

Immanuel Baptist Church



Established January 8, 1939

PASTORS

W. C. Sparkman..... January 8, 1939 – November 30, 1949
 W. P. Brooks..... December 5, 1949 – December 1956
 J. Burch Cooper..... June 23, 1957 – August 1967
 Ralph W Allmon..... September 17, 1967 – May 12, 1968
 William B. Jennings February 5, 1969 – April 14, 1985
 Kenneth M. Reaves January 26, 1986 – February 7, 1988
 David Gasperson October 2, 1988 – July 10, 1994
 Timothy Moffett March 1, 1995 – January 25, 1998
 Thomas Compton July 19, 1998 – October 2, 2005
 Harry Watkins November 5, 2006 – November 16, 2017
 Larry Brister July 8, 2018 -

Pastor	Begin	End	TTL Days	Years	Months	Days	Interim Before
W. C. Sparkman	1/8/1939	11/30/1949	3979	10	10	3	0
W. P. Brooks	12/5/1949	12/31/1956	2583	7	0	0	5
J. Burch Cooper	6/23/1957	10/15/1966	3401	9	3	6	174
Ralph W Allmon	9/17/1967	5/12/1968	238	0	7	16	337
William B. Jennings	2/5/1969	4/14/1985	5912	16	2	4	269
Kenneth M. Reeves	1/26/1986	2/7/1988	742	2	0	12	287
David Gasperson	10/2/1988	7/10/1994	2107	5	9	10	238
Timothy Moffett	3/1/1995	1/25/1998	1061	2	10	4	234
Thomas Compton	7/19/1998	10/2/2005	2632	7	2	16	175
Harry Watkins	11/5/2006	11/16/2017	4029	11	0	11	399
Larry W. Brister	7/8/2018			2	5	30	234

Beginnings...

There is not enough room to get 80 years of history on these few pages. But Immanuel was founded by a group of people who were concerned with the spiritual life of the people of Fort Lauderdale. We need to continue with the same concern for the spiritual lives of those in our community and to the ends of the earth today as well. Making Jesus Christ the center of our message and work... to teach... to reach... and to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ from God's inerrant Word, the Bible. To not necessarily get people into church, but to get the Living Christ into people... "seeking not what we can get, but what we can give." Looking to the future with unwavering faith, joyful that we can live for and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fort Lauderdale was a small town of a little over 10,000 people when Rev. Fred Blosch of the First Baptist Church of Boynton Beach brought Rev. W.C. Sparkman to Fort Lauderdale in November of 1938. Reverend Sparkman began a small preaching mission in the Elks Building on South Andrews Avenue. This is now the site of Florida Power and Light Company.

Evening services were held there for a short time until we moved to the American Legion Building. It was there, on January 8th, 1939 that the preaching mission became a church with 16 charter members.

- Mr. & Mrs. Ben Blosch and daughter Marijane
- Mr. & Mrs. Albert Blosch and Daughters Grace & Christine
- Mr. & Mrs. Roy Wrains
- Mr. & Mrs. E. B. Johnson
- Mr. & Mrs. C. J. Holmes
- Mr. Bethel Alderman
- Rev. & Mrs. W. C. Sparkman.

Reverend Sparkman was called as the pastor, and the name "Immanuel" was chosen.

One week later, on January 15th at a church business meeting, the pastor's salary was set at \$40.00 a month supplemented by \$25.00 from the state board. Mrs. Ethel Naumann, "Audrey's future mother-in-law, was elected church pianist and continued to play the piano and later the organ until she moved to Texas in 1975. The offering for that Sunday's two worship services was \$10.89 with \$1.00 designated to State Missions.

Our first Sunday School was started on January 19th with an attendance of 14. In less than 2 months, it had doubled. By this time, we had moved again and were meeting in the Carpenter's Hall building on East Broward Blvd. Our first choir, a small group of young girls, ages 11 to 16 was organized by Mrs. Naumann. Our first Baptism of 11 new believers took place on July 9th, 1939 in an abandoned rock pit on North Andrews Avenue Extension. Years later it became the small community of Lazy Lake in Wilton Manors... about 1.5 miles north of our current location.

The church continued to grow and so in February 1940 we moved again... renting the Women's Club building in Stranahan Park for \$3.50 a week where we remained for the next 5 years.

Almost immediately we began planning for a permanent building. A member of our congregation had a lot on S. W. 2nd Court and 8th Avenue which we purchased of \$91.00. The foundation of our church building was laid, and the cornerstone was set in place on May 26, 1940.

December 7th, 1941 marked the beginning of many changes for our church. Several members joined the armed services or were drafted. We took another look at the demographics of our congregation and determined we should relocate our services to the north side of side of Fort Lauderdale. We purchased a portion of our present property for \$500.00 with a \$100.00 down payment and a mortgage of \$10.00 a month.

A 36' x 80' building was started but war priorities slowed down construction. Finally, on July 22, 1945 our first service was held in a partially finished building. Growth was quick and steady. By 1948 it was apparent we needed another building and so a 16-room building was constructed on the south side of our sanctuary. That building now holds 2 large classrooms, 2 bathrooms, and the Food Pantry.

