

## **McDonald Chapel, Hunting Hill and Pleasant View ( Fairhaven United Methodist Church)**

### **Background**

The Methodist church split over the issue of slavery into the Northern Methodist and the Southern Methodist and did not unite until 1939. A central Jurisdiction was set up for African-American congregations in separate conferences. In this area there was the Baltimore Conference (white) and the Washington Conference (African-American). McDonald Chapel and Hunting Hill charge was in the Baltimore Conference and Pleasant View and Emory Grove charge were in the Washington Conference. The three churches McDonald Chapel, Hunting Hill and Pleasant View were all within a mile of each other. We had a good relationship with the two other church. In fact the Women's Society of Christian Service as it was then known and the Methodist Men had many joint meeting. Many churches disapproved of this separation and in 1956 it was abolished and a whole new alignment was established. The Baltimore and Washington Conferences were merged and this put McDonald Chapel, Hunting Hill and Pleasant View churches in the same Washington West District. All three churches had small memberships. Pleasant View had done a survey of our facilities and potential growth and the picture didn't look very bright. McDonald Chapel and Hunting Hill were in negotiations for a merger. Wouldn't it be better to join the two other churches right here in this community than continue a charge relationship with Emory Grove on the other side of Gaithersburg?

### **How did it happen?**

A secret ballot was taken and the majority of the membership wanted to see this happen but it split families. Pleasant View wrote a letter to the District Superintendent **requesting** that we be put on a charge relationship with McDonald Chapel and Hunting Hill. We received no immediately response but after several contacts the change was made. The next year we received a new pastor who was responsible for making the cross above the altar. That September 1968, 16 members of Pleasant View transferred their membership to McDonald Chapel. The following Sunday more members transferred their membership. The Administrative Board sent out a notice to all remaining members that Pleasant View would close the church after the last Sunday in September and that those not desiring to transfer to McDonald Chapel could transfer to any of the neighboring churches.

### **Fairhaven United Methodist Church**

The name was taken from Chapter 27 of the Acts of the Apostles beginning with verse 8. Paul on the way to Rome aboard ship stopped there with much difficulty, lost of cargo and ship finally landing in Malta but safe with other passengers.

### **Working together**

Change is sometimes difficult. How were we received at Fairhaven? Some welcomed us, some took a wait and see attitude. There were many good times: fellowship at dinners; baseball; bowling; a trip to Assateague Island with the youth on a camping trip, and the Youth Rock Concerts at Faith UM Church in Rockville.

We had an organization called "The Group of Concerned Christians" which set the policies of the church: The church is dedicated to "speaking the truth in love" with each other; the church is dedicated to helping all persons achieve the full realization of their humanity; the church is dedicated to responsible giving; the church is dedicated to

humanity; the church is dedicated to responsible giving; the church is dedicated to continuously evaluating its programs to bring them in line with its stated purpose; the church is dedicated to the principles of being all inclusive; the church is dedicated to supporting "Poverty Programs" by making available its facilities and the time and talent of its membership.

I discovered CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) in 1948 when I was told about an interracial meeting two of my co-workers had attended the night before. It seemed so interesting that I decided to check it out. It was a small office at 1724 F Street, NW in Washington, DC. I started going to their meetings and listening to their discussions about Gandhi and the nonviolent theory. The focus was on Washington, DC as the nation's capital. The thought was, if we can end segregation in Washington, it would be easier to end it in other parts of the country. The month of June people were recruited from other CORE groups to come here to assist our group in its projects. That first experience changed my life. The friendships, hugs, kisses, across racial and religious grounds was like nothing I had ever seen before. There were CORE groups in NY, Cincinnati, Cleveland, St. Louis, Evanston, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, Pasadena and Baltimore. In 1956 after hotels, theatres, restaurants, and all public places were open to everyone the Washington CORE was disbanded. Those experiences gave me the courage to bring this union of three churches together. If this could be done in the general society, why not the church. There were difficult times at the Administrative Board when I became chairman. Now was the time to use those techniques that I had developed. I listened to all voices, even those of opposition, disagreeing but not becoming disagreeable, patient, willing to compromise. I never had any doubt about our goal. We discovered that as human beings we had more in common than our differences.

