First Baptist Church

301 4th St, Marietta, OH, 45750
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History

• First Baptist Church descends from the earliest Baptist Church in the area, formed at Rainbow, near Lowell, in 1797.

• Captain William Mason, one of the first settlers of Marietta in 1788, was a Baptist and often led in the early services of worship and in study of the scriptures held in Campus Martius.

• However, it was not until 1796, when Nehemiah Davis, an ordained Baptist minister, and his family came from Maine to Marietta, that efforts were made to establish a church.

• In 1797, a group organized the first Baptist church in the county. The church was called the “Rainbow Church,” and members lived quite some distance up and down the Muskingum River and along Duck Creek. The church grew rapidly until 1804, when there was a conflict among its members about the observance of open Communion. As a result, the two factions separated, and each formed its own church group.

• Efforts made to bring the two groups together again were unsuccessful. However, a few of the Baptists who favored the closed Communion felt the need of an organized church and on September 5, 1818, five members met in the eastern part of Marietta and drew up articles of faith and covenant, the beginning of the First Baptist Church.
Church Buildings

Meetings were held in the houses of the members of the church until the congregation moved into its first building on Church Street in Marietta in April 1836 (about two blocks from the present building).

The membership grew, and soon larger facilities were needed, so in 1855 the church built a structure on Putnam Street, near the current one, where it met until 1907 when it built the current structure.

The 1907 building originally had a huge sanctuary, with many balconies and crannies which could seat 1,200 for major community events. Being located just across the street from the Marietta College campus, it was frequently used by the college for major assemblies. All of these church structures were two-story, with a large entrance “fellowship hall” across the front and the sanctuary on the second floor above, probably because all were in the flood plan. (However, no floods have been in the main building since 1937.)

The work of the Sunday School has always been an important facet of this church. One of the adult classes can trace its beginnings all the way back to 1927. In 1935 the house next door to the church on Fourth Street was purchased and converted into children’s classrooms. In 1955 this building was torn down and a three-story Educational Building constructed, providing space for the children and youth.
On October 10, 1971, a tragic event in the history of church occurred. While Sunday School was in session, the low-pressure boiler heating the Educational Building exploded, unhinging the floors from the outside wall and allowing the upper floors to collapse onto a Senior High Sunday School class underneath.

The teacher and four youths were killed, and several others injured. This was a double tragedy in that the pastor, the Rev. Donald Duncan, had died of a sudden heart attack two days earlier. The building was repaired and rebuilt, this time moving the furnace from the Educational Building over with the main furnace on Putnam Street, outside of either main structure.

As with many churches, the effects of the COVID virus heavily impacted our church.

Before the pandemic, our Church offered 2 services- one traditional and one contemporary. We also had multiple boards that worked together to run the operations of the church.

During COVID, we closed our physical doors to ensure the health and safety of our members and staff. Upon reopening, we shifted back to one service as it was no longer practical to hold 2.

Additionally, we have since streamlined our operations to one board that facilitates the operations of the church. This has enabled us to quickly react to church needs and activate volunteers in roles that are best suited for their talents and interests.

FBC Marietta has experienced multiple church splits over its tenure. Differences in personalities and opinions on how we should run boards and programs has caused conflict.

Conflict has not always been managed in a quick and meaningful way. As a result, the church has recently spent a lot of time and effort in creating a Conflict Resolution Process to enable us to work through differences and de escalate issues before they lead to any further splits.
Leadership Timeline

Most Recent Leadership:
- Rev. David Bilyeu (2005-2010)
- Pastor Chad Mugrage (2012-2023)

Not counting interim pastors, this church had 8 ministers between 1923 and 1972.

Rev. Clyde Atkins, retired, the father of one of the church members at the time, conducted a healing interim ministry from 1971-1972 until the Rev. Don Shuler came to the First Baptist Church of Marietta, OH.

Rev. Shuler stayed 25+ years (the longest in the church’s history). Dr. Gary Stowasser followed, serving approximately 3-1/2 years before moving on to his next calling, and the Rev. David Bilyeu served a little less than five years.

Our most recent leader was Pastor Chad Mugrage who served the church for 10 years. During his tenure, we also hired an Associate Pastor in November 2016. Pastor Brittany Wilson, is still on staff and has helped lead the church for nearly 7 years.
This church has had many great lay leaders over the years. In the 1800s the name of Thomas W. Ewart is prominent. He was chairman of the 1854-55 building committee and served as Sunday School superintendent for 41 years and as moderator of the Marietta Association of Baptist Churches for 25 years.

He became president of the Ohio Baptist Convention and moved his membership to Granville in 1880. His descendants left a considerable financial endowment to this church.

Dr. George R. Gear, son of the Rev. Hiram Gear, was born into this church and remained in it until he died at age 91. He served as its pastor for 20 years before retiring. He was a very active layman, as well as pastor. The names of Ewart and Gear, as well as the Turners, are memorialized in the stained-glass windows of the church.
Renovations

In 1967 the internal structure, especially the first floor, was beginning to sag due to flood rotting of timber supports. The building was gutted, redesigned and rebuilt using the original outside walls and tile roof. A number of changes in design were made. The basement was filled in, the sloping sanctuary floor made level, and the sanctuary made a “church in the round”, with the choir loft directly behind the pulpit. Only the baptistry in one corner remains unchanged.

Most of the balconies were closed off and converted to adult Sunday School rooms, so that the sanctuary with alcoves now seats about 550. An elevator was installed, providing limited handicapped access. Within the last 11-12 years, approximately a $1 million dollars has been spent on renovations and upgrades to the church structure.

