

History of St. Paul Baptist Church

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Early Beginnings

The Rev. St. James Williams, a licensed preacher, came to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in 1918. He joined with four other men to form a Negro Baptist Fellowship within walking distance of their homes. St Paul's humble beginnings started with a need to bring church services to Northampton Heights.

Rev. Williams enlisted in the armed forces in 1919 during World War I and served one year. Rev. Williams who was born in 1873 in Birmingham, Alabama returned to Alabama to bring his wife, Katie Joe Williams, and her children, Eddie, Samuel and Ella Lewis back to Bethlehem after his discharge.

Returning to Bethlehem in 1920, Rev. Williams oversaw the formation of a small group of worshippers who held services in the name of Mount Olive Baptist Church. Rev. F.P. Diggs pastored the church from 1921 until he was called to another church in 1923.

Rev. Perkins was then called to pastor the church. From 1920-1924 services were held in storefronts and temporary locations at Second and Carbon Streets, the 1500 block of East Third Street, and at Second and Bessemer Streets.

Rev. Perkins with his associate, Rev. St. James Williams, and members of the church gathered to discuss buying property to establish a permanent place of worship. A committee was formed to purchase some land in May of 1925. Members of the committee were Trustee Ross Washington (Chairman of the Board), Trustee Boise Glass and Trustee Joseph Wilson. Land at Second and Carbon Streets was purchased.

During the planning of the new church building, Rev. Perkins was called to pastor elsewhere. Rev. St. James Williams was then taken to Philadelphia by Rev. Diggs and the officers of the church and he was ordained into the ministry. Rev. Williams was selected to pastor the church under the supervision of Rev. P.H. Hughes and Rev. McCrayer.



Rev. St. James Williams (founder) and Sister Katie Lewis Williams (wife)

Pastor of St. Paul from 1925 - 1931, 1933 - 1943

Breaking Ground for the New Church

On a Sunday morning in July 1925, a splendid service was held at the ground breaking for the new church in Northampton Heights. The name of St. Paul Baptist Church was established at this service. Following the opening hymn, scripture reading and prayer, Rev. George A. Weidman, supply pastor during this month at the First Baptist Church, Bethlehem, made a few brief but timely and appropriate remarks. Mrs. Watson, of the Second Baptist Church, Bethlehem, sang and the Rev. F. P. Diggs of Easton was Master of Ceremonies. Rev. T. A. Collins, pastor of Union A.M.E. Church in Easton delivered the sermon, using as his text "The People Had a Mind to Work". A large offering for the time of over \$100.00 was collected for which officers of the church were very grateful. After this service the congregation went to the proposed site of the new building, Pastor St. James Williams lifted the first shovel full of earth and then passed the shovel to the other pastors who did likewise. Members of the congregation then placed their offering in the hole, covered it up and the inspiring service was concluded.

Charter members were the Rev. St. James and Katie Williams , Thomas and Rebecca Glass, Lloyd B. Glass, Frances Potillo (Gunn), Joseph and Hattie Wilson, Samuel Lewis, James W. and Georgia Williams, George and Sarah Washington, James Ross Washington and Mr. and Mrs. Casey.



1926 - 1949

The new structure, a frame building with outside facilities and no running water was completed in September 1926. Water was secured from next door at the home of Deacon and Mrs. James Williams. The church, with a wooden floor, homemade benches and a potbelly stove in the middle of the floor, seated approximately 100 people.

Sister Nora Kent (Kannon) was the first candidate for baptism once in the new church building. The baptism took place in Saucon Creek as did subsequent baptisms. Membership began to grow. The official board consisted of Deacons: Thomas Glass, Charles Washington, Ross Washington, Ernest Enix, James Bryant, James Williams, and James Washington. Trustees: Lenwyn Glass, Abner Terry, Norman Glass, Samuel Lewis, Isaiah Smith, and William Gunn, Sr. Hattie Wilson was church secretary. Samuel Lewis and Isaiah Smith were ordained as deacons by the Rev. St. James Williams. These officers played a tremendous part in the advancement of St. Paul Baptist Church and served St. Paul faithfully until their passing.

