How Bishop Saunders' vision came true

On Baltimore National Pike in Baltimore straddling the city-county line are 22 acres of some othe most scenic property in Maryland. Here is the home of First United Church — The Center of More Abundant Life, a $multimillion complex with a modern day care center.

The Center of More Abundant Life — has not always been located here for it is an idea born out of the vision percieved and grasped by Bishop Monroe R. Saunders, Sr., pastor of First United Church and administrator of the Center of More Abundant Life.

For 20 years the concept of ministering to the whole person has been embraced along with a companion realization that the spiritual condition of an individual cannot be effectively addressed except that all aspects of that person — body, mind, soul, and spirit — be dealt with as well.

This vision did not originate with Bishop Saunders but was the very reason for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose for Christ's coming was to restore the harmony within man so that a harmoniously integrated man could be restored to fellowship with God and with other men. Jesus Himself dealt with the whole person — teaching spiritual principles for changing lifestyles, healing bodies and filling empty stomachs.

Jesus was concerned about every condition or situation a man could find himself in. Indeed, Jesus indicated in His teachings that judgment and inheritance of the kingdom would be based on reaction to the hungry, the th[illegible] naked, the sick, and the imprisoned. (Matthew 25:31-46).

PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy undergirding the Center of More Abundant Life is rooted in the teachings of Jesus but the physical roots of First United Church trace themselves to five family members who met in 1934 to bind themselves together in worship.

Following a period of house worship, the group affiliated itself with the Church of God in Christ eventually becoming the Church of God in Christ No. 6. Elder Randolph A. Carr was sent by the parent organization to pastor the group.

With others joining the core group their numbers grew large enough to purchase two properties in the 200 block of N. Mount Street to erect its first church building.

Bishop Saunders became a member of that group in 1937, the year, he came to Baltimore to attend his brother's funeral.

Monroe Saunders worked diligently in the church as director of the drama group and choir, Sunday School teacher and Sunday School Superintendent.

His methods of personal recruitment and concern were important to the development of the church particularly among the young people.

His concern included "personal pickup" for Sunday School, choir rehearsal during his lunch hour, and tutoring.

Many persons who became members of the church at that time through his evangelism and many others who joined are today members of First United.

GROWTH

The continuous growth of the congregation necessitated a move in 1945 to larger quarters at Fulton and Riggs Avenes.

Phenomenal growth, the need for increased facilitation of worship and the desire to follow the population shift combined to create the need for still another move. This worshipping body then relocated at 700 Poplar Grove St. in West Baltimore.

The facilities here were spacious enough for the kind of program envisioned and the area offered a tremendous challenge for soul-winning and potential growth. This move was made in 1954 where the church continued its ministry as the Rehoboth Church of God (Apostolic).

Bishop Saunders had become the general secretary of the parent organization known as the Church of God in Christ Jesus (Apostolic) earlier and spearheaded the Church's ministry of social concern.

FIRST DAY CAMP

In 1961, under Bishop Saunders' leadership, the church, purchased 300 acres of land in Carroll County, on which the Rehoboth Educational and Welfare Center was begun. Projections for that property included a school, nursing home, Biblical Institute, residential camp and other programs which affected all stages of human growth and development.

The first part of the Rehoboth Educational and Welfare Center to be developed was the Rehoboth Nursing Home, a 34-bed facility licensed by DHMH in July, 1963 with Bishop Saunders as its administrator. In the summers of 1963 and 1964 a low cost day camp was operated for approximately 200 children.

Staffed by volunteers from day camp directors to the bus drivers, the day camp transported children from church at 700 Poplar Grove to the camp site in Carroll County daily, providing a full program of educational, spiritual and recreational acitivites for children 3 years and older.

The operation of the Rehoboth Nursing Home was phased out and the [illegible] camp was ended in order to return to pro[illegible] direct service in Baltimore.

