

KELHAM

Church on the move!

75th ANNIVERSARY
MAY 21, 1989

Kelham, Church on the Move

(A History of the Kelham Avenue Baptist Church)

by

Gene Brewington

**The Kelham Avenue Baptist Church
1989**

Acknowledgements

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Mrs. Gene Brewington, who put up with late hours and piles of papers.

Mrs. Layne Hoel, who slaved away over the copy machine to produce the printed pages.

The pastor who edited everything just the way he wanted it!

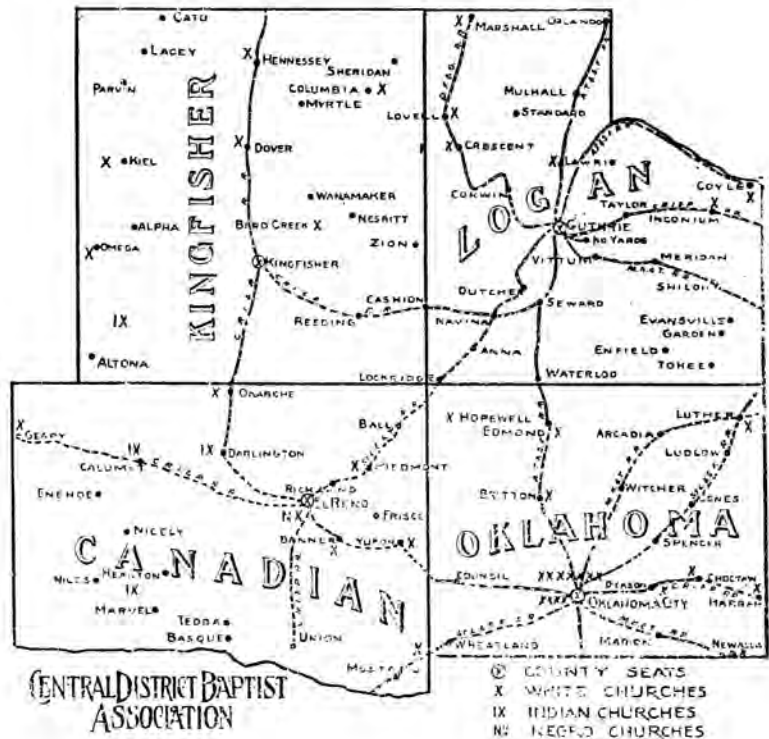
To the friends and members of Kelham Baptist Church for your hard work and support in writing, printing, and assembling this tribute to Kelham Church.

The style manual used was University of Chicago Manual of Style. The book is set in Montreal, a computer font by Casady and was set up on a Macintosh computer.

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The Unassigned Lands



This is from the Associational Book of Reports for 1913

CHAPTER I

I N T H E B E G I N N I N G . . .

Hours before daylight, all around the perimeter of the "Unassigned Lands," the light from countless campfires pierced the darkness. It was too early to get up, but the hopeful settlers were too excited to sleep. The time for the run into the "Promised Land" was only hours away. They must have felt much as did the children of Israel, when Moses led them out of Egypt. Many cups of coffee were consumed that morning, and no doubt there were many silent prayers. For many of those anxiously awaiting "the Opening," this day truly was the first day of the rest of their lives.

April 22, 1889, at "High Noon" was "D-Day." On that day what has been described as "the greatest horse-race in history" would begin. This would not be a run for the roses, but rather a run for survival. Thousands of acres of virgin land was to be given away—to the swift and to the strong. Each claimant had the opportunity to lay claim either to 160 acres or to several city lots. Stretching from the southern border of the Cherokee Strip, south to the South Canadian River and from the vicinity of modern-day U.S. Highway 81 eastward to the Shawnee Nation, this was the former hunting grounds of the Plains Indians and a veritable oasis for the cowmen.

On all four sides of this tract of land were literally thousands of hopeful immigrants. Many were there, no doubt, just on a lark, with no real intention of proving their claim or establishing any type of business. Most, however, were bona fide prospective settlers. Many were victims of

circumstances, looking for a place to begin again. It had been only a few short years since the close of the Civil War, and many had lost everything their families had accumulated before the war. Much of the farmland farther east had eroded to the point that decent crops could no longer be grown. Men predominated among this group, although there were many women and children as well. A great number of the middle-aged males, a very few years before, had been wearing the Blue of the Union or the Gray of the Confederacy. As a whole, sectionalism was virtually forgotten among this group. Perhaps there was some good-natured jibing of one who had been in the opposing Army, but there was little real bitterness.

Those waiting along the Northern Border of the Unassigned Lands were predominantly from Kansas, although before Kansas, their home may have been Tennessee, Illinois, Kentucky, or perhaps somewhere in Europe. Along the South Canadian River, the Southern Border of the territory, the majority were from Texas, although most of them, too, were originally from back East. A great number of those who entered the area from the east, on the Shawnee side, had been former residents of the Indian Nations, perhaps renters or by intermarriage into a tribal group. For some unexplained reason, there were few who entered from the west, although the prospective settlers were allowed three days before the opening to cross the restricted Indian Lands to get to a starting place. Perhaps it was because the Northern and Southern Borders were more widely publicized. The communication in those times was a far cry from the almost-instantaneous communication that we, today, accept as normal. Most of their information was by word-of-mouth or from the available newspapers *when* they were published. As a whole, the newspapers of the day

were as factually correct as possible, except in political reporting, and in that area each newspaper was very partisan.

The only railroad through the area, was the North-South route of the Atchinson, Topeka and Santa Fe. This, no doubt, greatly influenced the direction from which the settlers entered the area.

There was no possible way to make an accurate count of those who made the Run. Later historians' estimates range from twenty thousand to one hundred thousand. Probably a figure in the area of eighteen to twenty thousand is more nearly correct.¹

Many of those anxiously awaiting the zero-hour had been camped along the border for days. Most were poor, hard-working, God-fearing people. Certainly there were charlatans among them. There were those whose only plan was to survive at the expense of others. There were thieves, and there were con men. There was a rather large group, however, of successful businessmen, who saw this as an opportunity to build a better way of life. Many possessed sealed carloads of lumber, food, and other necessities of life sitting on the railroad siding at Guthrie or at Oklahoma City, awaiting their arrival. This group would be the real "movers and shakers" in the coming boomtowns of the expanding territory.

As the hands of the clock slowly approached the magic hour of twelve, there was an electric quality in the air. Each of the hopeful claimants had chosen his own method of reaching the land of his choice. Some were to make the race on foot, or in the vernacular of the day, they were going to ride "Shank's Mare." Others were astride highly bred, Kentucky racehorses. There were ox-drawn vehicles and wagons pulled by workhorses. There were hacks, and there were buggies and surreys. History does not record

¹Roy P. Stewart, *Born Grown*, Fidelity National Bank, 1974.

any "surrey with a fringe on top." Perhaps there were some. Published reports indicate some rode high-wheeled bicycles.

When the signal was finally given at high noon, pandemonium reigned. Each put forth his utmost, with the mode of transportation that he was using, to gain the advantage that would win the prize.

At the north and south terminuses of the railroad as it entered the area were hundreds of other potential settlers who would enter by rail. At the Northern Boundary there were eleven passenger trains awaiting the signal. By the time noon-hour arrived, each of the eleven trains was covered with human bodies. They were inside the cars, on the outside, on top, and anywhere a hand-hold and foot-hold could be found. Most had purchased tickets, but no doubt, there were many who were riding on credit. Many who had purchased tickets and kept the stub had reason to be thankful when later they were challenged to prove they had legally entered and were not "Sooners."

Under normal circumstances the passenger trains averaged about twenty-five miles per hour, but on this day the speed of the trains was held down to that of a running horse. This was designed to give all an equal opportunity. The first train from the Northern Boundary, after a short stop in Guthrie, arrived at the future site of Oklahoma City, at 3:00 P.M. The train from Purcell, on the Southern Boundary, arrived a few minutes earlier.

Although the land had been surveyed into sections and quarter-sections of 160 acres, there was no provision for counties or townships. There were no provisions for townsites either, but the claimants of two adjacent claims could claim them as a townsite and so plat it. Developers of two separate townsite companies were surveying the Oklahoma City townsite within minutes of the official

opening. One company surveyed from the north, while the other surveyed from the south. The two surveys did not exactly coincide. That accounts for the dogleg in the north-south streets that plagued Oklahoma City for many years.

On the morning of April 22 there were perhaps a dozen people who were legally on the site of the future Oklahoma City. These were in addition to the troops under the command of Captain D. F. Stiles, Provost Marshall and Commander of the Tenth Infantry unit. By darkness there were what has been estimated as ten-to-twelve thousand bodies, jockeying for space on the townsite. Perhaps the best account of the event was given by the most noted reporter of the era, Richard Harding Davis:²

These Pilgrims do not drop on one knee to give thanks decorously ... but fall on both knees, and hammer stakes into the ground and pull them up again and drive them down somewhere else, at a place which they hope will eventually become a corner lot facing the post office, and drag up the last man's stake, and threaten him with a Winchester because he is on *their* land, which they have owned for at least three minutes.

Strange as it may seem in retrospect, there were no provisions for any type of formal government anywhere in the area. It was soon painfully obvious that some sort of governing body would have to be organized to settle the numerous squabbles over who owned what. Captain Stiles and his army unit were there to keep the peace, but they refused to become involved in the dissension over ownership of the lots. Within seventy-two hours a committee had been elected to decide the ownership of the various lots and the locations of the streets and alleys. Surprisingly, the people accepted the committee's decisions. Soon tents and shacks were erected on the lucky claimants' lots. A very shaky city government was formed,

²Richard Harding Davis, *Harpers*, November 1892.

and the future capital city was on its way.

During the first few hectic days little thought was spent on religious matters; however, six days after the opening, on Sunday, Private Joseph Perringer, an infantry bugler, walked about the downtown area, sounding "Church Call." The bugler had been dispatched by the Reverend C. C. Hembree, a Presbyterian clergyman of such zeal that he did not wait to be called to a pulpit in the new land. A few of the ex-soldiers recognized the call, and the others, like children following the Pied Piper, fell into line and joined the parade. Under sponsorship of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, a union service was held in the one hundred block of Northwest Third Street.³ The Southern Methodists organized a church about June 1, with the Reverend I. L. Burrows in charge. A. J. Worley was called as pastor September 1. This was the forerunner of the present St. Luke's Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The first Catholic service was held on May 19 at Indiana House, on Main Street between Robinson and Harvey.⁴

The first endeavor of the Baptists was a call by W. H. Tompkins and L. H. North. Through the newspapers they solicited members of the Baptist faith. The first meeting was held on July 21 in a hall above Winningham Brothers Hardware Store, at 123 West Grand⁵. A Sabbath School was organized on July 28. Formal organization was perfected on Saturday, November 2, 1889, at 2:00 P.M. in the Overstreet Building.⁶ Tradition states that there were eleven charter members—eight women and three men. Neither the exact number nor their names are known to-

³Stewart, *Born Grown*.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Phyllis Woodruff Sapp, *Lighthouse on the Corner*, Century Press Publishers, 1964.

⁶Ibid.

day. Were there eleven, fourteen, eighteen, or twenty-one? There are no two lists that agree completely. One thing is certain: the women were in the forefront of organizing First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City.

Within a short time the Ladies' Aid Society was formed. Without more ado, the Baptist women of First Church embarked upon an accepted course of raising money for the pastor's salary and of caring for the church's meeting places.⁷ Phyllis Woodruff Sapp, in her history, wrote, "A legend in the First Baptist Church is that they at one time met over a saloon. The location seems to have been on South Broadway, probably McKinnon Hall."⁸ There is also a tradition that during this first meeting, boards placed across empty beer casks served as pews. The early members were quick to point out that the beer casks were empty!

Sapp noted,

The first pastor, Rev. W. H. Nichols, of Paola, Kansas, took charge of a church of thirty members on April 1, 1890. By June 22 he had led the little group to a glorious day: first foreign mission offering, first baptizing in the North Canadian River, and observance of the Lord's Supper.

The church secured lots at 113–119 West Second Street and built a six-thousand-dollar church building, the finest and the largest in the twin territories. It was dedicated on December 21, 1890.⁹

Because of the Panic of 1893, followed by two succeeding years of drought, the population of Oklahoma City dropped to about four thousand. This did not seem to bother the Baptists, as they established the South Town Mission on May 12, 1895, at South Broadway and Noble.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

Following Baptist tradition, of being *missionary* Baptist churches, First Baptist quickly established two more missions. The Capitol Hill Mission was established May 15, 1897. To the east, Immanuel Mission was established June 18, 1898.

"Oklahoma City's Peripatetic 'Meeting House,'" from *The Daily Oklahoman*, recounts an interesting aspect of the history the era by means of tracing the movement of the portable church building.¹⁰

When a man named Jackson built a little frame chapel at the corner of Broadway and Noble Avenue in 1899, he little dreamed what its influence was to be on the religious history and development of Oklahoma City.

The little chapel was built originally for the use of the Salvation Army, but was later acquired by the Baptists of the city and in 1902 was removed to Washington Avenue and Walker Avenue. Here it was used by the Washington Avenue Baptist Church for almost six months, that now flourishing congregation being organized there. In 1903 it was removed to Capitol Hill. In it the Capitol Hill Baptist Church was organized and it was the only home of that organization for the next two years. Then, in 1905, the First Baptist Church bought the building and placed it on the corner of East Fifth and Phillips streets. It was used for a mission Sunday School in the Maywood district, under the supervision of Dr. H. Coulter Todd for the next year. In 1906 it was again removed to East Ninth and Phillips street, where it was again used for a mission Sunday School under the supervision of G.N. Longfellow.

On October 24, 1907, the little chapel was acquired by the Immanuel Baptist Church, which was the third and last Baptist congregation to be organized within its walls. The Immanuel Baptist Church then had but twenty members, but they were 'game' and bought the building and lots for \$1,367. That night the Rev. Forrest Maddox was called from the Portland Avenue Baptist Church at Louisville, Ky, to the pastorate of the little new church in Oklahoma City.

The Rev. Maddox proved to be a hustler. He got the Baptist state board interested and it helped out financially. The little chapel was torn down and a new temple built last year with a seating capacity

¹⁰Ira D. Mullinax, *The Daily Oklahoman*, August 22, 1909, 3rd Section, page 6.

of 700. The church has grown from twenty members to a congregation of 169. The Immanuel Baptist Church also owns a mission site at the corner of Kelham Avenue and East Fourteenth street, and its total property is worth over \$7,500.

The little church was moved about so often during the days of its existence that among the church people of the city it came to be known as 'the peripatetic meeting house'.

The Rev. Forest Maddox, pastor of the Immanuel Baptist Church, which occupies the site of the old chapel, is a native of Kentucky and a graduate of the Southern Baptist Seminary at Louisville. He has been in the ministry since reaching the age of 18.

The first location of the Immanuel Baptist Mission was the two hundred block of Northeast Seventh. From there the church moved to Northeast Ninth and Phillips. This was their location when they established Kelham Avenue Baptist Mission. Later they moved to Northeast Eleventh and Geary Avenue. The church remained at this location until they merged with Capitol Baptist Church, which was located at Northeast Twenty-eighth and Phillips. Sometime in the 1960s the Capitol Baptist Church disbanded.

CHAPTER II

THE SEED WAS PLANTED . . .

The first Sunday School of what would become Kelham Avenue Baptist Church was held in the living room of Vincent and Sarah Bath. Sarah Bath, a few years later, wrote in the official minutes of the church, that L. L. Scott had charge of the first Sunday School sponsored by Immanuel Church. This was in December 1908. Whatever may have been the exact beginning of Kelham Avenue Church, it is well nigh a certainty that the church would never have attained the stature it did without the continued support of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent L. Bath.

Vincent L. Bath was born in Ohio, May 14, 1858. At the age of three he was taken to Sandusky, Ohio, and he lived there until he relocated in Oklahoma. George and Matilda Bath, who had emigrated from England in 1856, were the parents of Vincent L. Bath. When George Bath died at the age of ninety-four, he was the oldest man in Erie County, Ohio. Vincent Bath's mother lived to the age of eighty-six.

On December 8, 1891, in Green Bay, Wisconsin, Vincent L. Bath married his second wife, Sarah A. Kelham, who for ten years was a teacher in the public schools of Sandusky. Mrs. Bath's parents, John and Elizabeth Kelham, came from Lincolnshire, England, in 1851 and were among the early settlers of that section of the Ohio territory. Mr. Kelham was one of the leading contractors in Sandusky.