Bishop John Wesley Lord came to Fairhaven and delivered a message in his call for change. Rev. Harry Taylor and Bishop Forrest Stith (before he became a bishop) also came to help us.

There was an increase in membership and leadership and we were on our way. When I was a small child my mother sang a song to me that I shall never forget: Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world, red and yellow black and white, they are precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world. I am reminded of that song every Sunday morning when I hear the children's message. Fairhaven today is a diverse, friendly, hugging, kissing, welcoming church. It's not about me but what we have done together thru God's grace and mercy. I call it Divine Destiny. Welcome into our fellowship.



Fairhaven is a dream that became a reality when three special churches grew into one unique congregation. The history of the merger is complex and interesting. To accomplish the task many people worked long hours and suffered much before the three distinct congregations came together to form a united church.

During the year 1980, Fairhaven celebrates the 15th anniversary of the merger of two of the congregations, McDonald Chapel and Hunting Hill. The third congregation Pleasant View joined three years later, in 1968, making Fairhaven unique not only in the community, but in the Baltimore Conference as well. The histories of these churches began before the turn of the century and in one case soon after the Civil War.

Fairhaven exists today because there were concerned Christians who carried out their dreams. They showed that different people could come together under the leadership of God to form a new church. That church today is growing and prospering.

To those brave, convinced people this brief history is dedicated.

#### A SHORT HISTORY OF HUNTING HILL METHODIST CHURCH

Hunting Hill Methodist Episcopal Church, formerly known as Mizpah Church was erected in 1902. The land for the church was donated by Mr. Ignatius Beall Ward and his wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Garrett Ward. Most of the lumber from the church was obtained from a Methodist church in West Rockville, which was torn down and the material hauled to the site of the new church. In memory of Mrs. Ward's mother, they donated two stained glass windows which were placed in the front of the new structure.

Upon completion of the church, it was placed on a circuit with Epworth Methodist Episcopal Church in Gaithersburg. For all of its



organized life the church remained on a circuit. Later it was placed on a circuit with Eldbrooke Methodist Episcopal Church in Tenleytown. Finally it was on a circuit with Washington Grove Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington Grove, Maryland.

The first minister to serve the church was Rev. Charles E. Ely. He was followed by several other ministers until the merger. Rev. Kenneth Carder was the last pastor to serve. He helped the church to merge with McDonald Chapel in 1965.

Among the interesting stories told about this church is one centering on the time the social hall was built. The hall played a major part in seeing that the church bills were paid. This was done under the leadership of Mr. Louis Mossburg in 1924. The hall was the site of many dinners. Unfortunately during a successful dinner one social hall burned down in the early 1950's. It was rebuilt, and continued in use until it was bought by Central Baptist Church in 1967.

#### A SHORT HISTORY OF MCDONALD CHAPEL

Just before the turn of the century, the people of Grace Methodist Church were concerned about serving people residing in the part of Gaithersburg called Quince Orchard. With this in mind two acres were purchased at the intersection of Rts. 124 and 28 from John Higdon.

It was from this beginning in 1895 that the Rev. L.L. Loyd, minister of Grace, began conducting worship services and Sunday School classes at the old Quince Orchard Elementary School.

When services and church school were being held and a part of the acreage was set aside for a church, the people of the newly formed church began to make plans to have a church built so they could have their own place of worship. One outstanding person during this



period was Rev. W.A. McDonald who labored long and hard as the pastor and who also dreamed of a church in this part of Gaithersburg. He died before the building was completed. But because of his labors and dedication the church was named in his honor. It is one of the few United Methodist churches in the U.S. named for one of the pastors who served it.

In 1901 the deed for the property was turned over to the trustees and the building was completed in 1903 when Rev. P.J. Lambert was appointed to serve the charge. When the building was completed it showed the hard work of the lay people who had worked diligently on dinners, bazaars, and strawberry festivals to see that day come to pass.

