



The History of Tri-City Baptist Church Ministries

THE FOUNDER

Dr. James Singleton was born in Key West, Florida, in 1927. He attended morning and evening services at a Methodist Church where his grandfather taught Sunday school. On Sunday afternoons he attended Sunday school at a Plymouth Brethren Gospel Hall where he was saved at the age of 12.

Vocationally planning to be a weather forecaster, he attended Florida Southern College and became a meteorologist in Washington, D.C. The Lord was working on his heart, and by the time he joined the Navy in 1945 as a weather forecaster, he had decided to go to a Christian college to study for the ministry. He attended Bob Jones University, finishing college in three years by taking a heavy load and attending summer school. While waiting for his wife to finish her degree, he attended Bob Jones Divinity School. Being burdened to preach, he took revival meetings anywhere he could during his theological training.

The next year he accepted a circuit of six Methodist churches in Fries, Virginia, and immersed all who came for baptism. Then he entered full time evangelism for a time, after which he received the B.D. and Th.M. degrees from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He was ordained by a Southern Baptist Church in 1953, and served Southern Baptist Churches in the South for the next 14 years.

Pastor Singleton preached revival services in Ohio which resulted in his accepting a call to Lakeview

Baptist Church, a Southern Baptist Church in Vermilion, Ohio. Later he pastored the First Baptist Church of Albion, Michigan, a Conservative Baptist Association Church, where the Lord seemed to impress on him the necessity of starting a local church. Dr. Singleton was influenced during this period by the Bible Baptist Fellowship, and by such men as Dallas Billington, Harold Henninger, and Roy Thompson.

THE BIRTH OF TRI-CITY BAPTIST CHURCH

John Tucker, Youth Pastor of the Albion church, was called to Arizona to serve at the Tucson Baptist Temple pastored by Louis Johnson. When Pastor Johnson interviewed Pastor Singleton about Mr. Tucker, he extended an invitation to him to visit Arizona, where the fields were white already unto harvest. The following Monday Dr. Singleton flew to Phoenix, and on Tuesday he met with the only Baptist Bible Fellowship pastor he knew, Charles Vaden of the Alice Avenue Baptist Church. Pastor Vaden put Dr. Singleton in touch with Vaughn Adams and his wife who had been saved at Pastor Vaden's church but lived 40 miles away in Tempe. On Wednesday Vaughn Adams showed the Tempe area to Pastor Singleton. He then went to Tucson to visit Louis Johnson and came back with a pledge of support for a new church in Tempe. The Adams family consented to work with him in starting an independent Baptist church.

Tri-City Baptist Church had its first constituting service officiated by Dr. James Singleton on August 31, 1969 at the home of Vaughn and Lucy Adams, in Tempe, AZ. Twenty people were present at that first service in Tempe: Vaughn and Lucy Adams and their three children; Dr. Singleton, his wife Mary, and their two children, Steve and Susan; Ivan and Barb Schaal and their three children, and another family from Omaha whom the Adams family had recently met. Ivan Schaal had just been transferred from Omaha by the Motorola Company. He became a deacon and Barb taught a Sunday School class until 1986 when they left to assist their son, Kevin, as he started Northwest Valley Baptist Church in Phoenix.

Arriving two weeks later was Sue McGormley Anderson who had asked to join the Singletons in beginning the new church. She was church secretary for a couple of years and church clerk until her death in 1994. Vaughn Adams taught engineering at Arizona State University.

After meeting in the Adams' home for two weeks, the church began meeting in the Meyer Elementary School on Dorsey Lane until the first building on Price Road was completed in the fall of 1971. Because the school was not available for mid-week services, the Women's Club on the SW corner of Apache Street and Mill Avenue in Tempe was used for services on Tuesdays until 1971. The church was incorporated on February 15, 1970.

THE EARLY DAYS

God was at work preparing some choice believers for Tri-City months before the Singletons arrived in Arizona. A group of members from the Calvary Baptist Church in Tempe split off and met in the home of Frank and Deanne Craddock; Lloyd Gibbons was among them and became their Bible teacher. They established a new church, Tabernacle Baptist Church. Gibbons had helped build a church in Flint, Michigan while he was attending Midwestern Baptist College. However, he found it

very difficult preparing to preach at Tabernacle and really wanted to support himself as a court reporter, not as a pastor. While his assistant at Tabernacle, Herbert Hathaway, did a lot of house to house visitation, Lloyd worked full time as a court reporter.

