

Baptist Church Here To Mark 125th Anniversary June 28

The First Baptist Church of Ionia will observe its 125th anniversary on Sunday, June 28.

Former pastors, members and friends of the congregation, have been invited to participate in the program.

Dr Arthur Farrell, of Lansing, the Executive Secretary of the Michigan Baptist Convention, will be the speaker during the morning worship service.

The Rev Ralph Karney, of Lansing will be the main speaker during the afternoon fellowship at 3:00 p.m. Special music is being arranged for both services.

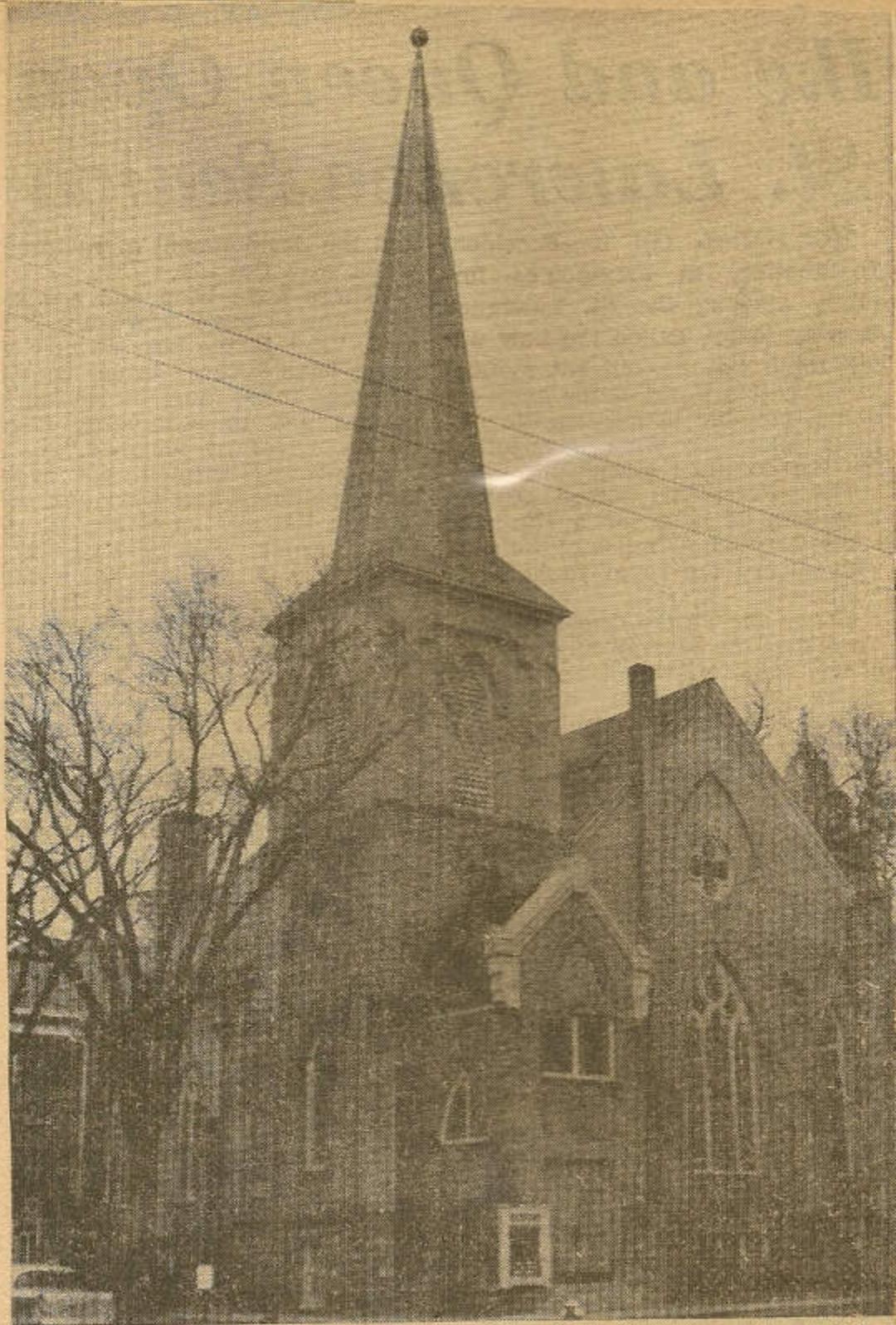
A time of fellowship, with light refreshments being served, will follow the afternoon meeting.

The General Committee on arrangements consist of the Rev Alfred Miller, Mrs H. H. Darling, Mrs E. W. Krainbrink, and Miss Ethel Crispin.

