accomodate those who drove in, the church was growing rapidly and had outgrown its space. The norm for pastors in the early years was a couple of years and several pastors served, another pastor served, then the pastor served a second term of their ministry. Rev. Abijah Sherwood, was the first as well as the 4th pastor.

With the exception of the years 1852 and 1853, when the pulpit was filled by Rev. G.W. Stone, and in 1853 and 1854, when Rev. D. P. Maryatt was the pastor.....Rev. Abijah Sherwood served the church until 1860. Adding the two or three years he preached to them while a branch of the East Sullivan Church, Rev. Sherwood's pastorate covered a period of about twenty years.



**1874 Church**



**Rev. Abijah and Maria Sherwood, son and daughter-in-law of founder Daniel Sherwood.**

Born in Marathon, NY Abijah served as pastor at Union Corners in New York State and in Pennsylvania, in addition to two times as pastor of First Baptist, also preached at the Delmar, Stony Fork, and Covington churches. A nephew, Andrew Sherwood, wrote the history of the Sherwoods and much of the Tioga County history.

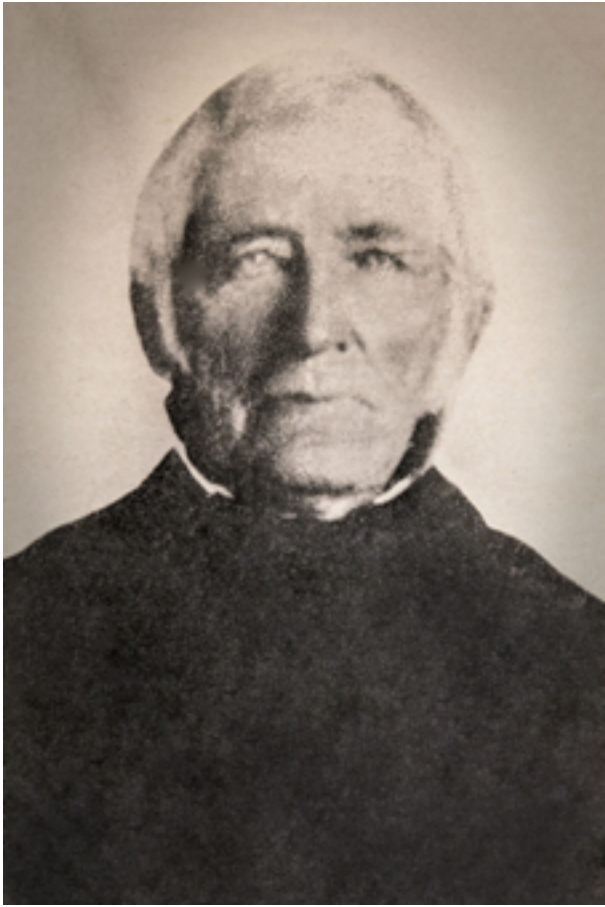


On the 40th Anniversary of the church, seven of the twelve founders were still living, four of whom were still members of the church. That year the church had 150 members with a large and flourishing Sunday School -- 125 pupils and 14 teachers.



**Charter member Oliver Elliott and his family.**

The Hon. Daniel L. Sherwood, son of Deacon Daniel and Anna Sherwood, in addition to being credited as a founder of First Baptist, also had a hand in the formation of Mansfield Classical Seminary, now Mansfield University. Dan L. served in the Pennsylvania Senate and rose to position of Speaker of the Senate, now held by the Lieutenant Governor. He might have been our only Governor but he got out of politics.



**Deacon Daniel Sherwood, who along with his family, founded First Baptist Church**



**Thomas Jerald, one of the founders and first trustees. Current members Tracy and Katie Rash are descendents. Esther and Barbara Jerald, who lived on Sherwood Street were also descendents.**



**Hon. Daniel Lee Sherwood, founder, speaker of PA Senate.**



**Caroline Sharp Sherwood, founder, wife of Daniel L.**

# Harvest the Wheat or Keep the Sabbath

It was noted that the early church building entrance was on the West wall, set well back from Main Street; a gallery provided extra seating, and the high pulpit was backed against the Eastern wall. In the 1850's, Mansfield was not yet incorporated and much of the land was not yet developed. Most of the congregation, as well as the pastor's family, depended on farming for their livelihood.

During August 1855, excessive rains had farmers greatly worried over the probable loss of their wheat; a very serious matter with them, since in those days they had to grow their own "wheat timber." The wheat was cut and in the shock, but was beginning to sprout, which meant that it soon would be ruined, which meant that the farmer and his family would, in all likelihood, go hungry. The potato and corn crops had already failed.

Such were the conditions on Sunday morning, September 2, 1855 when the sun shone out bright and clear, so that many farmers, including Dan L. Sherwood, started the work of gathering the wheat and threshing it.

It so happened that Dan L.'s fields lay on the South slope of Pickel Hill in view of the windows of the Baptist Church where the congregation watched the pastor's brother harvest the wheat while Rev. Abijah Sherwood preached on the Fourth Commandment (Exodus 20: 8-11,) on keeping the Sabbath holy.

"It was a lovely day," Andrew Sherwood wrote in the Sherwood history, "the sun seemed unusually bright and warm, after having been a long time hidden by the clouds. The preacher goes on in support of his text while his audience gazes furtively in the direction of the wheat fields, where men and teams, in full view, were busy hauling in the wheat. Finally," Andrew continues. "the speaker stopped for a moment to gaze out the window with his hearers, and then, in no uncertain language, expressed disapproval of the work going on in the wheat field."

Andrew Sherwood had always been something of a stickler himself about keeping the one day in seven and appeared quite perplexed at writing about his relatives and deciding which of the brothers had the correct point of view. While not

condemning the minister in so far as his remarks were in support of the general observance of a day of rest, Andrew concluded that "under the circumstances, believes that the layman was justified in trying to save his wheat."

## New Church Building 1888-1889

An article in the Mansfield Advertiser, March 18, 1889 heaped praise on the new Baptist Church building and its dedication.

"The Baptist people of Mansfield may at last congratulate themselves," the paper said, "that they possess one of the finest meeting houses in Tioga County."

