

MOUNT PLEASANT BAPTIST CHURCH
Raleigh, NC

CHURCH HISTORY
2017



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History of Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church

As we journey back into time, we find that Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church has a rich and robust history that evolved from the early 1800's. It is important to know from whence we have come to appreciate where we are and our vision for the future. How did Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church come into existence?

Our parent church was first called Wake Liberty Baptist Church. In 1848 their name was changed to Mount Vernon Baptist Church. It was speculated that the name change reflected our first president, George Washington's plantation and burial place in Mount Vernon, Virginia.

Per Waylon Dunn a former member of Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist church and one who became the caretaker of information that was passed down by Gillis Dunn to his son, Isaiah Dunn (better known as Z. Dunn) then to Waylon. In the early days of slavery, the slave masters of Mount Vernon Church would take their slaves with them to worship. The masters would sit downstairs while the slaves sat in the balcony or back of the church. This was the custom.

As the slaves grew into adulthood, a committee of Mount Vernon's white members conferred with the colored members about establishing a separate organization for them. This was around May of 1867. The colored members declined the offer at that time but later asked for permission for a Sabbath School for them and their children. Mount Vernon Baptist Church agreed and assigned a committee to arrange details and procure a location for the colored. The construction of a building was delayed until all the crops were laid. James S. Ray gave the church permission to use a section of his land north of the church free of charge for the colored. The colored worshipped under bush harbor (dense branches used for protection and comfort) until a better place of worship was obtained.

In October of 1870, the colored returned to Mount Vernon Baptist Church and requested that they give to them dismissal letters, to establish a separate church for their Worship Service. They were granted the request to have their own place of worship in addition to the Sabbath School. They were instructed to hold their separate conferences and make reports back to Mount Vernon Baptist Church.

In 1873 they used an old one room building that was located across the Falls of Neuse Rd. They named their church Stony Hill Mission House. They were truly thankful to God for their place of worship.

A little over a decade later in 1885 the colored began construction of a new place for worship. It was located across the road from Stony Hill Mission House. Three point two acres of land deeded for the soul purpose of building a church, with a stipulation that If at any time a church did not occupy this land, it would revert to the owner, however this deed was lost. Upon completion of the building, of their new building, Stony Hill Mission House was changed to Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church, reflecting part of the name from its parent church, Mount Vernon Baptist Church.

The construction of this building was a tremendous task for the men of the church but they were determined to complete the work. After plowing in the fields all day, they would go and work on the church building in the evenings.

They had no measuring devices, so they would place their hands flat on the lumber joining their thumbs together to get a measurement. The first pillars for construction were made of

stone and cost fifty cents per pillar.

Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church held Morning Worship on the second Sunday of each month with the Senior Pastor preaching. Junior Church Worship was on the fourth Sunday of each month with another minister preaching. The Second Sunday Service was well attended, but on the fourth Sundays there were fewer attendees. Sunday School was held every Sunday. On the Sundays when there was no Worship Service, members would attend a neighboring black church.

This rotation was good for the churches and communities. Although there were few or no automobiles, they either walked or used their mules and wagons. While they were in service, the mules grazed in the fields of the church. Church dues did not exceed twenty-five cents a month.

In 1885, Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church reached its greatest landmark in souls saved. Eighty-two were baptized and seven received by letter. The membership consisted of 127 males and 152 females.

On April 21, 1943 Walter and Mattie Hunter deeded the 3.2 acres that the church resided on, to the trustees of Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church. They were: A. J. Pulley, M. P. Pulley and W. M. Massenburg for the sum of \$1.00 and relinquished all rights to said property. The church later purchased additional land in the rear of the church. This land was owned by Marie Bailey, a dedicated member of the church.