Vincent Bath

Sarah (Kelham) Bath

Vincent and Sarah Bath moved to Oklahoma on November 30, 1900. Shortly thereafter he purchased an excellent quarter-section farm on the eastern outskirts of Oklahoma City. Here he built a modern (by the standards of the times) two-story house.

Bath Home, ca. 1909

Situated on a high hill, the house commanded a view of Edmond and the adjoining county. A contemporary article described it this way¹:

The Bath home is a neat two-story structure fitted up in the most modern manner. The equipment includes a private gas plant, hot water, and gasoline engine for pumping water. The house is finished in an attractive style. A spacious porch enables one to enjoy the cool breezes that are wafted in and to command a beautiful view of the surrounding country. In the rear is a spacious and commodious barn, which contains a superb equipment, including several Columbus carriages. Mr. Bath is the owner of four splendid horses, one of which, a colt,

¹*The State of Oklahoma, Its Men and Institutions*, The Daily Oklahoman, 1908, page 77.



Vincent Bath



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Bath Home, *ca.* 1909

promises to develop into a brilliant pacer.

Mr. Bath was a director of the State Fair and was one of the three persons instrumental in locating the fairgrounds on Eastern Avenue at the present location of Douglas High School. Mr. Bath was a director of the Planters and Mechanics Bank, of Oklahoma City, a member of the 150,000 Club, and a Mason. He was also a director of the Oklahoma Trust and Banking Company of Wewoka and treasurer of the Oklahoma Central Oil and Gas Company.

In 1906 a portion of the Bath farm was divided into building lots, of which 346 were sold in forty-five days. He controlled several subdivisions on the northeast side of Oklahoma City.

About 1910, Mr. Bath moved the two-story house westward to the next lot and built a new brick home on the old location. This home was later incorporated into the building that for many years was Hubbard Hospital. The original Bath home was destroyed by fire a few years after it was moved. Mr. Bath later built a home on the east side of Eastern Avenue at 2101 Northeast Fourteenth. This home is no longer in existence.

Vincent and Sarah Bath had no children of their own, but in 1902 they adopted two orphan children, a brother and sister, aged six and three, Augusta ("Gussie") and George.² Sarah A. (Kelham) Bath died December 30, 1922, and Vincent L. Bath died February 21, 1946. Both are buried in the Fairlawn Cemetery, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

The fledgling Sunday School sponsored by Immanuel on Kelham Avenue had a difficult time. There was little money available; so receipts were scanty. To give an idea of just

²George Bath died May 13, 1973 and is buried in Rose Hill Cemetery. Gussie married C. Harper Orth, and was living in 1980.

how tight finances were, the following is taken from the official Sunday School records of the time.³

Owe from last year—\$1.80.
 Jan. 7 Rec'd one back collection—\$.20
 Refunded from last coal for hauling it ourselves—\$.15
 Evening contribution—\$.10
 Jan. 10 Rec'd from Mrs. Anderson—\$.50
 Paid janitor for December 1911—\$1.00
 Mar. 29 Electric light bill, first quarter —\$3.00
 Ladies' Aid paid janitor for April.

In 1909 Vincent and Sarah Bath gave two lots on the northwest corner of Northeast Thirteenth and Kelham Avenue. These were deeded to Immanuel Church for the purpose of constructing a mission building. A twenty-four-foot-by-thirty-foot building was constructed on these lots. L. L. Scott, District Missionary, was the head of the first Sunday School.⁴

³"Account of Church Contributions and Expenses," Kelham Avenue Mission, 1912 (Brewington Collection, Oklahoma City).

⁴Associational minutes for the Central District Baptist Association for 1913 list L. L. Scott as pastor of Dixon Church, Mustang Church, and Walnut Grove Church in Oklahoma City. The minutes also note that "The Baptist District Association was organized at Norman, Oklahoma, August 29-30, 1890. Eighteen churches went into the organization. The Central Baptist Association was organized in 1889. These two associations covered practically the same territory; the first co-operating with the Southern Baptist Convetnion [sic] and second co-operating with the Northern Societies. The two associations were consolidated at Watonga, September 16, 1902." (Tiefel Collection). The minutes for 1926 for the Central Baptist Association record that "the churches of Oklahoma County presented to the association their desire to withdraw from the Central District and organize an Oklahoma County Association, looking to the better development of their mission territory. After a thorough and friendly discussion the association acquiesced in the move and letters were granted to all churches wishing to join the new association." (Tiefel Collection).

Mrs. and Mrs. L. L. Scott ("Scottie")
Baptist Messenger (April 1951)

Finances were a continuous, nagging problem. The amount received for the entire year of 1912, was \$36.61, and the mission's expenses were \$39.40, leaving a deficit of \$2.79. The Ladies' Aid Society used every legitimate means to raise money. They even went from door to door of the members, soliciting payment of tithes.

In spite of the financial problems, there was continued growth in the Sunday School membership. Through the summer of 1913, the average attendance was more than fifty each Sunday. Even when there was little in the treasury, Kelham Mission never forgot that they were a *missionary* Baptist church. The official records show that on April 12, 1913, they sent the entire Easter collection—\$2.56—to be used in the mission field.

During these troubled times, one of the staunchest supporters of the group was George Tiefel, father of Katharin (Tiefel) Taylor. Mr. Tiefel was Sunday School superintendent and Sunday School teacher through all of Kelham's formative years. He continued as a devoted member of Kelham until his death in 1959.



Mrs. and Mrs. L. L. Scott ("Scottie")
Baptist Messenger (April 1951)



George and Estelle Ann (Bledsoe) Tiefel

During this period there were no regularly assigned pastors to Kelham Mission. Sometimes a minister from the district missionary conference would preach. At other times the Reverend L. J. Dyke would deliver the message.⁵ At times there would be a pastor from Immanuel, the sponsor of Kelham Avenue Mission. At other times there would be only Sunday School with a lay member reading some scriptures.

Lodire Judson Dyke
as a young man

L.J. Dyke
in his Oklahoma days

This rather erratic operation continued for some time, until, on April 12, 1913, a few of the workers in Kelham Avenue Baptist Mission met in the mission building to

⁵Lodire Judson Dyke (1840–1927), named for Adoniram Judson, born in Newark, New Jersey, came to Oklahoma in 1891 after pastoring a church in Coffeyville, KS. He had served as a missionary for the American Baptist Home Mission Society to the Wichita and Caddo Indians and led in the building of seventy-six church houses (Thoburn and Wright, *A History of the State and Its People*, Lewis Historical Publications, New York, Vol. iv, p. 588). Associational minutes for 1913 for the Central District Baptist Association list Mrs. L. J. Dyke as a messenger from First Church, Oklahoma City. Gladys Fairchild, her daughter, indicated that when the family moved back to Oklahoma City from Atoka in 1907, they settled at “1521 NE 23rd” and her mother became a teacher of “Class 21” She then began to look for missions work in which to become involved, working first at Immanuel and then at Kelham. Mrs. Fairchild noted that she first served as a Sunday School teacher there, teaching Sarah Bath’s daughter “Gussie” (Personal Letter, Brewington Collection).



Lodire Judson Dyke
as a young man



L.J. Dyke
in his Oklahoma days

discuss the propriety of organizing the mission into a Baptist church. The Reverend Fred W. Barnaclo, who sometimes preached at the Mission, was chosen as Moderator, and Sarah Bath was chosen as Clerk. A committee was formed to canvass and report the number available to perfect such an organization. Those chosen for the committee were Sarah Bath, Fern Varvel, and George Tiefel.

Later that month, the committee reported to the group that there were thirty-seven Baptists who had expressed a desire to enter into the organization of a church. It was mid-December before all of the technicalities were ironed out, and the group gathered in the mission building to organize a regular Baptist church. L. J. Dyke was chosen as Moderator and had charge of the organization services.

The minutes of December 14, 1913, report,

The letters of dismission from sister churches were read and there were thirty-seven names. There was some discussion as to whether those whose letters were presented could be charter members unless they were present in person. The books were to be left open a short time. The covenant was read and those who wished to become members pledged themselves to the covenant. It was decided to take *The Baptist Church Manual* as our guide. Brother George Tiefel was chosen deacon, and Sarah Bath was selected as clerk.

The thirty-seven charter members were as follows⁶:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Mr. George Tiefel | 2. Mrs. Karena Anderson |
| 3. Mr. Emil Johnson | 4. Mrs. Julia Johnson |
| 5. Mr. W.B. Maddox | 6. Mrs. Minnie Maddox (Mrs. W.B.) |
| 7. Miss Anna Maddox | 8. Mrs. Sarah Bath |
| 9. Miss Augusta Bath | 10. Mr. George E. Bath |
| 11. Mr. J.F. Maddox | 12. Mr. Lon M. Maddox |
| 13. Mr. Ohley W. Maddox | 14. Miss Nannie Layne |
| 15. Mrs. Maybell Parnell | 16. Mr. G.A. Warner |
| *17. Mrs. Mabel Warner | *18. Miss Maud E. Craig |
| *19. Miss Laura E. Vermillion | 20. Mrs. Everett M. Johnson |
| *21. Miss Esther E. Johnson | *22. Mrs. Mary Vaughn |

⁶Unpublished minutes, Kelham Avenue Baptist Church, December 14, 1913, p. 4 (Brewington Collection).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 23. Mrs. W.R. Rister | 24. Mr. Nathan Steele |
| 25. Mrs. Nathan (Martha) Steele | 26. Mr. Wiley Steele |
| 27. Miss Debbie Siler | 28. Miss Cleo Soard |
| 29. Mr. A.W. Parsons | 30. Mr. Paul Parsons |
| * 31. Mrs. Nora Pearson | 32. Miss May Pearson |
| 33. Miss Fay Pearson | 34. Miss Lucille Pearson |
| 35. Mr. Ohley Pearson | * 36. Miss Bessie Lowry (also
shown as: Bessie Hull) |
| 37. Mrs. Mary Harasha | |

* Those marked with an asterisk were later granted letters of dismissal.

On January 14, 1914, G. A. Warner, Nathan Steele, Everett Johnson, and Vincent L. Bath were elected trustees of the church.

On May 31, 1914, a business meeting was called to consider calling a pastor. Brother George Tiefel was made Moderator. After some remarks the church decided that voting should be done by ballot. Fred W. Barnaclo received nine votes and L. J. Dyke received eight votes. Before the ballots were cast it was moved, seconded, and carried that the pastorate be for no definite time, but that the pastorate would terminate whenever so decided by the majority of the church. Brother Barnaclo had sent word that in the event of his being chosen pastor, he wanted a written call.

Brother Ewing moved that the call be made unanimous, but when some objected, because it was far from unanimous, Brother Ewing withdrew his motion. Mrs. Bath tendered her resignation as Church Clerk, but it was not voted on by the church at that time.

On June 7, 1914, after the morning service, Brother Barnaclo's letter accepting the pastorate was read. Immediately after morning service, a business meeting was called, during which it was found that the proceedings of the previous business meeting were illegal; seventeen votes were cast, only sixteen legal voters had been in attendance.

It was voted to recall the call to Brother Barnaclo and to give two weeks' public notice that a business meeting was to be held for the purpose of calling a pastor.

Two weeks later another business meeting was held. Brother Dyke had announced that he was not a candidate for the position of pastor, but that he was simply doing what he could to help the infant church. Brother Barnaclo was the only candidate. There were twenty-one present who could legally vote. There were twenty-one votes cast, five for and sixteen against Barnaclo. It was therefore suggested that Brother Dyke be asked to minister to the church with help from R. C. Mills.⁷ The church would operate in this manner until some other method opened up.

On August 12, 1914, another business meeting was held. The church voted to send a letter asking that they be admitted to the Central Baptist Association. The messengers chosen to attend the associational meeting were Nathan Steele, Martha (Mrs. Nathan) Steele, and Everett Johnson. C. D. Ewing was elected deacon. It was also voted to take five dollars from the church treasury to pay the grocery bill of a destitute member.

On December 27, 1914, the first revival meeting of Kelham Avenue Church began, conducted by L. L. Scott, District Missionary for the Central Baptist Association. This seemed very appropriate, as Brother Scott had charge of the missions' first Sunday School organized by Immanuel Church, in December, 1908, that was really the beginning of Kelham Avenue Church. During the revival the church was blessed spiritually, and twenty-six professed faith in Christ. Of the eleven received for baptism, five were baptized at Immanuel Church, by L. J. Dyke. They were John Erickson, Sr., John Erickson, Jr., Irvin Scott, Gerold

⁷The Associational minutes for 1919 give his initials. In the minutes for 1913 he is listed as pastor at Banner Church.

Shaeffer, and Roy Green. The revival meeting lasted three weeks.

On March 7 the church voted to order fifty songbooks, *The New Evangel*, for use in the church and the Sunday School. The total cost was seven dollars and fifty cents.

In May 1915 another business meeting was called to choose a pastor. Since there was only one candidate, Brother Barnaclo, it was deemed in order to vote *aye* or *nay*. There were eight members present, and seven votes were cast. There were six votes for Brother Barnaclo and one vote against him. Since Brother Barnaclo had more than three-fourths of the votes cast, he was declared elected to the pastorate. Sarah Bath resigned as Church Clerk again. It seems she held a definite position regarding Brother Barnaclo as pastor. History may have proved her correct.

In April 1915 the trustees were authorized to secure a deed from the Immanuel Church, to the lots occupied by Kelham Avenue Church. Immanuel agreed to execute and deliver the deed for the sum of \$150. Brother Warner and Mrs. Bath were replaced by Brothers Ewing and Erickson on the Board of Trustees.

A committee was chosen to investigate incorporating the church. The committee consisted of Brothers Erickson and Johnson, and Sister Rillie Ewing.

In April 1915 an internal problem arose.⁸ One of the church members had reportedly made some unseemly remarks directed toward another church member. A fellowship committee was appointed to counsel with the offending member and to request that he apologize to the church. Numerous prayerful meetings were held to counsel the individual, but when the individual refused to publicly

⁸See Appendix A for a photocopy of the postcard sent out to church members on this occasion.

admit his error, the church voted to withdraw fellowship from him. This was the first instance of a member's being "churched" in Kelham's history.

About this same time the pastor, Brother Barnaclo, made some sort of grievous error. Another minister was asked to take care of his duties. In June 1915, Brother Barnaclo came forward and made statement as to his conduct and the fault in which he was overtaken. Motion was made and carried that the church forgive Brother Barnaclo. Brother Barnaclo asked that the church rescind his call as pastor of the church. His request was accepted.

In July 1915, T. B. Cross came to Kelham as interim pastor.⁹ A short time later he was called as pastor of Kelham for seven weeks at two dollars per Sunday. He was apparently a no-nonsense type of individual. At the end of the first church service he held, he asked whether anyone wanted to unite with the church by baptism or by letter. None came forward. Then Brother Cross asked whether anyone wanted to leave the church by letter or otherwise. None came forward. That seemed to settle that.

After the resignation of Sarah Bath as Clerk, J. D. Welborn was chosen to serve. Rilla Ewing, who had been chosen as Sunday School secretary, asked to be replaced, as she was moving away.

A Sunday School picnic was planned for August 9, 1915. The plan was to ride the streetcar, which would leave from Northeast Thirteenth and Lottie at 9:45 A.M. In case of rain, the picnic would be rescheduled for the next day. Memories seem to have dimmed as to exactly where the picnic was held, but it is likely that it was either at the Fairgrounds on Eastern Avenue or at Wheeler Park on the river between Robinson and Walker.

⁹The minutes of the Central Baptist Association for 1919 list T. B. Cross as an ordained minister who was a member of Capitol Hill Church (Tiefel Collection).

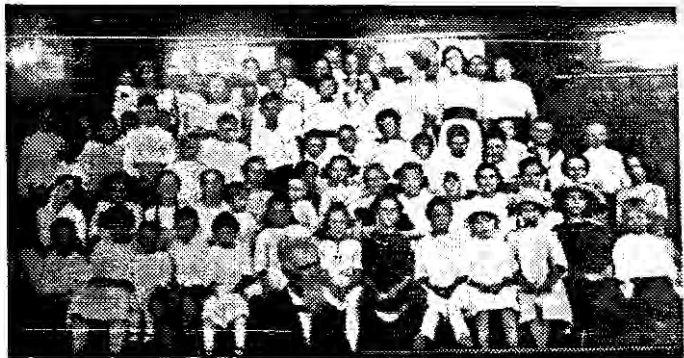
Sunday School Picnic. L. J. Dyke is the man seated in front. The baby in the upper left corner is Katharin Tiefel Taylor.

