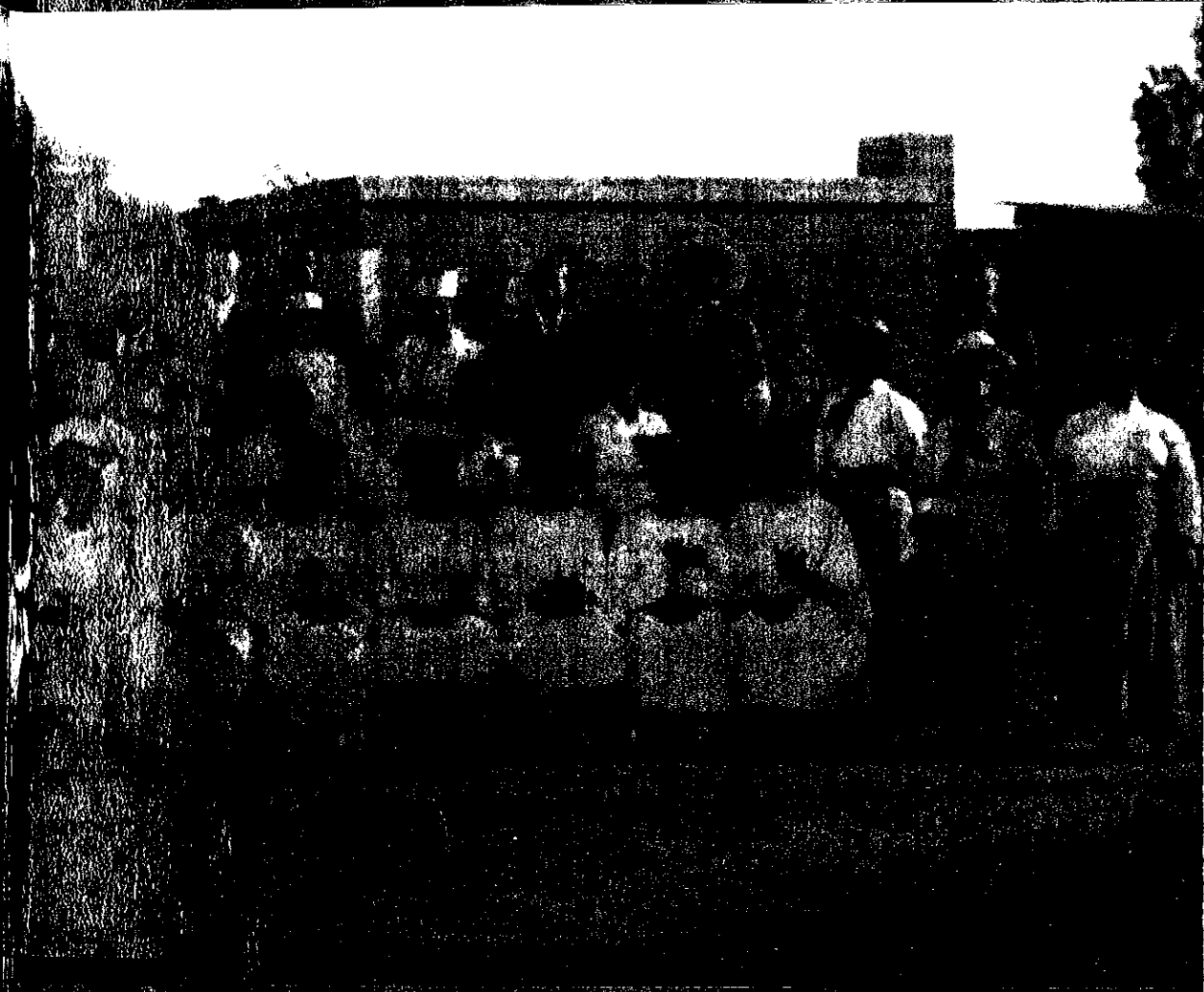


# St. Luke

Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

CELEBRATING THE SCROLL OF LIFE



REV. CARRELL C. CARGLE, SR. PRESIDING ELDER

1909-2002

A  
ILL  
OS

REV. DR. JESSE L. DOUGLAS, SR. PASTOR

St. Luke C.M.E.

