

## The History of Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church

**“...upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” Matt. 16:18**

### In the Beginning—A Vision

Moved by the Spirit of the Lord, a small group of eastside Detroit families who had migrated from Cordele, Georgia, held a meeting at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Alonzo Johnson on November 15, 1920. Out of that meeting came a vision to form a church that would be called Tabernacle Baptist Church. Emboldened by faith and undaunted by the tremendous task ahead of them, they began to look for a building and a minister to lead them. These pioneering families were: Mr. & Mrs. C. King, Mr. Algia Middleton, Mr. A.D. Smith, Mrs. Dena Harris, Mrs. Lenny Tyson, Mr. Lem Walker, Mr. J.B. Blossom, Mr. & Mrs. R. Rutland, Mr. Horace Lindsay Sheffield, Mrs. Georgia Sheffield, Mr. Willis Simmons, Mr. & Mrs. J.B. Coates, Mrs. Alice Lane, Mr. & Mrs. W. Davis, Mr. & Mrs. W. McGary, and Mr. James Armstrong.

### The Morris Mission

Inspired by a vision and on one accord, these dedicated brothers and sisters invited the Reverend Major James Morris, the highly successful Pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church back in their hometown of Cordele, to come to Detroit. He was a widower, 69 years old and well thought of in the Cordele community. For many years, he had served as the moderator of the South Georgia Baptist Association. Accepting the invitation to visit Detroit, Rev. Morris told the hopeful group: “There is the possibility for a great church if you let God use you.” The first Tabernacle Baptist Church was housed in a modest store-front, located at 602 Monroe Street at Dubois. Tabernacle’s doors were opened when thirty five men and women from Georgia and Mississippi, who had come north seeking God’s blessings for employment opportunities and a better life, formed Tabernacle’s first congregation.

During that first year, committees from Hartford Avenue Baptist Church visited Tabernacle and after hearing Rev. Morris preach, knew he was a man with a message. They arranged to meet him and explained that Hartford was experiencing discord among its members but there was only one Black church on the city’s Westside as an alternative church. If Tabernacle moved to the Westside, the committee promised the harvest would be great. To this request, Rev. Morris replied, “If my members follow me, I will come: but if they refuse, I will stay.” After considering the proposal, the Tabernacle congregation agreed to move westward.

Few African-Americans lived on the Westside in 1920. The church leadership prudently appointed men to purchase three lots in their names on Woodrow Street near Cobb. However, word traveled through the predominately white community that a new black church was coming into the neighborhood, and the community residents resisted the newcomers. Awaiting the voice of the Holy Spirit, Rev. Morris advised the church to: “Be still. Let God guide us.” Surely, where sin abounds grace much more abounds. The pastor of St. Stephens A.M.E. Church, Rev. Wright, heard about the contentious voices and told Rev. Morris, “Our doors are open for you to hold services every Sunday afternoon. My church members and officials welcome you to the Westside.” Thus, the Holy Spirit affirmed Tabernacle’s presence on the Westside through the warmth and generosity extended by the St. Stephens congregation.

The Tabernacle assembly continued to worship at the eastside location in the morning and at St. Stephens in the afternoon. During the week, the unemployed men of Tabernacle laid the foundation for a new church at 6015 Woodrow, while their wives prepared their meals. They sang songs of Zion as they worked without pay and zealously labored in the name of Jesus Christ. The walls of the new Tabernacle Baptist Church rose despite the opposition and the church was erected in only six days. On the seventh day, Sunday, September 6, 1921, the first service was held in the new building. The Reverend Major Morris took Psalm 92: 12 as his text and preached, “The Righteous Shall Flourish like the Palm Tree.”

The first major event at the new church was a wedding. The Reverend Major Morris married Millie Robinson of Montezuma, Georgia on a lovely Sunday afternoon. During a revival at Tabernacle, conducted by the Reverend H.H. Coleman of Macedonia Baptist Church in Detroit, more than 150 souls joined Tabernacle. Already, the Woodrow building was too small to accommodate the growing membership.

On nearby Beechwood, a German Lutheran congregation had just finished the foundation for a new edifice, but decided not to complete the building because its members were moving out of the changing community. In 1923, the officers of the German Lutheran Church offered the parsonage, six lots and the basement site to Tabernacle for \$27,000.00. Believing that this was a good offer, Rev. Morris prophesied, "This will be the west-side religious center someday." However, due to lack of money, the congregation and the boards declined the offer, except for the basement. Disappointed, Rev. Morris deferred to the wishes of the church; Tabernacle sold the Woodrow property and moved the church to the basement at 6113 Beechwood in 1925.

Peace!

Sometime between 1923 and 1926, a controversy arose between the Trustee Board and other church officials. The Trustees desired to incorporate the church giving them total authority over church affairs which the Pastor and the Deacon Board rejected. The Trustees took the dispute to court. In the interim, Rev. Morris called a meeting of the congregation, which voted to incorporate the church with shared governing authority. Rev. Morris took the minutes detailing the official church action to the court and read the minutes to the judge. Upon hearing the testimony of Rev. Morris, the judge turned to the Trustees and said, "For you gentleman, it may seem right but the church has said 'No' to your proposal." Afterward, Rev. Morris urged the Trustees to settle the matter, saying, "God's house is called the house of prayer. Don't make it a racketeer's institution. Let God predominate." The Court ruled that the pastor was for the people and answers to the people. Summing up the regrettable experience, Rev. Morris said, "You cannot defeat the purpose of God if you let God guide you."

After long years of faithful service, the Lord called His servant, the Reverend Major James Morris, home on June 15, 1926. The Reverend Arthur Pace carried on Rev. Morris' work for a few weeks, but gave it up, desiring to devote full time to the Detroit Baptist Union. The Church officers then selected the Rev. William O Drewry, a Tabernacle Member to sustain the work until a new pastor could be called.

The Pittman Pastorate

On the fourth Sunday of October 1926, the Reverend Robert H. Pittman was installed as the second pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church, beginning one of the most bountiful, but turbulent periods in the church's history. Only God knew that it would be a time of testing for Tabernacle and her new pastor. At the time he was called to Tabernacle, Rev. Pittman was the pastor of Western Avenue Baptist Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His wife, Alberta, their two sons, Randall and Horace, a family friend, Mrs. Hattie Reeves, (who later married Deacon Lemuel Walker), and a big collie dog accompanied Rev. Pittman to Detroit.

