

# FAITHFUL BEGINNINGS

Dawson has had a rich history of faithful people who sought the Lord's will and gave sacrificially to provide for future generations. These inspiring stories tell a little about their faithfulness from the beginning.

**On June 3, 1921**, a small group of Baptist women met at the home of Mrs. W.C. Sterrett and organized the Baptist Woman's Band of Edgewood. The object of the Band, stated in their constitution, was "to promote the spiritual and social welfare of its members and to foster personal service and missionary spirit." The early Band engaged in many activities and became the model for the WMS groups that followed.

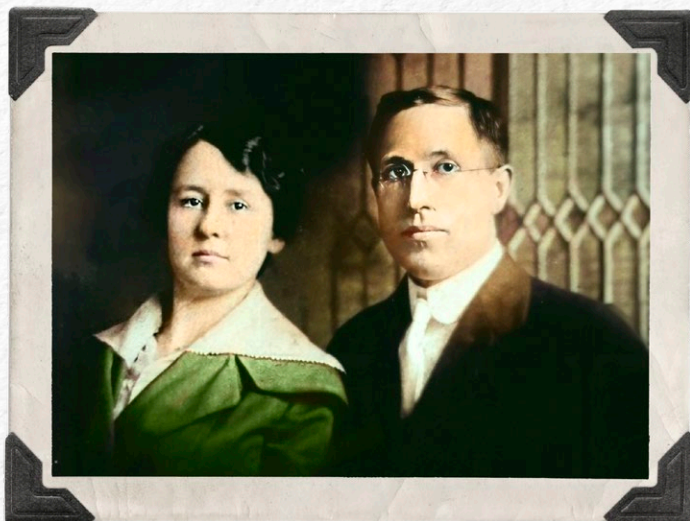
In December 1921, the Baptist Woman's Band elected Mrs. J. T. Callaway as treasurer of their Building Fund. All collections over \$5 a month were to be placed into this fund. These monies would be used towards building the Fieldstone Building, the

first worship and education space for the new church. The Band had continuous meetings from June 3, 1921 until April 1, 1925, when a meeting was held at Mrs. J. A. Coker's house to reorganize themselves as the Woman's Missionary Society (WMS) of the Edgewood Baptist Church.

The group had a will to work, and it was not long before they were well-organized and entered into all phases of mission work. Each of the women made personal sacrifices for her own giving, and so their work grew. Soon after the church had moved into the Fieldstone Building, the group had grown into a full organization providing missionary education through the **Sunbeam**

**Band, Girl's Auxiliary (GAs) and Royal Ambassadors (RAs).** In 1927 they added the **Young Woman's Auxiliary.**

The women sought to purchase a lot adjoining the church site, so each woman in the Society was to raise \$20 any way she chose. One woman gave the money she received from selling milk, another from the sale of eggs. (That was before there was a law forbidding cows and chickens in Edgewood.) On June 18, 1930, a special church conference was called to ratify the Woman's Missionary Society's purchase of Lot 4 for \$1000. On this lot, a portion of our current Sanctuary building would one day stand.



**John T. Callaway** was a first-year medical student when he met Frances "Fannie" Haggard at a meeting of the Baptist Young People's Union. Their encounter led to friendship, love, and eventually to marriage. The couple built their home in the Edgewood community and thus were numbered among the community's first settlers, with Dr. Callaway becoming an early mayor of the town of Edgewood.

One night the Callaways were attending a prayer service at the Edgewood Community Church, and an offering was taken toward the construction of a manse (a house occupied by a minister of a Presbyterian church.) Dr. Callaway leaned over and whispered to Mrs. Callaway, "I gave \$50 and would have given \$500 if the collection had been for a Baptist Church." Thereupon, Mrs. Callaway got busy trying to find enough Baptists in the vicinity to organize a church.



**Lemuel Orah Dawson** was a well-educated and respected Baptist leader. He served three terms as president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, was president of the Southern Baptist Young People's Union for 10 years, and was a trustee of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Howard College. After 32 years as pastor of First Baptist Church Tuscaloosa, he moved to Birmingham in 1924 to teach Bible and church history at Howard College.

Soon Dr. Dawson found that the role of pastor was so ingrained in him that he had no desire to make a complete break from his former calling. One day, his availability was made known to Dr. J.T. Callaway, and shortly thereafter, Dr. Dawson was called as the pastor of the newly formed Edgewood Baptist Church. Dr. Dawson began his pastorate with a great deal of optimism. He often wept in his sermons—so full of God's love and anxious for others to accept His love. He wrote about a wide range of ethical and moral problems in his newsletter, *Now and Then*. Dr. Dawson was a gentle man who held cherished beliefs about the role and destiny of this emerging church, which he often shared in his sermons. "Family life is emphasized in our church," he wrote. "The Lord made the family and the church, the only two organizations he ever made."



**The Fieldstone Building**, built in 1925, served as Dawson's Sanctuary and educational space until it was torn down in the early 1950s to make room for new buildings. The first services were held on Sunday morning, December 6, 1925. The church's report to the BBA listed the Fieldstone Building with 11 classrooms and an auditorium with a seating capacity of 300. Worshipping in the new building brought modest pride and unbridled joy to its members. They always began their services on Sunday morning by singing the first verse of *Blest Be the Tie That Binds* and ended with the last stanza. "This little ritual meant so much to us," wrote Mrs. A. S. Outland in the historical account *The First Ten Years*. "It seemed to bring us close together."

*It was just ten years ago, it seems but yesterday,  
Since a group of loyal women met one day to sing and pray.  
It was there we caught the vision that a church was needed here  
In dear old Edgewood community that we all hold so dear.  
And like the God He always is when we ask for guidance true,  
He sent us a leader to show us what to do.  
We circled all around the town and landed with a will  
And like the little busy bees we swarmed on Coker Hill.  
There we gathered all our forces each one carrying his load  
And soon a church was built to Him, on our lot on Oxmoor Road.  
We are proud of our Church and Sunday School too  
Our Young peoples union and W.M.U.  
But let us all be mindful to be good Stewards thus  
And help to give to others, as the Lord has prospered us.  
We should use our many talents for carrying out His Will  
And help to take the Gospel to those around us still.  
We should use our personality to carry out His Plans,  
In fact we should all be faithful Stewards  
in this Edgewood Baptist Band.*

*by Mrs. A. S. Outland*