At the business meeting held on August 11, 1915, a motion was made by Brother Barnaclo that a committee be appointed to ask church members who were going on hayrides on Sunday and on Wednesday nights to cease the habit and to put their time in working for the church. A committee was appointed, but the minutes do not record the results.

The same month, another pulpit committee was chosen, as Kelham had only an interim pastor. It was also decided there would be a deacon ordination, at a time to be chosen, in October. The ordination service was held on the fourteenth, with the ordination sermon being preached by J. H. Haskins. The charge to the candidates, was delivered by T. A. McClain. The four deacons ordained were George Tiefel, C. E. Clark, J. B. Erickson, and J. D. Welborn.

Fred W. Barnaclo also resigned that month as Sunday School treasurer. Fern Montooth was elected. F. W. Barnaclo, his wife, Josephine Barnaclo, and their daughter, Josephine, asked for letters of dismissal, which were granted.

The pulpit committee completed its work, with two candidates being presented to the church. Apparently the



Sunday School Picnic. L. J. Dyke is the man seated in front. The baby in the upper left corner is Katharin Tiefel Taylor.

church did not then follow the practice of considering one candidate at a time as is now generally practiced. The first candidate was S. R. Williams.¹⁰ The vote on Williams was thirteen against and five for. The other candidate was J. D. Cook. Brother Cook was called subsequently for an indefinite period of time. It was decided to ask the state convention for four hundred dollars to supplement the pastor's salary. Brother Cook was sent as a messenger that year to the state convention meeting in Tulsa.

On November 28, 1915, the regular report of the Church Secretary showed the contents of the treasury was \$12.45. At the same meeting it was agreed to pay Mr. Cook \$6.00 a week, in addition to whatever amount was received from the state convention.

The treasurer's annual report for 1915 showed a total amount received for all purposes of \$229.27. Expenses were \$227.00, leaving a balance in the treasury of \$2.29. The average Sunday School offering was \$.60 a week.

On March 1, 1916, Mr. Cook submitted his quarterly report. He had preached twenty-nine sermons, had three additions, conducted eight prayer meetings, performed nine marriage ceremonies, made two hundred and twelve religious visits and held prayer in homes of forty-two.

On June 7, 1916, the church voted to incorporate as a religious corporation, under the corporate name of The Kelham Avenue Baptist Church.¹¹ Trustees were chosen to expedite the incorporation. The trustees chosen were J. B. Erickson, George Tiefel, and Sarah Bath. In July the Corporation Certificate was received, and the President and Secretary of the Ladies' Aid asked for the privilege of framing the certificate.

In July 1916 a musical, sponsored by Mrs. Bath, was

¹⁰Associational minutes for 1919 give his initials.

¹¹That is still the official corporate name of the church today.

presented by the youth of the church. They took in \$4.50 for the musical. Tuning the piano cost \$2.50. The printing of the programs was donated, as were the flowers. Two dollars was donated to the pew fund of the church.

The associational letter for 1916 showed an increase; eleven by baptism, four by letter and one by statement. The total membership was fifty-nine. Eleven dollars and fifty cents had been contributed to state missions. George Tiefel, as Sunday School superintendent, reported an enrollment of one hundred and eight, with an average attendance of forty-eight.

In October W. S. Jones, Mrs. W. S. Jones, and George Jones were received on promise of letter. Brother Jones stated that he was an ordained deacon, and he was received into the church as such. On November 5, 1916, revival services began. Mrs. Swanda was received by statement. G. W. Parnell was received as a candidate for baptism. An offering was taken for state missions, with a total of \$6.35 being collected, allowing Kelham to reach its goal, \$15.00!

In December the messengers to the state convention were elected. The convention was to be held at First Church, Oklahoma City. The messengers chosen were J. D. Cook and wife, Mrs. V. L. Bath, Mrs. L. A. Nokes, George Tiefel, W. S. Jones, and his wife.

At that time the church was behind two hundred dollars on the pastor's salary. Since the pastor's salary was so much in arrears, a motion was made to declare the pastorate vacant. By strenuous effort and sacrificial giving, the amount owed was paid within ninety days. Since Kelham was again without a pastor, the ever-faithful Charley Curb, District Missionary, again filled the pulpit. Within a short time the pulpit committee recommended the calling of Hale V. Davis as pastor. Motion was made and seconded,

and Hale Davis was unanimously chosen on the first ballot. The church voted to ask the state board to contribute ten dollars a month on the pastor's salary.

Officially, Hale Davis was called as pastor on January 3, 1917. Davis was a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University and served as president of the university from 1932 to 1934. He pastored Exchange Avenue Church from 1918 to 1932 and founded Downtown Church. When he was a preacher in the Stockyards area, the Stockyards Union was very strong. The union members did not want Negroes to come into the union. Davis preached against this and apparently made many enemies. At one time there were two sheriff's deputies, armed with shotguns, protecting him from members of the union. According to contemporary accounts, the "shot-gun guards" even attended services held by Davis. Davis died in 1973 at the age of 83, in Denver, Colorado, and was survived by two daughters and one son, all residing in Colorado.¹²

In June 1917 A. J. March was chosen to be ordained as deacon. The church also voted to have an open-air revival meeting to begin the second Sunday of the month.

Copies of the minutes for the period of mid-1917 to early 1941 are missing; so details of events during this time-period are very sketchy. T. C. Carleton was called as pastor sometime in 1918.

In late 1923, a new source of friction arose in the infant church. Northeast Twenty-third Street was recently paved, and Kelham Avenue was still almost impassable after a rain. Lodire J. Dyke, long-time friend of Baptists in general and Kelham in particular, had purchased ten acres of land at Northeast Twenty-third and Prospect,¹³ and he

¹²Vertical File, Oklahoma Baptist University Library, Shawnee.

¹³Thoburn and Wright, *A History of the State and Its People*, note that "Mrs. Dyke, who was always the financier of the family, purchased ten

offered to give Kelham a lot on Northeast Twenty-third for the building of a new church. A vote was taken, and the majority voted to accept his gift and move the church. Pastor Carleton and most of the members moved to the new location, where a wooden tabernacle was soon constructed on the northeast corner of what is now Northeast Twenty-third and Prospect Avenue. The majority of the congregation, as well as the name, was moved.¹⁴ The group retained title to the building and lots at Northeast Thirteenth and Kelham.

T. C. Carleton had come to Oklahoma City about 1908 from Muskogee, where he served as pastor of First Church. He came to Oklahoma from Saint Louis, Missouri, where as a middle-aged man he had served as pastor of LaFayette Avenue Church.¹⁵ He was described by a current member of Kelham, as "one of the kindest men I've ever known." After a few years as pastor of Memorial Church, the name the majority at Kelham adopted when they moved north, Carleton retired from the active ministry. He was attending

acres of land on East Twenty-third Street. This little tract has now become the center of a great new addition to the city, and is laid out in building lots for development and sale." Real estate developers have long known that a church in the community can enhance a subdivision and hasten development. A personal letter from Dyke's daughter, Mrs. Gladys Fairchild, dated January 15, 1974 (Brewington Collection), says, "Mama and Papa felt that another church should be organized in our neighborhood so mama gave the land off of our ten acre tract for a church located on the cor. of 23rd & Prospect."

¹⁴Gladys Fairchild, Dyke's daughter, in her book *New Jersey to Sooner Land* (Personally published, n.d., p. 54), indicated that her father, L. J. Dyke, died of complications from being struck by a car. When a friend visited him on his deathbed and asked, "'Do you think this is the last?' Father said, 'Oh no, I have another church to build.' [He was referring to Memorial Church.] ... but someone else had to finish that church for Father's funeral was the first meeting held in the new church."

¹⁵"Aged Minister Dies Suddenly," *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 5, 1928, Page 1, Col. 3 (Photocopy in Brewington Collection). The article noted that "in the last five years" Carleton "had been assistant to Rev. F. S. Porter, pastor of the Trinity Baptist church, and also had been active in visitation work for other Baptist churches."

a prayer meeting at Trinity Church, at the time of his death in 1928, when he suffered a heart attack. He died at the age of seventy-five, and at the time was one of the oldest Baptist ministers in Oklahoma. He is buried in Rose Hill Cemetery.¹⁶

The name "Kelham Avenue Baptist Church" was deemed inappropriate for the transplanted congregation at the new location; so it was changed to Memorial Baptist Church.¹⁷ Many years later the name was changed again to Northeast Baptist Church,¹⁸ and even further down the span of time, Northeast changed their name to Park Estates First Baptist Church. Years later, the combined church merged back into the original Kelham congregation.

In the meantime at the old Kelham location, some twenty-eight of the former members were left without a church. They had the use of the building, temporarily, but had no church name, no pastor, and few members. Almost in desperation they attempted to start a Sunday School to try to help hold the flock together.

The Sunday School was not going too well when Immanuel Church again came to the rescue. They sent one of their best Sunday School teachers to the old Kelham location, Robert Clinton (R. C.) Howard. R. C. Howard was a long-time agent for the Herald of Liberty, King of Fraternal Orders, a life insurance company, as well as a dedicated Sunday School worker in Immanuel. His only instructions from Im-

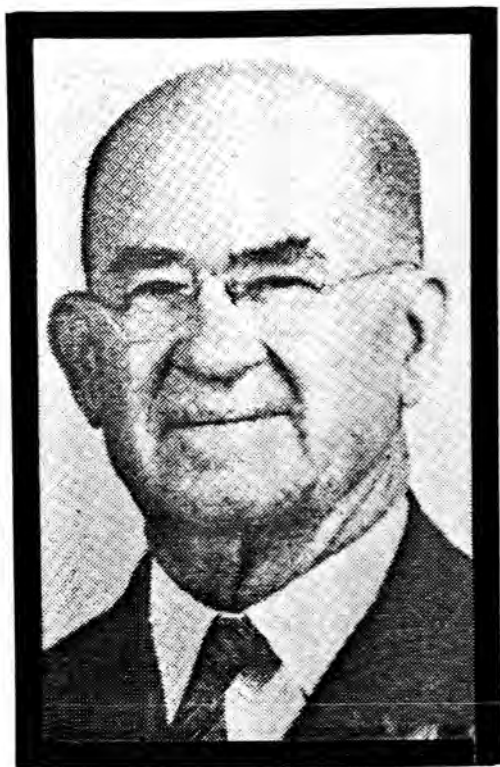
¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Gladys Fairchild wrote it was "named Memorial for Papa's [L. J. Dyke] work in Okla. Later changed to North East Baptist" (Personal Letter, Brewington Collection). *The Baptist Messenger*, April 23, 1924, records that the church voted to change the name to Memorial on April 20, 1924.

¹⁸As Northeast, they apparently had to rejoin the association. Associational minutes for 1932 note, "Committee appointed to investigate Northeast Church as to its standing in the Association (being formerly Memorial Baptist Church). Committee composed of R. C. Howard, A. L. Aulick, [sic] and R. C. Sheldon. Motion carried that Northeast Baptist Church become a regular member of the Association."

manuel were to try to hold the group together as best he could until such time as some way opened up to move them into another church.

If ever there was a special man chosen for a specific purpose to help fulfil God's own plan, it was this man, R. C. Howard. He was the man who would take this group and help weld and mold them into a church that spread the witness of Jesus Christ through many missions and preaching stations.



R. C. Howard (1887-1947)

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his
righteousness; and all these things shall be added
unto you" (Matthew 6:33)

CHAPTER III

GOD' S MAN FOR GOD' S PLAN

Robert Clinton Howard was born near Devine, Medina County, Texas, June 26, 1887. He was delivered into this world by a Negro "Mammy" midwife. He was the son of Robert Samuel and Texas Leona (Blevins) Howard. R. C. reported in later years that the family lived in a two-room log house, consisting of a large room with a plank floor and a kitchen with a dirt floor. He often attended his younger brother while his father and mother picked cotton.

At the age of seven Howard entered the country school three miles away, where his first book was the old *Swinton's Primer*. There was one teacher, and he had about ninety students from seven to twenty-one, grades one to ten. Part of the time R. C. had to walk alone through the pasture to school, though at times he got to ride a horse, sitting behind one of his aunts and holding on to the back of the saddle.

R. C. attended this country school from five to seven months each year, working on the farm evenings and through the summer. He completed the tenth grade, after which he persuaded his parents to send him to Tyler Commercial College, in Tyler, Texas, where he completed in six months a combined stenographic and bookkeeping course. After completion of this course of study he secured a position as bookkeeper and stenographer in San Antonio, Texas. After several months in this position he was elected as a teacher of shorthand, bookkeeping, and other commercial subjects in the Tyler Commercial College. After a few months he was promoted to Manager of the Bookkeeping and Shorthand Departments of a branch

college in Memphis, Tennessee.

In the meantime he had met and fallen in love with Miss Hettie Tilley, of Devine, Texas, and on June 10, 1906, he went back to the old home-place to claim his bride.¹ He was offered a position as bookkeeper, stenographer, and buyer for a furniture store in nearby San Antonio. R. C. and his new bride set up housekeeping in the city in June 1906.

In early of that year, a man came into the furniture store representing the Herald of Liberty, King of Fraternal Orders, of the state of Alabama, with a new and unusual kind of life insurance. After the plan was thoroughly explained, R. C. applied for the maximum amount, which was \$2,500, on what was called the Reserve Fund Distribution Plan. After further study of the plan, Howard became more and more enthusiastic about the plan. Soon he told the agent that he thought he could sign up some members for the plan. The agent told R.C. that he would get a contract written up, and that R.C. could have all of San Antonio, as the agent responsible for the city was going back home to Kentucky.

Soon R. C. Howard was issued a part-time contract, and so began his lifetime association with the life insurance business. He continued his regular job, selling insurance as a sideline. The first two people he contacted bought the plan; so the die was cast.

After about a year in San Antonio, Howard was offered a better-paying job as bookkeeper and manager of a commissary on a ranch near Del Rio. Although the Howards were located twelve miles from town, R.C. went to town every two or three weeks, and he usually managed to sell

¹"Age Not Her Favorite Topic," an article in the Westbrook Collection (Howard Memorial Library, Kelham Baptist Church, Oklahoma City), published on the occasion of Hettie Tilley Howard's ninetieth birthday, indicated that R. C. had been a student of Hettie some years prior to their marriage. She was some six years older than he.

two or three insurance policies.

In the latter part of 1908 Howard resigned from the commissary to devote full time to the insurance and real estate business. Moving back to his hometown of Devine, the Howard family which now included a young daughter, Hazel Kate, quickly settled down. In Devine, R. C. bought his first house on easy terms. After purchasing a good horse and rubber-tired buggy and opening an office, R. C. was ready for business. Selling some town property and some farmland along with his life insurance, he rapidly became well-known in the area.

After operating on a part-time contract with the insurance company for a year or two, R.C. was sending in more business than many of their full-time agents. Almost immediately he was offered a full-time contract, with larger commissions and the privilege of appointing subagents. In 1911 he was offered a contract for the entire state of Texas, providing he would purchase a block of stock in the International Loan and Trust company, the holding company for the Herald of Liberty. R. C. entered into this agreement, and in May 1912, he was appointed Grand Deputy for the state of Texas.

In 1912 an offer was made by the insurance company to reward any of its agents who wrote three hundred thousand dollars of business with a free trip to the head office in Philadelphia and a trip to Atlantic City. The leader was to receive an additional three hundred dollars cash, and the second-place winner was to receive one hundred and fifty dollars cash. Clinching second-place, in August, R. C. along with his family boarded a Southern Pacific Pullman for their dream vacation. None of them had ever ridden on a Pullman before; so they were understandably thrilled. After a week of excitement, it was back to the daily business.

In 1913, for some reason, the insurance company was

not given a license to write their special form of policy in Texas. R. C. Howard had to make a momentous decision. Would he give up the insurance business and concentrate on real estate, or would he give up his home and move to some foreign state? He had become so attached to the life insurance business and to the Heralds of Liberty that the choice was not too difficult.

