

# *Calvary's Extended History*

## **It was the year 1829...**

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The United States was in its infancy. Only 23 states had been admitted to the Union. Andrew Jackson was President. Slavery was a highly economical institution in the South. The use of railways had expanded along with the use of steamboats. Chicago was only a flourishing town. The beginning of the newspaper as seen today had just emerged. Gold and Silver were the legal tender.

It was in this setting in Louisville, Kentucky that the first Colored Baptist Church was organized. According to Walnut Street Baptist Church history, we find that in 1822, Reverend Phillip S. Fall, Pastor of the First Baptist Church (later named Walnut Street Baptist Church) of Louisville, Kentucky baptized two colored people. During his four years of pastorage, he received and baptized nine colored people. In 1829, freed Blacks and slaves who worshipped at the First Baptist Church founded Louisville's first all Black Baptist church called the First Colored Baptist Church. These people worshipped in a building on Market Street near Eighth. In 1831, the church moved to a building at Fifth and York streets on a piece of land that became a gift. It was deeded on May 7, 1833 (Deed Book K.K.P.P. 33-37) by Benjamin Stansbury to Henry Smith, a free man of color, for the consideration of \$1.00.

## **Rev. B. L. Davis**

Under Rev. Offutt's capable leadership, Calvary continued her progress and maintained her place among the leaders in denominational work and civic affairs. However, several disastrous events took place during Rev. Offutt's pastorate.

The flood of 1937 and later a fire in the back of the church caused serious damage to the church. Weak places found in the structure of the church necessitated extensive remodeling and redecorating.

While Rev. Offutt was pastor, World War II broke out and after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941, the United States entered the theater of war. During the war years, Calvary's doors were open

Rev. L. A. Offutt, the nephew of Offutt, filled the pulpit as interim pastor until the call was extended in 1950 to B.L. Davis, A.B. of Cleveland, Ohio.

Four years after Rev. Davis took charge of the leadership of Calvary, the church celebrated its 125th Anniversary. The church was still debating what to do about a new location. The United States had a new President, General Eisenhower. Discrimination against Blacks in the field of education was erased. The Supreme Court ruled that the separate but equal doctrine, practiced for many years, was illegal. The number of Blacks lynched

## **Rev. Samuel L. Whitlow, Jr.**

Our beloved Pastor was taken from us, but we were left in the hands of a very capable Interim Pastor in the person of the Rev. Samuel Whitlow, Jr.

In the year 2010, Calvary was blessed to have three Centenarians, Sallie Childs (then 100), Sylvia Watkins, deceased at the age of one hundred and two.

Since 2010, the nation and most of the world is still experiencing a severe recession and many churches are deeply in debt. We at Calvary are also feeling the pain, of the recession, but, Calvary Missionary Baptist Church is still going strong and celebrating its 183rd Anniversary.

At a special called meeting in November 2009, presided by Dr. Charles Duncan, Sr., Pastor of First Virginia Avenue Baptist Church, the members of Calvary voted for Rev. Samuel L. Whitlow, Jr., the Interim Pastor, to be the seventh pastor of Calvary since its reorganization in 1883.

Rev. Whitlow was quite familiar with the church because he had operated as an Associate Minister to the late Reverend Poyntz, Sr. for many years.

In 1849, a part of the membership of the First Colored Baptist Church moved to a lot on Fifth and Walnut Streets and became Fifth Street Baptist Church. Thus, occurred the division of the original members who started from First Baptist Church. The part of the membership that refused to leave the old spot remained at Fifth and York and was known as York Street Baptist Church. Reverend W. W. Taylor was the pastor.

The year is now 1854, twenty-five years after the organization of the “Mother Church,” the country has expanded in growth. The total number of states in the Union has risen to thirty. Harriett Tubman is active in helping slaves escape through the Underground Railroad. Frederick Douglas has escaped slavery and is living in Baltimore. Franklin Pierce, a Democrat, has been elected President.

Rev. Taylor is continuing as pastor of York Street Baptist Church. He passed in 1882, but, before his passing, the Zion Baptist Church was organized by members who withdrew from York Street Baptist Church.

On October 11, 1883, a council was called for the purpose of reorganizing York Street Baptist Church. It was unanimously voted that York Street Baptist Church would disband. One hundred and eleven members were willing to go into a new organization.

This organization adopted the name of Calvary Baptist Church and the Rev. C. S. Dinkins, A.B., was unanimously voted as pastor.

each year had dropped from 106 in 1900 to zero in 1952. By the 1950's, Blacks were permitted to vote in the South. In 1951, segregation of Blacks in the armed forces was abandoned.

