

SESSION 1: A COMMON FAITH

OUR STORY: ST. JOHNS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Our story begins in the summer of 1922 when the President was Warren G. Harding, the Vice President was Calvin Coolidge and the population of the United States was 110,049,000. The top song of 1922 was Al Jolson's "April Showers." The Presbyterian neighbors of St. Johns Park organized a Sunday afternoon Sunday School. The Springfield Presbyterian Church, no longer in existence, helped to establish our new congregation. There was such enthusiastic support, that in less than a year, the property at Melrose and Fair Streets was acquired, and it soon became the *St. Johns Park Chapel*. Seventy-eight members went on the rolls as charter members on June 16, 1929.

As growth continued, in 1945, with the help of the Presbytery, we acquired the lots on Herschel Street between Lexington and Shirley for \$3,500.00. In 1948, the dismantling of Camp Blanding allowed St. Johns to purchase an Army Chapel; the chapel, with the addition of a portico and with simple interior renovations, became the neighborhood church. In 1959, a weekday kindergarten was added.

By 1963, because St. Johns had outgrown the previous building, a large, new sanctuary was completed and consecrated on the same site. Many changes followed over the years: in 1972, the first woman elder was installed; in 1974-1975, the installation of a new pipe organ; in 1974, a new Unicameral system of church government. In 1975, a fire broke out in the church in the early morning hours on Good Friday. That day and all-day Saturday, professional cleaners, church members and friends and volunteers cleaned the sanctuary so services could be held on Easter Sunday.

St. Johns continues its fellowship and outreach through our two church services, various ministries, outreach to local and international missions, and our local partnership with the Tru-Way Church of the Risen Christ. Our vision is to: **Connect with Christ, Church and Community**. Since 1922 many things have change for example, the community surrounding the Springfield Presbyterian Church changed radically over the years. The Springfield Church was not able to adapt to the new environment and was unable to sustain itself. After the church was closed, the money and resources of the Springfield Presbyterian Church were used to begin *The Sanctuary on 8th Street*, which impacts this poverty-riddled area of Jacksonville. St. Johns supports the ministry of *The Sanctuary on 8th Street* through donations and volunteer support. It shows how life will continue to change, but the constant in all of life is connecting with our risen Savior, Jesus Christ and growing in discipleship. When we connect with Christ, we become a community of believers, Christ's body called to reach out to our community. This vision is a commitment to live as Jesus has called us to live in our historical moment.