Before he was officially installed, Rev. Pittman began drafting plans and scheduled the completion of the Tabernacle structure. By the fall of 1928, the new building was completed at an approximate cost of \$47,000. Dissension over money, however, boiled over into a destructive conflagration and on February 2, 1929, a large contingent of members withdrew and organized the New Light Baptist Church. Perplexed but not in despair, the remaining members regrouped, strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit and the inspired leadership of Rev. Pittman. Within a few months, Tabernacle was standing once again, stable and strong.

The Depression Years

Like many other churches, Tabernacle suffered through the depression. In the spring of 1930, businesses failed and there was widespread unemployment. People had nothing to give to the church. In December 1936, the Detroit Baptist Union withdrew its lien on the church property, leaving the

church free to negotiate directly with the First National Bank, which held the church's mortgage. Though its financial perspective was bleak, the church still managed to purchase a Paige Organ and a piano.

Under Rev. Pittman, the deacon's groups were organized to assist the church in becoming financially stable. Each deacon was to organize a group and give it a name. The purpose of the groups was to promote fellowship, Bible study and financial growth. Each group was asked to raise at least \$100 a month or whatever it could. This project succeeded and all debts were eventually retired and the mortgage was burned.

### The First Deacons Groups

Area	Deacon
<b>Beechwood Street</b>	<b>Zack Green</b>
<b>Woodrow Street</b>	<b>Israel White</b>
<b>30th Street</b>	<b>Deacon Calloway</b>
<b>28th &amp; McGraw</b>	<b>William Pigford</b>
<b>Hartford &amp; Stanford</b>	<b>Julius Combs, Sr.</b>
<b>Tireman &amp; Scotten</b>	<b>Earnest Johnson</b>
<b>McKinley, Vinewood, Roosevelt</b>	<b>Elliott McGill</b>
<b>Lumley John Baker</b>	
<b>Ironwood &amp; Whitewood</b>	<b>Samuel A. Dunbar</b>
<b>Northfield</b>	<b>Columbus Hall</b>
<b>Hazlett</b>	<b>Charles Winslow</b>
<b>Colfax</b>	<b>Theodore Burnette</b>
<b>American</b>	<b>John Crew, Sr.</b>
<b>Central Zenius Gray</b>	

Not only was Rev. Pittman a great preacher and administrator, he was also a teacher, counselor, and musician. He directed the Tabernacle choir until 1935 when Brother Charles Speights offered his musical gifts to the church. Brother Speights was appointed Minister of Music, serving in that position for nearly twenty years.

By 1941, the church was able to pay Rev. Pittman a salary. Prior to this time, he and his family accepted whatever the church could afford to give him and he declined special fundraisers in observance of his anniversary or birthday. Under Rev. Pittman's leadership, many groups and organizations were started, such as: the Daily Vacation Bible School, the BYPU, directed by Mable Gray; the Board of Christian Education, directed by A. Louise Jones; the Committee of Twelve (which solicited ads to pay for the church bulletin), the Deaconess Board, Maria Wright, President and editor of the Tabernacle Voice Newspaper. An organized Tabernacle Baseball Team was a great success and the games attracted enthusiastic crowds to Atkinson Park or Northwestern High School Athletic Field on Saturdays.

By 1946, Tabernacle had attained financial stability and a membership of approximately 800 congregants. The parsonage was debt-free and a \$10,000 educational trust fund was established for an educational building, the dream of Rev. Pittman. Plans were drawn to start the foundation in the Fall of 1946. However, on Sunday night, August 25th, while walking home from evening services, Rev. Pittman was struck by an automobile and the Lord called His servant home the following day.

The Rev. Robert Pittman had led the Tabernacle Family to great success, anchored by the conviction that "The Lord will provide." Mrs. Pittman continued to serve the church as senior organist until the third Sunday in March 1947, when she suffered a heart attack at the organ and died a few minutes later.

Again, the Rev. W.O. Drewry was asked to serve as interim minister.

Dr. Jesse Jai McNeil

The Rev. Dr. Jesse Jai McNeil answered Tabernacle's call and took up the mantle of ministry. He continued to build on that sure foundation that was Jesus Christ. A learned and scholarly man, he had received his B.S. M.A. and Ed. D. Degrees from Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary and served as the Director of publications of the National Baptist convention. Prior to coming to Tabernacle, he was pastor to churches in New York City and Nashville, Tennessee, and served as Dean of the School of Religion at Bishop College, Marshall Texas.

In February 1945, the Reverend Dr. McNeil visited Detroit to speak at Second Baptist Church. He was led by the Holy Spirit to share his time with Tabernacle as Reverend Pittman's guest, where he preached the Sunday morning sermon. After Reverend Pittman passed, the pulpit committee invited Dr. McNeil back to preach again. In April 1947, he was unanimously called to be Pastor of Tabernacle. He answered the call affirmatively. Accompanied by his wife, Pearl their son Jesse Jai, Jr. and their daughter, Genna Rae, Dr. McNeil took residence in Detroit and was installed in June 1947. An active membership of 1100 believers welcomed him to the pulpit of Tabernacle Baptist Church.

As Pastor, preacher, teacher, humanitarian, writer, lecturer, orator and civic leader, Dr. McNeil sought to extend Tabernacle's beacon outward. In a celebration of the church's 28th anniversary, he pledged to continue the mission of the church by Pastors Morris and Pittman, including religious education, expansion of church facilities, and community service. After completing a needs assessment for the church, he up-dated and expanded the church program. For example, the evening services were dramatically slipping in attendance. Therefore, Dr. McNeil experimented with holding two Sunday morning services. The response was overwhelming and an overflowing crowd sat in the basement civic hall. Mrs. Dorothy Yates Pugh played the piano for the worshippers downstairs. Tabernacle continued holding two morning celebrations to accommodate the membership.

In 1947, the Young Matrons, known as the Twilight Missionary Society (a subsidiary of the Missionary Society,) became independently organized and renamed the Sorosis Guild. The women of the Sorosis Guild were called to serve as the ecumenical and outreach arm of the Missionary Society and the church. Dr. McNeil referred to them as the "sisterhood of the church" for young women who desired to give their time and talents to the church.

In the fall of 1947, the men of Tabernacle formed "The Brotherhood". Dr. McNeil had recently returned from abroad and observed firsthand the results of organized manpower. It was his intent that the Brotherhood uses its talents and skills to benefit Tabernacle. The first president was Elbert McNeil. In the late forties and early fifties, The Brotherhood supplied the skill and talent necessary to perform tough renovations jobs for which there was no money. Their study book and guide was *Men in the Local Church*, written by Dr. McNeil.