Since R. C. had heard dire stories of the cyclones in Oklahoma, he chose New Mexico. Early in 1913 the Howard family arrived in Deming, New Mexico. There was not a policyholder in the state, and R. C. did not have a single contact. Within ninety days, he had sold over one hundred policies and was going out to other towns. Soon the company allowed him to enter the Arizona market. A state license was procured, and subagents were appointed. Not long afterward, the state of California was offered to R. C., and he operated there as well.

In 1914, the man who had been appointed to Oklahoma had failed at the job, and R. C. was again offered the Oklahoma territory. In September, Howard, his wife, and three children arrived in Oklahoma City. R. C. Howard soon opened an office and was back in business. Shortly afterward R. C. was offered the territory of Arkansas. Here he appointed more subagents. For many years he had agents in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Arkansas.

In 1924, R. C. gave up all of his state contracts except Oklahoma because he did not want to be away from home so much.² Texas was again opened up for the sale of insurance, and R. C. secured Texas as well, figuring that the travel would be minimal.³ At the same time, R. C.

²"City Man Mixes Insurance with Ministry, Successfully," in the Westbrook Collection, indicated that "slicing the six states from his territory cut a \$40,000 salary to \$20,000." Recall, those are 1924 dollars!

Howard, having felt the call of the ministry for many years, came to the group meeting at the Kelham Avenue location.

Brother Howard was sent out from Immanuel to minister to a group of twenty-eight who had no church and no charter. They did not even own the building in which they met. R. C. was a layman, a Sunday School teacher; but he had the God-given touch. He had the ability to transform this nucleus of twenty-eight into a vital, living, growing church. In twenty years the church grew from twenty-eight members to more than three thousand members. There were more than six thousand additions. Kelham established or supported nearly thirty missions, many of which became self-supporting churches.⁴

When R. C. Howard first came to Kelham, he found a small, disoriented, concerned group of people. They were concerned because there was a reversionary clause in the deed for the church property that stated when it ceased to be used for a church, the property would revert to the original owner. Like the children of Israel, they found themselves wandering in a wilderness. It seemed as if the very foundations of their faith were shaking. Their name and charter had been removed. Unknown to them, however, God, as He always does, had a man, in the person of R. C. Howard, who would lead them forward to greater heights than they had ever before known. Although he had never been an ordained preacher, he had been a deacon, a Sunday School superintendent, a teacher and worker in the church, and a successful businessman.

³Five years later, the Herald of Liberty, King of Fraternal Orders, was reorganized into an old line legal reserve company, and R. C. Howard, Jr., joined his father in the insurance business.

⁴Robert C. Howard, Sr., *Autobiography*, 1941, (unpublished manuscript).

Marker embedded in the sidewalk at the original location of The Kelham
Avenue Baptist Church, NE 14th and Kelham



Marker embedded in the sidewalk at the original location of The
Kelham Avenue Baptist Church, NE 14th and Kelham

Quickly taking R. C. Howard to their hearts, the people at what had formerly been Kelham Avenue Baptist Church asked him to help them to reorganize into a church. The group that had moved to Twenty-third and Prospect used the Kelham Avenue Baptist Church name for only a short time. With the assistance of R. C. Howard the organization of a new church was soon perfected, and on May 11, 1924, it was formally organized with twenty-eight members.

These members were declared Charter Members of the reorganized church⁵:

BROWN, Mrs Roy	LANDIS, Ray
BROWN, T. E.	LANDIS, Mrs. Ray
ERICKSON, J. B.	MAGUIRE, Mrs. H.G. (Mary)
ERICKSON, Mrs. J. B.	OWENS, G. W.
EVANS, Mrs. Mollie	OWENS, Mrs. G. W.
GOODNER, R. D.	SHUMAKE, E. T.
HIGHT, Blanche	SHUMAKE, May H.
HIGHT, Mrs. S. W.	TIEFEL, George
HULL, Weltie	TIEFEL, Mrs. George
JONES, George	TIEFEL, Paul
KIMMEL, Bernice	WHITMAN, Mrs. Elizabeth
KIMMEL, B. L.	WHITMAN, Mrs. John
KIMMEL, Corrine	WHITMAN, John S.
KIMMEL, Mrs. G.T.	WHITMAN, Ruben

The Moderator of the meeting was E. M. Johnson, Clerk.

With the organization of a church the members had avoided the loss of their church property. Letters were issued to those members who desired them by Memorial Church. Shortly after, Memorial Church transferred the deed to the property, the charter, and the Kelham Avenue

⁵Minutes of The Kelham Baptist Church, Howard Memorial Library (Oklahoma City).

Baptist Church name to the reorganized church⁶. Upon completion of the church organization it was voted to call R. C. Howard as their minister. They agreed to pay him seventy-five dollars per month. He accepted the call as supply pastor, and became their pastor even though he was not ordained at the time. The church asked for the ordination of R. C. Howard to the full work of the gospel ministry. On June 15, 1924, he was ordained.⁷

The Baptist Messenger, June 18, 1924, in an article entitled, "Ordination of R. C. Howard to Full Work of the Gospel Ministry," reported,⁸

Pursuant to call of the Kelham Avenue Baptist Church where Brother R. C. Howard has been serving as supply pastor, a council of Baptist ministers and deacons met Sunday afternoon, June 15. The council was constituted as follows: Ministers A. B. Roberts, F. A. Godsoe, T. G. Netherton, W. S. Evans, R. C. Mills, C. E. Myrick, Hale V. Davis, W. W. Stogner, Richard McKinley, Dr. J. A. Price and Evangelist E. A. Petroff of Blue Mountain, Mississippi. Deacons T. E. Gant, W. S. James, George Husted, G. N. Longfellow, Ben Longfellow, W. A. Covington, T. W. Barnes, G. W. Stomp, D. R. Evans, George Tiefel, and R. E. Whitton.

The presbytery organized by electing F. A. Godsoe, moderator; W. W. Stogner, clerk; Evangelist E. A. Petroff to conduct the examination; A. B. Roberts to deliver the admonition; W. S. Evans to present the Bible; and T. G. Netherton to offer the ordination prayer.

⁶The actual transfer, according to the original document, "Resolutions Adopted by Memorial Baptist Church" (Westbrook Collection), was June 7, 1925. The document itself is a curious instrument, with The Kelham Avenue Baptist Church (operating then as The Memorial Baptist Church) transferring title, rights, and property on Kelham Avenue to The Kelham Avenue Baptist Church. See Appendix B.

⁷Traditions circulated that Howard's pastor, Dr. Ridgeway, in an attempt to keep Howard at Immanuel called off the ordination service. It has good attestation from Katharin Tiefel Taylor, whose father was a deacon of Kelham at the time. Oddly enough, the article in *The Baptist Messenger* (which is printed in its entirety on pages 38-39, does not mention Dr. Ridgeway as having been present when his former Sunday School superintendent and deacon was ordained to the ministry.

⁸*The Baptist Messenger*, June 18, 1924.

Upon completing the examination, which showed that Brother Howard was well taught in the scriptures and sound in Baptist faith, the council recommended to the church that the ordination be proceeded with.

Rev. R. C. Howard is a successful businessman and has recently yielded to a call to preach which he has felt from childhood and according to his testimony even an active, devoted, self-sacrificing Christian life as deacon, Sunday School superintendent for years, teacher and worker could not take the place with him of complete submission to God's will. Brother Howard has been called as pastor of the recently reorganized Kelham Avenue Baptist Church and together as pastor and people, may they live and prosper, knowing the rich fellowship of those who walk and work with God.

With R. C. Howard as the leader, the growth of the Kelham Avenue Baptist Church was phenomenal. Brother Howard was a strong believer in tithing. He believed that everyone should give at least one-seventh of his time and one-tenth of his earnings to the local church. He certainly practiced what he preached. He never accepted any pay as pastor and gave much more than one-seventh of his time.

Although he never attended college or graduated from a seminary, Robert Clinton Howard became one of the most successful Southern Baptist pastors of his day. He was pastor of only one church and never received a dollar of salary because of his successful insurance business.

"City Man Mixes Insurance With Ministry, Successfully," an article in the Westbrook Collection, evidently written in 1945, twenty-one years into the ministry recites R. C. Howard's nightmare weekly schedule:⁹

The general schedule is: Monday morning, insurance dictation; Monday afternoon, church calls; Tuesday, all day, church work and sick calls, unless there is an emergency at the office. Wednesday, insurance, all day, unless there is a church emergency; Thursday morning, insurance; Thursday afternoon, church; Friday, calls on prospects and prepares

⁹Few people realize R. C. Howard, Sr., was only fifty-eight years old at the time of his death.

sermon; Saturday morning at the insurance office, and in the afternoon makes extra arrangements for Sunday services.

At night the pastor calls on prospects, has meeting, corresponds with the 200 service men of the church, many of whom he writes personal letters. He sends them Christmas candy and cookies and remembers them other holidays.

He says he never gets tired, never worries, but admits the routine keeps him pretty busy.

Of course, there are those days when three funerals occur the same morning, visiting religious leaders come to town, all the state representatives of his insurance company come to his office for a meeting, and an unexpected legal conference about church properties is called. But it all works out, he says.

It is because he places, 'First Things first,' he believes.

As the church continued to grow, it soon became evident that more room would be required. R. C. Howard expressed it this way¹⁰:

First we built on to the old original 24 foot by 30 foot. Then we built a tabernacle 30 feet by 60 feet where the Educational Building now stands. Then we purchased four more lots to the west of us on Fourteenth Street and then in 1928 we began the erection of the present auditorium, and then we purchased two more lots on the corner of Thirteenth and Kelham and moved the frame building to it. Then we tore down the tabernacle with the sawdust floor and built in 1936 our present Educational Building.

R. C. Howard was ordained in the middle of June; on July 2, 1924, bids were taken on the labor to enlarge the building. As early as June 11, almost five hundred dollars had been subscribed to the building fund. On Sunday August 17, 1924, Katharin Tiefel (Mrs. Karl Taylor) joined the church, as did Verna Darnold (Mrs. Francis Wolfe). On this same day, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Perry, parents of Mrs. Cecil (Helen) Cotner, joined.

¹⁰*The Baptist Messenger*, May 31, 1946.

Those early years were exciting; Kelham grew explosively during this time period. In August, when R. C. Howard was barely two months into his ministry, forty members were baptized in a lake in the twenty-six hundred block of Northeast Sixteenth. In September the White Orchard Circle placed a memorial window in the church in honor of Sarah K. Bath. In January 1925, The Howard Memorial Library was started. In this same year the Ladies' Aid paid off the one-hundred-dollar note that had been borrowed to finance the new addition. In June, the first mission volunteer, Bernice Kimmel, came to Kelham.

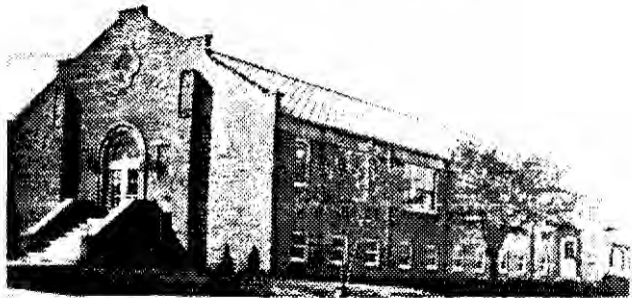
Sometime during that year, Kelham purchased two lots near Northeast Fourteenth and Kelham, and Sarah Bath donated the corner lot. Plans were drawn to build an auditorium. It was to be a brick building, fifty feet by one hundred and ten feet, with a full basement. The auditorium was to seat eight hundred persons. There were seventeen classrooms, a nursery and a kitchen in the basement. The building was dedicated November 18, 1929. The dedicatory sermon was given by J. B. Rounds, Baptist State Secretary.

The new auditorium of The Kelham Avenue Church

Brother Howard had always been a believer in missionary work, his church having contributed more than seven thousand dollars to the missionary endeavor in the first four

years of his ministry. It was not long after the dedication that Brother Howard led his flock to be deeply involved in local missionary work.¹¹

¹¹The different lists of Kelham's missions vary, depending on the source. Appendix C contains the best information available to this writer.



The new auditorium of The Kelham Avenue Church

Chapter IV

MISSIONS ACCOMPLISHED

No church has had as many "failures" in missions they have started as has Kelham. Kelham made an attempt to start at least ten missions that were not successful. At times the wrong location was chosen; perhaps another Baptist church already existed nearby. At times population shifted, and the need for the mission ceased to exist. Some missions were started in areas where there were not really enough people nearby. Many of these were abandoned for one reason or another. Even in these so-called failures, we must ask, were they really failures? Later, churches were started at the same locations in which Kelham attempted missions. Many found Christ in these "failed" missions. "Failed" missions were not anything for which Kelham should be ashamed. Many of them served the purpose for which they were established, even though only for a short time.

Although no church in Oklahoma City has had more mission failures than Kelham, the converse is also true. No church in Oklahoma City—perhaps in the whole state of Oklahoma—has established more *successful* missions than has Kelham.

In the early 1930s, R. C. Howard established what he called "Gospel Teams." These teams usually consisted of a group of laymen from the home church who went into surrounding areas and in schoolhouses and other available buildings and presented the gospel of Jesus Christ. From the reports given by these Gospel Teams, it soon became evident that the fields were ripe for the harvest and that

Christians should therefore fulfill the Great Commission of making disciples.

One of the members, who had recently built a modest four-room house not near any other church, said to R. C. one day, "Brother Howard, could we establish a Sunday School in my home on Sunday afternoons?" R. C. replied that they certainly could. The following Sunday afternoon, a group with three or four teachers met at the woman's home. The member had assembled eighteen or twenty people together, mostly children. After stating the purpose for the gathering, the group was divided into three or four classes. After teaching the lesson for the day, R. C. brought a brief message to the people and announced that the Sunday School would be held each Sunday afternoon in the future.

The following Wednesday night the matter was brought before the church, and the church voted to establish this as a mission point, extending the arm of the church. The church also elected a superintendent of the mission Sunday School. The first mission station, known as North Mission, was on its way.¹

After a few weeks attendance had grown to more than forty and the four-room house was overrun. A teacher would take four or five pupils out to a car and teach the pupils in this makeshift classroom. Soon the necessity for a house in which to meet became apparent. The church agreed to buy the material to build a twenty-by-thirty-foot building with a dirt floor. The bill for the material was \$325, including the roof. One of the men's classes agreed to build the building. The woman who had initiated the work offered two lots for a building.

¹Howard, *Local Mission Stations*, (Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Atlanta, n.d.).

The Women's Missionary Union agreed to provide a chicken dinner if the men would build the building. On the appointed day about fifteen men and the pastor went out to construct the building. Although the builders were slowed considerably after dinner, the house was still finished before nightfall. The following week, benches were built for the building. An old pulpit was salvaged; someone donated a baby bed for the nursery; and the mission was in operation. From that time, on a regular basis, Sunday School was held in the building and a short sermon or exhortation was delivered by the superintendent. Prayer meeting was held on Thursday evening so that the pastor of the home church could meet with them. R. C. Howard deemed this a must for every mission station.²

Several years later this building was moved to another location in the city that held greater promise.³ Only future historians can decide whether the North Mission was a "failure" or a success, but for those seventy-five who made professions of faith there is no question that the work succeeded.

After the first mission was well under way, "an intensified mission spirit broke out" in the church.⁴ Two or three members went to the pastor and talked about establishing missions at other points. One young man and his wife and a helper or two, with the approval of the church and the pastor, went to a schoolhouse several miles out in the country and started a Sunday School that met on Sunday afternoons. However, "the roads were so muddy in the winter that a car could not get there and the work was abandoned."⁵ This is likely what was known as the

²Ibid.

³This became the building for the Sixty-Third Street Mission, established in March 1935 (*Baptist Messenger*, May 18, 1939).

⁴Howard, *Local Mission Stations*.

"Mexican Mission."

Not many months elapsed until the man who had been superintendent at the first mission felt that someone else could do a better job there. He wanted to move on to a new field. A schoolhouse, located "some two miles from the home church on the same side of town and not close to any other church,"⁶ was chosen for another mission site. With the permission of the trustees, an afternoon Sunday School was started in the basement of the schoolhouse. This was called Crooked Oak Mission. After establishment of the mission, R. C. Howard held a two-week revival, resulting in twenty-seven professions of faith, most of whom were baptized. Ground was leased, and a forty-by-fifty-foot tabernacle, with sawdust floor, was erected. The building cost \$1,200.

