

SAINT JAMES AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Researched by Willie Frances McAdams
1107 East Oak Street
Denton, Texas 76201

The city of Denton boasts particular interest in three of its churches, each of which is the oldest of its denomination: First United Methodist Church; First Baptist Church; and the Saint James African Methodist Episcopal Church, the oldest black Church in Denton County, 108 years.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E. Church) was founded in 1787 by Richard Allen. It is the oldest and largest Christian Church denomination composed mainly of persons of African descent serving the entire United States. It is perhaps the first large Christian denomination in the Western Hemisphere which had its roots in sociological, rather than theological differences. The A.M.E. Church follows the teachings of John Wesley.¹ The Church is governed by the General Conference, the Council of Bishops and the General Board.

The General Conference is the supreme body composed of the Bishops as ex-officio Presidents according to the rank of election and ministerial delegates, elected by the Electoral Colleges. Other ex-officio members are the General Officers, College Presidents, Deans of Theological Seminaries and Chaplains in Regular Armed Forces of the United States. The General Conference meets quadrennially.¹

The Bishops, as Elders, are elected and consecrated to the Council of Bishops. Under Methodism in general, the Bishopric is

an office of superintendence. The A.M.E. Council of Bishops serves as the Executive Brance and has general oversight of the Church between General Conferences. The Council of Bishops is the clearinghouse for all general business in the denomination and, in fact, is the general superintendency of the Church. In theory, every A.M.E. Bishop has authority over the entire Church and is not limited to one district.¹

The General Board is the administrative body and is composed of various departmental commissions made up of the respective Secretary-Treasurers, the General Secretary of the A.M.E. Church, the General Treasurer, and the members of the various commissions with one Bishop as residing officer and the other Bishops associating.

The Church is divided into 18 Episcopal Districts: thirteen in the United States, four in Africa, and one encompassing the Caribbean and South America. There are over two million members of the A.M.E. Church.²

The Church provides funds for socioeconomic development and education and health services in the overseas districts as well as scholarships for students pursuing theological education. In addition, the Church supports various other Episcopal District projects.²

The A.M.E. Church also maintains five four-year colleges, one junior college, two theological seminaries and two Job Corps Centers in the United States. Wilberforce University is in fact America's first black college, founded in 1856 by blacks for blacks. Wilberforce celebrated its one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary in June of 1983.²

Saint James' history was recorded by the late Brother L. T. Lambert, (Uncle Luther).³

It all began about eleven years after slavery in the year 1875. A group of black citizens, who were dissatisfied with their living conditions on farms and plantations, decided to move to a new location.

The move started in November, 1875, when 27 families from the settlement of White Rock in Dallas County, Texas, moved to Denton County. They named their settlement "Freedman Town."

The people of this group had faith, courage and determination to live Christian lives. They met from house to house and held weekly prayer and Bible meetings. For a year they secured the services of a member in their group as minister, Rev. M. P. Lambert (Uncle Luther's father.) A year later under the pastorage of Rev. J. B. Goins, the church was organized and named Saint James African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The charter members were: Jim Crawford, Dicy Crawford, Jerry Crawford, Ford Crawford, Jim Hall, Phyllis Hall, Giles Lawson, Esther Lawson, Arthur Cochran, Harriet Cochran, M. P. Lambert, Sallie Lambert, Henry Maddox, Charlotte Maddox, Jim Holt, Mattie Holt, and Emly Russell. The first church was built in Freedman's Town with the encouragement of charter members Henry and Charlotte Maddox. They led the group into the woods to cut timber for the church's foundation. In the early 1890's the church was moved to Oakland Avenue; another small building was erected under the pastorate of Rev. D. Hill.

The Church was rebuilt in 1899 under the pastorate of Rev. J.S. Powe, Those serving as trustees at that time were: J. Lawson,

R. Lilly, J.D. Crawford, U.I. Johnson, and H. Taylor. In 1909 the Rev. A.J. Cooper erected another building.

In 1922 the City of Denton purchased the land where the church stood for use as a park.⁵ This time a building was erected on the corner of Oak and Crawford (our present location). Rev. Prince F. Jackson served as pastor.⁶ Those serving as trustees were: J. B. Crawford, J. H. Lambert, G.R. Hembry, J. R. Logan, J.W. White, and H. Maddox.⁷

In 1947 the church became more involved in community services. Under the leadership of Rev. S.V. Johnson, the Masons, Eastern Stars, and Heroines of Jericho used the church for their annual "turnout" on Palm Sunday.⁷

Under the pastorate of Rev. A. Wayman Harvey in 1954, a new parsonage was erected at the cost of \$7,000. From time to time the church was repaired and improved.