Rev. Sam Sanders was the Pastor of Stony Hill Mission House. The Pastors of Mt. Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church were as follows: Samuel Fulwilder, G. Harris, Bill Jones, John Ligon, G.W. Moore, C.C. Clark, Avery Horton, C. H. Heath, Herman Forte, Sr. and N. M. McMillian. Percy R. Jones was elected Pastor in 1973 and served 28 years, retiring December 2001. In January 2002, Hansel I. Jones became Interim and was elected as Pastor January 2002. He served until December 2005. He was followed by Nilous Avery in 2005, who served as Interim, until his health prevented him from continuing. Carl Waden was elected to serve as Interim July 2006, and was elected Pastor in December 2006, serving until October 2015. In December 2015, Chancy Edwards was elected to serve as Interim, he served almost a year, In November 2016, Anthony W. Bailey became the fourteenth Pastor of Mt. Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church.

Sunday Worship Service was held every second and fourth Sunday of the month. The Senior Pastor preached on the second Sunday and a Junior Pastor on the fourth Sunday. Sunday School convened every Sunday. Under the leadership of Rev. Percy R. Jones, we commence to having Morning Worship Service every Sunday.

The children of the church could participate in the service, only on Children's Day and Mother's Day. At other times, they were seen but not heard.

Some of the names among the early founders were: Isaac Hunter, Jack Dunn, E.W. Hunter, Issac Lassiter, Samuel Thompson, Gillis Dunn, Richard Dunn, Jr., William Ray, Oscar Allen, Edward Thornton, N. A Hunter, Amanda Dunn, Irene Massenburg, Nevelson Hunter, Sarah Massenburg, Maggie Hunter, Lizzie Allen, Lila Pulley, Elnora Thornton, Zollie Dunn, Amos Wall, Odessa Lane, Claddis Dunn, Amos Wall, Hazel Pulley, Corinna Branch, Lenora Justice, Maggie Alston, Georgia Ferrell, Ernest Gill, Clarienna J. Dunn, Suzie Merritt, William Hunter, Jack Pulley, Flonnie Brooks, Clara Mitchell, Katie Rogers, Callie Byrum, Mamie Rucker, Alice Dunn, Ruby Dunn, Lillian B. Dunn, Elonza Hunter, Samuel Justice, Eunice Dunn, Marie Bailey,

Thelma Mitchell, Lillian Dunn, Viola Moore, Lattie Dunn, Mary Lockley, Ora L. Robinson, Corrinna Dunn, Beulah Hunter, Bernice Hall, Mozelle Wall, Helen Hunter, Mary Dunn and so many others.

Our Deacon and Trustee Ministry has always been a viable source of leadership and inspiration to our church family. Some of the early Deacons were: Lonnie Gill, Garrison Jones, D. Allen, Richard Dunn, Jr., Iley Dunn, Amos Wall, William Hunter, Will Walker, Lucas Rucker, Samuel Thompson, Richard Dunn, Sr., Charlie Dunn, E. E. Hunter, Otis McMichael, Sr., Charlie Robinson, Edward Thornton, Ralph Justice, Sr., Wilson Thornton, Sr., James Gill, Zollie Forte, Wilbert Clark and David Gill, Sr. The current Deacons are: Calvin Dunn - Chairman, Worth Dunn, Jr., Julious Scott, Lawrence Jones, Kenneth Bledsoe and Robert Wall. Horace Dunn served as Deacon Emeritus until the Lord called him home September 2016.

Some of the previous Trustees were: Lenell Walker, Marvin Smith, Otis Pulley, Carl Williams, and Ernest Gill, Elonza Justice, Larry Washington, Carl A. Justice and Thomas Rogers. The current Trustee Ministry Members are: Thelma D. Evans - Chairperson, Albert Justice, Earl Dunn, Carlton Stewart, Dorothy Powell, Teresa Hall and Georgia Lynch. Arthur Gill and Worth Dunn, Sr. serves as Trustee Emeritus. Trustee Worth Dunn, Sr. was called home to be with the Lord in January 2017.

The church clerks were: William Ray, Oscar Allen, Edward Thornton, Arthur Gill and presently Kenneth Bledsoe. Charlie Robinson served as one of the church's financial and corresponding secretary.