It went on to point out that the handsome brick edifice, located on the corner of Main and Sherwood Streets, would be a credit to towns with much larger population than Mansfield.

The belfry on the southwest corner towers 85 feet from the ground, over the main entrance to the "audience room" of 65x45 feet. Stained glass windows of elaborate patterns were placed by families of some of the church founders. J.M. Clark placed a large window on the west wall, sacred to the memory of his father and mother, wife and son. E.P. Clark and his wife Fanny, were among the founding members. A second large window on the south wall of the room was contributed by another charter member, Oliver Elliot. One in memory of Lorena Ripley, also a founding member, was given by her children.

Pews of oak, trimmed with black walnut, were said at the time to comfortably seat 350 persons. The ceiling was made of hemlock and other woodwork of Georgia pine, with hand oil finish, presenting an elegant appearance. In the northwest corner is a platform, surrounded by an artistically constructed railing, where the orchestra and choir are stationed during services. The rostrum, near the center of the north wall, is semi-circle in form, with open-work supports, while underneath a portion of the ventilation of the building is secured by air pipes connecting with the great chimney in the northwest corner of the church.

**(Continued next page)**

Page 4

## New Building (continued)

Hanging from the center of the ceiling is a fourteen light chandelier, while the floor is covered with a rich ingrain carpet.

Next is the "sociable room," a 21x24 room, above which is the Sunday School apartment, from which an excellent view of the church proper is afforded. It also answers the purpose of a gallery when the church is crowded. It is carpeted and seated with chairs.

The paper also spoke of the finely appointed kitchen, a basement the size of the entire building and two Boyington furnaces that supplied heat. There were several closets and five entrances and exits.

Speaking of the building, the cost was \$8,300 and the debt had been reduced to \$5,000 by the time of the dedication. Former pastor N. L. Reynolds preached the opening sermon in the morning. Many years ago Rev. Reynolds was pastor, (1860-1866) and resided in Mt. Pleasant, according to the article. In the afternoon, the dedicatory sermon was preached by a Rev. D. T. MacClymont, of Williamsport. Mr. MacClymont, the article noted, is a stranger in Mansfield but will be royally welcomed should he ever come here again. In the evening, Rev. A. W. Hodder preached. A well known former pastor, Rev. Hodder was pastor 1885-1886 just before the new building was built.

All praise is due Rev. MacClymont for his heroic and successful efforts to remove the burden of debt from the house (church; house of worship.) While it was not all removed, it was reduced to manageable proportions. On Wednesday morning of the dedication the debt was \$5,000. By Wednesday evening it was brought down to \$2,000. Mr. MacClymont, by his genius for keeping the audience in good humor, developed their benevolence to a remarkable degree.

**Note: By comparison to today, the 1880 dollar was equal to \$23.64. Rev. MacClymont reduced the debt an equivalent of \$70,920. Total cost of the building would have been \$196,212. Remaining debt at the dedication would have been \$118,200... brought to \$47,280 in today's money.**



**West window dedicated to founders E.P. Clark and his wife Fanny.**



**South window dedicated to founder Oliver Elliott and family.**

## Changes in the Building Over the Years

Even with a “new” building, constructed in 1889, there have been several remodelings. Among the first, was the changing to electric lights. In 1889 there was a large chandelier in the center of the sanctuary and several smaller lights that were changed out when electricity came to town.

While things have stayed close to the original design, there have been numerous changes. In the 1950’s, the organ and pipes were installed, next to the choir, in the north-west corner of the church. At the front of the sanctuary, a fabric had been placed as a focal point.



Partially due to a leaky roof in the front and back of the sanctuary, and partially the fashion of the 1960’s, brown paneling covered the entire front of the church. The small cross in the center of the current one in the front of the church, was located in the front but the focus only went as high as the two blocks in the corner. A choir loft was also constructed on the platform.

During remodeling and making way for a new organ, the area on the north-west was opened up and paneling removed. A new roof had fixed the problem of the leaks.

Once the paneling was removed, an amazing discovery was made....now visible was the original stenciling that went all around the church at one time and it remained only in that corner. Pastor Ben Nevin made a copy of it and stenciled around a new arch pattern.



To make the front of the sanctuary match more with the shapes of the large windows, an “arch” was created. While the area was being replaced with new sheetrock, wiring was installed to accommodate the Christmas decorations.

## Changes (continued)



**A young Lori Wilber (Cooper) compares an old image of the church with the stenciling found near the organ during remodeling**



**Detail of arches reconstructed by Ted Smith.**

Our resident carpenter and woodworking wizard, Ted Smith, MADE new trim to match. Wood being what it is, it varies from board to board. No matter how good the new work was it would not match perfectly. At the front of the church where everyone looked at it every Sunday, it needed to match So we “borrowed” the trim from the top of the South window and put it in front where it matched. In the meantime, Ted was still working on the new trim. Where we took it from the South window, there was no paint behind it and it was somewhat dark in color there so for a week or two no one noticed that the trim was missing. They weren’t looking in that direction!



**A new handbell choir after Bert and Maurine Francis purchased the bells in 1979. Choir loft and choir in the photo. L-R: Joyce Wunderlich, Anna Smith, Florence Borkey, Anne Nevin, Sue Wilber, Carol Mortimer, Linda Sprunger and Stephanie Mumma. Back Row: Dick Howe, Ted Smith, Bert Francis, Ron Sprunger, and Rev. Benjamin Nevin.**

## Changes (continued)

If you look at the platform in the front of the church, you see the obvious height difference. Think about the fact that at one time the floor level was the same throughout the sanctuary and it had been built up. In order to drill a hole for wiring the sound system at the pulpit, we had to drill -- not just through some small floor boards, but through the original floor-boards to the cellar...down nearly three feet. A very long drill!

And during the remodeling, the Howe family paid to have all the pews refinished as well as have padded cushions for each pew. To start the process, we had a work bee right after church. People wore not their usual Sunday attire, but work clothes to worship. Pastor Ben advocated that we “pick up your pew and walk” after the service.