Rev. St. James Williams had a great desire to build and unite the Bethlehem community in Christian love. He worked hard in serving the church, visiting not only his members and the sick but the community as well. He was remembered traveling the community wearing his black felt hat. He often made house calls, sang, prayed and collected money on Saturdays for the church. He was a highly respected man. His theme was *"Build your hope on things eternal and hold to God's unchanging hand."*

In the early days of St. Paul the first Missionary Club was formed in 1924. Katie Williams, the first mother of the church, was named president; Mrs. Frances Gunn, Vice President; and Wilhemina "Bootsie" Terrell, Secretary. The first Sunday School was formed in the mid 1920's with Trustee Ross Washington as its superintendent. The ushers were organized in 1926.

St. Paul continued to grow. As the years passed the membership became stronger. In 1931 the Woman's Club bought the first gift for St. Paul, a rug runner to be put on the wooden floor. The members were Mrs. Katie Williams, Mrs. Frances Gunn, Mrs. Lucreasia Mercer and others.

In 1931, Rev. Eugene Hagans of Philadelphia was called to pastor St. Paul. Rev. Hagans was pastor for approximately 1 ½ years until Rev. Williams was recalled to shepherd the church.

In 1934, Julia Chin formed the Willing Workers. Mrs. Frances Gunn was President, and Mrs. Hattie Wilson was Secretary. Members serving both the Missionary and Willing Workers Clubs were Mrs. Nancy Clayton, Mrs. Ella Glass, Mrs. Rebecca Glass, Mrs. Annie (Pat) Terry, Mrs. Gilmore, Mrs. Monia Glass, Mrs. Casey, and Mrs. Georgette Williams.

Serving as Sunday School teachers were Deacon McCrea and Mrs. Lynette Brown. Picnics in Central Park are fondly remembered.

The youth were involved in various activities during this time also. There was a Boy Scout Program under the leadership of Mr. Wilcox, Charlie Richardson, William Brown, Isaiah Smith and Bert Tarboro. St. Paul's youth and the youth at the Ukrainian Church would visit each other for May Day programs. The youth were dressed in white and fondly remember the cake and ice cream following the programs.

There were also youth choirs. The youth included Ella, Mary Ellen, Vivian and Bert Tarboro; Willie, Marian, Bessie, Donald, Sevilla and Beatrice Gunn; Francis Terry; Lucille Sturdivant; Lillie Ruth Davis; Alma Grant; Sara Hall; Lillian and Dorothy Lewis; Ernest, Isaiah, Jr., Geneva and James Smith; Joan, Dorothy and Edward Brown; William Brown; Thad and Queen Esther Grimes, Hortense Moore; Martin Kent; Delores Williams; Mack Freeman; Johnny Terrell; the Washington and Pottillo children.

Music played a large part in the church's history. In the 30's and 40's there were monthly Ministerial Alliance Services with visiting choirs and programs with instrumental music, classics and just good singing that would rock the foundation of the church. Annie Smith served as the musician (piano) during the early 30's. Sis. Louise Ball served as the church pianist playing for the St. James Jubilee Gospel Chorus, the Senior Choir and the Junior Choir. Frances Terry, Lizzie Moore, Mr. Walker, Evelyn Johnson, Sis. Louise Tarboro and Ernest "Buddie" Smith (youth choir) followed Sis Ball.

Rev. Williams' hope was to build the church for the coming generation. He faithfully strove for this until his death in 1943. Rev. Williams' funeral was preached by Rev. Pratt. Bethlehem Mayor Pfeifle was present and the church was crowded. Loudspeakers were set up for the people who were sitting outside. Mrs. Rockymore sang "We Are Our Father's Children". It was a very emotional home going service.