Pastor Sparkman remained with Immanuel until November 1949. He soon organized another church, Southside Baptist, and remained there until his death in 1983.

Of the original 16 members, Grace Blosch (94 years old) was still alive as of January 18th 2018 and was residing in Wilton Manors, very near where we held our first baptism.

Immanuel continued to grow and acquired additional property around the original site. Ten pastors have served this church and Pastor Larry Brister, our eleventh pastor, is now leading a church that is rich in its history, with a heart for conservative Biblical teaching and preaching, a focus on missions and a tradition of being welcoming and friendly.

STORY BY PASTOR

Pastor W. C. Sparkman

Immanuel Baptist Church was organized on January 8, 1939. Brother W. C. Sparkman was called to preach in November of 1938. There were 16 charter members. The present building site was secured in 1941. On July 22, 1945 the first services were held in the new church building. In the summer of 1948 the sixteen room Sunday School addition was completed. In 1948 the first deacons were elected. In November of 1949 Brother Sparkman resigned as Pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church.

Pastor William Perry Brooks

Called as Pastor on December 5, 1949. During 1950 the WMU was organized. Training Union was organized and in August of 1950 the first revival was held. Permanent seating was installed in May of 1950. An organ was bought in 1953 and in 1954 new pulpit furniture was bought. Social Hall was built in 1954 and in 1955 the second story was added. The first inside Baptismal Service was held on September 9, 1956. Brother Brooks resigned as pastor in December 1956.

IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH CHOIR

About 1978 – 1979

(Pastor Bill Jennings)



Back Row: Pastor Bill Jennings, Gene Hovey, Nick Michels, Bill Pace, Farrell Eaves, Bill McCravy, Gene Cooper, Ron McCravy, Don McCravy, Bill Cotner, Lynn Winslow, Bill Smith, Reggie Bowen, Vince Williams, Charlie Anderson, Glen Harrelson.

Middle Row: Sylvia Jennings, Annette Moore, Mary DeRolf, Betty Johansson, Myra Jones, Betty Winslow, Madelyn Moreley, Edie Williams, Jean Chenault, Carmen Bowen, Esther Michels

Back Row: Mary Decker, Marilyn Pace, Jean Minor, Dottie Sisk, Ruby Kilcrease, Sylvia Cotner, (Unknown), Jenny Hightower, Fay Scott.

Psalm 150

¹ Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament!

² Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!

³ Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp!

⁴ Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!

⁵ Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with clashing cymbals!

⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!

Pastor J. Burch Cooper

Called as pastor on June 23, 1957. A Family Night program was adopted in October 1957. Before the end of the year 1957, a sidewalk from the front of the church to Social Hall was built, folding doors were installed in Social Hall, and Brother J. Allison was called as Choir Director. In 1958 6 - 25 foot lots on the east side of Social Hall were purchased. In 1959 air conditioning was installed in the main sanctuary and Social Hall; in addition, carpet was put in the main church auditorium. In 1961 heating was added to the baptismal and in 1963 the sprinkling system was installed. A building fund for new building was set up in 1965 and in June the rooms above Social Hall were air conditioned. In 1966 a new organ was purchased. And in October 1967 Pastor Cooper resigned.

Pastor Ralph W. Allmon

Called as pastor on September 17, 1967. In October of 1967 the pastorium was renovated. In January of 1968 the property on North East 3rd Avenue - South of the pastorium - was purchased. On May 12, 1968 Brother Allmon resigned.

Pastor William B. Jennings

Called as pastor on February 5, 1969. During that same year the parking lot was paved, and the nursery was established. A deaf ministry was set up and music was set as a focused means of ministry and outreach. Immanuel's Choir made records, was on TV as well as radio programs. In 1972 the inside of the sanctuary was renovated, and new pews were installed. Florence Paxton was approved as the youth and educational consultant in 1973. Then, in 1974 the property on the corner of 11th Street and 3rd Avenue was purchased. In 1982 the front of the church building was renovated to extend toward the street in order to acquire additional seating. A 15-person van was purchased in 1983. Brother Jennings resigned on April 14, 1985

Pastor Kenneth Reeves

Called as pastor on January 26, 1986. The pastorium in the back of the church was renovated and repurposed as a pastor's study and church offices. New office furniture and equipment was purchased as well as security systems being added. The library was moved and renovated. The educational building was remodeled. Then in October 1986 Mel Smith was called as our music and youth director. Immanuel helped to sponsor the Hillsboro mission. A new sound system was purchased. Homebound visitation program and Young at Heart Ministry was added to our programs. Brother Reeves resigned on February 7, 1988.

*Vacation Bible School
1986
(Pastor Kenneth Reeves)*



Psalm 127:3-5

³ Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.

⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth.

⁵ Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

Pastor Robert David Gasperson

Called as pastor on October 2, 1988. On January 13-15 we help our “Golden Anniversary Celebration.” The from January 16 – February 11 “A Phone’s for You” outreach training program for the Fellowship Mission was held. Then that same “A Phone’s for You” outreach was held from February 27 – March 16th. A Men’s Prayer meeting began in November 1989. New bathrooms were built in the Sunday School Building on the south side of the church in 1990 and the church also voted to undertake a long-range planning program. A Haitian mission began meeting in June of 1991. Pastor Gasperson resigned on July 10, 1994.

