

# Churches of Fort Lauderdale

Reprinted from the *Fort Lauderdale Sentinel*,  
Friday, February 23, 1923, Section 6, page 6.

The relation of the church to the civilized community is an unconditional equation in that the community would revert to the lowest type without the influence of the church, and it is a fact that is accepted by every student of community life. The relation of the church to the home is more intricate in that each unit adopts its own attitude toward this institution. The personal state of mind regarding the church concerns only the individual, and his conduct is the outcome of certain tenets to which he holds.

The unity of these different phases is the blending of church and community, a condition rarely found in modern times. But to recall the early history of Ft. Lauderdale is to demonstrate that such a condition can and did exist. With the coming of a few sturdy settlers into this tropical wilderness, the first necessity was the home, the next the school, and then the church. The children of the Marshalls, the Kings and the Bellamys with a few others to the number of thirteen, formed the nucleus of the community life of this new settlement. And after provisions were made for opening the daily school, the Sunday school was organized 22 years ago, by W. M. Marshall, an uncle of one of these pioneer families, and an itinerant Presbyterian minister, Rev. Kegwin [Rev. Henry Keigwin], who passed through Ft. Lauderdale at stated times. The first session was held in the school house, what is known now as the home of Mrs. Van Auken.

Here the religious life of the community began in the sincerest and simplest fashion. "Modern equipment" consisted of one room with four rows of chairs for the grown folks and the company, the remainder of the seats being benches with no backs. It was a great day with this band of children when an organ was purchased. No prizes were offered to induce the children to attend, for they could not be kept away, being eager to stay for the whole service. True, many

of them went to sleep and had to be carried home, but nobody cared for that. Every Sunday afternoon, the lad, W. H. Marshall, went up and down the river in his boat gathering up the children who attended the Sunday School. There were no landings, but the gang plank was thrown out wherever passengers were gathered on the banks. Soon the boat would not hold them and he attached a lighter in order to carry them to the services, after which the happy youngsters were returned to their homes.

Not the Presbyterian, the Baptist nor the Methodist preacher, but the Minister came frequently to preach. Each service was crowded with whole families anxious to hear the Gospel preached. The women worked together in harmony, earning their money for this union church with no thought of the denominational differences.

The highest expression of community, home, and personal religion was the result of mingling together in this common cause, and many who lived during the early making of Ft. Lauderdale now speak of those days as if they were hallowed by some sort of sacredness which does not seem to pervade religious work today.

But as the settlement grew, new ideas were brought in and the humble beginnings were cast aside to make way for the progress in church life to keep pace with business interests, resulting in denominational houses of worship. The Sunday School movement has grown to great proportions in Ft. Lauderdale, and the cherished dream of many is to see some condition arise which will permit of equipping a plant dedicated to the instruction of the youth of our city in the knowledge of the Bible.

## NAZARENE CHURCH

The Church of the Nazarene, located on Wilsey Court, was organized April 11, 1918, in a private home, with sixteen

members. Soon after a lot was secured and a house for worship built. So we are moving steadily on with thankful hearts and asking the prayers and cooperation of our Sister churches.

At present we have church property to the value of \$4,000, a membership of twenty-four and sincerely hoping for an advance in membership and property.

We are asking God to give us the best year of our service. The present pastor is Rev. Mrs. M. C. Boswell.

## FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

The First Baptist Church of Ft. Lauderdale was organized about 1910 [1907], holding services in a small building near the Post Office, and used during the week as a show house. There were fifteen charter members, a few of whom are still identified with this organization. Wheeler's Hall was the next place of worship, until it was destroyed by fire, taking with it the organ, hymn books, etc.

A new beginning was made at the present location at Valentine Ave. and Las Olas Boulevard, the site being the gift of Mr. Frank Oliver.