Once pews were removed (and carefully labeled as to where each belonged,) carpeting was removed and we were back to the bare floor. Old wooden floors tended to squeek, and ours was no exception. We had about 60 pounds of nails that tightened up the floor when we were done. In spite of all that, there was still a squeek or two but it was vastly different than before.

At that time in the summer, churches in Mansfield had ecumenical services and we worshiped at each of the churches in turn during that time. It gave us at least three weeks to accomplish the tasks and several of us, including the pastor, worked at least half days starting at 8 am Monday through Saturday during that time.

Having worked with Ted on church committees, from Trustees to Memorial



**Shelf and new organ pipes.**

committee, there were many conversations as we worked. One day, Ted remarked about the numerous projects he had completed around the church. “When I go,” he had remarked, “they won’t have to add anything to remember me, it’s all here!”

Indeed it was: arches, posts, railings, the cross in front, the shelf for the organ pipes and cabinets in the annex....a very visible memory. The cross, by the way, also used medallions from the ends of some pews that had to be removed to make room in the back for recording equipment and to make it easier to serve communion.

And before the new carpet arrived and the pews replaced, the whole sanctuary had to be repainted -- top to bottom. Before the most recent renovation, repainting included painting the ceiling tiles on the entire ceiling, using tall ladders that were lashed to the beams. Once the ladder was secure, there were some gasps from below when I held on with one hand and stretched out to reach more areas. We did not have scaffolding!

## Changes (continued)

Speaking of the beams, the church had purchased ceiling fans with lights. Contractor Ralph Wilston had a bit of a surprise when he installed them. Of course, to look right they had to be in the center. He was sitting on top of the beam with a big drill in hand trying to drill a hole down through to install the wiring. There was a rather large solid metal wire that went from one side to the other and the large turn-buckle that held it together was, naturally, right in the center.



**President's Day -- With flags and portraits of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Ulysses S. Grant, the church was decorated for the patriotic holiday. Note the stenciling.**

He worked hard to drill through both of those. He accomplished the task, with a bit of a struggle, and now the fans are an appropriate part of the decor.

During a more recent renovation, those beams were refinished and turned back to the original wood and stained (see inside back cover.)

Once the baptistry and choir loft were opened up and the arches replaced, the lights would have drawn the eye -- involuntarily -- to each side away from the center. To offset that, we used paint that was the same color but one shade lighter to help keep the focus on the center. And finally, to go back to the stenciling, once a copy was made Rev. Nevin stenciled around the center to keep that part of our heritage. It would have been monumental to say the least, to do the stencil all around the sanctuary as it was in 1889, especially in the various colors. In back of the pulpit around the newly installed cross....well, it just felt right as part of our heritage.

## “OUR PLACE”

Thanks to a concerted effort of restoration over a period of years, the description of the current church building more closely fits the glowing prose found in the Mansfield Advertiser describing the new brick building in 1889.

In 1996 the exterior brick was cleaned and repointed. The roof was replaced in 2001 with shingles resembling the old slate, and copper gutters and downspouts



## Early History



Lamb's Creek, north of Mansfield, looking into the town in the distance.

Discover the charm of Mansfield, a small college town nestled in the hills of northern Pennsylvania, with a rich heritage that celebrates its Sesquicentennial in 2007. Interestingly, both the town and what is now Mansfield University, were officially established in 1857, fourteen years after the Tioga Baptist Association officially recognized the First Baptist Church. One of the church's ten founders, Daniel L. Sherwood, son of Daniel and Anna Sherwood (also founders), had a hand in helping to organize the seminary school.

An Englishman from Rhode Island, Asa Mann, settled at the northern end of the present borough in 1804. After clearing about ten acres of land, he was kidded about "Mann's field." He owned a store, a hotel and a distillery while filling the position of the town's first postmaster for many years. In 1818, he built his house on North Main Street.

The first permanent settler within what is now Mansfield, was Benjamin Corey in 1797. Corey Creek was named for him as that is where he built the first log house in the area. Gad Lamb and his family settled on the north end of town in what is still known as Lamb's Creek, and the first Sunday School met at his home in 1826.

Several business and factories sprang up, including a grist mill, a saw mill, a tannery and iron-works, even a furniture factory and a cigar factory, which in 1884 employed 60 people and produced as many as 10,000 cigars a day. A number of brick manufacturers were in operation by the 1860's but the first brick house in the borough was built by Ben Gitchell in 1841. The Baptist Church brick building was built with locally made bricks in 1889.

The April 1840 meeting also presented more historical confusion. Present at the Sherwood home were: Daniel Sherwood and his wife, Anna; the sons Daniel L. and Abijah and their wives, Caroline and Maria; Elijah Pinchen Clark and his wife, Fanny; Oliver Elliott, Thomas Jerald, Martha Utter, and Lorena Ripley. Twelve. Since Daniel Sherwood is reported to be the founder, it follows that the "Sherwood home" referenced would be his. Sort of. According to the history of the Sherwood family compiled by Andrew Sherwood. The home was owned by Andrew's father Albert, son of Daniel, brother of Rev. Abijah and Daniel L.. However, it seemed that they all lived under one roof--same house, different owner. That house also presented another historical error of sorts later.

When the Sherwood family came to Mansfield in 1839, they purchased the Rev. Asa Donaldson and Ebenezer Burleigh estates--adjoining farms, just West of the Tioga River. The house pictured in the church's Centennial History and cited as the home where the organizational meeting was held, was Albert's as mentioned, but it was Albert's second house built in 1859.

The first church building was erected and the entire cost of \$1,112 was paid in 1848-1849. Rev. Abijah was still pastor.

***Albert Sherwood owned the land upon which the first church building was built and it was for him that Sherwood Street was named.***

## Albert Sherwood

It has been somewhat of an enigma that Albert, son of Deacon Daniel, must have been involved with the formation of Mansfield First Baptist as his father, brother Hon. Daniel L. Sherwood, their wives, and another brother and wife, Rev. Abijah and Maria (first pastor) were all listed as founders.

They met to establish the church at Albert's home, actually where they all lived. The land where the first church building was erected was given by Albert, and yet he was not listed as a founder.

