HISTORY OF UNION BAPTIST CHURCH

109 Court Streets, New Bedford, Massachusetts

-1895-

In March 1895, a reconciliation committee of the Second Baptist Church and Salem Baptist Church met under the auspices of an advisory board composed of the Pastors of the First Baptist Church and the North Baptist Church and representatives from the State Baptist Convention. As a result of this meeting in the First Baptist Church Williams Street, New Bedford, Massachusetts a new church organization was duly incorporated April 18, 1895 henceforth to be known as the Union Baptist Church.

At the first regular business meeting of the Union Baptist Church, May 2, 1895, the session opened with prayer, reading of the scripture and the singing of "My Faith Looks up To Thee." There were present 14 members from the Second Baptist Church and 46 members from the Salem Baptist Church, all of whom presented letters of admission. The procedure continued through several subsequent meetings as others presented their letters. After the election of the necessary officers for the ensuing year, it was voted that the church hold its meetings in the two

houses of worship alternating each month between the Middle Street house, Second Baptist Church and the house on North Street, Salem Baptist Church.

A motion was made that a vote of thanks be extended to the Pastors' First and North Baptist Churches for the use of their churches and for the worthy counsel received in behalf of the newly incorporated Union Baptist Church.

On July 29, 1895, a business meeting was called to consider the subject of a new church building and a committee was appointed to investigate the subject and suggest ways and means of attaining this objective. The committee reported that the Swedish Baptist Mission had made an offer of $3,200.00 for the Second Baptist Church building on the north side of Middle Street east of County Street. After several months of negotiations, the sale was completed on September 25,v 1896. Meanwhile, the pulpit of Union Baptist Church had been occupied b transient ministers. A call was extended December 10, 1895 to Reverend E. H. MacDonald, and the call was accepted January 27, 1896.

On March 7, 1897 at First Baptist Church, Williams Street, the ordinance of baptism was administered to several candidates and at the evening services held at Union Baptist Church , the Hand of Fellowship was extended to the newly baptized, admitting them to full membership. This same procedure was followed for several years as the membership continued to increase. The last service in the Second Baptist Church was held on July 1, 1896. The last service in the Old Salem Church, North Sixth Street, was held on July 21, 1899 with the Rev. E.H. MacDonald reading from the Scripture I Peter 2.

Consequently, with funds on hand from the sale of two churches, and subscriptions and other sources available, a desirable plot of ground in the West End area of the city corner Cedar and Court Streets, was purchased and the cornerstone was laid with the Mayor present at impressive ceremonies in 1899. When the new edifice was completed, there was one full week of dedication from March 25th to April 4th of 1900, with visiting clergymen from far and near speaking from the platform of the new temple.

The ministry of Reverend MacDonald ended in September 1900. He was succeeded by the Reverend William W. Ryan in February 1901, his ministry ended in 1908. He was succeeded by the Reverend N. A. Marriet who served from May 1908 to 1912. Reverend Charles Dixon, his successor, served from May 1913, to June 1915. The Reverend Nathaniel Robinson, his successor, served from January 1916, to June 1917. The Reverend L. J. Nichols served the pulpit from January 1918, to March 1920. The Reverend Charles Shelton served from 1920, to 1929. During his administration the church celebrated its 25th Anniversary and on September 22, 1921, the church mortgage was burned with the assistance of Mrs. Martha James, the church's oldest member, who lit the match.

During the years 1929 to 1937 the pulpit was occupied by the Reverend Arthur Spratley. In 1938 the call was accepted by Rev. Benton Harris who served until 1942. In 1943 the church observed its 45th Anniversary, under the guidance of the Reverend Paul Fullilove who served this church diligently from 1946 from 1946, to 1950. November 4, 1951 the church was graced with the acceptance of call from Reverend Edward A. Hailes, B.A., B.D.. During his administration the church celebrated its 62nd Anniversary on March 24 thru 29th, 1957. He was succeeded by the Reverend Hugh A. McGhee, who served this church form December 1963 to September 1970. The Reverend Stanley Barnes served this church on an interim basis from September 1970 to November 1973. A call was sent and accepted by the Reverend Luther Parson, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and he served this church and community form November 12, 1973 to March 1975. The Reverend William A. Howard, Boston, Massachusetts, served this church from November 2, 1975 to December 31, 1978. The Reverend Bravell Dodd Sr., Providence RI a long time friend of this church and community received his call March 3, 1979 he served until 1982. The Reverend Brett Snowden, served from November 1982 to May of 1988. The Reverend Oliver T. Lee, came to serve Union Baptist Church in November of 1988, and served until October 1991 In November of 1991 The Reverend Steven E. Taylor Beaver Falls Pennsylvania, served as interim pastor until he received the call and was installed on October 4, 1992. He served until September 2008. During his administration Union Baptist Church celebrated its 100th Anniversary with a weekend of celebrations. On June 16, 2008 the church was added to the National Register of Historic Places. The Reverend Pajibo Kyne MS, M, DIV accepted the call and was installed as pastor of Union Baptist Church with a weekend of celebration on September 20, 2009.