Tabernacle Baptist Church met first in the home of Frank and Deanne Craddock, after which they met in the home of Lloyd Gibbons until they began renting space from Dorsey Elementary School. They held their mid-week service at the Danforth Chapel on the ASU campus. Frank Craddock led the singing.

Pastor Singleton came to Tempe and gathered about 40 people in three or four weeks; it had taken Tabernacle 10 months to do that. Lloyd saw Pastor Singleton's ad in a newspaper and went to see him to explain that he would like to bring the Tabernacle people to visit for six weeks, and then they would vote whether or not to cease operating and turn over the \$3,000 in their church account to Tri-City. After three weeks they voted to dissolve Tabernacle Baptist Church. Brother Gibbons became Associate Pastor and Herb Hathaway (Grandfather to Kyle) the Visitation Pastor Ivan Schaal would become the first song leader of the new congregation.

The group joined Tri-City, giving the young church a major increase. They went from 80 to a high of 500 in four years. The Gibbons' swimming pool was actually used as the baptistery until September 1973.

BEGINNING TO BUILD

When the church began looking for property to buy, a \$78,000 site at Price Road and Southern Avenue became available. In order to secure this property, a \$20,000 down payment was necessary which seemed to be almost impossible with the number of members at the time. Pastor Singleton asked that each family write down on a piece of paper what amount they would be able to give. When totaled,

the pledges amounted to \$17,300. Previously two men had told Pastor Singleton that they had money to loan for the down payment; one converted some bonds to get \$1,700 and the other had \$1,000 – exactly \$20,000. This confirmed to the congregation that God worked miracles and was leading them in constructing a church building.

The following spring the church launched a \$100,000 bond issue to build what became the 100 building. Just before the four room building was completed, the City of Tempe notified Pastor Singleton on a Saturday that Meyer School could no longer be used. The members were hastily notified that services would be in the new building that Sunday. The Pastor had to stand in the hall between two rooms to preach. The next week the Church went to two services, 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Sunday school attendance was just under 200 when the church moved into their new building. A closed circuit TV was installed in one of the rooms to help accommodate the size of the crowd.

RAPID GROWTH AND EXPANSION

As soon as the 100 building was occupied, construction began on the 200 building. It was completed in April 1972 with a total debt of \$7,500. This was raised in full on Dedication Day.

Immediately thereafter, Western Savings Bank loaned the church \$100,000 to pay off the land and begin construction on the 300 building. Later, the same bank loaned them an additional \$70,000 to complete that building.

Almost immediately the young church began construction of a fourth building, known as the 500 building. This was a 40' x 116' auditorium built to seat 650 people, and had the first permanent baptistry. It was dedicated in September of 1973 at a total cost of about \$45,000. In the fall of 1973 the highest Sunday school attendance yet achieved was 723.

In 1976 and in 1978 the space between the 300 and 500 buildings was enclosed to form classrooms and restrooms, and became known as the 400 building.

The Deaf ministry started in the Fall of 1977 by Mr. & Mrs. Virgil Webster. Mike Langin became the first pastor to the deaf in August of 1987.

In 1980 the new church auditorium on Southern Avenue was constructed to seat approximately 500 people. In 1982 classrooms/overflow rooms were added around the auditorium. In 2001 the ladies' restroom was significantly expanded, more than doubling in size. This building became known as the 600 building.

The first AWANA leader was Clarence Devore, followed by Dean Olson, and then by Paula Mostrom.

In 1988 the Gym was built, and in 1994 the fellowship hall, kitchen, classrooms, and restrooms were built. This became known as the 700 building.

In 1994 the 800 building was constructed to house the growing International Baptist College.

Burdened by the need to establish other independent Baptist churches in the East Valley, about 15 members of Tri-City Baptist Church agreed to help start Southeast Valley Baptist Church in Gilbert. The church had been meeting in the McQueen Recreational Center from its beginning in 1997, and planned to move to permanent facilities on Williams Field Road in Chandler in 2003. Pastor Singleton and Pastor Sproul alternated preaching at Southeast Valley until Joel Tetreau was called to be pastor in 1999.

FOUNDER PASSES LEADERSHIP

On September 1, 1999, Dr. Singleton turned the reins of Tri-City Baptist Ministries over to Pastor Michael Sproul after a mentoring process lasting

from the summer of 1996 until then. The congregation voted to accept the pulpit committee's and Dr. Singleton's recommendation with a 98% vote.

