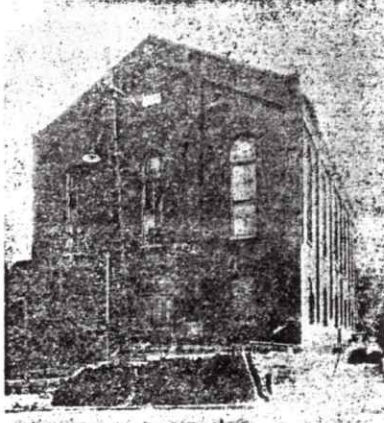


HISTORY

A CHURCH IS BORN 1861-1899



This is the story of a Church. A Church, as you know, is the "first fruits" of the Kingdom of God. It is also known as "the friends of Jesus." One author states, "it is the Company of the Committed."

The Church in question is Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church of Leavenworth Kansas. Its stewardship and its witness will entitle it to the definitions applied above.

It was born at a vital turn in the course of history, nurtured by a people who had escaped the savage chains of slavery, in whose hearts the warm blood of human brotherhood brought pride and a sense of satisfying peace.

The Bethel A.M.E. Church of Leavenworth, Kansas, was born in the Mid-19th century. Worship was held in a small frame building at 409 Kiowa.

On March 8, 1861, Henry and Isabelle Foote deeded to the Trustees of Bethel lots 27 and 28 of block 56 in the original plot of Leavenworth. This became the site for the new Bethel demanded by an expanding and dedicated group. Trustees were Derry Ferguson, William L. Freeman, Henry King and Moses White.

A building of strength and height was constructed by tender hands and consecrated hearts. It could be seen from the eastern banks of the Missouri River giving hope and planting the dignity of freedom in the hearts of Negroes and making them conscious of the sufficient power of Almighty God.

Shortly after its construction in 1861 a lantern would be hung from the historic bell tower. At night the beams from this lighthouse guided many slaves to refuge and safety in the state of Kansas.

Bethel Leavenworth, is one of the earliest A.M.E. churches in the free state of Kansas and perhaps the most historic. Rev. John Turner was pastor in 1865 when the cornerstone was laid. This event took place on the same day that Abraham Lincoln was buried. All Negro churches in town were invited to participate in the cornerstone laying. The news of Lincoln's death had been relayed to Fort Leavenworth. So on the day of the cornerstone laying the city of Leavenworth was draped in black. General Butler conducted services in the memory of Lincoln at the Fort and all the Sunday Schools in the city were invited to march in a body to attend the ceremonies there. Bethel yielded to this significant event and held the cornerstone laying later in the day.

Mr. Madison Wilson and Mrs. Mary F. Wilson cleared brush away with their bare hands. Mrs. Lizzie Allen was a tireless worker in raising funds for the building. The later Mrs. Martha Patterson, a centenarian, baked pies and carried them in trays upon her head to Ft. Leavenworth, where she sold them to soldiers.

An early contribution to the building fund was given by the 179th Kansas Volunteer Regiment under the command of Col. D. R. Anthony and Captain Mathis, Company Commander.

James A. McGonagle was contractor and builder of the Cathedral Church. When the church was completed, the basement was furnished with cots and here many of the ex-slaves were housed and fed. Some of these families later played a prominent part in the progress of this community. One was the Rev. Billy Smith, an early day painter and a pastor of Sunflower Baptist Church. He was the great-grandfather of Verdel Taylor, a present member of Bethel Church.

The building itself was tall and stately. It was of rectangular construction and sported a gentle gable roof. It was made sound and secure by the selection of brick for the outer veneer.

Bethel was one of the spiritual outposts in the western thrust of the A.M.E. Church. Preachers of strong pioneering stock moved to the very edge of the wilderness to make God's Truth plain to the needs of frontier life.

Transportation in those days was undertaken by men of great courage. Great distances involved great periods of time since the mode of travel was crude, laborious and fraught with danger. Yet, the impulse to bear the burning torch of salvation, gave men the fortitude to meet the test.

Such a man was Hiram Rhodes Revels.

