

**Sugar Land Bible Church
- Its First Decade -
A Reflection On God's Work In Starting The
Church**

By

Earl H. Doyle

March 2001

Introduction

Sugar Land Bible Church was planted by Southwest Bible Church. The first service was held September 19, 1982 at Sugar Land Middle School. Stanley Dean Giles (aka Stan) was its first Pastor. A table of significant dates in the early history of the church is shown below. However, these facts do not tell the story of how God used the right people at the right time to plant a ministry in the Sugar Land area. Thus, this is a primarily a story of God working through these people and that is what I will try to convey in this reflection of the first decade. I was privileged to see how God worked in the planting of this ministry. I write this to have a personal record of these times for those involved in the formative years of the church, to provide a history for those in Sugar Land Bible Church who come after me and, most importantly, to show that God planted the seeds of the church and watered the seedling as it grew. Unfortunately, I do not mention every person who was part of this ministry, but hopefully I have touched on the major highlights. This reflection spans the time from the initial Bible study in 1979 to Stan's last Sunday in February 1993.

Significant Dates

Date	Event
March 9, 1982	Sugar Land Bible Church incorporated as Texas non-profit corporation
September 19, 1982	First service held at Sugar Land Middle School
October 10, 1982	First all-church picnic
September 18, 1983	Constitution and Doctrine implemented and church becomes independent of SWBC and has its first Board of Elders
August 27, 1985	Land purchased
September 28, 1986	First Board of Deacons elected
June 12, 1990	Drawings and specification completed for auditorium and Sunday School building
November, 1990	Construction started on new buildings
September, 1991	Sunday services begun in new buildings
February 28, 1993	Last Sunday for Pastor Giles

Starting From A Home Bible Study

The beginning of the church actually started from a Bible study held at the home of Jim and Marilyn Bryant in 1979. The Bryant's had recently come to Southwest Bible Church (SWBC) with two other couples from Western Meadows Christian Church. The Pastor at SWBC at the time was William "Bill" R. Perkins. Knowing that the Christian Church was doctrinally different from SWBC and that the Bryant's had a regular Bible study at

their home, Bill asked Elder Earl Doyle if he and his wife, Bobbie, would make the acquaintances of the Bryant's and "check out" the Bible study. Since Earl and Bobbie lived in the same subdivision (Covington Woods) and were looking for a Bible study, this seemed a natural. They found a very friendly and God-committed group at the Bryant's house. Attending were Ray and Kathy Mathems and Millie and Alan Neiser. It soon developed into a closely-knit group that thoroughly enjoyed each other. Initially, the Bible study was a bit of a Biblical free-for-all but it quickly evolved into a regular book study. Soon joining the group were Lois Allen, Ed and Carol Zahradnik and Bill and Donna Atkins. The Atkins lived down the street from the Bryant's and had recently been led to the Lord by Pastor Perkins. Of course, children were in attendance as there were four Bryant boys, two Zahradnik boys and three Doyle children. (One of Jim & Marilyn Bryant's sons, Wayne, currently attends SLBC with his wife, Nancy.) Bill and Donna had a young son who also attended. In 1981, Jim Bryant's job took them to Kansas City, Missouri, and the Bible study shifted to the Doyle's home on Vinehill Drive.

The size of the group grew and it was a regular Friday night event at the Doyle's home. God provided teachers and especially a man gifted with working with children. Dick Turpin took over teaching the children while the adult Bible study was taught. After the study, food was always a big event (especially with the children). Some of the new people joining the group were Sharon Turpin (wife of Dick), Lynn and Phyllis Harrington and Paul and Deanna Sartwell.

Pastor Bill Perkins liked to put pins on a map to see where the people lived that attended SWBC. It was clear that many were coming in from Sugar Land – especially since dirt roads like Eldridge (north of the Fort Bend County line) and Airport were now paved and it was easier for people to attend SWBC. (At that time, SWBC was located in Alief on the corner of Boone and Bellaire.) The Elders at SWBC began praying about starting a church in Sugar Land. SWBC had itself been planted by Spring Branch Community Church so there was a "tradition" of planting Bible churches in the Houston area. Earl Doyle was on the Elder Board and agreed to bring the idea of planting a church to the Friday night Bible study. Once brought before the group, there was much discussion as most were not thinking along the lines of starting a church. Eventually, through prayer, the group agreed to start a church.

From A Sunday School To A Church

It was announced in SWBC that a church was going to be started in the Sugar Land area and an interest meeting was held at the home of Bill and Donna Atkins on February 27, 1982. It was well attended and a vote was taken to name a church. The two candidate names drawing the most votes were Cornerstone Bible Church and Sugar Land Bible Church (SLBC). Of course, SLBC eventually received the most votes and all were happy to get started.