The mission continued to grow, and about "200 souls were baptized from the mission."⁷ When the home church deemed the mission "large enough to be self-sustaining,"⁸ it was recommended that it become a church. The church was organized in 1934 with 122 charter members. It was called Eastern Avenue Baptist Church. The name was later changed to Victory Baptist Church, located at 2205 Southeast Fifteenth. Victory, in turn, sponsored Sooner Mission, which became the Sooner Baptist Church. This church established the Westminister Road Mission. Victory Church is still a functioning Baptist church in 1989.

R. C. Howard, "hearing of the discontinuation of an Interdenominational Sunday school, six or seven blocks from our State Capitol,"⁹ and the pending sale of the

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

building, went out on the day of the sale. The building was to be offered to the highest bidder by sealed bids. The building was about twenty-by-thirty-feet with a sawdust floor. According to his own account, R. C. figured someone might bid seventy-five dollars or possibly seventy-six dollars; so he bid seventy-seven dollars. His bid was the highest; so he bought the building.

The following Wednesday night Howard told the church what he had done, and they voted to reimburse him for the building. The building was in a poor location because of muddy conditions; so with ropes, a Ford car, and several helpers, the building was moved to a better location. Located on rented land, the church's fourth mission, to be known as Capitol Mission, was established.¹⁰

This mission was set up like the previous ones, with a Sunday School superintendent and teachers from the home church. Young preachers with no place to preach began to appeal to Brother Howard for a location. Many of these young preachers got their training in this and other Kelham missions.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Howard's missionary spirit comes through in his comment on this occasion: "One of our largest churches in the city at the time I bought this, refused to buy it or to have a mission, saying we didn't need over four churches in Oklahoma City, or five at the outside." The 1987 Annual of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma listed eighty-three churches reporting in the Capital City Association!

Capitol Mission

Capitol Church, 1951

In 1941 the Capitol Baptist Mission was constituted into the Capitol Church, with eighty-seven charter members. All property was given to the new church. A new building located at Northeast Twenty-eighth and Phillips was completed and dedicated in 1948. The pastor at that time was W. A. Squyres, father of Ray Squyres, current Kelham member.

Capitol sponsored two missions, Ridgecrest and Crestline. In 1954 Capitol had five hundred members with an average of three hundred and ten in Sunday School.¹¹ In later years, due to a shift in the population, Immanuel, the mother church of Kelham, merged with Capitol.

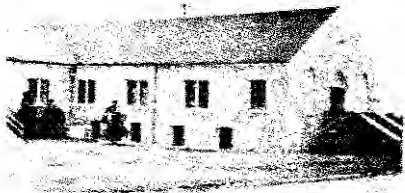
The fifth mission commenced by Kelham was located in the northwest section of the city. There was no Baptist church within two or three miles. Some people in the neighborhood sent word that if Kelham would build a building, the people would procure the lots.¹² The church voted to establish a mission there and to move the building from the first mission site, located on north Kelham Avenue. The people bought a tax-title lot for fifty dollars

¹¹"Capitol Baptists Plan Ceremony," *The Daily Oklahoman*, May 1, 1954.

¹²Howard, *Local Mission Stations*, recounted that this mission arose out of concern for an impoverished widow lady who told him she could not afford the \$1.75 it cost to take her children to Sunday School by streetcar.



Capitol Misslon



Capitol Church, 1951

CAPITOL BAPTIST
CHURCH

1948

DEDICATED TO GOD

PASTOR W. A. SOUTHWELL

and the building was moved onto the lot. A three-week revival was held and forty-eight people were baptized from this mission. Within a month the members outgrew the original building; so a new auditorium forty-by-fifty-feet was built, and the original building, "the whole thing, bell and all,"¹³ was moved around to the back to be used for Sunday School purposes.

This mission was known as the Sixty-Third Street Mission and also as University Heights Mission. Established in 1935, this mission became University Heights Church in 1942. It was located at 701 Northwest Sixty-third. Later it became Westernwood Church, located at 13024 north Western Avenue.¹⁴

University Heights
Mission, 1951

University Heights Church, 1939

In December of 1934 the sixth mission was started. It was known as Foster Mission.¹⁵ It was located in the southeastern section of the city, in the newly developing oil field. This mission was first established in a home. Later a good tract of land was donated by Henry Vernon Foster,

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Howard noted that the first superintendent of this mission later surrendered to preach. One of his first converts was his own eight-year-old son, who himself surrendered to preach.

¹⁵*Baptist Messenger*, May 18, 1939.



University Heights
Mission



University Heights Church

president of the Indian Territory Illuminating Oil Company.¹⁶ This company brought in the discovery well on December 4, 1928, in the Oklahoma City field, when Oklahoma City Number One began production. The mission was located at Southeast Fifty-fifth Street and Foster Road.

Foster Mission, 1939

¹⁶Howard (*Local Mission Stations*) later reflected that he had made a mistake in not asking for a whole block of land, instead of the half block Foster's representative offered.



Foster Mission, 1939

After receiving the land, construction was immediately started on a building that was forty-by-fifty-feet with a wooden floor and a shingle roof. The cost of the building was about twenty-five hundred dollars. It was completed in February 1935.¹⁷ A. E. Teem, who was killed in the service in World War II, was the first minister.¹⁸ Within a year the congregation outgrew the original building, and an educational building was added. In 1940 Foster Mission was constituted into a church. The name was later changed to Twin Oaks Baptist Church, and they relocated to Southeast Twenty-ninth and High. Still later the name was changed to Crossroads Baptist Church, at 929 Southeast Twenty-ninth.

The next mission project Kelham began, located near the downtown area, where no organized church work was being done, was known as the Downtown Mission.¹⁹ This was among a very destitute group of people in the heart of the Depression. A licensed preacher found a vacant store building in which he wished to start a mission. The matter was brought before the church, and it was voted to start a mission and sponsor the preacher there. Howard lamented, "We could only pay him \$5.00 a week, but he threw papers and did other things to help out."²⁰

Several revivals were held at the mission, and one man, who later became pastor of a Baptist church near Oklahoma City, was saved. Another Baptist church started a mission only a few blocks away; so Kelham's mission was abandoned.

¹⁷*Baptist Messenger*, May 19, 1939.

¹⁸Arvil E. Teem is mentioned in detail on page 81 in Chapter V, "A Prince Has Fallen."

¹⁹Kelham also supported Brother Ballew in the Kiamichi Mountains beginning in 1935 (Mary Fike, "History of Kelham Baptist Church").

²⁰Howard, *Local Missions*.

The other church operated their mission for a few months and then quit. Was this Kelham mission a failure? One man, who became a licensed minister, was saved, and he was instrumental in the salvation of many more. A failure? Hardly, by eternal standards.

The eighth mission, Irving, was established in December 1937.²¹ A committee searching for a building in which to meet was unable to locate anything. Kelham's people decided to bring Mohammed to the mountain. "We decided that the next best thing, until we could find a place, was to take our cars and go down . . . and take them over to our home church, and then take them back again. . . . Sometimes as many as 15 to 18 cars would go, and sometimes it was necessary to make two trips."²²

When a building finally was rented, it was close to the downtown area. Irving Mission "was organized in a little store building," according to Brother Howard.²³ In 1938, Kelham "bought a seven-room dwelling" at 308 Northeast Seventh for the mission, and it quickly outgrew it. In 1939, the Sunday School attendance was "over 250 per Sunday" and "more than 150 have been saved at this mission." Irving rapidly grew, and even though there were as many as two hundred in attendance and one hundred and four baptized in Kelham through this mission in 1945, there were setbacks. The neighborhood was in transition, and there was another Baptist church located in the area. Out of this mission came several Baptist preachers, two of

²¹Irving Mission sprang from the missionary heart of a member of Kelham, a former foreign mission volunteer who had been turned down because of health. As a schoolteacher at Irving School her heart went out to the hundreds of children she saw who had no Sunday School or church life. She approached Brother Howard and placed a burden on his heart for the area.

²²Howard, *Local Mission Stations*.

²³*The Baptist Messenger*, May 18, 1939.

whom became full-time pastors in Oklahoma City churches.²⁴

Irving Mission constituted as a church in June 1946.²⁵ Later that year the church was able to purchase the building of what was "formerly the Maywood Presbyterian Church."²⁶ Kelham "voted to give them \$200, and individual pledges were made for \$335."

Irving Church (formerly Maywood Presbyterian Church)

On April 18, 1956, Irving voted 58 to 8 to sell their deteriorating building.²⁷ The building was bought by New Zion Baptist Church for "\$8000 cash . . . and a note from them for the balance of \$22,000 at 7% interest."²⁸ The

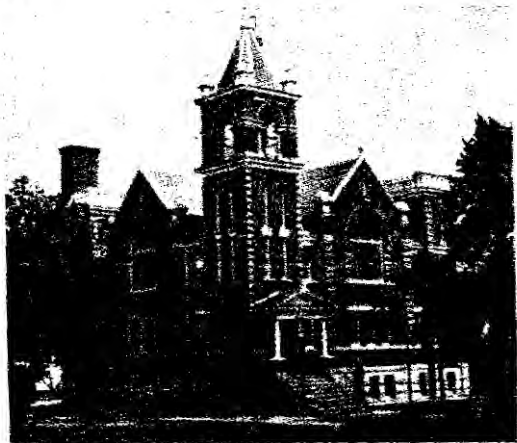
²⁴Ibid.

²⁵*The Baptist Messenger*, June 7, 1946.

²⁶*The Informer*, Kelham Baptist Church, November 24, 1946. The property was located at the corner of Ninth and Stiles. Kelham gave Irving their original buildings and site, which they sold to use toward the purchase price. In addition, Kelham cosigned the note with the Home Mission Board.

²⁷Minutes of the Irving Baptist Church, April 18, 1956 (Kelham Baptist Church Collection). Only five years earlier the property had been valued at fifty thousand dollars.

²⁸Three months later the church voted to sell the note without recourse, accepting a discount if necessary.



Irving Church (formerly Maywood Presbyterian Church)

church then voted to borrow money "to purchase Airforce [sic] chapel & hospital buildings, [and] have them moved to new location." In September 1956, Irving changed their name to Utah Avenue.²⁹

As the number of Kelham's missions began to multiply, R. C. Howard established a practice of holding a monthly meeting during which he and the pastors from the various missions met to discuss the progress and the problems of the missions. These meetings were started in 1939, but during the war because of rationing of gasoline and tires, they were suspended.³⁰ While they were held, they were very effective in solving the problems that inevitably arose.

The tenth³¹ mission started by Kelham was Lone Star, located at Northeast 109th and Eastern.³² It was started in a schoolhouse, pastored by a young preacher who was paid enough to enable him to commute back and forth to Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, each week.

Morris Roe, one of the preacher boys who finally

²⁹Minutes of the Irving Baptist Church, September 2, 1956. The minutes reveal the church chose "Utah Avenue" over "Sunset Baptist." Minutes for September 12 reveal that Kelham cosigned the note for the Utah location until financing was arranged through the Home Mission Board of the Convention. (See Chapter VII for the strange odyssey that brought Kelham and its former Irving Mission back together again in the Utah Avenue building.)

³⁰Another helpful practice was a monthly "Sing-Song" in which the members of the missions and Kelham gathered one Sunday afternoon a month for a short joint service. This reinforced their ties with the home church. This, too, was stopped by wartime rationing.

³¹There was actually another mission of sorts begun during the Depression when a Baptist preacher who was out of work approached Howard. Kelham rented a vacant building that already had pews in it near Union Depot. The work lasted until the preacher was elected as superintendent of a school in another town, where he also served as pastor of a country church. Kelham had helped a preacher feed his family, and several made professions of faith through this work.

³²*The Oklahoma County Baptist*, September 1951 says that "Kelham opened the work at Lone Star in 1933."

graduated by means of this arrangement, got his start at Lone Star Mission. During the war Roe was a chaplain in the South Pacific and baptized many people from the Navy into the membership of Kelham. After the war most of these were lettered out to local churches in various areas of the country.

Lone Star Mission, 1939

Kelham operated Lone Star Mission for about eight years. A church located much closer to the mission wanted to assume sponsorship; so it was transferred.³³ After operating Lone Star for two months the other church abandoned the mission and it went out of existence for some time. Later, however, the work was started up again, this time successfully.³⁴ By the time of its constituting in 1959, Lone Star mission was the "oldest in the Oklahoma County Baptist Association."³⁵ At the time of its

³³Kelham Avenue Baptist Church minutes for July 8, 1942, note, "Motion carried to discontinue the work at Lone Star."

³⁴Lone Star was adopted again by Kelham in special business session on October 27, 1946 (Minutes, Kelham Baptist Church). At that time Richard Skeel ["Skiel" is the spelling in "Mission Coming of Age at Ripe 15," *Oklahoma City Times*, October 17, 1959] was elected as pastor of the mission by Kelham.

³⁵"Mission Coming of Age at Ripe 15," *Oklahoma City Times*. The article noted that the mission "dates back to 1931." That may be correct. The article also observed that the work "was revived in 1944." The mission likely struggled from 1942 until 1944, when it was begun again and sponsorship was then assumed again by Kelham in 1946.



Lone Star Mission, 1939

constituting, Jack Rodgers, who was married to the daughter of Gene Strahan (the “taxi driver” who began the work at Plainview), served as pastor.³⁶ Jack Rodgers’ father, O. T. Rodgers, was a deacon of Kelham. At the time of its constituting, the pastors of Lone Star Mission had been Orval Ray, Richard Skiel, James Alexander, Milo Riggs, and T. H. Holt.³⁷

Another mission, whose genesis and fate is lost in the shadows of time, was called “Riverside” mission.³⁸ It was begun in 1934 and lasted only some two months. It was located in what was called “Mulligan Flats.” It was probably not R. C. Howard’s unnamed benevolent mission started near Union Depot.³⁹ At the same time Kelham began support of an unnamed mission in China.⁴⁰

According to R. C. Howard, the eleventh missionary effort, the identity of which is uncertain, was “some twelve miles”⁴¹ out, at Spencer. The location had a

³⁶The *Oklahoma City Times* noted that “Lone Star is one of 29 missions established by Kelham in its long history. Seventeen of these have become independent churches.” This count may be accurate, but there is no way of actually determining these numbers with anything approaching certainty.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Mary Fike, “History of Kelham Baptist Church” (1961).

³⁹See above, page 54, n. 29.

⁴⁰Mary Fike (“History of Kelham Baptist Church”) noted that in 1931 “Lina Beck Hoppel came as church missionary, and she started a Great Commission Band, who with its pennies and offerings helped to start mission work in China. Kelham supported four foreign missions. This had nothing to do with the Gospel Mission Movement in China at the first of the twentieth century; it was simply the outreach of a *missionary* Baptist church. Support for another unnamed China mission under a Reverend Johnson was begun in 1934 (Fike). Beginning in 1931 Kelham supported a mission started by a Reverend Wilcox in Brazil. His picture is in Kelham archives in the Howard Memorial Library. Later (see note 86, page 72) Kelham supported work in Egypt (beginning in 1936 according to Mary Fike’s “History of Kelham Baptist Church”) and in South America.

⁴¹Howard, *Local Mission Stations*.

Baptist church but it had gone under and the building had been abandoned. The people could not pay a pastor even five dollars a Sunday. Kelham voted to send a young preacher out and pay him five dollars a week. The work grew; times got better; and the work was reorganized into a functioning church. "We had been used of the Lord to re-establish a dead church."⁴²

One of the oldest Baptist churches in Oklahoma County was the Dickson Baptist Church.⁴³ "It had never had a building, but had met in homes and in the Star School house."⁴⁴ It had conducted preaching services now and then (mostly then!) and had finally ceased to exist. A member of Kelham was attending Oklahoma Baptist University and wanted a place to preach. Kelham sent some men out to assess the situation. They contacted the trustees of the school, who agreed to allow a Baptist Sunday School in the building.⁴⁵ A Sunday School was started, but there seemed to be nothing but trouble. "People who were not Baptists didn't understand why they couldn't take the Lord's Supper with us. They fussed because we used Baptist literature and refused any other kind."⁴⁶

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³The minutes for the Central District Baptist Association for 1913 show "Dixon" with L. L. Scott as pastor (Tiefel Collection). Associational minutes for 1919 do not show either "Dixon" or "Dickson." The name also appears in the *Minutes of the Oklahoma Baptist Association of Oklahoma* as "Dixon." In 1940 "Dixon" is noted as a new church in the statistical tables.

⁴⁴Howard, *Local Mission Stations*.