Hiram R. Revels was an early minister of Bethel. He was born on the wings of destiny. He came at a time when men were not confined to small annual conference boundaries. His pastoral duties led him across great sections of the country. Distance helped him fulfill opportunity unlimited. As pastor of Bethel he gave the military community of Leavenworth a dignified leadership and a firm demonstration of Christian valor.

During the early life of the church love feast tickets were signed and given to the communicants of Bethel. Some of the cards have been preserved that were signed by this historic figure in 1866.

History claimed him in the land of Dixie. Negro voters, holding a majority in the state of Mississippi elevated Revels to the U. S. Senate to fill the unexpired term of Jefferson Davis, the former president of the Confederacy. He became the first Negro U. S. Senator in the history of the United States, on February 25, 1870. He was seated by a vote of 48 to 8. This honor brought credit to an outstanding race, pride to magnificent church and dignity to a great nation.

Revels was literate, an able man. He was vocal, versatile and vibrant in the halls of Congress. Perhaps his work at Bethel was quite helpful to his tenure in the Senate.

J. C. Embry followed Hiram Revels in the pastorate of Bethel Church. He was another able administrator. His name is on the honor roll in Bethel and also in the general church. He has the distinction of being the first minister to be elected Bishop from Bethel Church. I hope to give more attention to him in a future study.

Early ministers also include Jim Hubbard, Parkie Johnson, a Rev. Bruing and a Rev. Dave. Rev. Henderson was the pastor in 1877 when Mrs. Mary Alexander joined. Rev. Watson was serving the church in 1884 when Mrs. Eliza Webb became a member.

Rev. G. W. Turner was the minister in 1886 when Mrs. Isabelle Smith joined. Mrs. Smith is quiet and unassuming. She has a priceless soul that radiates warmth and strength to the church today. She is the president of Stewardess Board Number Two. For many years she worked with great success in the Kathryn D. Tillman Missionary Society. She also made a rich contribution while serving in the Emergency Club. The club sponsored the Feast of the Seven Tables as a fund-raising project. She held a valuable membership in the Daughters

of Bethel Lodge for an active period. At 91 she enjoys radiant health.

Mr. Otis Johnson also joined the church during the administration of Rev. George Turner. During this time the entire Sunday was celebrated in worship with his mother, Mrs. Cecelia Johnson. They would be present at the opening service in the morning and leave for home when the night service was over.

Somewhere near the close of the 19th century Rev. Collins led the congregation in the construction of the present parsonage.

Rev. Phill Hubbard served the church during this period. Sally Hunt became a member under his charge.

Rev. Jordan Allen came to Bethel in 1893. He revealed prominent traits of Irish stock. A remarkable minister—he is remembered as a great church builder and organizer. His pioneering spirit planted Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church in Parsons, Kansas, in 1873.

Rev. George Griffin appeared in 1894. A Rev. Lucas was strongly mentioned during this period.

Rev. H. W. King was pastor at the close of the century. Mrs. Estella Sharp joined in 1899 during his tenure.

Mrs. Estella Sharp has been a vital human element in the life of Bethel Church. She is a native of Springfield, Mo. She now considers Leavenworth to be her home and Bethel to be "her church." God has blessed her with a long and fruitful life. She has remembered Him in her spiritual witness.

THE ECONOMIC PICTURE

The Negroes of this period were largely confined to work performed by hand and limited to physical ability rather than physical or mental skill. This was a result of custom and tradition.

A most active worker during this period was the Negro domestic servant since domestic service was the chief enterprise of the person of color. The white business man, land owner, military officer and entrepreneur included the Negro maid on his budget. She was used to assist in the care of the home and the nurture of his heirs.

Coal mining became a source of major employment for many Negroes. It was their hands that lifted native coal from the bosom of the sandy hills of Leavenworth County.

1900-1919—A NEW DAY IS BORN

Bethel moved into the 20th century with pride and promise. It was not only a tremendous asset to the community of Leavenworth but an important cog in the machinery of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

A Rev. Clark was assigned to Bethel in 1900. He was followed by Rev. Brooks in 1902 who served until 1904.



