

# MORNING CHAPEL CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

1868-2025

## OUR HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Fort Worth Star-Telegram clipping files "Early Churches" University of Texas at Arlington Special Collections. "Sketch of History of Fort Worth Methodist" by W. Erskine Williams which reads as follows:

*"We have three Colored Methodist Episcopal Churches in Fort Worth: Morning Chapel, a splendid building on East Third and Crump Streets. with Rev. Dr. N. L. Smith. D.D. (1908-1914) as preacher in charge at this time. During this pastorate two missions. Gibson Memorial (Carter Metropolitan) near the 7th Ward. and North Side Chapel (Benson Chapel) have been established. Morning Chapel was organized in 1868, just before the separation and the Reverend W. H. Coger, colored, was the first pastor. Anderson Caville, Henry C. Williams and other good negroes were members of this church."*

Morning Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal Church is a member of the "Methodist" family of the Christian Church. Methodism was born in the 18th century in England under the inspirations of John and Charles Wesley. It is a blend of the practical Christianity found in the faith of New Testament, the theology of the Protestant Reformation, and the genius of John Wesley. Wesley describes a Methodist as one who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him; one who loves the Lord his God, with all his mind, and with all his strength. From a small group of college students on the campus of Oxford University known in derision as the "Holy Club" and "those Methodists." Methodism has grown to include millions of persons around the world. Morning Chapel is proud to share with "so great a cloud of witnesses.

Morning Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1868, which is before the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church became a separate and independent church. Morning Chapel C.M.E. Church has the distinction of being Fort Worth's oldest African American congregation. It has been documented and confirmed that an estimated one-third of the 35,000 men who drove cattle along the Shawnee, Chisholm, Western, and other trails during the cowboy area in 1867 were black. It was during this era in 1868 Morning Chapel CME Church was organized by a small group of persons who met for prayer and worship in homes or wherever possible to offer praises to God.

The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was organized December 16, 1870 in Jackson, Tennessee by persons who had been members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, while they were slaves. At the beginning of the Civil War, there were 207,000 slave members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. By the end of the war, only 78,000 slaves remained. These 78,000 former slaves wanted to maintain the religious faith they

had come to know in and through the Methodist Episcopal South. However, they wanted their own church organization free and independent from the domination of the white church. Accordingly, in 1866, they requested and received the right to organize their own church through the established procedures of Methodism. By 1870, sufficient local churches, districts, and annual conferences were organized to set up a General Conference. Thus, December 16, 1870 will always be a historic day for the C. M. E.'s because on that day the stand for liberty, freedom, and dignity had been crowned with success for the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America. The General Conference was held at Mother Liberty C. M. E. Church, Jackson, Tennessee. Bishop Payne and Bishop McTyrie consecrated the Reverends William H. Miles and Richard M. Vanderhost as the first two Bishops of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.

According to the authority given to the first two bishops from the Methodist Episcopal Church South, new congregations were organized and churches established. Three years after the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church had been organized, death came to Bishop Richard M. Vanderhost. A called session of the General Conference was held in Augusta, Georgia, 1873. It was here that Bishop W. H. Miles made known to the body assembled that the rapid growth of the church, the increasing demands of the work of the church, and the lamented death of Bishop Vanderhost was the reason for this called session. The sole weight and rapidly expanding program of the church was too great for him to handle as one bishop. He made it known that the church must suffer unless the vacancy is filled. Bishop Joseph A. Beebee was made the 3rd Episcopal District Bishop.

The East Texas Conference was comprised of two states, Texas and Louisiana. The East Texas conference was the first conference to be held in Texas. The West Texas Conference was formed at the session of the East Texas Conference held at Waxahachie, Texas with Bishop Joseph A. Beebee, 3rd Episcopal District, Presiding.

The first session of the West Texas Annual Conference was held in Fort Worth, Texas, November 1874, with Bishop Beebee, presiding and Rev. A. Bralett Prince, the first presiding elder.

With the spiritual vision and cooperation of a few faithful and illustrious pioneers as Brother Anderson Caville, H. C. Williams and others, Morning Chapel became part of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church South during the called 1873 session of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church South General Conference.