Rev. Williams left his members with the desire to continue in grace, faith and strength. In the years following his death, members of St. Paul continued in Rev. Williams' vision. St. Paul was served by several ministers after Rev. William's death until 1949. Among them were Rev. Walker, Rev. Foster, Rev. Raymond L. Warren (1942-1949) and Rev. Edward Johnson.

On March 7, 1948, a meeting was held at the home of Lucreasia and William Mercer to discuss a building project to more adequately service the church and the means of financing the project. A prayer service opened the meeting then the business meeting was called to order. Several avenues were discussed and on that evening St. Paul formed the first Building Fund Club. Attending the meeting were Deacon Isaiah Smith, Bert Tarboro, Jr. (Club chairman), Deacon Samuel Lewis (Assistant Chairman), Deacon James Williams, Sis. Katie Williams, Sis. Beulah Grimes, Sis. Lucreasia Mercer and Sis. Frances Gunn.

The old frame building was torn down and the lot was cleared for the foundation of the second St. Paul Baptist Church building. The project was turned over to the Deacon Board Chairman, Isaiah Smith. Working with him were William Gunn, Sr., Deacon James Williams, Bert Tarboro, Jr. and Deacon Samuel Lewis. At the beginning of the project a meeting was called to discuss finances. At this meeting the Treasurer reported that the church had the sum of \$1,800.00 to start building. A 40 x 60 foot area was excavated and old lumber, second hand plumbing, cement and cement bricks were purchased.

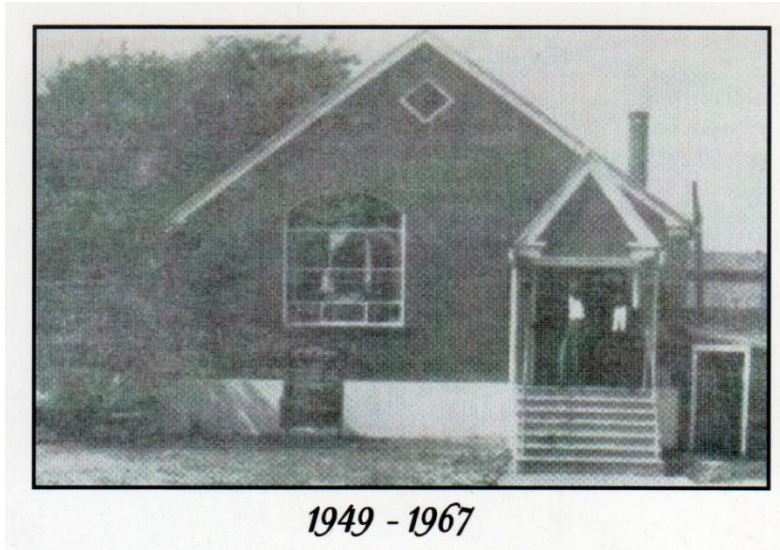
St. Paul went through a period of disunity and mismanagement. The pastor took the project into his own hands and spent money as he went and the money ran out. The project was at a standstill and St. Paul lost most of their building material.

The members regrouped and put the project back into the hands of the trustees. Meanwhile, with no place to hold services, Deacon Isaiah Smith and his wife, Annie Smith cleaned out the basement of their home at 1800 E 3rd Street to allow St. Paul to hold services there. Leaning on Trustee Smith's quiet strength, the officers went to work, sold all the remaining bricks, had all the old plumbing hauled away, and had the excavation re-dug starting a new one. During all this time the auxiliaries never stopped working or raising money by cooking home dinners. A suggestion by Bert Tarboro to subcontract the project was adopted by the Building Fund Club. A bricklayer and a carpenter were hired and with the help of each member and many friends the work on the new building began.

The second St. Paul Baptist Church was solidly built by hand labor contributed by members and friends working together. The women had a two-fold job, housework and helping at the church in the evening. They used picks and shovels, pushed wheelbarrows, some carried blocks and bricks, moved lumber from place to place and helped wherever they could. The women played a tremendous part in helping the men construct the building.