1909 - 2002

CELEBRATING  
THE SCROLL OF LIFE

**St. Luke  
Christian Methodist  
Episcopal Church**

CELEBRATING  
THE SCROLL OF LIFE

1909 - 2002

COMPILED BY THE  
HISTORY COMMITTEE

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(Champaign)  
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6/02 9:41 12:00

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: from Rev. Roland Brown

An old adage, "A picture paints a thousand words," is appropriate to pictures that tell a story of a time past that needs to be remembered and treasured. Every church has someone who has kept a picture of the church when it was first started. One is this picture. It is a portrait of the congregation of St. Luke's Tabernacle Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. With the help of one of our oldest members, Mrs. Rosie Shelby, and her cousin, Mrs. Myrtle Chatman, who owned this picture, we can see some interesting gems of history of African Americans in Champaign county. According to Mrs. Shelby and Mrs. Chatman, the picture is dated around 1914 to 1919. Both ladies recognize the pastor who was Rev. W.T. Whitsitt. Notice the cornerstone on the right-hand side and the church building in the background. This is different from what one sees in the building today.

The families represented in the picture are many — the Pickens, the Pettifords, the Nesbitts, the Tisdales, the Hopkins, the Miles, the Valentines, and the Abernathys are just some of the families shown. The fashions of the time are clearly noticed. For instance, "Mortar Boards" on the women's heads were worn by members of the choir. Women who wore bonnets were on the Stewardess Board.

Between 1914 and 1919, families of Italian and German, as well as African descent were living in the neighborhood around Fifth and Tremont Streets where the church is located. Though it was an integrated neighborhood, only Black children attended the Lawhead School which can be seen in the picture as the tall building behind the church. At this time, Tremont Street went from Poplar Street to Sixth Street. Douglass Park was not developed.

St. Luke Christian Methodist Episcopal Church  
CELEBRATING THE SCROLL OF LIFE 1909 - 2002

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Compiled by the History Committee of St. Luke Christian Methodist Church.  
Book design by Joyce Mast.

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**TO THE ST. LUKE FAMILY:**

When I started this project a few years ago, I felt that God had sent me on a mission. I had been asked by Rev. Roland Brown to prepare a church anniversary program. After giving this some thought, the committee and I came up with the theme — *To Claim Our Heritage*. Mrs. Myrtle Chatman was my inspiration along with Mrs. Edna Booker and Rev. O.G. Monroe who were also mentors in getting our history together.

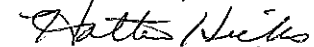
The next project was on endurance — how the church has endured and survived for 90 years on this corner. We are one of the oldest churches in Champaign-Urbana besides Bethel and Salem. We had a guest speaker from Chicago, the Rev. Larue Kidd, along with his choir. He is a very dynamic man of God and a good speaker. His choir was out of sight!

Rev. Julio Andujo preached on our 91st year program, *Walking with the Lord in This Century*, and I am sure you remember it was a glorious time we had praising the Lord. At each celebration, we presented pictures of our members — past and present.

Our own Rev. Dr. Jesse L. Douglas gave a rendition of Negro spirituals on our 92th year anniversary which focused on ministers in song. He taught us a lot about our spiritual music and where it originated.

We hope that you will enjoy this small token of our love for St. Luke and the desire we had in presenting it to you to read in your leisure time. We are sorry that we could not obtain more information from the members, and we do apologize for it not being published in the book. However, everyone had the opportunity to contribute. We all need to keep up with the history of this church for the generations to come, long after we have gone on to Glory. God bless all of you, and we thank you for the opportunity to present this token of love.

Yours in Christ,



The History Committee

<i>Hattie Hicks, President and Chairperson</i>	<i>Eve Foster, Programs</i>
<i>Jean Nesbitt, Co-Chairperson and Decorator</i>	<i>Julie Kendrick, Correspondence</i>
<i>Joyce Mast, Designer, Editor and Typist</i>	<i>Rev. Dr. Jesse L. Douglas, Pastor</i>
<i>Darlene Pearson, Typist</i>	

#### FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

We, the Pastor, officers and members of St. Luke C.M.E. Church express heartfelt thanks and deep appreciation to Ms. Hattie Hicks and the members of the history committee for their untiring efforts in gathering historical information for the compilation and publication of this brief church history.

