

Hamilton Square Baptist Church

"A Brief History"

Hamilton Baptist Church was originally known as the Baptist Church of Nottingham Square. Abraham Eldridge gave to the Baptist Society a lot from his farm acreage which extended to Nottingham Square on which a church was built in 1785. In 1851, a parcel of land east of the Eldridge lot was bought from what was known as the Cubberly Tract, and, in 1864, a lot was purchased from the Reed property which is now the cemetery.

The site of the original meeting house is marked by the grave of Reverend Searing Stiles. Reverend Stiles requested to be buried where the pulpit of the old church stood. This grave site is located on the west side of the church.

In 1880, plans and specifications were drawn by William Hammell for a larger and more accommodating building. The cornerstone of the present church was laid on August 10, 1880. The building was dedicated on October 19, 1881. The cost of it's construction was \$13,000.

Behind the building there were stables or stalls for the horses and buggies of the early members of the church. Some of the neighbors in Hamilton Square were disturbed enough to complain about the Baptists racing buggies on Nottingham Way after Sunday services.

Baptisms were performed at two sites until the present baptistery was constructed within the church building in 1921. The first of these was the Delaware River. One cold March, the ice had to be broken for baptism to take place. Later, baptisms were done at Hutchinson Pond. With the completion of the baptistery in the church, the climate for baptism was much more comfortable. Today, the baptistery has hot and cold running water.

The windows presently in the sanctuary were installed in the 1920's. Problems with the original sashes led the congregation to replace the first colored glass windows with new stained glass, donated by families of the early members, and in their memory.

Names of our early members are familiar on streets and roads throughout the Square: Flock, Hutchinson, Tinadall, Cubberly, George Dye, Coleman, and Robbins to name a few. All of these names are on the tombstones in the cemetery on either side of the church. Also buried in the church cemetery are Revolutionary and Civil War veterans. Buried near the church is Gersham Loveless, a Revolutionary War Veteran and Boston Tea Party participant. Civil War Veterans buried in the church cemetery are:



The Christian Education wing was added in 1959. Also, in 1959, a parking lot was constructed to replace the stables and stalls in order to accommodate automobiles. In the mid-nineteen-sixties, the sanctuary was remodeled and the organ console was electrified. Recent renovations include a wheelchair ramp, an elevator, and the air-conditioning of Burke Lounge.

Burke Lounge, named in honor of former pastor Ernest Burke, is used for many of our church organizations and committees as a meeting place. The outside front of the church has been renovated and landscaped in memory of our former pastor, the late Roger H. Berg.

We currently sponsor several organizations within our building including the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey, The Grange, two AA groups, Alanon, La Leche League, Cub Scout and Girl Scout Troops.

The Sanctuary accommodates 250 people comfortably. The cross over the pulpit was made by a member of the church using the wood from one of the original pews in the church.

Since 2000, many projects have been undertaken including inside and outside lighting, air conditioning of our sanctuary, a complete renovation of our kitchen and raising our mission giving four- fold!

In 2002, the remaining members from Calvary Baptist Church in Trenton joined us after having to close their church. We now have more love, added resources, and renewed singing!

God is good, slow to anger, merciful, and ever-faithful - and we continue to celebrate Him and His care of our lives!