Dr. Sproul was born August 10, 1963 in Pennsylvania. Seven of his first eleven years were spent on the road as his family traveled and conducted local church evangelistic meetings. In 1974 the Sproul family moved to Tempe to establish a base for his father's evangelistic ministry. Pastor Mike graduated from Tri-City Christian Academy in May 1981. After attending Bob Jones University from 1981-1983, he transferred and completed a BA degree at International Baptist College in May 1985. In June 1985 he married his high school sweetheart, Elma Phillips, and shortly after that they moved to Lansdale, Pennsylvania where he would study at the Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary. He graduated with a Master of Divinity degree in 1988. Dr. Sproul later earned his Doctor of Ministry in 1995 from International Baptist College.

From May 1988 to June 1991, Mike Sproul and his wife traveled in full-time evangelism, and during this time his son David (May 1989) and daughter Sara (October 1990) were born. In July 1991 he joined the Air Force as a chaplain. He was stationed on two different Air Force Bases and pastored chapels on both of them. In the summer of 1996, Dr. Sproul joined the Air Force Reserves, and on July 12, 2002 he was installed as the Wing (Senior) Chaplain of the 161st Air Refueling Wing at Sky Harbor International Airport in Phoenix.

One of the first items of business Pastor Mike Sproul worked on with the deacons and pastors of Tri-City was the development of Mission and Vision statements which were adopted in late 1999. The Mission Statement stated, "Exalt the Triune God through lifestyle worship; edify believers through correct doctrine, discipleship, fellowship, and unity; evangelize unbelievers through prayer and the

proclamation of the Gospel." The Vision Statement declared thus: "Glorify God by building a New Testament Church in order to assist its members and other biblical churches in the West and around the world in fulfilling the Great Commission."

On July 13, 2001, Dr. Singleton passed away after fighting cancer for nearly two years. The church and Dr. Singleton agreed on an insurance policy on his life years before. Only one month before that insurance policy was to expire, Dr. Singleton was diagnosed with terminal cancer. The Church and Dr. Singleton both determined to continue the policy and name both Mary, his wife, and the church as beneficiaries on his policy.

RELOCATION PLANS BEGIN

At a Deacons' meeting on June 9, 2002, Pastor Sproul suggested that it would be prudent to consider possible relocation of the entire ministry in light of Nita's Hideaway being approved across the street, and the possible deterioration of the neighborhood as well as the resistance by the City Council and neighbors to an expanding college/seminary.

In July 2002 the church received word that Rachel Nicholson had left the church a significant bequest. She had attended services as a senior citizen in past years. Her bequest was to be used in part to provide preliminary floor plans for the new church facility in Chandler. This estate and the money from Dr. Singleton's insurance policy were the foundations that allowed the church and ministry to eventually move.

On July 27 Pastor Sproul shared with the Deacons the results of the investigation about relocating the church. The response was favorable. On August 20, 2002 the Board of Deacons unanimously voted to submit a letter of intent to purchase about 14 acres near the intersection of Germann Road and Dobson Road in Chandler, right next to a 27 acre park. On

October 13 the congregation voted 95% in favor of pursuing the relocation of Tri-City Baptist Church to Chandler.

GOD'S PROVISION

The cost for the land was \$2.1 million dollars. The College was able to complete the first building, the Residence Hall, in August of 2005. The Price and Southern property was sold to Tom Sawner and his company, EdOptions, in 2007 for \$7.3 million. By the time Tri-City was looking to build the main church building, the economy had dived into a terrible recession and banks were not loaning money. The church already had \$5,000,000 debt at a very low interest rate on tax exempt bonds that accounted for the land, residence hall, and had also purchased the steel for the new main building at an extremely low cost. The steel was purchased at a cost of about \$700,000 which was over \$1,000,000 less than was originally quoted.

Once the sale of the property had been secured, the matter of a contractor became very important. As the bids came in, the church realized that the costs for building the campus had exploded over the previous two years and they could simply not afford the cost of a general contractor. While discussing the dilemma with different people, Pastor's brother suggested that he could form a construction company, not charge the church any contractor fees, and allow church members to volunteer as much as they could. God led the church to a commercial general contractor who was out of work and a construction company came into existence to build Tri-City's new church campus. This new construction company saved the church at least \$2,000,000 over the bids of other companies.

