

A HISTORY OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST AMONG AFRO-AMERICANS IN MICHIGAN

Introduction:

- A. Detroit one of the great centers of the church in the US
- B. Church ties to outstanding national black leaders
 - 1. Rosa Parks and Fred Gray,
 - 2. Janie Orr
 - 3. Alex Haley's relatives
 - 4. Joe Louis
- C. Malcolm X's boyhood in the Lansing, MI area

I. BEGINNING OF THE BLACK CHURCHES OF CHRIST

- A. Biracial-racial from the beginning - chart of early churches
 - 1. Cane Ridge picture and balcony
 - 2. All churches were BI-racial prior to the Civil War
 - a. 1832 - church in Little Rock had balcony for slaves
 - b. 1835 General Clark to Jackson, MS & preached/baptized his slaves
- B. Nashville church 1849
 - 1. 1851 the Am. and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society reported the "Cambellites owned 101,000 slaves w/ Methodists and Baptists having more than twice that number
- C. Thyatira, MS history during Civil War

II. THE STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE

- A. Poor, rural and outcast
- B. Christian education efforts
 - 1. 1882 - 1932 Southern Christian Institute, Edwards, MS
 - 2. 1894 - 1924 - Lum Graded School, Lum, AL
 - 3. 1913 beginning - Jarvis Christian Institute, Hawlins, TX
 - 2. G. P. Bowser
 - a. 1907 - 1908, Jackson Avenue in Nashville
 - b. 1909-1918, Silver Point, TN, Annie Tuggle, T. H. Busby assist
 - c. 1920 for six weeks - Southern Practical Institute, Nashville
 - e. 1938-1946 - Fort Smith, AR
 - f. 1946 - 1947 - Detroit, MI
 - g. 1947 - 1948, Southern Bible Institute, Fort Worth, TX
 - h. 1948 - 1949 -the school continued at Terrell, TX
 - I. 1949 - 1950 - opening of Southwestern Christian College, Terrell, TX
 - 2. Nashville Christian Institute, 1940-1967
 - a. Marion F. Holt, President, A. C. Holt, Vice-president - 2 years
 - b. Marshall Keeble - 1942-1967

III. ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

- A. Migration away from the South
 - 1. Began during WWI
 - 2. 2,500,000 during WWII
- B. In the South: from farm to the city
- C. Churches formerly started and maintained by white brethren developed freedom
- D. A. M. Burton began supporting Marshall Keeble in 1930 - 1st full-time evangelist

IV. EARLY HISTORY OF MICHIGAN

- A. 1836 - establishment of first black Baptist church
- B. 1837 - first white Restoration church has sporadic meetings
- C. The underground railroad

V. BLACK CHURCH BEGINNING IN MICHIGAN

- A. 1918 - W. C. Baldwin, preacher. with encouragement from Claude Witty, met for the first assembly in George and Blanch Yowell's home on May 29
 - 1. White assistance began in 1920
 - 2. 1922 - River Rouge began
- B. T. H. York, the second preacher, came from Nashville in 1917 and stayed in Claude Witty's home
 - 1. 1921 Highland Park mission began, York came in 1923, white assistance
- C. Store-front Alexandrine and St. Antoine - white assistance
 - 1. D. M. English, preached
 - 2. G. P. Bowser persuaded D. J. Bynum to come in 1930
- D. 1934 - Purchased from white brethren the Cameron Avenue building
- E. 1946 - purchase Joseph Campau for \$30,000
 - 1. Some stay at Cameron Avenue
- F. Bowser and Keeble visits

VI. DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK INSTITUTIONS

- A. The Big Four - National Lectureship began in 1945
- B. Southwestern Christian College - 1950 - Thanksgiving Lectures
- C. National Youth Conference - began in Detroit 1952
- D. Crusade for Christ - Dr. Daniel Harrison, National Director - began 1979

VI. TROUBLE IN DETROIT

- A. Membership outgrew the quiet and aging Bynum, new generation wanted change
- B. O. L. Trone, Sr. asked to leave driving city bus and try preaching
 - 1. Sent to Baldwin, later helped in Pontiac
 - 2. Younger people want Trone as preacher, elders tend to oppose
- C. Congregational meeting dismisses elders
 - 1. New church bylaws written by Trone
 - 2. Marshall Keeble comes to help settle difficulties - promotes the school
 - 3. Church leaders leave National Lectureship and come to settle problem
 - 4. Trone makes public confession and publicly tears up bylaws
 - 5. Trone is dismissed as preacher by elders but refuses to leave
 - a. Locks changed, armed guard escorts him to preach
 - 6. Trone has another copy of bylaws
- D. In both lower court and in appeal to Michigan Supreme Court
 - 1. Majority rule upheld - decision in favor of By-laws and elders dismissal
 - 2. The elders and a handful of members begin a new group on east side
 - a. Later secure the old Fairview building on E. Vernor at Lemay
 - b. Both Cameron and Fairview were buildings built by the Grays
- E. Fall-out: encouraged preacher-rule and degraded elder-rule in black churches
 - 1. Negative climate regarding white elders - paternalism
 - 2. Independence toward making own decisions
 - 3. Appeal of the role model of black Pastors

VII. MORE RECENT HISTORY

- A. Growth and separation - Race Relations forums of 1960s
 - 1. 1967 Cobo Hall Meeting with Jimmy Allen
 - 2. Michigan Christian College began 1959 - little effort to include blacks
 - 3. East Side Central
 - 4. Lansing, 1st church began in 1937, Holmes Rd began 1953, united with black mission in 1963
- B. Strathmoor and Will Ed Warren
 - 1. Monthly meetings of church leaders/wives in homes
 - 2. Racial integration - 51% - whites not used to minority status
- C. Churches in transition - 6 in Detroit area
 - 1. Black-White pulpit exchanges began 1979
- D. Monthly meetings
 - 1. White - Preachers' Luncheon began 1940
 - 2. Black - Concerned Leaders' Breakfast begun by Trone in 1971
 - 3. God's Family Banquet began 1987
- F. Crusade for Christ - 1991 - biracial success

VIII. OUT-STATE CHURCHES

- A. Albion (1945), Baldwin (1948), Benton Harbor (1947), Flint (1948), Grand Rapids (1945), Jackson (1922), Kalamazoo (1948-1950), Saginaw (1951)
- B. Efforts at integration
 - 1. Ann Arbor, Lansing, Saginaw, Carpenter Road - Flint

Conclusions

- A. Two separate worlds - slow improvement - MI has a relatively strong church presence
 - 1. Good opportunity for sharing
- B. We have to work at fellowship in Christ
- C. Let the painful memories of the past spur us to greater appreciation of unity in Christ