Benefit musical concerts were also held to help in funding the construction. One such concert was organized by Eugene Strong, a concert baritone artist, at Liberty High School in 1949. Through hard times, trials and heartaches, the members never once doubted in whom they put their trust. They trusted in the Creator of heaven and earth and

the Ruler of all things. As the building took form and the lower area was under completion, the work began on the upper area.



Cornerstone Laid at New Church

The cornerstone of the new church was laid on the first Sunday in September 1949 by Rev. Solomon Quash, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Coatesville, PA. On September 12, 1949, Rev. William D. Corum of Pottstown, PA preached the first sermon in the completed basement. The structure was covered with a canvas, because the upper level was not yet completed.

Rev. Corum was called to pastor St. Paul on October 21, 1949 and was ordained by Rev. Haywood Butler, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Pottstown, PA.



***Rev. William D. Corum and
Sister Mary Corum
Pastor of St Paul 1949 -1963***

The Lord continued to bless St. Paul. Trustee Isaiah Smith was ordained a deacon and served faithfully later becoming chairman of the Deacon Board. A mortgage was obtained by Trustees Bert Tarboro, Jr.; William Gunn, Sr.; and Deacon Isaiah Smith to finish the building. By the will of Almighty God, the work was completed in July 1950. St. Paul was dedicated in September 1950 and Rev. Corum was installed as Pastor by Rev. Donald Owens, Pastor of Zion Baptist Church of Reading, PA. The church was incorporated at Harrisburg, PA the same year.

The membership continued to grow. Again the women of the church worked faithfully toward its growth. A Missionary Circle under the leadership of Susie Grimes, purchased and installed a large stained glass window that depicted Christ knocking at the door. Also, Mrs. Frances Gunn (Chairman), Miss Lucy Moore, Mrs. Lucreasia Mercer and the Willing Workers purchased chairs for the pulpit. Many other contributions from faithful members were contributed to the church.

In October 1953, a state rally was held with Mrs. Lucreasia Mercer and First Lady Mary Corum as captains. The money raised was turned over to the Trustees to pay on the mortgage. This tradition continued for several years. In 1958 a church rally was held and with the help of the Willing Workers and the Missionary Circle, the balance remaining on the mortgage was raised and the mortgage was paid off in December 1958. A mortgage burning service was held on April 19, 1959.

The members worshipped in that building for seventeen years. During these years, Royal Grimes was ordained a deacon and Hudson Warner retired as the church treasurer after serving in that position for nearly 40 years.

Sis. Louise Tarboro was Sunday School Superintendent and Youth Choir Director. In July 1963, St. Paul became a life member of the NAACP.

Rev. Corum resigned as pastor in October 1963 to accept the pastorate at Second Baptist Church in Easton, PA. St. Paul was served by several ministers including Rev. Reed and Rev. H.E. Robinson during 1965 and 1966.

On December 21, 1966, Rev. Frank J. Dyson of Philadelphia was called to pastor St. Paul.



*Rev. Frank J. Dyson
and Sister Bonnie Dyson
Pastor of St. Paul 1966 - 1977*

Urban Renewal in Northampton Heights

Urban renewal moved into Northampton Heights and once again St. Paul had to move. The last worship service in the building at Second and Carbon was held in March 1967. The Bethlehem Steel Company purchased the land and razed the church building. St. Paul moved to a temporary location at Fourth and Duncan Streets.

The church gave the trustee board the authority to look for ground elsewhere. Bro. Charles Davis (Chairman) along with a committee of Bro. Monfort Walker and Bro. William Gunn, Sr. located land at Goepp and Bryan Streets (the present location). Bro. Bert Tarboro, Jr. was elected Chairman of the Trustee Board and the work of St. Paul continued to progress. On Sunday, August 18, 1968 groundbreaking ceremonies were held and the foundation of the new church was started. In April 1969 work on the new church was completed.

The membership continued to grow under the leadership of Rev. Dyson. Rev. Robert Bass became as Associate Minister. Deacon Walter Moore (Chairman of the Deacon Board) was called to the preaching ministry and Deacon Samuel Lewis became acting Chairman of the Deacon Board.