Shown below is the guest book list of people who attended the February 27, 1982 fellowship at the Atkins' home.

Dinner Fellowship at
Atkins Home

Below is a list of those people who attended this meeting to learn more about the formation of the Sugar Land Bible Church.

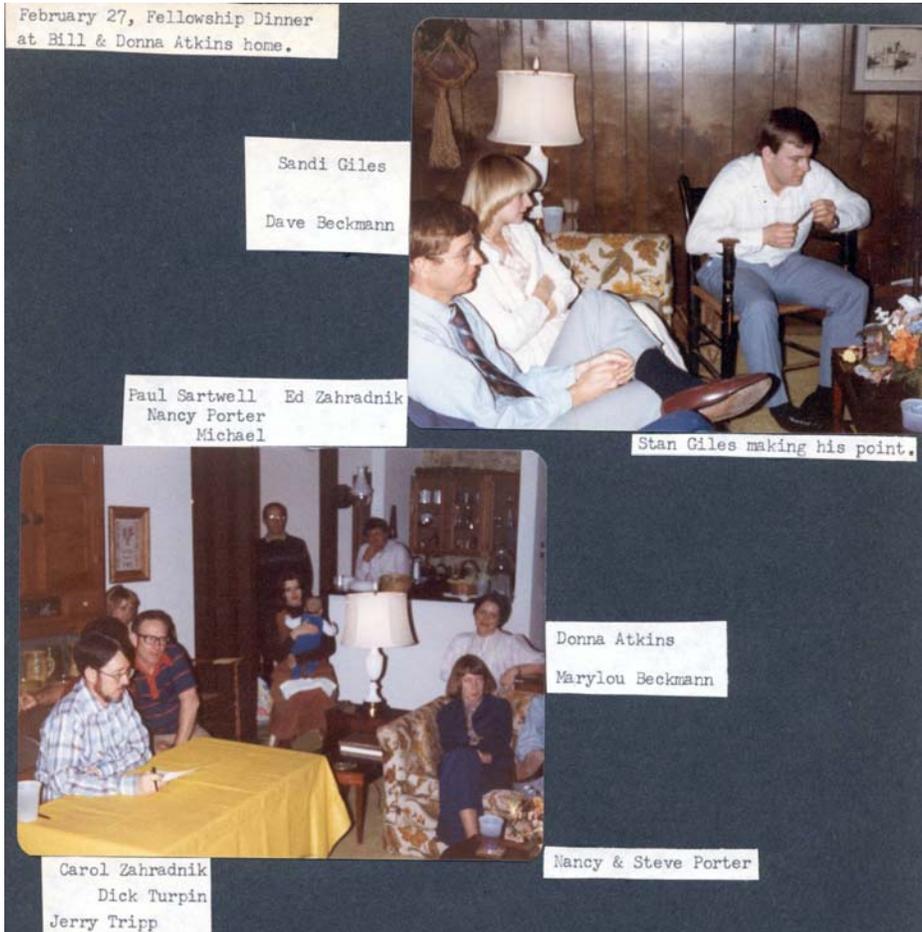


Guests
—
February 27, '82

Earl Dayh
Ray & Kathy Mathews
ED & CAROL ZAHRADNIK
Onwuchekwa UKAZIM
Deanna + Paul Sartwell
Al + Lynda Furberton
Jerry C. Tripp
Dick & Sharon Jurjin
Steve & Nancy Porter
Dave + Marylou Beckmann
Stan & Sandi Giles
Bill & Donna Selvin

God is our refuge and strength. Psalm 46:1

Shown below are some of the people who attended the “name-picking” meeting.





The church was officially incorporated in the state of Texas as a non-profit corporation on March 9, 1982. Signing the incorporation papers as the Board of Directors were Earl H. Doyle, Stephen R. Porter and Paul C. Sartwell. The “government” of the church at that time was primarily congregational in which we tried to get a consensus agreement of all attending. Ultimate authority was still vested in the elders of SWBC who designated Elder Earl Doyle as their official representative.