With the construction company in place and the buyer in place but no place to turn for financing, Pastor and Elma took a couple out to dinner and expressed the church's difficulty. The bank had promised to loan the money for construction, but

now refused to do so. It had taken the church three years to find someone to buy the property, but there was a \$3,000,000 short fall between the cost of the property and the money needed for the completion of the project. The couples talked and Pastor asked these friends if they would be willing to loan the church \$3,000,000 at 5% interest for the time to construct the building. (Once the building was complete, the bank would be willing to loan money, but they weren't willing to loan for construction.) They replied in the affirmative. In fact, they told pastor that in their devotional time, they felt the Lord impressing them to give the church whatever it needed financially. God had worked a miracle by providing a buyer, a construction company, and now the financing!

The people of the Church, in turn, gave sacrificially. The stories were many and various, but in desperate economic times, some people refinanced their homes and gave the proceeds. Others sold property and gave the entire profit to the Lord. Others took sabbaticals from work to give their time to this project. Another family had an insurance claim settled that was a decade old, and they gave it to the Lord. It was a joy to be a part of a ministry with people so dedicated to God's work.

THE BIG MOVE

The building process occupied many hours each week and lasted for 18 months. The church members put in all the landscaping themselves, saving the ministry well over \$1,000,000. Many mistakes were made, but many problems were overcome by God's grace so that the congregation and its ministries moved into their new home on August 23, 2009. The maintenance building and the main building were finished, but had many needs to add/fix as well. The schools opened their doors on August 24!

When school opened, the building did not have interior doors. The gymnasium did not have a floor,

basketball goals, or bleachers. The college buildings were not available for use because there was no money to complete them. There was no choir loft and no organ and only an extremely old piano. No playgrounds existed and the Pre-school could not get an occupancy permit because of the farmland next door. The church was sued by sub-contractors with bogus claims that were eventually found in court to be in the church's favor, but they cost the church many thousands of dollars in lawyer fees.

The buyer of the Tempe property was not able to give the Church the last \$250,000 he owed because of the recession and cash flow problems in his business. Eventually, the buyer was able to pay, but months later. Even with all these difficulties, the congregation was overjoyed at God's goodness.

God graciously gave a donor of \$100,000 for the organ. God gave other people a burden to finish the gymnasium, and a church donated their bleachers that they wanted to discard. They fit perfectly into the gym. God gave workmen who could build a choir loft and many other things at 20% the cost of a normal contractor. Other donors wanted to finish the 10,000 square foot college/seminary building, and in August of 2011 it was completed.

In August 2011, International Baptist College and Seminary moved into their new 10,000 square foot academic/administration building. It is exciting to see the completion of the campus in sight. The college/seminary now has a Residence Hall as well as its new main building and the soon to be completed Media Center. The current goal is to finish it by April 2012.

The Church is the sole legal entity for all the ministries, with each of the following being DBA's (Doing Business As) in the state of Arizona.

Tri-City Christian Academy opened in the Fall of 1971 with approximately 65 students in grades 1-8 with four teachers in four classrooms. Two years

later grades 9-12 were added. Frank and Deanne Craddock were instrumental in helping the Academy become a reality. By the fall of 1973 the Academy had 190 students.

The Academy became fully accredited by the American Association of Christian Schools in 1999 and also by American Christian Schools International in 2011.

The highest enrollment in the Academy's history was 423 in the 2001-2002 school year. Academically, the academy scores above the national average as reported by the Stanford Achievement Test. For the 2000-2001 school year the Academy's lowest class complete battery percentile score was 82% in grade 5 compared to 50% national averages – 11th grade was 97% and 12th grade was 98%. The Academy continues with these kinds of scores today.

Time For Tots Preschool accepted a license by the Arizona Department of Health Services in 1973. Time for Tots offers a planned curriculum that makes learning a fun experience. Children are furnished with an array of key learning experiences in order to enhance and extend their own capabilities and emerging skills.

International Baptist Missions (IBM) began in June 1980, with four missionaries, two in India and two in the Philippines. The Board currently has 29 missionaries serving in ten countries. Dr. David Sproul served as the director from its inception until October 2010 when he retired and turned his position over to Pastor Larry Ball who has continued the great work of missions through this agency. IBM works closely with International Baptist College to equip and send missionaries to mission fields.

International Baptist College and Seminary began by unanimous vote of the Church in October 1980. The freshman class of 15 students began September 8, 1981 working on a BA or a two-year

AA degree. Courses were offered in Pastoral Studies, Missions, Sacred Music, Christian Service, Elementary and Secondary Education, and Clerical Studies. In 1986 a Master of Ministry was added along with a Master of Education. In 1987 a Doctor of Ministry was added, followed by a Master of Arts in Biblical Education in 1989. The Master of Divinity was added in 1991, set aside in 1995, and re-established in 2010.

