

Tanglewood Bible Fellowship
A story of our beginnings, our families and our future
By Carol Wanzor

Author's note: This narrative is a compilation from many sources. I am grateful to MANY who have aided me in putting together the story of TBF from the beginning. While great care has been taken to insure the accuracy of information, I am open to hearing your comments, corrections, suggestions and additions as the story continues to be refined. It has been a joy to work on this project!

In the Beginning

In the summer of 1976, a small group of believers had a desire to explore starting an independent Bible Church. Bill & Jo Dickinson, George & Paula Rountree, Jonny & Joella Blalack, Mary Jo & Lance Smith, Dale & Debbie Corbin began meeting for Bible study in their homes and seeking God's direction.

Debbie Corbin shared her memories of this time in her and Dale's young married life, as they had just moved to Duncan in 1976 when the idea of the new church began. "With much prayer, soul searching and faith, we decided to join this group and move forward. Matt 17:20 was on our mind a lot, "Because of the littleness of your faith, for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to the mountain, 'move' from here to there; and it shall move and nothing shall be impossible to you."

Debbie also humbly recognized that "we were merely instruments used by God to start this journey. We had no idea what we were doing or where it would lead us. But here we are 44 years later. We began by meeting in each other's homes for Bible Study and fellowship. We felt the Lord was leading us to start a New Testament Church based on Bible teaching, prayer and fellowship."

A leadership group visited Believers Chapel and Fellowship Bible Church in Dallas, TX (Pastor, Gene Getz). They were also in touch with Dallas Theological Seminary who helped them find their first minister, through the help of Bob Salstrom, Director of Alumni and Church Placement at DTS. As a result of Bob's assistance, later in 1976, Dr. Mike Kempainen became the first pastor of TBF. Mike, wife Chrys, and two young daughters Amy and Heather (ages 2 and 3) joined the TBF family and Chrys went to work using her God given musical talents. She played the piano, sang, and taught music lessons to several in the TBF family.

Church services were held first in the upstairs of Paula's Attic on Main Street (owned by Paula Rountree), then at Parkview Restaurant (now Daylight Diner). Wednesday night prayer and fellowship meetings were held in homes.

God Blesses with a Time of Growth

In late 1977, the church embarked on a building program. Mrs. Odom (Joella Blalack's mother) donated the land the church sits on and Jonny Blalack oversaw the construction of the building. The building originally had a large room for worship and a couple of classrooms. In that large room, which is now our youth room, were held church services, Christmas plays, pot luck dinners, baby showers - everything happened in that one room!

There were, of course, restrooms and a couple of small classrooms in the very first phase of building. The original building continued to expand to the south (today's "north hallway area") adding more classrooms, including a room that soon became a nursery.



Building Phase One,
Late 1976



Original TBF Building –
Complete with snow and children!

Around this same time, Mama Jo Dickinson began to pray for babies and families to increase at Tanglewood. Mimi (Ponder) Roberson and husband Tom had come to Tanglewood soon after it began, and were part of the group when the building was built. Russell was one of the children born to the TBF family in 1978, joined by the children of Dale & Debbie Corbin (son Sean), Robin & Robbie Richey (daughter Kristen) and Brad & Cindy Blystone (daughter Kristin) and others. Mimi explicitly remembers how all of these babies and others that quickly followed in the years to come, were in the nursery. That nursery was a rather small room outfitted with cribs designed to accommodate two children in the space of one crib - bunk cribs, you might say!

As the church building and family grew, the Tanglewood family enjoyed many good times with weekend church held at various lakes, ladies retreats, pot luck dinners, Backyard Bible Clubs, held in various neighborhoods of church members and participating in local softball leagues. Homemade ice cream socials were also one of the many ways this group found to enjoy each other's company.

Several received Christ and were baptized on the weekend church trips held at places like Lake Murray and Quartz Mountain. Baptisms were also held at the home of the Blalacks in an indoor pool. When they sold the house to the Puryear family, that family became faithful members and a few more were baptized in that pool.