History threw its arms around Bethel in 1906. A young school teacher felt the call of the Christian ministry under Kansas skies. His name was John Andrew Gregg. He was assigned to Bethel in 1906.

John Andrew Gregg earned a degree in education at the University of Kansas. He served as president of Edward College, Jacksonville, Florida, 1913-1920. He then became president of Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio, and served until he was elected Bishop in 1924. He was the first Negro to be elected president of Howard University, Washington, D.C. (1926) but he declined.

Bishop Gregg was the presiding Bishop of the Fifth Episcopal District when Rev. Frederick D. Jordan remodeled Bethel in 1928.

By the invitation of President Roosevelt he visited all war fronts in World War II except Alaska. In June of 1950 he assisted Bishop D. Ormonde Walker in ordaining J. Curtis Foster, Jr., an itinerant elder in Shorter Hall at Wilberforce University. He died in February, 1953.

One of the resourceful persons coming to Bethel under the leadership of Rev. Gregg was Susie Henderson Fields. She became a member of the Little Daughters of Bethel. As time unfolded she became a very active worker in the church. She was a brilliant organizer and re-

vealed this ability in many social and fraternal agencies in the community.

She sponsored some of the most successful chicken dinners in the history of the church. She was a professional caterer and was an important asset in this capacity to the home of Fred Harvey, famous throughout the world for his restaurants.

She organized a Republican Club among Negroes in the community. This provided her with the opportunity of helping Bishop Gregg by way of contact with so many administrative problems of Western University, Kansas City, Kansas, on the state level in later years. She campaigned with vigor for Gov. Alf Landon.

She was very active in the Pastor's Aid under Rev. F. D. Jordan and remains a very dear friend of Bishop and Mrs. Jordan today. During World II she was one of the officials of the U.S.O.

A glance at her arresting smile unlocks the door to a vibrant and warm personality.

This was the period that embraced the first World War. Negro boys and girls were constantly reminded of the importance of education. Certain religious denominations sponsored schools where Negroes could further their training and fit themselves for larger service. A Negro could seek a career as a teacher or a minister. Some were turning to medicine, dentistry and law, although on a rather limited scale.

During the war some of the families of Bethel contributed fathers and sons to the armed forces to serve the sacred cause of freedom.

Domestic service remained as a chief source of income for many of Bethel's members. Coal mining remained stable and secure during these days.

The church engaged in various projects. Dinners to the public emerged as an important effort. Fraternalization with the churches in Atchison and Lawrence expanded an ever-ripening fellowship. It was during this period the Daughters of Bethel Lodge was quite active. It included members of other communities. It enjoyed the privilege of paying over \$200.00 in death benefits per person.

DR. C. M. MOATS

Dr. Moats achieved prominence during these years. He instituted a medicare plan for approximately 700 miners at \$1.00 per month. His success was secured by a remarkable degree of proficiency in preserving the health of his many patients, black and white. He was an astute business man and accumulated property of vast strategic import. He died in 1920.

1920-1929—AN ERA OF BUILDING

This period is called an era of building because there was a noted increase in the membership of Bethel and because great attention was directed to the physical plant. Bethel started the decade of the 20's rather slowly but steadily gained momentum.

Beatrice Contee makes up a part of a strong and dedicated family of African Methodists. Her membership was characterized by many facets of service. She was one of the arch promoters of the Kiddies Minstrels. She once served as organist of the church. A sister, Georgia Marshall, sang in the choir and was very active in church administration. She moved to California during the 30's and maintained a prominent lay position in the life of the church. Gertrude Clark, a sister, was also an active member of Bethel until she married Attorney John W. Clark and moved to Lawrence, Kansas. She devoted most of her energy to charity and missions. She has been a familiar figure at the general conference through many years. A brother, Rev. Harvey Parker, gave the church a full day's service throughout Missouri and Kansas.

Some members attained a rather colorful prominence. They are remembered by a number of things that made them stand out from their fellow members. B. S. Small is certainly an unforgettable soul. He possessed a strong bass voice in the senior choir. For many years he was the power behind the organ pedal. The children remembered him as a custodian in the grade school.