Morning Chapel's first pastor was Rev. W. H. Coger. Other founding members were Eugene "Blue" Rollins, Anderson Caville—first church trustee and first superintendent of public schools—and Henry C. Williams. Morning Chapel's first church structure was built approximately in 1872, five years after the church was organized. Anderson Caville, the church trustee, paid \$150.00 for the lot on Sixth and Crump Streets. According to the Daily Standard Newspaper printed December 15, 1876, a terrible windstorm blew down the small frame structure. Mr. Caville had to raise another \$100 for the rebuilding of the structure. Brother Caville had a very hard struggle in the interest of the heavy debt carried on this church from the time it began. He jeopardized his own property in its

defense, and without his aid and that of his friend, Mr. Tom Mason and a white friend, Mr. George Mulkey, long since, the property would have passed into other hands. The trustees at this time were: Brothers Anderson Caville, Henry C. Williams, and Emmitt Vaughn. Reverends W. P. West, Lorenzo Williams, J. A. Cooper, I. S. Pierson, G. C. Rowlston, F. P. Gipson, F. K. McPherson, Hutcherson, W. P. Huntley, C. A. Lefwich and Douglas gave much worthwhile. Spiritual service as pastors. Bishop Beebee gave much encouragement in helping the church to get established. The new edifice was rebuilt within a year, and its first cornerstone was laid in May 1877 at 3:00 pm as recorded by the Daily Standard. The new structure was moved to Fifth and Crump in 1884 under the leadership of Rev. R. H. Booker.

Under the pastorate of Rev. R. H. Booker, in 1884, this faithful congregation and friends with the assistance of the Methodist Church, South, moved the frame structure into a very beautiful stone edifice at fifth and Crump Streets and completed it in 1905 *except for the windows*. Much honor and respect are due Rev. Booker, who labored and suffered untiringly with this congregation in the building of the stone structure.

Excerpts from the History of St. Andrew's United Methodist Church, Fort Worth, Texas by Mrs. Catherine M. Taylor, Church Historian, 1981-84:

*"Etched upon the hearts of our 15 (fifteen) brave Christian Methodist pioneers - singing, praying, shouting, and reading from their Bibles in their various homes. is the memory of that wonderful time in 1888, when they had a vision for a Church, that would someday become an asset in a growing community.*

*"Growing tired of meeting in various homes, the fifteen Christian pioneers decided to branch out to larger quarters - renting a Fraternal Hall of the U. B. Lodge on Calhoun Street, once called 'Little Mexico,' because of its neighborhood. They organized the little church under the guidance of Rev. James W. Moore and called it "St. Andrew's Methodist Episcopal Church." Being unable to pay rent no longer at the Lodge, the small membership secured the use of the Morning Chapel C.M. E. Church from its Pastor and its members. For two Sundays per month, they had use of the Church. They so graciously consented to share their church with us, until Rev. Moore and the small membership, with the help of many friends, secured a piece of property on East Ninth Street and built its first church. They were ever grateful to the Pastor and members of Morning Chapel C. M. E. Church for this wonderful Christian endeavor."*

Some of the stewards and trustees of Morning Chapel who served during these times were: Anderson Caville. Henry C. Williams. Emmitt Vaughn, Henry Davis, Prof. J. T. Langston, Eugene "Blue" Rollins, Bob Tucker, John Horton, Allen Turner, Prof. J. E. Guinn, Jackson Simmons, John King, Felix Gardner, Prof. H. H. Butler, J. E. Martin, Louis (Grand Pap) Smith, Henry Brown, C. C. Guinn, and Richard Upshaw, Sr. Some of the Missionaries and stewardesses were Sisters Millage, Mollie Gipson, Angie Osborne, Allee Ward, Scott, Mellie Davis. Sophia Williams. Alice Berliner, Jennie Gooden, Janie Burton,

Mary Taylor, and Julia Wright. Sisters Lou Mason, Lucille Berliner, A. C. Harris-Bilbrew and Minnie Venson served as pianists. Albert G. Wright and Robert A. Wright, sons of Sis. Julia Wright, and Horace A. Davis and Henry Y. Davis, sons of Mr. Henry and Mrs. Mellie Davis, and grandsons of Mr. Anderson Caville, served as janitors of the church and rang the bell for all deaths, funerals and Sunday School.

