when segregation was a fact of life, Bethel maintained a park for the neighborhood children on Ellis Street. The church also established a library, had a church orchestra, and served as a meeting place for black students attending the University of Illinois.

There have been many active groups in the church which include the Lay Organization, the Helping Hand Club, the Fleur de Lis Club, the LouAnna Riley Women's Missionary Society, the Usher Board, the Willing Workers Club, and the Men's Club.

As in all A. M. E. churches, Bethel has long had an active Sunday School. Teachers in the early Sunday School of Bethel taught the Bible and the primer used in the public schools. It became one of the foremost Bible schools in the connection. It also had the first teacher training classes, separately organized classes, Boy Scouts and an excellent Sunday School orchestra. At one time the Men's Baraca Class held a meeting at which Dr. Booker T. Washington spoke and a reception was given for him.

A newly formed group in the church first started in 1983 is called the Bethel Biblical Arts Players. This group evolved from a program idea to help make the Bible come to life, and from a desire of its members to have an outlet for their acting ambitions. The idea caught on and money was raised from private donations to sponsor dramatic productions. The first performance was at the Annual Founder's Day Church Banquet in February 1986. The Players depicted the first "freedom march". They have also presented a Family Thanksgiving Dinner and a 1990 Kwanza Celebration.