This labor of love could not have been completed without the input and sharing of personal experiences and firsthand knowledge of members and friends who have been an intricate part of the growth and development of this congregation.

During the 93 years that St. Luke has existed as a Christian Fellowship in the Champaign-Urbana community, she has sought to work with the home and school in the nurturing of our children and youth in the Christian faith, as well as adults. She has also sought to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, both in word and deed.

Down through the years St. Luke's mission has been and still is, to witness and demonstrate to all people what it means to follow God's revelation as exhibited through the life of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Mrs. Douglas and I were assigned to give leadership to St. Luke in August of 2000. Since that union we have shared a wonderful ministry together. As we celebrate 93 years of Christian Service, let us lift our hearts and hands to God in holy praise and thanksgiving for His bounteous goodness toward us. Let each of us recommit and dedicate our lives to be used by God in helping to make this world what He would have it become.

In loving obedience to His will, we are,

Yours in Christ's service,

*Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Jesse L. Douglas, Sr.*

CHAPTER I

ST. LUKE CME: 93 YEARS  
OUR NAME



**S**t. Luke Christian Methodist Episcopal Church celebrates 93 years of service since its founding in 1909. Our name “speaks” of our origins. Rooted in African soil and civilization, we triumphed through the furnace of American slavery. Through the Episcopal Church of England, transformed into John and Charles Wesley’s Holy Club, People Who Are Called Methodists, to missionary efforts of that group in America, we became Methodist Episcopal. With the division of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, into the Methodist Episcopal Church (in the North) and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, we became the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, (details on page 12) whose name was changed in 1954 to the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

Thus, our heritage stretches much longer than 93 years (1909-2002). It is 132 years as C.M.E.’s (48 years of Christian Methodist Episcopal [1954-2002]) preceded by 84 years as Colored Methodist Episcopal (1870 - 1954); 215 years as the Methodist Episcopal Church in America (1784-2002); 270 years as Methodist Episcopal, since the founding of the Holy Club (1729-2002); 370 years as African Americans (from 1620 when Africans were first forcibly brought to Jamestown); and from the beginnings of human kind as African children of God.

**THE COLORED METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH -  
ILLINOIS AND AREA ANNUAL CONFERENCES**

The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was organized on Friday, December 16, 1870 in Jackson, Tennessee, by forty newly freed slaves. The organization grew rapidly and became a strong southern denomination. In 1886, the Southeast Missouri and Illinois Annual Conference was organized under Bishop Isaac Lane.

The 1907 Atlanta (Georgia) riot caused many colored people to move north seeking a safer territory. Among the new migrants was the Rev. J.H.T. Walls who arrived in Chicago, Illinois, and immediately began looking for members of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.

Since he found no former C.M.E. people, he gathered three women, Mrs. Leah Thomas, Mrs. J.J. Reeves and his wife, and on September 7, 1907 began holding meetings in a storefront on State Street in Chicago, which is now the Saint Paul C.M.E. Church. Later, other churches were organized, and the Rev. H.A. Hatchey became the first Presiding Elder of the Chicago District.

During 1916 and 1917, the migratory movement of Blacks brought large numbers of C.M.E. people from the south to Chicago.

Originally, the Chicago District consisted of churches in Indiana, Missouri and Wisconsin, as well as Chicago, but as the membership grew, it was divided into three districts in Chicago, St. Louis and Champaign.

During Bishop E.P. Murchison's administration, the Southeast Missouri and Illinois Conference name was changed to the Southeast Missouri, Illinois and Wisconsin Conference, and the Chicago District became the Chicago - Milwaukee District. In 1986, under the direction of our present Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Dotcy I. Isom, Jr., the Chicago - Milwaukee District was separated, and the Milwaukee District became a district in its own right.

The Chicago District has come a long way from our humble beginnings, with three worshipping in a storefront on State Street in Chicago, to a membership of thousands. We are grateful for the progress that we have made. The C.M.E. Church has become a major denomination in this area.

**CONFERENCE YEAR 2001-2002**

**Bishops of the Chicago District**

R.A. Carter  
J. Claude Allen  
E.P. Murchison  
Chester Kirkendoll  
Dotcy I. Isom, Jr.