Tom Odell joined the staff of TBF in May of 1980 as Youth / Associate Pastor. He was joined by his wife Beverly who also played the piano for services. Their two children, Kimberly and Curtis were a welcomed addition. Beverly and Chrys Kempainen were the leading force behind the many children's Christmas programs we had which often included many adult roles. Beverly and others led in organizing Wednesday night classes such as Pioneer Girls for the children. The Odells were the embodiment of sacrificial servants and helped bring the church body into a loving, cohesive unit.

Sometime in the early 1980's Wassail Night became a huge traditional Christmas celebration and after moving into the larger building, it grew to include a potluck event. If you don't know about Wassail Night and how it brings out the amateur performer in each of us. . . well that's a WHOLE other story.



"Fun times"
George & Paula Rountree
1985 – Wassail Night?

In late 1986, Mike Kempainen moved on to another church as pastor, and Dr. Bob Lightner, a Professor at DTS, came to serve as an interim pastor/Sunday pulpit minister. Bob served in this position for about 2 years, never moving to Duncan, but driving up each weekend for services. During this time, Bob Salstrom of DTS again assisted TBF in identifying several potential candidates who did visit and speak at the church.

During this interim period, Tom Odell continued in his position as Youth Pastor while also ministering to the flock and handling other pastoral duties during the week. Sometime in the first half of 1988, Tom and Beverly and family chose to leave the TBF family, returning to their home and family in Illinois.

In the fall of 1988 Dr. Lightner suggested that the Elders contact a former student of his, Brad McCoy, about the full-time pastoral position. Perhaps a little known fact is that Dr. Lightner had also preceded Brad as an interim at the church Brad was pastoring in Shreveport, Fellowship Bible Church. Brad recalls receiving an unsolicited call from Bill Dickinson wanting him to visit Tanglewood and consider becoming their pastor. Brad and Debbie first visited TBF in October of 1988, and accepted the call to be TBF's pastor, beginning their work in Duncan in December of that year. Brad and Debbie's two sons, Jamie and Jonathan were in kindergarten and second grade when they made the move to Duncan.

The church Brad and Debbie inherited was still meeting in the quite small building on Sunday morning. On Wednesday nights, Pathfinder Boys and Pioneer Girls and Sonshine Kids (for younger children) were meeting at the church, where a nursery was also available. Wednesday night adult meetings continued to be hosted in homes, with an Elder leading prayer/share time and Pastor Brad leading in Bible Study.

The McCoy Decades

Under Brad and Debbie's pastoral guidance, Tanglewood continued to grow and flourish. In 1991 the congregation was able to greatly expand the size of the building, adding the auditorium, educational wing, and the kitchen. Shortly after the completion of the auditorium there was a fund drive for a new piano. Dale Corbin and Susan Duell took the lead in helping

the church select the grand piano that is still used in worship services. Susan was serving as the church pianist at that time, and Dale as worship leader.

Another big change the new building and auditorium brought was allowing baptisms to be held indoors. Prior to this time, many had been baptized at Clear Creek Lake or as previously mentioned in the swimming pools of members such as the Homer and Pam Cox and the Blalacks.

Brad's general style of teaching was verse by verse exposition of Scripture based on close exegesis of the Biblical text. His objective in the pulpit was to do two things. The first was interpretation, or to teach clearly the contextual meaning of a given passage so that TBFers could read and understand Biblical content on their own. The second was application, to exhort TBFers to live out in their conduct the content of a given portion of God's Word.

Brad says "I Timothy 4:1-16 and I Peter 2:1-3 was always in the back of my mind both when I prepared to teach and then when I actually taught the Word. I wanted TBFr's to gain a thorough knowledge and understanding of Scripture and to be able to read and discern the meaning of Scripture for themselves. Were there commands to obey? Warnings to heed? Key truths/ doctrines to believe? All of this was designed to catalyze spiritual growth in believers empowered by the Spirit such that we might be "transformed by the renewing our minds" (Romans 12:1-2) that is, in our God-concept, our self-concept and our worldview.

In a recent interview, Brad shared with me that he adopted this expository style of teaching due to the influence of a Sunday school teacher at First Baptist Nederland, TX. His study at Dallas Theological Seminary of Ecclesiology (the doctrine of the C/church) led him to prioritize a focus on the church's spiritual health over external numerical growth. McCoy also affirmed that TBF's style of not having an altar from its beginning is in line with the early Church as seen in the Book of Acts. In fact, Brad points out that historically, altar calls actually did not appear in Church history until the early 1800's.