⁴⁵The "wall of separation" between church and state was not viewed to be as high or as solid it is now.

⁴⁶Ibid.

Dickson Baptist Mission, 1939

Dickson Baptist Church, 1951

The old Dickson Church had at one time purchased about one-half acre of land at 2000 North Spencer Road, which was still in their name. A deal was made whereby Kelham and the defunct Dickson Church joined forces. A building was erected on the land, and Kelham's twelfth mission was born. The mission grew, and in 1940 it was constituted into a Baptist church. It is still operating in 1989.

The thirteenth mission was one that Kelham inherited, so to speak. Some members of another Baptist church, using money loaned by R. C. Howard, had built a small building.⁴⁷ The other church tried to operate it as a mission, but soon gave up, asking Kelham if they would take it over. It was known as Packingtown Mission, because it was located in the Packingtown area. When the mission was established it was the only place of worship in an addition in which five hundred people lived. Due to a shift in the population, however, this effort was finally abandoned.

Barnes Mission was the next mission established by Kelham. Started in 1936, it was located at Southeast Fifty-ninth and Anderson Road and originally met in the Barnes School. The preacher that first started it soon gave up, but Kelham continued to support the mission. Kelham purchased a tent, put it up in the area, and held a revival. A good number of people were baptized. The mission slowly grew, and soon enough money was accumulated to build a

⁴⁷Howard noted that "it was on the opposite side of town from us, and I have tried not to establish missions in the territory of other Baptist churches; so I loaned the man the \$20.00."



Dickson Baptist Mission, 1939



Dickson Baptist Church, 1951

building forty-by-fifty-feet.⁴⁸ The church continued to grow, although very slowly. It finally reached the point at which it could be self-supporting, and on January 13, 1958, it was constituted into a Baptist church, with Gene Palmer as pastor. The church continued as a mission of Kelham for twenty-two years. The name has since been changed to Crestview, and it remains an active church, located at 7715 South Hiwassee Road.

Barnes Mission, 1939

Barnes Mission, 1951

May Avenue Mission had originally been established as a mission of Northwest Church.⁴⁹ At the request of Northwest, Kelham took responsibility for May Avenue in 1939.⁵⁰

Southwest Friendship Church, 1951

⁴⁶*The Oklahoma County Baptist* (September 1951) describes the location at that time as "5 miles East and 1 mile South of Midwest City."

⁴⁹Mary Fike, "History of Kelham Baptist Church."

⁵⁰*The Baptist Messenger* (May 18, 1939).



Barnes Mission, 1939



Barnes Mission, 1951

In 1941, the building was moved around the corner onto Southwest Thirteenth.⁵¹ In June, Gene Strahan, who was serving as mission pastor brought a request from the church to change the name to Friendship Mission.⁵² Later the church moved to 3001 Southwest Sixteenth and the name was changed to Southwest Friendship. It was constituted into a church in 1948.⁵³

The third Baptist church to be organized in Oklahoma City was the Washington Avenue Baptist Church.⁵⁴ After thirty or so years, it fell into the hands of a man who styled himself after J. Frank Norris. These were the days of Norris's heyday. Due to a divisive spirit, the church split several times,⁵⁵ and wound up losing its property, some of

⁵¹"May Avenue News," *Oklahoma City Star* (Kelham Avenue Baptist Church Edition), May 2, 1941.

⁵²Minutes of the Kelham Avenue Baptist Church, June 4, 1941.

⁵³*The Oklahoma County Baptist*, September 1951.

⁵⁴In all likelihood, Capitol Hill, which also began in 1902, was the second church in Oklahoma City, though some from Washington Avenue seem to have claimed that in later years (1936–1938 in associational records) by calling the church "Second Baptist Church." The street on which the building, built in 1927, is located is now called Second, but it was not renamed until later. Associational minutes in later years indicate 1902 as the date of Washington Avenue's constituting. The minutes for 1913, list 1903. Nineteen hundred and two is the date listed in the minutes for several years for the Second Baptist Church at the same address as Washington Avenue. This was evidently one of the many splits the church suffered or an attempt to change the image of the church by changing its name.

⁵⁵The associational minutes for 1926 do not show Washington Avenue. In 1928 associational minutes report a membership for the preceding year of 545, with current membership of 497 and 39 baptisms. Minutes for 1929 report has no figure for total members but lists 59 baptisms. In 1930, membership was reported as 437, with 71 baptisms. The associational minutes for 1931 do not mention Washington Avenue. It is absent until 1939, when Kelham took it over as a mission. In 1937 Second Baptist appears in the minutes with the same address (601 W. Washington) and founding date (1902) that Washington Avenue reported. That year Second Church reported Clarence Cain as pastor, 32 baptisms and a total membership of 70. Carl Nunn, son-in-law of Clarence Cain, founding pastor of Fortieth Street stated that when he came to Wash-

which was foreclosed on by the creditors and sold at a sheriff's sale.⁵⁶ With the help of three others, who were cosigners on the note, R. C. Howard bought the building for seventy-five hundred dollars.⁵⁷ The building had originally cost more than twice that amount and was in excellent shape.

Kelham voted to start a mission there, but Kelham could not afford to purchase the building; so R. C. Howard carried the note on the building. It was in the downtown area and had an auditorium that is reported as seating five hundred people.⁵⁸

The first Sunday there were four people in attendance. The next Sunday there were seven from the community and four from Kelham.⁵⁹ The next Sunday there were eleven from the community. The work grew slowly, but within six months it was able to support a full-time minister. In 1939, it was organized into a church. At that time, R. C. Howard sold the group the building for what he had paid.⁶⁰ The church operated for several years until conditions ap-

ington Avenue in 1938, the old-timers called it Second, as it is reported in associational records for 1936-1938 (Telephone Interview, May 15, 1989).

⁵⁶Howard, *Local Mission Stations*.

⁵⁷The Minutes of the Oklahoma County Baptist Association for 1939 under petitionary letters asks that "the 40th St. Baptist Church, which was organized in regular form May 7th, 1939, be received into our fellowship." Financial records for Kelham Avenue Baptist Church reveal that Kelham took over financial support of Washington Avenue from May 1939 to September 1939, at which time evidently they became self-supporting. Associational Minutes for 1940 reveal that Washington Avenue petitioned the association for membership and were received. Carl Nunn stated that Fortieth was started because the group did not want to be a mission of anybody (Telephone Interview, May 12).

⁵⁸If this is the building standing at 215 S. Dewey, the calculation must have been a typical case of ministerial overstatement!

⁵⁹Howard, *Local Mission Stations*.

⁶⁰Ibid.

parently deteriorated again.⁶¹ Associational records for 1941–1946 continue to show Washington Avenue as a church, and no letter petitioning for membership is recorded. It may be that Kelham (through R. C. Howard) took over some financial support of the church, but that the church did not consent to becoming a mission of Kelham.

Washington Avenue ceases to show up on associational records in 1947. If, as this writer assumes, Washington Avenue depended on R. C. Howard for financial support, at his death in May 1947, the church-mission went out of existence. The neighborhood was in transition, and urban renewal and Interstate 40 subsequently destroyed most of the area. Thus was the strange genesis of the second Washington Avenue Baptist Church, the building of which still stands and is visible on the north side of Interstate 40 downtown. It is located at 215 S. Dewey, just west of Walker. The northeast side of the building proclaims the name in raised brick.

In 1952, *The Sunday School Builder* ran an article on the history of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, and its missions through the years. On the cover, a graphic portrayal shows Kelham and its missions, listing Fortieth Street but not listing Washington Avenue. No sources available to this writer show that Fortieth Street ever became a mission of Kelham.⁶² The published minutes of

⁶¹Minutes for Kelham Avenue Baptist Church, March 12, 1941, record this puzzling entry: "The pastor and deacons present the following recommendations: (1) That we extend an arm of the church to Washington Avenue and receive it as a mission, with the assurance that the pastor ["the" is struck through with "our" inserted] would bear any financial responsibility." Kelham Baptist Church deacons' meeting minutes for March 10, 1941 indicate that Washington Avenue was "to be disbanded" and the church to become "an arm of our church" with "Pastor to guarantee operating expense." Financial records of Kelham for the period immediately following do not show any money from the church going to Washington Avenue.

the Oklahoma County Baptist Association for 1940 contain this statement: "We, your committee, on reception of new churches, recommend that the 40th St. Baptist Church, which was organized in regular form May 7th, 1939, be received into our fellowship." The church, pastored by Clarence Cain, came out of the defunct Second-Washington Avenue Church and first met at the pavilion at Belle Isle Park, east of the present Penn Square Mall.⁶³

⁶²Contemporary sources that list Fortieth Street as having been a mission of Kelham are *The Oklahoma County Baptist*, (August 1951), Kelham's Building Dedication Day program (September 7, 1952), and Dycus's, "A Stranger Looks Inside a City Church: Kelham Baptist Just 'Grows and Grows,'" *Daily Oklahoman*, April 28, 1954 (Brewington Collection). All omit mention of Washington Avenue as a Kelham mission. The associational minutes for the Oklahoma County Association for 1946 list 1939 as the date of constituting of Fortieth Street. That date is the date Fortieth petitioned the association and was accepted. The minutes for 1945 report 1945 as the date of constituting. That is the date included in all sources that list Fortieth as having been a mission of Kelham. Associational minutes for 1945, however, list only two churches as being admitted to the association at the annual meeting: Midwest City and Pennsylvania Avenue. Records for 1944 list no new churches. During this whole period Clarence (E. C.) Cain is listed as pastor. There is probably no solution short of heaven to this puzzle—if heaven keeps associational minutes!

⁶³Telephone Interview with Carl Nunn.



Fortleth Street Baptist Church

Fortieth Street Baptist Church

With the available records, it is not certain exactly where the sixteenth mission was located. "There was a struggling Baptist church in the edge of Oklahoma City, with another non-cooperating Baptist church just two blocks away."⁶⁴ Finally a pastor was called who thought the situation could not continue in this manner for long. He proposed that the two churches consolidate, with Kelham operating it as a mission. The two churches and Kelham agreed, and the building and lot were deeded to Kelham. The pastor served the church for a few months and then resigned to attend Oklahoma Baptist University. The church building was sold to another denomination, and the money was used to build a building at Barnes Mission.

Soldier Creek Mission was the next mission sponsored by Kelham.⁶⁵ There had been an interdenominational Sunday school operating in the schoolhouse at Soldier Creek for several years. First one kind of preacher would pastor for a time, then there would be no preacher for weeks. It was a very ineffectual operation. Finally a young licensed preacher who had no place to preach asked R. C. Howard if Kelham would sponsor him if he tried to establish a Baptist church in the area. The members of Kelham approved the plan, and the young preacher went to work. "Soon a Baptist from the city moved out into the country. He began to tithe, and the Lord blessed him greatly."⁶⁶ He gave five

⁶⁴Howard, *Local Mission Stations*.

⁶⁵In the same year the "Louisiana Boat Church," with Ira Marks as pastor, was started, according to Vogt's "History of Kelham Baptist Church" (unpublished). Minutes of the business meeting for August 11, 1943 report, "That we give Bro. Ira Marks \$100.00 for Louisiana extension work."

⁶⁴Howard, *Local Mission Stations*.

hundred dollars for a building to move the mission out of the school, and a building was built. The work progressed so well that by 1943 the mission was constituted as Soldier Creek Baptist Church.

Soldier Creek Church, 1951

Almost fifty years later, the church, located at 9020 Southeast Fifteenth, is still ministering to the spiritual needs of the area.

The exact location and name of the eighteenth mission is another that is lost in the clouds of time. It was started in a small store building located "out some five miles on the highway."⁶⁷ The work was carried on there for about two years, baptizing "quite a number,"⁶⁸ with about forty to fifty attending Sunday School. When the sixteen-by-eighteen-foot building burned the work was abandoned.

The next mission adopted was Franklin Mission. Located some six miles east of Hollywood Corner on Franklin Road,⁶⁹ twenty miles south of the city, Franklin had functioned as a church for several years. During the Depression population shifted, and the church ceased operation. With financial help and faithful support from Kelham,⁷⁰ the

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹"Hollywood Corner" was the name given to the intersection of U.S. 77 and Franklin Road because of the little community called Hollywood located there.



Soldier Creek Church, 1951

church was reactivated. After about two years as a mission, it was in a financial condition again to operate on its own.

The twentieth mission begun by Kelham was started in a honky-tonk. A member of Kelham, a taxi-driver, Gene (D. E.) Strahan,⁷¹ had felt the call to preach.⁷² Brother Howard told him that if he could locate a place to start a mission, Kelham would sponsor it. Shortly afterward, Strahan reported that he had located a building on North Lincoln, on Highway 66, some "five miles north of the Capitol."⁷³ It had been known as The Lucky Penny Bar,⁷⁴ but it was now closed. The man who owned the building said that he had been getting fifty dollars a month rent, but he was so disgusted with the renters that he would rent it to the church for twenty-five dollars a month. He offered to sell the building for \$2,250. The church rented the building with a ninety-day option to buy.⁷⁵

Strahan, was sent out with two or three helpers, and a

⁷⁰Joe Lynch and Al Perry attended often.

⁷¹Gene (D. E.) Strahan served as mission pastor at May Avenue (Friendship) Mission prior to this. He is reported as pastor of Capitol Church in the minutes of Kelham when Irving was constituted on June 9, 1946. He retired from associational missions work in Texas in 1983.

⁷²A letter, dated July 24, 1942, from the Friendship Mission and signed by its Secretary, Mrs. Eula Poage, says, "We, the members of Friendship Mission, feel that our pastor, D. E. Strahan, who has been with us the past sixteen months, has had sufficient time and opportunity to prove to our satisfaction that he is truly called of God. In conference, we voted to petition the Home Church to ordain our brother into the full ministry of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Minutes of the Kelham Baptist Church, August 1942).

⁷³Howard, *Local Mission Stations*. The distance estimate is R. C. Howard's and is not correct. Howard noted that "it is in a tourist camp community, with not many residences nearby."

⁷⁴"A Stranger Looks Inside an Oklahoma City Church: 'Little White Church on Hill' Is Getting Bigger Fast," *Daily Oklahoman*, n.d. (Brewington Collection).

⁷⁵Howard, *Local Mission Stations*.

mission was started. Strahan put out circulars, telling the people that the one-time dance hall was now a soul-winning station. The first Sunday there were fifty-two in attendance. Miss Wilma Meyer, a long-time member of Kelham, was one of the most dedicated helpers. The mission operated in The Lucky Penny location for some time, but when a revival was to be held it was held in a tent on four lots donated by George Leach, a Baptist layman.⁷⁶ This was located at Northeast Forty-sixth and Lincoln. The group voted to stay in the tent and not return to The Lucky Penny. The preacher at the time was John Roe,⁷⁷ who believed the church would eventually get a building and move out of the tent on George Leach's lots.

Finally, Kelham voted to build a building at 205 Northeast Forty-sixth, on the lots donated by Leach. Lincoln Mission, which became Plainview Baptist Church on September 5, 1948, stayed at this location until the area became too industrialized to support a church. At that time they built a new building at 7105 North Kelley.⁷⁸

⁷⁴"A Stranger Looks Inside an Oklahoma City Church: 'Little White Church on Hill' Is Getting Bigger Fast."

⁷⁷Ibid. In 1951 Roe was in the Crippled Children's Hospital with polio (*The Oklahoma County Baptist*, September 1951).

⁷⁸The church moved in 1961, according to "Silver Anniversary Sunday," *The Oklahoma City Times*, November 10, 1973.

Plainview Church, 1951

Plainview began its own mission, Southeast Baptist Chapel, which became Beverly Hills Baptist Church, located at 400 Southeast Fifty-ninth. Some of the ministers who have served Plainview were Jimmie Rogers, John Roe, Kenneth Witt, Dick Fisher, Roy Critchfield, and his brother, David Critchfield.⁷⁹

On August 5, 1945, the East Reno Mission was started. It was located on three acres of land in a developing neighborhood.⁸⁰ This was the twenty-first local mission supported by Kelham. The mission was started with a revival in an old tent. The tent was pitched in a cornfield, and when the tent was destroyed by a windstorm, a neighbor, Mr. Pace,⁸¹ allowed the group to meet in his basement.⁸² Construction was started on a rock building with an auditorium and basement. The new building was ready for occupancy in six months. Within four months after the founding of the mission, Sunday School attendance was up to eighty.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Howard (*Local Mission Stations*) recounts his concerns for the Meadowview subdivision in Midwest City: "In this particular locality, I saw one house after another go up. I have been scared half to death that someone else would get in there and build a church of some other denomination. I tried to buy the acreage mentioned but could get no price offer. The owner seemed not to care to sell, but finally last summer we got a proposition out of the owners and bought some three acres, and now we have a whole block, a most beautiful location." It is a fitting tribute to R. C. Howard's vision that the church started there is The Howard Memorial Baptist Church.