In the meantime services were held at various places in order to keep this band of Baptists together, until the building was completed. The Rev. S. P. Mahoney accepted the call to preach and served the church for six years. During his pastorate and under his able direction the present church and parsonage was built and most of the lot was cleared. The church prospered greatly adding to its strength and membership in the community. In those days it was counted a pleasure to make sacrifices for accomplishing the purposes of the church, and the woman's work stands out as a notable picture in the history of this organization in bringing about the results obtained. The various activities of this church, the work of the various departments has outgrown the present equipment, and

plans are made to enlarge the church for the departmental services, especially for the young people's work and the Sunday school, which has gone beyond its metes and bounds.

In this church as in all others, the lack of leaders fitted for the work is the greatest handicap.

Pastors Atchison, Bouterse, and Walker ministered to this congregation. The present minister, the Rev. Milton Bales, has charge of the work and the members are looking forward to a creditable house of worship in the near future and great results from his ministry.

We believe in our simple faith, stand for the cause of righteousness, and wish to serve our city of Ft. Lauderdale in any way that will lift it to a higher plane.

#### FIRST METHODIST CHURCH, SOUTH

Twenty years ago the First Methodist Church in Ft. Lauderdale was organized under the leadership of Presiding Elder S. W. Lawler, and Pastor L. Oser. It being the first church organized here.

A reference to the original membership roll shows a number of names of men and women who are still identified with the church, among others those of W. H. Marshall, A. W. Cromartie, Mrs. J. G. Stevens, and Mrs. Clifford King. This church has borne its fair share in the spiritual development of our city, and has numbered among its pastors, during these twenty years, men who sought to give the Kingdom of God its rightful place in the life of the community by calling men and women to give their allegiance to Jesus, as their Lord and Master.

The church is particularly fortunate in possessing a strong band of women workers, organized under the name of [line deleted] noble women are indefatigable in their efforts to advance the church in any possible way, and can be depended upon at all times to do their very best to meet any emergency that may arise.

The present church building, while adequate for all purposes in the years gone by, is now proving to be too small for the growing needs of the church and the Sunday school, and in order to keep pace with the expansion taking place in our city along all lines, larger accommodations will have to be provided in the very near future.

The officials of the church are men of vision and are already discussing plans for meeting the need along these lines.

The present pastor, Rev. C. E. Gutteridge, came here last December, well recommended as a Sunday school leader and a worker especially interested in the young people, and his efforts, ably seconded by a strong corps of teachers and with Prof. H. B. Robertson as Sunday school superintendent, are already

producing results in increased attendance and interest.

Mr. Gutteridge is an able teacher of the Bible, and his work in this particular makes an especial appeal to men.

This church is known as "The Church of Smiles and Welcome."

#### FIRST METHODIST EPISCOPAL

Early in 1911, Dr. L.S. Rader, the District Superintendent, began preaching services in a store building. After a time, enough had been found who desired a permanent church home; then the site on which the present church stands was purchased and a building was erected thereon early in 1912.

At the time of its completion it was the second church in Ft. Lauderdale. Since then many others have come to stay.

Through these years it has had its struggles, yet withal, it has maintained a cheerful outlook and its ministers have ever preached a pure gospel.

While there are a few of the original members still on its roll, for the most part they have come from many other states in the union and from across the seas.

It has always extended a glad hand of welcome to all, regardless of position, wealth or fame of its worshippers, and its doors are open to all God's people, and to any seeking a better way. We believe in God; we believe in Jesus Christ, His Son; we believe in our fellow man; we believe in this great State; and we believe in our fast-growing city. The present pastor is Rev. S. E. Lawhon, who extends to all a cordial welcome.

#### CHRISTIAN SCIENCE SOCIETY OF FT. LAUDERDALE

The Christian Science Society of Ft. Lauderdale was organized in December 1913 by a few members of the Christian Science Society of Miami living in or near Ft. Lauderdale, and Sunday morning services were held in the Masonic Hall. The Christian Science Sunday school was organized in February, 1914, and held at the same place, and Wednesday evening meetings have been held since December, 1914.