The church was a beacon of light for the community. It always had a church bell that ranged when it was time to begin Worship Service. When Sunday School ended, there was a short break, to get water and use the toilets. The bell ranged to get everyone back in church for service. The church bell ranged whenever there was a Funeral Service. This let the members know that the hearse was approaching the church. Whenever you heard the bell tolling, it got the community's attention, for there was something happening.

Revival Service was a big event back in the day. It was held once a year in the summer for a week of service. A Guest Pastor would always preach for revival. The guest minister would be housed by a member of the church for that week. Edward and Elnora Thornton was one of the families who offered their hospitality to the guest minister.

The revival was held for a week in the evening. A noon day revival service was held in the middle of that week. The front seat in the church was called "the mourner's bench" it was designated for the unsaved to sit. The minister would ask for all the saved members to raise their hand. This was followed with the unsaved to raised their hand. The unsaved was asked to come up front and sit on the Mourner's Bench. This took place before the sermon. Once the sermon was completed, the deacons, the sisters and the pastors would surround the front seat where the mourners were sitting and they would sing and pray until the person accepted Christ and stood up. If someone didn't confess, they were told to return to the Mourner's Bench the next night. If they stood up to quickly, a parent would sometimes tell the person that they needed to return to the Mourner's Bench, because they hadn't received salvation.

Baptismal Service took place in the woods that once existed beyond Dehijuston Ct. There was a pond located there. The men would clean the debris out of the pond so that the candidates could be baptized. Years later a Baptismal Pool was built adjacent to the church. It is presently inside the church, back of the choir loft.

Communion Service was held on the 2nd Sunday every three months. A set of the white linen

that was used on the communion table was made and donated to the church by Rosabell Thornton-Jones. The sisters dressed the communion table with white linen. They covered the communion to keep flies and other insects from getting in the wine, because the windows would be raised and the bread and wine glasses had no coverings.

Sunday Morning Worship Service started at 11:00 am and adjourned between 2:30 and 3:00pm. The congregation enjoyed their worship experience and never rushed the flow of the spirit. The deacons would start the service with singing and praying. This ignited the Worship Service. The choir would be in their robes with a matching hat and tassel on their head. The choir always sang hymns, with a spiritual preceding the sermon. Following the sermon and invitational hymn, testimonies were given by mainly the sisters. They told of the goodness of the Lord and what he had done for them, as soon as one finished another one would stand up. They were so glad to be in the service one more time.

In 1962 Rev. C. H. Heath initiated the Building Fund Project for our current structure. Construction began in 1962. When the basement was completed, service was held in it until the sanctuary was completed years later. As funds were raised the work continued. The building was completed in 1969 under the leadership of Rev. Herman Forte, Sr.

Some that were on the building committee were: Orange P. Dunn, Edward Thornton and James Gill. Otis McMichael's masonry skills and Ralph Justice, Sr's carpentry skills were instrumental in completing the work on the building.

The Sunday School Department was and still is the plant bed of the church. Gillis Dunn was the first Superintendent with three Sunday School classes. Over the years, the classes grew to nine. When Orange P. Dunn took over as Superintendent, he drove his long bed truck and picked up all who wanted to attend Sunday School and Worship Service. The attendance grew. He was succeeded by Lonnie Gill, D. Allen, Zollie Dunn, George Hargrove, Sr., Ralph Justice, Sr., Otis McMichael, Sr., George Hargrove, Jr., Wilson Thornton, Sr., Willie Bethune, David Gill, Sr. and Leon Hunter, assisted by Deshown Miles. The current Superintendents are Carlton Stewart assisted by Florine Justice.

The church purchased a church bus from funds raised by our Annual Birth Night Celebrations. Purchase of the church first bus was an exciting time for the members. It was used to attend afternoon events and to pick up members and others who wanted to attend service. We had volunteers to drive the bus each Sunday. They were: Albert Justice, Carl Williams and Otis Pulley. They were dedicated servants in addressing the transportation needs of the church and community. The church membership increased because transportation was made available to those who needed it. After the bus was put out of commission, the church purchased a van, which we still use. The van is used for various events, afternoon service, picking up members and guests for Sunday School and Worship Service, the auxiliaries needs and pastor's engagements.

