

THE HISTORY OF THE FIRST SLAVIC BAPTIST CHURCH OF SACRAMENTO

And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you". Deu. 8:2

The resettlement of Russian emigrants to Sacramento, California, started after WWII, and evangelical Christian Baptists were part of it. At first these believers were gathering in an American Church, First Baptist church at 4840 Fruitridge Rd. This church had granted the believing emigrants a place to do Sunday school in Russian, yet the worship services Russian emigrants had to hear in English.

Several months passed by, and Russian-speaking believers decided to look for a meeting place closer to their residence. The search was a success, and the house they found on 26th Street was prepared to accommodate the worship services.

September 9, 1962, a group of believers composed of 22 people organized into a church called the Russian Baptist Mission. The church operated under that name for several years.

People continued to join the small church, and the church grew. Brother Joseph I. Poda was elected the first church leader. Soon, a sisters' group was formed with sister A. Poda as the appointed head. The sisters launched out missionary work to help the poor, as well as those sick with leprosy in South America. Later the youth group was organized, and a Russian language school started. The mission began to publish a small magazine called "The Voice of the Shepherd"; brother E.V. Garin was its editor.

Later on, brother F.P Karpets was invited by the church to take the pastoral ministry. Prior to that he lived in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. It took time to prepare the paperwork before he moved to America, and brother P.G Amegin served as pastor during that time. On February 5, 1965, F. P. Karpets' family moved from Canada to America, Sacramento, California, and on February 21 of the same year, the pastoral responsibilities were transferred to brother F.P. Karpets.



F.P. Karpets' family arrival to Sacramento

The church life revived with the coming of brother Karpets' family. A choir was organized, and Alina Karpets became its conductor. A couple months later the brother A. Kravchuk joined the church; soon he became choir's master and organized a string orchestra.



The first string orchestra led by A. Kravchuk.

The worship services at 26th Street continued for three years, but the house of prayer was getting small. The church had to find a new building. The search was long and though a suitable place was found, it turned out that it was scheduled to be demolished due to a highway construction. The city administration had already issued an order to demolish the house and a contract was signed with the contractor. The church had asked the Lord to preserve this building and help to get it for the service, so that His name would be glorified. The Lord heard the prayers and answered His children' plea by changing the decision of the city council in favor of the church.

The house was lifted from the basement and placed on wheels. God miraculously helped to buy a piece of land to set this house on. It was an abandoned parcel, where wild grass and trash were plentiful. After much effort, the land was transformed, and a house of prayer was set up on the site. This was the result of persevering prayers and hard toil of 30 church members.



The house of prayer construction at Franklin Blvd.

On June 3 of 1966 the dedication and opening of the house of prayer took place at Franklin Boulevard. The families of Maz, Granchukov, Amegin and Shaluk put much effort constructing the house of prayer.

A new period in church's life started after the church moved to a new location at 2925 Franklin Blvd. It was a period of prayers and expectations, prayers that the Lord would fill the house of prayer with people who would worship God in this beautiful building.



The dedication of the new house of prayer on June 3, 1966

In the fall of 1982, the church got its first answer to the prayers. The family of Leonid Abramovich Fayer came from Israel to Sacramento choosing this city as a permanent place of residence, and immediately joined the general work of the church. At that time, the church had 55 people.

In 1986, Fedor Petrovich was the Chairman of the Pacific Coast Slavic Baptist Association, and together with brothers Kuzichev and Altukhov, they visited Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. Brothers saw that believers had a hard life, and

Christian liberty didn't exist there. Having a desire to help those of faith, F.P. Karpets left his business cards wherever he went, saying that if anyone had an opportunity to go to America, they could use him as the point of reference.

Since 1989 the families of new emigrants began to arrive in Sacramento. The number of emigrants was increasing and soon emigration turned into a mighty flood. Every Sunday, Fedor Petrovich welcomed the new families. God heard the prayers of the church, and the prayer house at Franklin Blvd was not only completely filled, but also became small.

In 1991 a group of brothers and sisters from *Independent Baptist Church* led by Michael Pruglo decided to organize a new church.



The church at Franklin Blvd. 1966.

A little time passed, and the church became crowded again. The Ukrainian brothers led by Julian Sagaidak, Vladimir Yanchuk, and A. Vasilenko, announced their decision to have services in their native language. On August 16, 1992, the group separated and opened the Ukrainian Baptist Church.

