Third Street Bethel A.M.E. Church
Richmond, Virginia

Richmond, Va.

The Third Street Bethel A.M.E. Church after 120 years is meeting the humanitarian and spiritual needs of the Richmond, Va. community. The Church responds to the needs of the homeless and disadvantaged with food, clothing and other services.

In May, the Church, under the pastorate of Rev. Rodger Hall Reed celebrated their 120th anniversary and received a proclamation from the Governor of Virginia honoring the origins of the Virginia Annual Conference at Third Street Bethel. The Honorable Roy A. West, Mayor of Richmond proclaimed May 10, 1987 as "Third Street Bethel Day" in the city.

Under its present leadership, the church has developed an international ministry.

In March of 1987, following a bicentennial overseas missions workshop led by Dr. Frederic C. Harrison of the Department of Missions, A.M.E.C., the membership adopted an A.M.E. Church, minister and school in Botswana, Africa.

In keeping with the spirit of its founders, the church is supportive and active in the Richmond Branch of the NAACP. This year it paid out its life membership and pledged a Gold Heritage membership in this 12-month period. The church and pastor are also active and involved in the local O.I.C. program, the Downtown Ministries, the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance andfthe Martin Luther King, Jr., Learning Week. Other ministries include social service referrals, Scouting, prison visitations, counseling, ministries to youth and Christian Education publications.

Historic Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church has its roots firmly planted in the soil of the Old Trinity M.E. Church located at Franklin Street and Locust Alley in old Downtown Richmond.

From the year 1828, free Negroes had worshipped regularly. In 1844 the question of slavery caused a split in Trinity Church. In 1859, 11 years before the Civil War, free Negroes organized into a congregation. Under the direction of Thomas Hewlet, an exhorter, the following persons were charter members: Samuel Smith, Diana Smith, Peggy Tyree, Randolph Rully, Rebecca Strange, William Williamson, Elizabeth Young, Delia Pierce, Maria Jackson and Sara Norrell. Four men and seven women.

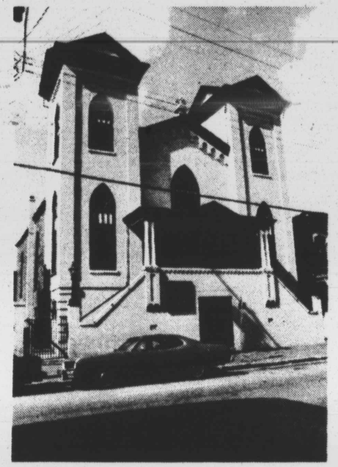
On July 1, 1852, two trustees of the Virginia Conference of the M.E. Church, William Parker, and Cornelius Crew, made an agreement with Mary Libby for the transfer of a parcel of land to the M.E. Church, South, for the future use of the M.E. Church, under the trustees, as they desired. The land was located on the north side of Third Street, northeasterly beyond Leigh St.

In 1856, upon completion of the principal portion of the Church building, the colored congregation began to worship separately, under the supervision of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, with white pastors. The church was named "THIRD STREET METHODIST CHURCH."

With the coming of the African Methodist Episcopal Church as the Civil War drew to a close, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, relinquished supervision and pastoral oversight of the Third Street Methodist Church. This allowed the congregation to unite with the A.M.E. Church and also remain in the church building located at 614 North Street.

May 10-14, 1867 marks the dates of the organization of the Virginia Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. This event took place in the newly established Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. The Right Rev. Alexander W. Wayman, Bishop of the A.M.E. Church, presided. The Rev. J. E. S. Hall was transferred from the Baltimore Annual Conference and became the first pastor. Thomas Richmond Hewlett, who had served the congregation as an exhorter, was ordained a local elder. On January 22, 1874 the congregation entered into an agreement to transfer ownership of the church property at 614 North Third Street from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for the sum of "cash hand-in-hand the sum of one dollar." The deed was certified by the Chancery Court of Richmond on April 12, 1875.

