

1867-2022—A PROUD HISTORY

A church is its people. The history of a church is the story of what God has done through people. Thus, when we consider the history of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church it is really a part of God's story. Each success and each challenge should remind one that only what we do for Christ will last.

The history of the people comprising Mount Pleasant Baptist Church extends back to 1863 when many of them were granted freedom from slavery and similar servitude. This group of brave men and women out of slavery traveled hundreds of miles by foot through unfamiliar territory comprised mainly of trails, cow paths and murky swamps and settled in the Alexandria area. Although they arrived as freed slaves with no formal education, and no previous business knowledge, God blessed them to make homes for their families.



The success of these men and women attracted the attention of Mr. Charles H. Brown (a white man) and he offered 60 acres of land for sale. Many persons bought the land and built homes. These early settlers included such persons as Catherine Johnson, Giles Payne, William Nutt, John Curry, Andrew Jackson, Fenton Somers, Michael Miner, Jim Hinshaw, Ennis Jackson, Brown Sheppard, and Georgianna Sheppard.

The village created by the homes of these persons was named Mount Pleasant as a reflection of the cooperation and pleasantness that existed among the residents and because the village was located on a hill. Mr. Brown, who sold them the land, thought that a settlement would not be complete without a church, so he gave one acre of land "to be used exclusively for religious and school purposes and for a burying ground by and for colored people." On September 7, 1867, Mr. Brown and his wife, Eliza, deeded the land "to Andrew Jackson, Fenton Somers, William Nutt, and John Curry, freedmen of Fairfax County." These men organized the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church in 1867.

The first church had one small room and was made of pine logs. It was used for worship services on Sunday and as a school during the week. In 1881, a mere 14 years later, a frame church was built and it doubled the size of the original building. New families into the community included names such as Pinkett, Scott, Warner, Moore, Butler, Gaskins, and Wheeler. These families continue to be an integral part of the church.

As the people worked for the cause of Christ, the church continued to grow, making it necessary to build again in 1931. The program of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church broadened to provide varied avenues for Christian worship, service, fellowship, and religious education. All was designed to address the needs of the people and promote the cause of Christ.



In the mid-1970's, a new building became mandatory. The official ground breaking for the new edifice was held July 17, 1976. The March-in followed a year later on August 7, 1977. God blessed the people and on April 3, 1983, being free of debt, the mortgage for the new sanctuary was burned.

On September 20, 1992, the sanctuary of the church built in 1931 was refurbished, officially dedicated and named the Pinkett and Sheppard Memorial Chapel thus celebrating the work of two former pastors. The nursery and other areas of the building were modified in recent years.

Having recognized a need, on July 21, 2012 the church authorized a feasibility study for an elevator to enable elderly or physically challenged individuals to conveniently get to the lower level of the church. On March 22, 2014 ground was broken for the elevator and praise God, the elevator was put in service on September 6, 2015.





Mount Pleasant Baptist Church is one of the oldest Black Baptist churches in Northern Virginia. It has been officially recognized as a historic institution by the Fairfax County Historic Commission. The unveiling and dedication of the Historical Marker was held on August 5, 2017.

A list of Pastors who faithfully served at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church through its 152 years includes Rev. Laws, the first pastor; Rev. Randolph Scott; Rev. Pryor; Rev. Randolph Peyton; Rev. John Pinkett; Rev. Milton Sheppard; Rev. Dr. Carroll Baltimore; Rev. Clary Brown; Rev. Dr. Harry J. Pilson; and our current pastor Rev. Dr. Carl M. Johnson. Pastor Johnson accepted the call of the Church and began his tenure on July 6, 2014. He was installed on October 5, 2014.