**Presiding Elders of the Chicago District**

M.A. Crowder  
A.L. Hodges  
S.J. Laws  
B.S. Gregg  
Charles H. Shyne  
Carrell K. Cargle, Sr.



**C.M.E. DOCTRINAL HIGHLIGHTS**

What is distinctive about a C.M.E.? Without going through our doctrine in detail, we highlight here three characteristics. First, every person can know through the power of the Holy Spirit which speaks to the heart of the believer, that she or he is a child of God. Even though humans are naturally sinful, yet we have free will and are thus responsible for our actions. By God's spirit every person can surrender him- or herself to God through Jesus Christ by faith. Second, we accept the authority and government of bishops, and as part of the local body of Methodists we are connected with each other, with other churches in our Conference, District, and General Conference, and with C.M.E.'s and Methodists throughout the world. Third, since the inception of the Christian Methodist Church we have always believed that the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ should emphatically and unequivocally address the ills of our society. We were among the first ethnic groups of people to lead in the healing of the races and regions after the civil war.

The following responsive reading provides a succinct doctrinal statement.

**GENERAL RULES OF THE CHRISTIAN METHODIST CHURCH**

**Leader:** There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies, a "desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins."

**People:** But wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore, expected of all who continue therein that they shall continue to evidence their desire of salvation.

**Leader:** First, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced; such as: The taking of the name of God in vain;

**People:** By profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein, or by buying or selling; Drunkenness, or drinking spirituous liquors unless in cases of necessity;

**Leader:** Fighting, quarrelling, brawling, brother going to law with brother, returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling.

**People:** The buying or selling of goods that have not paid the duty; The giving or taking things on usury, i.e., unlawful interest;

**Leader:** Uncharitable or unprofitable conversations, particularly, speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers;

**People:** Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us; Doing what we know is not for the glory of God: as, The putting on of gold and costly apparel;

**Leader:** The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus; The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God;

**People:** Softness or needless self-indulgence; Laying up treasure upon earth; Borrowing without the probability of paying, or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

**Leader:** It is expected of all who continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation.

**People:** Secondly, by doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as possible, to all men;

**Leader:** To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison;

**People:** To their souls, by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with, trampling under the foot that enthusiastic doctrine that "we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to do it."

**Leader:** By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be, employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in business: and so much more because the world will love its own, and them only.

**People:** By all possible diligence, and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.

**Leader:** By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily;

**People:** Submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to bear the filth

and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them for the Lord's sake.

**Leader:** These are the General Rules of our societies; all of which we are taught of God to observe,

**People:** Even in His written word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice.

**Leader:** And all these we know His Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts.

**People:** If there be any among us who observe them not, or habitually break any of them, let it be known unto them, watch over that soul, as they who must give an account.

**All:** We will admonish him of the error of his ways; we will bear with him for a season; but if then he repent not, he hath no more place among us; we have delivered our own souls.

## CHAPTER 2

### FOUNDING OF ST. LUKE OFFICIAL HISTORY

**T**here was no church in Champaign and Urbana connected with our great C.M.E. Conference of today. The Lord saw fit to send a family here from Kentucky, namely Mother Hopkins, Sister Pickens, Sister Tisdale, Brother Tisdale and others of that family. But as we see today, this family did not stop. They prayed to God for help, so there was a minister named Rev. W. M. Townsend.

In 1909, a little band of faithful workers began holding services in a store house in Urbana, Illinois. And persons inquiring as to what new denomination was springing up in their midst were told it was a C.M.E. mission.

The title was known to some, others had never heard of it, and a large number predicted it would not succeed. However, the Supreme Judge who rules over all continued to guide and direct this little band and, as on the day of Pentecost, added daily to the church such as should be saved.

The Mission continued to grow and the seed had fallen upon good soil and came forth, and the Holy Father directed the minds of this

praying band to look forward to later purchasing property wither this Temple might be erected in His name (St. Luke C.M.E. Church).

#### CHURCH BUILDING

St. Luke was built by its own members, and through their hard work and labor it has become one of the greatest churches in Champaign/ Urbana, Illinois. Originally (1909) it was located on the corner of Eads Street in Urbana in a small storehouse. It was then called the C.M.E. Mission which was new to the community. The mission grew with the purchase of more property and a name was given — Saint Luke Tabernacle Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (renamed in 1954 to Christian Methodist Episcopal). In 1914 the group moved to the present location at 809 N. Fifth Street in Champaign. The design of this structure was of a twin-tower type building. It resembled Salem Baptist Church. According to the cornerstone, the church was constructed by Reverend Whitsitt.