For certain he was involved, and indeed he was later listed as a Trustee. His son Andrew, who wrote the Sherwood book, and who penned the Tioga County History for Mansfield and Richmond Township, noted that his father and uncle --Hon. Daniel L. Sherwood -- were also both involved in the formation of Mansfield Normal School (started as the Mansfield Classical Seminary and soon thereafter became the "normal" course of study for higher education.)

The land upon which the Normal School was started, had once belonged to Albert. It was said that Albert had owned some 20 properties in Mansfield.



**Albert Sherwood and Wife**



**The home of Albert Sherwood and wife built in 1859, located on the west side of the Tioga River.**

William Ripley, cousin of founder Lorena's husband Philip, was a prominent educator and taught and founded a local school. One of William's pupils was Fordyce Allen. Later Allen founded the Soldier's Orphan School and became one of the early Principals, as the president was then called, of Mansfield Normal School.

During a fire that burned the first campus building in early April, 1855, it was said that William marked out plans for a new building in the snow before the fire was even out.

The Ripley family, as well as the Sherwoods, had an amazing legacy which impacted the beginnings of the church and Mansfield University.

## Sesquicentennial Gala in 1993



John and Audrey Baynes (above) and Peter and Claire Hill (right) enact skits as part of the 150th Anniversary Gala



Special music was part of worship for the sesquicentennial, including Rev. Nevin playing the cymbals.



Members and friends posed for posterity at the anniversary dinner in Manser Hall at MU.

**The Baptist Quartet of Rev. Benjamin Nevin, Dale Stone, Dr. John Baynes, and Rod Nevin performs at the dinner. Below, Pastor Nevin presents a certificate to the Moderator on behalf of the church.**



# 160th Anniversary -- Displays, Music, Costumes and Cake



Display of church history from Sesquicentennial



Rev. Dr. John Whitfield and wife Martha pose in period costume in front of portraits of Rev. Abijah Sherwood and wife Maria, two of the founders and the first pastor.



Sylvia Sumner in period costume, samples some anniversary cake.



Anniversary cake with photos of the three church buildings



Barbara and Esther Jerald hold a photo of their ancestor Thomas Jerald, one of FBC's first trustees. The sisters still live on Sherwood Street but, Esther says, "since mother married a Presbyterian minister we are a part of that church."

## HIGHLIGHTS OF NOTE

“Who can measure the amount of good done by a Christian church in fifty years?” Hugh Sherwood, a descendent of the founders who edited the church newspaper for many years, made the observation on the 50th Anniversary of First Baptist. Now, after 175 years, more than three and a half times that yardstick, his statement is even more profound.



**Hugh Sherwood**



**Bill and Judy Bott enact a skit as founders Daniel and Anna Sherwood as part of the church's 160th Anniversary in 2003.**



**A special cake thanked the 50 year members for their faithfulness. Rev. Whitfield, left, and Mike Hill, right, hold the cake honoring Charlotte Garside, Lou Sine, and Helen Lutes.**

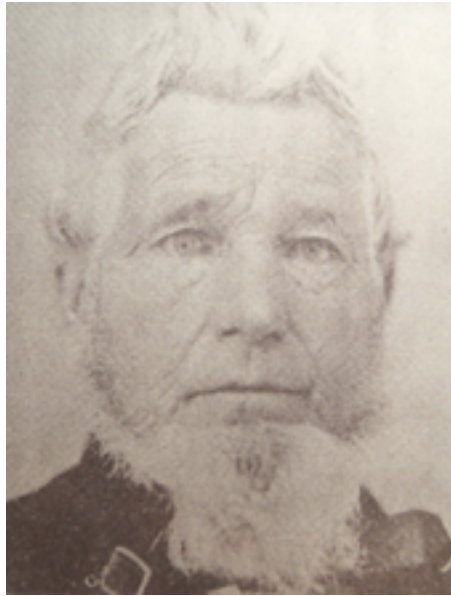


**Two longtime organists for the church, Mrs. Alma Wade, left, and Florence Borkey, right. Mrs. Wade's family were members of First Baptist for five generations. Miss Borkey also taught music at Mansfield College.**



# PASTORS OF MANSFIELD FIRST BAPTIST

For some of the pastors we have enough information to tell a story, for others just the names and dates of their ministry. Rev. Abijah Sherwood, one of the founders and a son of Daniel Sherwood, became the first pastor. He was also the 4th pastor. He served the church officially more than 16 years, at two different occasions and as pastor during the three years as a branch of the East Sullivan church before being recognized by the Tioga



Association. In all, he served nearly 20 years.

**Rev. Abijah and Maria Sherwood - First and Fourth Pastor,**

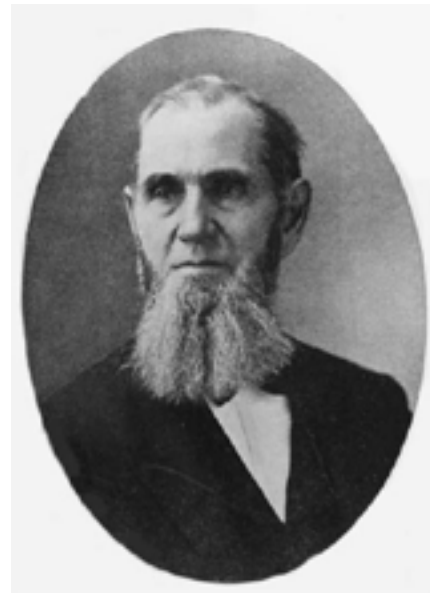
He was born in Marathon, NY, March 16, 1801 and ordained at Center Lisle. He served as pastor at Union Corner and Mt. Morris in New York State. In Pennsylvania, he preached at Delmar, Stony Fork, and Covington.

After retiring, they lived with Russell Watson and family on Newtown Road. Mrs. Watson and Mrs. Sherwood were sisters. Rev. Abijah died March 15, 1880; Mrs. Sherwood seven years later.

**Rev. G. M. Stone** and **Rev. D. P. Maryott**, who each served the church for 2 years, were second and third pastors, then Rev. Abijah again as 4th.