The Marr-O-Not Fellowship, encouraged by Mrs. McNeil, was composed of serious, intelligent and spiritual young adults who promoted fellowship as well as church and public activities that were interesting to young Christians either single or married.

Tabernacle was reaching beyond her walls and actively participating in interfaith organizations such as the Detroit Council of Churches, The Roundtable of Christians and Jews and Church women United. In support of African missions, monetary contributions and Sunday School literature were sent to two schools in Nigeria, West Africa.

As a result of the rapid growth of the membership and expansion of the ministries, Dr. McNeil appointed the Reverend Clarence Crews as the first paid associate minister. Rev. Crews was instrumental in helping Dr. McNeil meet the many demands of counseling, ministering and teaching the congregation from 1957 to 1961.

It was not long before more physical space was necessary to support the vigorous growth of the congregation. Under the guidance of Deacon Leon Wright, the church sold bonds to raise money for an educational wing known as the Neighborhood House. At a cost of \$160,000, the Neighborhood House

was completed in 1963. The Pittman Chapel, a part of the new addition, enlarged the north wing of the sanctuary. The Neighborhood House became a community center, accommodating several interfaith groups such as the Circle Theatre and its musicians.

On May 6, 1949, the Retired Citizens Good Neighbor Club held its first meeting. Mrs. A. Pruitt was elected President. Its major purpose was to keep the members informed and up-to-date on all matters pertaining to senior citizens.

Dr. McNeil, at one time the Dean of Religion at Bishop College, was intensely interested in religious education. Consequently, Tabernacle religious education programs received his devoted attention. Christian Education was promoted in the Lyceum Lecture Series and the Family Life Series. The Sunday School was expanded from two departments to three divisions: The Adult, Youth and Children's Divisions, using closely graded study materials. Mrs. A. Louise Jones served as the Director of Christian Education.

In April 1952, Dr. and Mrs. McNeil opened what became known as the finest nursery school for African-American children in the city of Detroit. It began with five children but soon grew to 52 preschoolers. The first director was Mrs. Anne Spiller Lewis, a pioneer in nursery school education. The church subsidized the nursery school to keep tuition affordable for low-income families. Other dwellings were purchased, to meet the demands for space, such as the Fellowship House on Beechwood and the Annex on Whitewood and Milford.

Women, traditionally discouraged from working outside the home except for part time jobs and day work, were major contributors to the growth and strength of Tabernacle Baptist Church. Great women, filled with the Holy Spirit and administrative acumen shaped the course of the missionary work, the outreach programs, foreign missions and Christian education, especially under the sensitive and intelligent inspiration of Mrs. Pearl McNeil as the First Lady of the church.

The civil rights era captured the attention, if not the hearts and minds of people everywhere. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King emerged out of Montgomery, Alabama, as the spiritual leader of nonviolent protest. Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam called upon Black America to take up arms in self-defense against white violence. Nonetheless, Dr. King's fame swept around the world. Black and white college students occupied sacrosanct whites-only lunch counters in North Carolina, Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, and other southern states, where they faced dogs, horses and brutal cattle prods, these demonstrations, flashed world-wide on television screens, portrayed courage at its very best and hatred at its very worst.

During this period, many former members returned to Tabernacle, and new members were joining in impressive numbers. The Board of Deacons and Board of Trustees more than doubled in number to accommodate the increasing membership. Under Dr. McNeil's leadership, the membership increased to well over 2,000 believers.

A prolific author, Dr. McNeil published many books on church administration, such as *Your Church*, *The Minister's Service Book for Pulpit and Parrish*, *Men in the Local Church and Parish*, *The Preacher Prophet in Mass Society*. Inspirational books include, *Abounding in Hope*, *A Present Help*, and the widely read, *As Thy Days, So Thy Strength*.

Dr. McNeil wrote:

*"The church should be found wherever the crucial decisions are made. It preaches high principles. It also should provide a situation in which people who are trying to live those principles can find fellowship, work, play, and discuss them with others."*

Dr. McNeil envisioned classrooms and a kitchen by enlarging the church on the south. However, complex legal disputes arose with the architect who had drafted plans for the addition, causing the church to lose substantial sums of money. Discouraged, the leadership of the church abandoned the expansion plans. Nevertheless, Tabernacle remained firm to her commitment of glorifying God, giving thanks for all things, and continuing steadfast in His Word.

The final chapter of Dr. McNeil's illustrious Christian ministry as Pastor of Tabernacle was written in 1961, when after fourteen years, Dr. McNeil relinquished his pastoral ministry at Tabernacle to devote full time to writing and publishing. The church's beacon, however, did not fail or falter. Her witness to the world continued undiminished because of the leadership of the Board of Deacons, Deacon John Baker as chairperson at that time and the very capable ministerial staff composed of Rev. Gordon Story, Rev. James Kelly, Rev. Grant Foster, and Rev. Charles Woolridge.

#### The Bradley Beacon

The Reverend Fulton O. Bradley became Tabernacle's fourth pastor in March 1962. He came to Detroit with his wife, Lettie and two sons, Fulton, Jr. and Raymond. He had previously served at the Metropolitan Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., and had taught Practical Theology at Howard University School of Religion. He arrived at a time in Tabernacle's history where the goals for expansion were not clear. Disappointed in the aborted effort to build the multi-purpose room, some members were not disposed to enlarging the church, while other members wanted to wait and see what the new pastor envisioned.

Under Rev. Bradley, the sanctuary was refurbished with new windows, carpeting and pews. New hymnals were purchased and the church organ was rebuilt. Air conditioning was installed and the Lecture Hall was redecorated and furnished. Perhaps the most notable change was the separation of the duties of the Church

Secretary and Director of Christian Education into two offices. Sister Anna B. Johnson succeeded Sister A. Louise Jones as Director of Christian Education. Under Rev. Bradley, Christian Education Week was expanded to a full week of educational programs; in 1969 a Scholarship Committee was established to provide financial assistance to high school graduates. The church also purchased a thirty-five passenger bus for the nursery school. Hindered by personal problems affecting his ability to shepherd the flock, Rev. Bradley resigned as pastor to accept a teaching position.

#### The Reverend Gordon Story

Tabernacle has always been blessed to have capable, spiritual leaders in a time of crisis. The Rev. Gordon Story, who served as a minister from 1939 until 1993, was an avid reader, serious bible student and teacher of the Bible. During his fifty four years of service, he was the assistant to four Pastors—Rev. Robert H. Pittman, Dr. Jesse J. McNeil, Rev. Fulton O. Bradley, and Dr. Frederick G. Sampson. Reverend Story became one of several interim ministers after Dr. McNeil relinquished his pastoral duties to devote time to writing and publishing. Again Reverend Story was called upon to serve as interim pastor when Rev. Bradley resigned as pastor to accept a teaching position in 1970. Under Rev. Story's dedicated and consistent leadership, Tabernacle's Ship of Zion continued to sail. The church body continued to assemble, praise God, and do the work that Christ assigned her while the search continued for a new pastor.