A major task of any new church is to find a pastor. The candidate that immediately came to the mind of the SWBC Elders and the leadership of SLBC was Stan Giles. Stan was co-pastor of SWBC with Bill Perkins before leaving to obtain a Master of Theology degree from Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS). Stan with his wife, Sandi, had been at SWBC as Youth Pastor under Pastor Calvin Blom. When Calvin left SWBC to go to the mission field (in Sudan), Stan became interim pastor and then Co-Pastor when Bill was hired. Stan was in his third year of a four-year program at DTS but agreed to come to Houston each Sunday to teach a Sunday School class at SWBC for people interested in being part of the SLBC ministry. That class met through the summer until the first official service of SLBC in September. Stan faithfully commuted each weekend from Dallas for more than a year to minister to the body starting this church-planting ministry. Stan jokingly says, “A group of people had a vision for a church and hired a guy that didn’t know much about church planting. However, they’re usually the only kind you get

because experienced pastors generally won't do it." Joking aside, Stan had the perfect personality for the position and faithfully and ably pastored the flock during those early years.

Committees were formed to get the church off the ground. Shown below is a handout explaining what committees were needed. Volunteers then signed up to fill these needs.

SUGAR LAND BIBLE CHURCH

START-UP COMMITTEES

1. Arrange to drive the Giles back and forth from airport. (Once per month until June 1 and then weekly during the summer.)
2. Arrange for Sat. evening and Sun. afternoon meals for the Giles when they are in town. (Once per month until June 1 and then weekly during the summer.)
3. Arrange for a car for use by the Giles when they are in town. (Once per month until June 1 and then weekly during the summer.)
4. Rental of facilities. (Find some possible places to rent, get details and report to Leadership Committee.)
5. Setup Sunday School Class during summer months. (Class to be held at Southwest Bible Church during June, July and August.)
6. Telephone calling committee. (Call the Sugar Land people when ever "news" should be passed along.)
7. Setup legal matters of the church. (Involves securing incorporation, tax exemption and insurance matters.)
8. Telephone number and Yellow Pages. (Get a telephone number for the church and then investigate putting an ad in the Sugar Land and Southwestern Bell Yellow Pages. Report back to Leadership Committee.)
9. Budget formulation. (Formulate a detailed start-up budget and report to Leadership Committee.)
10. Advertizing. (Formulate an advertizing program and report to Leadership Committee. Once approved, implement advertizing campaign.)
11. Fellowship planning. (Plan for several church fellowships through start-up in September, e.g., camping, covered dish dinners, picnics, etc.)
12. Church historian. (Keep records of events, growth and collect misc. pictures.)
13. Newsletter editor. (Put together a monthly newsletter and distribute according to the church mailing list.)
14. Mail Box. (Obtain a Post Office Box in Sugar Land and then pick mail up on about a weekely basis.)

Shown below is a picture of Stan (on right) teaching the “SLBC” Sunday School class at Southwest Bible Church. The class actually met in the hospital located to the east of the church.



Sugar Land Middle School

Finding a place to meet in the Sugar Land area was a daunting task as the growing community of Sugar Land was full of start-up churches that were also looking for space. Since most of the interested people came from the northern section of Sugar Land, the logical meeting location was somewhere near where all lived. The ideal location was Sugar Land Middle School on Seventh Street. The only problem was that the custodial staff did not want to work Sundays. District rules at the time said that the custodial staff must come from the same school and be willing to work Sundays. Bill Atkins went with a small group to the chief custodian’s house and literally begged on his knees for Mr. Willie Stock to help us out. Mr. Stock was a devoted Catholic and had health problems, but he finally agreed. The first service was held in the school choir room on September 19, 1982. The format of the first services was somewhat unusual in that the services lasted from 10:00 A.M. until 11:30 A.M. The first half-hour consisted of music, announcements and prayer. The children were dismissed for Sunday School at 10:30 as Stan began his sermon. At 11:00, the adults had a 30-minute time of fellowship while waiting for the children to finish Sunday School.

On that first Sunday, Stan spoke on The Persistent Church from Matthew 16:13-20. The three points of his sermon were: a) the ownership of the church, b) the construction of the church and c) the preservation of the church. He said, “In this passage, the first mention ever of the first plan and program of the church, Jesus assures us that there is a future for the church. There is a future for the church because Christ Himself is responsible for its growth and existence.”

Twenty families attended that first service. Their names are given in following table.

First Twenty Families of SLBC

Name
Bill & Donna Atkins
Dave & Marylou Beckmann
Earl & Bobbie Doyle
Raymond & Linda Ellison
Sol & Lucy Esperanza
Stan & Sandi Giles
Lynn & Phyllis Harrington
Ed & Carol Harnell
Ken & Wanda Jackson
Dave & Tammy Leyva
Ray & Kathy Mathems
Al & Lynda Pinkerton
Steve & Nancy Porter
Ramona Sanders
Paul & Deanna Sartwell
Janett Sellers
Ron & Karen Smith
Ken & Linda Theaker
Jerry & Polly Tripp
Ed & Carol Zaradnik

The first all-church picnic was held October 10, 1982 in the city park west of the school. It became a regular event and was always free. The idea was to welcome new believers and attendees to the fellowship and provide a fellowship experience for the church families. Soon, “Chef” Frank Richardson brought his trailer-mounted BBQ system and several men of the church would start cooking brisket very early in the morning. Because they barbequed at the park next to the school, we all could smell the wonderful BBQ as we went to church on “picnic” Sundays.

