MEMBERSHIP

The growth of the membership of the church was gradual but steady. Figures for the membership from the beginning are unavailable but it must have been very small as the number of Blacks in the community was small. In 1888 the membership was sixty-two. In 1938 it was approximately 270.

BETHEL CHOIRS - EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Bethel has always been blessed musically. At various times the Sunday School boasted of excellent orchestras, and the church never had to leave the membership to find a pianist or organist. Bethel has had a choir since 1893. In 1917, the first choir robes were purchased for $4.00 each. In 1922, the choir was well organized with a complete set of officers and various committees, all working together to make Bethel A. M. E. Choir the finest in the community and the district.

> Bethel has been fortunate in the quality of its choirs. Even in the early days in the old church, there were good voices and what they lacked in musical technique they more than made up in the quality of their voices. These choirs carried on into the new church. In 1894 a group of young people voluntarily organized a choir. This group was reorganized by Mrs. P. M. Lewis in 1895 and became the first "note reading" choir in the Church history. All of its members could not read notes but all were taught to sing by note. Rev. P. M. Lewis used the choir to sing at white churches and at the public opera house to raise money for the church indebtedness.
>
> In 1896 and 1897 the choir at its own expense employed a teacher of vocal music from the University of Illinois to instruct and train it how to sing.
>
> The choir was reorganized in 1908 or 1909 with Ernest Harlan Scott as its director and Albert R. Lee its president. The choir continued under this management except during 1919-1920, until the passing of Mr. Scott