In the summer of 1991, Tanglewood began a missional partnership with Jerusalem Baptist Church (or in Spanish Iglesia Bautista Jerusalem) in Puebla, Mexico, pastored by Tomas and Carmen Yanez. Originally, these trips were organized through Global Mission Fellowship (1991 to 1995). In 1996, no such mission trip to Puebla was scheduled by GMF, but three brave TBF souls (Brad McCoy, Larry Herrera, and Steve Howard) embarked on a similar trip to Escuintla, Guatemala.

"In 1997, after much prayer and with a lot of fear and trepidation in my heart" says Dr. Brad McCoy, "I organized a return mission trip to Puebla and Jerusalem Baptist Church, 'on our own', by the grace of and with the help of God. From that point on we returned almost every year until 2006 when we skipped due in part to plans to travel to Israel that same year."

Ultimately between 1991 and 2017, around 15 mission trips were made by various groups of TBF volunteers. On a few occasions, other members of the Duncan community joined TBF on these trips to Puebla. At our best estimate, around 40 different TBFr's took part in these missional journeys over the years. Tomas and Carmen continued to pastor Jerusalem Baptist

Church over these years, eventually moving their evangelical efforts outside the walls of a church and calling the effort "Church of the City" which met in small groups in homes.

Of course, under Brad's tutelage, leadership and outstanding athleticism, The TBF Tigers Men softball teams FLOURISHED in the local Church League at Hines Park. (A touch of Brad humor there, sorry.)

Tanglewood fielded teams under the "Tanglewood Tiger" banner between 1978 and 2005, when participation in the league greatly diminished. Over the years, the Tigers finished at 2nd or 3rd in the 12 team league almost every season and in both 1999 and 2000 they won the league championship. Pastors Kempainen and McCoy both served the team well in the position of pitcher.

These times at the ballpark were great opportunities for the church family to bond together, spending time together with their families and showing support for the Tigers. It was not unusual after a softball game to see everyone enjoying watermelon that had been kept cold in a trashcan full of ice.

A New Era - Looking to the Future

On the first Sunday of September of 2019, Pastor Brad announced his intended retirement to be effective near the end of the year. This was understandably an emotional time, but the Board of Elders and many of the TBF family immediately began to focus on the future and look with hope toward a new era of continued Bible Study, prayer and fellowshiping together.

In December, 2019 we dedicated Wassail Night to the purpose of extending to the McCoy's a proper thank you for their service, and bidding them goodbye. By mid-February, a decision was reached by the leadership team to extend a call to David Shields to become our next pastor. David and Brianna accepted this call and arrived on the scene in Duncan on March 7, 2020.

We were able to have an initial celebration and welcoming for David, Brianna and their son Calvin (age 16 months) and to hear David's teaching on only two Sundays before the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic plunged us into an unknown world. To curb the spread of this deadly virus, meetings of 10 or more people were quickly discouraged by government officials. This forced TBF to use Facebook, email and other communication methods to "gather", study God's word, share prayer needs and encourage each other.

As I complete this story today, America is still in uncharted territory in response to the Coronavirus crisis. We are in a time of great uncertainty regarding many things, including our economy.

Pastor David Shields shares with us these encouraging words of wisdom: "When I reflect on the history of TBF I think of 2 Timothy 1:14 'guard the good deposit entrusted to you.' The founders of Tanglewood were seeking to guard that ancient deposit of our faith from the early church. Our job today and in the future as a church is to continue a legacy of faithful witness to the gospel and our Lord. No one knows what the future holds for us, especially in our current crisis! Our church will continue to grow and change as it has these many years, but our mission

and commitment is the same. My prayer is that when our Savior returns He will have found us faithful."

At Tanglewood we greatly anticipate the opportunity to get to know David, Brianna and Calvin and learn from David's teaching from the Word. Under the leadership of David and our Elder Team, we will continue to focus on Bible Study, Prayer, Worship, Fellowship and Outreach / Missions.