Pictured below are some scenes from those early picnics in the park next to the school during that first year.



When Stan and Sandi moved here from Dallas they purchased a home in the Sugar Mill subdivision on Muirwood Lane. It was literally across the street from Sugar Land Middle School. Stan & Sandi were welcomed to the area with a housewarming and gathering at their new home. Two pictures from that event are shown below.



Raymond Ellison offered Stan the church's first office space at Raymond's oil and gas business on Corporate Drive. The church office later moved to the Stewart Title Building on the Southwest Freeway before finally arriving at the church offices at their present location in the new building.

Fellowship gatherings were also held in various homes. Pictured below is one at the Giles house on Muirwood Lane.



By November, we had our own telephone! This number is still used by the church and was carefully chosen to have “Biblical” numbers. The last four digits of the number are 7773, which reflects the number seven for God, and the “three” for the trinity.

In order to promote fellowship, sharing and prayer among the body, Fellowship Groups were soon begun. A large majority of the church family attended Fellowship Groups in those early days.

Music was initially praise songs led by Russell Clark. He played the piano and led the music at the same time. It was also a paid position. However, during the summer of 1983, the Matthews family, who had been active in SWBC, returned from Brazil and plugged in to the church. Bob was a terrific tenor with a charismatic personality and almost immediately started leading the music. His daughter, Sandy, played the piano brilliantly each Sunday. Bob and Sandy continued in this ministry until the late 80’s. Shortly after Bob started leading the music was when the church made its first major purchase – songbooks. At the time, we all thought this was a big decision such that it had to involve the Elders. Selected was the same songbook that is in use by the church today.

Pictured below are Bob and Sandy Matthews at the piano when the church was meeting in the choir room.



Each Sunday, church attendees came in about an hour before the church started and set up for the services. (One reason we set up only an hour before was that the rent was based on the time the doors opened.) The school did allow us to store a limited amount of material - including our “library” books and salvation tracts that were displayed each Sunday.

Sunday School teachers were an important part of the new church. Shown below are scenes from some of those classes.



Sandi Giles’ Grade 1-2 class is pictured on the left. Recognized children are Ben Doyle (left) sitting next to Todd Sartwell. Carol Zahradnik’s 4’s and 5’s class is pictured on the

right. Recognized children are Rachel Doyle (left) sitting next to Mandy Atkins. Other teachers were 2's – Nancy Porter and Tammy Leyva, 3's – Sharon Sullivan, Grade 3-5 – Paul Sartwell, and Jr. and Sr. High – Larry Lengyel.

Another critical volunteer ministry was staffing a clean, friendly and safe nursery. Shown below are (left to right) Nancy Porter, Tammy Leyva and Lucy Esperanza (nursery head) playing with the many babies who made up part of the young families attending the church.

