

GREATER LITTLE ZION BAPTIST CHURCH HISTORY

(As recorded in 1991 by Rev. Grant and Alberta Williams; updated in September 2012 by the 121st Zion Day and Souvenir Journal Committees, and in September 2016 by the 125th Anniversary Committee)



On April 17, 1876, a deed was transacted between John “Jack” Pearson and his wife Elizabeth “Lizzie,” William Hamilton, Jackson Morton and Henry Parker, as Trustees of the Colored church known as “Zion.” The deed transferred a plot of land as a grant from the Pearsons to the church for the purposes of erecting a Methodist Church and also establishing a burial ground for any and all persons. The Methodist Church was never built.

This land can be traced back as far as 1728 when Francis Coffey I received a 378-acre land grant from Lord Fairfax. There was another transfer by will in 1782, then another in 1803, and still another in 1817. In the 1817 will, Francis Coffey III passed land to his son, Francis Coffey IV. In the same will, a Negro slave girl, Phillis, was given to Francis Coffey’s daughter, Catherine, who later gave ownership of Phillis to her brother Francis Coffey IV. In 1861, Francis Coffey IV, one of the most prominent landowners in Burke, Virginia at the beginning of the Civil War, left a portion of his lands consisting of two parcels - one 300 acres and the other 74 acres - to his slave woman, Phillis Pearson and her 4 sons. The sons were named William, Charles, Joshua, and John Pearson, who was born in Fairfax County in 1826. During his life, “Jack,” as John was called, acquired a considerable amount of land and became a successful farmer. It was “Jack” and his wife “Lizzie” who in 1876 donated the land on which the Colored church was to be built.

In 1891, a group of faithful believers, known as Old School Baptist Groups of Blacks and Whites, formed a membership in Christ and constructed a church on Burke Lake Road in Burke, Virginia. The church, erected by former slaves, still stands today. It was built by “Mr. Hoover,” a man who lived on a boat in Occoquan, Virginia and charged \$20 to build the small but comfortable structure. Reverend Lewis Henry Bailey mortgaged his home for \$50 so that the church could be built (\$20 for Mr. Hoover and \$25 for building Materials). The name “Mount Zion Baptist” was recommended by Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Smith; however, after much discussion and a considerable amount of prayer, the group settled on the name of “Little Zion Baptist Church.”

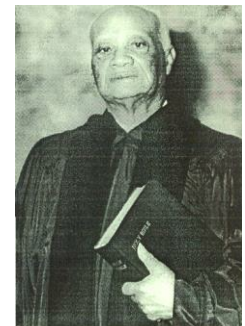
Founding membership included Tom and Lilly Foster, Jim and Mary Gaskins, William and Rose Hamilton, Anderson and Will Ann Wright, and the Robinson and Shelton families. This original group and other members formed sister churches in the early 1900s - Zion Mission Baptist Church on Ox Road and Little Bethel Church on Sideburn Road, which was built on property donated by Mr. David R. Pinn.

After construction of the Little Zion Baptist Church in 1891, **Rev. Lewis Henry Bailey** became the first hired minister, and he served the congregation from 1891 until 1931. As a child, Rev. Bailey had been sold from a slave pen in Alexandria, Virginia. He was sold away from his mother and taken to Texas. At twenty-one years of age, Rev. Bailey was freed, and he immediately set out walking to return to Alexandria, Virginia in hopes of finding his mother. By the grace of God, he was reunited with her. He was an inspired, God-fearing leader of unshakable faith.



Rev. Carter L. Taylor was the second pastor of the church. He was a long time member of the Shiloh Baptist Church located in Odricks Corner (McLean), Virginia. Rev. Taylor was also an active missionary, a licensed contractor in the state of Virginia, and a pastor well known throughout Northern Virginia. During Rev. Taylor's five-year tenure, Little Zion improved its physical structure by adding a basement and a furnace. Rev. Taylor served from 1932 until 1937.

Rev. Edward Thomas served as Little Zion's pastor from 1938 until 1940. He served as pastor for First Baptist Church, Vienna; Oak Grove Baptist Church, Herndon; and the Greater First Baptist Church, Mount Pleasant Plains, DC. Rev. Thomas also was on the Board of the National Baptist Convention and served as President of the Baptist Ministers' Conference. Because of his outstanding service at Little Zion, he was extended a "Call for Life" (as minister of Little Zion) by the membership of the church. Rev. Thomas' motto was, "I have set the Lord before me and I cannot fail."



Rev. William T. Henry, a native of Wilson, North Carolina, was pastor from 1941 until his death on September 28, 1948. He married Cora Sue Hylton in Danville, Virginia in 1922. Rev. Henry and his wife moved to Alexandria, Virginia, and one child, Jacqueline La Marr (Henry-Green), was born. The Henrys joined Alfred Street Baptist Church. Rev. Henry, a graduate of Washington Baptist Theological Seminary, was licensed to Preach the gospel on September 3, 1941, and Little Zion immediately called him to pastor. Under Rev. Henry's leadership, Little Zion grew. Among his accomplishments was the purchase of the church's first organ that his daughter played for the church services.