The Missionary Department was and still is a vital part of our Church Ministry. Some of the early leaders were: N A. Hunter, Amanda Dunn, Irene Massenburg, Marie Bailey, Elnora Thornton, Lenora Justice, Hettie Hargrove, Rosabelle Thornton, Helen Dunn, Margaret Alston, Kathleen Bledsoe and Jessie Dunn. Today the Missionary Ministry under the guidance of Rev. Linda B. Gill, has been dedicated to serving not only this church and community but has reached far and wide in its compassion and service to others, such as the Nursing Homes, The Central Children's Home Orphanage, Food Drives, assisting the bereaved families and many

other projects. The Missionary Ministry has always worked diligently in their service to God, through serving mankind

The Usher Board was organized in 1937 by Sam Harris. Mark Dunn served as the first president from 1937 to 1968. Some of the members were: Thelma Mitchell, Lillian Dunn, Addie Gill, Helen Dunn, Leona Thompson, Otis Pulley, Ernest Gill, Flonnie Brooks, Georgia Ferrell, Wesley Elam, Della Boone, Worth Dunn, Sr., Hazel Pulley, Roxanna Allen, Reba Chavis, Pauline Dunn, Arthur Gill, JoAnn Forte, Willie Bethune, Zollie Forte, Lenell Walker, Marvin Smith, Lois Smith, Johnny Williams, Mary Justice and many others. Edna Stewart is the current president. Years later, the Young Adult Usher Ministry was established. The ushers were dedicated in their service to the Lord as doorkeepers, attending to the needs of the congregation.

The Music Department consisted of vocal music praises with excellent voices such as: Zollie Dunn, Irene Massenburg, Waylon Dunn, Henrietta Dunn, Paul Dunn, Simon Roberson, Lizzie Massenburg, Ennis Justice, Melissa Massenburg, Charlie Jones, Ruby Dunn, Clairrena Dunn, Graham Harris and others. In 1930 Pandora Dunston allowed the church to use her organ. Around 1936 the first piano was obtained. Mr. Johnson from Shaw University was the first pianist.

The Senior Choir was organized in 1936, The Friendly Five later organized and consisted of such songsters as: Lila Pulley, Hazel Pulley, Bessie Clacks, Georgia Ferrell, Clifton Ferrell and Viola Dunn Moore. The Spiritual Chorus was organized in 1969. Other choirs were, The Junior Choir, Young Adult Choir, The Ensemble, The P. R. Jones Gospel Choir 1980, The New Heights Choir, The Voices of Praise and The Male Chorus. We currently have four groups. They are: The Spiritual Chorus, the New Heights Choir, the Male Chorus and the Voices of Praise.

In 1963, a few of the young men of the church, organized a singing group called the Morning Stars. The singers were: Kenneth Bledsoe, John Bledsoe, Jr., Terry Dunn, Jerry Dunn, Worth Dunn Jr., and Calvin Dunn.

Some of the early musicians were: M.B. Brown, Margaret Harris, and A. Beckwith. Mattie Justice became the musician for Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church at the young age of 12. She served as a dedicated musician for four decades and still assist this church and others churches when needed. The piano and organ were the only instruments allowed in the early days. Drums, guitars and tambourines were allowed in the church under Rev. P. R. Jones tenure. Some other musicians were: Pearlene Williams, G. Townes, Kim James, Jasmin High, Lance Sims, Sam Cooley, T. K. Jones and Dwight Bunch. Drummers, Kenneth M. Bledsoe and Herbert Powell. The current musicians are Rev. Jimmy Yarborough, Minister of Music and pianist; Victor Tanner, bass guitarist; Jarrell Tanner, lead guitarist and Quantrell Tanner, drummer.