When church was destroyed by a storm in 1962, all its records were lost.⁸ A new building (the one in which we now worship) was erected and dedicated that same year under the pastorate of Rev. W. A. Garland. The individuals serving as stewards and trustees at that time were: Trustees - L. T. Lambert, Albert Fox, C. J. Peace, Parthena Brooks, and Eulah Gray. Stewards - J. B. Smith, Roy David, W. M. Woods, and Leonard Logan. Rev. Garland introduced Men's Day and Women's Day as annual events of recognition and as major fund-raising events.

New pews were purchased in December, 1963. In 1964, under the pastorate of Rev. S. E. Braziel, an organ was purchased and a fountain was installed in the memory of Sister Virgie Caraway.

A communion table and pulpit seats were also purchased. A Founders Day program as an annual event was initiated during his tenure, and the church had its first souvenir program, which included the church's history.⁹

The Women's Missionary Society bears the name of Phyllis Hall, a charter member.

The parsonage was remodeled in 1968 under the leadership of Rev. M. E. Rice. The first Founders' Day Banquet was also organized during Rev. Rice's tenure.

In 1969 Rev. Wm. Jamerson was sent to pastor St. James. He remained pastor for seven years (the longest time ever served by 47 pastors assigned to our church). Numerous accomplishments were achieved under his leadership. St. James' 100th Anniversary was celebrated during his tenure. The sanctuary was remodeled to include central heat and air. A young adult choir was organized and named the Jamersonettes, in honor of Rev. Jamerson. Robes for the choir were purchased, Steward Board II was organized, and the membership among young adults increased. A parade called Freedom March was held and participants marched from the site of our first church to our present location.¹⁰

Rev. Albert Moore, Jr. served as pastor from October, 1977 to March, 1978. Under his leadership the members organized a "Family Night." Each family was asked to bring a dinner once a month for family night, which brought unity among the members of our church. Graduating seniors were also recognized during Rev. Moore's tenure.

Rev. Kenneth Waters served as pastor from 1978 - 79. Under his leadership the Young People's Department was reorganized, and ten youths attended the annual retreat at Latham Springs. The

second Sunday was denoted Youth Sunday with the young people being in charge of the program. The young people also took a trip to Palo Duro Canyon to see one of our members, Quentin Clark, perform in the production of "Texas." The church also celebrated the birth of Micheal Williams Waters, the second baby born to a minister's family in the church's history. Rev. Waters encouraged members to collect aluminum cans that could be sold and recycled. This marked the beginning of a self-help effort toward the purchase of a church van. Car washes were held to supplement this effort, and (church members) made pledges. Mr. Albert Leo Champion, Jr. donated the first \$50.

Mrs. Waters used her musical abilities to expand the involvement of our youth and helped to organize the first Christmas Cantata.

Rev. Richard Tankerson, pastor from 1979-80, used his expertise in financial planning to adjust the Church's budget for annual expenditures. He also organized monthly planning meetings in an attempt to involve all the members.¹¹ The first Christain Debutante presentation was held honoring outstanding young women from our community. Those young ladies recognized were: Robbie Garrett (Mt. Pilgrim C.M.E. Church), Susy Devereaux (Pleasant Grove), Joyce Ervin (Mt. Calvery), Patsy Varner (St. Emmanuel), Kathy Rhodes, Penny Jones, and Beverly David (St. James).

The church van was used to transport students that attended the Denton Christain pre-school.¹¹

Rev. Tankerson also published a weekly newsletter and held the first Christmas Candlelight Service.

The Rev. Robbie Lowe, our present pastor, came in 1980. She revitalized our church with God as the source, through the use of

revivals and musicals. Ladies' and Men's Bible Classes were established. Night services were increased with the organizing of various programs.

On second Sunday night a layman speaks; each third Sunday night is recognized as "A Family Affair," and on fourth Sunday nights members celebrating a birthday during the month present a program.