In 1907, the Cotton Belt Railroad bought the church property at fifth and Crump Streets, under the pastorate of Rev. G. H. Harlee, and moved the church to its present location (3rd and Crump Streets). As the membership grew, many boards and auxiliaries were organized to enhance the work of the church.

Greater ideas and visions became realities under the spiritual guidance and leadership of the following ministers: Nathan L. Smith (1908-14); James R. Starks (1915-16); K. J. Johnson (1916-1918); under Rev. K. J. Johnson's pastorate. Prof. J. T. Langston, cashier of the Provident Bank and Trust Company, (a colored bank) on East Ninth Street, and superintendent of the Sunday School, organized a Sunday School Annex on East Ninth Street in Dr. R. E. Gilton's office to get some of the men on East Ninth street interested in church work. Bro. R. B. Briscoe came into the church through the Sunday School Annex. Mrs. Eugenia Cook-Simpkins-Menefee was the secretary of the Sunday Annex.

Under the pastorate of the Rev. Mason H. Spencer (1918-21), the church purchased the property next door, which housed Charlie's Grocery for many years, from Newkirk and Offortt, owners of a big shoe store downtown. The Busy Bee, a lady's club, was organized with Mrs. Ida Meredith as president. Some of its members were: Bell Amos, Bertha Langston, Nellie Hurst, Alice Berliner, Carrie Edwards, etc. I. E. Robinson (1921-23). John H. Hudson (1923-25)

George A. Simpson (1925-28) organized the Young Women's Auxiliary Board and later changed the name to Stewardess Board #2, with Mrs. Laura Alexander-Faulkner as president. The Pastor's Aid Board was organized with Mrs. Annie V. McCaskill as president. This Board was changed to Stewardess Board #3 with the same president. A group of young women were organized into a Gold Leaf Circle, with Mrs. M. L. T. Bennett as sponsor, and Mrs. Nina Caldwell Bryant as president. James R. Starks (1928-29). John E. Raines (1929-30). George H. Bell (1930-31).

Under Rev. Alfred F. Johnson (1931-32), the church was condemned and the congregation worshiped in the upstairs auditorium of the K of P Hall on East Second and Crump Streets. Leo E. Craig (1932-34).

Under the pastorate of Rev. George A. Simpson (1934-36), the church was demolished and rebuilt on a cash basis in its present architectural stone structure. The Trustees were: A. E. Smith, C. White, W. M. Collier, R. A. Wright and C. Whitmore. Rev. John E. Raines (1936-37). M. T. McKinney (1937-39). George A. Simpson (1939-48), the third and last time pastoring, envisioned an opportunity to make the church financially secure by purchasing some rental property (the Dixie Tavern) across the street at a cost of \$2,700.00 and same was paid for under this administration. The Sunday School, with Mrs. E. M. Shamblee as superintendent, gave the church a baptismal font, in memory of

Yancy Lincoln Wilson and Mr. Robert A. Wright. A mural painting by Mrs. Pauline Belew was placed in the choir loft of the sanctuary. In order to add comfort and beauty to the sanctuary new pews were installed. A new Hammond Church Organ and Chimes were installed, lending much grace and spiritual fervor to the worship services. Rev. Simpson was funeralized from the church in August 1948. His body lay in state all night in the church before the funeral. Bishop Luther Stewart gave the eulogy, and his body was carried home to Gainesville, Texas for burial. with a procession of about thirty cars and two buses following. He was a great preacher, financier, and humanitarian. The City of Fort Worth, as well as the members of the C. M. E. Church, lost a great minister.

After Rev. Simpson's death, the stewards carried on the work of the church for three months without an assigned minister, with Bro. J. W. Bennett, Chairman of Steward Board No.1 installing floor furnaces for added comfort to the church. Rev. Simpson's widow, Mrs. Mary F. Simpson, was paid his salary each week for a three-month period.

