



ST. MARK A.M.E. ZION CHURCH HISTORY

Before the Emancipation Proclamation, there were no southern A.M.E. Zion Conferences in the Connection. However, the assignment committee (Episcopal) at the 1860 General Conference held at Wesley Church in Philadelphia did designate the southern annual conferences. In 1862 Bishop Joseph Clinton was given the appointment.

In the year 1865 churches were formed in Tennessee as part of the Old North Carolina Conference. During this time St. Mark A. M. E. Zion Church was organized and became part of the Athens District, which included churches from Charleston, Tennessee all the way to Sevierville, Tennessee. The first session for these churches was held at St. Mark. On October 6, 1868 the Tennessee Conference was organized under the leadership of Bishop Joseph J. Clinton (1823-1881) along with Rev. J. W. Logan, Rev. Alfred Anderson, and Rev. Samuel Dubois in the Eastport community, now known as Park City in Knoxville, Tennessee.

The present property was purchased in 1867. This area was known as Free Hill. A school for Negroes was built on the land first. Worship services were held in the schoolhouse. It was the only place for Negroes to worship and go to school. The pastor Rev. John McDonald, who was a carpenter by trade, built the first church. Roland McGill, who still has relatives that are members of St. Mark, organized the first Sunday school. This Sunday school became the largest as the years went by in the community. The school was closed for lack of funds to operate and this spot was turned into a recreational center for Negroes. On the 4th of July, 8th of August, and Labor Day special events were held at the center. Years later this building became the worship center for St. Mark A. M. E. Zion Church.

The first Trustees were Patrick and Henry Roland, Albert Hamilton, Lonas Cleage, Charles Evans, Keith brothers, Amos Jackson, W. H. Ferguson, Emanuel Hoyle, The Lovings, The Fores, Wiley Gibson, Will Matlock, Matt Hammonds, Berry and Tish Isabell. A parsonage was built on the grounds (the barbeque pit is in that location now), and it was the home for many pastors through the years. The parsonage was torn down in the late 1960's. During this time Tennessee Wesleyan College was buying all of the property on Free Hill and Mr. Henry Isabell was working at the college and he was instrumental in the purchase of a house to be used as the fellowship hall for the church. It was placed on the left side of the church if you are standing in the present parking lot facing the church. This fellowship hall was used until 1974 when it was torn down to make way for the present fellowship hall.

Through the years many changes have been made to the church structure and inside the building. The first came in the early 1960's by taking down the bell tower and giving the structure a general face-lift. In 1974 and 1975 the church was remodeled and extended to be the present church and building (entrance was changed from the side facing Knoxville Avenue to face North Jackson Street, fellowship hall was added, and the whole building was bricked). Through the years the church furniture and carpet has been changed. The present parking lot was paved in the late 1970's. In the spring of 2014 the covered drive thru was added to the church. St. Mark has hosted several District Conferences through the years and other District and Conference meetings. Before 1993 St. Mark hosted all of the Tennessee Conference Check-Up Meetings. Even today several community organizations hold their meetings at St. Mark.

Past Bishops Include Rt. Revs. Joseph J. Clinton, P. Arthur Wallace, Cameron C. Alleyne, Hampton T. Medford, Raymond L. Jones, Andrew Stewart, C. Ewbanks Tucker, Clinton R. Coleman, Enoch B. Rochester, Warren Brown, Milton Williams, Louis Hunter, Bishop Roy A. Holmes and presently Bishop Darryl b. Starnes.

Past Presiding Elders include Revs. Andrew Cowan, W. H. Ferguson, Montgomery, Manson, Tucker, Withrow, Branner, Riley, Johnson, Rawlings, Davenport, Rev. O. R. Hayes, Dr. George Sanders, Rev. Arthur Tuggle, and presently Rev. J. R. Bridgeman.

Past Pastors include Revs. Andrew Cowan, W. H. Ferguson, J. W. Wright, McKenzie, B. J. Tyson, W. O. Carrington, Patrick, Gough, Mackintire, Williams, Ward, Triggs, Washington, Amos Jackson, Samuel Greenwood, Goff (1925), M. P. Linder (1926,1933), T. M. McKenzie (1928), J. G. Gaines (1935), L. V. Brown (1936), Dennis S. Blackwell (1936-38), J. J. Sharp (1931,1943), J. H. Branner (1938-140), J. M. Draper (1940), G. W. Maize (1943), W. J. Greene (1946), E. A. Sappington (1948-1951), B. F. Lester (1951-1952), G. H. McGhee (1952-1953), B. J. Alexander (1953), S. S. Robinson (1954-1957), Joseph P. Keaton (1957-1961), Lovelace C. Dillingham (1961-1977), J. E. McKinnis (1977-1978), Cedric A. Henson (1978-1982), J. R. Bridgeman (1982-1986), Michael McNair (1986-1991), Arnold Snowden (1991-1995), J. D. Howell (1995-2002), Rodrick Hoffman (2002-Nov. 2003), Hobert Brabson, Rev. Herman L. Poindexter (Feb. 2004–Sept. 2012), Rev. Dr. Carl Glenn (Nov. 2012–June 2014), and presently Rev. Roxianne S. Sherles.

Past Sunday School Superintendents include Roland McGill, Willard Dickerson, Amy Johnson, James Bates, Sherry Scruggs, and presently Frances Williams.

Past Trustees other than those already listed include Clarence Hall, Sarah Arnold, Helen Long, Cleo Bridges, James Bates Clementine Gibson, Lillian Malone, Rev. L. B. Tate, Ray Johnson, John Peck, Billye Mack, Frances Williams, Dennis Ferguson, Charles Johnson, Eric Buchanan.

Present Trustee Board includes Burkett Witt, Jeff Melton, Ann Buchanan, Elizabeth Collier, Sherry Scruggs, Joe Mack, Earnest Powell, Frances Williams, and Rev. Roxianne S. Sherles.

Present Steward Board includes Eric Buchanan, Brian Witt, Ricka Mack, Evelyn Armstrong, and Judy Ferguson.

Past Deaconess includes Lizzy McGill, Lula Montgomery, Helen Long, Cudella Witt, Augusta Johnson, Dorothy McDermott, Helen Williams, Amy Evans, Clementine Gibson, Edith Peck, Alma Moore, Deborah Poindexter, and Helen Holmes.

Present Deaconess Board includes Ann Buchanan, Judy Ferguson, and Sylvia Glenn, honorary member Mrs. Dora Cullom.