⁸¹Pace is called "Bro. Frank Pace" in *The News-Bulletin* (Kelham Avenue Baptist Church Edition), July 29, 1949; so he may have been a church member.

⁸²Mrs. Pace said that one morning they had eight-nine downstairs in the sixteen-by-thirty-foot basement, not counting those upstairs in the bedrooms, which were used for Sunday School rooms (Telephone Interview, May 17, 1989).



Plainview Church, 1951

About the first of January 1946, it was decided to change the name to Meadowview. On December 14 of the same year, it was voted to change the name to Howard Memorial, in honor of Kelham's long-time pastor, R. C. Howard. Howard Memorial Mission became a church on Sunday July 31, 1949, with 213 charter members. Orval Ray was pastor when it was constituted as a church and continued as pastor until early 1956.⁸³ Howard Memorial was the twelfth church to be constituted from twenty-three local missions, sponsored by Kelham during the years R. C. Howard served as pastor.

Howard Memorial Church, 1951

The twenty-second mission was started because the women of the neighborhood of Northwest Fifty-eighth and May Avenue asked help from Kelham in the establishment of a Sunday school.⁸⁴ It was started in a two-room house

⁸³Telephone Interview with Mrs. Ray, May 1989.

⁸⁴Howard reported the beginnings: "In October, 1945, a lady called one day on the telephone and said ...'My husband and two sons were converted and baptized from one of your missions, three or four years ago. I thought maybe you would be interested in helping us. We have found a little two-room dwelling that is vacant and the owner says we may have free rent for three months if we use it for church purposes.' We told her we would be interested and would be right out, so my



Howard Memorial Church, 1951

that had no electricity and no heat. It was eight miles from the home church. The first Sunday afternoon a Sunday School was held. The first meeting had thirty-two women and children and one man in attendance. A student at Oklahoma Baptist University was secured as pastor.

The mission was first called Milam Mission, from the name of the housing development in which it was located.⁸⁵ Mrs. Clara King, a real pillar of the church, devoted her untiring efforts to further the progress of the mission. Some of those from Kelham who labored at the new location were Bess Graham and Marie Daugherty.

The first pastor was Jimmy (James H.) Bitner, who was later a missionary to Chile. The next pastor was Johnny Brewster. Then came Buddy Magruder. About this time Jack Rodgers came as song leader. Then there was a Mr. Dyer and a Mr. Holt. Other pastors who received some of their training at this mission were Paul Sanders, Skip Buford, and Damon Corley. The name of the mission was later changed to Linn Avenue.⁸⁶ Mr. and Mrs. Claud Holland, stalwart members of Kelham, attended Linn Avenue and served in various positions.

assistant and I got into my car and in thirty minutes we were out on 58th and May, eight miles from our church."

⁸⁵Howard recalled the subdivision: "There is about one house to a block, a few blocks have two houses; it is probably 80 acres of land, most of the house are two and three-room affairs." Howard did not note in *Local Mission Stations* that he bought the lot to secure property for the mission and then sold it to Kelham for what he had paid for it. A warranty deed in the minutes of Kelham records that.

⁸⁶May 7, 1946, was the date, according to "Church History Notes" included in the August 7, 1946 minutes of Kelham Baptist Church.

Linn Avenue Mission, 1951

The twenty-third mission, and the last one to be established under the leadership of R. C. Howard, was Crutcho Mission, located on Northeast Twenty-third, near the Taylor Boy's Home. Started on January 11, 1946, there were thirty-four present the first Sunday. R. C. Howard impressed upon those attending that this was a greater number than the thirty-one who had attended the first Sunday he preached at Kelham. The mission progressed, and in 1952 it became Crutcho Baptist Church.

R. C. Howard served as pastor of Kelham for twenty-three years, during which twenty-three local missions were supported or established.⁸⁷ Though there were other missions Kelham established after R. C. Howard, we could well say, "Missions accomplished!"

⁸⁷There were other missions established after R. C. Howard's day. The total number of missions is difficult to determine and depends upon the historian's criteria for what is classified as a mission. Records indicate a mission called "Magerus," a short-lived effort in the home of John Quickle during November 1949–January 1950. Kelham also had four foreign missions during R. C. Howard's service. One was in Egypt, pastored by Seddik W. Girgis. The Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention took over support of this work in 1958. At one time, the Egyptian work was the only Southern Baptist work in the whole country. Minutes for May 3, 1944, show San Martin, Argentina, also was a mission site, with Kelham spending almost \$2000 to build a mission church building.



Linn Avenue Mission, 1951

CHAPTER VI

JUSTICE, HALL, AND A MOVE

Without the leader on whom they had depended for so many years Kelham was like a ship without a rudder. R. C. Howard had been such a tower of strength that it was difficult to visualize Kelham operating without his strong leadership. After the initial shock had subsided, the staff and the officers of the church, knowing what must be done, immediately went into action. Jack Lyall had been called as music director in March of 1947, before Brother Howard passed away, and he came on the field in June of that year, before a pulpit committee was elected.¹ It was almost two months after Brother Howard's untimely death at the age of fifty-eight that a pulpit committee was appointed and the first step of rebuilding was accomplished. The committee were among the ever-faithful stalwarts of the church: R. C. Howard, Jr., C. C. Freeney, Homer Myers, George Tiefel, and E. M. Gibson.²

Prayerfully the committee began its work. They were certain God had already chosen a leader for His flock. Although there were others considered, the committee was unanimous that the pastor God had selected for them was pastor of First Church, Atoka, Anson Justice, a native Oklahoman.

¹Minutes of Kelham Baptist Church, March 21, 1947.

²Ibid., July 6, 1947.

Anson Justice

Anson Justice was born near Elmore City and graduated from Lindsay High School and the University of Oklahoma. His graduate work was done at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He was baptized, married, and ordained in First Church, Norman, under "Preacher" (Edgar F.) Hallock. Justice served as the first pastor of Trinity Church, Norman for seven years.³ He then served First Church, Atoka, for more than six years. His wife is the former Nadean Turner of Norman. They have three children, Ruth Ann, Laurence, and Paul.⁴

Feeling certain that they had located the pastor who had been chosen by God to lead the flock at Kelham, the committee recommended to the church that it tender a call to Anson Justice. Justice accepted the call, and on September 1, 1947, he came on the field as Kelham's spiritual leader.

On June 20, 1948, a seven-room house, to be used for a parsonage, was purchased at 917 Northeast Nineteenth Street for fifteen thousand dollars.⁵

Under Justice's leadership, Kelham continued its role as a *missionary* Baptist church. The church set a goal to establish at least one mission a year. In 1947 a radio program was started with Anson preaching each Tuesday morning at 7:45 A.M. over station KLPR.⁶

³Anson Justice was the mission pastor at Trinity, Norman, and saw the church through its constituting.

⁴"Program of Dedication Services," September 7, 1952.

⁵*The Baptist Messenger*, July 2, 1948.

⁶*Ibid.*, October 3, 1947.



Anson Justice

The parsonage on Nineteenth Street

In 1948 Newalla Mission was founded⁷ and three former missions were constituted as churches. These were Plainview (formerly Lincoln Mission), Shields Boulevard located at 3704 Shields Boulevard,⁸ and Friendship, located on Southwest Fifteenth.

Southwest Friendship Church, 1951

⁷Mary Fike, "A History of Kelham Baptist Church" (Brewington Collection).

⁸Mary Fike noted that Shields Boulevard was started as mission in honor of the later R. C. Howard. In the minutes for the deacons meeting of June 9, 1947, Harold Lassiter, Brother Howard's assistant and acting leader after his death, introduced "Bro. Steele from our new Mission, Shields Blvd. Baptist Mission." Later Lassiter became pastor of Shields Boulevard.



The parsonage on Nineteenth Street



Southwest Friendship Church, 1951

Shields Boulevard Church, 1951

In 1949 there were eighty-nine more people baptized in Kelham than in any other church in the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma.⁹

It was also in 1949 that Kelham member Albert McClellan, editor of *The Baptist Messenger*, left for Nashville, where he initially served as Publicity Director for the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention. When he left, this tribute to Kelham appeared in the last issue of *The Baptist Messenger* edited by him:¹⁰

And Kelham Avenue, with R. C. Howard and Anson Justice as my spiritual mentors, how can I ever be anything except an Oklahoman? Kelham gave me a broad view of what heaven is like, where fellowship is deep and kind, where people love each other, where God and all his interests come first, Kelham with all her children churches and grandchildren churches. Kelham with her abundant liberality. Kelham that gave my two sons their first consciousness of what a great church can be like. Kelham will always be a part of me. Glorious Kelham. It could happen only in Oklahoma.

In 1949 Howard Memorial, originally East Reno Mission and then Meadowview, constituted into a church, and in 1952 Crutchon Mission, located at 6900 Northeast Twenty-third, received its charter as a church. The Chairman of the Missions Committee at the time was M. J. Jones.

In 1951 space was again at a premium. There were two alternatives. The church could expand the present facility, or they could move. There was much soul-searching and a great deal of discussion as to the proper course. A drastic shift in population was occurring. The location on Fourteenth and Kelham was not as desirable a location as it once was because a great number of the members had moved from the area to other parts of the city. The

⁹Ibid, February 4, 1949.

¹⁰*The Baptist Messenger*, July 28, 1949. The frontispiece of this issue has a typographical error in the date, indicating 1948.

transitional nature of the neighborhood "made some members doubt the wisdom of added building at the site."¹¹ A choice had to be made. Some thought a new location should be sought and that the church should be moved. Others felt that they already had so much invested in the old location that they could not afford to move. There was no easy answer.

After much prayer and a thorough discussion of the available options, it was finally decided to bring the matter to a vote of the members. When the vote came it was two hundred and fifty to sixteen to remain in the old location.¹² The die was cast.

From the perspective of time it might be easy to say the church made the wrong decision. Such a conclusion, however, would be simplistic, for it disregards the dynamics of the church and the community in troubled times. Moving the facilities any substantial distance would have meant abandoning the members of the church. Later a move was made twenty blocks north, but even that meant hardship for some members. Another factor to be considered in the equation was a rather substantial amount of money that had accumulated in the treasury. Many hours were consumed in suggestions concerning proper use of the funds. Voting to build eliminated possible contention and moved the work ahead.

When the church decided, no time was wasted. Plans were drawn for a new educational building, to be located on the corner of Northeast Thirteenth and Kelham. This was the location of the original white-frame building and its additions, and it was still being used as part of the church operation.

¹¹"A Stranger Looks Inside a City Church: 'Kelham Baptist Just Grows and Grows,'" *Oklahoma City Times*, April 4, 1954, Page E-1.

¹²*Ibid.*

Disassembling the original building

Lockhoma Mission was a rapidly growing mission and needed additional buildings. The original building was sawed into two sections, and moved to Lockhoma, where it continued in the Lord's work for many more years. Actual construction had begun on the new educational building before the old building was moved. The new building was built around the old as much as possible.

The new building was two-storied with two single-story wings. The foundations on the single storied sections were built so that an additional floor could be added on when required. When completed the new building contained 5,600 square feet.

The new educational building

As soon as the educational building was completed all church functions were moved into the new building, and re-



Disassembling the original building



The new educational building

modeling of the old auditorium began. As originally constructed the old auditorium was built over a basement, with an entrance several steps above street level. Remodeling plans included lowering the auditorium floor to street level, adding thirteen feet to the front of the building, five feet to the rear, and seven feet along the north side. The new sanctuary was designed to add an additional three hundred seats, bringing total seating capacity to one thousand and fifty. The new sanctuary was described at the time as "conventional enough to be like a church and modern enough to be up-to-date."¹³

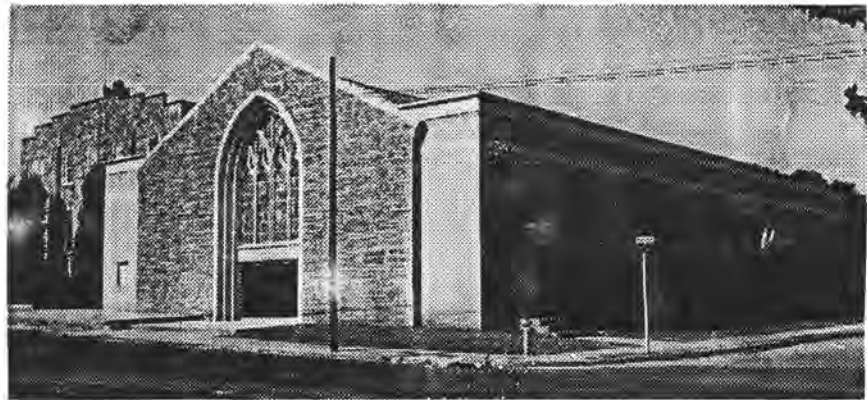
In later years Anson Justice recalled, "We decided to shoot the works and it seems to have been the right decision. We have members driving in from all over the county each Sunday. Our membership has risen to two thousand and four hundred."¹⁴

Remodeled auditorium

Designed by Architect Bryan Miller and constructed by Milner Construction Company, the new building was one of the most beautiful in the city. The exterior was pink

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.



Remodeled auditorium

Clinton brick, trimmed with two bands of marblecrete cast stone, with a cornice of the same material. The front was built of Crab Orchard stone surrounding a massive arch, which enclosed elaborate rose window towers above glass doors that seemed to invite the worshiper to come into the house of God.¹⁵

The color scheme of the interior was light green and rose, with cinnamon carpet down the aisles and rose drapes across the baptistry. The building was completely air-conditioned. A completely new baptistry was installed as well as new walnut pulpit furniture. The new building was dedicated on September 7, 1952. Regular services were held in the morning, and the dedication was held in the afternoon.

The dedication opened with the Processional, which included the pastor and deacons, mission pastors, and pastors of churches organized by Kelham Avenue Baptist Church. Mrs. Ferman Phillips was the organist. Dr. M. E. Ramay addressed the assembled group on "The Hazards of Going On."

Some of the notables who attended were the Honorable Johnston Murray, Governor; Allen Street, Mayor; Dr. Hershel H. Hobbs, President of the Southern Baptist Convention; and Dr. T. B. Lackey, Executive-Secretary of The Baptist General Convention Oklahoma.¹⁶ During the

¹⁵"Program of Dedication Services," September 7, 1952.

¹⁶Personal letters of congratulation were received from such Southern Baptist legends as Dr. R. G. Lee (see Appendix D for the letter from Lee); Dr. E. D. Head, President of Southwestern Seminary; Dr. J. Howard Williams, Executive Secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Texas; Harold Lassiter, then serving as pastor of First Church, Flat River, Missouri; Joe Burton, Editor of *Home Life*; John Wesley Raley, President of Oklahoma Baptist University; and Dr. Harold Graves, President of Golden Gate Seminary (Justice Collection, Howard Memorial Library). In addition telegrams were received from J. D. Grey (First Church, New Orleans) and Porter Routh (Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention). These also are in the Justice Collection.

evening worship the baptistry was used for the first time. The song service was led by R. C. Howard, Jr.,¹⁷ who was also a member of the building committee. Ruth Ann Justice and Beverly Howard¹⁸ sang a duet.

The following year the missionary growth of Kelham continued as Lockhoma Mission was started with Max Caldwell as pastor. In January 1953 Jack Rose, of Harrah, came as the new Music Director.¹⁹

In January 1954 the educational building was completed and dedicated. During construction of the remodeled auditorium, part of the educational building was used as a temporary auditorium for the church.

In late 1954 Anson Justice resigned to assume the pastorate of Crestwood Church, Oklahoma City, where he remained until his retirement from the active ministry. *The Baptist Messenger* (January 12, 1978) indicated that Anson Justice retired January 1, 1978, after forty-six years as an Oklahoma pastor. He had been moderator in three associations, was a former president of the state convention, and was a member of the board of directors of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. During his ministry he preached 160 revivals, conducted twenty-eight Bible study series, taught forty years at Falls Creek and led six tours to the Holy Land. At the time of his retirement, his son Laurence was a pastor in Anniston, Alabama, and his son, Paul, since deceased, was a pastor in Oklahoma City.