Under Pastor Johnson's leadership, Mount Pleasant has welcomed many new members and seen great change. Pastor Johnson has licensed eight ministers to preach the Gospel and ordained nine Deacons, seven Deaconesses, and consecrated five Trustees. Many other changes on behalf of the Church were initiated, implemented, and instituted. Some of the highlights of his tenure include: a viable strategic plan for Mount Pleasant that included a series of Leadership conferences, streaming church worship services, and on-line giving, Youth "Thursday Night Take Over" (TNT), Capital Campaign for facility improvements, dedication of the elevator in memory of Beatrice White. In 2018 the Mount Pleasant Board of Directors was reorganized to add three at-large lay members selected from the congregation. Currently there are 20 deacons and 22 deaconesses under his guidance.

Pastor Johnson established the popular summer worship schedule and community Bible study cookout. Mount Pleasant had its first two-day noonday Senior Revival in 2018. Discipleship classes for men and women have been established. The Grief Ministry and Safety & Security Ministry were reactivated.

In April 2018 Pastor Johnson was selected to participate in a three year Strategic Pastoral Excellence Program (SPEP). The Program is designed to recognize and support significant pastoral leaders and their congregations through a curriculum that focuses on personal and business financial skills. Dr. Johnson was appointed Region 1 President of the Northern Virginia Baptist Association, Inc., Gainesville, VA (Rev. Dr. Augustus Henderson, Moderator). He also serves on the Executive Board of the Baptist General Convention, Richmond, VA. He is a member of the Kingdom Association of Covenant Pastors (KACP).

Always looking forward, Pastor Johnson has initiated a Youth Council for children ages 10 through 18. Mount Pleasant has been blessed to have an outreach ministry that offers nurturing to all of God's Children. To help meet the needs of the members, many ministries have been added. They have included ministries for children, youth, young adults, singles, seniors, men, women and the grieving, to name a few.

On January 5, 2019, Pastor Johnson convened a Leadership Conference that kicked-off a strategic planning effort that used a four-step process resulting in the development of the MPBC Strategic Plan for 2020-2024 in January 2020. A Vision Team was formed to oversee the process. The plan includes eight strategic goals, each led by a goal group. Mount Pleasant's ministries serve as a key part of the implementation and are supported by the Spiritual Audit Team. The plan can be found on the Mount Pleasant website. The Church is kept abreast of progress through reports to the Quarterly Church Conferences and written documents that are placed on the website.

On March 16, 2019, the church honored the retired Superintendent/Church School Director, Sister Aaronita Mackley Brown after 50 years of dedicated service and named the library in her honor the "Aaronita Mackley Brown Church School Office". Sister Yvonne Bush was appointed the new Church School Director in January 2019.

The church continued its missionary work by supplying over 20,000 meals in October 5, 2019 for Kids Against Hunger going to Africa as well as other needed supplies. The Deaconess and Women's Ministry held a celebration in October. Under Pastor Johnson's leadership on November 16, 2019, the First Community Fellowship Day was held labeled "Unity in the Community," free meals and clothing were provided.

Theme for 2020
“We Are Committed to the Spirit of Excellence” Matthew 5:16

In January 2020, Pastor Johnson introduced the Faith giving initiative which entailed giving above and beyond tithes and offerings. Starting in February 220 members were asked to give in amounts of 2020. The trustees developed a list of projects to beautify and sustain the physical building for which the funds will be used.

Such a theme has never been needed as much as this one for the current times beginning on March 15, 2020. On this date MPBC cancelled all worship services, in-person church activities, programs and events as a precautionary measure due to the state of emergency caused by the corona virus, COVID-19. The church office staff began practicing social distancing while continuing to meet the administrative and communication needs of members. Even though the church building was closed, Pastor Johnson used his technological acumen to put in place ways to meet the church’s spiritual needs using several digital platforms for ministry, prayer meetings, Bible study, and Sunday worship services.

The spirit was evident with our first dial in prayer service during the start of a coronavirus epidemic. The excellence of all learning to use various forms of technology to keep God’s church alive and reaching souls. The first virtual worship service on Sunday March 22 with Pastor Johnson recording his sermon. Church members (the WE) showing each other how to use technology. Church School held zoom lesson starting March 29.