Through out its beginning the church was on a charge with Grace Methodist Church. In 1955, it was put on the charge with Hunting Hill, whose pastor also served Washington Grove. In 1965, Pastor Kenneth Carder presided over the merger of these two churches. It was he who suggested the present name, referring to a passage in the Book of Acts. In that passage Paul stops on his journey at Fairhavens to renew himself and for the repair of the ship for the arduous journey to Rome -- much like Christians coming to church to rest themselves after a long journey following a week of work.

#### A SHORT HISTORY OF PLEASANT VIEW CHURCH

Of the three churches that came together to form Fairhaven this congregation is the oldest. It was organized in April 8, 1888, when three acres as a site for the church were purchased from Mr. and Mrs. Aquilla Fisher by Thomas Neverson, George W. Johnson, and Charles Beander, trustees of a new congregation seeking a place to worship. The price for the three-acre tract was \$54.00.

After the sanctuary was completed, the congregation worshipped there and the building served a number of useful purposes. Only in



the adjacent cemetery could Montgomery County blacks be buried. Another building on the property served as a school. It was the only school in upper Montgomery County that would accept black children as students.

However, because of its poor condition the original Pleasant View Church was torn down and a new building was constructed in 1914. During the time of the construction the congregation attended services in the elementary school located on the premises.

Functioning for years in the Washington Conference, Pleasant View was served by supply pastors or was on a circuit. This was the case until 1961 when, with the merger of the Baltimore and Washington Conferences, the three churches were now in the same conference. With the merger of Hunting Hill and McDonald Chapel there was talk of uniting with Pleasant View. But it was not until 1967 that a study committee was appointed to study the possibility.

Under the leadership of then District Superintendent Edward G. Carroll, this process was thoroughly discussed when the study committee's report recommended the merger.

By this time the Methodist Men, the WSCS and the youth groups were holding joint meetings. It appeared the long-awaited merger was in the offing. In May 1967 part of the dream came true when the District Superintendent informed the congregation that Pleasant View and Fairhaven would become a charge.

But there was much work yet to do. Some of the members of Fairhaven were opposed to any type of merger with the black church. However, under the leadership of Fairhaven's first pastor, Douglas Harton, this was accomplished. With difficulties overcome, on three Sundays in September 1968 almost the entire membership of Pleasant View transferred their memberships to a new Fairhaven that was meeting in the old McDonald Chapel building. On Sunday, September 29, 1968 the last worship service was held at Pleasant View Church, ending over



90 years of continuous ministry.

### A SHORT HISTORY OF FAIRHAVEN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

With the merger accomplished, the church turned its sights to finding a site that would be acceptable for the future sanctuary. After much discussion and much searching the present site was found. Four plots (3 acres) on which to build a new church were bought.

With an every-member canvass and three conference loans, construction of the building began. On March 1, 1970 the present church structure was dedicated.

In recent history the church's uniqueness continues. A court suit resulted because of a will left by one of the people who attended Hunting Hill Church. In his will Porter Ward left money to Hunting Hill Church. But that Church did not exist when his will came into effect. When it did there was another church on the site named Central Baptist. With this state of affairs the pastor and the entire congregation prayed and considered what to do when they were given suit papers.

It was all to turn out well, however, because on April 22, 1980 the courts after over two years of waiting awarded the interest money to Fairhaven. The trust fund will now be administered by the people of Fairhaven.

Looking towards the future, the church is growing and trying to minister to a community that is rapidly expanding and changing. People of the past have preserved Fairhaven. The task of the church members today is of equal importance as they face the future confident that God will lead and guide them.



# Historic schoolhouse holds stories from county's past

by Peggy McEwan  
Special to The Gazette

Drivers traveling Darnestown Road might notice the historic schoolhouse situated atop the hill as they pass the new homes and shopping centers, but few probably are aware of the stories it holds.

The schoolhouse is a long, white building that has been a part of the community since 1902. It started as a one-room schoolhouse for the black children in the area and stayed in operation until Montgomery County integrated its schools in the 1950s.

On Friday evening, despite icy conditions that closed Montgomery County Public Schools, Nina Clarke brought those stories back to life in a history lesson that dated back to 1937, her first year as a teacher.

The lesson, "School Segregation in Montgomery County" took place at the former Quince Orchard Colored School, which housed the area's black students before desegregation in Montgomery County.

