

*First Baptist Church*  
*Ionia, Michigan*

# Welcome ....

to the First Baptist Church of Ionia. We are happy to have you as our guest during this Tour which has been arranged by the Ionia County Historical Society.

This was the first Protestant Church in the area.

Samuel and Anna Dexter, Erastus and Phoebe Yeomans, and Alfred and Mary Cornell were among the first settlers who came to this wilderness from the State of New York. These Baptists felt the need of a Church to worship God and carry on His work. They met at the home of Erastus Yeomans June 24, 1834, together with an agent from the Home Mission Society and a missionary from the "Thomas" station - now Grand Rapids. They united in a conference, voting to ask recognition as a Church. Since that date our Church has been in continuous active existence.

The land upon which the present building now stands was given by Samuel Dexter when the town was laid out. The original deed with his signature is still in existence, along with the first clerk's record book.

In August, 1845, it was voted to tax each male member 12½ cents and each female member 6 cents per month for the support of the Gospel. It was also voted to raise money by having a committee search the tax rolls and levy a tax on each member according to the amount of property assessed to him. The Church Clerk kept a record of all absentees and these were reported at Covenant Meetings which were held on Saturday afternoons preceding the first Sunday of each month. Such absentees were required to "render a satisfactory excuse or be admonished for neglect of religious duty."

The first church building was erected in the summer of 1846. Pews were rented by families

for \$1.00 to \$5.00 per year, payable in grain or its equivalent. The building was later moved to the Eastern part of the City where it was destroyed by fire.

The present building of yellow brick was dedicated January 7, 1872. The contractor was Orry Waterbury, Sr., grandfather of Stanley Powell. The pipe organ was installed in 1892 and the balcony over the foyer built in 1906. In 1913 new hardwood floors were laid in the auditorium. Stained glass windows were added to the auditorium in 1917, a gift from the Emma Arnold estate.

In 1919 fire destroyed part of the foyer and smoke and water damaged the auditorium. While repairs were being made, services were held in the Court House. The first remodeling of the basement took place in 1923. A modern kitchen was installed and a parsonage purchased.

During the winter of 1944 - 1945, the Sanctuary, foyer and entrance were renovated and decorated. This involved a new ceiling and refinishing the floors; and the organ was completely overhauled. The entire expense of this undertaking amounted to \$3,600.00 which was paid for through donations of members and friends.

Gas heat was installed in 1953 and 1958 saw cushions on the pews and new tables in the dining room. Carpet was laid in the foyer and Sanctuary, and heavy oak doors were added to the entrance.

Fellowship Hall was remodeled in 1962. Paneling was installed, the floor tiled, and new lighting provided. In 1967, the parsonage was sold and a new home built on Reimer Drive, south of Ionia.

During the summer of 1972, the sanctuary and foyer were cleaned, restored, and decorated. And, in 1976 carpeting was laid in the Yokefellows

class room and part of the Kindergarten. A new ceiling and panelling were also added to the Yokefellows room.

In February, 1977, an electric chair lift was installed for the front stairway, and three furnaces replaced.

Over the years, the following have been presented to the Church as Memorial gifts:

Communion table  
Brass Cross and Candle lights  
Offering plates  
Communion service  
Pulpit and Pulpit lamp  
Lighted cross above the organ  
Hymnals  
Pulpit chairs  
Guest Register stand  
Wedding Candelabra  
Desk lamp in C.C.W. classroom  
Lighted picture of Christ in foyer  
Upholstered chairs in foyer  
Outside bulletin board  
Piano  
Furnishings for two rest rooms  
Tables in Fellowship Hall  
Choir chairs  
Rocking chair in Nursery  
Desk in C.C.W. classroom  
Shrubs and trees at Parsonage  
Railing at Church entrance  
Sound system  
Money gifts and Trust and Endowment Funds.



MISS ETHEL CRISPIN  
ORGANIST  
1902 - 1962

### THE HISTORY OF THE ORGAN

In February of 1892, the Reverend J. J. Phelps, pastor, formed a committee of five church members to research and select an organ company to install the present organ. The committee was composed of George H. Allured, John W. Baldie, F. M. Douglas, and Orry Waterbury, with Dr. A. R. Long as chairman.

The organ committee secured the firm of Hook and Hastings of Boston, Massachusetts, the largest organ building company in America during the Nineteenth Century, to install the church organ at a cost of less than a thousand dollars. The company was started by Elias and George G. Hook in 1827. Frank Hastings joined the firm in 1855 and became a partner in 1870. In 1881, after the Hook brothers died, the name was changed to Hook and Hastings. The Hook and Hastings Company built an average of 46 organs per year during the 70's and 80's, after which production began to slow. The company fell victim to the Depression and went out of business in 1936.