Part II

In the year of 1826, a small group of black citizens met an organized the African Christian Church. Fourteen years later, this church became known as The Third Christian Church, located on Middle Street, east of Cypress Street, now Cottage Street.

In 1840, Frederick and Anna (Murray) Douglass had their first child, Rosetta, blessed by Reverend Jacob Perry. In this small congregation Douglass met contemporaries who like himself, had taken the hazardous path of escape. In the year 1844, during the days of anti-slavery agitation, a group of nineteen persons met and decided to withdraw and establish a church became known as the Second Baptist Church, with Thomas Allen as the acting pastor.

The reason for this action was due to sentiments similar to those advocated by the Calvinist Baptist, and other things pertaining to the Baptist denomination. This group secured and old

schoolhouse for their place of worship. In the year 1845, this group was dedicated and organized.

Reverend Allen had by this time been ordained and became the first pastor of the Second Baptist Church, he served the church for three years (1845 – 1848), and was followed by the Rev. Kelly who served from 1848 to 1851. He was succeeded by Rev. Elder Johnson of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, who served for one year. (1851 to 1852)

Rev. Cummings Brav, who had been preaching at Gayhead, Martha's Vineyard pastored the church form 1852 to 1855. In 1855 Rev. Jackson resumed his pastorate with the church and served until 1858. At this time he and a small portion of the congregation withdrew and organized the Salem Baptist Church, with Rev. Jackson's departure, Rev Edmund Kelly again served as pastor for a brief period. Succeeding him were Rev. Richard Vaughn, Rev. Pleasant Bowler, Rev. Theodore P. Valentine, and Rev. Caleb Woodard. This church was located on Middle Street, east of County Street, the present location of the Elm Street Baptist Church.

At the time of Rev. Jackson's withdrawal from the church, Second Baptist had a membership of over two hundred and fifty, plus a Sunday school of seventy-five members. Second Baptist for many years played its role in the development in the town and city of New Bedford. Rev. and a small group of the congregation of Second Baptist withdrew in 1858, due to a misunderstanding and the feeling that they could no longer live together in harmony.

An Ecclesiastical Council was called in the vestry of the First Baptist Church and after careful examination of the articles of faith and the covenant, the council unanimously accepted this group as a church to be known as the Salem Baptist Church. Since they had no building, the church held meetings for five months in a room in the Perkins block of Union Street between Purchase and Fifth Streets, now Pleasant Street.

In June of 1858, Salem Baptist Church purchased the old Center Chapel on Sixth Street between Union and Market Streets. The first pastor was Rev. William Jackson who served 1858 to 1863 , at which time he was granted leave to serve as Chaplain of the 55th Massachusetts Regiment. He was the first negro chaplain in the state of Massachusetts. Mrs. Bertha Jackson-Youngblood, former organist at the Union Baptist Church was the grand-daughter of Rev. Jackson.

Salem Baptist had many outstanding citizens on its church roll. Among them were Deacon William Bush, one of the cities early contractors, Anthony Jordain, son of New Bedford's earliest wigmakers, Seargeant William H. Carney, one of New Bedford's first five mail carriers and also a civil war veteran and receiver of the Congressional Medal of Honor. James E. Reed

photographer, and Edward Jackson, whose daughter Lucy Whitney bequeathed her home to Union Baptist Church for a parsonage.