The earliest legal records of St. Luke were found among the archives at the City Building and the Deeds Office in Champaign and Urbana where it was listed as the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church of the North End Subdivision. (See the copy of the deed on pages 20-21.) The church was bought from a widower by the name of John C. Coler who lived in Champaign. He sold the property for \$1,000.00. The church congregation paid \$500.00 as a down payment on April 5, 1910, and the balance was due by April 5, 1913 with an interest rate of 6 % per annum from October 5, 1912, also subject to taxes and assessments levied on imposed land.

The church is located on Lot One (1), Block One (1) in the Vredenburgh's Subdivision on the South part of the Northeast quarter of the Northwest quarter of Section Seven (7), Township Nineteen (19) North, Range Nine (9) East of the Third Principal Meridian. Trustees who signed for the loan were Jephtha Tisdale, George Simpson, John Burnett, James Jones and Robert Ewings. The Notary Public was John Beers of Champaign County. The date of the signing was February 11, 1913. Boyd Blane was the Recorder of Deeds.

As part of a remodeling and enlargement project, a new front entrance, elevated choir loft and balcony were erected. The worship area

was also expanded from the basement to an upstairs area, and a six-room Sunday School area was added. The new church was dedicated on August 19, 1962.

In March of 1968, a fire started at the rear of the church and caused extensive damage. No clues were found as to the origin of the fire, but there was no reason to assume that arson was a factor. As the city building inspector said that the church was structurally sound, the shell of the church was used as the base for rebuilding. The pastor, Rev. Bishop, was an accomplished carpenter and he, church members and neighboring churches helped with the reconstruction. In the meantime, church services were carried out in the church basement.

Among neighboring churches who helped with the rebuilding were local Mennonites. The following article documenting their efforts appeared in *The News-Gazette* on June 13, 1968:

Area Mennonites Gather to Repair CME Fire Damages

Members of area Mennonite Churches have been helping renovate St. Luke C.M.E. Church, which was gutted in a fire nearly three months ago. According to Robert Massanari, a member of the First Mennonite Church in Urbana, the church has a "disaster service" which provides aid in times of crisis.

Several members "took the initiative to get it started," and nearly 30 persons volunteered to clear the rubble caused by the fire, and begin rebuilding the inside of the extensively-damaged church, according to Massanari.

Volunteers came from the local church, the East Bend Mennonite Church at Fisher, the Arthur Mennonite Church, and the Dewey Mennonite Church.

The workers have torn out burned partitions, walls, and floors, removed scarred varnish and started rebuilding the inside of the church.

Rev. A.W. Bishop is pastor of St. Luke.

The Grantor, John C. Coler (a widower)

of the City of Champaign in the County of Champaign and State of Illinois

for and in consideration of the sum of One thousand DOLLARS

in hand paid, CONVEYS and WARRANTS to Jephtha H. Disdale, George Simpson, John W. Burnett, James Jones and Robert Ewings, Trustees of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church of Champaign, Illinois and their successors

of the City of Champaign County of Champaign and State of Illinois

the following described Real Estate, to-wit:

Lot One (1) Block (1) One in C. J. Vredenburg's sub-division of the South part of the Northeast quarter of the Northwest quarter of Section (7) Seven, Township (19) Nineteen North, Range (9) Nine East of the Third Principal Meridian

Subject to a Trust Deed for (\$500.00) Five Hundred Dollars dated April 5th 1910 due April 5th 1918 with interest at the rate of six per cent per annum from October 5th 1912. Also subject to all taxes and assessments levied or imposed on said land

situated in the County of Champaign, in the State of Illinois, hereby releasing and waiving all rights under and by virtue of the Homestead Exemption Laws of this State.

Dated this 11th day of February A. D. 1913

[SEAL]
[SEAL] John C. Coler
[SEAL]
[SEAL]

State of Illinois } ss. I, John N. Beers, a Notary Public
Champaign County }

in and for said County, in the State aforesaid, do hereby certify, that

John C. Coler (a widower)

personally known to me to be the same person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing instrument as having executed the same appeared before me this day in person, and acknowledged that he signed, sealed and delivered the said instrument as his free and voluntary act, for the uses and purposes therein set forth, including the release and waiver of the right of homestead.