Not to be forgotten is Bertha Jacamiller Taylor. She was a highly independent spirit. She was a strong member of the Emergency Club. While serving in this club she became a driving force in the organization and implementation of Pew Day. This was in the early 20's. Pew Day is still observed the first Sunday in April each year.

The history of an organization is highlighted by the activity of persons possessing great faith, independent spirits, rugged determination and persevering souls. The person of Gertrude F. Baker comes to mind. She was secretary of the Emergency Club. Her tireless energy helped in making this club monumental in the life of the church. She also served as den mother to the Boy Scouts. Her father, Johnson Taylor, was an early lay preacher in Bethel near the close of the century.

Susie Tatum was a tireless worker in the Sunday School. She was a most active person although she weighed in the neighborhood of

300 pounds. She kept the children active by hikes on Saturdays. She found a place for the young people. She gave them something to do. Through her efforts the young people gained a sense of pride and respect for the church.

A strong Kansan came to Bethel in the mid 20's. He was a young preacher, vigorous and versatile. A few years prior to his coming he had just built a great cathedral church in the city of Parsons, Kansas. His early years were spent in Paola, Kansas, where he was quite successful in business.

He was serving Bethel in 1925 when 75 converts were added to the moral comfort and spiritual security of the church during a winter revival. 115 members were added for the year.

During his tenure at Bethel the A.C.E. League possessed an orchestra. An attendance of 85 to 100 youth was maintained each Sunday night.

Dr. T. W. Greene, Jr., has been a tremendous asset to the church. His pastorate has been rich, ripe and rewarding. Presently, he is the Spiritual Shepherd of Quinn Chapel, Independence, Kansas.

The assignment of Rev. F. D. Jordan near the close of the 20's marked another progressive turn in the life and history of Bethel Church. He was well-trained, possessed a keen mind, and had a winning way with people.

His pastorate here was a happy holiday for the young people. This as a result of having married an ideal minister's wife. Mrs. Artishia W. Jordan brought life and energy to the first unit of the church. Games and taffy-pulling were high on the active list. She had a way with youth and is fondly remembered by many.

During his administration the church was remodeled. The building was lowered. An exciting gable roof was installed with ornamental outside trim. A new gable entrance was installed on the front.

Rev. Jordan served as President of Western University and Cathedral pastor. The General Church rewarded his rich resourcefulness by gently placing the mantle of its highest office (the bishopric) across his worthy shoulders in Chicago in 1952.

Since then he has opened many highways of spiritual service and brought many honors to his church and race. Today he holds the coveted position, President of the Council of Bishops.

1930-1939—GROWTH DURING THE DEPRESSION

A CHURCH IS STABILIZED.....1930-39

The early 30's found Rev. George W. Blakely at Bethel's helm. He possessed a brilliant mind, a strong and resolute spirit and an unquestioned love for the church.

Rev. Blakely, who was affectionately known to his friends as "G. Wayman," was in Bethel only a short period of time, yet he made a signal contribution. It was during his administration that a mortgage was secured of \$7,600 on the church property.

He was called to shepherd the flock at Bethel A.M.E. church in Little Rock, Arkansas. While at this church he became a popular connectional personality.

During the 50's he returned to the Fifth Episcopal District and was assigned to St. Paul A.M.E. Church in St. Louis, Missouri. The church rewarded him with its highest office in Cincinnati, Ohio, at the 37th Session of the General Conference.

Bishop G. Wayman Blakely presides over the 16th Episcopal District at this time. He is writing a bold new page in that district. He recently dedicated the Stephen's Health Center in Georgetown, British Guiana, and is currently sponsoring a drive to build a cathedral church in Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies. Bethel A.M.E. Church, Leavenworth, Kansas, took great pride in sending her ex-minister, Bishop G. Wayman Blakely, a contribution toward his work in that district this conference year.

