3/28/09 Ten Baptist Christians of Harlingen led by two Baptist ministers organize the Missionary Baptist Church which is to become the First Baptist Church. The following year they will build a small, flat-roofed building at 317 E. Van Buren. Brother Rev. W.H. Petty is the first pastor. In future years A.L. Brooks, a strong lay member, is to provide firm leadership according to Frank Martin, who came in 1911.

5/31/09 In an appeal to a group of Seminary Graduates in Richmond, Virginia, in describing the potential of Harlingen, Dr. S.L. Morris said, "Now this rich country is a crude frontier where people who are pouring into the country are laying the foundation for great wealth; but there is little opportunity for organized religious worship—Here is the greatest opportunity for Christian service to be found anywhere."

It was Samuel McPheeters Glasgow who arrived to take charge in answer to the above appeal. He described Harlingen in 1909 as a mud town, no paved streets, or roads, or sidewalks—coal oil lamps, not a plumber in the entire Valley—burros, or horses, or mules were the chief means of transportation, and he estimated the population to be about 200.

1909 (fall) A small square Tabernacle building is erected at 517 E. Van Buren. It has a raised platform at one end and instead of windows has hinged panels on its sides. These can be raised or lowered depending on the weather. The building is used for Protestant services and also houses the first public school classes in town. Sam F. Marsh, Baptist minister who lives on "Canal Three", preaches here.

1916 During this year the First Baptists secure three lots at Jackson and 3rd Streets and erect a church building on the southwest corner at a cost of $2,500 to $3,000, $400 of which is donated by the State Mission Board. Church member Andrew Goldammer constructs it for the 58 members. After being placed in use, the old church on Van Buren becomes a parsonage and is used as such until 1923 when a new one is built at 609 E. Harrison.

1926 In this year the Jackson Street lots of the First Baptist Church are sold and lots purchased at the northeast corner of Van Buren and 5th Streets. The following year a large brick sanctuary at 501 E. Van Buren is erected by S.G. Stringer and Associates at a cost of $100,000. (An aerial photograph of Harlingen shows the church with its roof still under construction on 9/11/27.) The building is said to have cost $100,000. This comes about under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. W.W. Lee. In this period the congregation numbers around 394. The debts for this building are paid by 1943. It is in 1937 that this edifice is to receive a pipe organ given as a memorial by Dr. and Mrs. N.A. Davidson. The gift is ably used for the next 28 years by the talented and inspirational musician, Foster Tebee.

1926 Mrs. J. M. Mothershead and her attorney husband take up residence in Harlingen. She will organize the Dorcas Friendship class at the First Baptist Church and teach Sunday School there for 23 years before departing for Brownwood in October 1950. Mr Mothershead, who was born 10/21/89 in Mississippi but lived in Texas 66 years, was to die at age 70.

1949 By 1948 Sunday School enrollment had grown to 705, therefore the First Baptist Church erects, at a cost of $118,000, an Educational Building to the immediate east of the sanctuary. Immediately thereafter a program is set up to renovate and air-condition the sanctuary. A member then donates the costs of air conditioning, but the additional
expenses are well over $50,000. Additional property with a house is obtained across 6th Street to the east for a primary department for the Sunday School. In this period the church also secured two large lots at Filmore and L Streets to establish a mission for Latins under its supervision. It will have an auditorium and a large dwelling. 9/16/71 Dr. W.W. Lee, former pastor of the First Baptist Church, is honored. During his tenure, 1925-36 the sanctuary was constructed.

1976 This year the Stack building is added to the north of the First Baptist Church sanctuary. It is financed mainly by a gift from Mr. Jack Stack as a memorial to his parents, his father having been an early pastor of the church. The following year the whole block between 6th and 7th Streets is purchased, cleared, and paved for member parking.

1991 The First Baptist Church opens the larger Family Life Center having recreational facilities, a dining room, and an adequate kitchen. In August 1997 it is to remodel the sanctuary as well as parts of the Worship Center. The mission-minded church supported missions that became these churches: Second Baptist Church, Primera Iglesia Bautista, Fairview Chapel, and Los Vecinos, while in this year its missions were Arroyo Chapel at Arroyo City, and Parkdale Deaf Church.