Given under my hand and seal, at

this 11th day of February A. D. 1913

John N. Beers,
Notary Public

John N Beers
Notary Public
Champaign, Ills.

Filed for record this 12th day of February A. D. 1913, at 11:40 o'clock A. M.

Boyd S. Blaine Recorder

St. Luke marked the completion of the work with a double celebration which was noted in the following article from *The News-Gazette* on September 22, 1966:

**REV. BISHOP CELEBRATES**

Methodist Pastor Observes 9th Year Sunday  
 Rev. A. W. Bishop, pastor of St. Luke's Christian Methodist Episcopal Church of Champaign, will celebrate his ninth anniversary at 3 p.m. Sunday. The celebration will have a special meaning for the congregation, as it will take place in the recently restored sanctuary of the church. Fire destroyed the sanctuary last March and many members of the church took part in repairing it.

Ministers of the Champaign-Urbana area will participate in the program and the youth choir of St. Luke's will be featured.

**PARSONAGE**

Records from the Assessors Office indicated the parsonage was built around 1958. According to Rev. O.G. Monroe, Rev. Crowder built it and Rev. Taylor was the first minister to live there. Rev. Bishop had two rooms added. Rev. Kennedy added a study and the carport garage

The records also showed that before the parsonage was built, the original building at that location was razed. There was no information about any pre-existing structure.

**CHAPTER 3**

**PASTORS  
 OF ST. LUKE**

St. Luke has been blessed with God-fearing pastors over the past 93 years. Following is a list of Senior Pastors with known dates of service.

Rev. Townsend	1909-1910	Rev. J.C. Colclew	
Rev. W.T. Whitsitt	1912	Rev. J.P. Davis	
Rev. G.W. Samples	1919	Rev. G.W. Thomas	
Rev. J.W. Jacobs	1923	Rev. E.R. Coleman	
Rev. C.A. Cregg	1931	Rev. A.L. Adams	
Rev. A.W. Womack	1932	Rev. J.S. Turner	
Rev. W.M. Crain	1932	Rev. H.T. Triggs	
Rev. W.D. Browning	1937	Rev. C.W. Williams	1945
Rev. W.C. Doty	1938	Rev. T.R. Taylor	
Rev. T.C. Black	1930's	Rev. M.A. Crowder	
Rev. C.H. Blackshear	1930's	3 times Pastor, once Presiding Elder	
Rev. J.A. Forster	1930's	Rev. A.W. Bishop	1959-1970
Rev. Parker	1930's	Rev. H.J. Thornton	1970-1974
Rev. W.M. Wolf		Rev. Earl Kennedy	1974-1989
Rev. E. Pendleton		Rev. John DeRon Johnson	1989-1993
Rev. J.A. Cregg		Rev. Roland Brown	1993-2000
Rev. G.S. Croon		Rev. Dr. Jesse L. Douglas, Sr	2000-

## RECENT PASTORS

Our recent pastors' tenures at St. Luke have been as varied as their persons — from running for Mayor of Champaign to rebuilding and remodeling the church; from supporting a touring youth choir to seeing that we became handicapped-accessible; from ushering us into the computer age and working for racial reconciliation through the Ministerial Alliance and Religious Leaders for Community Care to having our stained glass windows restored to their original beauty. We have been so blessed!

Following are glimpses into the lives of Pastors Bishop, Thornton, Kennedy, Jackson, Johnson, Brown and Douglas.

**Rev. A. W. Bishop, D. Th.** (July 16, 1919 - January 13, 1983)  
Served St. Luke from 1959-1970

Rev. Bishop saw the church through the turbulent 60's with its local gang wars and church fires. In 1961 and 1962 Rev. Bishop spearheaded a remodeling project that included the addition of Sunday School rooms, remodeling of the sanctuary and renovation of the main entrance. A Champaign civil rights leader and opponent of its urban renewal program, in 1966 Rev. Bishop ran for mayor of Champaign on a platform "to clean up the city's image." He was president of the Northeast Homeowner's Association and had filed a protest against the renewal program on the grounds that the program would foster discriminatory housing. In 1968 he celebrated his ninth anniversary at St. Luke in the recently restored sanctuary which had been destroyed by a fire the previous March (see page 22).