As interim Pastor, Rev. Story discharged pulpit duties and preached both services on Sunday morning. On Baptism Sunday, Rev. Story assigned Deacon Fred Green to the pulpit while he performed the baptisms, then he returned to the pulpit to preach the sermon. Still continuing to teach as well as preach, Rev. Story earned everyone's love and respect.

The church remained steadfast, and thrived under the remarkable leadership of this tireless servant of God. Tabernacle continued to shine brightly as a light in the darkness. All of the darkness in the world could not extinguish Tabernacle's light. The Word of God continued to sustain the light of faith, as the membership waited for the guidance of a new under shepherd.

#### Sampson...Shepherding Dynamic Diversities

At the time Tabernacle needed a revival, the Lord sent a special gift. On September 25, 1971, the ministry of Dr. Frederick George Sampson II began when he said, "Yes," to the call from Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church. He came to Tabernacle from Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky with his wife, Earlene Harrison-Sampson, their son Frederick G. Sampson III, and daughter,

Freda Gelene Sampson. A native of Port Arthur, Texas, he was one of nine children born to Frederick and Florence Sampson. He held degrees from Bishop College, Howard University, Union University and the University of Louisville, Virginia Theological Seminary.

The congregation experienced a period of rest and prayerful focusing, and was ready to attain all God had in store—a greater spiritual empowerment by the Holy Ghost. After the Annual Christian Education Institute in September, Dr. Sampson studied the congregation and its needs. He began structuring groups to improve relationships between the auxiliaries and committees. Dr. Sampson initiated the Leadership Council as the communication nerve center to communicate information throughout the church body. With his energized, charismatic and thought provoking preaching, he articulated to all levels of the fellowship the new direction God was leading the church family, and the family was eager to follow.

Reverend Story served as Assistant Pastor to Dr. Sampson. He was assigned the duties of scheduling associate ministers to the pulpit for Sunday services, and providing orientation on dedicating babies and performing baptisms. He regularly taught bible study classes to include the Wednesday Noon Bible Study Class and he scheduled meetings for Sunday school teachers. He was a dedicated and active servant until the Lord called him home in March 1993.

In 1976, the Rev. Oscar Carter, licensed and ordained by Dr. Sampson, became the first paid Administrative Assistant to the Pastor. Because of Rev. Carter's prior service as a Trustee at Tabernacle, he capably assisted Dr. Sampson in the pulpit as well as with the operation of the church building, building expansion, personnel and other administrative affairs. Rev. Carter served in that capacity until 1987 when he was called as Pastor of Springhill Baptist Church, Inkster, Michigan.

Under Dr. Sampson, the church became Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church. Then Dr. Sampson coined the nickname "Tab." The mission statement of the Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church is:  
To image our Father God

To image His Son, the Savior and Lord of our lives. And

To involve ourselves actively, sacrificially, and unconditionally with the Holy Ghost in this divine assignment.

Dr. Sampson's unshakable faith, uncompromising love, and unparalleled wisdom, earned him the title "Pastors' Pastor". He was active and instrumental in teaching ministers of various denominations to fulfill their call to ministry. His gift of love endeared him to people everywhere who referred to him affectionately as "Doc." Dr. Sampson was a rare and precious jewel. There was never an obstacle or challenge that he could not meet with love, faith, wisdom, courage, and his belief in God. He knew that his "vertical connection" would equip him to handle any "horizontal confrontation."

Spiritual gifts were poured out upon the membership at Tabernacle. Children, teens, young adults, men, women and seniors exercised their gifts in unity of the Holy Spirit and to the glory of God. Dr. Sampson appointed, Brother John Whittington as Dean of Music to coordinate the Music Ministry. The church grew to six choirs, one for every age group, including a women's chorus initiated in 1995. The choirs ministered to the church family and accompanied Dr. Sampson during his many invitations as guest preacher in churches—locally and nationally. The Tabernacle Symphonette grew from a few instruments to a full complement of strings, horns, percussions and organ.

To assist Dr. Sampson, the Board of Deacons and the Board of Trustees in the administration of church affairs, Mrs. Lillie Elmore served as Administrative Assistant to the Pastor and Deacon Emmett Grimmett served as Office Manager of the office staff. Deacon Samuel D. Johnson served as Chairman of the Board of Deacons and Roosevelt Wise, Chairman of the Board of Trustees. The two boards met periodically as the Joint Board to take action on matters that needed to be ratified by the church body at church meetings called by the pastor.

The Leadership Council was established to bring Deacon Group, Auxiliary and Ministry leaders together monthly to discuss church activities and plan the event calendar for the year. Dr. Erma Glasgow Davis was its first president.

Dr. Sampson saw the need for daily Bible study lessons. Under his supervision, seven Bible study classes were offered from Monday through Sunday. Dr. Sampson facilitated the 6:30 am Sunday Dawn Seekers Class in the Social Hall. The Dawn Seekers Class provided theology lessons for sixty to eighty participants, which often included non-members and ministers from local churches. To provide high spiritual nourishment, strength and encouragement, Christian education at Tabernacle expanded to seven Bible study classes. They were offered every evening and on Wednesdays at noon to accommodate schedules for working, retired and non-working members.

To increase the frequency of sacred worship, Dr. Sampson introduced two initiatives: the first initiative began with evening service on Ash Wednesday and every Wednesday evening until Palm Sunday. The second initiative was The Four "High Weeks of Worship" week-long celebrations that occurred four times a year. The first "High Week", named the Week of Challenge, was the Passion Week preceding Easter. The second "High Week", held in mid-June with an emphasis on children and youth, was named the Week of Revitalization. The third "High Week" was, the last full week of September, launched Christian Education Week. The fourth "High Week" became the Week of Advent, preceding Christmas. During each week, dinner was served for all attendees, followed by lectures and study period, and concluded with a worship service in the sanctuary.

The Autumn Fellowship was established to provide hot meals daily for homebound members. The Ministry of Women and Girls was extended to a year-round ministry designed to meet the spiritual and developmental needs all women—from the ages of ten to adulthood. The Ministry of Men and Boys provided opportunities for boys to interface with men as role models. These nurturing partnerships engaged men and boys in both ministry and productive social activities.