**Rev. N. L. Reynolds**, our 5th pastor, served for 7 years 1860-1866. He was pastor in the early years of his ministry during the time of the Civil War. It was said at the time the pastor was asked to “keep politics out of the pulpit,” to which he agreed. However, on one occasion he did not refrain and was asked to leave his ministry. Just what he said is not entirely clear, however, one source explains that he said something to the effect of “May God smite the tongues of the Democrats.” Since most of the Sherwood family were Democrats, a major rift occurred in the church and he was asked to leave.

Rev. Reynolds, who became pastor of the Blossburg Baptist Church, was the father of F.W. Reynolds, 18th pastor. Rev. N. L. evidently made amends with the congregation as he gained wisdom in his later years of his ministry, since he preached again at the church on more than one occasion during his son’s pastorate. Rev. N.L. Reynolds was one who preached at the dedication services for the new building in 1889 and is said to have founded at least two more churches in Tioga County.



**Rev. N.L. Reynolds**

## Pastors (continued)

**Rev. G.P. Watrous**, was our 6th and 8th pastor, serving 8 years, with **Rev. J.W. Henry** serving two years in between his ministries. 1866-1867; 1868-1873 (8 years) was a very able scholar, pastor and missionary. After 8 years of preparation at Hamilton & Rochester, he with his wife (whose name was Knapp, (sister of Charles Knapp and Mrs. Andrew Sherwood) sailed for Burma in 1854, one of the first Baptist Missionaries after Judson. After 6 years in Burma, Rev. Watrous failed in health and returned home. He soon became pastor of the Tioga Church in 1862. He was pastor of 15 churches in Tioga County, often walking up and down the hills and through the valleys. His last church was Jackson Summit. He died June 26, 1894 at the age of 69 years.

**It should be pointed out that during the early years of the church a long ministry in one church was not usual. Two or three years was more the average; only three pastors in the whole 175 years had a ministry here of 20 years or more:**

**Rev. Abijah Sherwood served about 20 years but almost three different times of service. Rev. David Griffiths had the longest with a ministry of 40 years here, and Rev. Benjamin Nevin served for 24 years. Several others served for 5-8 years.**

**Rev. George M. Richter** was the only other pastor to serve more than one term of ministry. He was our 9th and our 12th pastor. Rev. Bell and Rev. Bray each served 3 years in between.

Born in Roxborough, PA in 1848, George was baptized in the church in which his uncle, John Richter, was the founder.



**Rev. George M. Richter**

In May 1869, he was licensed to preach by the same church.

He was a graduate from the University at Lewisburg, what is now Bucknell University. For several years he taught in public schools of Muncy. He was ordained as a minister on January 14, 1875. In November of that year he left the Roxborough Church by letter for a pastorate at Dempseytown, PA. He also preached in Muncy and Laceyville, PA.

The timeline for his ministry is somewhat problematic. It is usual that a pastor is licensed, then ordained when they get a church. It seems that Rev. Richter was licensed, then was a pastor at First Baptist from 1873-1874 -- the first time -- and then ordained in 1875 and was pastor again here from 1878-1881.



**Rev. J.E. Bell**

**Rev. J.E. Bell, 1874-1876** our 10th pastor, served 3 years, but was dismissed in 1876. According to church records, several accusations of “apparent falsehood,” including cheating someone on the sale of his horse, and false statements in regard to the church, led to the dismissal.

**Rev. H. Bray, 1876-1878, and Rev. Samuel Earley, 1881-1885,** were the 11th and 13th pastors. Both also served as pastors of the State Road Baptist Church in Mainesburg. Rev. Earley served 5 years and built the chapel over the horse sheds at Mansfield, and built for himself a large house on upper Extension Street. In 1883 the large Sunday School noted 125 pupils and 14 teachers.

**Rev. A.W. Hodder, 1885-1886,** the 14th pastor served 2 years, and **Rev. Frank Cooper, 1886-1892,** served 7 years and was pastor when this current building was built and dedicated in 1889. There were lots of photos of the building but none were found of Rev. Cooper.

Two more pastors served 2 years each -- **Rev. H.S. Quillen, 1892-1893,** and **Rev. Charles DeWoody, 1893-1894** then **Rev. F.W. Reynolds, 1894-1897,** the 18th pastor He was son of 5th pastor **Rev. N.L. Reynolds,** and in February 1895 this pastor baptized 31 persons in one month. I think this might have been in conjunction with Tabernacle services where all the churches saw a huge increase in membership. Remarkable nonetheless!

Even into the early 1900's, the local tabernacle services encouraged many new members at all of the churches



**Rev F. W. Reynolds**

He was followed by a ministry of 8 years of **Rev. L. M. Gates, 1897- 1904.** (See photo next page.) **Rev. Arthur Simpson, 1904-1907** was the next pastor. For many of the pastors we only have names and dates of their ministry and not a lot else to share. Others have quite a legacy.



**Rev. L. M. Gates**

Greeting the new year in January 1902 with a small booklet given to all, Rev. Gates included a Bible Reading outline for the year.

“We have enlarged the scope of your Bible reading this year,” he said, “by indicating memory verses which I trust you will find helpful for meditation on the day named and retain in memory as part of your spiritual equipment for the Master’s service.”

Changes at that time included wiring the church for electricity and installing a new pipe organ in 1898 for over \$1,000 -- quite a bit since the whole building had only cost \$8,300.

**Rev. R. M. Hunsicker, 1907-1912**, became our 21 st pastor. He served until **Rev. Frank Eden, 1912-1918** came to Mansfield. Many things happened during Rev. Eden’s ministry, including construction of the parsonage in 1916. The church grew in 1915 as Rev. Eden baptized 165 new members that year.



**Rev. R. M. Hunsicker**



**Rev. Frank Eden**

Construction of the parsonage in 1916 and a couple of images of Rev. Eden with a car of the era and a house, perhaps on Prospect street where the Edens kept some horses.

Mrs. Alma Wade, who became a longtime church organist, recalled that “Rev. Eden had a brogue like a Scotsman.”

She tells of one service in her first years here, of having to sit in the aisle when all of the seats were taken.



