

Kitty Hawk Baptist Church History

Kitty Hawk Baptist Church dates its beginnings to 1962 when the Chowan Baptist Association built the Kitty Hawk Chapel at MP 4.0 in Kitty Hawk, NC. The little chapel was started to minister to tourists who came to the beach each summer.



In August 1972 a group of dedicated Christians met to discuss the starting of a new church and to petition the Chowan Baptist Association for the rental of the chapel during the winter months. On September 5, 1972, the group of thirteen elected officers met and decided on the name “First Baptist Church of Kitty Hawk” (FBCKH). On October 27, 1972, Reverend W. Arthur Hales was voted the first pastor. Rev. Hale was a retired minister from Elizabeth City, NC, and served FBCKH until July 15, 1973. Under Rev. Hale’s leadership, the church continued to grow in numbers and faithful commitment, to the extent that on January 26, 1973, the Chowan Baptist Association gifted (under a 10-year stipulation agreement) the Kitty Hawk Baptist Chapel and grounds to FBCKH. A new Baldwin organ was purchased, and electric heat was installed.



Bill Creef, a layman at Berea Baptist Church in Elizabeth City, began preaching for FBCKH as interim and eventually was called to serve as FBCKH’s second pastor on August 5, 1973. Under his leadership the church joined the Chowan Baptist Association in 1974. By 1976 the Chapel’s sanctuary was enlarged, classroom space added, the parking lot paved, a new heating system installed, and an Allen organ purchased.

In 1977 the church began talking about the need for a larger worship space. By May 1978 they had voted to move forward with a plan to build. In 1979 a \$122,200.00 contract was awarded for building new worship space. The foundation was laid in 1979, and the new worship space was completed in the spring of 1980. The first worship



service took place on Easter Sunday, April 6, 1980. At the time, the membership was sixty resident and twelve non-resident members. In 1980, 1,000 visitors to the church were recorded. In 1981 the church held its first Vacation Bible School (VBS) with average attendance of thirty children.



A milestone in the history of FBCKH occurred in October 1984 when the Chowan Baptist Association deeded the buildings and grounds to FBCKH in accord with the 1973 agreement.

In March of 1985, groundbreaking for the new educational building began, which added six



classrooms. A van was also purchased to support the growing youth ministry. This purchase was aided by an unexpected gift to the church.

In 1986 the old chapel, now serving as the fellowship hall, was renovated. Also, in 1986 the church built a parsonage in Kill Devil Hills for the pastor and his family. Ministries and outreach continued through Pastor Creef's tenure until his retirement in October 1990.

On November 1, 1990, the church called Dr. Frank Morris as the interim pastor. He resigned January 3, 1991, due to his wife's serious illness. Local laymen known to the members provided pulpit supply for several weeks. On March 4, 1991, Reverend W. Clinton Hardee, Jr., preached; after the service a special business meeting was held. The church voted unanimously to call Pastor Hardee as the church's third pastor. Under Pastor Hardee's leadership, the church began to see greater growth and ministry within the community. Programs such as VBS saw incredible outreach with numbers surpassing 200 children many years. The church members were active with the Beach Food Pantry, working Monday – Friday at least once a month to reach out to those less fortunate on the beach. There was an active chancel choir, a men's chorus, and children's choirs. The church hosted spring and fall revivals annually as well as participated in the community Lenten services and lunches each year. The church also hosted Divorce Recovery Support groups, community Bible studies, Brotherhood dinners, and Christian concerts.

1993 through 1995 were difficult years for FBCKH. A difference in understanding God's plan and will for the church led to a power struggle. Officially the struggle began at a regular business meeting on August 4, 1993, when a motion was brought forth to dismiss Pastor Hardee. After much discussion, the motion was defeated 78 to 64; but the damage was done. The minority refused to abide by the majority's decision and began several legal actions against FBCKH. Though ministry continued to bring forth fruit, the internal fighting began to play out publicly, causing harm to the church and its ministry in the community. Eventually the minority

from the original dispute lost all legal battles and decided to leave FBCKH to form a new church in Kill Devil Hills known as Ocean View Baptist Church. In September 1995, sixty-five members officially departed FBCKH.

Even after the long legal battle and the loss of energy, time, and money, ministry did continue with revivals, Christian concerts, Easter cantatas, baptisms, and VBS. 1995 ended with 206 resident members and 87 non-resident members.

From 1996 to 2000, the year Pastor Hardee resigned, ministries continued; yet a slow decline began in baptisms and church membership. Life at the beach was also changing: more churches had started, and life in general was becoming more secular.