In 1980, the church raised one million dollars to build the Jesse J. McNeil Center, which opened July 1981. The physical church was also renovated and expanded to keep pace with the demands of church growth, ministries and programs. The Jesse J. McNeil multi-purpose fellowship hall had a larger kitchen and could serve meals for five hundred people. The sanctuary's expansion included the addition of the Baker Chapel, named after Deacon Emeritus John Baker. The renovation did not require a mortgage since the cost for the expansion was paid as the project proceeded. During the 1980's neighboring properties were purchased to provide additional parking space for the growth of over 4,000 members. Several new ministries were established by Dr. Sampson including the Department of Evangelism which provided training for door-to-door witnessing in the community. Annually Tabernacle ministers and lay-people traveled, preached, taught, evangelized and fellowshiped with churches in the Bahamas and Africa.

In September, 1984 and again in November, 1993, Ebony Magazine recognized Dr. Sampson as one of the nation's 15 outstanding African American preachers. In 1987, the Detroit Free Press called Dr. Sampson "One of the City's most powerful black ministers" who refuses to allow politics or politicians in his pulpit. Dr. Sampson is quoted in that article as saying:

"We are politically active but we don't politicize the pulpit here. We are low key. We've got six judges here. We've got 120-some people here in medical science, but you won't hear us making note of it, because we've got your common laborer here, your ditch digger here, former addicts here, your welfare people here. We've got God's people here, and we say the ground is level for everyone at the foot of the cross... On Sunday morning we are the church gathered for enlightenment and empowerment... then we're the church scattered into the world. And the judge can be a better judge. And the young man who puts on an automobile bumper will do that work with quality.

New Outreach Ministries--1990 to 2001



After 11:00 am worship service, Sunday, November 9, 1990, the church family marched to the corner of 30th and Cobb Street, for an open house to celebrate the opening of The Tabernacle Annex Community Center of Creative Compassion (TC4). Formerly St. Benedict the Moor Catholic School, the building's renovation included removing asbestos and creating rooms for adult education classes and halls for community activities.

Dr. Sampson established several new ministries from 1990 to 2001. The Prison Ministry, under the leadership of Rev. Samuel Spruill was organized in March 1992. That same year, Dr. Sampson daringly broke with tradition and entrusted the Women and Girls' Ministry with planning "The Week of Challenge," between Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday. Tabernacle's men and women disciples preached each night to highlight the worship services.

The Collegiate for Christ Ministry was formed in May 1992 to oversee the spiritual needs for Tabernacle students attending colleges and universities around the country. This ministry sent care packages each school semester with bulletins and sermons on cassette tapes to keep the young people in touch with their church family.

The Women and Girls' Choir was established, as an outgrowth of the Women and Girls ministry, and performed under the direction of Karen Young, LaVera Young and Teresa Young Nickelberry. The choir is now an established arm of the Music Ministry.

In 1994, Dr. Sampson appointed Mrs. Gwendolyn Hicks, a graduate of Ashland Theological Seminary as the Director of Christian Education. Through her dedication and gifted direction, the Christian education curriculum was enriched. Tabernacle teachers were certified in Biblical Studies by the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., and they joined guest lecturers in teaching accredited courses during Christian Education Week. Deacon Troy Robertson coordinated all programs for Christian Education. Rev. Lemuel Harrison and Rev. Johnnie Green served as assistants to Dr. Sampson after the Lord called Rev. Gordon Story to his heavenly home.

The Intercessory Prayer Ministry was organized in March 1995 under the leadership of Rev. Jeraldine Jackson; every Sunday morning at 6:00 a.m. prayer warriors came together to pray, lifting individual prayer requests, prayers for our church, the community and our nation at-large.

Dr. Sampson taught theology lessons, which led to licensing and ordaining numerous ministers as "Sons and Daughters of Tab" during his thirty years as pastor. In June 1998, three female ministers were the first to be ordained by Dr. Sampson: the Reverend Gwendolyn Hicks, the Reverend Joyce Moore, and the Reverend Grace Moorman. One of the outstanding events that captured Dr. Sampson's strong emphasis on seminary study for ministers was the graduation of five Tabernacle ministers with doctoral degrees in ministry from United Theological Seminary of Ohio in June 2000. Because there were five doctoral graduates from Tabernacle, the seminary took the extraordinary step of holding the convocation at Tabernacle—a unique honor for the church, Dr. Sampson and the recipients. The five doctoral candidates were: the Rev. Dr. Frederick G. Sampson III, the Rev. Dr. Gwendolyn Hicks, the Rev. Dr. Joyce Moore, the Rev. Dr. Grace Moorman, and the Rev. Dr. George Sebastian Vaughn.

As a part of the Youth Ministry, the Children's Church was revived in May, 1998 under the guidance of the Rev. Dr. George Sebastian Vaughn, Sister Sharon Rankin, Director and many faithful co-laborers were drawn to serve in the Children's Church Ministry. The Children's Church services, scheduled every first and third Sundays outgrew the social hall, and moved to the Jesse Jai McNeil Multi-Purpose Room. The "Twenty-Somethings", also organized under Rev. Dr. George Sebastian Vaughn, was devoted to the spiritual needs of young adults. The Twenty-Somethings became an active integral part of the Children's and Youth Ministry. In November 2001, the Reverend Brenda Joy Davis organized the Save America's Youth, (S.A.Y. Yes!), Program, which provided after school tutoring and mentoring for at-risk children.

A New Church on the Horizon: the Groundbreaking

On September 23, 2001, the Tabernacle congregation marched from Beechwood and Milford to the corner of Grand River and West Grand Boulevard to attend an evening groundbreaking service under a huge tent. The groundbreaking launched the construction of a new church edifice.

Dr. Sampson was brought from the hospital to the Groundbreaking Ceremony by his son and daughter, Rev. Dr. Frederick Sampson III, Freda Sampson and Rev. Johnnie Green II. The congregation rejoiced and thanked God for allowing Dr. Sampson to be with his Tab family for the ceremony and to experience placing his feet on Tab's new Promised Land. The Rev. Charles Sanders from Nassau, Bahamas preached a sermon that challenged the church to consider why the new church was built and to remember that the grandeur of the church is not measured by the stateliness of the structure, but by the spiritual greatness of the people. Afterward, Dr. Sampson led the congregation to the corner site for the groundbreaking. With stirring solemnity, designated leaders prayed, and then placed the shovel in the ground and turned the earth. Although Dr. Sampson would not live to see the new edifice, we were blessed by God's presence that day.