More emphasis has been placed on reaching students from North Texas State and Texas Woman's University and involving them in our services. The church van is sent to Texas Woman's University each Sunday to transport students. The first Community Music Workshop was held by Cynthia Turner McDade, a Texas Woman's University student and our musician. A Male Chorus was organized and more adults have been drawn to participate in Sunday School under Rev. Lowe's leadership. Physical improvements made during Rev. Lowe's pastorate have been the enclosing of the foyer, which was aided through fundraising by the Young People's Department. The Sunday School of the First Baptist Church, along with members of our church, used their skills to accomplish this project, which had been envisioned by Mrs. Eulah Gray.¹² Another goal fulfilled was an Annual Fellowship Day with ex-students from Fred Moore School.

The church rejoiced with our pastor when she married Mr. Harvey L. Slaughter in July, 1982.

The church has been blessed by the licensing of two new ministers in our membership: Sister Ella Mae McDonald, who received her license in July, 1982, and Brother H. Slaughter in January, 1983. We are thankful to have in our midst, Rev. W.M. Clark as Assistant Pastor. Rev. Clark is retired but served his tenure in Texas in

various conferences. Saint James is his home church, and he returned here with his family and united with us.

¹³The church has grown spiritually and financially, and many improvements can be seen as a result of our 51st pastor.

Our future is bright, and (some of) our goals include:

1. A children's day care center in the community, for working parents.
2. Christian Youth Center with structured activities.
3. More involvement in Campus Ministry at T.W.U. and N.T.S.U.
4. More Out-Reach to the community - an Out-Reach of Love.

During our 108 years we have been blessed with outstanding Christian leaders; we have triumphed over adversity and we have embarked upon our second century of service with vision and optimism that this little light of ours will continue to shine!

This location has been the meeting site of the congregation of the Saint James A.M.E. Church since it was moved here in 1922.

The pastors of the congregation at the present time are Rev. Robbie L. Slaughter. Rev. Robbie L. Slaughter

Associate, Rev. W. M. Clark. Rev. W. M. Clark

The congregation meets regularly four times weekly.

This A.M.E. Church is the third oldest Black Church in the state of Texas. It is the oldest Black Church in the city of Denton, Texas. Our Church's present membership is 105.

Church Clerk Lovie M. Rucker
Lovie M. Rucker

Contemporary Data Clerk Jackie Webb
Jackie Webb

FOOTNOTES

- 1 "Encyclopedia of African Methodism," by R. R. Wright, Jr. Compiler, 1948.
- 2 The Post Tribune Saturday News, Dallas, Texas, June 20, 1981.
- 3 "History of the Church Interview with L. T. Lambert," (Uncle Luther) Denton Record Chronicle, Sandi Green, February 9, 1975.
- 4 "CORNERSTONE," A.M.E. Church, October 28, 1899.
- 5 Denton County Deed Records, Denton County Courthouse, Vol.181, p. 411.
- 6 Church Pictures of former Pastor and Presiding Elder, "Dr. Prince F. Jackson, D.D., B.Th." 1922.
- 7 "Rev. S. V. Johnson and Officers & Members of A.M.E. Church." Three pictures 1947. Rev. Johnson was contractor for the present church building, 1962.
- 8 "Rev. and Mrs. W. A. Garland" and Church, 1962. Plans were drawn by Rev. Garland.
- 9 Rev. S. E. Braziel and Mrs. Imogene Braziel," Introduced "Founder's Day Programs," and the 91st. Souvenir Book, 1967.
- 10 "ONE HUNDRED YEAR CELEBRATION," Based on Church Records, 1975.
- 11 Pictures of First Christain Debutante (2), 1979 Membership Directory Picture of Denton Christian Pre-School community involvement, 1979.
- 12 "First Baptist Church Overcomers Sunday School Class," Foyer Enclosed Picture, 1982.
- 13 "Premiere Documentary: History on Screen." Alma Clark and Willie F. McAdams.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

History of Saint James A.M.E. Church, L. T. Lambert (Uncle Luther)
91st Souvenir Book, September 10, 1967
Rev. S. E. Braziel - Pastor.

First Cornerstone of A. M. E. Church, October 28, 1899, Trustees
were J. Lawson, R. Lilly, J. D. Crawford, Rev. J. S. Powe - Pastor.

Denton County Deeds Records, Denton County Courthouse, Vol. 181,
p. 411.

Second Cornerstone of A.M.E. Church, 1922, Trustees were B. F.
Crawford, J. R. Logan, J. H. Lambert, H. Maddox, L. T. Lambert,
J. W. White, C. R. Hembry, Rev. Prince F. Jackson - Pastor.

Third Cornerstone of A.M.E. Church, June 11, 1962. Trustees were
L. T. Lambert, Albert Fox, C. J. Peace. Stewards were J. B. Smith,
W. M. Woods, and Roy David. Rev. W. A. Garland - Pastor.