LIBERTY HIEGHTS CHURCH

In June 1965, the center of worship for scores of Saints moved from Baltimore to Washington, D.C. Personal convictions and a fervent desire to follow God in a more meaningful way led the host of Saints to travel to 8th and L Streets, N.W. During the time of transition, Saints were hospitably received by the Washington congregation.

The decision was made for this group to return to a permanent site in Baltimore, and property at the corner of Liberty Heights Avenue and Copley Road was purchased and a new church organization was officially begun.

First United Church was dedicated Nov. 7, 1965, and became the center of a tremendous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit were in abundance and the presence of the Lord expressed itself freely. Because of this the congregation grew in such numbers until the need for larger facilities became apparent and hopes began to stir anew that First United would again take up the challenge to meet the social needs of its church community.

Faith Baptist: hub of Eastside religious life

The origin of Faith Baptist is indeed an unusual one, in that the church was an outgrowth of its Sunday School organized in East Baltimore by a group of members of North Street Baptist Church, now known as Union Baptist Church No. 1 of Baltimore.

On March 22, 1891, at Bond Street near Bank, Mr. and Mrs. Jefferson Jones and Mr. and Mrs. Felix Duncan, assisted Reverend L. J. Montague, to establish Faith Baptist Church. Rev. Montague, who was the church's first pastor, served for a period of three years, and was succeeded by Rev. D. G. Mack.

The pioneer pastors of Faith included the Rev. G. Mayor, who served for one year; Gleason Davis, S.S. Wormely, who served nine years; Joseph Perry, J.A. Dennis and P. C. Young; each of whom rendered two years of service.

Notable among the early pastors was Reverend S.S. Wormley. During his administration the membership of the church increased to 75 and the church moved from Wolfe Street to a building on North Spring Street.

As soon as progress was about to be made, Reverend Wormely resigned the pastorate to do missionary work.

Rev. Joseph Perry was then chosen pastor and during his two years as leader, the church faced one of the most crucial periods in its history. the membership decreased, the building could no longer be maintained, refuge was sought in the Fountain Baptist Church. Remaining at this location for only three months, a few members rejected suggestions of disbandment, and called Rev. J. A. Dennis as pastor of their church, located on Spring Street near North Avenue.

Rev. P. C. Young followed Rev. Dennis as pastor.

The Rev. Simon Willamson was installed as pastor of Faith Baptist Church after Rev. Young.

With the installation of Rev. Williamson, the remarkable work of the church actually began. He paid off the debts of his predecessors and kept the faith and good will of his members. Soon the membership grew so large that larger quarters were a necessity.

Rev. Williamson set his hopes upon School No. 8 at Ashland Avenue and Bond Street, even while the school was in session. Unknown to his members, he put forth efforts to secure it. The Red brick building was purchased for $7,500.

The Rev. Williamson attended Lee and Hayes University, Baltimore.

A "Doctor of Divinity" was conferred upon him by Dr. Willis J. Winston, president and professor, and the faculty members of the University, on June 17, 1919. Later the same degree was conferred upon him by the Virginia Theological Seminary and College, Lynchburg, Va.

Rev. Williamson reviewed the records of the church, but found no articles of incorporation. He immediately took steps to initiate the process, completed it and made record of it on Dec. 1, 1919.

During the first 10 years of Rev. Williamson's pastorate, the membership increased and made it imperative to build more extensively. The church was then remodeled in 1921 at a cost of $35,000.

This property was then bequeathed from Rev. Simon Williamson to the Faith Baptist Church, Dec. 9, 1921, by the Maryland Legislature and the late Honorable Albert C. Ritchie, Governor. Through this act the church became its own sovereign.

In 1940 at an additional cost of $22,597, a new wing was added.

The Rev. Walter Ellis Paige was ordained in November 1953 and assumed the duties of assistant to the late Dr. Williamson.

When Dr. Williamson died in 1964 he left his legacy a greatly expanded church membership.

The late Dr. Simon Williamson had an unparalleled record for motivating many ministers.

