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Fee Fee Baptist honors Past, looks to Future

By [Scott Bandle](#)

More than 100 people began to sing "Amazing Grace," the words blending with the sound of wind rippling through the trees at Fee Fee Cemetery.



Leon Algee Jr. photo - These young celebrants lead a procession to Fee Fee Cemetery as part of Fee Fee Baptist Church's 200th

They had gathered for a final ceremony Sunday, celebrating the 200th anniversary of Fee Fee Baptist Church in Bridgeton.

Although Sunday was a celebration of the church's history, Randall L. Fullerton, the church's senior pastor, reminded the congregation they also had to look to the future.

"We ought to be proud of our history, but we've got our work ahead of us," he said. "Will the church be around in 50 years? The only thing that could stop it is us."

Before the ceremony, Fullerton said Fee Fee Baptist will have to make a greater effort to let area residents know they are welcome to join.

"In some ways, a church is like a business," he said. "We've been slow to market the church. Now, we're starting to."

The current congregation numbers about 1,000, many from the North County area and St. Charles County. A demographic study indicated there are about 68,000 residents within three miles of Fee Fee, 11330 St. Charles Rock Road. The median age is 37.3, the pastor said.

"These are families that need a place to go," Fullerton said. "We're building a family life center behind the church. We hope people will want to come and consider us."

Sunday packed a full schedule for the church members, including a morning service, lunch, a presentation of Fee Fee Baptist's history, and finally prayers and songs at the cemetery. More than 130 guests marched in a procession down Fee Fee Road to the cemetery, escorted by police cars.

Members always are aware of their church's history, said Hazelwood resident Jacque Till, 43. A 24-year member, she also is Fee Fee Baptist's financial secretary.

"We have a lot of things here that remind us," Till said. "We've still got the chapel built in 1870. Will the church be here in another 100 years? It's hard to fathom, but then, for the original founders, what did they think?"

Hazelwood resident Melissa Maschmidt, 20, is a lifelong member of the church.

"I think it will be around for a long time," she said. "I don't see it going anywhere. Our congregation will keep it going."

Fee Fee Baptist is the oldest Protestant church west of the Mississippi River. The founders gathered in secret for several years before the church was built. The French government owned the land and forbade Protestant worship.

The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 changed that. Religious freedom came to the area, and 14 people founded the church in 1807. Fee Fee Cemetery opened in 1827. Many of the church founders, Revolutionary War soldiers and other St. Louis notables are buried on the grounds.

Fee Fee Baptist is strongly linked to Bridgeton's history. As one of the first institutions in the area, the city grew up around it.

When asked if Bridgeton would be a different city if Fee Fee hadn't been built, Fullerton shrugged his shoulders.

"It's hard to say," he said. "I would like to hope so."