The period from 1990 to 1992 was directed by one goal - welcoming of new

emigrants. The church grew. The matter of buying a new house of prayer became imminent, and the brother's council consisting of brothers P. Dyachenko, P. Kunda, V. Fox, N. Kramarenko, and N. Bugriev, together with Pastor F.P. Karpets began searching for a house of prayer. There were many suggestions, and searches that lasted until 1994.



The new emigrants' welcoming at Sacramento airport

In mid-1994, American brothers from the Association of German Baptists offered to buy their house of prayer at Cromwell Way. The conditions were accepted and the purchase took place. When repairs were completed, the building was ready for worship. The first service in the new house of prayer on Cromwell Way took place on November 27, 1994. The new period began in the life and ministry of the First Slavic Evangelical Baptist Church. In comparison to a crowded house of prayer at Franklin Blvd, the new building seemed spacious. The church actively

joined in spiritual work helping the poor. Missionary activity was reactivated. The youth of the church traveled to different countries to hold Christian children's camps every year.

The flow of emigrants from the CIS countries continued, and the church grew in number. The new building, which seemed so spacious, was cramped again. A decision was made to divide the morning services in two: at 8.15 and at 11.00, but space was still lacking. Parking was also problematic.

March 16, 1997, a large group of church members led by the brothers Grigory Ivanovich Lakhno and Mikhail Antonovich Kioroglo announced the decision to start a new church. Wishing to preserve the unity of spirit with the church, the brothers decided to name the new church "Second Slavic Baptist Church".



Our common sponsor - Fyodor Petrovich Karpets. July 1995

By 2000, the number of the church members had increased to 1,500, and in 2001 the need to purchase a new house of prayer with a large parking lot adjacent to it became evident. The suitable site was found on Arden Way, and after all the

documents were filed, it became the property of the First Slavic Church. It was the building of a former shop in need of remodeling and conversion into a house of prayer. The city authorities and the Light Rail management planned to lay the rail tracks through the whole territory of the site which did not suit the church. After lengthy negotiations with the city authorities, on July 2003 the purchased site was sold to the Light Rail management.

In 2002, a group of brothers and sisters, headed by the brother S. Ivanilov, left the church, organizing into a new church called "The Cornerstone". In the same year, brother Fyodor Dezhnyuk left to the "New Hope" church at Rancho Cordova, where he was later appointed the lead pastor.



The church service

Once more the Church on Cromwell Way could not accommodate all attendees, and a decision was made to open a branch in the house of prayer at Franklin Blvd. P.F.

Brother Kunda was appointed elder. He served as elder from 2000 to 2003. As pastor F.P. Karpets's health condition worsened, brother P.F. Kunda was recalled to serve as the second pastor to the main church on Cromwell Way. The leadership of the church's branch at Franklin Blvd. was assigned to pastor A.K. Dutov.



The church's pastor – Peter Filipovich Kunda.
2004.

After brother F.P. Karpets, the man who served as church's pastor for 39 years and 3 months, on March 2003, became ill, P.F. Kunda was appointed the senior pastor of the First Slavic Baptist Church at the general church meeting. He served as a senior pastor till 2012. In 2012, his family moved to Washington. V.P. Kunets was elected the senior pastor of the First Slavic Baptist Church; he ministers there to this day.

The life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ's church on earth continues. The First Slavic Baptist Church has variety of services: the women's ministry of "Moms in prayer," choral service, camps, Sunday school, and sports club. The missionary service initially organized and supported both materially and spiritually by the family of F.P. Karpets remains active.

In 1991, a radio ministry was started at the Franklin Blvd church, and on March 1995, the FEBC mission's branch was ceremonially opened at the First Slavic Evangelical Baptist Church, where Jim Bovmak, Rudy Vints and Valentin Burlaka worked. Since that time, the broadcasting of the Gospel preaching and worship

services to many countries of the world continues. Several years ago, an online television ministry was launched, reaching the remotest points of the globe. Praise is to God for our church, for every way He led her and for the ministers that headed her in service!

“Then Samuel took a stone and put it up between Mizpah and Jeshanah, naming it Eben-ezer, and saying, Up to now the Lord has been our help.” (1 Sam. 7:12)



Pastor V.P. Kunets



The church at Cromwell Way

Emilia Guseva