They are:

1916, Rev. Carroll A. Davis;
1924, Rev. Grover McCoy;
1924, Rev. Clarence Smith, Rev. Noah Ford;
1930, Rev. James Redd;
1931, Rev. Milton C. Phillips;
1932, Rev William Tapscott;
1934, Rev. John Edward Burton;
1937, Rev. William Williamson;
1938, Rev. James Wilkins;
1938, Rev. Thomas Scott and Rev. Ludd Scott;
1951, Rev. Jackson Henry;
1953, Rev. Walter Ellis Paige;

In July 1955, Rev. Paige was elected and installed pastor of Faith Baptist Church.

Within three years of his pastorate, a portion of the church was renovated at a cost of more than $7,000 and an air condition system was installed at a cost of $21,000.

He is responsible for leading the membership to purchase five houses located next to the Church. On this property was built the Faith Baptist Christian Educational Center, which was dedicated March 31, 1984. His dream came true, including equipment, at a cost of approximately $250,000.

Following are persons who have been ordained as ministers, under the leadership of Rev. Walter E. Paige:

Rev. William Mayo;
Rev. Cleophis Walker (deceased);
Rev. Lester Hamrick, 1959;
Rev. William brown;
Rev. Robert T. Hurte;
Rev. Libert Campbell, 1959;
Rev. Frank J. Bell and Rev. Obie Barnes Jr. 1977.

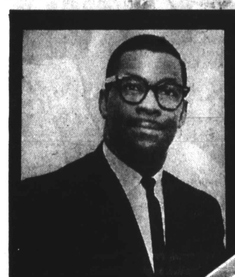
Church officers at Faith Baptist Church are John A. White, chairman of Deacon Board; Wade Spears, co - chairman Deacon Board; Alvin R. Edwards, chairman, Trustees; James Waddy, co-chairman of trustees; William Paylor Jr., financial secretary; Calvin Israel, assistant; William H. Parker, treasurer; Preston Watson, assistant; Mrs. Barbara J. Whipple, church clerk; Miss Sylvia Joan Stanton, secretary.

Other officers are Mrs. Rose L. Coleman, director of Christian education; Mrs. Marie Booker, chairman; Mrs. Mary Bishop, co - chairman; Ms. Lillian Wright, director, Baptist Training Union; James Waddy, financial secretary; Mrs. Lurray Utsey, superintendent, church school; Mrs. Margaret B. DeShazo, leadership education chairman, children's work; Mrs. Bessie H. Mason, chairman, public relations;

Also, Dennis M. Foster Sr., and Titus M. Sparatley, Boy Scout leaders; Mrs. Mary Foster, Girl Scout leader; Mrs. Enolliah B. Williams, chairman, youth work, Miss Robin Tiggle, assistant; Mrs. Pauline Bruce, chairman of scholarship committee; Mrs. Estelle H. Parker, chairman, history committee; Mrs. Audrey G. Bell, chairman adult committee; Mrs. Celia E. McLeod, director of musicians, John R. Faidley, Miss Beulah T. Mills, Mrs. Brycye Greene, Miss Linda Hardy, Gary Myers and Mrs. Gloria M. Stills, organists.

Other officers are Mrs. Amanda C. Powell, custodian and Alvin R. Edwards; Mrs. Maudestine Godsey, family life committee; Mrs. Nora Banks, kitchen committee; Mrs. Auria Dean audio visual committee; Mrs. Lucille Harrison, Golden Age committee and Mrs. Ann Holloway, librarian.

Members of Faith are now making plans for the 25th anniversary celebration of the pastor Dr. Paige in July 1980.



DR. WALTER E. PAIGE, PASTOR

Faith BAPTIST CHURCH

"THE PRAYING CHURCH"
BOND STREET AND ASHLAND AVENUE
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21205

1979—INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD—1979

THEME:
"Serving One Another to the Glory of God" . . .