The distinctive of the College is every student being mentored by a ministry worker – this philosophy limits the growth of the College to the mentoring that can be provided by Tri-City Baptist Church and other sister churches. We foresee a maximum college enrollment of approximately 250. The College became fully accredited by the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS) in 2000. This process resulted in some program changes.

Chandler School of Fine Arts opened in the fall of 2009 through individual and group instruction. It offers beginning and advanced training in all the areas of the Fine Arts, both music and art. The instructors are well qualified and specialize in voice, drawing, brass, wind, piano, and organ. With nearly 100 students, this school is a great atmosphere to train young and old alike.

THE FIRST CAMPUS

Buildings with overall view of dates built and current usage. Buildings totaling 65,692 sq. ft. to support the programs were built over the years. As needs changed, the buildings were adapted. Following is an approximate building history, with a brief description of usages:

100 Building – 4,920 sq. ft. - 1971, 1981. This building housed the Time For Tots preschool program, plus one church office and a dedicated Church nursery, and several classrooms used also

by the Church on Sundays. This was the first auditorium building.

200 Building – 5,518 sq. ft. -1971-72, 1975. This building housed the kindergarten classes, third grade, fourth grade, and a science laboratory. In the early years, this was the second auditorium.

NOTE: (300/400/500 Buildings were joined together – total 15,528 sq ft)

300 Building - 1973, 1975, 1978, 1996. This building was used for five pastoral offices, a conference room, a receptionist office, the Academy offices, the business offices, and a small kitchen.

400 Building - 1978, 1976. Used for Academy classrooms; also used for Church Sunday school classes.

500 Building - 1974. Used primarily for Library space, plus a chapel for school assemblies. Used by the Church for Sunday School and Children's Church. In the earlier years, it was the third auditorium..

600 Building – 16,321 sq. ft. - 1980, 1982, ladies' restroom--2001. The primary use of this building was the sanctuary in the center. Around the sanctuary were six classroom/sanctuary overflow seating areas. This was the fourth and last sanctuary building on the first campus.

700 Building – 16,945 sq. ft. - 1988, 1994. This building included a full gym with wood gym floor, a state licensed kitchen, and a fellowship hall dividable into three meeting rooms on the lower level. On the upper level were four classrooms.

800 Building – 6,460 sq. ft. - 1994. This multi-purpose building included three college classrooms, five enclosed offices, a conference room, three secretarial areas, a social parlor, and a mini-kitchen/serving area that could be opened up to

serve both the parlor and another room which came to be used for college chapels.

THE CURRENT CAMPUS

Residence Hall – 17,616 sq ft – 2006. The first floor has two handicap accessible rooms, two laundry/lounge rooms, a house-parents' apartment, and nine regular dorm rooms. The second floor has 16 regular dorm rooms. Two doors dividing the upstairs hall enables four rooms to be switched from men's to women's or vice versa. Access is from exterior doors only. Normal rooms are designed for four students each. The handicap accessible rooms are designed for two handicapped students – giving a planned capacity of 104 students.

Church Building – 96,027 sq ft – 2009. Flexibility was key to providing a gym, sanctuary, Time for Tots classrooms, Academy classrooms, and Sunday school classrooms along with ministry-wide food service. There are 57,880 sq ft on the first floor and 38,147 sq ft on the second floor.

Academic Building – 9,847 sq ft – 2011. This building has administrative offices, student center, chapel, and classrooms.

Maintenance Building – 3,000 sq ft – 2011. Has a large door enabling a full size bus to be enclosed in the building.

Media Center – 4,260 sq ft. Tentatively planned to be completely renovated by April 2012. This building will contain the library and work space for volunteers to do processing.

For a more detailed treatment of Dr. Singleton's philosophy, see Chapter 6 (*A Church In The Length And Shadow Of Its Leader*) in a book by Elmer L. Towns titled Getting A Church Started In the Face Of Insurmountable Odds With Limited Resources In Unlikely Circumstances. [Impact Books, 1975, ISBN 13: 9780914850236]

The history of Tri-City Baptist Church Ministries researched, written, and formatted by
Walter Baines, Jerry Tetreau, Jim Sproul and Mike Sproul in September 2011.



2211 W Germann Rd, Chandler, Arizona 85286
480-245-7900 • info@tricityministries.org
www.tricityministries.org