These were the days of the last great depression. Times were tough. Money was scarce as prosperity had taken a holiday. However someone had to carry on in spite of poverty, privation and pain. One Trustee, who gave strength to the fledging congregation at this time was Delilah Hamilton. She was a many talented person. She gave time and energy to the senior choir for many years. One of her most outstanding features was her benevolent spirit. She was one of the star-studded souls that kept the financial program of the church alive. She also served as president of the Kathryn D. Tillman Missionary Society.

Rev. Granville Reid come to Bethel during this period. He is a nephew of Dr. Fred A. Hughes, former editor of the Christian Recorder. Granville was a great power in the pulpit. He is known throughout the connection. He wrote for many years under the caption, "Pertinent Points." Presently, he is in the Chicago conference.

You may ask how did the church survive during the dark days of the 30's. It had just taken out a mortgage in a major building job and Wall Street collapsed. It was not easy.

Payments on the mortgage were delayed because there was hardly enough money to bear the burden of current expenses. The patience of the Leavenworth Mutual Building, Loaning and Savings Association wore thin and fragile. However, the right team came on the scene. The prolific mind of Presiding Elder John Adams, Sr., Esq., in serious counsel with the officials at Leavenworth Mutual helped bring about an agreement which the people of Bethel could rally and meet. This prevented the humiliation of a foreclosure. Professor Earl Lawson came forth with the practical answer of meeting the challenge of the crisis.



Earl M. Lawson was easily one of the most prominent personalities in Bethel's history. He served the church more than 50 years before his death, February 29, 1964.

After finishing Howard University in 1917 Magna Cum Laude, he returned to his native home, Leavenworth, for a brief visit. The opportunity to become principal of Lincoln school, one of two Negro schools in the community, presented itself. He accepted and became a beloved, renowned and efficient administrator.

It was due to his imagination and foresight that Negro boys were given an opportunity to participate in basketball during their high school years. His work in the church showed the same forceful action.

During the period of the depression and shortly thereafter many churches had a difficult time, but it was at this time that the members of Bethel undertook the practically impossible task of paying off the church debt of some \$10,000. "Phess," as he was affectionately known, was one of the promoters of the pledge plan for members. Through this idea and those of many other stalwart workers the debt was paid off on August 9, 1941.

1940-1949—A TIME OF MUTUAL CONCERN



On a bleak day in the winter Sgt. and Mrs. Albert A. Lynn embraced the Methodist faith at Bethel Church. It was January 23, 1943. They made their way to Bethel in the bitter cold while the altar of love was aflame in their hearts with concern for the redemptive arm of the church.

Rev. McNeil made a wise appraisal of this pair and not only accepted them into the church but commissioned them as well. Sgt. Lynn became secretary in April and started an advanced system of keeping the records of Bethel church. He kept an adequate and efficient account of all conferences and board meetings. Presiding Elder John Adams, Sr., commended

him on the painstaking work he did as an officer of the quarterly conference in a letter dated February 21, 1947.

Sgt. Lynn was a striking figure at the annual conference. He was a member of the finance committee from Bethel for three consecutive years. He inspired great confidence in Bishop D. Ormonde Walker, mainly because he rang true to his convictions. He was honored by becoming a Trustee to Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio, for 4 years.

For many years he served as the Pastor's Steward. This is the office he holds today.

A young minister walked through the doors of Bethel in 1944. Elmer W. Newton had been in the ministry shortly over 4 years. Yet, he was able to meet the challenge of this great church. Highlights during this year included a festive yet serious entertainment of the annual conference session.

The tide began to turn in the economic picture in the local community during the 40's. Many of Bethel's sons left to defend the honor of our nation in its devotion to freedom's cause. After the war the availability of civil service jobs became more and more accessible to Negroes. More became employed at the Federal and State institutions. The door opened wider in the employment opportunity at the V.A. in Wadsworth and Fort Leavenworth proper. The Negro community became more stabilized from the standpoint of employment in its quest for an affluent position.

1950-1959—GROWTH IN FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP

GROWTH IN FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP 1950-59

The spiritual life of Bethel was directed by W. W. Betton in the early 50's. His voice rang to the tune of the Christian Evangelist.