An interim period began at the resignation of Pastor Hardee in July 2000; several local laymen filled the pulpit until an interim was hired in October 2000. C. L. Reynolds began leading the church as a pulpit search committee also began its work. Pastor Reynolds led the church until May 26, 2002, when Rev. Charlie Waller became FBCKH's fourth pastor and continued the ministries of the church. He served as pastor for only thirty months before resigning to accept a call at another church out of the area. From October 2004 until November 2005, the church again entered into an interim time with Pastor C. L. Reynolds returning to serve.

On November 20, 2005, Pastor Don Tears became FBCKH's fifth pastor. Incorporating in 2007, the church officially changed its name to Kitty Hawk Baptist Church (which was the way most referred to the church anyway) and updated its Constitution and By-laws. During his



fourteen years as pastor, the church developed a strong community outreach. Under Pastor Tears' leadership, Kitty Hawk Baptist Church (KHBC) instituted a ministry around the Harley Davidson's annual Bike Week in the Outer Banks, which included accommodating vendors, handing out welcome packets and providing food for the bikers. With a contribution supplied by the Chowan Baptist Association, a raffle with a cash prize was made available for anyone who

listened to a five-minute gospel presentation. Over the course of the years, many accepted Christ as Savior; and many more rededicated their lives to Christ. Through the years, the church heard stories from past raffle winners of how that money was a needed and miraculous answer to prayer.



Another innovation Pastor Don brought to the beach was a desire to be prepared for a big emergency on the Outer Banks (OBX). While praying about how to go about putting an emergency plan in place, Dennie Nessley of

Christ in Action contacted pastors on the beach about partnering together. Pastor Don was the only one to accept Dennie's invitation; he and Jill attended a workshop to learn more about Christ in Action's ministry. The next year Hurricane Irene came ashore in the OBX. Due to the earlier contact, KHBC became a staging area for Christ in Action as they ministered throughout the county.

New ministries began while others continued or were revamped under Pastor Tears. These included VBS, Fall Festival, mission trips to Helene (Honduras) and Alaska, joint Good Friday services with other Baptist churches in the area, and a joint Christmas Eve service (with a waffles & ice cream social afterwards).

In 2010 the pastor at OVBC and Pastor Don at KHBC considered the limited resources of both churches to achieve the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ on the OBX. They began to consider the possibility of a reunification merger. Though the merger was eventually shelved, the idea of reconciliation and cooperation was pursued. There was a time of forgiveness and healing for all as the two congregations moved toward reconciliation and cooperation. In 2013, after several years of cooperation in ministry and the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the idea of a reunification merger was brought forth from the leadership of OVBC. Much prayer and fasting ensued by members of both congregations who sought guidance from the Holy Spirit. A town hall meeting was held in September 2014. However, OVBC eventually voted not to pursue a merger of the congregations.

The two churches under the pastors' leadership continued to work in cooperation and in partnership on several ministry opportunities through the next few years. A second attempt began in late 2017 with the formation of a joint merger committee. The group met bi-monthly until August 2018 when it met an impasse. Unable to move beyond a non-negotiable requirement from OVBC, KHBC decided it could not accept the terms; and the committee formally disbanded. Although a merger did not happen, reconciliation between the two congregations was achieved; and the joint cooperation and good will between the two churches continues to this day.

On September 23, 2019, tragedy struck KHBC when a distracted driver on the Highway 158 Bypass crossed several lanes of traffic to crash into Pastor Tears, who was riding his motorcycle. Pastor Tears' family, the KHBC family, and the Outer Banks greater community were devastated by the sudden loss of Pastor Don.

During this difficult time, the deacons led the church and asked Pastor Steve Siegrist and Chaplain Cheri Wheeler to fill the pulpit until an Intentional Interim Pastor (IIP) could be hired to help the church through its grief and to prepare for a new pastor. On December 1, 2020, Pastor Steve Siegrist, a retired pastor who was trained by the North Carolina Baptist in the Intentional Interim process, was called to work with KHBC. As IIP Pastor Siegrist's duties include preaching for Sunday morning worship, leading Wednesday night's adult Bible study, and providing guidance and training for the Transitional Team in preparation for an eventual pulpit search committee.

The Transition Team is comprised of church members who were nominated at large by the congregation. The Nominating Committee, working in consultation with Pastor Siegrist, contacted eight people to serve. Each person was asked to pray about his/her participation on the team, and all eight accepted the call to serve. The Transition Team, commissioned by the church and prayed over at the Sunday service on February 9, 2020, met for the first time that afternoon. They continue to meet weekly as they systematically tackle five key areas to include heritage, mission, leadership, connections, and future of the church. The congregation and the Transition Team are committed to taking 12-18 months to grieve, heal, and plan for the future.