The Congregation is Led to New Edifice



On February 8, 1970, Rev. Dyson led the congregation into the new edifice at 925 E. Goepp Street (our present location) to celebrate their first worship and dedication service. Rev. Dyson ordained Bro. Edward Pierce as deacon in June 1971. Deacon Pierce served as church pianist and also later as Chairman of the Deacon Board. Bro. Monfort Walker was Sunday School Superintendent and Church Treasurer. The Dyson Echoes, a gospel ensemble, was formed. This group was directed and accompanied by Robert Gilbert.

The Flower Club was started with Deaconess Lucreasia Mercer and Sis Mary Corum. Other clubs were also formed. Rev. Dyson organized the Youth Council with Bro. Monfort Walker and Sis. Barbara Hemmons to conduct a sports and worship program for the youth and young adults. The church became active in several Baptist Associations and also joined the newly formed Bethlehem Area Council of Churches. The church wrote up and approved its Constitution and By-Laws and was incorporated in Harrisburg. Several lots of land adjoining the church and across the street from the church were purchased.

Mention must be made of the work the kitchen committee did led by Sis. Dollie Potillo and Sis. Lucy Moore. Many delicious meals were made for church functions and to raise funds for the kitchen. The church participated with a booth at the Bethlehem Christmas City Fair for many years and meals were prepared for visiting groups during the Christmas season.

In 1973 Sis. Brenda White became Youth Choir Director and Youth Leader. Sis. Barbara Hemmons became director/organist for the Senior Choir and pianist for the Youth Choir.

In 1975 the St. Paul celebrated its Golden Anniversary. It was a great celebration of 50 years of coming through struggles, trusting in God's Word, and praise for the goodness and faithfulness of God. A banquet was held at the Hotel Bethlehem and members who had toiled for many years since the beginning of St. Paul were honored. The honorees included Deaconess Frances Pottillo Gunn (member since 1923), Sis. Lula Bradford (1925), Deacon Bert Tarboro (1928), Deaconess Hattie Warner (1929), Deaconess Lucreasia Mercer (1929), Sis. Lucy Moore (1930's), Deaconess Louise Tarboro (1936), Sis. Anna Johnston (1937), Sis. Erma Kelly (1937), Sis. Lucille Terrell Sturdivant (1930's), Rev. Walter Moore (1940's) and Deaconess Frances Moore (1940's).

Bro. Melvin Tatem and Trustee Bert Tarboro, Jr. were ordained as deacons by Rev. Dyson on November 21, 1976. Bro. Charles Davis and Bro. Alfred Hemmons in turn became Chairman of the Trustee Board. The church went into mourning at the death of Deacon Samuel Lewis, the son of the founder, Rev. St. James Williams, in 1977.

The church regretfully accepted the resignation of Rev. Dyson in 1977 after pastoring St. Paul for 11 years. Rev. Dyson and his wife, Bonnie, returned to his home church, Metropolitan Baptist, in Philadelphia. The church went into prayer while searching for a new pastor. Deacon Melvin Tatem, entered into the preaching ministry at St. Paul on September 3, 1978 and was licensed to preach under Rev. Jerry Hargrove, pastor at Second Baptist Church in Bethlehem. Rev. Bass left to assume the pastorate of the Christian Missionary Alliance Church in Stroudsburg, PA.

The church called Rev. Lorenzo Hall from Washington, DC to pastor in January 1979. "Project 79" a plan suggested by Bro. Elmer Williams, Chairman of the Trustee Board, to pay off the remaining mortgage by individual pledges was started. The congregation worked hard and sacrificed much and the mortgage was satisfied in March of 1979. Rev. Dyson joined with us for the mortgage burning celebration to thank God for his continuing faithfulness.