One of the warmest welcomes ever given to a minister was showered upon Rev. S. J. Holly when he was assigned to Bethel in 1953. He met the occasion with unlimited devotion and Christian dedication.

Rev. Holly was a handy artisan. He contributed much to the actual work as he led a great volunteer effort within the church to meet its needs. His service of 6 years and 1 month is the top record of pastoral administration at Bethel Church.

He served as president of the Usher Board and was succeeded by Mrs. Lynn in 1944. During this period he furnished the annual dinner for the Usher Board for five years. His Steward appointment came in 1943. He then became a moving force in the rehabilitation of the par-

sonage and church. During the administration of Rev. S. J. Holly he refinished the Chancel Rail of the sacred altar of Bethel church.

The course of time will add strength to the memory of many who have made a Christian trek through Bethel. The name of Blanche McClanahan invokes a prayer of thanks from the lips of many people. She was the kind of Christian you looked for regardless of whatever need you had. A monumental service was rendered to the church through the department of music. She directed the youth choir, sang in the senior choir and played the piano many years without thought of compensation. She is missed.

The leadership of Bethel Church was in the hands of Rev. G. C. Hall beginning in November, 1959. He was accepted graciously. His ministry was quite effective from the outset.

Rev. Hall was an Easterner by training. His training was adequate and efficient. He was a product of Boston University, a Methodist school.

1960-1966—LOOKING to THE ETERNAL HILLS

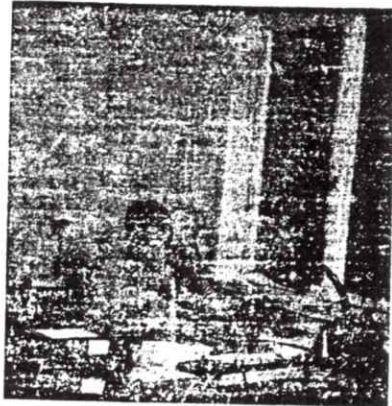
LOOKING TO THE ETERNAL HILLS 1960-66

Bethel rolled out the red carpet for Rev. William Franklin Dancy on October 1, 1962. A great church was face to face with a great builder, capable administrator and fund-raising expert. To say the least he was one of the most outstanding men to ever pastor Bethel.

He was ordained in the Chicago conference by Bishop John A. Gregg. He came to the Fifth District with his sleeves rolled up. St. Luke A.M.E. Church in Westport, Kansas City, Missouri, was remodeled and St. Luke A.M.E. Church in Kansas City, Kansas, was built under his leadership.

Bethel Church soon felt the impact of his thriving concern. New heating and air-conditioning units were installed in the church. The first unit was dressed in wall paneling and a tile ceiling was installed. The church was completely rewired at a cost of over \$2,000.00. Dinnerware was purchased and a Baby Grand piano was presented to the second unit. The parsonage was refurnished and completely air-conditioned.

Since leaving Bethel he was appointed by Bishop H. Thomas Primm to direct the construction of the \$1,000,000 Senior Citizens Rest Home in Kansas City, Kansas.



The work of Bethel Church is complimented by the tender care of the dedicated soul of G. A. Buckner. He is retired from the U. S. Army where he was once a former member of the famous "10th Cavalry." He was committeeman of Boy Scout Troop No. 71 in 1933. This interest followed him wherever he went. He was associated with Troop No. 102 in San Francisco in 1949-51. His mother, Mrs. Lottie Wright, beamed with joy when he responded to the sacred call to the Christian ministry in 1965. Rev. Buckner is of priceless help to the administrative duties of Bethel Church. On the Steward board he held the office of District Steward a number of years. He has become a

walking symbol of Christian brotherhood at St. Mary's College where he has been employed for four years. His dedication depicts another reason why Bethel Church will always live in the hearts of grateful people. He was the first Negro to serve on School Board No. 19.

The events of the 37th Session of the General Conference meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, caused a shift of leadership in some key spots. The spiritual care of Bethel fell heir to a seasoned connectional figure. Dr. Benjamin Julius Nolen stepped down from the editorship of the Christian Recorder to assume the pastorate of Bethel Church. His background was rich in ecclesiastical attainment. He began his ministry at an early age and climbed steadily to a lofty perch on the ladder of accomplishment.

