

ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

How often here has gladness filled the place,
As hearts have yielded to redeeming grace,
And joined the ever-multiplying band
Of travellers journeying to Immanuel's land.

Here manhood's strength has gained its god-like power
For duties, trials, and temptation's hour;
And here have tried ones learned in God's wise will
How safe and sweet to "suffer and be still."

Here, too, have children learned the joyous song,
Which in the land of love they'll still prolong;
A song too sweet for highest angel's voice,
But in whose rapturous strains all will rejoice.

Here, too, the aged have new life begun,
Which knows no darkening with the setting sun;
That feels no sorrow when earth's joys are o'er,
Nor dreads to near the undiscovered shore.

And so this hallowed place to-night seems filled
With memories sweetly sad of voices stilled,
While shadowy forms and faces once so dear
Through fancy's vision seem to mingle here.

And well they may, for here through their best years
Their prayers and praises rose, and fell their tears,
While sturdier grew their faith, their hearts more brave,
As truth they sought to spread and souls to save.

The names of some one scarce can read for tears,
As we recall their conflict long with fears;
Yet, with such lives, their names can never die,
But will adorn the honor roll on high.

Some seem too sweetly sacred to be named,
Like one of old, as Christ's beloved, famed;
Whose strong devotion and whose service grand
Graved high their names eternally to stand.

Some may have blundered in their work and fight,
And seemed to aid the wrong more than the right;
But well we know the Lord their meaning took,
And wrote their names with love in His fair book.

And now, as with a backward, lingering glance,
We turn toward the future, to advance,
Faith gathers courage for the trials new,
From all the grace and goodness we review.

For well we know that fruits from labor here,
Through coming years will ripen far and near;
While by and by such work rewards will bring,
Of heavenly service for the heavenly King.