Farewell, Sweet Hour of Prayer

During Dr. Sampson's last weeks, he prepared his flock for his departure. He warned the church that terrible days lay ahead for him and we were to be strong in the Lord. The battle cry became:

"Hallelujah, anyhow!"

On October 10, 2001, while the church was gathered in the Jesse Jai McNeil Multi-Purpose Fellowship Hall for Wednesday night prayer meeting, Rev. Johnnie Green, who had been at Doc's bedside announced, "The Lord has called His servant, Dr. Frederick G. Sampson II, home."

Chairman, Samuel Johnson and the Board of Deacons, declared a ninety-day period of mourning in heartfelt appreciation for Dr. Sampson's extraordinary thirty-year ministry at Tabernacle. All meetings and programs were suspended, except for the Women's Retreat.

The last ministerial activity established by Dr. Sampson was the Women's Retreat Ministry, which was coordinated by the Women and Girl's Ministry. It was Dr. Sampson's desire to see the women come together in a retreat setting to start building what he called a "Reservoir of Righteous Resources."

Fifteen women were gathered in his office on that day. He appointed Sisters Mamie Humphrey and Colette Douglas as co-chairpersons and assigned Rev. Beverly McCutcheon to support planning the retreat. The women's retreat was held November 9-10, 2001. This was the only active ministry during the period of mourning for Dr. Sampson.

Dr. Sampson's burning passion for Christ, his indomitable spirit, his zest for the gospel and zeal for God's Word will be remembered forever in the hearts and minds of those he shepherded.

The Reverend Johnnie Green II—Praying and Leading in Faith!

After the home-going of Dr. Sampson, Rev. Johnnie Green, Assistant Pastor of Tabernacle, assumed leadership of Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church as Interim Pastor/ Spiritual Leader. His hard work and devotion to the church was just as strong if not greater during the three years, 2001 – 2004, when Tabernacle was without a Pastor. Although his responsibilities grew after the death of Dr. Sampson, Reverend Green never shirked his duties as he continued in the vein of Joshua to Moses. Reverend Green carried the full pastoral load of the church's operations and management along with the boards of Deacons and Trustees.

Reverend Johnnie Green came to Tabernacle in 1957. His wife, Kathi and his two sons, Johnnie III and Josiah, were members of Tabernacle, also. He was licensed in October 1986 and ordained in August 1992 by Dr. Frederick George Sampson, II. He attended the University of Detroit and received a Bachelor's of Religious Studies degree in 1993 and later matriculated at Ashland Theological Seminary in Detroit from 1994- 1996 and Trinity Theological Seminary in Newberg, Indiana thereafter, beginning in 1999. His quest for lifelong learning enabled him to share his passion for God and His Word in many areas of ministry. Reverend Green, who formerly held positions as a police officer and missile system analyst, became Assistant to Pastor Sampson in 1993, assisting the pastor in all areas of ministry and

administration. He was also responsible for the care and training of associate ministers. He proved to be a hardworking and faithful servant of the Lord to the church and community. Rev. Green preached sermons, counseled members, visited the sick, and appeared at hospitals to pray for members, particularly on their surgery day even at 5 a.m. in the morning.

Reverend Green's compassion and humility matched his faithfulness in doing ministry. He was a compassionate teacher, a learner of life, and shared willingly what he learned through counseling, and mentoring men and women of God. Reverend Green's abilities as a preacher have been utilized in different venues at the Congress of Christian Education, the National Baptist Convention U.S.A., Inc. where he served as a delegate. He was also a delegate to the Wolverine State Convention, and the Metropolitan District Congress of Christian Education. He became an active member of the Council of Baptist Pastors of Detroit and Vicinity.

He took the importance of his call seriously as he had opportunity to minister beyond the walls of the local church to reach out to those in prisons, nursing homes, and hospitals. Reverend Green's preaching has taken him throughout the United States, Canada, and the Bahamas. He has ministered in evangelism to the Bahamas for over fifteen years. He has preached in the Holy Land and served as a delegate to the Oxford Round Table at the University of Oxford, England in 2004.

Reverend Green faithfully guided the flock of Tabernacle during the interim period of no pastor and managed to keep close relational contacts with the people. He, occasionally, preached two different sermons on Sunday for the 8 o'clock and the 11 o'clock services. Sometimes, he preached a third sermon when the church was invited out such as on the first Sunday evening in the New Year for Hartford Memorial Baptist Church's Annual Vesper Service. During the week, he taught Bible classes, preached funerals, led ministers meetings, conducted weddings, attended Prayer and Praise Service, and helped to support any church meetings and endeavors. He kept the close and supportive fellowships going with Dr. Charles Adams of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, Dr. Robert Bailey of Trinity Church in Pontiac, Dr. Oscar Carter of Springhill Baptist Church, and Dr. Ned Adams of True Faith Baptist Church in Detroit.

Reverend Green fulfilled every aspect of church ministry and leadership in a strong way. He stood tall and led valiantly. During this period, he asked members who were able to fast and to pray for the church. Any difficulties in the church were resolved with strength under his authority and respect from the people. He fulfilled the role of a pastor in every way. The Reverend Terry Robinson, Minister of Discipleship and Kingdom Expansion, provided a strong supportive arm to Rev. Green and the church. Reverend Green was a man who valued and understood the power of prayer, particularly in the church. Every Sunday morning at 6 a.m., he attended the intercessory prayer sessions along with Dr. Sampson prior to and after his death. Intercessors and other church members faithfully and consistently offered fervent prayers for the needs of the people and the church. God heard and answered many of these prayers, sometimes in miraculous ways thereby increasing the faith of the people and glorifying the name of the Lord. Under Rev. Green's astute leadership and that of Rev. Terry Robinson, and the Deacons and Trustees, Tabernacle continued to worship and serve. By faith, the mighty prevailing prayers of the church, and the hand of God, Tabernacle was able to build a 106,000 square foot new church for worship without a pastor to the Glory of God only by the power of God.

Reverend Terry Robinson

Reverend Terry Robinson served as Minister of Discipleship and Kingdom Expansion under the pastoral ministry of the Reverend Dr. Frederick G. Sampson II. He was licensed in 1986 and ordained in 1988 by Dr. Frederick G. Sampson II. He received a Masters of Divinity degree from Michigan Theological Seminary. Reverend Robinson was assigned by Dr. Sampson in 1996 for the training of disciples. They met on Tuesday mornings at 6 a.m. for prayer and biblical studies. Their monthly meetings became weekly meetings.