**Rev. Eden served for 7 years, from 1912-1918, our 22nd pastor. Rev. Norman J. Mecklem, our 23rd pastor, 1918-1921, served 4 years.**

**Rev. David J. Griffiths and his wife Alta Griffiths, 1921-1961, our 24th pastor and the longest ministry in the history of the church.**



**Rev. David J. Griffiths**

Mrs. Alma Wade recalls that when Rev. Griffiths arrived with his family in Mansfield in 1921, he had to walk up from the train station because much to someone's embarrassment no one was on hand to meet them.

The Griffiths stayed with the Wades until their furniture arrived. Audrey, who much later became Mrs. John Baynes, was just a baby then. Sister Bronwyn was born a bit later.

Mr Griffiths was born in Wales and some of those Welsh characteristics endeared him to those he served. He studied and was ordained in Wales, and the family has a copy of his ordination sermon in English and Welsh.

Many events were celebrated during the ministry of Rev. Griffiths, including the 50th Anniversary of the church building in 1939, an anniversary of Rev. Griffiths' ministry and the 100th Anniversary of the church in 1943. A highlight of that service was a mortgage burning, announcing the church "Debt Free in '43."



**Alta Griffiths**

During World War II, 64 men and women signed up to serve in the Armed Forces, including John and Audrey Baynes, John's brothers Harold and Richard, Gordon Garrison, Harry Cole, Richard Maul, Omer Sumner and Douglas Dart, among others.

Dr. John Baynes later recalled, "What a burden of prayer and concern the church must have borne through the war years.

After the war, the smaller stained glass windows were replaced and dedicated to the Wade's, founding member Lorena Ripley, and four who were killed in the war.

Rev. Griffiths also pastored the State road Baptist Church in Mainesburg during his ministry here, especially during the Great Depression when finances were tight.

Rev. Griffiths shared his sense of the dramatic, not only in the pulpit but with campus Music Department productions like "*Brigadoon*."

### Three Services For The Annex Construction

Three church services and a couple of ceremonies kicked off the construction of a new, enlarged annex that later was to be named for Rev. David J. Griffiths. At the end of church services one Sunday morning in 1952, the congregation was ushered outside for a group photo, bottom, followed by a formal groundbreaking with the church Trustees looking on as the pastor turned the first shovel.

For the event, the long pastorate of Rev. Griffiths was recognized by inviting the many couples for whom Rev. Griffiths had performed a marriage ceremony, to return for the event. The photo above right was the result. One couple, of course, was Dr. John Baynes and his wife Audrey, daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Griffiths...front row on the left. Not sure but it might be Audrey's sister Bronwyn and her husband next to them. It was a full house testament of a wonderful ministry.



**First Baptist Trustees behind the shovel for the groundbreaking were C. Raymond Edgerton, Cecil Garrison, Walter Meade, Percy Coles, Harold Strait, and Warren L. Miller.**



Rev. Griffiths, celebrated 50 years of ministry, June 16, 1960 by translating and preaching his first sermon from Wales. Both his first sermon and the second presentation were held on the anniversary of Father's Day, his topic was "A Golden Anniversary Tribute to Dad."

**Rev. Earl Sires, 1961-1966, 5 years**

When the new pastor was called, Rev. Earl Sires, fresh out of seminary, was featured in the monthly American Baptist news magazine *The Crusader* did a special spread emphasizing the compatibility between Earl and “Grif,” as he was affectionately called.

In spite of their contrasts in height (Rev. Sires was very tall,) their age, experience, and more.

Rev. Sires grew up in Savannah, GA and Rev. Griffiths in Wales. Earl arrived and the Griffiths moved into the house across the street. They got along well.

Earl graduated from high school in Savannah, then served in the Army for two years. He married Anne in 1949 and moved to Louisville, KY where he enrolled in a television repair school. After a year there they moved to Atlanta and at the Moreland Ave. Baptist Church Earl felt he wanted to become a minister.

The Sires moved to Macon, GA where Earl enrolled in Mercer University. After graduation they moved to Newington, GA where Earl became pastor of the First Baptist Church, a parish of three churches. From there he headed to seminary at Colgate Rochester (NY.) He was pastor for the North Rush Congregational Church while in seminary.

His next step was as pastor of First Baptist, Mansfield and, like his predecessor, also pastor of the State Road Baptist Church. He left after five years to accept a call at the Hornaday Baptist Church in Pittsburgh, PA.

**Rev. Wesley Fisher, 1967-1969** was the next pastor and he stayed until Rev. Benjamin Nevin came in 1970.

Rev. Fisher related well to the young people and had a strong heart for Campus Ministry at the then Mansfield State College. The 1960’s closed with the resignation of Wes Fisher and his move to New Jersey.

**Rev. Benjamin E. Nevin, Jr., 1970-1994** served as a Baptist minister of 35 years; for 24 years as pastor of the First Baptist Church, Mansfield. His pastorate was the second longest in



**Rev. Earl Sires, Anne Sires, Claire Hill, Rev. Peter Hill**

church honored him with a Pastor Emeritus status.

His ministry began in Confluence, PA, followed by a pastorate in Terentum, PA. Each of those ministries is followed by a long list of organizations and activities in which he served.

In Mansfield, in addition to his duties as pastor, Rev. Nevin was a member of the Mansfield Area Ministerium where he also served as Secretary-Treasurer and as President.

As a member of the Tioga Baptist Association, he served as Clerk-Treasurer, as Moderator, as Chair of the Ordination Committee, and as chair of the Sesquicentennial Celebration.

He served on the church’s Region Board as Recording Secretary, as President, as Chair of the Executive Search Committee, as a member of the Budget Committee, and on the Policy Review Committee. Additionally, Ben served on numerous committees for the PA Council of Churches and the Region Ministers Council.

In the community, Rev. Nevin was Secretary and President of Mansfield Kiwanis, and was recognized for 11 years of perfect attendance.



**Rev. Benjamin E. Nevin, Jr.**

On Mansfield Area United Way, Ben served as board member and as president. He also served as president and member of the Mansfield Free public Library Board and on the Potter-Tioga County Library Board.