"This is what I know and this is what I like to talk about," Clarke said of her presentation.

The Supreme Court ruled on the historic Brown v. Board of Education case in 1954, abolishing decades of

"separate but equal" education. Montgomery County Public Schools began a six-year integration plan in 1955 and completed it during the 1960-61 school year.

"We never had any violence in Montgomery County" said Clarke, although she said some areas protested integration and that there are some "mean" letters in the archives.

"The children got along alright, it was the adults who created the problems," she said.

Clarke began teaching after graduation from Bowie State Teacher's College.

"There was only one thing for an educated black woman to do — that was to teach or else she could clean houses," Clarke said.

Clarke taught first and second grades at the Quince Orchard school. There were only two rooms in the schoolhouse then, so a second teacher, who taught third grade, shared the space with Clarke and her students.

"They would hand to us what the children in other schools were finished with," Clarke said. "It was 'just right' for us. We had books with missing pages and torn covers, sometimes no covers and desks that were carved on the top so bad you had to put

something over them before you could write. We made the most of what we had."

Clarke felt lucky to be earning \$64 per month. Just the year before she began teaching, a lawsuit had resulted in equalized pay for both white and black teachers. The extra money came in handy as Clarke helped send her younger brother to college. He had to wait until she graduated before he could start.

"My family could not afford two kids in college at the same time," Clarke said.

Clarke's brother graduated from college and became a pilot with the now famous Tuskegee Airmen during World War II.

Esther Lyons of Gaithersburg, who attended the school from first through sixth grades, sat in one of the small desks listening to Clarke speak and remembering her time there.

"I think this stove is the one that was here when I was," said Lyons referring to a pot-bellied stove that was used to heat the room.

Once schools were segregated in the county, Lyons attended Lincoln Junior High School and Carver High School in Rockville.

"It is the same stove, the pipe is new," agreed Thompkins Hallman of Washington, D.C. "I went to school right here. The bigger boys had to keep the stove going. I remember we would try to bank it at night so it



Stacie D. Marshall/Special to The Gazette

Nina Clarke stands beside an pot-bellied stove and a photograph of the historic Quince orchard school where she taught. Clarke spoke Friday about segregation in Montgomery County.

would not go out, but we always had to restart it in the morning."

Friday night's presentation brought back many memories for Hallman.

"We really had very nice teachers, very patient," he said. "Some actually boarded with my mother, so that helped us be on our best behavior."

Everyone walked to school, even the teachers.

Bill Ridgley, who lived in Darnestown when he was a student at Quince Orchard and is still a resident today, walked two-and-a-half miles each way to school.

"When I went here, there were seven grades in one room and only one teacher," Ridgley said.

Everett Davis graduated from Quince Orchard High School and now teaches Spanish at Northwest High School. He asked about discipline in the classrooms.

"We didn't have too much trouble with discipline because if we told the parents they would discipline them," Clarke said.

Although Clarke could not remember exactly when she left Quince Orchard, she knew her next assignment was at the Smithville School near Colesville. She was teaching in Sandy Spring in 1954 when the Supreme Court ruled on Brown v. Board of Education and said that segregated schools violated the 14th amendment.

"Montgomery County was the first county in Maryland to integrate its schools," said Clarke, who has written a history of black public schools in Montgomery County.

"They decided to get ready for integration and set up committees of community leaders and school professionals. Everybody was nervous; it was a 360-degree turn in our lives. We had never had an integrated life. How were we going to make one school system out of two?"

The plan was to complete integration of the county schools over six years starting in September 1955. "The top black students were picked to go to the white schools at first," Clarke said. "They had to send in their grades and letters of recommendation proving they could 'make it' in integrated schools."

Clarke moved to Hungerford Elementary in Rockville after integration, the only black teacher in a school of all white children.

"I loved my students, black or white, they were my students and I loved them," Clarke said.

Clarke retired in 1973 after serving five years as principal of Aspen Hill Elementary, completing 37 years with Montgomery County Public Schools.

The Quince Orchard Colored School closed in the 1950s. It became a historical site in 1978. The school is located at 11900 Darnestown Road.

Keisha Green's husband