Reverend Robinson was the key minister of support to the Rev. Johnnie Green and the church during the three years that Tabernacle was without a pastor. He preached sermons, counseled members, performed weddings and funerals, taught New Members Class and the Wednesday Noon Bible Study. Reverend Terry Robinson was a very personable minister and gifted teacher. He was the minister to the Men and Boys ministry. Many of these duties were performed before Dr. Sampson passed. Rev. Robinson assisted Rev. Green with the ministers' and disciples' training and meetings. Reverend Robinson's inspiring sermons served to keep the church uplifted and contributed to its faith walk, and spiritual growth.

The Church in Waiting: 2001-2004

Without a pastor, established ministries, groups and new committees continued to serve valiantly as the search for a new pastor progressed. The Deacon Board steadily guided the ship through turbulent waters and the Deaconess Board performed their duties with dignity and sobriety. There were serious storms and perilous situations, but through determination, perseverance and patience, the family continued to worship together and glorify God. Deacon Isaac Washington was elected the new Chairman of the Board of Deacons and Sister Kay Lanier Jones was elected the first woman chair of the Board of Trustees. The ministerial staff, under the energetic, dedicated, and loving spirit of Rev. Johnnie Green II, preached Christ and His saving grace.

The Leadership Council, guided by Sister Mary Lee and Brother Cedric Fails, kept the church programs organized. The New Members' Ministry, under co-leaders, Dorothy Few and Bernice Bond, helped welcome new members into the Tabernacle family and encouraged their church attendance, spiritual growth, and development. Bonding is further encouraged through brunch & dinner fellowships throughout the year.

All ministries - Ushers, Bus, Hospitality, Silent, Tape, Choirs, Sunday School staff, Big Sisters, Personnel, Maintenance staff and Security Guards, steadfastly and enthusiastically pursued their callings.

The Department of Christian Education under Rev. Dr. Gwen Hicks, the Men and Boys' Ministry under the experienced guidance of Rev. Terry Robinson, intensified its outreach and educational programs for men and boys. The Evangelism Department continued to witness and educate; bible study classes continued every evening and on Wednesday afternoon. Serious Christians tried harder and prayed longer. Yes, some still went away from the church: but the many faithful worshippers, whom God had called to stay, remained true to their posts and obedient to their calling. The Scholarship Committee continued its ministry to financially assist high school graduates who were seeking higher education or training.

By faith, Tabernacle never stopped, split, gave up or paused, but kept marching forward. The joining of new members was a sign of God's blessings and brought joy and exhilaration. Someone was baptized every second Sunday. From January 2002 to January 2003, over one hundred candidates were baptized. Only through the presence of the Holy Spirit could that miraculous work be accomplished. The congregation even dared to plow new ground. New groups and old groups alike stepped out with bold faith. On March 16, 2002, Tabernacle's Implementers sponsored a Yolanda Adams Concert at the Detroit Opera House to raise funds for the new edifice. The concert was a sold-out success and brought in \$75,000.00 in proceeds. The Missionary Society became pro-active in missionary outreach by joining Caregivers and the Sorosis Guild added new outreach activities to help the community. For the first time, the Deaconess Board stepped out of its customary role to spearhead Project Angel Tree along with the Prison Ministry. The Culinary Arts Department continued to serve the church with delicious meals for bereaved families, senior citizen and church affairs.

Truly, the Lord has been with us and is showing us great favor. Tabernacle's leadership, through wisdom and foresight, systematically set aside funds through the years for future construction. Then, when the time was right and the site was determined, many members were entrusted with the massive responsibility to plan, schedule, construct, furnish and find additional financing for a new edifice. Those

members labored long to resolve hundreds of details so that the church building would be serviceable yet inspirational. A cry of thanksgiving resounded through the entire congregation when a loan to finance the completion of the new church was successfully secured in the spring of 2004. As Chairman Washington said, "We did not open those doors, it was all God."

#### The Search for a Pastor

At the same time, the search continued for the man God had appointed and anointed to serve as the pastor of Tabernacle. Two successive pulpit search committees were called. Though disappointed in our search several times, our trust in God never wavered, but deepened. We learned to lean on, cry out to and depend solely on God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Wednesday night prayer meetings enriched our faith as we witnessed the moving of the Holy Spirit in the testimonies and prayers of a faithful remnant.

Concerned friends and pastors who were sons of Tabernacle walked with us, such as Dr. Oscar R. Carter and Dr. Robert Bailey. They were instrumental in keeping a few of our church meetings from spiraling out of control. We were encouraged and lifted to spiritual heights by exceptional preachers and pastors such as Dr. Lance Watson, Dr. James Perkins, and Dr. Charles Adams, to name a few, who were regular visitors.

#### Pastor Nathan Johnson, D.D. -- "Journeying Forward"

Pastor Nathan Johnson is the former pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Houston, Texas where he ministered for thirteen years (1991-2004). He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music and Education from Southwestern University and also pursued advanced studies in Expository Preaching at Stephen Oxford Institute and the WHW Conference on Expository Preaching. He is the recipient of an Honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Saint Thomas Christian College and Seminary and an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the Tennessee School of Religion. He currently serves as the first-vice president of the Wolverine State Congress of Christian Education. In addition, he serves on the Advisory Board at Moody Theological Seminary of Michigan.

In June 2003, while lecturing at the National Baptist Convention Congress of Christian Education in Detroit, Pastor Johnson was invited to preach at Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church. He was well received and was invited back for "Loyalty Sunday" in September 2003. He was invited as a candidate for pastor officially in December 2003. On Friday July 16, 2004 the congregation overwhelmingly selected Reverend Nathan Johnson as the new Pastor of Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church. The church had experienced two other unsuccessful calls for a Pastor. Pastor Johnson began his tenure at Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church on Communion Sunday, September 4, 2004. He was accompanied by his wife Michelle, their daughters Bridgette and Elizabeth, and their two sons Zachariah and Nathaniel.