During the summer of 1916 a building site was purchased and an architect employed to draw plans for a church building; and on December 25th of the same year the cornerstone was laid. During the winter months following, the building was completed, and the readers' desks, pews, and piano put in place and services have been held in the church edifice since April, 1917. The total cost of lot, building, and furnishings was about \$6,000 when completed; and some improvements have been added since that time.

The first free public lecture on Christian Science was given under the auspices

of the Society in February, 1915, and a similar lecture has been given each year. Since December, 1914, a free circulating library of authorized Christian Science literature has been maintained.

#### ALL SAINTS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Although All Saints is still, technically, a Mission, the energy and faithfulness of its membership entitle it to a place of unusual importance in the history of the Episcopal Church in South Florida. It began its life with the organization of All Saints Guild, the woman's society, on All Saints' Day, 1912. The little band of faithful women was joined by the men in the effort to have regular services of the Episcopal church held from time to time by clergymen of their faith. When, as was only too often the case, no such help was given them, the lay readers of the congregation continued to gather the faithful about them, and the little band continued to meet for worship in private houses. After a time the Masonic Hall was selected as a place of meeting. The difficulty of access made it unsuitable for a continued course of services and when, in 1918, a pastor at last came to reside in Ft. Lauderdale the Woman's Club was engaged as a home for the Episcopal congregation.

Owing to the untiring efforts of the Guild, a sufficient sum of money had been secured to purchase a lot; and it was a proud day when the deed for the first plot of land was at last in the hands of the people. It was soon discovered that this lot was not going to meet the demands and needs of the church if the community grew as it was bound to do; and so, before attempting to begin any sort of a building, a further effort was made, and the present beautiful location was secured. A corner lot, one hundred feet east and west, and one hundred and fifty feet north and south facing the city park is now in possession of the Episcopal church, affording room for every sort of parish building that may need to be erected in years to come.

In spite of the difficulty of the task, and the not infrequent words of discouragement that were uttered by some who felt that the hope of securing a building was little better than a beautiful mirage, the people set themselves to the work again and were this time aided by the little congregation of the disorganized Mission at Jupiter. St. Martin's Mission of that place, having fallen into disrepair; but there was still a building of sorts there, and some church furniture. With the permission of the Bishop, the building was dismantled, taken to pieces, and brought to Fort Lauderdale. Only a part of the original material was found fit for use. New material was purchased, and in the hands of the efficient building committee, the present beautiful little Gothic

## CHURCHES OF FORT LAUDERDALE



Clockwise from upper left: Southern Methodist, Northern Methodist, Christian Science, Christian, Baptist, Presbyterian and Episcopal.

church with its dark red roof, and cream colored stucco walls gradually came into being.

Being now in possession of a church building, the first thought of the congregation was for its young people, and a Sunday school was organized. This was in November, 1921. Commencing with only fifteen it grew in a year to have over seventy on its roll, with classes for every age from the tiny tots to thoughtful adults of the Bible class. Once again, the women of the Guild showed their faith and determination; and being unwilling that the building they had worked so hard to get should be theirs with a burden of debt, they girded themselves for a supreme effort, and during the Lenten Season of 1922 poured into the church treasury the sum of one thousand and one dollars, and on Easter Day of that year were able to feel the wonderful satisfaction and peace that came with the knowledge that every square foot of land every cubic foot of timber and masonry belonged to the All Saints Mission fully and freely.

Services are now being held every Sunday morning, and on appropriate occasions during the week. The church doors are always open for prayer and a hearty welcome is given to all who wish to worship with the congregation.

### CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Organized January 1, 1912, by Ira Adams of Miami. Organization took place at the M. E. Church South with fourteen charter members. W. E. Williams and

P. A. Read were elders; Mrs. Maud Bollinger, clerk; and Mrs. J. C. Repp, treasurer. We met in the M. E. Church in the afternoon for a short time and also held our services in the Baker Hall, Sentinel Hall and Berryhill Hall until we built our church home in 1916 on the lot on North Third and Valentine donated to the church by Mr. Frank Stranahan and wife. Two years ago a parsonage was built on the north end of the lot which the ladies aid furnished. We have a splendid Bible school, a Junior Endeavor society and Ladies Aid. Brother Garrison, editor of the Christian Evangelist of St. Louis preached the first sermon. The following are some of the preachers who have labored with us: Mr. Medary Gorsuch, Mr. John Melady, Mr. L. B. Allen, Mr. Chas. O. Woodard, Mr. J. W. Greep. Brother O. M. Sala of Miami, is our pastor at the present.

### SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

The Seventh Day Adventist church was organized on June 19, 1920, with 27 members. The meetings were held in the Women's Club Building. The Sabbath school is held every Sabbath morning at 9:30. A Bible study at 11 o'clock. On Sunday night another Bible study at H. Marshall's. On Wednesday night a prayer meeting is held at F. E. Porter's. On each second Sabbath of the month, elder C. R. Magoon of Miami preaches at 11 o'clock. H. Marshall, Elder; F. F. Porter, Superintendent of the Sabbath School.

There are about 19 active members. There has been sent to foreign missions

since the organization \$3,616.50. The Adventists are doing missionary work in 109 foreign fields. The Adventists are strictly a missionary people; called to deliver the special message of Rev. 6:14. In common with other S.D.A. churches the Ft. Lauderdale church has sent out many who are doing valiant work for the Lord and some who are "training" for service.

### CATHOLIC CHURCH

The first mass in Ft. Lauderdale was said by Rev. Father Fontaine, on December 25th, 1894, in a tent in Stranahan Camp, located where the [Stranahan] home now stands, the tent standing just north of the beautiful "Royal Palm" familiar to all in Ft. Lauderdale. There were just four members attending the first mass, Capt. and Mrs. Dodge, Mr. O'Neil[1] and Mrs. Nugent. This was the first Christian service ever held in Ft. Lauderdale. Masses were then said at irregular intervals from about 1900 to 1913 in the old school house near the county court house and in other buildings.

On May 13th, 1913, the property on Valentine and South Third street was purchased and remodeled for church purposes at a cost of \$1,000, this amount being generously donated by the members of the church and citizens. Masses were said monthly by the Jesuit Fathers of Miami, this being a mission until 1921 when a permanent pastor was installed.

In 1916 the Altar Society was organized with nine members, this society hold-

ing faithfully together from that time to the present, accomplishing much during this time for the church and doing its share in Red Cross work.

In the spring of 1920, the society took up work of raising funds by subscriptions and entertainments for the building of a new church. This was made possible with the work of a small congregation and cooperation and generosity of citizens and friends from afar. However, the impressive building, St. Anthony's church, now standing on Las Olas Boulevard, could never have been accomplished if it had not been for Rev. Father Thomas J. Plunkett, known as the "Builder Priest," giving generously and untiringly of his knowledge, time and physical labor. This beautiful church was erected to the honor and glory of God. The church was dedicated December 17th, 1922, by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Barry, D.D., of St. Augustine.

#### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The First Presbyterian Church of Ft. Lauderdale was organized in the South Methodist church building on April 14, 1912, by Rev. R. W. Edwards, Pastor evangelist of the Presbytery of Florida.

There were nine charter members of whom three, Mr. and Mrs. W. O. Berryhill and Mrs. J. K. Gordon, are at present active members of this church. In the fall of 1912, Dr. C. L. Work came to this city, on account of poor health, and finding an organized church without a leader, assumed the pastorate and served in that capacity until his death in August 1914. At this time there were 53 active members and all church meetings were held in the building now occupied by the Queen Theatre.

Following the death of Dr. Work, the church had supply pastors until October, 1919, when Dr. H. S. Dumming was called as pastor.

During Dr. Dumming's pastorate, with the help of friends of the church and the untiring efforts of the members, the present church building was erected, and later the Social Hall was added by the Ladies' Aid Society.