Centennial Celebration Souvenir Book, 1875-1975.
February 14-16, 1975. Rev. William Jamerson, Jr. - Pastor.

St. James A.M.E. Church Directory (1980). Rev. Thomas Zgambo,
Henry Joe Jones, Lucretia Jones, and Mable Ross.

A Celebration of our Heritage (Premiere Documentary) February 11,
1982, Produced and Directed by Alma L. Clark and Willie Frances
McAdams.

The State of Texas,

Known All Men by These Presents:

County of Denton.

That we, F. Crawford, L. F. Lambert, Oscar G. G. W. Henry, James Lambert, J. A. Logan, O. S. Henry, Haddox and consulting and being the duly elected Board of Trustees for the Denton Methodist Episcopal Church and by authority and direction of a resolution duly passed by the members of the members of the church on the 21st day of August, A. D. 1922, of the County of Denton, State of Texas, for and in consideration of the sum of Ten Hundred Dollars

to US paid and secured to be paid by The City of Denton, Texas, a municipal corporation as follows: All cash, the receipt of which is hereby fully acknowledged.

have Granted, Sold and Conveyed, and by these presents do Grant, Sell and Convey, unto the said City of Denton

of the County of Denton, State of Texas, ⁴⁰³⁵ ~~4036~~ lots, tracts or parcels of land situated, lying and being in the City and County of Denton and State of Texas, and more particularly described as being:

TRACT: One Lot on Oakland Avenue No. 17, Seventeen in Geers addition to the town of Denton, City (50) by one hundred twenty feet (120)

TRACT: Lot No. 15, as shown on the map or plat of Geers Addition to the town of Denton.

Reference is hereby made to the map or plat of Geers Addition to the City of Denton, Texas, recorded in Book 9, page 86, of the Records of Denton County, Texas, for a more complete and full description of both above described lots. All improvements upon both of the above described lots are exempt from the operation of this deed.

him and assigns, against every person whomsoever lawfully claiming, or to claim the same, or any part thereof.

But it is expressly agreed and stipulated that the Vendor's Lien is retained against the above described property, premises and improvements, until the above described note, and all interest thereon are fully paid according to face and tenor, effect and reading, when this deed shall become absolute.

WITNESS OUR HANDS at Denton, Texas, this 28 day of August, A. D. 1922.

(\$1.50 Rev. Stamp Canceled)

Witnesses at Request of Grantor:

Oscar X Gober
Mark

Henry X Maddox.
James Lambert

C. F. Herby.

THE STATE OF TEXAS.

COUNTY OF Denton.

Denton

BEFORE ME, Elbert Hooper, a Notary Public, in and for B. E. Crawford, T. L. Leffert, Oscar Gober, James Lambert, J. A. Looney, O. S. Sivy, Henry Maddox and Trustees A. J. Church

known to me to be the persons whose names are subscribed to the foregoing instrument, and acknowledged to me that they executed the same for the purpose and consideration therein expressed, and in the capacity therein expressed.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL OF OFFICE, this 28 day of August, A. D. 1922.

(L. S.)

(Seal)

Elbert Hooper, Notary Public, in and for Denton County, Texas.

THE STATE OF TEXAS.

COUNTY OF

BEFORE ME,

County-Texas, on this day personally appeared

and subscribed to the foregoing instrument, and acknowledged to me that they each executed the same for the purposes and consideration therein expressed; and the said

having been examined by me privily and apart from her husband, and having the same fully explained to her, she, acknowledged such instrument to be her act and deed,

and she declared that she had willingly signed the same for the purposes and consideration therein expressed, and that she did not wish to retract it.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL OF OFFICE, This day of

(L. S.)