He served on the Mansfield University Human Relations committee and helped to establish the Martin Luther King, Jr. resource center on campus. Ben was a member of the Mansfield Borough Recreation Committee as well as the Town & Gown Committee. He was president of the Community Foundation of Mansfield and served for 10 years on the North Penn Comprehensive Health Services Board and as Vice President for two years.

Rev. Nevin's love of music is also evident. He was a member of the Mansfield Men's Chorus, a sometime member of the Mansfield University Festival Chorus, Community Choruses and has been featured as baritone soloist.

For the Chamber of Commerce, he has been

Secretary as well as President of the Chamber. He served on the Christmas Committee, active on the Fabulous 1890's Weekend committee and served on the Citizen of the Year Committee and the Youth Leader of Tomorrow Committee. He was selected as Citizen of the Year in 1996, a prestigious group.

Indicative of the university community in which we live, he was awarded "Pastor Emeritus" status upon his retirement and became just another member of the choir and congregation. Following his retirement, Rev. Nevin made a concerted effort to not influence the ministry of the new pastor and often made frequent references to "his pastor," a situation he had not been able to enjoy while he held that position. Ben was a strong supporter and ally for the pastor.

Additionally, Ben had been called upon for pulpit supply during times the pastor was not available, and he often used that platform to praise and support the pastor and took that opportunity at times to hint at ways the church could be more supportive of the pastor.



**Ben B. Nevin and Rev. Benjamin Nevin at the Fabulous 1890's Celebration dressed in period costume.**

**Rev. Peter Hill, Interim pastor 1984-1985, one year.** A member of the congregation who also served several churches as interim pastor, Peter was an excellent pastor who put his heart and soul into his ministry.

Rev. Hill excelled at visiting the sick and shut-ins and kept in touch with many people during his ministry. He served on numerous committees and served in the office of Moderator.

When a change in the church constitution was suggested, he served on a panel that reviewed the entire document over a month-long period, section by section.

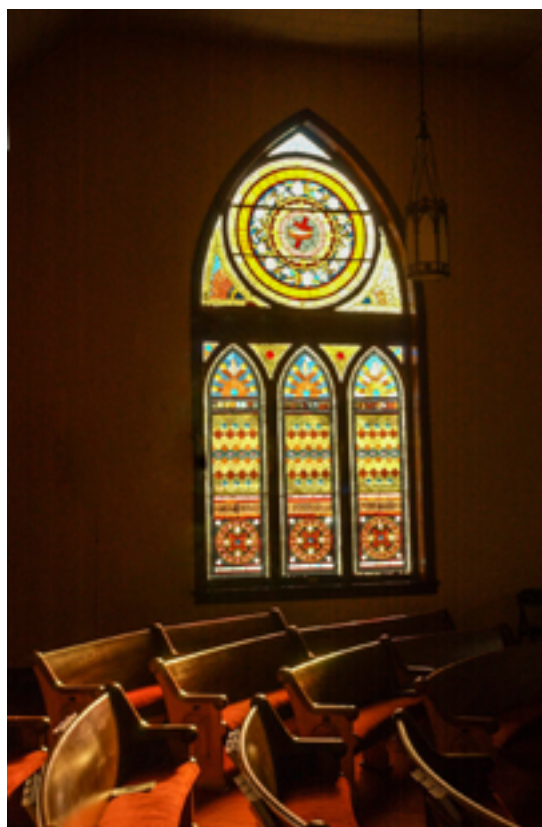
**Richard Anderson July 1995- February 1996.** Served about six months and then resigned.

**Rev. Deborah Casey, Interim Pastor February 1996 - January 1997** A former pastor of the Canoe Camp Church of Christ, Deb served for a year and then became the Protestant Campus Minister for 16 years.

During her interim, Deb delivered fine sermons and fit right in.

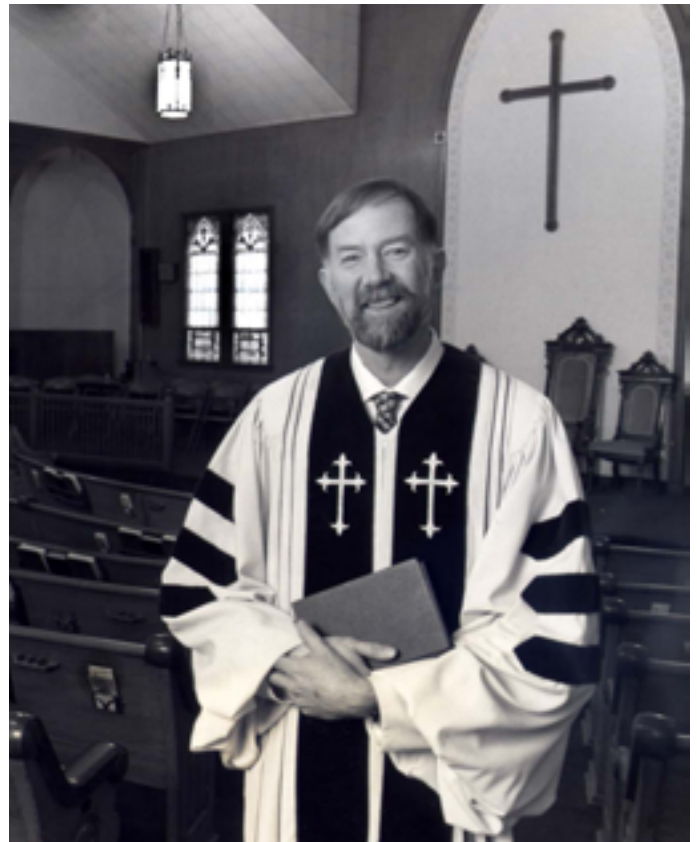


**Rev. Peter Hill**



**Rev. Dr. John C. Whitfield, January 1997 - 2005, 8 years.** The 31st pastor, his eight years of ministry tied him with three other pastors Rev. G.P. Watrous, Rev. L.M. Gates and Rev. Steve Case for the fourth longest ministry in the history of the church.

