

HISTORY OF UNION AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

WARWICK, NEW YORK

Union began as a mission in late 1904 or early 1905. A small group of people felt led by a deep spiritual conviction to establish a permanent church for people of African ancestry in Warwick. These founders were Mrs. Ruth Garrison, Mr. and Mrs. Friedman Braxton, Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Teabout, Mr. and Mrs. Washington Booker, Miss Hannah Garrison, Mrs. Sarah Murray, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Garrison, Mr. Amos Duryea, Mr. and Mrs. George Duryea, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Mann, Mrs. Mary Lilland Terry and Mrs. Rose Rice. It appears that they met at the Demerest Hall and Eager's building while a mission.

In July 1905, Rev. J.J. Walters was assigned by the New York Annual Conference to pastor both Warwick and Chester. Soon after, in August of 1905, Rev. Joseph Stiles was assigned to Warwick with a mission to build a house of worship for the community of African ancestry. Rev. Stiles resided with the Braxtons of South Street.

On October 1, 1905, a special service was held at the Demerest Hall. Colored and white members of the community attended. At this service, Rev. Stiles announced the forming of the new church organization and plans to build a house of worship. Rev. Minogue of the Catholic Church pledged financial support, as did Mr. Thomas Demerest. Mr. Demerest consented to the continued use of his hall every first Sunday of each month. It was estimated that the new church would cost \$1,500.00.

In November of 1905 a piece of land was secured on McEwen Street and the foundation of 20'x40' was being laid. Mr. Henry Demerest gave lumber and use of horses to haul sand given by Mr. Frank Odell. Ms. Fanny Benedict gave stone for the foundation and a team of horses. On December 17, 1905, the cornerstone was laid and on the first Sunday in February 1906, the first worship service was held in the new building on McEwen Street. The official incorporation of Union African Methodist Episcopal Church was completed in March 1906. On June 7, 1906, the church was dedicated.

During the physical building of the church, a spiritual church was also growing. Records indicated 12 conversion, 15 accessions, 15 baptisms and 1 marriage occurred during the construction of the building. The pulpit Bible was given by Mrs. Sarah Murray, the pulpit by Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Teabout.

New Members and contributions during that first year were Rev. and Mrs. William Anderson, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Day, Mr. and Mrs. Clinton Shoemaker, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Mann, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Jackson, Mrs. Julia Marshall, Miss Kitty Perry, Mrs. Hughes and Mr. and Mrs. Albert Hicks.

Rev. Stiles left in August of 1906 and was replaced by Rev. Haynes. During the next 30 years, the Union Church had its ups and downs. Some left for unknown reasons and formed another mission under the Baptist supervision. However, as God would lead, in August of 1937, Rev. Oscar Palmer was assigned to Union at the order of Bishop Simms and Presiding Elder Manning. Rev. Palmer stayed at the home of Rose Rice and Mrs. Garrison.

Somehow God had the colored Baptist mission to ask Rev. Palmer to preach for them on Sunday morning and he preached for the evening worship service. Through God's grace, Rev. Palmer was able to convince the 25 persons at the Baptist mission to come back into the membership at Union. This took place on the first Sunday of January 1938. During this time the two stained glass windows were secured from the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Middletown. Rev. Oscar Palmer left in August 1939 leaving a membership of 90 persons.

From 1941-1960 John Logan was organist, followed by Mr. Bessie Stewart, Ms. Gearlin Logan was very active in the Sunday school and mission and Mrs. Ida Bartow Hicks gave leadership in missionary work. Today the Women's Missionary at Union, Warwick bears her name.

Sis Lois Jackson Dowdy, Mother Jackson's daughter (Union's church mother) led the church in securing a Pastor to reopen Union in 1968 with Rev. Simon P. Bouie.

During 1968 Union had been considered abandoned. In October 1968, Bishop Hickman appointed Rev. Simon P. Bouie to Union. Refurbishing was undertaken with some financial assistance from St. James Mission. Services were held in Warwick Village Hall until renovations were completed. Union became alive again. Organizations grew during this time under Rev. Bouie's leadership. The Simon P. Bouie Fellowship Hall was built on the land donated in 1956 by Mrs. Lulia Chandler.

Since Rev. Bouie's pastorate, Union has had eleven pastors, namely, Rev. William D. Watley (1972-1974), Rev. Forrest Worten (1974-1975), Rev. James Baptiste (1975-1977), Rev. James E.F. Lawrence (1977-1981), Rev. Joseph Ward (1981-1982), Rev. Reynold Smith (1982-1983), Rev. George Harmon (1983-1986), Rev. James Washington (1986), Rev. Benjamin Hill, Sr. (1986-1989), Rev. Paul S. Owings, Sr. (1989-1999), Rev. Ronald L. Ivey (1999-2004) and Rev. Mashona Walston Davis (2004 to present).