

## The Story of New Pilgrim Rest Missionary Baptist Church 1939 - 2066 "Seventy-Seven Years Old"

This is the story of New Pilgrim Rest Missionary Baptist Church. It is a chronology of events from the beginning in 1939, when it was organized under the leadership of Rev. W. C. Bonds, who was the moderator of the Peaceful Zion Association. New Pilgrim Rest took its name from our sister church, Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, in North Dallas.

The church was a small lean-two structure with dirt floors, bottled oil lamps, benches with no backs, one or two chairs, no windows, one tin heater, and one make shift door. Streets were unpaved and very muddy, and when it rained it was very hard trying to get to church. Sis. Lelia Britt came to New Pilgrim Rest during that time (1939) and found these things to be true.

Rev. Bonds was soon called to California and Rev. S. G. Gooden of the Star District Association supplied a new minister, and Rev. Ward was called. He soon left and Rev. J. L. Reese carried on the services. In 1942, Rev. Fields was called and applied the first permanent pavement, a small parking lot.

In 1944, Rev. G. T. Britt was called. The church grew, and in 1948 Rev. Myles Franklin poured the first foundation for expansion of the first building. Rev. Franklin was an associate minister at our first location on Navarro Street at that time.

In 1951, our church name was changed to New Pilgrim Rest Missionary Baptist Church. It was well established in the community. Rev. Britt organized the first auxiliaries of this church, which were the Deacon Board, Deaconess, Choir, Usher Board, B.T.U., Mission & Youth

Departments. Scholarships were given to boys and girls, even though times were hard then, and families were larger and poor.

Unfortunately, a tragedy struck New Pilgrim Rest. Our Pastor, Rev. Britt was killed in a dreadful train accident on May 26, 1960. His youngest daughter, Loyce Annette, was killed along with her father. Rev. Britt was the 5th Pastor of this church. He served well and will always be remembered for his fine work.

Rev. W. J. Shackelford was called on September 26, 1960 to Pastor New Pilgrim Rest. In 1964 he completely remodeled the church at 3322 Navarro Street. The church continued to grow. Things were changing and we needed more classrooms, a larger cafeteria, more parking, better rest room facilities, and more seating. Not to mention the fact that the building was decaying and in need of repair.

In 1972 Pastor Shackelford had a vision. He brought it to the church. In the night he got out of his bed and drew the picture and showed us what God had told him to build. This church was in his vision. This was the beginning of our building fund. Pastor Shackelford first asked for \$100 a month per member, but it was soon realized only a few could make this payment. So in a few months he changed it to \$50 per month, per member. He asked everyone to stand that would support this amount. There were some that did not stand.

Everybody went to work and all the auxiliaries supported this with fundraising. Programs such as musicals, contests, dramas, banquets, and selling dinners on the weekends were some of the fundraising activities. Sometimes we sold dinners from the trucks of our cars, driving to Oak Cliff, South Dallas, and back to West Dallas. The youth did their part with musicals, heaven and hell parties, and trips around the world. There were wiener roast, hayrides, and fun in the parks. We worked together, and our finances really grew. As the finances grew trouble arose.

A group of Deacons and members decided they didn't want the Pastor to build. They turned against him. His life was threatened many times. Money was stolen, and he was taken to court, along with the only three Deacons he had left. At one time he had 23 deacons. Now only three Deacons remained, Deacon Garrison Blackman, Otis Deloney and Fred Small. But as trouble came others would leave.

Soon the Lord sent Deacon Gene Patterson, and Deacon Autry Williams. Rev. Shackelford could not get a loan in the United States because he had no collateral good enough to offer. To build a church that size in West Dallas was a no. He also had four Trustees, Harry White and Curtis Banks, and the first of two women Trustees ever of New Pilgrim Rest, Zelma Joiner and Ethel Blair, two businesswomen of West Dallas. It was truly with their help that this church is here today.

The proposed cost of this church was \$1-1/2 million dollars. This did not include the pews, pulpit, tables, chairs, instruments, lights, and kitchen equipment.

We had not purchased the land at that time. In the 70's we were busy working. When we did purchase land, we purchased the land across the street in front of this church. We quickly learned it would not be enough room for parking with a church this size, so we sold it and bought this land. Lots of work had to be done on this land, because at one time, there was a creek or lake here. Churches used the creek for baptizing. Work was done to fill the creek, clear the trees and stumps. The church hired someone to draw up a blue print. Rev Shackelford gave the man the plan that God had given him. The man said this is going to be much larger than the old church. Rev. Shackelford did not know that the church would be the size it turned out to be.

People were asking why build a church like that in West Dallas? He would say, "God give me the plan, there are souls to be saved in West Dallas."

