

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FIRST  
BAPTIST CHURCH, IN CAMBRIDGE;  
WITH THE DECLARATION OF  
FAITH, THE CHURCH COVENANT,  
AND LIST OF MEMBERS**

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A Brief History of the First Baptist Church, in Cambridge; With the Declaration of Faith, the Church Covenant, and List of Members by Anonymous

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**ANONYMOUS**

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## OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

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The records of this church begin with the statement that "A meeting of the professed friends of Christ, of the Baptist denomination, in Cambridge and vicinity, was held at the house of Mr. James Hovey, in the month of March, 1817, for the purpose of relating the exercises of their minds relative to the propriety of covenanting to walk together as a Church of Christ." At this meeting it was "Voted, That when, in the opinion of our respected fathers in the ministry, it shall appear expedient, we do esteem it our duty thus to unite."

For nearly a year previous to this time, however, these "professed friends of Christ, of the Baptist denomination," had sustained evening meetings for prayer and conference, and "lectures" preached by some of the neighboring Baptist ministers, especially by Rev. Joseph Grafion, of Newton, and Esauign Lincoln, a lay member of the Third Baptist Church in Boston. These meetings were continued, without any formal church organization, until near the close of the year 1817. Then, on the 17th day of December, those interested assembled, to the number of forty-six — seventeen males, and twenty-nine females — at the house of Mr. Samuel Hancock, and constituted themselves into a regular Christian Church, by subscribing their names to "Articles of Faith and a Covenant," prepared by a committee previously appointed for the purpose. William Brown, David R. Griggs, and Levi Farwell, were the members of this committee. On the 25th day of the same month, the newly-constituted body was publicly recognized as a Regular

Baptist Church, by a council composed of ministers and brethren from the First, Second, Third, and African Baptist Churches in Boston, and from the Baptist Church in each of the following places, viz.: Newton, Charlestown, Malden, and Lynn. Rev. Thomas Baldwin, D.D., was moderator of this council, and Rev. Elisha Williams, clerk. The religious services connected with the public recognition of the church were, an "Introductory Prayer," by Rev. Daniel Sharp; "Reading of Select Portions of Scriptures," by Rev. James M. Winchell; "Prayer before the Sermon," by Rev. Ebenezer Nelson; "Sermon," by Dr. Baldwin; "Address to the Church, and Right Hand of Fellowship," by Rev. Joseph Grafton; "Concluding Prayer," by Ensign Lincoln; "Benediction," by Rev. George Phippin. Dr. Baldwin's sermon, and Mr. Grafton's address, were afterwards requested for publication.

Simultaneously with the meeting which was held in March, 1817, to consult in reference to the formation of a church, preliminary measures were taken to secure the erection of a house of worship. Such was the prejudice in the community, however, against the Baptist name, that considerable difficulty was encountered in obtaining a suitable location. A Baptist Church was not considered a desirable addition to the religious institutions of Cambridge, although there was not, at that time, more than one exclusively Evangelical Society in the whole town. But the difficulty of obtaining a suitable location was at length overcome, and the work of building, which was commenced in the month of June, was prosecuted with so much vigor, that the house was finished in December, and dedicated to the worship of God on the same day that the church was publicly recognized, and by the same services.

On the 10th of February, 1818, William Brown and Levi Farwell were chosen deacons. They both acted in this capacity for more than twenty-six years; the former, until he joined with others in the formation of another church; the latter, until he was called to a higher service in the church above. Mr. Farwell



was also the clerk of the church from its organization until his decease, May 27, 1844. It is not too much to say — nor will it be deemed out of place by any who know his history, to say it here — that there is no man, among the living or the departed, to whom the Baptist cause in Cambridge is more indebted, than to LEVI FARWELL. His memory will never cease to be reverently and affectionately cherished by the church, whose almost unparalleled prosperity, for more than forty years, is both the monument, and, in a great measure, the fruit, of his deep piety, practical wisdom, and untiring devotion to its welfare.