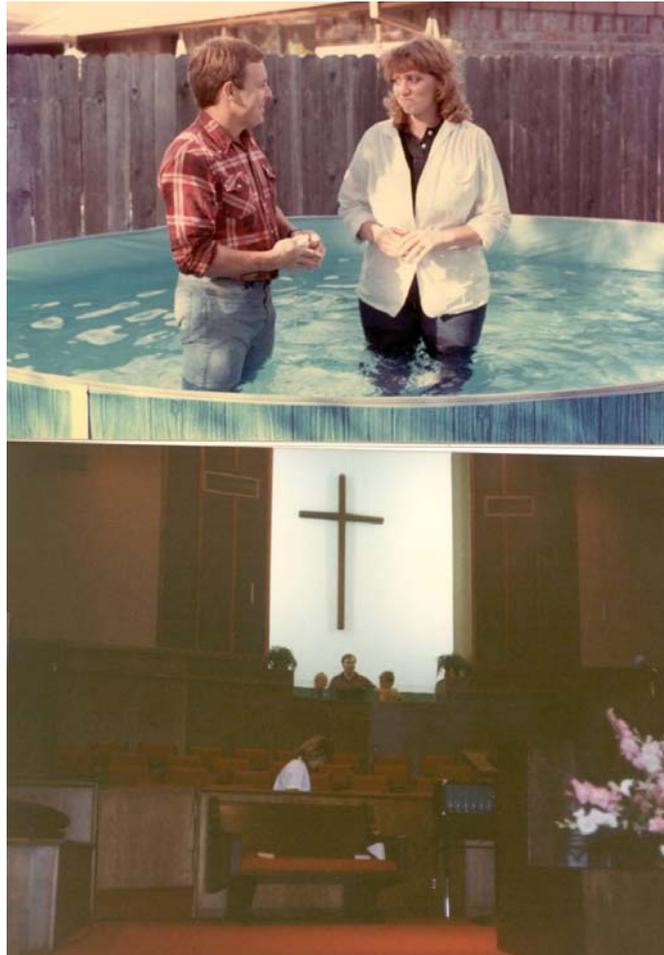


A carry-over from SWBC was the church's giving policy. As all know, an offering plate is not passed at SLBC. In part, this was to forestall any potential criticism from non-believers and a firm belief that mature and committed believers discipline themselves to give.

The first Board of Deacons was formed in September 1986. Those first Deacons were Kirk Bailey, Gus Henry, Pat Kelly, Doug Lawton and Bob Moore.

In 1987, the church selected its first Youth Pastor. Danny Tamez and his wife, Patti, were with the church until the summer of 1992. Until that time, volunteers directed the youth ministry. First Larry Lengyel led the teenagers. Bob & Trisha Patterson later led the high schoolers and the junior highers were led by John and Jan Rogers who were joined in 1986 by University of Houston student, Mark McDonnell. Mark was brought in on a part-time basis to assist with this ministry.

Baptisms were always interesting events. They were held in backyard pools and local churches. Stan & Sandi's backyard pool was one of those locations as shown below where Stan is about to Baptize Kathie Warncke. Pictured also is a Baptism held at First Baptist of Sugar Land. Stan is Baptizing Ben and Rachel Doyle in 1984. Baptisms always were followed with a fellowship and celebration.



Church Doctrine And Constitution

A Leadership Committee was formed once the church began meeting at Sugar Land Middle School. Its purpose was to develop the church doctrinal statement and government. The Leadership Committee consisted of Earl Doyle, Stan Giles, Dave Beckman, Steve Porter and Paul Sartwell. The church was still voluntarily under the governing authority of SWBC although technically, the original Board of Directors (Earl, Steve and Paul) was in charge of the church. All decisions were through unanimity. Steve, having the most organized mind of the five, proposed the basic Articles, namely; Name, Philosophy, Statement of Faith, Positional Statements, Government, Ordinances,

Amendments and Implementation. Steve wrote the first draft of the Philosophy and made sure we had a clear presentation of the Gospel in that article. Paul led the development of the doctrinal statement and used the Westminster Confession of Faith as the basis for the doctrinal position. Rather than develop a detailed doctrinal statement, the Leadership felt that there were certain fundamentals of the faith that brought us together as believers in Christ. Thus, the doctrinal statement represents those fundamental beliefs. Other “positions” of the faith also were important to the type of teaching at SLBC. The “positions” were not intended to discourage anyone from fellowshiping at SLBC, but were intended to ensure that the Pastoral and Sunday School teachings were consistent. The first Position Statements dealt with: 1) sanctity of life, 2) marriage/divorce/remarriage, 3) hermeneutics (interpretation of the Bible), 4) dispensations, 5) eschatology (things to come), 6) repentance and 7) temporary spiritual gifts. Earl wrote the Government section although Steve made sure each section was well organized. The Leadership Committee met for about a year and at the one-year anniversary of the church, the Constitution and Doctrine were formally adopted and church rule turned over to the first Board of Elders. The Elders of SWBC were present that Sunday to lay hands on this first Board. The new Elders were Earl Doyle (chairman), Pastor Stan Giles, Dave Beckmann and Steve Porter. (Paul Sartwell declined to be an Elder. Dave Beckmann’s worked caused him to transfer to San Antonio in September 1984. Earl remained on the Elder Board until 1986 when he volunteered to step down and Steve Porter stayed for a few more years after that before also stepping down.) Shown below are the new Elders on that Sunday.



Pictured left to right are; Earl Doyle, Dave Beckmann, Steve Porter and Stan Giles.

Shown below is a picture from that Sunday where SWBC Elders laid hands on the new Elders. Coming from SWBC were (left to right) Nathan Mains (CE Pastor), Rich Thomson (Sr. Pastor) and Charlie Pearson (Chairman). (Charlie is the father of Lisa Pearson Galloway who presently attends SLBC.)



