

Calvary Baptist Church A Brief History

Calvary Baptist Church held its first meeting Easter Sunday morning, April 25, 1943, led by the founding pastor, the Rev. Victor Beattie. Services were conducted in the auditorium of the Battle Creek Sanitarium until December 1948. In January 1946, Pastor Beattie resigned and was succeeded by the Rev. Allen Cherry in March 1946. On December 5, 1948, the church had to move when the federal government took over the auditorium. The congregation began meeting in the Adventist Church in Urbandale the following week. Pastor Cherry's ministry at Calvary was subsequently terminated two weeks later.

On January 11, 1949, the Rev. Roy Frook became interim pastor. The congregation purchased the former Lutheran Church building at 11 Adams Street into which they moved on November 19, 1949. The Rev. Jay DeBoer began his ministry as our pastor on Easter Sunday, April 9, 1950. A growing membership necessitated the purchase of property at 400 North Avenue where a partial building was utilized, and services were held on April 12, 1959. Pastor DeBoer resigned in June of 1959. The Rev. Walter Gibson began his ministry on August 30, 1959, and relinquished his position in June of 1962. Pastor Henry Berends succeeded Rev. Gibson in March of 1963. The Rev. Berends faithfully served the church for 17 years, resigning on March 2, 1980. The Kellogg Foundation purchased the North Avenue church property. Subsequently, on January 8, 1963, three and one-half acres were purchased on Capital Avenue at Frey Drive for a new church building for Calvary Baptist. We moved into our present building on Sunday, March 1, 1964.

The Rev. Brian Spencer was called to shepherd Calvary on August 2, 1981, and continued faithfully to inspire and lead as our faithful Senior Pastor until his retirement in August 2009. In May of 1990, a new graduate of Grand Rapids Baptist College, Donald Jackson, Jr., came as our Youth Pastor. He became Associate Pastor in 1995 and continued to lead the Student Ministries until June 2010 when he resigned to become a full-time missionary with Vision for Youth. The Rev. Jim Luedeman came to Calvary from Hart, Michigan and began his ministry here on September 2, 1997. He resigned in November 2003.

Our current pastor, The Rev. Tom Townsend, began his ministry at Calvary Baptist Church in August 2011. In November 2012, John Lippard joined the pastoral staff as Pastor of Family and Student Ministries.

Calvary has a rich history of longevity among its pastors as well as many members. God has blessed Calvary with a pastorate of godly shepherds over its 70-year history. With God's faithful guidance, Calvary will continue to serve the Lord until His return.