EMPHASIS:

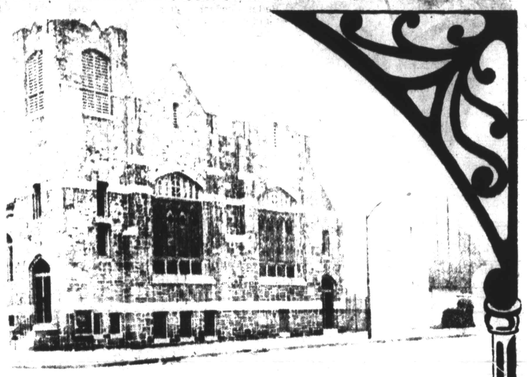
H UMILITY "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind . . ." Acts 20:19A

O BEDIENCE "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." II Corinthians 10:5

M ATURITY "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." II Peter 3:18

E VANGELISM "If we continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;" Colossians 1:23

DR. WALTER E. PAIGE, PASTOR



BOARD OF DEACONS

John H. Bishop
Herman Cane
John Dixon
Ampy Dyer
James A. Epps
Walter Epps
Robert H. Goode
Ance Graves
Eddie Henderson
David Hicks
Robert M. Johnson
Harry Marshall
Carl Norwood, Sr.
Roosevelt Parker
William Paylor, Sr.
James B. Smith
Reynolds J. Smith
Wade Spears-Co - Chairman
Howard Stainback
John A. White, - Chairman
Robert Williams
Samuel Wright

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Joseph Earl Alston
Willard Booker
Irving Carpenter
John Craig
Lloyd Dodds
Alvin Edwards R.-Chairman
Alfreda Everette
John R. Faidley
Henry Green
Calvin Israel
Roosevelt Jenkins
Phillip Johnson
Amos L. Lee
Charles W. McLeod, Sr.
William H. Parker
William Paylor, Jr.
Isaac Porche
Robert Streat
William L. Waller
William Paylor III
William Hunt
James Waddy-Co - Chairman

East Baltimore church founded by great-grandson of famed Nat Turner

EBENEZER BAPTIST'S proud congregation inherits priceless history

Founded by REV. JOHN W. JONES in 1896

By Elizabeth M. Oliver
AFRO City Editor

REV. CLARENCE POOLE

Ebenezer Baptist Church at 23rd and Guilford in East Baltimore has a small but ever-growing congregation of citizens who have just cause to be mighty proud.

Many of them not only boast that their roots are deep in Old Virginia but they can also claim a heritage which comes from one of Virginia's most famous heroes.

Their famous ancestor is the immortal Nat Turner, a slave born Oct. 2, 1800 in Southampton County, Va. who struck a blow at the vicious system of slavery and upset the complacent attitude of slave masters in a period prior to the Civil War.

TURNER'S DESCENDANT

How does this come about?

Ebenezer's illustrious founder, the Rev. John W. Jones, also born in Southampton County, Va. was the great grandson of Nat Turner who ranks along with Frederick Douglass and Dr. Martin Luther King as a freedom fighter.

The Rev. Mr. Jones attended the public schools of Virginia and at an early age came to Baltimore. His parents were Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Jones who settled in Northeast Baltimore in the Waverly Section. Later in his youth, young Jones became concerned with the lack of churches in that section. He prayed over the matter and became convinced that God wanted him to organize a church in his neighborhood.

He began with a Sunday School [illegible] in the livingroom of Mrs. Susan Frazier who lived at 21st and a half Street.

The Sunday School grew so fast the Rev. Mr. Jones had to seek larger quarters. He was successful in locating an old house in the 400 block 23rd Street. He later converted this building into a church and it was named Ebenezer Baptist Church.

In 1918, the Rev. Mr. Jones purchased the present site at Guilford Avenue and 23rd Street.

The congregation was soon organized into many groups including The Willing Workers and The Missionary Circle and several choirs.

The Rev. Mr. Jones died in December, 1931 and was greatly mourned by the church and the community.

An AFRO clipping of the funeral and several subsequent articles on the descendants of Nat Turner and the Rev. Mr. Jones, lists the following survivors as of that year, 1931:

One grandson of Turner's still lives in Southhampton County, (Va.) He is John R. Jones, of Deweyville.