Shown below is the inside of the bulletin from that first year anniversary bulletin.

Morning Worship

SUGAR LAND BIBLE CHURCH FIRST YEAR ANNIVERSARY SEPTEMBER 18, 1983

Dear Friends,

Time flies! One year ago today we met formally for the first time as a church. Much has happened since then. We've grown in size, expanded our Sunday School, began our home group meetings and today, we formally adopt our constitution and recognize the charter members. God has been good to us during this past year.

Now that we've been meeting for a year we've pretty much gotten into a routine. Things flow fairly smoothly, we are fairly familiar and comfortable with each other, and I think we are confident of the future. With this in mind I would like to challenge us to a new goal this year. I'd like to encourage each of us to seriously consider our responsibility toward evangelism. As a church one of our purposes is to reach out with the gospel and yet in the hustle and bustle of starting the church this has taken something of a back seat. As a tangible goal I'd like to see each of us pray for and share the gospel with one person or family during this next year. It could be a neighbor, a co-worker, whoever, but I think it would be exciting to look out one year from now and see a host of new believers in this body. Would you consider committing yourself to this goal?

To all who work so faithfully -- thank you. May God be glorified through our efforts.

*Sincerely,
Stan Giles*



Listed below are the elders who have been appointed by Southwest Bible Church for a three month term. At the end of three months there will be a church election.

Dave Beckman – Dave became a Christian at an early age. He is from Virginia but graduated from LeTourneau College with a degree in Electrical Engineering. He later received a Masters degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Dave and his wife Mary Lou have two sons, Jonathan 8, and Daniel 4. Dave is the Branch Sales Manager for Honeywell.

Earl Doyle – Earl grew up in Rhode Island and received a Civil Engineering degree from the University of Rhode Island and later a graduate degree in Ocean Engineering. He later moved to Houston and became a Christian in 1972. He and his wife Bobbie have three children, Ben 7, Rachel 5, and Daniel 3. Earl is a Senior Research Engineer with Shell.

Stan Giles – Stan grew up in San Antonio and became a Christian in 1971. He graduated from Florida Bible College and is almost finished with his studies at Dallas Seminary. He and his wife Sandi have no children. Stan is the pastor of this church.

Steve Porter – Steve grew up here in Houston and received a Physics degree from the University of Houston. He became a Christian in 1975. He and his wife Nancy have one son Michael, who is two years old. Steve just recently received a Masters Degree in Business Administration from HBU and is a systems Supervisor for Exxon.



Buying Land

Growth was rapid during the early years. The services were moved from the school choir room to the commons area (i.e., cafeteria) in February 1984. (Mr. Stock, the custodian, was very faithful to SLBC and although he initially stayed in his office, he eventually could be seen standing at the back of the cafeteria listening to the service.) Shown below are two scenes from the services in the cafeteria. Bob Matthews is leading the singing. As you can see from the rear view, cafeteria tables had to be moved each Sunday to make

space to set up chairs for the services. The piano also had to be moved from the choir room to the cafeteria each Sunday!



When Pastor Stan was on vacation (or away on his Air National Guard training missions as an Air Force Chaplain), a variety of men preached at the church. One of the more frequent speakers was Pastor Mark Choate who lived in the Houston area prior to becoming a missionary-teacher at the Central American Theological Seminary in Guatemala City. At the time, he was CE Pastor at Bethel Independent Presbyterian Church. Mark laughingly relates that he was the third guest speaker at the church from

Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS). Stan called him out of the blue one day and asked Mark if he was interested in speaking. Stan always spoke his mind and lovingly said he was reluctant to ask another DTS speaker as the first two were not good speakers and if Mark was also bad, he wouldn't be able to ask another DTS man to speak there! Mark came back many times, so he must have passed Stan's muster that the pulpit be filled with quality speakers when Stan could not be there himself.

The church did well those first years. Many were filling the needed ministry roles. A list of those heading ministries in September 1984 is shown below (taken from the 9/30/84 Congregational Meeting hand-out).