Under Rev. Moses E. Bradley (1948-1951), a new brick parsonage was built on a cash basis of \$6,666.00. The Trustees were: C. White, Horace A Davis, Horace Wilkins, Ella M. Shamblee, Yancy Wilson, A E. Smith, W. N. Rice, and Fred Tucker. Rev. W. J. Johnson (1951-52). Death came to his wife, Mrs. Jewel Johnson, the same year.

Under the pastorate of Rev. J. C. Darden (1952-1959), the H. P. Porter Education Building was erected in August 1953, at a cost of \$33,065.00 by Joe Peace Construction Company, The Trustees were: J. A Holbert, E. S. Gainer, W. N. Rice, Fred Tucker, E. M. Shamblee, Yancy Wilson, and R. D. Benton.

Under Rev. Lindsey Rucker (1959-66), central air-conditioning and heat were installed in the sanctuary. A carport was purchased for parsonage since there was no garage attached. The Alter Guild was organized with Mrs. Darutha Ervin as president. On Sunday, May 25, 1965, a Victory Day for Morning Chapel. The mortgage of the Educational Building was paid off. The mortgage burning ceremony was held with Bishop Bertram W. Doyle, as guest speaker, who also had charge of mortgage burning ceremony, A glorious service was witnessed by all. On November 6, 1966, death came to Rev. Rucker. He was funeralized from his church with Rev. J. C. Henry of Tyler, Texas, giving the eulogy. Bishop Norris S. Curry, officiating. Rev. Rucker's body was carried to Dallas for a burial with a large procession of members and friends following.

Under the leadership of Rev. W. A Schultz, 1966-1979, the educational building was redecorated, the church sanctuary took on a new look, with new windows, new doors, bamboo wall- paneling, new cushioned pews, wall-to-wall carpeting, new lights, mural in the choir loft refinished -- changing the image of the church to an edifice of spiritual beauty and comfort. A new Hammond organ was installed, and new pianos were purchased. The air-conditioning debt was liquidated. Steward Board No. 3, the Revival Choir and Willing Workers Board was organized. Iron rails were added to the church, inside and out, for the protection and safety of the membership on entering and leaving the church. The parsonage was redecorated also, with iron bars added to the windows and doors.

Under the pastorate of Rev. Dr. W.E. Stone (1979-1999), a 3-bedroom cream brick parsonage was purchased, a 15-passenger church bus was purchased. The lot across the street from the church was paved for parking. An additional lot and house located at 915 East Third Street were purchased to provide more parking spaces. During Rev. Stone's pastorate in 1999, Morning Chapel CME Church was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1999, Rev. Manuel Henderson (1999-2010) was assigned. During his pastorate on June 2, 2005, while preparing for the Annual Conference, Pastor Henderson and the church secretary, Vernice B. Coleman, were in the church when an explosion occurred in the HP Porter Education Building. By the grace of God, no lives were lost, but this event displaced the congregation once again. During the reconstruction of the building, for twenty (20) months, the church held services in the Fellowship Hall of Carter Metropolitan CME Church. In February 2007, the members re-entered the Morning Chapel building which still needed some repairs in the sanctuary.

Rev. Kwesi R. Kamau was the pastor of the "Old Rock Church" from 2010—2012. The church completed the renovation of the church sanctuary and repaired other projects totaling more than \$100,000.00. The church-initiated Thanksgiving feeding outreach through the Young Adult Ministry and continued its partnership with the historic I.M. Terrell Elementary School through the One Church One School Program. The ROCK Respect Academy for children and youth of the church and the community was started.

Rev. Lionel G. Hayes, Jr. was assigned pastor of Morning Chapel from 2012-2014. During the 2014 Dallas Fort Worth Annual Conference, Senior Bishop Lawrence L. Rederick III made history by assigning Morning Chapel its first female pastor -- Rev. Dr. Willa M. Ross who pastor from 2014—2018. Rev. Dr. Ross' emphasis was Christian Education and Spiritual Growth. She reestablished the Noonday Bible Study.

