

## Architecture of FBC

First Baptist Church was organized in 1843 in a room in the Courthouse on Gay Street, moving to the present location in 1924, in the heart of downtown, uphill from the Tennessee River and a mile from the University of Tennessee. Ground was broken in 1923, costing \$600,000 and utilizing 150 workers. Dougherty and Gardner of Nashville were chosen to be architects, and Worsham Brothers of Knoxville was the general contractor. First Baptist Church was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in March of 1997.

The building is a pleasant blend of ornate and simple. The church is Baroque Classic, an eclectic blend of English Renaissance and Romanesque architecture. Many exterior details resemble St. Martin-in-the-Field in Trafalgar Square, London. The portico is framed by an elaborate hand-carved frieze of garlands and cherubs, supported by six Corinthian Columns. The cross above the portico was uncommon for Baptist churches.

The Narthex is richly decorated in marble and ornamental plaster. The domed ceiling reflects the style of the Sanctuary. Over the center doors, the marble plaque honors the founders, James and John Moses. The field of the floor is Tennessee Gray marble surrounding the Star of Baptism of Tennessee Cedar. The Gray is from the Forks of the River quarry, and the Cedar is from either Forks of the River or the Blount County quarry.

The Sanctuary design is monumental in scale, meant to be inspiring and impressive. The three-story Sanctuary is octagonal and comprised of marble, paneling made from sweet gum, and plaster. The Doric, Ionic and Corinthian columns abound supporting the structure and the many-stepped moldings. In Baptist tradition, there are no statues, but the Sanctuary is rich in design and symbolism. Many classic details are found throughout. Garlands, wreaths, winged flames, olive branches, lotus, and acanthus leaves are hand carved from wood and plaster. The Greek key molding delineates the perimeter of the Sanctuary, uniting the gallery arches. Mrs. Nona Brown, who was wife of the pastor of the church during the building, chose the biblical quotations along the stringcourse written in 15 gold letters.

The Chancel is the focal point of the Sanctuary. The baptistery, choir loft, and Communion table are located here. The sound of the 42 member choir is enhanced by the Schantz pipe organ, which has 58 ranks and 3,153 pipes; the Steinway piano; and a carillon located in the steeple. The organ grill is bordered by a tulip molding. The wave molding unites the choir area with the baptistery, both physically and thematically. The baptistry, elevated behind the Choir, is framed by a pediment, supported by two Ionic columns, each topped with an urn. The back wall of the baptistry was originally gold leaf. This was later changed to marble, and then replaced with the current plaster wall. The base is paneled in marble. The seven ceiling medallions of the arch over the Chancel repeat the octagonal structure of the building.

The Balcony, extending around three sides of the Sanctuary, is a triforium, a gallery of arches. Jerusalem crosses atop four of these arches denoting aisles. The alabaster glass windows harmonize with the warmth of the subtle color throughout the Sanctuary. Above the triforium, the clerestory has ten small round windows. The balcony is faced with sweet gum panels. Carved into these panels are crosses surrounded by pillars of faith; between these sections are medallions of acanthus leaves and dogwood blossoms forming a cross. The arches, the capitals, and frames of the clerestory windows are covered with gold leaf. The walls are painted a soft cream. The 100 bulb Italian chandelier dominates the open space. The chandelier lowers from the ceiling by a pulley system.

The atrium west of the Sanctuary is the Welcome Center, connecting the Church Building with the City Parking Garage. The brass lectern is the pulpit from the earlier sanctuary on Gay Street. The Welcome Center serves as the main entrance to the Church during the week. The Church offices are in the two wings behind the sanctuary. The West Wing hosts the offices of the Receptionist, the Deaf, Youth, and Children's Ministries; and the financial office. The East Wing contains the offices of the Community Ministry, the Associate Pastor, the Senior Pastor, the Pastoral Care Minister and the Conference Room. The Music Suite is in the East Tower; the Youth Suite, the West Tower. Spanning the East and Wings is the Church Library, containing 12,000 volumes on many subjects from religious topics to children's fiction. Below the Church Library is the Blue Room which serves as the church parlor for small receptions and meetings. West of the Blue Room is the Deaf Classroom Suite.

Below the Sanctuary is the Fred Brown Chapel, dedicated in 1965. Dr. Brown was the pastor from 1921-1946 and presided over the building of the Sanctuary. The Chancel is framed by two sets of Corinthian columns. The Chancel centerpiece is a stained glass window, depicting Christ. The window, designed by Jacoby of St. Louis, is executed in jewel tones—blue, the symbol of heaven; red, the blood of sacrifice; green, the color of life. At the base of the window stands the Communion table, embossed with IHS, representing the motto of the Emperor Constantine, *In hoc signo vinces*. The Chapel is designed to deepen an awareness of Christ as Redeemer, Comforter, and Healer. It is painted in shades of white, the lightest being in the chancel. The decorative paneling, made in Germany, is recessed squares framed by a tulip molding. On the organ screens above each choir stall are ten shields embossed with Christian symbols. In the hallway circling the Chapel are several rooms including the Archives and the Heritage Room which houses historical records. On the west side of the Chapel is the Prayer Room which opened in 1997.

The two-level crossover over Hill Street connects to the Education building, built in 1959. The Third floor, which is on the level of the Church offices, is comprised of Adult classrooms. The second floor is the Children's Ministry. The Preschool and Nursery is the first floor. The Ground Floor is Trentham Hall, named after Dr. Charles A. Trentham, pastor from 1953-1974. Trentham Hall is used for receptions, Wednesday night dinners, the Bridge and large group meetings. In the rear parking lot is Mary's Place, a children's playground dedicated in 2007 in memory of Mary Hutson.