There are also a number of great-great-grandchildren of the Virginia hero, and Rev. Mr. Jones.

There are six granddaughters of Turner's as follows:

Mrs. Charity Loikley, Mrs. Mittie I. Whitfield, both of Washington, D.C.; Mrs. Mason Dean, Franklin, Va.; Mrs. Mary E. Jones, Capron, Va.; Mrs. Ella Coleman, Newport News, Va., and Mrs. Margaret Jones, of Capron, Va.

Great-grandchildren of Nat Turner are: Miss Abbie Gaithers, Miss Ruth Lockley, Mrs. Maud L. Dixon, and Mrs. Ruth W. Frazier, all of Washington; Mrs. Mary Banks, Mrs. Della Rucker, Mrs. Maud Stevens, Mrs. Catherine Banks, Mrs. Luella Billingslea, John Jones, and James Jones, all of Baltimore.

There are also a number of great-great-grandchildren of the Virginia hero, and Rev. Mr. Jones.

A 1934 clipping from the AFRO discovers more relatives of the Rev. Mr. Jones and his great-grandfather, Nat Turner.

The clipping dated Jan. 16, 1932 states:

WASHINGTON

Five descendants of Nat Turner, slave insurrectionist of Virginia, were located here by the AFRO-AMERICAN this week.

Four of them live at 1453 Church Street, northwest, and one, Mrs. Abbir J. Gaither, who is a great-granddaughter, is residing at 1604 15th Street, northwest.

Those at 1453 Church Street are: Mrs. Charity Lockley, 71, who is a granddaughter; Miss Ruth E. Lockley and Mrs. Maude L. Dixon, who are great-granddaughters; and Walter T. Dixon, Jr. a great - great - grandson.

FOUNDER, THE REV. JOHN W. JONES, great-grandson of famed Nat Turner, purchased the site at Guilford Avenue and 23rd Street in 1918; the location of the Ebenezer Baptist Church today. Rev. Clarence Poole is the present pastor.

REV. JOHN W. JONES, Founder.

83rd ANNIVERSARY 1896-1979

NAT TURNER — A slave born Oct. 2, 1800 in Southhampton County, Va., heard a voice from heaven say, "Strike a blow for freedom."

Who was Nat Turner?

The Late Rev. John Jones, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Baltimore was the great-grandson of Nat Turner, the great Virginia revolutionist.

Turner, who was pure - blooded African, a slave, preacher, believed himself called of God to free his fellow men. Through fasting, prayer; study of the Bible and exemplary character, he gathered a following.

In August, 1831, at the head of a band fo slaves, he raided through Southampton County (Va.) and killed 61 slave-owners, and laid waste to numerous plantations.

This exploit stirred the whole county and served notice that slaves were men and would fight for freedom.

Turner had less than 50 followers at the height of his insurrection, but he evaded arrest for ten weeks, and caused a calling out of militia and a reign of terror.

Nat Turner's insurrection so stirred Maryland that a law was passed seeking to transport all free colored people to Liberia.

THE RESULTS

Many whites, convinced that the Negro would not for long make a willing slave, advocated emancipation or deportation to Liberia.

Maryland passed a law providing a fund for removal of free Negroes.

Other states took immediate steps to keep the slaves down.

Delaware forbade entrance of free Negroes by law, prohibited assembly after ten o'clock or preaching by non-resident Negroes.

Virginia and North Carolina prohibited free Negroes from preaching. Alabama and South Carolina enforced laws forbidding Negroes from learning to read or write and banning return of any Negro who left the state to be educated.

In most states passes were required for any Negro who desired to be out after dark and not more than five Negroes, free or slave, were allowed to congregate without a white person present.

South Carolina enforced its law banning Negroes from working as salesmen or clerks in stores.

Turner's rebellion convinced the best thinking white minds that the slave system rested upon a volcano, liable to erupt at any moment, and convinced many free Negroes that they must leave the South and migrate Northward.