The church organ was first used on Sunday, December 18, 1892 and remains in use today in "mint" condition. It is a tracker-action organ, all the working parts being completely mechanical and not electronic, as the modern organs of today. The opus or serial number, 1538, is

visible on one of the larger pipes. There have been only two changes in the organ since installation: the painting of the facade pipes and the installation of the electric blower. The latter was added by the Hinners Organ Company in 1922. Previous to that time, the organ bellows had to be pumped by hand. Standing in the small compartment at the right of the organ chamber, a young boy would have the job of pumping the bellows constantly while the organist played. To this day, many of these boys' signatures may be seen on the walls of the bellows room.

The First Baptist Church pipe organ is currently valued at approximately \$80,000.00, and is a fine example of the workmanship of the organ builders in the latter nineteenth Century. It's present day quality of sound is a source of enjoyment for church members and visitors alike.

Great (unenclosed):

Open Diapason	8'
Dulciana	8'
Melodia	8'
Unison Bass	8'
Octave	4'
Fifteenth	2'

Swell (enclosed):

Stop <sup>d</sup> Diapason Treble	8'
Stop <sup>d</sup> Diapason Bass	8'
Viola	8'
Flute Harmonique	4'
Oboe	8'
Bassoon	8'

Pedal:

Bourdon	16'
Tremolo	
Bellows Signal	

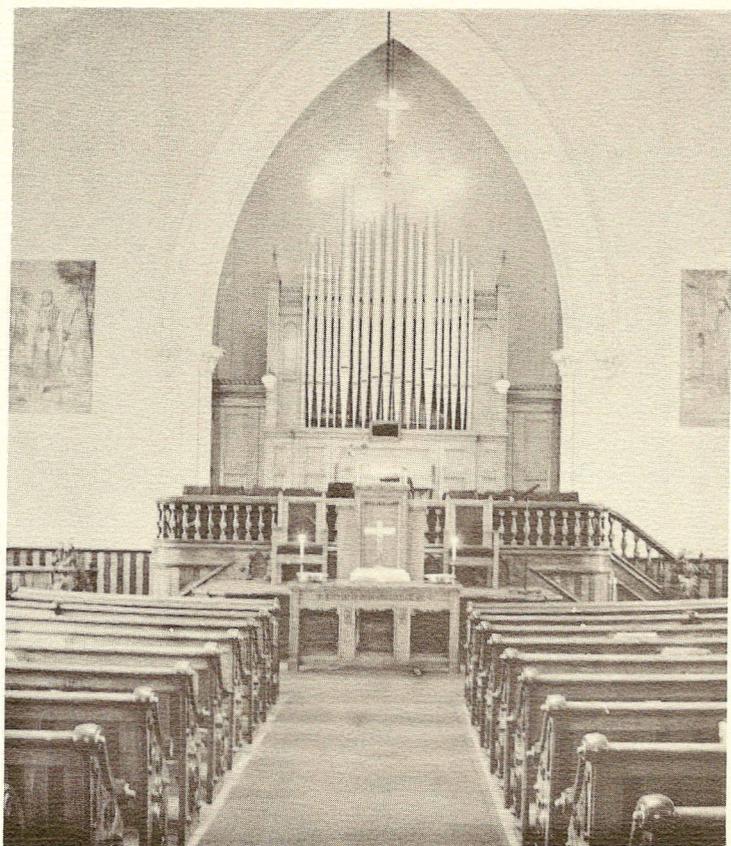
Couplers:

Swell to Great
Great to Pedal
Swell to Pedal

## ROSTER OF PASTORS

*From June, 1834 to 1837, the Church was under the pastoral care of Home Missionaries.*

Rev. A. C. Sangster	1837 - 1840
Rev. H. D. Buttolph	1840 - 1845
Rev. Alfred Cornell	1845 - 1863
Rev. E. H. Morrison	1863 - 1865
Rev. Alfred Cornell	1865 - 1867
Rev. Levi Parmely	1868 - 1872
Rev. Jonathon Rowley	1873 - 1874
Rev. E. O. Taylor	1874 - 1876
Rev. John Donnelly	1877 - 1882
Rev. D. VanAlstine	1882 - 1886
Rev. T. S. McCall	1886 - 1888
Rev. J. J. Phelps	1889 - 1893
Rev. F. O. Dicky	1893 - 1896
Rev. E. M. Jeffers	1896 - 1899
Rev. D. L. Martin	1900 - 1904
Rev. E. E. Branch	1905 - 1922
Rev. Wm. T. Woodhouse	1922 - 1924
Rev. Alfred Trenerry	1924 - 1928
Rev. F. J. Fitch	1929 - 1936
Rev. George Woolcock	1936 - 1945
Rev. W. L. Cruthers	1945 - 1947
Dr. J. Lee Lewis	1947 - 1950
Rev. W. W. Pixley	1950 - 1956
Rev. A. P. Miller	1956 - 1960
Rev. J. W. Tennyson	1961 - 1966
Rev. Lowell Young	1966 - 1969
Rev. Gilbert R. Kohler	1970 - 1973
Rev. Roy A. Pitts	1973 -



*May 21, 22, 1977*