After the land had been cleared, one Sunday morning in 1982, we gathered and marched down to this spot. We sang songs of joy, and prayed and thanked God for the land he had given us. This land cost over \$20,000. The clearing and cleaning of the land was almost the same. Membership was over 1,300 and everybody was ready to work. We just worked and prayed for almost five years. We still had trouble with our enemies.

After failing to get a loan here, Rev. Shackelford and a friend flew to Europe to try and get a loan. Things seemed to change. We had already started building and had to stop because of the lack of finance. Another tragedy hit our church. Rev. Shackelford discovered he had lung cancer. He became very sick, but he labored on. He said he asked God to let him live to finish this church, and to preach one sermon before he called him home. God let him live two years and two months after finishing this church.

On August 7, 1994, entering services were held. The cornerstone was laid, the ribbon was cut, and we entered into the church that God built. On October 11, 1996 the Lord called Rev. Shackelford home. Rev. Shackelford was the sixth Pastor of this church.

On May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1997, our seventh Pastor, Dr. Billy L. Bell, Sr., was called. He labored here seven years trying to finish the job, and trying to settle the debt that was left behind by Rev. Shackelford. Some of the members that stood on that day and promised to help settle the debt, have walked off and left, but somehow with Pastor Bell and God's help, the debt have been settled. I KNOW Rev. Shackelford would be proud. We thank God for the Victory and Vision. Dr. B. L. Bell, Sr., was the founder

and Pastor of the Judea Missionary Baptist Church, Moderator of the Spirit of Unity District Association of Fort Worth, Texas, and Vice President of the Institutional Missionary Baptist State Convention. Since Pastor Bell arrived in Dallas at the New Pilgrim Rest Missionary Baptist Church, God has enabled him with the help of the New Pilgrim Rest Church family, to undertake the following accomplishments: Established and dedicated the W. J. Shackelford Fellowship Hall in honor of the late Pastor, Dr. W. J. Shackelford. A 24x24 gold nameplate was placed over the entrance door and a beautiful glass and chrome display case to house memorabilia of our late pastor. Established the W.J.S. Scholarship Banquet, a 1997 Ford 15 passenger van was purchased, A weekly senior citizen ministry was organized to transport our senior citizens to the doctor, clinics, grocery store, pharmacy, therapy, etc. Added an administrative office to conduct day-to-day operations of church ministry and business functions. Computer and copier were updated. Part time Administrative Secretary was hired. Security lights were installed in the rear parking lot. Old storage room was renovated and turned into a classroom. Women's lounge was remodeled and carpet added with a color television. Cabinets were installed in the kitchen area with a serving table added. G. T. Britt Library was dedicated in honor of our late pastor, Rev. G. T. Britt. Organized a bible study group called C.L.A.S.S. The acronym for Christian Ladies Anointed Studying Scriptures. Organized the B. L Bell Inspirational Choir. Appointed six junior deacons in September 1997. Appointed two new Trustees to serve on trustee staff. Headphone sets for ushers to enhance communication in sanctuary during worship service. Organized and instituted the Senior Citizen Retreat in June of **1998**. A classroom was renovated and remodeled and a Nursery opened for ages 0-3 was dedicated in June 1998. Organized senior citizen Christmas Fellowship at the home of our Pastor & First Lady. In 1999 trustee, Sam Coleman, built a pavilion to house members for cookouts and retreats in the rear of the church. A Computer Lab, with over seventeen computers was started in year 2000. A new church sign was donated to the church through the

Leadership of pastor Bell. A Mother & Daughter breakfast was implemented as well as a Father and Son breakfast. An outreach program called T.B.O.C. (taking back Our Community) was implemented. Over eighty residents were surveyed; to express what New Pilgrim could do, to make the community better. A Cell Ministry, which embraced all members to be part of some ministry in the church. A computer monitor was installed inside the wall to keep members and guess informed of activities and ministries in progress. All Restrooms were remodeled with ceramic tile. The vestibule was remodeled with chairs and embellished with pictures and lamps. A New Roof added. Sunday school literature compiled and published by our own Pilgrim Press Publishing Staff. A Spring Church Wide Institute, with Dr. R. A. Williams, Jr., pastor of McCoy Memorial Baptist Church in Los Angeles, California and President of WHW Ministries, Inc. as our Evangelist. A Fall Church Wide Institute with Dr. Frank Ray, Sr., pastor of Salem Missionary Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee, as our Evangelist. In October a Community Block Celebration was held. A parade with police escort, in West Dallas. The street was blocked off and agencies around the city participating. A Leadership manual with over one hundred and twenty five pages put together. The manual has job descriptions, ministry needs, vision statements, yearly calendar and much more ministry information. Pastor Bell has been with the New Pilgrim Rest Church family for 19 years.

Researched by the Late  
Walter Johnson and

Eula Deloney