SLBC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

ELDERS

SENIOR PASTOR

MINISTRY LEADERS

ELDERS

EARL DOYLE - CHAIRMAN
STEVE PORTER - SECRETARY
STAN GILES
BOB MATTHEWS

SENIOR PASTOR

STAN GILES

MINISTRY LEADERS

WORSHIP SERVICE - STAN GILES
FELLOWSHARE GROUPS - BILL MONTGOMERY
SUNDAY SCHOOL & JR CHURCH - JOHN MARTIN
(2 Yrs - Grade 5)
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL - STEVE PORTER / STAN GILES
JR & SR HIGH YOUTH - LARRY LENGYEL
LADIES BIBLE STUDY COORDINATOR - SHARON SULLIVAN
FELLOWSHIP EVENTS - MATTHEWS, HARRINGTONS,
JACKSONS & ZAHRADNIKS
EVANGELISM - PAT KELLY
MERCY - TRICIA SCOTT
MISSIONS - VINCE GRIFFIN
MUSIC - BOB MATTHEWS
TREASURER - EARL DOYLE
BOOK TABLE - JACK CONNELLY
NURSERY - MICHELLE LENGYEL
SUNDAY AM SET UP - MIKE SULLIVAN
SUNDAY AM USHERS - BOB SCOTT
SUNDAY AM COFFEE FELLOWSHIP - KEN THEAKER
LAND & BLDG - ELDERS

By September 1984 we had grown to 61 families and by the summer of 1985 (three years after the church started) the number of families attending the church had grown to 80 (including the birth of many new children not the least of which was Stan & Sandi's first

child, Scott, who was born in November 1884). It was now time to buy land for a permanent church home. The school district administration was also starting to be a little difficult toward us as they felt that we should not permanently rent the school. As we began to look for land in early 1984, it was readily apparent that Sugarland Properties owned virtually all the available land in Sugar Land area. In our initial meetings with them it became clear that only “recognized” churches were getting land. These plots were typically about five acres and were all part of the planned community envisioned by Sugarland Properties for the City of Sugar land. In fact, during the fall of 1984, Sugarland Properties were not even interested in talking to us. As with the history of this church, God sends the right people at the right time to help the church. In this case, Harold Judy was attending the church and was with Sugarland Properties. He helped “legitimize” the church and off we went searching for property. Charlie Howard, Executive VP of Sugarland Properties, was also a help in our acquiring land. Charlie is a long-time committed member and deacon at Sugar Creek Baptist Church and also represents our area in the Texas Legislature.

The property that was purchased is the present site of the church on Matlage Way. It was purchased on August 27, 1985 for \$295,450 and is 4.4507 gross acres in size. However, restrictions limited the net acreage to 3.3913 acres. Instrumental in the loan acquisition was Ken Rice who had extensive dealings with the local Texas Commerce Bank through his State Farm Insurance business. Without Ken’s banking contact, it would have been very difficult to get the loan. The purchase included three homes on Brooks Street and required Sugarland Properties to extend Matlage Way from the nursing home to the present Cul-de-sac. The difference between the net and gross acreage was primarily due to pipeline easements and that Terry Street was platted to extend across Brooks Street to Matlage Way. The church successfully petitioned the city to abandon this section of the street and also demolished one of the Brooks street buildings to increase the net size of the property.

As pictured below, shortly after the purchase the church body gathered at the land site after a Sunday service to dedicate the land to God’s ministry.



By September 1986, the number of families had grown to nearly 100. However, Houston was hit with a severe recession during the mid to late 80's due to low oil prices. The impact on the church was to see several people lose their jobs (and some their homes) and others to leave the area in search of better jobs. It was certainly a time of ministering to those in need within the body. One effect of the recession was to delay our building construction plans until the economy improved.

The Building

The next exciting phase of the church was to design and build our first building. A building committee was formed in March, 1986 and consisted of Doug Lawton, Debby Dunn, Bill Atkins, Stan Giles and Warren Johnson. God provided architect Doug Lawton to us as he and his wife, Gay, started to attend the church about the time we needed architectural help. Doug drew sketches that showed a phased development of the property. (Many wonder why the existing auditorium is not perpendicular to Matlage Way. The original building layout developed by Doug showed four buildings on the property. The other two future buildings were to be built on the land between the present buildings and the nursing home. The existing auditorium and a new building were to be angled away from each other to form a central courtyard.) Doug's help was instrumental in developing the initial enthusiasm of the church to approve funding the building. Sadly, Doug's work soon took him to the Boston area. However, the church had a "stick and brick" commercial construction expert in Bill Atkins. Bill was part owner in a construction firm that specialized in commercial, wood-framed, brick construction. Except for the steel frame used in the auditorium, the construction was exactly the type that Bill was familiar with. Final plans were drawn by Yeatts Architect (a firm Doug recommended) and Bill also developed the massive book of detailed specifications used to specify every aspect of the materials used in the building. The plans and specifications were completed and approved on June 12, 1990. The New Construction Committee of the First Colony Community Services Association, Inc. approved the final construction plans on October 4, 1990. David Edwards, whose expertise was securing financing, played a key role in obtaining the necessary funding for the project. The building eventually cost about \$750,000 to construct. A contract to build the building was entered into with Construction Ltd. on September 14, 1990. Bill Atkins was the Elder representative for the construction project and the church representative was Earl Doyle. The first major item was to demolish one of the three homes on Brooks Street so that we could have entry from Brooks Street. The building construction did not go all that smoothly as the builder did not adequately provide continuous on-job supervision and he also tended to use non-commercial contractors (i.e., home-builder types). Actual construction on the buildings was started November 14, 1990 by clearing the land of surface grass and soil. Progress was slow at first. The auditorium slab was poured on December 14, 1990 and the education/office wing was poured on January 17, 1991. The building was essentially complete in June and the office staff was the first to move in on June 13, 1991. First services were held in September. The church leadership and the authority they vested in Earl worked well as there were very few misunderstandings with the contractor. As Earl told the contractor tongue-in-cheek, "You can do whatever a