Dr. Whitfield could have had a much longer ministry with First Baptist but went back to his former home of 15 years in Michigan to be with his children and new grandchildren. He left numerous legacies for First Baptist, including a revised program for Discipleship Classes (his Doctoral thesis). Early in his ministry John spent several months prayerfully working with church boards to develop a new mission statement. It is still used extensively.



**Rev. Dr. John Whitfield**

**Dr. Whitfield also celebrated historical events and delighted in the Fabulous 1890's with a period costume.**



**Rev. Charles Mercer, Interim Pastor, 2005-2006.** Rev. Mercer, who had served a ministry in the Soviet Union, among others, ably offered a unique perspective during his time at First Baptist. He ran marathons until about age 58 and relayed interesting sermons about his visits to the Holy Land.

The “Tape Ministry” began while he was pastor and continued each week for a long time.. He initiated a small group Bible study which is still active, and offered a mid-week prayer and praise time that had a small but very heartfelt following.

His visitations are fondly remembered by church “shut ins” and his ability to relate to people was especially evident at funerals. Services for persons that John had never met were delivered in a manner that those attending would have sworn that John knew them all his life. He had a gift for that. Also active in the community, John’s ties with the Mansfield Hose Company Auxiliary led to a joint dinner with the church and the auxiliary in his honor when he left.





**Rev. Steve C. Case**

**Rev. Steve Case, 2006-2013.** Rev. Case came to Mansfield from a Ministry in New Jersey. A history buff, he was here for the 165th Anniversary of the church and when he discovered that many of the founders were buried in the Prospect Cemetery, he led a very moving ceremony of remembrance at the cemetery in conjunction with the anniversary. Many of the Sherwoods, as well as the Griffiths, were all buried within a short distance from each other. It was a bit like stepping back in history.

Among the legacies left by Rev. Case is the hymn we sing each Sunday, "Go Now In Peace." It was used as a special tribute for members who were moving away and as a prayer recited at events. The pastor participated in a Youth Leader of Tomorrow banquet and was always willing to offer a prayer at veterans' events

Steve had been very active with the American Baptist Regional Board prior to his arrival here and he continued that involvement during his ministry in Mansfield.



**Rev. Case and Rev. Case.**  
**Steve with his father Charles. Not only did Rev. Charles participate in Steve's installation but he was invited to preach here on a couple of special occasions.**



**At the installation ceremony, Bruce Dart, who chaired the Pulpit Committee that brought him here, presented Steve with a commemorative plate of the church.**



Rev. Steve and Diane Case share a meal with Myra and Rev. Allen Goss at Perkins Restaurant..

**Rev. Allen Goss, Interim Pastor, 2013-2014**

Allen H. Goss was born in Boston, MA April 24, 1943, the younger son of William Gardiner Goss and Leona Clapp Goss. He graduated from Arlington High School and earned a Bachelor of Sociology



**Myra and Rev. Allen Goss**

Degree from Alderson-Broaddus University in Philippi, WV in 1967. Allen graduated with a Master of Divinity from Andover Newton Theological School in Newton, MA in 1970. He was ordained in Christian Ministry at the First Baptist Church in Wilson, NY a year later.

Through the years he served seven churches. The Gosses moved to Mansfield following Allen’s retirement in 2013. He was available to serve God as Interim Pastor here.

Myra Louise Holbert Goss was born in Wheeling, WV and graduated from Benwood Union High School. She earned her Bachelor of Secondary Education from Alderson - Broaddus in 1967.

Myra worked as a branch librarian in Newton, MA while Allen was in seminary. Through the years she taught preschool, piano, led choirs, and played piano and organ as needed.

While living in Williamsport, Myra served as conference coordinator, then as president of American Baptist Women of PA - DE, then as President of ABCOPAD (American Baptist Churches of PA and Delaware.)

When Church Leadership Institute was formed, Myra graduated in 1998. She served Coryland Baptist and Presbyterian Church as pastor for eight years before retiring.

“We both love serving the Lord and his people,” Myra said.

- Churches where Allen served:**  
**Wilson, NY FBC, 6 years**  
**East Pembroke Federated Church, East Pembroke, NY**  
**9 years**  
**Williamsport FBC, 17 years.**  
**Melrose, MA FBC, 2 years**  
**East Smithfield Federated Church, East Smithfield, PA 2 years, Interim Pastor**  
**Gillette Baptist Church, 8 years**  
**Mansfield First Baptist Church, Interim Pastor, 2 years.**

Both Rev. Allen and Myra sing in the choir and continue to serve Mansfield First Baptist. Allen is Chair of the Trustees and Myra the Board of Missions.

**Rev. Cheryl Filson, Installation, 35th pastor, August, 2015 -Present**



**Tioga County Commissioner Mark Hamilton offers his congratulations, and a prayer.**



**Rev. Allen Goss and Bill Bogart, chair of the Pulpit Committee, above, offer a welcome to Rev. Cheryl and Doug Filson. At left, Area Minister Rev. Mark Mahserjian-Smith reads the “charge to the pastor” during installation service. Below left, many friends and officials from Matrin Luther King Baptist church in Harrisburg came to wish her well in her new ministry. The cake below right was part of the reception.**





**Pastor Cheryl works with her laptop to input parts of the service that is projected on the screens at the front and back of the church.**



**Ongoing ministry of American Baptist Women with packages for shut-ins.**



**Decorating for Christmas**



**Music to decorate by, above, pastor Emeritus Rev. Benjamin Nevin talks about the Nativity, bottom left, and girls add "food" to the Manger Scene, bottom right. (Photos by Myra Goss)**



Ongoing activities of the church include the Handbell Choir performance at St. James Church, right; the Children's Handbell Choir, below; Pastor Cheryl sharing the Children's Message, middle right; a fellowship meal at Easter, bottom left; and a Christmas Mission project, bottom right. (Photos by Myra Goss)



## After the Latest Renovation...More like the Original Building



Scaffolding in the sanctuary during the renovation to install a new ceiling. The beams at the top, previously just white were restored to the original wood. Bottom, Pastor Cheryl Filson in the Sanctuary. Rev. Filson has had the church open most Sunday evenings for people to come in and have a place to sit quietly and pray with gentle music in the background.