Rev. Clarence Poole, the present pastor of Ebenezer Baptist was called to the pulpit in 1973 and has since then doubled the number of members. For example, on Sunday, May 27, 1979, 25 persons were Baptized.

The Rev. Mr. Poole was not ordained at the time he was called but the church immediately set up Ordination Services so that he might perform all the ministerial duties.

A few months later installation services were held and the Rev. Mr. Poole took leadership in his first church, historic Ebenezer Baptist.

RESPECTED

The Ebenezer Baptist 80th Anniversary souvenir book describes the Rev. Mr. Poole thus: (By Naomi L. Johnson)

"He is a gospel preacher and a spiritual singer and has the love and respect of the membership. Rev. Poole has done an excellent job in kingdom building for our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

"The chief aim of any church is or should be the saving of souls. To date one hundred eighty persons have been converted, baptized and added to the church membership roster.

"Twenty-six members also have been added through Christian Experience, Watch care and Reinstatement making a grand total of 20 persons that have been added to the church under his administration. Rev. Poole has organized a President's Club and reorganized the Baptist Training Union and the Willing Workers.

"As we celebrate the 80th Anniversary of our Church in the Bicentennial Year and the 3rd Anniversary of our dedicated pastor, our fervent prayer is that Ebenezer will continue to stand as a beacon in Northeast Baltimore, rendering service to the poor and needy and supplying spiritual strength and guidance to the weak and oppressed in the community, the city and the state."

FORMER PASTORS

Preceding the Rev. Mr. Poole were the following pastors:

REV. EDWARD T. JORDAN, who succeeded the founder Rev. John W. Jones in 1931 and retired in 1953.

Rev. Mr. Jordan is described in church history thus:

"His regime as pastor was highly successful because he was converted, baptized and ordained as a minister, while serving in Ebenezer. He was familiar with the urgent needs of the church and as soon as he was installed, he began working to meet these needs.

"The urgent need was the liquidation of an $8,000 mortgage on the church which had to be paid on a specified date. Rev. Jordan in order to meet this emergency organized a Young Peoples' Society to spearhead a fund raising drive.

"Despite the fact that our nation was in the throes of the worst depression in its history and bread lines were everywhere, the Young Peoples' Society with the cooperation of the entire membership raised the $8,000 and the mortgage was paid on time.

"This proved to be the outstanding achievement of his administration."

REV. I. LOGAN KEARSE was called to succeed Rev. Jordan as pastor. One of his first acts as pastor was to have Rev. Jordan elected Pastor Emeritus of Ebenezer Baptist Church.

Rev. Kearse was a gospel preacher and he brought to the pulpit of Ebenezer some of the most outstanding ministers in the nation. Among them the great Civil Rights Leader, Rev. Martin Luther King.

REV. MAXWELL JOHNSON was the fourth minister to serve Ebenezer. He was an oustanding preacher and a qualified teacher.

Being a man of action, Rev. Mr. Johnson began making plans for a new Ebenezer. He needed $50,000 to start the project. To meet this need, an Improvement Fund Committee, consisting of six dedicated women, was named to head the fund raising drive. Each member was asked to contribute $2 weekly to the Improvement Fund and thus enabled the Pastor to reach the $50,000 goal to start the building program.

In less than four years a beautiful new church was built, a new organ installed and the main auditorium of the church air conditioned.

In appreciation the church gave the pastor a Testimonial Banquet at the Belvedere Hotel. Rev. Mr. Poole became pastor in 1973.

EBENEZER TODAY

Musicians: Michael Morris, Mrs. Gwendolyn Neal, Mrs. Myrna Powell, James Alston.

Presidents of Organizations: Ardelia Lokeman, Willing Workers; Margaret Harris, Sanctuary Choir, Myrna Powell, Youth Leader; Dorothy Ransom, Youth Leader; Bettye Graves, Jr. Missionary Director; Laura Mitchell, President Edward Jordan Memorial Circle.