He was a college dean, presiding elder and first editor of the combined "A.M.E. Christian Recorder." He was accepted by open arms at Bethel and was affectionately known as "Pastor Nolen." He left in February, 1964, to assume the pastorate of St. John A.M.E. Church in Topeka, Kansas.

The Rev. J. Curtis Foster, Jr., is the present minister of Bethel A.M.E. Church, Leavenworth, Kansas.

The employment picture certainly affects the life of Bethel. Many of her members have been employed as civil servants on the Federal and State level. These agencies are seeking qualified applicants constantly from Bethel and the entire community. It is our desire that Bethel may enjoy a ceaseless life of active service in promoting good conduct and great citizenship.

The community of Leavenworth looks forward with President Johnson towards the Great Society. The welfare of the citizens looks bright and promising. A large number of veterans have chosen Leavenworth for their home and have made it a great retirement city. It offers many careers to the high school and college graduate that wish to decide on a secure and stable future.

A church is great and strong because of the stewardship of its members. Good leaders are always good followers. Our attention is gripped by the soft personality of Mrs. Sarah Faison. She is dutiful. She has been a loyal member and staunch supporter of Bethel in the neighborhood of 40 years. She has led the way towards the shining cross of love in her work with the Stewardess board and in the Missionary society. She is the type of member that rests your anxiety. She helps create the kind of atmosphere where worship is glorified.



Reverend Glendah Hillard Warren arrived at Bethel A.M.E. Church, September 1977, being appointed to the pastorate by the Rt. Rev. Hartford Brookins, Bishop of the Fifth Episcopal District.

The outreach ministry of Bethel grew, In May 1978 a Nutrition Site opened, serving members of the congregation and community. The church was designated as one of 24 historic locations in the Leavenworth area by the Memorial Committee of the Leavenworth Historical Society, and offered a stained glass window tour in 1979. During this time the Interdenominational Men's Chorus was organized under the leadership of Louise Robinson, and the Bethel Light began publication with the "Pastor's Word" gracing the front page. In 1981, the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church Handbook was written and published by Lawrence Sidney, and the Buckner-Davis Library was dedicated.

On June 25, 1985 after 124 years of service, the church was closed because of structural problems. St. James C.M.E. Church, Lincoln School and the Masonic Lodge opened their doors for meetings, choir practices and worship services. Before plans could be completed to restore the structure, it collapsed on August 8, 1985, partially damaging the parsonage. Several churches of the community offered the use of their sanctuaries to the Bethel congregation. Fund raisers began immediately to rebuild on the same site. Response from the congregation, the community, and the connectional church was tremendous. Prompted by Bishop Henry Murph, Fifth Episcopal District, church members from St. Louis to Los Angeles provided contributions to help

defray the cost of rebuilding; and a Bethel Church Rebuilding Festival was sponsored by the Leavenworth County Clergy Association/Leavenworth Ministerial Alliance. With the help of God, the congregation and the community, the first service was held in our new sanctuary December 1986. The laying of the cornerstone took place in April 1987, sanctioned by the Prince Hall Grand Lodge F&AM Jurisdiction of Kansas and the Master Masons conducting the ceremony.

As in the old church, the new church was growing and reaching out to the community. The Daughters of Allen was organized in 1987, the new fellowship hall was dedicated and named for Lillie Mae Hartfield in 1989, a nursery unit was formed and the G.H. Warren Kiddyland opened in August 1990. A mortgage burning took place in January 1991, freeing the church of debt, and the Richrad Allen Cultural Center opened its doors in July 1992.

Rev. Warren suffered a stroke in March 1994 and returned to his home Topeka. He was supernumerated at the 119th session of the Annual Kansas-Nebraska Conference. During his 17 year tenure at Bethel, Rev. G.A. Buckner, Rev. S.J. Holly and Rev. Michael Bradley served as associate ministers.



