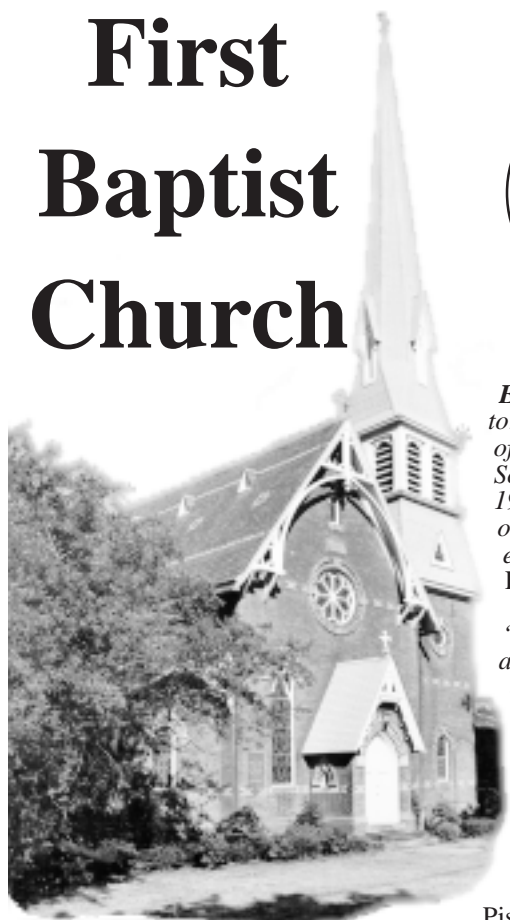


First Baptist Church



*Serving
The Community
For More Than
250 Years*

Editor's Note: In conjunction with the historic theme of Our Town, an edited version of a story about the 250th anniversary of the Scotch Plains Baptist Church on August 5, 1997 has been republished below. The story originally appeared in the August 14, 1997 edition of The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood.

For that article, the Reverend Charles "Chaz" Hutchinson, Minister of Education at the church, recounted the history of the church — one of the oldest in the state — which even predates the establishment of Union County.

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By JUSTIN BRIDGE
Specially Written for Our Town

"Two hundred and fifty years ago, a group of men and women from the Piscataway Baptist Church asked for a letter of dismissal so that they could form a church here in

Scotch Plains," Reverend Hutchinson explained.

Seventeen parishioners founded the Baptist Church in Scotch Plains because the trip to Piscataway was, in those days, a very long trip.

"And not all of the women were Mrs. So-and-so. They were women on their own. That was very unusual for that day and age," added Reverend Hutchinson.

"A lot of the early founders of Scotch Plains were members of the church. Families such as Darby, Lambert and Osborn, that are still names in Scotch Plains," he continued.

The first Baptist Church building in Scotch Plains stood until the winter of 1816-1817, when it burned to the ground. In 1817, parish members decided to construct the "Old Meeting House." This building served as the church until 1871, when it was moved, with the help of oxen, down Grand Street.

It then served as District Fourteen School until 1890, the year that the original School One building opened. Since 1947, the Grand Street YMCA has run the building.

Another treasure relating to the church's history is its cemetery, originally known as "God's Little Acre." William Darby, the owner of the property in 1743, marked off the west corner of his farm in order to have a place to bury the dead. The oldest grave in the cemetery belongs to Sarah Frazee and is marked 1754.

Reverend Hutchinson spoke of one gravestone in particular, that of Caesar. Caesar was a slave who had fought in the Revolutionary War and was also a teamster. (In the late 1700s, a teamster was someone who drove a wagon pulled by a team of horses.) Caesar was originally a slave in Scotch Plains until his owner, Deacon Drake, freed him. However, despite having been a slave, he had been a member of the church for over 50 years, until his death on February 7, 1806, at the age of 104.

"In the day before the civil rights movement, this was an integrated church where a man like Caesar could be a member," he noted.

Another grave of mention belongs to the Reverend Benjamin Miller, the first minister of the Scotch Plains Baptist Church, who served from 1748 to 1781.

Despite being a haven to all men and women, the church has seen its share of strife.

"Its seen loyalists and revolutionaries, families that had men on both sides of the Revolutionary War. During the Civil War, there were feelings that ran for both the North and the South," said Reverend Hutchinson.

"However, the church stayed together, despite those tensions," he said, pointing out that this is impressive for Baptists because in some areas, the Baptist churches split over "the little things."

Just across the street from the church is the Old Baptist Parsonage. This sandstone building has been standing for the past 197 years. The building was also the site of the township's first library, with the books having been stored on the second-floor landing. The parsonage has been home to 23 individuals and their families.

The pastors who lived at the parsonage subsisted off whatever they could grow on 15 acres of the parsonage farm in addition to a small salary and firewood. In 1868, the church trustees sold off the parsonage farm in order to pay for the new church.