Co News, June 25/59

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*Ionia Sentinel
June 23/59*



CHURCH ANNIVERSARY—First Baptist church of Ionia will celebrate its 125th anniversary Sunday. Programs have been arranged for the morning and afternoon. Guest ministers include the Rev. F J. Fitch of Muskegon, the Rev. W. L. Cruthers of Quincy, and the Rev. W. W. Pixley of South Haven.

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Ionia Baptist Church Marks 125th Anniversary June 28

1959

125 YEARS OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF IONIA

Our Church has the distinction of being the first Protestant organization in this section of Michigan.

The original settlers came here from the state of New York, in May 1833 and settled on land purchased from the government. This was a wilderness where Indians held undisputed possession.

These settlers were God loving people and at once took steps to form a religious organization.

Ionia was then called Washington Center, a name given to this settlement by its founder Samuel Dexter.

On June 24, 1834 a meeting was held at the home of Erastus Yeomans. Elder Loomis, an agent of the Home Missionary Society and Elder Slater, a missionary at Thomas Station, now Grand Rapids, were present.

At this meeting six persons united in a conference; Samuel Dexter and wife, Anna Erastus Yeomans and wife Phoebe and Alfred Cornell and wife Nancy.

This was the birth of our First Baptist Church, we observe June 24, 1834 as the original date, the permanent organization being effected on August 23 of same year, the first Charter members being the six who united in this conference. Since that date our church has been in continuous active existence.

The first baptism was that of Dr. William B. Lincoln in the Grand River, the day following its organization by Elder Loomis. Dr. Lincoln was Ionia's first physician and school teacher. He was the first clerk of this Church holding that office for ten years.

Church records show that relatives and descendants followed in Church membership in rapid succession.

Our Church is indebted to Samuel Dexter, founder of Ionia for the land on which the present building stands. The original deed is still in existence and bears the signatures of Mr and Mrs Dexter. Mr Dexter was a direct descendant of Roger Williams, founder of the First Baptist Church in America.

Church meetings were held in the homes of members and later at the school house located on west Main Street. Baptisms were solemnized in the waters of the Grand River.

The first Pastor was Rev. A. C. Sangster who came in 1837 at a salary of \$300.00 per year. During his Pastorage the Church voted to tax each male member 12½ cents and each female member 6 cents per month for "support of the Gospel," a committee was appointed to collect same.

Rev. Alfred Cornell became Pastor in 1845 and remained for seventeen years. About this time the First Church building was erected. It was lot east of where the present building now stands. There is no definite date but probably the summer of 1846.

Pews were rented from \$1.00 to \$5.00 per year, it is interesting to note that there was a committee whose duty it was to search the tax rolls and levy a tax upon each member residing near enough to enjoy the privilege of Church meetings, the tax to be according to the amount of property tax assessed to each on said tax rolls.

This first structure erected and dedicated as a Church was the first and only edifice in this section of the wilderness. For several years it was used for all large gatherings, weddings, celebrations, etc.

The Church clerk kept a record of all absentees and they were required to render a "satisfactory excuse or be admonished for neglect of religious duty."

On June 22, 1868 it was voted to erect a new building. After various meetings and discussions the contract was given to Mr Ory Waterbury, Sr. (father of Miss Della Waterbury and grandfather of Stanley Powell, our Master of ceremonies this p.m.) It was like the present building except for entrance which was added later. Rev. Levi Parmely preached the dedication sermon on January 7, 1872.

In 1892 the pipe organ was installed and on June 1895 it was voted to hire "An Organ Pumper" at a salary of 50 cents per Sunday.

Rev. E. E. Branch came to us in 1905, a pastorate which continued for seventeen years.

In 1906 the balcony was added and in 1913 new hard wood floors were laid in the auditorium. In 1916 the new stained glass windows were installed and in 1919 a motor was purchased for the organ. Also in 1919 the foyer and auditorium were badly damaged by fire.

In 1923 the basement was remodeled, the former kitchen be-

The First Baptist church, Ionia, observed its 125th anniversary on Sunday, June 28, with two services. It is the oldest church organization in this section of Michigan.

At the morning service there was special music by two choirs, one composed of grandmothers and an address by Dr. Arthur Farrell, Executive Secretary of the Michigan Baptist Convention.

The afternoon program began at three p.m. with Stanley M. Powell master of ceremonies. The Rev. W. W. Pixley, a former pastor, gave the invocation. Mr Powell, welcomed guests and friends present. Greetings from the Ionia Ministerial association were given by Rev W. Sawyer and Rev. Pixley expressed greetings from former pastors. Letters of congratulations and good wishes were read from non-residents, also former members unable to be present. Mr Powell gave recognition to the two oldest members unable to be present, Mrs Clara Yeomans, 97, and Miss Della Waterbury, 95. Both have been members of this church for 78 years.

