

PABC

Park Ave 101

THE EVOLUTION OF PARK AVE

In 1870 in the Fourth Ward of Atlanta a group of Christians wanted to ensure that the local children were learning to read. That "Sunday School" would soon become Fifth Baptist Church of Atlanta & built a clapboard church at Bell & Gilmer Streets. In 1900 church records grievously say on account of "apartments and negroes moving in", the church sold the property to a new African-American congregation that became Ebenezer Baptist Church.



in 1927 the current building was built, with an education building added in 1953. Through the 30's-50's the church had a large Sunday School program with an average attendance of more than 700. The construction of I-20 in the early 60's saw an exodus of Grant Park residents as many moved to the growing suburbs. In time the membership declined severely and the congregation refused to minister to a changing neighborhood, rejecting initiatives by some pastors to engage increasing populations of African-Americans & people facing poverty. The church began losing membership. Moving to the industrializing Southeast side of the city, the church was renamed Woodward Avenue Baptist Church. in the growing neighborhood of Grant Park. In time the church building began to fall into disrepair.



Tragically a fire in 1920 did significant damage to the building. As industry sprang up around the building, the decision was made to buy property a few blocks away along Grant Park.

By 2005 the membership of Park Ave was 12 senior adults who believed God could do something new in the church with new leadership and Park Ave began with an inclusive traditional church model, including a senior Pastor & associate Pastors.

In 2015, PABC shifted again, creating a non-hierarchical six Pastor collective model of church leadership. At that point

the church had the first Black Pastor, the first female Pastor and the first LGBTQ-identified Pastor in lead and began focusing on creating anti-racist community. PABC began in earnest the long road to redemption from its Southern Baptist roots.

The model has proved adaptable. Pastors have shifted and all paradigms have changed since the pandemic. Park Ave. committed to abolition in 2020 amid the uprisings with Pastors in the streets protesting. Today in 2024 Park Avenue is moving toward toward a three Pastor bivocational team and maintains a community driven abolition framework.

Originally founded to teach children to read, Park Ave continues that legacy while dreaming into the future where all communities are safe without police tyranny.

history.