"GOD'S LITTLE ACRE"...Graves in the cemetery adjacent to the Scotch Plains Baptist Church are inscribed with the names of some of the area's oldest families.

— Directory to Houses of Worship —

ALL SAINTS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH
559 Park Avenue, Scotch Plains
(908) 322-8047
Reverend Thomas Laws

BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH
539 Trinity Place, Westfield
(908) 232-4250
Reverend Kevin Clark

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
1781 Raritan Road, Scotch Plains
(908) 889-5556
Bishop Linden Slaugh

COMMUNITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Deer Path & Meeting House Lane,
Mountainside
(908) 232-9490
Reverend Christopher R. Belden

CONGREGATION ARI YEHUDA
1251 Terrill Road, Scotch Plains
(732) 541-4849
(Rear entrance of Assembly of God Church)

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL
1920 Cliffwood Street, Scotch Plains
(908) 889-1830
Rabbi George Nudell

ECHO LAKE CHURCH OF CHRIST
419 Springfield Avenue, Westfield
(908) 233-4946
Jeff Harris

EVANGEL CHURCH
1251 Terrill Road, Scotch Plains
(908) 322-9300
Reverend Kevin M. Brennan

FANWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Martine Avenue & La Grande Avenue,
Fanwood
(908) 889-8891
Reverend Robert T. Snell

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
170 Elm Street, Westfield
(908) 233-2278
Dr. Robert L. Harvey

FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST
257 Midway Avenue, Fanwood
(908) 322-8461

FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST
422 East Broad Street, Westfield
(908) 233-5029

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
United Church of Christ
125 Elmer Street, Westfield
(908) 233-2494
Dr. Christopher Atwood, Senior Minister
Reverend Pamela Gilchrist

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1171 Terrill Road, Scotch Plains
(908) 322-9222
Reverend Sam Chong

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1 East Broad Street, Westfield
(908) 233-4211
Reverend David F. Harwood

GRACE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1100 Boulevard, Westfield
(908) 233-3938 or (908) 232-4403
Reverend Stanford M. Sutton, Jr.

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
250 Gallows Hill Road, Westfield
(908) 233-8533
Reverend Dimitrios Antokas

HOLY TRINITY ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
Westfield Avenue & First Street, Westfield
(908) 232-8137
Reverend Joseph Masielio

WOODSIDE CHAPEL
5 Morse Avenue, Fanwood
(908) 889-2375

IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY RC CHURCH
1571 South Martine Avenue, Scotch Plains
(908) 889-2100
Reverend John F. Kennedy

METROPOLITAN BAPTIST CHURCH
823 Jerusalem Road
(908) 233-2855
Reverend Clement Griffin

MOUNTAINSIDE CHAPEL
1180 Spruce Drive, Mountainside
(908) 232-3456
Reverend Dr. Gregory Hagg

OUR LADY OF LOURDES RC CHURCH
300 Central Avenue, Mountainside
(908) 232-1162
Reverend Patrick J. Leonard

**THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN WESTFIELD**
140 Mountain Avenue
(908) 233-0301
Reverend Dr. William Ross Forbes

REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH
229 Cowperthwaite Place, Westfield
(908) 232-1517
Reverend Paul E. Kritsch

**ST. BARTHOLOMEW THE APOSTLE
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**
2032 Westfield Avenue, Scotch Plains
(908) 322-5192
Reverend Michael A. Merlucchi

ST. HELEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
1600 Rahway Avenue, Westfield
(908) 232-1214
Reverend Monsignor James A. Burke

ST. JOHN'S BAPTIST CHURCH
2387 Morse Avenue, Scotch Plains
(908) 232-6972
Reverend Kelmo C. Porter, Jr.

**ST. LUKE'S AFRICAN METHODIST
EPISCOPAL ZION CHURCH**
500 Downer Street, Westfield
(908) 233-2547
Reverend Leon E. Randall

ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
414 East Broad Street, Westfield
(908) 232-8506
Reverend Richard W. Reid

SCOTCH PLAINS BAPTIST CHURCH
333 Park Avenue, Scotch Plains
(908) 322-5487
Reverend Gary Rothwell

TEMPLE BETH O'R/BETH TORAH
111 Valley Road, Clark
(732) 381-8403
Rabbi Shawn B. Zell

TEMPLE EMANU-EL
756 East Broad Street, Westfield
(908) 232-6770
Rabbi Charles A. Kroloff

TEMPLE SHOLOM
815 W. Seventh Street, Plainfield
(908) 756-6447
Rabbi Joel N. Abraham

TERRILL ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH
1340 Terrill Road, Scotch Plains
(908) 322-7151
Michael C. Seaman

TERRILL ROAD BIBLE CHAPEL
535 Terrill Road, Fanwood
(908) 322-4055

WILLOW GROVE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1961 Raritan Road, Scotch Plains
(908) 232-5678
Reverend Kenneth G. Hetzel