During this time, Calvary is still struggling to secure a new home. Rev. Davis decided to resign in the fall of 1956, which was made effective before January 1957.

The Reverend William Hollis Bell, a native Louisvillian, from Pontiac, Michigan, became pastor of Calvary in July 1957. On September 24, 1957, the church property at Fifth and York Streets, the site of the “Mother Lot” was sold. A church building at 28<sup>th</sup> and Woodland was purchased and consummated July 3, 1959 by a cash payment. Previously, on March 3, 1958, a motorcade formed at the historic site at Fifth and York, led by the pastor and officers, rounded its way through town to the new site of Calvary Baptist Church at 28<sup>th</sup> and Woodland. The cornerstone presented by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Fournoy was laid in an impressive service on October 9, 1960.

During the spring of 1961, the church was completely renovated and a baptistery was installed. The house adjoining the church was purchased to make room for a parking lot. Central air conditioning and padded pews were installed. The lounge, prayer room, kitchen and dining area were redecorated.

The year 1979 marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Calvary Baptist Church. The church is still going strong and realizing successful progress. In the last 25 years, the country

After accepting his call, Rev. Whitlow has been very active in continuing the spiritual leadership that has always been a major characteristic of Calvary. Membership has increased and finances have increased allowing the church to minimize debts.

Under his supervision, Calvary successfully experienced its first summer camp for children called Camp Calvary which is now in its third year; the Text Ministry was established and expanded; the 9:00 am Sunday morning worship service was added with only thankful and appreciative comments; systems were installed to project worship services in the sanctuary, basement and prayer room; the Women's Ministry was revived along with several other ministries, and the following repairs and alterations have been made: roof repaired, a new sound system installed, parking lot resealed and stripped, lighting enhanced on all levels, classrooms, kitchen ceilings, floors and walls repaired and painted, new floor tiles installed in the kitchen, new carpet and padding installed in the sanctuary as well as new carpet in the classrooms on the third level. Additionally, new pews were installed in 2012 along with carpet in the prayer room and adjacent rooms and a second van added in 2013.

History was made for Calvary in September of 2012, when the first female pastor was welcomed into Calvary's pulpit to bring God's word for both the 9:00 am and 11:00 am services. Calvary's community involvement increased and through Rev. Whitlow's leadership, Calvary continues to work to help transform our community. We adopted several vacant

Within this early period, several members broke away from Calvary according to the Meadowlawn Church history (*found on Meadowlawn.org*).

A small band of Christians who attended Calvary Baptist Church and who resided in the southwestern part of Louisville began worship services within their own community because Calvary was a great distance away. The distance created transportation problems for those members wishing to attend weekly prayer services. After much discussion and prayer, these members parted and began meeting in various homes, mostly in the home of Sister Matilda Camp which became known as the "Church." A plot of land was later secured and deeded to the "Trustees of the Meadowlawn Colored Baptist Church and School.

Looking back 50 years after the organization of the church to the year 1879, we encounter a host of major changes that have evolved in the nation and made a great impact on the Black church. A great war had been fought between the northern and southern states ending with a victory for the North. Abraham Lincoln, our fifteenth President, has been assassinated. After the war, the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments were passed guaranteeing the slaves' freedom, citizenship and the right to vote.

The effect of the war and its aftermath had a positive effect on all Colored churches, including Calvary. The freed slaves had more money to contribute and many of the slaves who had been forbidden to leave the

has experienced some very catastrophic situations. President Kennedy was assassinated.

There was an uprising by Blacks seeking their freedom from the Jim Crow laws. Freedom marches were carried out. Martin Luther King, a dedicated preacher and leader, led the people toward securing freedom from segregation. His *March* on Washington was spectacular and his freedom speech will ring through the minds of people worldwide. Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis in 1968.

Returning to Calvary, Rev. Bell has become very well known for his denominational contributions to the city, state and national associations. However, soon after, he contracted a serious illness. During his illness, he was aided by the Rev. Larry Cunningham and Rev. Thomas Styles. Rev. Bell succumbed to his illness on October 4, 1984. After his death, Rev. Cunningham served as interim pastor.

In 1985, the call was extended to the Rev. Larry D. Poyntz, Sr., the pastor of First Baptist Church in Nicholasville, Kentucky. He accepted and became the sixth pastor of Calvary Baptist Church. Under his capable and spiritual leadership, the church made much progress.

