

1890

North American Baptist Heritage Commission

Church Histories



Picture from web site, constructed 1903

Forest Park Baptist Church, Forest Park, Illinois

In 1862, regular prayer meetings, preaching services, and Sunday School sessions were held in private homes after a German Baptist family had contacted members of the First German Baptist Church of Chicago three years previously to establish a mission work in Forest Park. In 1867, the founders built a chapel on the southeast corner of Marengo Avenue and Franklin Street, in what is now Forest Park. At the dedication service on September 15, 1867, the hope was expressed that a church would soon be organized. Restricting influences necessitated the sale of the chapel in 1974 to the Onward Mission Sunday School. A few years later, Rev. Jacob Meier called a meeting to revive the work, and in 1887 the present site was purchased for \$1000.00. In the following year a chapel was built, and on January 22, 1890 the formal organization of the First German Baptist Church of Oak Park was celebrated with joyful services.

By 1900, because of membership growth, the chapel was inadequate. It was sold and moved to a different location to make way for the construction of the present building in 1903. A member, Mr. H. G. Fiddelke, designed the building and gave

the beautiful stained glass window on the north wall. The name was changed to Forest Park Baptist Church in February 1940.

Although founded as a German Baptist Church in a community of German-speaking people, in 1923 the church voted to have two services in the English language every month. Gradually over the years the use of German lessened. A German Bible Study class continued until 1988 when it merged with the Senior Adult Sunday School class. Forest Park Baptist Church was privileged to plant two daughter churches and has encouraged a number of individuals as they began full-time Christian ministry.

“Pathways for the Future,” a program of growth and expansion under the ministry of Rev. David A. Steinhart, has allowed Forest Park Baptist to reach out beyond its ethnic borders to encompass the changing face of our community. As milestone events are planned and celebrated, the congregation looks to the future with excitement and gratitude to God Who makes all things possible.

Written by Lucille Lengefeld, NAB Heritage Commission [September 2015]

Bibliographical sources: [Published articles – Baptist Herald & Other]

“Baptists Celebrate 50th Year.” *Forest Park Review*: Jan. 18, 1940.

Nordlund, Rev. C. B.: “Let the Church Be the Church!” *Baptist Herald*: March 11, 1965.

Sermon preached at the Forest Park Baptist Church during its 75th Anniversary.

<http://www.forestparkbaptist.com/about/heritage3.cfm>

Archival sources in North American Baptist Heritage Center:

Selected annual reports and photographs

Fiftieth Anniversary Booklet 1890 – 1940, and program

Seventy-fifth Anniversary Booklet 1890 – 1965, and program

Forest Park Baptist Church 100th Anniversary

Church Directories, bulletins

Correspondence

Assorted other documents

“The Stained Glass Windows of Forest Park Baptist Church”