Pastor Timothy Moffett

Called as pastor on March 1, 1995. Beginning that month, a great emphasis was put on our Sunday School attendance contact list. Through this the attendance at the Preschool children’s picnic was increased. While the clothes closet was officially opened on January 12 of that year, a greater focus and signs were added to that ministry. Easter Service was held in the parking lot and in August Immanuel hosted a group of seminary students. Brother Jean Joseph Surin was called as Pastor of Haitian Mission. In January of 1996 a workshop for Preschool, children and youth was held. A new roof for the Sunday School building was put on in February. That same month a Wednesday morning Bible Study began. And during Pastor Moffett’s ministry many community outreach events were held. Pastor Tim resigned on January 11, 1998 effective January 25, 1998.

Pastor Thomas Compton

Called as pastor on July 19, 1998 with his ministry beginning on August 9. During Pastor Compton’s ministry the Clothes Closet was repaired and painted. New stoves were purchased for the kitchen. An air conditioner was bought for children’s puppet ministry room and planning began for a meeting time for the Haitian Mission. Chris Bell was voted in as Youth Minister in December of 1998. A revival was held with the Blackwood Brothers in concert. Chris Bell left for Seminary in May of 2000 and Pete DeRose was voted in as Minister of Education ... working with the youth.” Together We Grow” a 3-year plan for community outreach began. In January 2002 Teophil (Phil) was hired as Youth Director. On June 2, 2002 was the grand opening of Living Waters Care Center with set hours established in August for the clinic, clothes closet and food pantry ministries. A Dental Clinic was on-site from December 2 – 6 of 2002. On January 29, 2003 Phil Gruit our Youth Director resigned. Senior Adult Ministry began in March 2003. New tables and chairs were purchased for Social Hall and on August 14, m2003 Christopher James Bell was ordained into the ministry. Pastor Tom resigned October 2, 2005

Immanuel Worship Team – Joint Language Christmas Service – December 20, 2020

Worship Leaders Ana and Jamie



Immanuel Joint Language Christmas Service - December 20, 2020

Pastor Carol Vidal (Hispanic Ministries)

(Senior Pastor Larry Brister)



Pastor Harry Watkins

Called as pastor on November 5, 2006. Pastor Harry brought a heart for missions and a continued tradition of friendliness to Immanuel Baptist Church. As he came into his time here, he went right to work on the facility itself. Understandably... over the year's things began to age and a lot of maintenance and repair was needed. Addressing everything from new handrails to paint and general work on all the buildings, Pastor Harry went about getting the facility in order. He also started a coffee ministry for parents bringing their children to school and other outreach programs. He also established a connection with Pastor Ivan Toro and Jamie with and their ministry BIOLUMINESSENCE in June of 2016. As Jamie was serving as the Worship Leader at Living Hope Church... a "church-to-church" connection was established between Pastor Harry and our current pastor. Pastor Harry. Went to the Lord in November of 2017.

Pastor Larry W. Brister

Called as our current pastor through a church merger vote on June 17, 2018, Pastor Larry preached the first "unified" service on July 8, 2018. The merger or "church marriage" was between Immanuel Baptist Church of Fort Lauderdale and Living Hope Baptist Church of Coral Springs. With Living Hope came a thriving Hispanic Ministry, 5 Associate Pastors, 5 Deacons and a diverse membership that reflects the South Florida Community. In the 2 ½ years (As of 2021) since the "marriage", Immanuel has established a strong Social Media and Web presence... including live service web video casts and the ability for people to watch archived services through our web site and Church App. In September 2018 a new air conditioning unit was added to Social Hall. During October a new sound booth was built, and the sound system wiring was completely revamped. Then on November 4th there was a Gospel Quartet Concert on Sunday Evening by "The Dougall's." In December 2018 new video monitors were installed in the Main Sanctuary and by the end of the year campus wide internet had been installed. During the week of January 21 – 15 2019 the sanctuary received new carpet. And since then the Fellowship Hall and Education Buildings have all been remodeled.

In 2020 the Main Sanctuary stage was rebuilt, and all classrooms were remodeled as well as Social Hall... currently in use as our Hispanic language sanctuary. The primary ladies restroom was completely remodeled as well as both restrooms in the Social Hall.

Pastor Brister has a heart for missions, outreach, enabling and encouraging young people to serve, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, consistently teaching John 14:6 each week. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Or better put... salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone!

What's Next?

While our current facility has served well, the sheer passage of time is taking its toll on our buildings. A lot has been done already.... But much more remains. We are looking to build a new area for our Hispanic Ministry, enclose our "between buildings" passageways, while modernizing the Food Pantry, Clothes Closet and expanding other ministry areas... including creating a state of the art nursery and upgrading all electrical. Why all this coming work? This is not just to have a "nicer place"... but to better serve our community, provide a vibrant place of worship and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Fort Lauderdale and throughout the world.