In April 1975, Third Street Bethel A.M.E. Church was designated a Virginian Historic Landmark by the Virginia Landmarks Commission, and recorded on the National Register of Historic places kept by the Division of Parks, of the U.S. Department of Interior.



Third St. Bethel AME Church—Richmond, Va.

Rev. Rodger H. Reed
Third Street A.M.E.
Richmond, Va.

Rev. Ronald E. Braxton
Portsmouth, Va.

Rev. Marie P. Braxton
Portsmouth, Va.

Emmanuel A.M.E. Church

Rev. Ronald Braxton
Portsmouth, Va.

Emmanuel AME was founded in 1772 and joined A.M.E. in 1871. The congregation dates back to 1772, three years before the revolution. The Methodist society was formed and Robert Williams in 1772 erected a meeting house on South Street. The black people called their society the African Methodist Society. The late Bishop Francis Asbury served as pastor around 1775.

Black people occupied a building on Washington Street between High and King Street. Here they worshipped until Nat Turner's insurrection in 1831. It was then that they were forced to worship with the white methodists in their church on Glasgow St. When the whites built a new church the blacks used the old church building until it burned in 1856.

The congregation, though largely slaves and freed blacks with undaunted courage, went to work and bought the lot on which the present church now stands. North Street Church, as it is commonly known, was dedicated to the service of Almighty God on the first Sunday in November, 1857.

The pastors of North Street Church had been white with black exhorters until 1864, at which time the pulpit was supplied by the A.M.E. Church. The late Bishop James A. Handy was the first black pastor to serve this congregation.

The church remained in the Virginia Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, until 1871; prior to this period, slaves could not own property. It was in 1871 that the then 99-year-old congregation was granted permission to join the A.M.E. Church. Truly, God had been with them, thus they received the name Emmanuel (God With Us) Church.

Some of the salient historic features of the building include:

—It is completely handmade.

— The wrought iron rail was molded by hand.

— The altar rail was said to have been carved out of trees that grew on North St.

— The seats were built for "worship not for comfort." Cushions were added later to ease the hardness.

— Around the walls are the shields of symbols of the apostles and adorning the ceiling are Christian symbols copied from those seen in Paris and Rome.

Gaines A.M.E. Church
7134 Montgomery Road
Elkridge, Maryland 21227
(301) 796-8530
Established 1866
Rev. H. Lorraine Harvey, Pastor

Presiding Elder and Mrs. Edward C. Wilson
The Eastern District of the
Baltimore Conference
Salutes the
African Methodist Episcopal Church
As We Celebrate 200 Years of Service and Growth

St. Stephen A.M.E. Church
Wilmington, N.C.

St. Stephen AME, Wilmington, N.C.

St. Stephen A.M.E. Church, Wilmington, grew out of what was known as the Front Street Methodist Church. That Church had its beginning in 1796 when the Rev. William Meredith, a missionary of the Wesleyan Methodist Church came to Wilmington from the West Indies and began holding services in a small wooden building located at Front and Walnut Sts. That church was generally referred to as the "African Church." because of the predominance of its membership.

In spite of persecutions from a number of white citizens in the city, and later by a series of fires, the congregation continued to increase, with Negroes still in predominance.

The Rev. Meredith was succeeded by other pastors. As time went on, many of the Negro membership became dissatisfied with their status in the church. By resolution, they later expressed desire to dissolve all connentions with the M.E. Church South, and transfer their relation to the A.M.E. Church of the United States.

In May of 1865, 642 Negro members withdrew and went to the African Church then under the leadership of the Rev. W.H. Hunter, a Negro Chaplain of the Federal Army of Occupation. Rev. Hunter was appointed as their agent.

The withdrawing group, in 1866, constructed a place of worship - a wooden church - between Fifth and Sixth Streets on the Northside of Red Cross Street. Rev. James A. Hanby was appointed pastor by Bishop Daniel Payne during Annual Conference. This wooden edifice was name St. Stephen A.M.E. Church.