The outside stone has been cleaned and a new tile roof put on. New carpet, pew cushions, pipe organ and sound system have been added to the sanctuary, as well as refurbishing of some of the stained-glass windows. A handicapped restroom has been added on the main floor, as well as offices being restructured and newly furnished. Wall screens were installed in the sanctuary for easy projection of announcements, words to hymns, and films, and a large two-sided sign was added on Fourth Street side by the Educational Building.

Most recently, the church also experience a burst pipe in the sanctuary which resulted in damages and repairs. As a result, we have just replaced the carpeting in the sanctuary this year and repainted it. Additionally, the decision was made to remove the choir loft as we have not used a choir in years to provide more room for the praise team.
Mission and Vision

Our **Mission** is “To make more and better disciples” in the Marietta community and beyond.

We seek to partner with God in the Great Commission to:
1. Increase the number of believers (more)
2. Grow as disciples (better)

Our **Vision** is “Strengthening Faith and Family Forever.”

Whether you’re a family or 1 or 100, we invite you into our Faith Family!

We strive to:
1. Strengthen your relationship with Christ (faith)
2. Strengthen your relationship with Others (family)
How We are Led

Executive and Associate Pastor- The pastor shall be the leader of the church in all its activities and shall preach the gospel, administer the ordinances, oversee the stated services of public worship, and guide the spiritual life of the church. The pastor shall be available to counsel church members and others who may need such service. In obedience to the commands of Jesus, the pastor shall oversee the total program of the church, shall be a member ex-officio of all church boards and committees, and shall lead the church in developing an effective program.

Ministerial Staff - The church may at times secure other ministerial leadership as dictated by current needs. Job description, compensation, and benefits will be set by the church on recommendation from the Board of Ministries. These are paid positions.

Church Board of Ministries- The Board of Ministries meets monthly or more, if needed, to conduct Church business. These are volunteer positions.

Church Clerk- The church clerk shall keep a current and permanent record of all business of the church, sign all letters, and maintain minutes of all board and church business meetings. The clerk shall enter upon the records of the church those current events in the life of the church that are likely to be of historical value, thus making the church records a continuous story of the history of the church.

Church Moderator- The moderator shall preside at all congregational meetings of the Church. In the absence of the moderator, the chairperson of the Board of Ministries shall preside. This is a volunteer position.
Our Staff

Brittany Wilson  
Executive Pastor

Eric Moore  
Youth Pastor

Logan Moore  
Children’s Ministry Director

Steven Wilson  
Director of Technical and Media Ministries

Owen Buxton  
Pianist
Our Ministries

**Adult Ministry**

Our Adult Ministries consist of Adult Sunday School class, Women’s Circle, Men’s group, and other ad-hoc groups.

Some recent and current ministry events include:

- Women’s group breakfasts
- Church league Softball
- Monthly Senior Luncheons

**Family Care Team**

Our Family Care Team is a group of volunteers who seek to help individuals and members of the church who need assistance. Members of the Family Care Team volunteer their time and talent to help. The Board of Ministries helps support the Care Team financially.

Assistance provided can include:

- Providing toiletries
- Minor lawn care
- Assistance with purchasing necessary items
- Packing care packages for college students
Our Ministries

Youth and Children

• “Impact Youth” is our Youth Ministry. It includes 6th - 12th graders and meets every Sunday morning at 11:00 am for Youth Group on the third floor of the Education Building.
  • This ministry is led by Youth Ministries Pastor Eric Moore.

• "Action Kids" is the name of our children's ministry, offered to children ages birth - 5th grade. Children's church meets during worship at 10:00 am.
  • At "Action Kids", children learn about the Bible, and how to put the Bible into action!
  • This ministry is led by Children's Ministries Director Logan Moore.
Our Ministries

Praise Team

• On Sundays, volunteers join and share their talents to lead the congregation in worship through music. Our praise team includes singers and musicians. The praise team is led by Pastor Brittany Wilson and meets one hour before service to prepare for worship.
Marietta, Ohio, is a small city located at the confluence of the Ohio and Muskingum Rivers, about 160 miles due south of Cleveland, Ohio, and 15 miles northwest of Parkersburg, West Virginia, along Interstate 77.

Founded in 1788 by the Ohio Company of Associates, Marietta was the first permanent, legal settlement in the Northwest Territory and as such contained the Land Office, which assigned rights and ownership to the lands in the Territory in the 1700s.

Marietta, a community of 14,085 people, is the county seat for Washington County, home to 61,778 persons.

In recent years tourism has become part of the area’s economy as the local convention and visitor's bureau promoted Marietta’s historic heritage, location between two rivers, and related sightseeing, shopping and recreational activities. A large regional mall with more than 100 stores is located between Marietta and Parkersburg and boasts many of the stores and facilities found in larger cities.

Marietta College, a liberal arts college founded in 1835 with a current enrollment of 1,350+ students, is located across the street from the church. Washington State Community College is also located in Marietta. Founded in 1973, its current enrollment is 2,000. Public schools include a career center serving adults, one high school, one middle school, and four elementary schools, and one private, parochial school. Marietta is also home to the county library system. Of the 48 churches within the Marietta area listed by the local chamber of commerce, First Baptist is the only American Baptist Church within Marietta.
About Marietta, Ohio

Demographics

• White: 93.5%
• Black or African American: 2.4%
• Two or more races: 2.09%
• Asian: 1.24%
• Other race: 0.46%
• Native American: 0.32%
• Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0%

Key Data

• Average household income: $75,401
• Poverty rate: 24.38%
• Median age: 38.5
• Average Family Size: 2.83
• Average Household Size: 2.14
• Rate of Home Ownership: 57.9%