

HISTORY OF NORTH KNOXVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH

217 Oldham Ave. NW

Knoxville, TN 37917

By: Thomas Lee

North Knoxville Baptist Church was the outgrowth of a mission begun by Rev. Jimmy Day in 1928 in a one –room store building on the southeast corner of Emerald Avenue at Worth Street. The church was formally organized on January 19, 1930 with 15 charter members, and was named North Knoxville Baptist Church. Membership grew rapidly, and the store building was too small to accommodate the growth. NKBC was admitted to the Knox County Baptist Association on Oct. 14, 1931. A lot on the corner of Oldham Ave. and Worth St. was purchased for \$250.00, and a new frame church was erected on this site. The new church faced Oldham Avenue, and was opened and dedicated on May 11, 1933. The building had a dirt floor that was covered with sawdust. Later, a basement was dug beneath the building for class rooms, and a floor was built in the sanctuary. Also, an addition was added on the west side of the sanctuary.

As the membership continued to grow, a decision was made to build an even larger building on adjacent property. This building was of brick construction and included a sanctuary and 26 classrooms. It was dedicated November 15, 1953. A 20-room wing was added on the west side, and was first used on February 27, 1955. A north wing was added on August 9, 1961. The Kerr building, a combination recreation/fellowship/educational facility was completed in 1974. It was named in honor of former pastor Kerr Wolfenbarger.

On Thanksgiving morning, November 27, 1980 the church sanctuary was destroyed by fire. Church members rallied together over the next two days, and converted the Kerr Building into a temporary sanctuary. Regular services were held in this facility during the period of reconstruction.

The church was rebuilt and on April 11, 1982 services were held in an expanded sanctuary which also included a new balcony. A 90th anniversary celebration was planned for March 29, 2020, but the Covid-19 Pandemic caused the event to be cancelled.

The church continues to operate at this location, and celebrated its 94th anniversary on January 12, 2024.