member of the church wants, but we won't pay for it. The building will be built according to the plans and approved change orders only." That seemed to work effectively. People in the church provided their expertise in several areas. Chris Kenney was responsible for the sound system contract and installation. Diane Choate provided her interior design expertise in selecting color schemes and tile and carpeting selections. Bill Atkins was, of course, instrumental in providing specification and construction expertise. Stan provided encouragement and enthusiastic support and was the official greeter to the many people who stopped by to see how the construction was progressing. Davey Nichols faithfully recorded the construction progress with his still camera.

Interestingly, two congregational votes were taken regarding the building. One was a members-only vote to approve the expenditure and the other was on an issue that often divides church. The color scheme! All attendees over 18 years of age were invited to vote. The "colors" vote was taken on January 20, 1991 and the "blue/gray" scheme was chosen in a close vote followed by the "red" scheme. Thus, the "blue/gray" scheme was used in the foyer and educational wing and the "red" scheme was used in the auditorium. The "blue/gray" scheme was advertised as having cool colors that keep you awake. The "red" scheme was advertised as denoting warmth. Happily, the church survived this crucial juncture in its history.

Below are some of the pictures taken by Davey Nichols as the building was being built.



no

JAN. 28, 1991



emo

JAN. 26, 1991



mo

JAN. 31, 1991



FEB. 6, 1991



emo

APRIL 5, 1991



mo

MARCH 21, 1991



Memo

APRIL 30, 1991



Memo

APRIL 30, 1991



Shown below are pictures taken June 16, 1991 during the open house. There was still plenty to do, but the congregation got its first “official” look at the building.



Pretty soon it was time to start moving our “stuff” in to the new building. One of the first things that came in was the piano.



Rooms started to be filled.



Keeping the “kids” out of trouble was a bit of a problem as shown below.



A Building Of Our Own

The first service in the new building was held in September 1991 although the open house was held June 16th. Attendance swelled those first Sundays as old-timers returned. Many who watched the building being built also started attending like Beverly and Julius Baumann. By the end of 1992, the number of families calling SLBC home had risen to 141.

Although there were mission donations, a Mission Committee was not formed until about 1987. After that, an annual missions conference and regular pulpit updates for the congregation became a prominent feature of the church. Pastor Stan wrote the original by-laws of the Missions Committee, but it was the result of many meetings between Stan, Vince Griffin and Paul Sartwell. In preparation for this, Paul took a six-week course taught by the US Center for World Missions (Pasadena, CA) at Bethel Independent Presbyterian Church. One highlight occurred in 1989 after the “Iron Curtain” fell in Eastern Europe. The church "adopted" four young people from Sofia, Bulgaria. They spent a year with us learning English, studying, and worshipping - and another year at Bible school in the northwest. They returned to Sofia and started a church, which is still flourishing today.

As the first decade closed on the church, Stan Giles embarked on a new ministry to pastor another church. He preached his last sermon on February 28, 1993. Stan, Sandi and their two children (Scott and Shannon) moved from the Houston area to Clinton, Iowa. Stan has been Senior Pastor at the Evangelical Free Church in Clinton since March 1993 where he has had a very successful ministry for the last eight years.

Finally, I would like to recognize the men who served as Elders during this first decade of the church. They devoted countless hours to the success of the church and should be recognized for their leadership and commitment.

Elders During the First Decade

Elders
Bill Atkins
Earl Doyle
Towt Dunn
Don Frost
Stan Giles
Ed Jones
Mark Kuzdas
Doug Lawton
Bob Luke
Bob Matthews
Bill Montgomery
Steve Porter
Frank Richardson
Bob Scott
Ron Smith