The church, thus organized, and at home in its own house of worship, began immediately to witness tokens of the Divine favor in the frequent application of hopeful converts for baptism, and membership. Seven candidates were thus received before the services of a pastor were secured, the pulpit meanwhile being occupied by temporary supplies. Among these supplies was the Rev. Bela Jacobs, then pastor of the Baptist Church in Pawtucket, R. I., who also baptized the seven candidates above referred to. The labors of Mr. Jacobs were so acceptable to the church and congregation, that the minds of all were turned to him as a suitable man for their pastor, if he could be obtained. A unanimous call was therefore made out for him by the church, and seconded by the congregation. This call Mr. Jacobs accepted on the 11th of June, 1818, and immediately entered upon his duties. On the 22d of the following month he was "installed" by a council of ministers invited for the purpose by the church. The public services connected with his installation were participated in by Rev. Stephen Gano, Dr. Baldwin, Rev. Joseph Grafton, Rev. Daniel Sharp, and Rev. Elisha Williams.

Mr. Jacobs remained the pastor of the church until May, 1833, when, at his own request, on account of the state of his health, he was dismissed, to accept the secretaryship of the "Baptist Educational Association." The fifteen years of Mr. Jacobs' ministry with the church, was a period of decided and healthful prosperity. Two hundred and seventy-five members

were added; two hundred and thirty-five by baptism; and, though the church, during this time, dismissed companies from its membership to aid in the formation of new churches in Roxbury, Brookline, and Watertown, yet the congregation increased so rapidly that the society was compelled, in 1827, to enlarge considerably their house of worship. The language of Mr. Jacobs' biographer, respecting the results of his ministry in Cambridge, is fully justified by the records of the church. She says, "At the time Mr. Jacobs left, the society was in a very prosperous situation. The labors of their pastor had been eminently successful among them; the church, which numbered about forty on his coming, had been increased to nearly two hundred; the debt resting on the house had been paid, and though a number of other churches had arisen in the town, and around it, his congregation was by far the largest in the place."

On the 6th of February, 1834, the church extended a call to Rev. Stephen Lovell, of New Bedford, to become their pastor. He accepted the call, and was "installed" on the 24th of March following. His pastorate was of short duration. He closed it by a peremptory resignation, on the 15th of May, 1836. Mr. Lovell had been connected with the Baptist denomination but a few months when he was invited to the pastorate of this church, and immediately after his resignation united with the Methodist Church in Portland, Me. During his ministry for the church, forty members were added to it, thirty-one by baptism.

Among those who temporarily supplied the pulpit the following summer and autumn, was Mr. JOSEPH W. PARKER, then a student in the Theological Institution at Newton. The hearts of the people were drawn towards him, and the church thought they recognized in him the "under shepherd," whom the Lord had sent in answer to their prayers. He was therefore invited, on the 28th of October, 1836, to become their pastor. He accepted the invitation on the 18th of November, and on the 11th of December was ordained and publicly recognized as the pas-

tor of the church by services participated in by Rev. Messrs. Nathaniel Hervey, James D. Knowles, George B. Ide (who preached the sermon), Barnas Sears, Baron Stow, N. Medbury, Daniel Sharp, and William A. Stearns.

Rev. Mr. (now Dr.) Parker remained the pastor of the church a little more than seventeen years. They were years of substantial and uninterrupted prosperity. The social and pecuniary power of the society was augmented, and the church increased by the addition of four hundred and seventy members, of whom two hundred and seventy-nine were added by baptism. Twice during this time the society found it necessary to improve their house of worship to meet the wants of the congregation, notwithstanding the large draft made upon it by the formation of a new church in Old Cambridge, in August, 1844. The formation of this new body drew off from the church eighty-three of its members, and a large number from the congregation.

In the autumn of 1853, Dr. Parker was elected Secretary of the Northern Baptist Education Society, and Financial Agent of the Trustees of the Newton Theological Institution. Such were the necessities of the Society at the time, and so urgent the claims of the cause of ministerial education in New England, that neither Dr. Parker, nor his people, could regard his election other than the call of the Master upon him to enter that service. His resignation was therefore accepted, with very deep regret, on the 23d of December, 1853, to take effect the first of the following month.

The church was without a pastor during the whole of the year 1854; but under the faithful ministry of Rev. B. W. Barrows, and Rev. R. W. Cushman, D.D., who succeeded the pulpit most of this time—each several months in succession—a good degree of prosperity was enjoyed. The congregation continued large and interested, and thirty-one new members were added to the church, twenty-one by baptism.

On the 23d of January, 1855, the church extended a unanimous call to Rev. Sumner R. Mason, then pastor of the Baptist