Also, during this year Deaconesses Frances Gunn and Gertrude Lewis were elected as the first women to the Trustee Board. Bro. Tas Jeffries and Bro. Thomas Wright were ordained as deacons. Rev. Tatem and Sis. Brenda White became Sunday School Superintendents. A new gospel choir was started under Rev. Hall's direction. A new financial system was instituted, a new Hammond organ was purchased, new hymnals were purchased and exercise classes were started.

Rev. Hall pastored St. Paul for about a year and a half before leaving to begin Grace Deliverance Baptist Church, a new Baptist Ministry in the city. During this time the church went through a very difficult time and lost many members but the members depended on the faithfulness of God's Word and continued in prayer for His leadership and guidance.

Once again St. Paul went into prayer for leadership and guidance, while searching for a new pastor. During this interim period, Trustee Alfred Hemmons was ordained a deacon by the Rev. Clarence Council of Philadelphia in August 1980.

Rev. Marshall Griffin is Installed as Pastor

The church elected a new pastor, Rev. Marshall Griffin, Sr. of Philadelphia, in October 1980. Rev. Griffin was installed as pastor of St. Paul in January 1981.



***Rev. Marshall E. Griffin, Sr.
and Sister Edith Griffin
Pastor of St. Paul 1980 - 2011***

At this time Bro. Bert Tarboro, Jr. was chairman of the Deacon Board, Bro. Walter Sturdivant was chairman of the Trustee Board, Deaconess Barbara Hemmons was Sunday School Superintendent and Sarah Davis was the Assistant. Deaconess Diane Barrington was the Youth Director. Bro. Elmer Williams succeeded as Chairman of the Trustee Board after the death of Bro. Walter Sturdivant in December 1982. Other trustees serving as Chairman have been Brothers Matthew Harrison, Jeffrey Davis, Carlton McCullough, Sis. Virginia Burton, and Sis. Vivian Butts.

St. Paul was active in the yearly Camp Central picnics. We enjoyed the yearly softball competition, food and fellowship with other member churches and would participate in the different activities and brought home many awards.

The Nurses Unit was formed with 16 members in 1981 under the leadership of Sis. Virginia Harrison (President). A Birthday Club, Transportation Committee and Hospitality Club were organized. Deacon Bert Tarboro, Jr. organized a Layman's group at St. Paul as part of the Central Baptist Association's Laymen's Movement.

The Missionary Society with the assistance of First Lady Edith Griffin began the annual Candlelight services during Advent for the benefit of Foreign Missions through the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. The Missionary Society also served meals at

community shelters. The Missionary Society, under Sis. Margaret Bowers, and the Sunday School had its first Strawberry Festival. With the festival's success and fellowship it became an anticipated annual event.

On September 28, 1985 a banquet was held in celebration of St. Paul's 60th Anniversary. State Rep. William Rybak and the Hon. Mayor Paul J. Marcincin attended and gave remarks. Sis. Nora Kent Kannon, the first person baptized in St. Paul, attended and gave greetings. It was a grand occasion and the members honored were: Sisters Frances Gunn, Lula Bradford, Hattie Warner, Irma Kelly, Anna Johnston, Lucille Terrell, Louise Tarboro, Lucy Moore, Lucreasia Mercer and Deacon Bert Tarboro, Jr.

Rev. Griffin ordained Brothers Charles Davis, Wilson Maxwell, Frank Golden, Mark Moy, and Matthew Harrison as deacons. Deacons joining St. Paul from other churches during this time were Elijah Williams, James Barrington, Raymond Dickerson, Rufus Bennett, Robert Baker and Marshall Bernard. Bro. Sterling McNair and Rev. Donald Carpenter joined St. Paul and the pulpit ministry. Deaconess Frances Gunn became the "Mother of the Church." In 1994 Deacon Alfred Hemmons was called to the ministry.

In the Music Department a new Male Chorus was formed under the direction of Bro. Jeffrey Moore, Deacon Edward Pierce, Deacon Charlie Davis and Robert Miller later joined as a guitarist. The Male Chorus helped form the Central Baptist Male Singers Association, an organization of male choruses from the churches of the Central Baptist Association that meet to sing. A scholarship program was initiated by CBMSA in the memory of St. Paul's Deacon Charles Davis, one of CBMSA's founders. Scholarships are presented to high school graduates each year.