Rev Ralph J. Karney of the Michigan Baptist Convention gave the main address. The church history was read by Mrs E. W. Krainbrink. Special music was given by the choir also a trio by Mrs Robert Hamp, Mrs Wendall Yager and Mrs Richard Bennett, and another trio of great-grandmothers, Mrs George Woolcock, Mrs Don Crawford and Mrs Joseph Harp. Benediction by pastor Rev. Alfred Miller.

A social time followed with refreshments served by ladies of the church. Many non-resident also former members and friends were present at both services.

Committees were: General committee - Mrs H. H. Darling, Mrs E. W. Krainbrink, Miss Ethel Crispin, Rev. Alfred Miller, Publicity, Mrs Berdie Burlingame; Invitations to non residents, former members and friends, Mrs E. W. Krainbrink; Reception committee - Mrs Fredricka Lowrey, Mr and Mrs Ben Carter, Mr and Mrs Archie Boltz, Mrs E. W. Krainbrink, Mrs Merrill Ketchum, Sr., Mrs Guy Edington; Music - Miss Ethel Crispin; Decorations - Mr and Mrs Harold DeBoer, Mr and Mrs Ford Halsted; Registrations, Mrs Myrtie Boardman, Mrs George Woolcock; Refreshments - the ladies of the church.

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ing made into room for the Brotherhood, (now Primary) and a new kitchen built in present location.

The present parsonage was purchased in 1923 during the Rev W. T. Woodhouse's pastorate.

During the pastorate of Rev. F. J. Fitch our Church celebrated its 100th Anniversary, in June 1934. This was an outstanding event with four different gatherings.

Much has been accomplished in the following twenty five years since this century observance. George Woolcock was with us nine years. During this time an outside Bulletin Board was dedicated in March 1943, given by the Dorcas Society. The final payment was made on the parsonage mortgage. During winter of 1944-45 a new ceiling was put on auditorium and that room, the foyer, and entrances completely renovated and painted, floors refinished and organ overhauled. When work was completed the expense of around \$3,600.00 was entirely paid through donations of members and friends. Many memorials were given at this time, including the electric cross over the organ, setees in foyer, collection plates etc.

Parsonage repairs were made during Rev. W. L. Cruther's Pastorate, which included a completely refinished bath room, with all new fixtures, floor coverings etc.

The Church observed its 115th anniversary when Dr. J. Lee Lewis was Pastor, with two interesting events.

Rev. W. W. Pixley was our Pastor from October 22, 1950 to August 15, 1956. During this time, there were many accomplishments. Two modern rest rooms, Sunday School Class and a remodeled kitchen were given to the Church by Mr and Mrs Hiram Darling as a "Living" Memorial. The CCW Class gave two new gas ranges and an incinerator at this time. In the summer of 1953 a gas automatic heating plant was installed in the church.

A beautiful communion table was placed in front of the pulpit in memory of R.F. Whitesides and on it the cross and candles, a memorial for Mrs Mina Underwood.

New cushions for auditorium pews were purchased, also new tables for dining room and dividing screens for Sunday School Classes.

Rev. Alfred P. Miller came to us Dec. 1, 1956. In 1957 an automatic oil furnace, later converted to gas was installed in the parsonage. New hymnals were purchased in 1958. Mr and Mrs Ernest Wheeler gave a loud speaker system to our church in 1957.

During the summer and fall of 1958 the auditorium, foyer, hall and entrance walls and ceilings were painted and varnished and

new coverings on floors. Chairs for the choir were given by the Crispin family in honor of Miss Ethel Crispin, who has been our faithful organist and much of the time choir director for over 50 years. The heavy oak doors at church entrance, the chairs and desk in foyer all were given in memory of loved ones.

A re - dedication service was held Sunday, November 2, 1958 with Dr. R. W. Weigum giving the main address. Much credit is given Mrs Margaret Darling, chairman of the Board of Trustees, who personally supervised all of this project.

During the past 125 years our church has had 24 pastors, five of whom are still living.

The First Baptist Church of Ionia stands as a memorial to the zeal and devotion of those who sought to secure for themselves and their descendants the right to worship God according to their own convictions. We enjoy today a modern building, in all of its beauty because of the many who have toiled and sacrificed. Ours is indeed a priceless heritage.

What will the future be? That depends upon every member. May we keep the fires burning that were started 125 years ago to light the way for those who will follow, remembering the words of our Saviour, "I have chosen you that ye should go and bring forth fruit."

*Written by Nellie E. Krasinski
(Church Clerk)*

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June 2

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R. S. V. P.

*Wed 3
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