When Pastor Poyntz came to Calvary, he made several changes. He reorganized the choirs and put major emphasis on the responsibility of each member to tithe. Sunday School attendance was strongly urged for all members in order for them to learn more about the Bible. He started a Bible study class on Wednesday

properties in our community where we maintain the lots by mowing, weeding and cleaning on a regular basis.

The church continues to open for community care during extreme hot days and suffering due to storms and other devastating conditions and occurrences as well as during Holy Week for prayer and submission.

There have been further improvements and exciting enhancements in 2013. On January 21, 2013, Calvary celebrated, along with the rest of the nation, the beginning of the second term of President Barack Obama and the birthday of another great leader, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. On this day, Calvary's youth gathered at the church to watch the Inauguration, to learn more about President Obama and Rev. King and how they can become great men and women of God. Also in January, Calvary celebrated the newly established Deacon Appreciation Day for their dedication and ongoing evangelistic efforts.

Early in 2013, Rev. Whitlow presented a wonderful opportunity and bible training experience for the church and community by establishing the first Calvary Missionary Baptist Church Bible Institute with the first class ending on July 27, 2013. This course was taught by Dr. Warren C. Eley, a former professor and Academic Dean at Simmons Bible College.

Calvary's community work extends to the Parkland Community Improvement Program efforts, to the spiritual and physical needs of the new Family Scholar House families and to our first community feeding program

plantation could enjoy the freedom of attending church regularly.

The Negro church developed following the war. It served as the cornerstone for all Negro life. Following the war and throughout later years, the road to success in Negro life was paved through activities within the church.

At the time of the reorganization of the York Street Baptist Church as Calvary, the edifice was heavily in debt. However, under the astute leadership of Rev. Dinkins, within two years, the membership increased and the debt reduced. The church continued to grow and prosper. Rev. Dinkins resigned September 27, 1885.

In 1885, the church called the Reverend Charles Henry Parrish as Pastor. Under the pastorate of Dr. Parrish, Calvary lived through what may be called its golden years. Through the efforts of Dr. Parrish as world traveler, educator, author, lecturer and civic leader, Calvary became known nationally and internationally.

In 1929, 100 years after the organization of the First Baptist Church of Louisville, a major depression struck the nation. The stock market fell and many banks closed causing severe economic deprivation upon the entire land. The church could not escape this catastrophic event. Simmons University that relied upon the Black Baptist churches for support was forced to close. Nevertheless, Calvary was able to survive these terrible times.

nights and taught the members how to study the greatest Book of all time.

One thing Pastor Poyntz highly stressed was his belief that the church was a sacred place and the building should be kept in good condition. With this in mind, he set about to make necessary repairs and additions. He supervised the installation of an elevator so the elderly and the handicapped could avoid the steps.

Pastor Poyntz was an exceptional shepherd of his flock. He cared for all the members. Through sickness, personal problems, good times or bad times, he was always there. He paid special attention to the youth of the church and did not neglect the aged. He organized the 90+ Club to give the elderly special attention for their years of service to the church.

Pastor Poyntz believed in the two greatest commandments that Jesus taught: "Love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart, soul and mind and thy neighbor as thyself." He thought members should be concerned about each other and always be ready to help.

Preaching the Word according to the Bible was his main concern. He often highlighted his sermons with his beautiful singing voice.

On April 24, 2009, Pastor Poyntz stepped into the Great Beyond and left a congregation reeling at his untimely death.

during the Thanksgiving season. Calvary also purchased and planted several garden beds with the Parkland Community Garden to enhance the knowledge and skills of the youth in Calvary's summer youth camp, Camp Calvary.

Rev. Whitlow has a very charismatic personality. He believes in caring for the problems of all his members, the young as well as the elderly. He believes strongly in the study and learning of Christian Education. His sermons are based on principles that the congregation needs to follow in order to stay in fellowship with God.

Rev. Whitlow believes in keeping the faith. The words of the song writer express his belief:

*"We've come this far by faith, Leaning on the Lord, Trusting in His mighty Word, He's never failed us yet."*

*Submitted by Sister Lillian Singleton, 90+ Club Member*

*Updates submitted by Chinita Butler, Historical Committee Member*

Dr. Parrish served faithfully and untiringly for 46 years. He went to his eternal rest on April 8, 1931.

Rev. M. B. Lanier, a professor and close associate of Dr. Parrish, was called as interim pastor until a call was extended to the Rev. Walter P. Offutt of Bowling Green, Kentucky.