¹⁷"Program of Dedication Services," September 7, 1952.

¹⁸Mrs. James Emerson.

¹⁹*The Baptist Messenger*, January 2, 1953. Jack Rose currently is retired and living in Tulsa.

David C. Hall

The church elected a pulpit committee and within a month, David C. Hall, pastor of Sequoyah Hills Church, Tulsa, was called. Hall was born in Oklahoma County and educated in Oklahoma City public schools. He was ordained at the age of sixteen and served as pastor for Nicoma Park Church from 1943–1944 and later at Crowder. He was pastor of Calvary Church, Shawnee, and later Emmanuel, Ardmore. In May 1951 he accepted the pastorate of Sequoyah Hills, when the church was only thirty months old. During his ministry at Sequoyah Hills there were six hundred additions to the membership, two hundred and thirty-nine of which were by baptism.²⁰

David Hall was a graduate of Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth. He was accompanied to Oklahoma City by his wife, Marcine, and three children, David Jr., Judith, and Mary Sue.²¹ At that time, George Green of Tulsa was educational director, and Don Sears was Youth and Music Director.²²

Hall preached his first sermon at Kelham in January 1955. David Hall was an enthusiastic young preacher; strong on organization and promotion. He led the people to practice preaching, teaching, and soul-winning.²³

²⁰"Rev. Hall Returns, He'll Be at Kelham" (n.d., article seems to indicate 1954 or 1955), Westbrook Collection.

²¹Ibid.

²²*The Baptist Messenger*, Feb. 12, 1959.

²³Mary Fike, "History of Kelham," n.d., ca. 1964.



David C. Hall

In the first year Hall was at Kelham, 1955, there were two hundred and forty-four additions, one hundred and twenty-seven by baptism. Total tithes and offerings were \$101,544.²⁴

In 1956 the specter of relocation again raised its head. The area in which Kelham was located was in flux. Population was shifting to the north and west. The church finally decided that to survive, relocation was a must. Events moved swiftly. During this time Jack Rose, minister of music, resigned to accept a similar position at First Church, Bartlesville.

There were lots available between Northeast Forty-eighth and Fiftieth, just west of Eastern, where Kelham had considered building a mission. This plot covered nearly a square block, but it was L-shaped. Although the location was seriously considered, it was not selected.

The building committee, composed of C. L. Fike, Glen Pipher, Charles Litton, R. C. Howard, Jr., E. W. Thomas, and Claude Barton, wrestled long with the problem of exactly where to relocate. Property on Broadway Extension was considered, as was a plat on North Lincoln. Another site considered was Northwest One hundred and eighth and Western.

First Church, Oklahoma City, had established Park Estates Mission at Northeast Thirty-sixth and Staton Drive some time before, and things were not going too well. First Church offered to sell the building and property to Kelham for approximately what was owed on it, and Kelham bought the site for fifty-nine thousand dollars.

Plans now had to be made to sell the church property on Kelham Avenue. Unknown to Kelham at the time, the members of Park Estates Mission protested that they were never told of the pending sale or consulted in any manner

²⁴*The Baptist Messenger*, February 19, 1956.

whatever. They complained that they had been shuffled onto Kelham Avenue Baptist without the members' knowledge. Park Estates rebelled. They were determined, but they were ordered to leave the building and site, which First Church had helped to finance. Members of Park Estates Mission tried to establish a new church and met for a time "in the army reserve armory, NE 37 and Eastern".²⁵ Dr. Elmer Ridgeway, who was retired at the time, preached for the group for a while. Park Estates Mission's attempt to establish a church was unsuccessful, and many finally affiliated with Kelham.

Northeast Thirty-sixth and Staton Drive

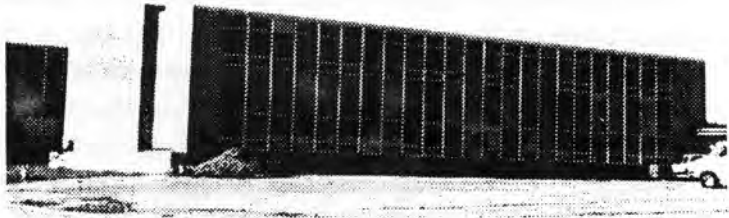
The property at Northeast Fourteenth and Kelham covered "a square block and [was] valued at more than one-half million dollars."²⁶ The property was sold to Avery Chapel, African Methodist Episcopal church. Robert H. Alexander was pastor of Avery Chapel, which had a membership of more than eleven hundred. The announced "purchase price was \$180,000."²⁷ At the time of the sale, Kelham had already begun construction of new facilities on a three and one-half acre plot on Northeast Thirty-sixth.

The last person baptized at the Kelham Avenue location

²⁵"Orphaned Church Finds Home in Armory," n.d (Westbrook Collection).

²⁶"Baptists Sell Church," n.d. (Westbrook Collection).

²⁷Ibid.



Northeast Thirty-sixth and Staton Drive

was Moses Goddard of Adult 3. On February 8, 1959, Kelham moved to Thirty-sixth Street, although the official dedication was not held until April 5. George Bruce Fike, son of Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Fike, was the first candidate to be baptized at the new location. Several years later, the church officially adopted the tradename of "Kelham Baptist Church."²⁸ The church's corporate name remained The Kelham Avenue Baptist Church, which it still is today.

Construction progressed rapidly at the new location. On Sunday, April 5, 1959, the building was officially dedicated. Designed by Bryan Miller and constructed by J. W. Skaggs Construction Company, the edifice was modern in design, the exterior presenting an inviting pattern of pink brick and grey stone. The temporary sanctuary, which would later serve as Fellowship Hall, had a seating capacity of six hundred and fifty. The units of the structure were designed to care for approximately twelve hundred in Sunday school. The cost of the project, including pews, parking, annex remodeling, and architect, was about three hundred and fifty thousand dollars and resulted in thirty-five thousand square feet of space. The dedication service was held at 3:00 P.M., with presentation of the building by C. L. Fike, Chairman of the Building Committee, and acceptance of the building by M. A. Fitzgerald, Chairman of Deacons.

During this transitional period, the church continued to grow. In the previous four years about eleven hundred members were added and the church's income had increased about fifty-percent.²⁹ The first Sunday after relocation, there were one thousand and eighty in attendance. Two worship services were held, the first at 8:30 A.M., the second 11:00 A.M., with Sunday School sandwiched in between at 9:45 A.M.

²⁸Minutes of Kelham Baptist Church, March 6, 1966.

²⁹*Oklahoma City Times*, April 6, 1959.

In 1958 the Foreign Mission Board assumed support of our mission in Egypt, where Seddik Girgis served as pastor. Just prior to this, Brother and Mrs. Girgis were guests of Kelham for several weeks. Kelham helped them purchase a car to be shipped to Egypt.

That same year Don Sears resigned as Music Director to accept a similar position in Bonham, Texas. As he had many times in the past, R. C. Howard, Jr., filled the position until a replacement could be selected. R. C. was an excellent singer and was always willing to help in any manner possible. R. C. Howard, Jr., and Millie, his wife, had been married in 1930 and had four daughters, Barbara, Beverly, Katie, and Trudy. R. C., like his father, R. C., Sr., started in the insurance business and progressed finally to the specialized field of estate analysis and management. After retiring, the Howards moved to a ranch near Cushing, Millie's hometown.³⁰ R. C. died in 1980.

R. C. and Millie Howard in Hong Kong

Members of Kelham for many years, R. C. and Millie contributed greatly, both spiritually and financially, to the growth of Kelham. Their contributions led to the construction of Howard Memorial Chapel at Baptist Memorial Hospital and the Howard Cottage at the Boys' Ranch Town. R. C. was awarded an honorary doctor of laws

³⁰*OBU Bulletin: Bison Hilltopics*, Oklahoma Baptist University, Spring 1983.



R. C. and Millie Howard In Hong Kong

degree by Oklahoma Baptist University in 1974.³¹

In August of 1958, after R. C. Howard, Jr.'s, interim period as Music Director when Don Sears left, Denny Boyd of Elk City was called as Music Director.

In January of 1960 Texas Mission in the southeastern part of Oklahoma County was begun with A. Lee Hibbard as pastor.³² This was a new era in missions for Southern Baptists. This was in the period of the new philosophy of "associational missions." Kelham's missions before this time had been missions that originated in the heart of the home church or were adopted because of needs in the mission.

At some point in time, however, the idea that the association could somehow exercise greater wisdom as to where new churches needed to be started originated. Consequently the association had bought property in what they deemed to be growing and expanding areas of the county. Texas Mission was one of these missions.³³ In this case the church voted to have the trustees accept title to the property for the mission on Southeast Twenty-ninth and begin plans and arrangements for construction of a permanent building. In June the church authorized the be-

³¹ Ibid.

³² Minutes of Kelham Baptist Church, December 20, 1959.

³³ One might well argue that few churches possess the wisdom and resources to properly plan mission sites in expanding communities. The history of Kelham's missions and mission failures might well be used as evidence of this, but an equally strong case might be made based on statistics for associational missions. Though we might be tempted to adopt a corporate approach to mission starts, buying key properties well ahead of their development, it seems to this writer that the process that has worked from the very beginning has almost twenty centuries of successful church starts behind it. Furthermore, this strategy has the implicit support of Matthew 16:16-18, which associational missions probably lacks. In no case should this be seen as a diatribe against cooperative missions. We believe in cooperative missions as taught in the New Testament. If anything, this is a defense of church missions in its purest New Testament sense—the sense in which missionary Baptist churches have always done the work of the Great Commission.

ginning of Shady Nook Mission, with Damon Corley as pastor.³⁴

In February of 1960 George Green submitted his resignation to become Educational Director of Baptist Temple, Oklahoma City. In March Jim Moore was called from Missouri as Educational Director.

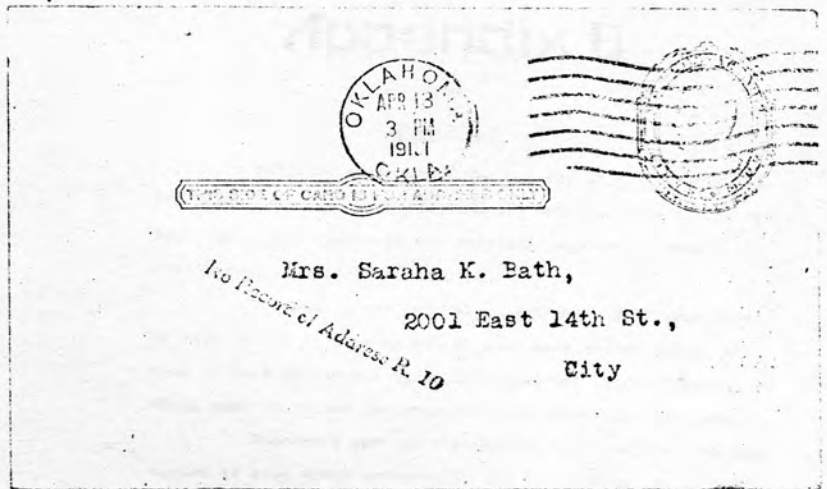
In September 1960 David C. Hall resigned as pastor of Kelham to become pastor of North Phoenix Church, the largest Baptist church in the western United States. Hall returned to Oklahoma and pastored First Church, Chickasha, where he remained for three years.³⁵ Hall then served in Madison, New Jersey, where he remained almost a year. From there, he went to Washington, D. C., for a brief time. Later he was pastor of the Seminole Heights Church, Tampa, Florida. He currently pastors in Tulsa.

With the resignation of David Hall, Kelham was again without a leader, but there was never any doubt that the Master already had chosen exactly the right man to lead them. Little did the church know that under this man, God's man for God's time, they would again move. Only time would reveal that the church on the move was poised to move again.

³⁴Sherilyn Vogt, "History of Kelham Baptist Church," 1968. Minutes of Kelham Baptist Church for December 20, 1959, note that "the Missions Committee notify the Oklahoma County Baptist Association of our desire to begin a work" in the Shady Nook community and that "the Trustees be instructed to accept title to approximately four acres of land located a short distance South of N.E. 23rd street on Post Road."

³⁵"Baptist leader returns," *Oklahoma City Times*, April 14, 1977. The exact sequence of Dr. David C. Hall's ministry has not been fully researched by this writer.

Appendix A



Phone W. 7252

Kelham Avenue Baptist Church
Pastor's Study
1219 East Seventh St.
Oklahoma City, April 13, 1915

Dear Brethern:

An important business meeting will be held at the church Wednesday evening, Apr. 14, 1915, immediately after prayer meeting. You are specially requested to be present. Let nothing hinder you if it is at all possible for you to come. Our church is moving along in accordance with God's will, and we desire you to be with us to act on matters of importance in God's Kingdom in our field. Lay everything aside and Come.

Everett Johnsen
Church Clerk

Sincerely yours,
Fred W. Barnaclo, Pastor

Appendix B

RESOLUTIONS.

Whereas, on or about the ___ day of ____, 192_ Kelham Avenue Baptist Church, of Oklahoma City, by vote of its members, on motion duly made and seconded, decided to remove to 23rd Street in said City; and,

Whereas, after removal in accordance with said vote, by vote of its members on motion duly made and seconded, the name of said church was changed to Memorial Baptist Church, in which name it is now incorporated under a new charter; and,

Whereas, a part of the membership of said church continued to hold their services at the former location on Kelham Avenue and have reorganized under the former name of Kelham Avenue Baptist Church; Therefore,

Be it Resolved that we give to Kelham Avenue Baptist Church our former corporate charter and all our right, title and interest in and to the real property and premises formerly owned by us and now occupied and used by said Kelham Avenue Baptist Church.

Be it further Resolved, that we authorize and instruct our corporate trustees to execute and deliver to Kelham Avenue Baptist Church a proper deed of conveyance fully investing it with the real property hereby given to it.

Be it further Resolved that a copy of these resolutions be furnished by the Clerk to Kelham Avenue Baptist Church.

The above resolutions were adopted by vote of Memorial Baptist Church, on motion duly made and seconded, at its regular meeting for business held ~~June 7~~ ^{June 7} 1925.

J. B. Robertson
Moderator,
F. E. Ware
Church Clerk.

Appendix D

Robert G. Lee, Pastor
Bellevue Baptist Church
1208 Court Street
Memphis, Tennessee
September 2nd, 1952

Dr. Anson Justice
Kelham Avenue Baptist Church
1425 North Kelham Avenue
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Beloved Justice:


I am so glad for the honor you have bestowed upon me in giving me the invitation to be present at the dedication services of the new sanctuary of the Kelham Avenue Baptist Church where the hand of God has been for good upon you and your people.

I am sorry that distances and duties and various demands make it impossible for me to avail myself of this great joy. But gladly and gratefully do I offer my sincere congratulations as to this wonderful achievement for Christ.

May your light and the light of your people burn brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

My prayer for your people and for you is Hebrews 13:20-21: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Yours earnestly,


Robert G. Lee

RGL:G

APPENDIX C

Missions of Kelham Baptist Church

<i>Date Started</i>	<i>Name of Mission</i>
1. ?	San Martin, South America
2. 1936	Barnes
3. 1931	Brazil
4. 1931?	Capitol
5. 1934	China
6. 1931?	Crooked Oak
7. 1946	Crutcho
8. 1935?	Dickson
9. ?	Downtown
10. 1936	Egypt
11. 1934	Foster
12. 1941	Franklin
13. 1939	Friendship (May Avenue)
14. 1945	Howard Memorial
14. 1937	Irving (Utah)
16. 1935	Klamichl Mountains
17. 1941	Lincoln (Plainview)
18. 1945	Linn Avenue
19. ?	Lockhoma
20. 1933? 1935? 1946	Lone Star
22. 1941	Louisiana Boat Church
21. 1930?	Mexican Mission
22. 1930?	North Mission
23. 1948	Newalla
24. ?	Oak Ridge
25. 1935?	Packingtown
26. 1934	Riverside
27. 1960	Shady Nook
28. 1947	Shields Boulevard
29.	Soldier Creek
30. 1934?	Spencer
29. 1960	Texas
30. 1934	Unnamed (downtown)
31. 1934	University Heights (63rd)
31. 1939	Washington Avenue

This list is a best estimate, based upon the information available. If you have verification of a date that has a question mark or if you have verification of a different date, please let the writer know.