Just as God encouraged Joshua to be very courageous before crossing Jordan into the Promised Land, God encouraged Pastor Johnson to preach a series of sermons from the book of Joshua as he prepared the people of Tabernacle for new horizons on Grand River. On January 9, 2005, the Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church congregation moved into the new church building at 2080 West Grand Boulevard in Detroit, Michigan. It was during this year that Pastor Johnson initiated the church's mission statement which is to:

**Exalt** the Savior through worship and prayer.

**Expound** the scriptures through biblical preaching and teaching.

**Embrace** the saved through membership and fellowship.

**Evangelize** the sinner through the sharing of the good news empowered by the Holy Spirit

**Encourage** the struggling through ministry for the whole family.

**Equip** the saints through Christian education and discipleship for the work of the ministry.

Through the proclamation of the Word by profound preaching and teaching combined with his compassionate altar call, Pastor Johnson has led many to Christ while encouraging others to recommit their lives to God. His emphasis on expounding the truth of the scripture facilitates our identity to become a "Totally Absolutely Biblical [TAB] Church". "Come Home to Family-- because Tabernacle is a place to belong, not just attend," characterizes the warmth and openness of the fellowship here. Under Pastor Johnson's new leadership, the Word of God is studied by the church family to promote spiritual growth and development during the Tuesday night bible study. He also encourages the church body to attend other bible classes that are offered during the week.

Pastor Johnson's new leadership has pioneered several new ministries and strengthened existing ministries within the church. Soon after his arrival, Pastor Johnson formed the Commission on Ministries to study and examine key ministries of the church. Sister Audrey McGresham served as coordinator. The commission was charged to make recommendations to the Pastor for the purpose of under-girding, enhancing, restructuring, or creating a model of ministry on the "cutting edge" at Tabernacle. As a result of the Commission on Ministries, the Writers Ministry was birthed to under-gird our church growth through the development of a bible study curriculum and monthly study lessons for the Deacon groups. This concept also has the purpose of actualizing our church mission through print media. Through the implementation of a Family Spirituality Week focused on "***Doing Family God's Way***", the importance of the family as the foundation of a strong Christian community is emphasized. This event is held in February as part of the Black History month.

Additional programs designed by Pastor Johnson to strengthen Tabernacle's biblical foundation, include: "Super Saturday", held every fourth Saturday for the women and girls and men and boys. It became a special day for study, discipleship, and mentoring.

Camp TAB, a developmental summer program for our youth. This two week camp is aimed to strengthen the students' academic, social skills, and spiritual development.

The Comfort and Care Ministry (initiated in the fall of 2008) assists those experiencing a loss of any kind.

Pastor Nathan Johnson's musical gift and passion for worship with music inspired him to reorganize the Music Ministry of the church. He has inspired the congregation to engage in higher levels of praise and Worship during the Sanctuary Celebration.

The nation's recession and high levels of unemployment impacted Tabernacle. This condition was a key factor in the decision to reorganize the worship service. As a result in May 2009, the congregation voted to move from two services to one church service at 11:00 am with Sunday Church School beginning at 9:30 am. The church family felt that this would bring them closer together during worship service. Several Tabernacle ministers and deacons have been ordained under Pastor Johnson. These servant leaders were instrumental in furthering the mission of the church and spreading the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ under Pastor Johnson's leadership. They were: Reverend William Ashworth, Rev. Debra Carter, Rev. Anthony Caudle, Rev. Joy Davis and Rev. William Mebane II. In December 2006, Pastor Johnson also licensed eight (8) new ministers: Rev. Miller Adams, Rev. John Davis, Rev. Yvonne Gilchrist, Rev. Willie Hawk, Rev. Dennis Kitchen, Rev. William Mebane II, Rev. Patricia Mobley and Rev. Robert Walker.

In January 2008, the following Deacons were ordained: Antoine Clay, Robert Clarke, Rickey Gibson, Charles Green, John Hale, Ulyses Hunter, Randolph Jackson, James McDonald, Jerry Moses, Gregory Pearson, James S. Sarter, and Danton Wilson. A complete listing of Tabernacle's Board of Deacons now include: Frank Adams, Rev. Miller Adams, James Beasley, John Bracey, Robert Brown, Robert Clarke, Antoine Clay, John Crew Jr., Duval Evans, Delbert Fails (Chairman), Robert Files, Robert Friday, John George, Rickey Gibson, Charles Green, John Hale III, Redus Hale, Emanuel Haley, Theron Harley, Kenneth Hubbard, Ulyses Hunter, Randolph Jackson, Samuel Johnson, Rev. Dennis Kitchen, James Martin, Aubrey

McCutcheon, James McDonald III, Jerry Moses, Gregory Pearson, Troy Robertson, Michael Rodgers, James S. Sarter, Lomas Shaw, Daryl Thomas, Isaac Washington, and Danton Wilson.

Deaconesses who have been appointed include: Geraldine Conoway, Chaunte' Davis, Eleanor English, Marla Gibson, Barbara Haley, Betty Hooper, Gloria Hunter, Marie Jackson and Kim Stringer-Taylor. A complete list of the Deaconess Board now include: Etta Adams, Viola Arnold, Rudelle Berry, Warner Bracey, Magnolia Brewton, Juanita Cage, Geraldine Conoway, Chaunte' Davis, Eleanor English, Katie Files, Marla Gibson, Yvonne Gillespie, Deborah Harley (Chairperson), Barbara Haley, Hassie Hunter, Gloria Hunter, Marie Jackson, Katie Johnson, Mary J. Lester, Nazell Linebarger, Earlene Lutes, Minnie Martin, Rev. Beverly McCutcheon, Eula T. Rice, Odessa Robertson, Marcell Robinson, Kimberly Stringer-Taylor, Pearl Thomas, Donna Washington, and Irma Watson.

In August 2010, the installation of the following Trustees occurred: Darnetta Banks, Les Brown, Kerry Caliman, Anita Friday, Hervey Jenkins, Marvin Pettway, and Stephen Smiley. JoAnn Neal was added in October, 2010. A complete listing of the Board of Trustees include: Darnetta Banks, Dwight Blakey, Les Brown, Clifton Bond, Kerry Caliman, Bertha Crossley, Robert Elmore, Anita Friday, Garlin Gilchrist (Chairperson), Frederick Hall, Vincent Harden, Hervey Jenkins, Elaine Hudson, Eddie Johnson, Samuel May, Olin E. Meador, Rudolph Nash, JoAnn Neal, Marvin Pettway, Katherine Pitts, Claude Reece, Stephen Smiley, Addie Strong, James Wahls, Johnallison Westbrook II, Kelvin Wise, and Roosevelt Wise  
Pastor Nathan Johnson's journey forward heralds and proclaims the uncompromising Word of God and teaches the truth of the gospel through deep study and meditation. His ministry is further exemplified in the work of "Claiming our Jerusalem", an Evangelistic outreach, spearheaded by Rev. Miller Adams. It fulfills the great commission by saving souls and making disciples. (Matthew 28: 18-20) His goal is to consolidate the gifts of the skilled professions and layman in the congregation in order to administer services to the church, surrounding community and City of Detroit.  
May he continue to lead us by the power of the Holy Spirit!