Specifically, on March 24, he established a Tuesday evening virtual prayer service using conference calls, along with the established 6 a.m. Friday morning prayers. Wednesday noon-day Bible study and Thursday evening prayer and Bible study were conducted virtually using Zoom teleconferencing and conference calls. Homecoming and Revival services were conducted virtually with guest pastors delivering their messages live streamed via the MPBC website. Music ministry continued through soloists, liturgical dance, and even a virtual choir. The digital platform afforded us the opportunity to study and grow in knowledge, understanding and application of Biblical principles. Mount Pleasant continued to grow, gaining three new ‘E-members’ in 2020.

A community food give away has been held twice, May 23 and August 18 under the Emergency Preparedness Committee. Children and Youth Day was held June 28. Graduates were honored. First virtual church meeting was held on August 29. We are committed to the spirit of excellence by all church members and it has been remarkable.

Many persons have given their time, talent, service and means to the cause of Christ since 1867 at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church. On October 11, 2020 long time member of 69 years and Head of the Culinary Ministry, Mrs. Hazel Gooden was called home to be with our Lord and Savior. On December 22, 2020, Trustee William “Sonny” Duke, one of Alexandria’s successful African American businessmen succumbed to Covid-19. Duke was well known in Alexandria for owning five dry-cleaning business and a model for African Americans.

The year 2021 found us “**Emerging Renewed and Stronger**” Isaiah 40:31. The church continued having virtual meetings and classes to include the Women’s Ministry’s cooking, speakers, exercise classes, and Vacation Bible School. Several community food drives were held on the church parking lot. All were welcome. In addition, Communion supplies were distributed so individuals could partake in their homes.

Phase III of re-entry started on Sunday July 25, 2021, with approximately 50 people in attendance. This was made possible by an on-line pre-registration process and strict protocols for admittance to the sanctuary. As we look forward to a new norm, there is high expectation that Mount Pleasant will emerge renewed. We have not stood still, we are stronger.

Since the 154th anniversary of Mount Pleasant Baptist on September 12, 2021 many things have been going on to lead up to the 155th anniversary of the church. On September 17, 2021 we saw the licensing of four ministers, Derrick Allen, Penni Ford, Kimberly Seward and Midi Spinner under Pastor Johnson.

Fellowshipping with Alfred Street Baptist Church, the MPBC Missionary Ministry along with other churches organized and stuffed 100 barrels with personal hygiene items, medical and baby items and general needs items to send to Haiti after a devastating earthquake. Many hands of GOD working together, October 2021.

A new year 2022 and God has truly blessed Mount Pleasant Baptist Church. The theme for the year is “**Expanding for a Greater Work**” Isaiah 54:2. The church continues to monitor and adhere to CDC and Virginia Health Department guidelines. The year started out with the Ordination of two ministers: Jessie Reynolds and Cornella Carter-Taylor on January 23, 2022. What a blessing from God. Then, on March 20, MPBC had the first baptisms and welcome fellowships since the COVID pandemic. A new Minister of Music was appointed Jarvis Smith.

Praise the Lord on June 19, 2022, the church was open and all allowed to attend worship service without pre-registration and COVID release forms for the first time in two years. Our heritage has been rich and varied; our labors hard and long. As we remember the triumphs of the past, let us renew our commitment to the challenge which lies ahead – to make Christ known to ALL as the Savior of the World.

We celebrate Pastor Carl Johnson’s 8th Anniversary as he continues to dedicate his time, knowledge, and support as Shepherd to lead and serve Mount Pleasant Baptist Church.

During 2022, he was instrumental in setting up a new, updated Church app. Where individuals can text a number to request prayer, membership, or salvation and receive a response. A Congregational Care Ministry group was established for virtual/out of town members.

Pastor Johnson was recently appointed as Chairperson, Commission on Christian Faith Formation at the 2022 Baptist General Convention, Inc., Richmond, Virginia.

In the Works - - A podcast titled “The Heart Cry” with the theme “Living your best Life in real Life.”