Other outstanding members were Martha J. James , Mary S. Hudson, Charles Carter, John P. York, James Reynolds, Mr. & Mrs. Henry and Martha Onley. Levina Betts one of the founders of Salem Baptist Church , bequeathed to the church two houses on lots located on Kempton Street. The church took possession of the property upon the death of his widow Harriet Betts. This property was sold and a portion of the proceeds was used to remodel the church.

The cultural and social programs of the earliest church and church school did not have as great a competition as those today. There seemed to be a closer affiliation between the church and home.

There were very few children among the ninety-six members and the devoted Sunday school teachers went out and recruited until Salem had a high Sunday school attendance. It was one of the first Sunday Schools in the city to adopt international lessons. In 1855 the Sunday school had an enrollment of one hundred and fifty-five students and twelve teachers. /Some of the teachers who served were Benjamin Magnett, Mary Onley-Hudson, James Magnett, Margaret V. Onley, John Dunlap, Josephine Ritter, Anne Bush-Jordain, James E. Reed, Mary Drummonds, and Annie Galloway.

Many persons contributed to the church who were not members. Among them were Dr. Joan Bennet-Drummonds, Rose Bush-Lewis, daughter of Andrew and Bell Mitchell-Bush, founder of Bush Dry Cleaning Company, Bertha Samplin-Shefton, daughter of Parker Samplin, one of the city's first policemen, Hattie Parker-Richardson, daughter of John Parker, a well known tinsmith, and Estelle Carter one of New Bedford's' school teachers.

In March of 1895, reconciliation became mutual between the Second Baptist and Salem Baptist Church's, and a desire for a union between the two churches was evidenced.

For that purpose a small group of members was dismissed from each church to confer with an advisory board. This board was comprised of the pastors of the First and North Baptist Churches and a representative from the State

Baptist Convention. They met at the First Baptist Church and following several council meetings, the union of the two churches became effective. The proposed union was unanimously received and adopted, and on the eighteenth day of April 1895, the organization was duly incorporated, henceforth to be known as The Union Baptist Church located at the corner of Cedar and Court Streets in New Bedford. The cornerstone was laid by mason Benjamin C,. Magnett.

FIRST MEMBERS OF UNION BAPTIST CHURCH

AGNES LEE

SARA E. SMITH

SUSAN A. HAYDEN

ANNIE HARROLD

MARGARET V. ONLEY

FANNIE YATES

FRANCIS JOHNSON

SARAH A. JOHNSON

SENORA LEE

ROSINE DANDRIGE

ELLA COOK

ANNIE GALLOWAY

MARY A. REED

JOHN C. LEE

SUSAN THOMAS

HARRIET CHUMMACK

CORENA WHITE

ELIAS MORGAN

SARAH JACKSON

LOVE P. WILLIAMS

LAURA FELTON

ROBERT REYNOLDS

ANGIE MAGNETT

MARTHA ONLEY

ALICE BAILY

JULIE LINDSEY

MADELINE PEASE

JAMES A. REYNOLDS

ANNA E. JORDAIN

AMOS HARROLD

HARRY A. FORTED

JAMES E. AYLEY

RICHARD OLIVER

MARY F. DRUMMONDS

JAMES REED

ANNA J. REED

CHARLES THOMAS

THEODORE TAYLOR

WILLIAM P. SYKES

LUCY FOSTER

MIRIAM SEALS

MARY TAYLOR

RHONDA HENRY

LUCY SYKES

MARTHA CONROY

LUCY JACKSON

JOHN C. GUINN

NARY V. COSY

JAMES MAGNETT

EMMA MAGNETT

ELIZABETH CISCO

SARAH ROSHUR

CALEDONIA THORNE

SOPHIE JOHNSON

MERCY HILL

MARTHA JAMES

MARGARET MORIN

AMELIA PATTERSON

ADELAIDE RITTER

FRANCIS WEST

SARAH WIGGINS

ANNIE E. PIERCE

ANNIE WELLING

ANNIE SAMPLIN

WILLIAM FERGUSON

HENRY FOSTER

EDWARD LORD

ELIZA FORTUNE

LOUISE ARRECK

GARR CARCY

MARY YORK

ELIZABETH RANDOLPH

WILLIAM H. CARNEY

MARIA HAYDEN

SUSIE A. HAYDEN

MIGUEL A. FORTES

BENJAMIN MAGNETT