Succeeding Rev. Hanby was the Reverends Nichols, Seaton, Sluby and Fry. Rev. Joseph Fry served the congregation from 1880 to 1885. During these years building of the present structure of St. Stephen A.M.E. Church was begun. Had it not been for the leadership of Rev. Fry and the deep devotion and dedication of the officers and members most of whom were fresh out of slavery, this super-human feat of construction might never have been attempted.

At a church meeting, it was decided to do away with the existing wooden building and erect a brick church. Nine stewards, nine trustees, and twenty-five class leaders were entrusted with the task of planning and executing the job.

The land on which the present structure was erected, was donated by George Peabody, a Boston philanthropist. This gift was channeled via the City of Wilmington.

Bethel A.M.E. Church, Greensboro, N.C.

Bethel A.M.E. Church began on April 13, 1869 at the first session of the North Carolina Annual Conference held in Greensboro, N.C. At the meeting, a motion was passed recommending that an A.M.E. church be established in the eastern part of Greensboro.

A small group of faithful believers worshipped under a brush arbor in those early years. In 1872, Rev. Elisha Boon was assigned by the Annual Conference as the first pastor. Under his leadership the fledgling congregation worked tirelessly and, in 1874, property was purchased and a small frame structure built.

This first church, named Boon's Chapel after its first pastor, grew so rapidly that in 1890 the members voted a more permament building. A new brick structure of Gothic design was dedicated in 1894 and the name was changed from Boon's Chapel to Bethel.

Urban renewal claimed the second building in 1964 and the congregation embarked upon a multiphased building program to erect the present facility. The fellowship hall and administrative wing were completed in 1967 under Rev. L.S. Penn and the sanctuary was completed in 1975 under Rev. E. G. Terrell. Between 1976 and 1985, under the pastorage of Rev. I.W. Knight, the church grew in membership and importance in the community.

In July, 1985, Dr. Maurice T. Wilson was assigned by Bishop John Hurst Adams to serve as the 41st pastor of Bethel A. Ph.D. psychologist, former college professor and university administrator, Dr. Wilson earned his M.A. degree in Theology from St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore in 1982.

In the months since Dr. Wilson was assigned to Bethel, 190 new members have been added to the congregation, new ministries have been developed and existing ministries have been strengthened.

EVANGELISM

Bethel's worship services are broadcast each Sunday over two radio stations with a broadcast area of over 400 square miles reaching major metropolitan areas. Two evangelistic revivals are conducted annually and Bethel is the home of a city-wide Interdenominational Prayer Circle.

MINISTRIES

The Commission on Christian Education (CCE), under the direction of Sister Naomi W. Wynn include the Sunday School, Scouting, Bible Study, Economic Development, Adult Basic Education and Bethel's Newsletter.

Bethel's Sunday School, under the direction of Sister Jessie W. Cardwell and a dedicated staff, instructs about 100 active members ages 1 through adult. In addition to systematic Bible instruction, the Sunday School presents original plays, sponsors the Vacation Bible School as well as seasonal programs and recreational activities.

Bethel's scouting program consists of Cub Scout Pack 410 led by Sister Linda Thompson; Boy Scout Troop 410 under the direction of Brothers Oliver Bowie and Alan Bell; Brownie and Girl Scouts led by Sister Bertha Barrow. Bethel's Ecumenical Bible Study (EBS) and New Testament studies between September and June.

An adult Basic Education program was initiated in 1986 which now has an active enrollment of ten students working toward the GED. Bethel's Economic Development Club (EDC) seeks to increase awareness of and appreciation for economic self determination. Through its bimonthly newsletter, the EDC brings up-to-date information on a variety of issues such as financial planning, saving for education, budgeting, investments, insurance, etc.

The EDC works with the Internal Revenue Service each year to give free income tax preparation assistance to middle and low income families.

Dr. Maurice T. Wilson
Bethel A.M.E.
Greensboro, N.C.

WEBB
Congratulates the A.M.E. Church for 200 Years of Spiritual and community leadership
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