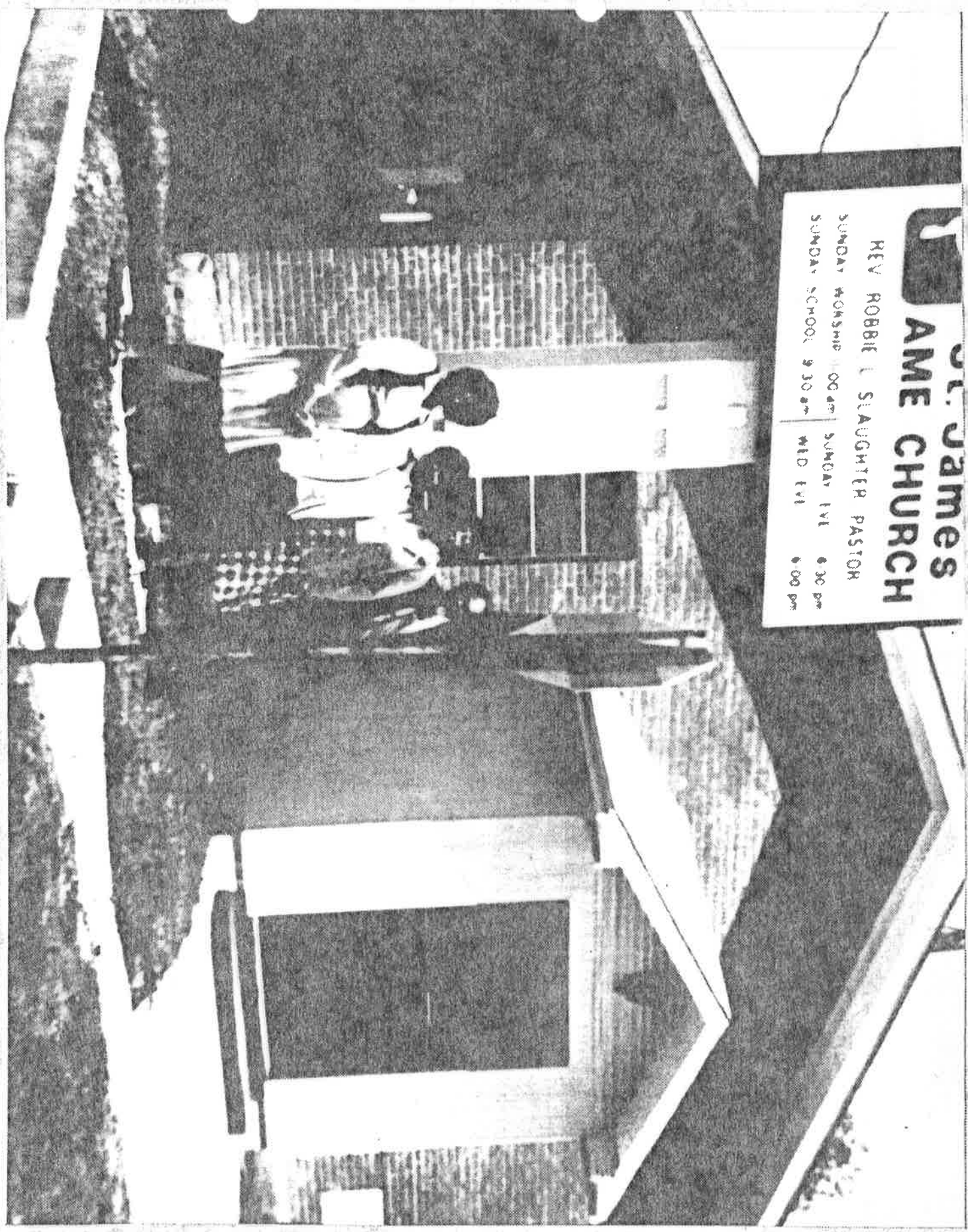
FILED FOR RECORD This 2 day of Oct., A. D. 1922 at 4:30 o'clock P. M.
RECORDED This 2 day of Oct., A. D. 1922 at 5:40 o'clock P. M.

By Deputy, County Clerk

**ST. JAMES
AME CHURCH**

REV ROBBIE L SLAUGHTER PASTOR

SUNDAY WORSHIP 11:00 AM
SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:30 AM
MID LEVEL 6:00 PM
SUNDAY EVE 6:30 PM



1760

**"God Our Father,
Christ Our Redeemer,
Man Our Brother"**

1982

— KEY TO UNIVERSAL PEACE —



RICHARD ALLEN
The Founder of African Methodism

A BRIEF HISTORY

In 1787 when Richard Allen and about five other Blacks at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church, Philadelphia were pulled off their knees while praying in an area reserved for Whites they walked out in protest and formed the Free African Society which in 1816 became The African Methodist Episcopal Church, the first independent Black Church in the world. Today the church comprises 18 districts in the USA, South America, Africa, and the Caribbean. It is the oldest Methodist Church in continuous existence and the second largest Methodist denomination in the world.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT OF THE
SAINT JAMES A.M.E. CHURCH DIRECTORY (1980)

Quotations from Rev. Willie Clark, stepson of Charter Member C. R. Hembry.