The gospel choir was reorganized under Sis. Patsy Floyd. Sis. Barbara Hemmons organized the "Voices of Glory" and became the Minister of Music. A new piano, new drum set and new hymnals were purchased. The choirs also purchased new choir robes.

The youth department was organized under Sis. Sharon Brown with a young adult choir called "Visions" under the direction of Sis. Joanne Fuller, youth ushers, and other activities for the youth. The youth choir continued under the direction of Sis. Hemmons.

Under Rev. Griffin's leadership much progress and many additions have been made. Membership increased greatly through baptism and Christian experience. Bro. Carlton McCullough, as Chairman of the Trustee Board, oversaw a large new building project. When it was completed, two classrooms, a storage room, an upgraded kitchen, additional lavatories and an apartment for the pastor were added to the church. The mortgage for this project was paid off in full in November 1998 with pledges from members. Additional land was purchased for the church's future use. A new church bus was purchased and new

carpeting was installed. A utility and storage shed was built, bookracks were placed on the pews, the pews were upholstered and an air conditional system was installed.

In 1995 Rev. Griffin accompanied the Foreign Mission Board President and other pastors to Africa. He toured several countries in Africa to see the Foreign Mission programs in action. On his return he told us about the churches in the countries he visited and the people he met.

In November 1995 the church celebrated its 70th Church Anniversary with a special service and banquet held at the Candlelight Inn. The theme was: "Coming Together in One Accord... Working Together as a Team" based on Acts 2:1. Honorees were Deacon Bert Tarboro (67 years membership), Deaconess Francis Gunn (70), Deaconess Hattie Warner (66), Deaconess Lucreasia Mercer (66) and Sis. Lula Bradford (70). Remarks were given by Sis. Ella Frierson, daughter of the Founder and Sis. Dorothy Hairston, Rev. William's granddaughter.

St. Paul's youth program joined the city basketball league. Under the leadership of Bro. Jamie Eggleston, Bro. Derek Holmes and others the church formed several teams to practice and play the teams from other churches. The pee-wee team was a delight to watch, the girls played strong and the older boys played several winning seasons. It was also a blessing to see the youth participate in church.

The church went into mourning at the death of our beloved first lady, Sis. Edith Griffin on November 30, 2000. She was a great source of encouragement and had actively worked with the Deaconesses, the Nurses Unit, the youth and in organizing the Candlelight Service programs.

In 2000 Rev. and Mrs. Clinton Bryant joined St. Paul after moving into the area. Rev. Bryant became an Associate Minister, Assistant Sunday School Superintendant and Youth Minister and Sis. Priscilla Bryant joined the Deaconess Board.

Monies received at a memorial service held after the death of Deaconess Lucreasia Mercer in November 1998 were used to start a stained glass window project. The window glass project was presented to the church by the Flower Club and they received permission to go ahead. It was a way for the church to do something to celebrate the lives of those early members who worked in the church. The church windows in the sanctuary, finance room, nursery, rear hall area and foyer were replaced with stained glass windows that were donated in memory of loved ones. The Flower Club, at the time headed by Sis. Betty Mitchell completed the project and a dedication service was held in July 2003. The Flower Club also had Homecoming Services in the August. The church members had an opportunity to fellowship and worship with the remaining early members and their descendants from all over the U.S. during a Sunday afternoon service.



Other upgrades to the church include: the church parking lot being paved and extended to the end of the property in the rear; a new audio-visual system was installed in the sanctuary and lower auditorium; and, in 2004 new tables and chairs were purchased for the dining room. Later, new pulpit drapes and templates for the pulpit and communion table were purchased. New landscaping was planted around the church. The Willing Workers and the many auxiliaries of St. Paul continue, as throughout the history of the church, to work energetically on projects to raise money for the benefit of the church. The church has greatly benefited by the many things that have been purchased to make worship more meaningful and beautiful.

