

Sandusky Baptist Church Profile

In the early years of the twentieth century, nearly everyone went to church, walking to their house of worship from their homes. Prior to 1902, there were three Baptist churches in Lynchburg and one in Madison Heights, all built by the Baptist Extension Society. Their goal was to "build for a greater work in the future, (while) not neglecting to cultivate the spirit of world-wide evangelism." Since the inner-city White Rock Hill area was very heavily populated, they saw a need for a local Baptist church to serve that neighborhood as well. Consequently, the Society built a new church on Franklin Street, which was completed in 1902. On May 4, 1902, the Franklin Street Baptist Sunday School held its first session—the following week, the first formal session was held with an attendance of about 150 people. Being somewhat loosely organized in the beginning, meetings were held in private homes for a while, using a borrowed organ for music. In May 1904, the church's membership was firmed up and officially became Franklin Street Baptist Church, with W. Brooke Carter serving as supply pastor. Dr. Pickard read the "Articles of Faith and Fellowship" to the congregation, five deacons were elected and ordained, and officers were selected, thus establishing the organization into a church.

For many years, Franklin Street Baptist Church served the neighborhood well, as a House of God and a place of prayer and supplication. Membership increased and mission work thrived, as the congregation's numbers were able to support many ministries necessary to spread God's Word. Following the end of World War II, with personal income on the rise, many families were able to buy automobiles and purchase homes in the suburbs, moving away from the inner-city. Many churches sprang up in the newly inhabited areas and the membership numbers of Franklin Street Baptist waned. Church leadership found that dwindling numbers and higher costs to maintain an aging building that lacked more modern amenities (such as air conditioning), signaled a need to find another location. With Reverend Ralph L. Jackson (who became pastor in 1969) and the congregation as the driving forces, on July 21, 1971, the motion to move to another area was made. A handshake agreement was made between Rev. Jackson and H. H. Hutter (the owner) to purchase land in the Sandusky area for the purpose of building the new church. Groundbreaking was conducted on August 4, 1972, and construction was completed in late fall of 1973. It was decided to leave the old Franklin Street Baptist Church as a mission home for those in the White Rock Hill area under the guidance of the Lynchburg Baptist Association, and on December 1, 1973, moving to its location on Catalina Place, we officially became members of Sandusky Baptist Church.

In the intervening years, there has been an even greater exodus to the outer suburbs, as many people have moved beyond the boundaries of the city into Amherst, Bedford, and Campbell Counties. We have a very faithful membership, averaging about 60 people for Sunday services (mostly senior citizens). Sunday services are primarily traditional, with a somewhat blended music program. Sunday Bible Study School is well attended and Prayer Meetings are generally held on Wednesday evenings. Small discipleship groups meet throughout the week at the discretion of each group, and the series "The Chosen" is viewed and discussed on Sunday evenings. We support the Baptist General Association of Virginia with funds and send delegates to their conventions. They provide us with knowledge and resources, such as databases and guidelines for conducting a Pastor search.

Each member is encouraged to invite visitors to our church as our church mission statement is to "make and mature disciples of Jesus Christ." Our vision is to meet the needs of people by offering them the message of hope that only comes through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The long-term goal of Sandusky Baptist is to sustain and increase our membership with positive growth, especially that of youth and young families. We believe in supporting our local community's needs as well as national and global ministries. The congregation contributes to and is directly involved in our Food Pantry, Red Truck Ministry, Meals on Wheels, Klothes 4 Kids, Coats 4 Kids, Jericho Mission Toy Drive and our in-house Benevolent Fund for members in temporary need of financial help. We provide a nursery during Sunday service for the very young and we have an annual Vacation Bible School for educating children about the Lord in an environment of fun and creativity. We give to well-known missions such as Operation Christmas Child, Annie Armstrong, Alma Hunt, Lottie Moon, and the Gideons. In addition, we help sponsor and send church members to Honduras each year to minister to the local Lenca Indians' physical, financial, and spiritual needs. We endeavor to follow the Lord's Great Commission by assisting the Lenca in building and establishing several churches in an extremely impoverished part of their country. For those who are home-bound, our Pastor records his sermon each week. Videos of those (as well as information on other church events) can be viewed on our website at sanduskybaptist.net.

The financial health of Sandusky Baptist is excellent. Paid employees are the Pastor, a part-time Secretary, Minister of Music, and Organist. Outside independent contractors are the lawn care company and cleaning service, and we have no outstanding debt. Other duties are handled by our members, who are loyal volunteers. Although we do not always meet our budget goals, should a specific need arise that requires funding, someone always steps up to see that the need is met adequately.

The Lord has truly blessed our church and congregation with spiritual gifts that set us apart from many churches of our size. Our kindness, friendliness, and compassion within our membership and toward visitors always attracts and surprises newcomers. Giving of our financial resources is notable, as is evident by the number of missions we sustain and support, even those not included in our budget. Also, we have an outstanding Minister of Music who is not afraid to try something different. Along with our superior organist, the dedicated choir of 20 members presents an annual Christmas and Easter Cantata and weekly anthems to the congregation. A number of those in the choir are capable of taking the role of soloist based on the song selection.

May God continue to bless us as we move forward in our relationship with Him.