

The Presidents' Class History

The First Baptist Church has always held a unique position in Dallas. Located in the heart of downtown, the church has been a beacon that has gone into every area of the city, sending rays of light into all walks of life while ministering to people in many different languages and cultures--from the homeless to those in the high-rise executive suites. It was a result of that executive ministry that the Presidents' Class was born.

In 1986, our late pastor of so many years, Dr. W. A. Criswell, felt a need to reach out to several CEOs in the buildings surrounding our church. He had formed a friendship with many of these men during years of contacts with Dallas civic activities as well as from his daily treks across the street to the YMCA, where he faithfully adhered to a rigorous workout program.

As the pastor began to know the men who held prominent positions in the city, he discovered that a number of them were, at that time in their lives, unchurched. Their lives were totally taken up with their work and with their service to the community. The pastor, knowing that the corporate life is one of constant demands and pressures, felt that our church could be an important support to those men, not only spiritually but mentally and emotionally as well. His idea was to form a Sunday School class that would minister especially to this group of highly talented, intelligent people. So it was that in 1986, the Presidents' Class was formed. It was taught by the equally talented and intellectual Dr. Charles Lowery, who was serving on the church staff.

Lacking an empty room in the church educational buildings, the group met in the Dakotas Restaurant, across the street from the church. During the first year there were about 30 in attendance. Some were already members of the congregation and some were CEOs who had been personally recruited by the pastor. For two years the group met in the Dakotas, and then moved to a conference meeting room at the Fairmont Hotel for the next 3 years. By this time the membership of the class had increased to 140 men and women. By 1990 the class had moved to a large meeting room on the church campus—the "505 Building.

Also, by this time the membership had expanded far beyond the "CEO image" and was filled with members who were simply drawn to the excellent teaching and fine fellowship. However, because the beloved pastor had begun the class and had named it himself, the class continued to be called the Presidents' Class. Certainly the class is proud of the past purposes of the pastor's heart to reach a unique group of people in downtown Dallas. The present membership includes people from all ages, walks of life, and ethnic groups.

The Presidents' Class is a dynamic place to be on Sunday morning for Bible study. It has been blessed with gifted teachers, all of them highly educated, with extensive Biblical training. Three of them were from the faculty of Criswell College, as is the present teacher, Dr. Alan Streett. The class roll carries approximately 250 names with weekly attendance averaging nearly 200.

The spirit of fellowship is that of an extended family. The class studies together, prays together, and parties together at several spectacular events each year. Each member of the class is assigned to a "Care Group" of eight to twelve people, so that no need is ever left unnoticed, and members receive individual care and comfort whenever there is a sorrow or a sickness. The class has also rejoiced at several weddings and births among our members!

You are invited to come and be a part of this exciting fellowship, where you will find spiritual inspiration, in-depth Biblical instruction, and Christian friendships that feel like family!

You are welcomed! You are loved!