

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Raleigh's First Baptist Church on the occasion of its bicentennial celebration.

First Baptist is a pillar of the Raleigh community, with a history of prophetic witness and community service. For 200 years, it has been a spiritual home to successive generations in Raleigh and beyond, a place of learning and teaching, a place of faith, and sustenance, and a place of commitment to a just society.

The church was founded in 1812 by a congregation of 23 members – 14 black and 9 white – who had come to the State Capitol to hear Rev. Robert Daniel. At that time, the city of Raleigh had about 1,000 residents but not a single church building. The new congregation was dubbed Raleigh Baptist Church. At first, the church met at the State Capitol, but church facilities were soon built, and, for the next 56 years First Baptist was a multiracial assembly that reached more than 400 members.

Following the Civil War, the church's black membership, about half the congregation at the time, asked for and received permission to establish what became known briefly as First Colored Baptist Church. It was under these auspices that the church settled in its current location on South Wilmington Street, completing the church building early in the 20th century and ultimately becoming First Baptist.

The Rev. William Warwick, a Philadelphia native, was the first African-American pastor at First Baptist, leading the flock from 1867 to 1874 and establishing a school called the Miles School. Students here were absorbed into the public schools a short time later. The seventh pastor was Dr. Oscar S. Bullock, whose leadership included the pioneering of transportation for children and adults to attend Sunday school through the purchase of a bus in 1925. Dr. Charles Ward led the church for a long period in the mid-20th century, from 1959 through 1988. He was a prominent leader in the NAACP and oversaw the construction of a housing development for low-income members of the community. He was nearing the end of his ministry when I first ran for Congress in 1986, and I will always be grateful for his counsel and encouragement.

I've been honored to work with several of First Baptist's leaders during my time representing the Triangle. The Rev. Nathaniel O. Boykin and Dr. Isaac B. Horton led the church in interim capacities after the death of Dr. Ward in 1988. Since 1996, Dr. Dumas Alexander Harshaw Jr.

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has led the church into a new era with his powerful preaching and teaching and a strong record of service to the broader community. Under Dr. Harshaw's guidance, the church has added an early Sunday service, purchased additional property and built an adjacent Family Life Center. Giving by the approximately 800 members has recently surpassed the \$1 million mark.

Today, First Baptist continues its work as a place of faith and of learning. From daycare and after-school programs to weekly meals for the homeless, job workshops for the unemployed, and substance abuse counseling, First Baptist continues to strengthen the community. First Baptist Church is a cornerstone of Raleigh's faith community. Its 200 years merit recognition by this body, as well as the hope that it will be an essential part of the Raleigh community's fabric for many decades and centuries to come.