History - Continued

During the years of 1967 and 1977, the following ministers served at Bethel: Rev.'s B.J. Nolan, A.T. Taylor, J.S.T. Decker, Hercules D. Benbow, Earl G. Harris, Dorsey McCullough and G.H. Warren.

In 1969 under the leadership of Rev. A.T. Taylor, a committee was formed to help raise monies to remodel the church. The committee consisted of Reuben Nutter, chairperson; Gladys Johnson, publicity chairperson; Jessie Hill Larket, Letha Polk, and Lillie M. Hartfiled, publicity helpers; Joseph Barnes, treasurer; Juanita Hill Brundy, secretary; Louise Robinson, musical chairperson; Dorothy Willis, Paul, Jones, Cyburnis Brown, L'Esther Barnes, Commodore Williams, Myrtle Nutter, Melvin Daniels and Evelyn Linton. Rev. Taylor later became a Presiding Elder

Rev. J.S.T. Decker was appointed to Bethel A.M.E. Church for one year and later became a Presiding Elder.

In 1972 Rev. Hercules D. Benbow was appointed to Bethel. Under his leadership the following was accomplished: the continuation of the remodeling of the church, which included: Re-roofing the parsonage, Painting the church entrance to match the color of the doors, the sanctuary, and the Parsonage interior. Paneling the two stairways leading to the sanctuary and the pastor's study. \$8,000.00 was borrowed from the Leavenworth Building and Loan Association to accomplish these task. The members of the church made pledges to pay off the debt within the Trustees two year plan. Two youth choirs and the Birthday Club was started. New hymnals were purchased, and Rev. Gussie A. Buckner was ordained as a Elder.

In 1975 Rev. Earl G. Harris was appointed to Bethel, Leavenworth. He and his lovely wife, Angie had three children. Rev. Harris was re-assigned to Bethel the following year but stayed only a few months before being transferred. The Emergency and Pastor Aid Club's were active under his leadership. The three J's (Beatrice, Lois and Mildred Johnson) were always busy in the kitchen. Cresoline McAllinster was a delegate to the Annual Conference's during the 1970's.

In 1976 Rev. Dorsey McCullough, his wife Loyce and their six children came to Bethel from the West Coast. The McCullough's were a musical family. Rev. McCullough and his wife gave concerts (often accompanied by Patricia McClellhan) for the Church and the Leavnworth community during their one year assignment. He encouraged the adults members to attend workshops to become familiar with techniques on how to support youth activities. Christmas Eve services were held and a Maundy Thursday meal was enjoyed during Holy Week. He also instituted the Tuesday Noon Hour of Power. The Pastor's Aid and the Emergency Club continued to be active. In 1976 Bethel was designated an Historical Site by the Leavenworth Historical Society.

In 1977 Rev. G.H. Warren was assigned to Bethel, and remained until 1994. (See preceding article on Rev. Warren).

In October 1994, Pastor Donald A. Baker was assigned to Bethel. His wife Betty joined him in March, 1995. Since arriving at Bethel the following accomplishments have occurred: the purchase of new Choir robes, two vacant lots west of the church and repainting of the church interior. The Richard Allen Cultural Center became incorporated. Pastor Baker was appointed to the board of Mother to Mother Ministry, Neighborhood House and Charter for Youth. He was elected vice president of the Leavenworth Ministerial Alliance. You could say he is not only Bethel's Pastor, but a "Community Pastor". Bethel has grown spiritually under Pastor Baker's leadership. During the 1996 Lenten season services were held every Wednesday, Pastor Baker gave the first message and the next six were by lay persons of the church. He teaches a Bible Study Class every Wednesday night. When he eugolizes a funeral it is indeed "A CELEBRATION." He and the congregation pray that when future history is written we will have grown more spiritually.

*Take note: It is written in the book "HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, written by Howard D. Gregg, Ph.D., Historiographer of the A.M.E. Church, that in September, 1859 Rev. John M. Wilkerson was sent to Leavenworth City from the Missouri Conference to establish the first society in the state of Kansas. The members of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church are busy researching and making corrections on the history of their church. We hope in years to come to have a more complete and accurate history of our church.