Bro. James Jackson joined St. Paul and worked with the Sunday School and youth. He was licensed to preach under Rev. Griffin in September 2004 and ordained on October 28, 2007 and became an Associate Minister. He left as a supply pastor to Goodwin Memorial Baptist Church in Harrisburg but not long afterwards was called to pastor the church. St. Paul worshipped together with Rev. Jackson and his wife, Lisa, at his first anniversary service.

St. Paul Community Center was started under the auspices of St. Paul. It held classes to help our youth with their studies and computer training classes for the community. Since 2010 a Computer Training Program under the direction of Bro. Sam Burgess has been offering classes to individuals to learn and upgrade their computer skills.

Bro. James Teague and Bro. Sammy Maxwell were ordained as Deacons in April 2010. Their wives, Sis. Annie Teague and Sis. Grace Maxwell, were also welcomed as Deaconesses.

In October 2010, St. Paul was fortunate to celebrate Rev. Griffin's 30th year as pastor with a banquet at Iacocca Hall, Lehigh University and special services to show how much he was loved and appreciated and to thank him for his commitment to his calling. The three-day event celebrated his tireless efforts and dedication to St. Paul and the entire Lehigh Valley community. Through his illnesses St. Paul and the religious community prayed much for him and the Lord miraculously restored him to us. But, on January 15, 2011, Rev. Griffin succumbed to illness and the Lord called him home. Life celebration services were held at St. Paul and in Philadelphia with hundreds in attendance.

The time that Rev. Griffin pastored St. Paul was a time of great growth. The church grew physically with the additional physical space and spiritually through bible study and service for our Lord. We grew financially with the greatest amount of money received at any time in its history. Many people were drawn to make a decision to follow Christ and work out their soul salvation at St. Paul Baptist Church. Rev. Griffin will also be remembered for his unrivaled faith in and support of the men in the church.

As great as our past is, yes, the Church has undergone spiritual, numerical and physical growth but God has many good things for us in the future. The members of St. Paul Baptist Church will continue to embrace the hope of our founding pastor, the late Rev. St. James Williams, to build a church for the coming generations.

After a period of mourning, the church went into prayer seeking God's guidance for the future leadership of the church. A Pulpit Committee was elected to lead the search for and to provide candidates for the pastorate. The committee members were Deacon Marshall Bernard, Chairman, Deacon Wilson Maxwell, Trustee Jesse Johnson, Trustee Sam Burgess, Missionary President, Sister Esther M. Lee, Brother James Sharp, and Sister Jennifer Eggleston. During this time Rev. Clinton Bryant, Associate Minister, and the Deacons worked diligently to keep St. Paul moving forward in prayer. After hearing several ministers the church made a decision.

Rev. James I. Jackson, Jr. Elected as New Pastor

A special meeting was called to vote for our new pastoral candidate. The Rev. James I. Jackson, Jr. from Enon Baptist Church in Philadelphia was elected as our next pastor. The church remained in prayer as we made arrangements to receive Rev. Jackson, his wife Whitneye, and their children James and Jordyn on Sunday, June 10, 2012.

Installation services were held on the weekend of October 13-14, 2012. A choral service with visiting local choirs was held on the Saturday and Rev. Jackson's brother, Elder Samuel B. Jackson from Norfolk, Virginia, preached the Sunday morning service. The Rev. Dr. Alyn E. Waller of Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church, his associate pastors, and choir brought a rousing service on Sunday afternoon. The church and lower auditorium were full and a great service was experienced by all.

Rev. Jackson was welcomed by St. Paul with opened arms and with a renewed vision. He has brought great energy and exuberance to worship at St. Paul and a greater sense of individual Christian responsibility. Rev. Jackson is guided by Ephesians 2:8. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and this not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man boast."*



Pastor James I. Jackson and First Lady Whitneye Jackson

Submitted by Sis. Barbara Hemmons
Church Historian, 2012