Dr. Dumming served the church as pastor for three years, resigning at that time to take up evangelistic work in New York State.

The church then called Dr. W. L. Atkisson, who is the present pastor.

The church has a missionary society with Mrs. C. B. Currier as president, Mrs. Clarence Wedge, vice-president and Mrs. J. G. Ewing, secretary-treasurer.

There is an interesting Sunday School of 125 members. Col. Robert Reed is the superintendent, with able assistants in Mr. O. B. Caswell as assistant superintendent, and J. B. Breon secretary-treasurer.

The Ladies' Aid Society is a very

active part of church organization and the financial success of the church is due largely to the untiring efforts of this body of women. Mrs. J. E. Breon is the efficient president of this society and she is ably assisted by Mrs. J. G. Ewing, vice-president, Mrs. J. K. Gordon, treasurer and Mrs. J. D. Sherwin, secretary.

This report would not be complete without mentioning the Christian Endeavor and Boy Scout organization of the church.

Mrs. O. B. Caswell is the advisor of the Senior Endeavor, with Vernon Clinton as president; Dorothy Dahlquist, vice president; Aleda Olander, recording secretary; Leonard Jeffries, treasurer; Elizabeth Atkisson, chairman missionary committee; Ivy Berryhill, chairman prayer committee; Winifred Stilwell, chairman Social committees; Florence Stilwell, chairman Information committee and Winifred Dahlquist, pianist. The Junior Endeavor with Dorothy Jenkins, president; Frank James Clinton, vice president; Barbara Blakely, secretary; and Clarence Powell, treasurer.

The larger boys in the Sunday school have a Boy Scout organization of 24 members known as Troop 4, with Mr. O. B. Caswell as scoutmaster.

There is being organized a Junior scout troop for the younger boys. With all these organizations working the church hopes to go on record as helping to make Ft. Lauderdale a good place in which to live.

*"Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."*

To those who have a deep and sympathetic insight into the motives and thoughts of the colored folk, this scripture has a significant meaning. In all the denominations, there are no people who accept the Bible in its entirety, without "taking or adding to" as do these children of the Black Race. In what might be considered a crude manner of interpretation, the great underlying fundamentals are accepted without question and regeneration with all the other long terms of "ations" mean little to them, but they have a perfect understanding

of Sin, Repentance and Forgiveness. Even to being converted and reconverted, baptized and rebaptized with an abiding faith that these manifestations of repentance are acceptable.

They are well versed in the different creeds of their churches in Ft. Lauderdale and their church life means much to them. The Episcopal service is read by Henry Edgecombe, a man who in the passing years will be looked back upon as one who stood for the uplifting of his race, a layreader of ability and a tireless worker.

It is a matter of great regret that the few quaint customs of Ft. Lauderdale are fast passing away, one of the most interesting is the baptismal service of the colored people. This ordinance usually is the culmination of a series of emotional sermons with many converts. On Sunday afternoon they gather at the church and prepare to march to the beach for baptism, the candidates being dressed in long white robes and heads uncovered. The minister, Bible in hand, leading the way, the march is taken up with men, women and children following on foot, with a noticeable absence of levity. The impressive feature of this custom is the singing. A faint sound of melody seems to float into the beautiful Sunday afternoon, and as the procession approaches the music growing sweeter and clearer as high sopranos and deep basses take up one familiar hymn after another, and as they swing onto the Boulevard, the music reaches its height of expression. Oblivious to all surroundings they pour forth their songs of worship, gathering volume and sweetness until it seems of necessity that there must be a pause, a lifting of the hat in reverence for a moment at least, by those who look upon this scene.

On reaching the Atlantic Ocean a fiery sermon is delivered by the minister, and the ordinance of baptism administered in the presence of many white people, some who jeer, and others who have the understanding of the lives of these simple believers.

The practical demonstration of their religion is shown in their great respect and care for the aged and their unselfish care of the orphans in their midst.