Rev. John Dallas Bussey served as Little Zion's pastor from 1949 until 1954. He was born in Clark's Hill, South Carolina, and his family moved to Washington, DC when he was very young. Rev. Bussey married Katie Freeman in 1934, and they were blessed with four daughters: Shirley, Rose, Ruth, and Victoria. He served as a deacon at the Noble Street Baptist Church in Portsmouth, Virginia prior to being ordained as a minister by the Capital View Baptist Church in 1949. Rev. Bussey graduated from Washington Baptist Seminary with a B.A. degree, and he later received a Doctor of Divinity from Virginia College and Seminary in Lynchburg, Virginia. He did additional study at Washington Bible College. Rev. Bussey gave extensive service to the spreading of the gospel through the Baptist Denomination; prison ministry; and civic, religious, and social organizations, and he was the recipient of numerous awards for his services. He left Little Zion to assume leadership of Bethesda Baptist Church, and he remained faithfully devoted to the cause of Christ for 35 years until his death.



Rev. James D. Peters, Jr. pastored Little Zion from 1955 until 1957. He graduated from Washington Baptist Theological Seminary, Washington, DC. Rev. Peters has said the following about his ministry at Little Zion: "I think often about Little Zion Church and remember fondly the 2 years which I spent there. I have had a very blessed ministry which has allowed me to preach all across this country and serve many great churches, but it all started at Little Zion in Burke." It was during his tenure that Little Zion began to

have worship service every Sunday. Additionally, the church on Burke Lake Road was legally deeded, and the land on which the church now stands on Zion Drive was marked "The Future Home of Little Zion Baptist Church."



Guided by the Holy Spirit and with much dedication, sacrifice, and hard work, Little Zion was rebuilt, dedicated, and renamed Greater Little Zion Baptist Church (GLZBC) in 1964 under the leadership of **Rev. Posie James Preston, Sr.** During his tenure, the church paid off its 20-year mortgage in 10 years, while retaining ownership of the original property on Burke Lake Road. In 1970, GLZBC was named "Church of

the Year" by Virginia Union University. Rev. Preston was one of the original organizers for the Hamilton Memorial Scholarship Fund and the Sideburn Civic Association. He served as Chaplain of the National Capital Chapter #2 of the Disabled Veterans and was active in Veterans' Affairs. Rev. Preston served as pastor from 1958 until his retirement in 1976. He died October 9, 1988 at Veterans Hospital in Washington, DC.





Rev. James E. Roots, Jr. served as pastor of GLZBC from 1977 until his retirement in 1996. He was born January 23, 1936 in Falmouth, Virginia. He was married to the former Susie Clarice Holloway, and they have 3 children. While in the United States Army, he was ordained by Mount Sinai Baptist Church in Okinawa, Japan. He pastored in Okinawa for two years. Under Rev. Roots' leadership, the church continued to experience spiritual growth. A new sanctuary that seats approximately 500 worshippers was completed and dedicated July 22, 1990.

Additionally, the Young Adult Choir, Shining Stars Choir, James E. Roots Inspirational Choir (JERIC), Church Nursery, and Youth Church were all fruits of his vision. In 1991, the Fairfax County History Commission declared the Little Zion Baptist Church and Cemetery a historical site. Rev. Roots' motto was "Through God all things are possible." He died on October 4, 2015 in Fairfax, VA.

Rev. Dr. James T. Murphy, Jr. was called to pastor GLZBC on December 5, 1998 and continues to serve in that position. He was born and raised in Alexandria, Virginia, and he is married to the former Barbara Ann Thorpe. They are the proud parents of 2 children: LaTasha Monique and Ethan Lamar. Rev. Murphy received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees of Theology from International Bible Seminary, and a Master of Divinity and Master of Theology from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. After further graduate studies at Duke University Divinity School, he received Doctorate of Ministry degrees from South Florida Theological Seminary, Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Rev. Murphy also received a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the Graduate Theological Foundation in collaboration with the University of Oxford, England. Prior to his service at GLZBC, Rev. Murphy was an associate minister at Cedar Grove Baptist Church, Roxboro, North Carolina (1987-1991); pastor at River Zion Baptist Church, Blanch, North Carolina (1991-1995); and associate minister at First Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Dumfries, Virginia (1995-1998). He has authored two books, *Crossing Your Jordan* and *Defining Salvation in the Context of Black Theology*, his most recent release. Under his leadership, Zion established vision and mission statements to guide the church's growing ministry, which includes new Sunday School classes, Singles' Ministry, and monthly Family Fellowship and Bible Study Night.



In October 2001, Zion ended a Capital Stewardship Campaign. The goal of the campaign was to pay off the existing church mortgage loan. Although that did not occur as planned, in September 2002, Zion refinanced its existing mortgage loan and acquired a parcel of land adjacent to the Pinn Center on Zion Drive. Throughout the follow-on years, Zion relied heavily upon tithes, offerings, and extra "Burn the Mortgage" donations in order to pay off the 2002 mortgage loan early, while continuing to meet operational financial commitments. In February 2009, a loan modification was granted by the lender which significantly reduced

the current mortgage interest rate and monthly payments.

A Capital Stewardship Committee was activated in 2010 and continues to the present. Zion members, friends, and the community were very faithful and supportive in providing financial support to the committee's initiatives. This fervent, prayerful, and unrelenting labor of love enabled Zion to accelerate the payoff of its mortgage loan for the church and parcel of land in 10 years instead of 20 years, and retain ownership of the original church, Little Zion Baptist Church on Burke Lake Road.

We remain prayerful, thankful, and grateful because we realize that this labor of love was done with the help of our GOD. Historically, it is the second time Zion has paid off a 20-year mortgage in 10 years. May it be forever remembered in the history of Greater Little Zion Baptist Church that October 2012 marked a milestone that our gracious God allowed us to reach. Because of His grace and mercy that have sustained many generations of our past and present members, we are beyond abundantly blessed to be able to burn the second mortgage on this church and land.

God is Able. To God Be the Glory!