Rev. Avery Horton initiated the first Baptist Training Union (BTU). He was succeeded by Orange P. Dunn and Wilson Thornton, Sr. This organization provided training in the Baptist doctrine. It was extremely beneficial in the early church. Marie Bailey, Otis Michael, Sr., Hettie Hargrove and Ralph Justice Sr. were some of the dedicated teachers of the BTU. The Wake Baptist Association provides training for church ministries.

Under the leadership of our 12th Pastor, Rev. Percy R. Jones, the Birth Night Celebration originated. This was an affair wherein the entire church could participate by celebrating their birth month. Some of the projects accomplished through the Birth Night Celebration funds

were: our P.A. (Public address) system, central air, our first organ, church bus, new carpeting, stucco of the building and the padding of the pews.

Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church has had four ministers preach their initial sermon, they were: Joyce P. Hinton, Linda B. Gill, Earl Dancy and Kenneth Martin Bledsoe. We thank God for them and pray that they will continue to preach God's powerful Word. May his protection and blessings surround them as they go forth with this awesome task. Elder Sarah Dillahunt joined our church, but left in 2014.

We presently have five Associate Ministers, they are: Linda B. Gill, Naomi Brown, Michael Barrow, Kenneth Jones and Jimmy Yarborough.

Various ministries and committees have been added to this church such as: Deaconess Ministry, Floral Club, First Aide, Hospitality Ministry, Children's Nursery, Scholarship Committee, Laymen's League, Trailblazers (Senior) Ministry, Children's Church, Youth Ministry, Publicity Committee, New Members Ministry, Widow and Widower Support Ministry, the launching of the Church's Web Page, Budget Committee, Finance Committee, Kitchen Committee and the Pastor's Aide Ministry. We currently have a new praise dance team under the guidance of Lady Andrea Bailey that consist of young and mature Praise Dancers.

Sunday evening musical programs were often held to raise funds for the church. Guest choirs from various churches would participate. Members like Lillian Dunn, Clara Mitchell, Otis McMichael, Jessie Dunn, Lizzie Massenburg and so many others worked faithfully to increase funds for the church.

In 1985 we celebrated our Centennial Homecoming. One hundred years since becoming Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church. The celebration began with a week of service with dynamic guest ministers accompanied by their choir each night. It was a time to be thankful to God for 100 years. On that Sunday, we dressed up like our ancestors did long ago. The men wore bib overalls, straw hats, checkered shirts and suspenders too. The sisters wore their long dresses and bonnets for their heads. Even the children dressed back in time with the overalls, dresses with pinafores and their hats. We had a high time in the Lord. Just being thankful. We knew where God had brought us from. After service dinner was spread outside on tables and the fellowship continued. No one was in a hurry to leave because we were enjoying the fellowship and the delicious food.

In 1993 a new addition was added to the church. It consisted of a fellowship hall, a multi-purpose room, secretary's office, library, classrooms, bathrooms, baptismal pool, choir room and a bathroom was added to the pastor's study. Later the pulpit was enlarged, carpet replaced, a new piano was purchased, televisions for the multi-purpose room/fellowship hall and vestibule. Recently security cameras, and re-construction of the side entrance of the church, addressing the needs of the members.

As we face the challenges today, we realize that it is only through God's loving grace and mercy that we have come thus far. Our ancestors were such great pioneers.

We thank God for where we are today in all walks of life. The struggles that our ancestors went through made their faith stronger. They cared about their fellowman and tried hard to

make things better for their children, the church, the community and all who will follow. They learned to trust and rely upon God to see them through. We give thanks to God for our new pastor, Rev. Dr. Anthony W. Bailey, Lady Andrea and their family as we embark upon higher callings in the Lord.

Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist has held high the banner of Christ who said in Matthew 16:18, "upon this rock I build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it", We have been standing on the rock 132 years and may this church forever stand in years to come as a living monument of a Savior who died that all men might live. God bless our church family.

*Resources of information used to compile this history: Mt. Vernon Baptist Church History, Archives and History, members who are now deceased, Waylon Dunn, Mamie Rucker and elderly people who once lived in the community, Mt. Pleasant's deed, grandparents and personal experiences
L. A. Justice, September, 2017.