I can remember the A.M.E. Church as a landmark to the community of Denton. My parents were C. R. and Maude Hembry. When the church was in "Quaker Town," the school house burned and the A.M.E. Church was used for a school building. The teachers were Miss Ella Hampton, Miss Emma Walker, and Miss Maggie Hampton. School was held in the church until the black school moved to its present location. The name of the school was Fred Douglass, now known as Fred Moore.

(1950) Dr. D. B. Cockrell and students of N.T.S.U., Physical Education Professional Club gave gifts to the children of the church and invited the Sunday School to the college to see different plays for about ten years. Later on, Dr. Cockrell began giving the young people a plant at Easter until her retirement.

(1970's) The Cosmopolitan Class of First United Methodist Church gave the church a financial donation as a service gift through a dear friend of ours, Mrs. Jane Marshall. The money was used for church purposes. Rev. W. M. Jamerson was the pastor.

(1970's) Rev. W. M. Jamerson began the fellowship between the white churches and Saint James. This fellowship was on the third Sunday of each month with First United Methodist, Asbury Methodist Church, Hillcrest Baptist, First Baptist, Grace Temple Baptist. It was a fellowship that enriched the congregations and gave unity to the community.

(1979) The Pastor, Rev. Kenneth Waters and wife Brenda, along with Peggy Fox and Willie McAdams were instrumental in the Celebration of the Year of the Child. Meetings were held at the church with other denominations of the city. Big Brothers and Big Sisters and other local and city organizations planned the first Children's Fair at the Denton Civic Center.

(1980) Rev. Thomas Zgambo, his wife Anita, and daughter Frances, came to Denton from Africa. As a student at N.T.S.U., he began worshipping with us under the pastorate of Rev. Tankerson. Rev. Zgambo helped us review the church directory and was the Youth and Junior Church Minister. His son Thomas, Jr. was born during their stay here.

(1981) The first Community Garden was introduced by our Pastor, Rev. Robbie Lowe Slaughter. The land was donated and cleared by a friend of the community, Mr. Fred Hill. The garden was across the street from the church. Anyone wanting to plant vegetables did so. This also reaped a togetherness in the community, and the food was plentiful. The sharing of crops was amazing.

(1982) The church was instrumental in serving Texas Woman's University (First Gospel Ensemble Group) organized by Ms. Cynthia Turner, a graduate student and teacher of Music Therapy. This group was encouraged by Rev. Paul Hill, who was assistant of First United Methodist and also the campus Minister at both universities.

The group used the church van to give concerts in Sanger, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Ennis, Texas. They also performed in Denton at most of the churches with free concerts and at any program in the city.

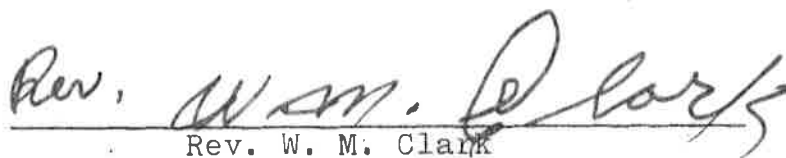
The church opened its doors to the community with the First City-Wide Non-Demoninational Musical Workshop, directed by Ms. Cynthia Turner McDade. Young people and adults in the community

came to take lessons for voice, piano, and guitar, and choir directing. Two concerts were given, and the music was shared by the community.

Denton State School Choir shared a concert with us, with the magic touch of Barry Niles, a Music Therapy student of A.M.E. descent from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. When Barry finished with services at Denton State School, he came by St. James every Sunday just to play for the "Invitation to Discipleship" or as the old timers would have said "opening the door of the church." The fellowship was beautiful. The church served refreshments, and the members and choirs visited. Barry has returned to Philadelphia. We will cherish his time here as another cornerstone in St. James' History.

(1982) The Men's Bible Class (The Overcomers) of the First Baptist Church of Denton joined the men of St. James to enclose the front of the church into an entry or front foyer. They worked on Saturdays, and the women prepared lunches for them. It was a beautiful sight to behold, brothers Black and White working together for Christ. A true sign of our Emblem and church Motto "God our Father, Christ our Redeemer, Man our Brother."

(1983) Rev. Willie M. Clark, the oldest member of the Saint James A.M.E. Church was four years old when he first attended the church. He participated in the programs mentioned above, and signed this statement as being true facts.


Rev. W. M. Clark