In 2018, Rev. Kenneth L. Hollingshed was assigned to "The Rock" church. The church purchased a 15-passenger Van. During his second year at Morning Chapel, the world was plagued with COVID-19. Rev. Hollingshed led the members for two years by coming into an empty church building to hold Sunday Morning Worship online. This new method of "gathering" moved Bible Studies to Zoom and facebook live and Communion served via Drive through. In 2022, in-person services reconvened, and services became hybrid, In-Person, and Live online. In 2023, Morning Chapel C. M. E. Church celebrated its 155 Anniversary with a "2010 document Mortgage Burning". With Rev. Hollingshed's guidance, the church continues to move forward.

Morning Chapel has the distinction of being the Mother Church of five CME Churches located in the City of Fort Worth, with Gibson Memorial (Carter Metropolitan) being the first offspring (1910); North Side Chapel (Benson Chapel, 1915); Stewart Chapel (1937); Jubilee Temple (1926); and, Lula McLane Chapel (1958). This distinction has given strength to Morning Chapel in every respect. There have been several ministers throughout the years assigned to pastor Morning Chapel and one of the ministers have been elected Bishop, the late, Bishop Elias Prophetic Murchison, Jr., 29th Bishop of the

CME Church. He was born behind the church on Second Street and baptized in Morning Chapel church. He expired this life November 18, 1992, in Atlanta, Georgia.

Many achievements and goals have been reached during Morning Chapel's 157 years as part of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. The membership of Morning Chapel C.M.E. Church is grateful for the spiritual guidance and leadership receive from bishops, presiding elders, pastors, and ministers.

#### **Timeline of Morning Chapel C.M.E. Church Pastors from 1868-2025**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Pastors during the 1800s</b>		<b>Year</b>	<b>Pastor</b>
1864	W.H. Coger		1925-1928	George A. Simpson
1873-1884	W.P. West		1928-1929	James R. Starks
	Lorenzo Williams		1929-1930	John E. Raines
	J.A. Cooper		1930-1931	George H. Bell
	I.S. Person		1931-1932	Alfred F. Johnson
	G.C. Rawlston		1932-1934	Leo E. Craig
	F.P. Gipson		1934-1936	George A. Simpson
	F.K. McPherson		1936-1937	John E. Raines
	Hutcherson'		1937-1939	M. T. McKinney
	W.P. Huntly		1939-1948	George A. Simpson
	C.A. Lefwich		1948-1951	Moses E. Bradley
	Douglas		1951-1952	W. J. Johnson
1884	H.A. Booker		1952-1959	J.C. Darden
			1959-1966	Lindsey Rucker
<b>Year</b>	<b>Pastor during the 1900s--2000s</b>		1966-1979	William A. Schultz
1907-1908	G.H. Harlee		1979-1999	W. E. Stone
1908-1914	Nathan L. Smith		1999-2010	Manuel Henderson
1914-1916	James R. Starks		2010-2012	Kwesi R. Kamau
1916-1918	K.J. Johnson		2012-2014	Lionel Hayes, Jr.
1918-1921	Mason H. Spencer		2014-2018	Dr. Willa Ross
1921-1923	I. E. Robinson		2018-present	Kenneth L. Hollingshed
1923-1925	John H. Hutson			

<b>Additional Clergy Assigned to Morning Chapel</b>			
Jonah Parker	I. C. Timberlake	C. T. Cook	Othar T. McKinney
H. C. Jackson	W. S. Smith	D.E. Coffey	Annie Walker
L.D. Jackson	Edgar Curry	C.E. Edgerton	Raymond Davenport
Stanley M. Berliner, Jr.	James L. Smith	W.J. Lee	J.I. Dodson
Ida Collins	MaDarol Thomas	Ashley Tarrant-Thomas	Gloria Young
Woodreall Holman	Alfred M. Fletcher	Logan Hampton	Marcus Lawson
Ricky Watson	Johnie K. McDowell	Tyrone Pettiford	Byrd Lowe
Wendel L. Cass	Jonathan Jones, Sr.	Yolanda Simpkins	Bobbie Finch
Stephanie Drew	Tanesha Hollingshed		