**Rev. H. J. Thornton, M. Ed.** (May 16, 1979 - January 10, 1992)  
Served St. Luke from 1970-1974

Rev. Thornton and his family were invested in both the community and the church. He served as a member of the Human Relations Commission of Champaign, as Director of Operations of CCOIC, a member of the Housing Commission, and a member of the Champaign-Urbana Ministers' Association. During Rev. Thornton's tenure at St. Luke the youth choir rose to 80 voices. Rev. Thornton accompanied the choir to Washington, D.C., where they had been invited by Senator Percy to sing at the old Senate building. The choir also toured

in Portland, Oregon, and produced two record albums, *Hold the Light* and *We've Come to Praise His Name*.

Mrs. Cauthel Thornton, Rev. Thornton's wife, spoke and sang in Conference, was a member of the Senior Choir at St. Luke, and sang and traveled with the Youth Choir.

**Rev. Earl Kennedy** (December 4, 1918 - August 29, 1995)  
Served St. Luke from 1979-1989

Rev. Kennedy was known in the Champaign-Urbana community for his welcoming hand waves. He was involved with the Champaign Park District at Douglass Center and Douglass Park where he worked with all the softball teams, was the official volleyball umpire, organized a volleyball team, and worked with the Senior Citizens. He founded the Kennedy Club, the Crowder Club, the E.P. Murchison Club, the Children's Choir and Children's Usher Board, and the Male Chorus. During Rev. Kennedy's pastorate, the church's interior was modernized, the exterior upgraded, and its property holdings increased.

Mrs. Ethel Mae Kennedy worked tirelessly with her husband in all these projects. She continues her involvement at St. Luke and as a volunteer in the community (see page 60: *St. Luke Celebrates Living Members*).

**Rev. Robert Jackson** (February 22, 1910 - April 2, 1996)  
Served St. Luke as an Assistant Pastor under Rev. Kennedy

Rev. Jackson was a member of the Ministers' Alliance of Champaign and Vicinity and the Concerned Citizens' Board of Douglass Center. His wife, Arrow Jackson, served beside him as a faithful member of St. Luke. She was a Stewardess and a member of the Senior Choir

**Rev. O.G. Monroe**  
Served St. Luke as an Assistant Pastor under Rev. Kennedy

Rev. Monroe came to Champaign back in 1942 and played the organ for the choir. He was here during the times that Rev. Crowder was pastor. He told us that Reverend Crowder served this church 3 times as pastor and was also the Presiding Elder. Conference claims were only \$500 back then for the entire church. Reverend Monroe said that a young minister named Reverend Williams tried to get the congregation to pay Conference Claims and they were so angry with him that

they wanted to run him out of town. The church used to have services 3 times on Sundays and the pianist was paid \$2 per Sunday. Reverend Monroe himself played the organ for three generations.

Rev. Monroe stated that the church had hard times when Rev. Tisdale was here. The congregation mortgaged their homes in order to save the church.

Rev. Monroe also remembers that the bell tower was renovated when Rev. Thornton arrived. Rev. Craig was the oldest of all the ministers. Rev. Crowder built the parsonage, Rev. Bishop built the choir loft, and Rev. Taylor was the first minister to live in the parsonage. Rev. Bishop had two rooms added to the church parsonage.

#### **Rev. John DeRon Johnson**

**Served St. Luke from 1989-1993**

Rev. Johnson came to St. Luke right out of seminary and was a strong force in the area of Christian education. He revitalized Wednesday night prayer meetings, Friday night "Hour of Power" Bible studies, and paved the way for radio ministries in the Champaign-Urbana community. Rev. Johnson continued the church modernization, both interior and exterior, begun by Rev. Kennedy and encouraged St. Luke to become accessible to folks with special needs. He maintains his relationship with St. Luke from his post in St. Louis. From time-to-time Rev. Johnson preaches here at special services and members of St. Luke visit his congregation.

#### **Rev. Roland Brown**

**Served St. Luke from 1993-2000**

Rev. Brown and his wife Willia and adult children Tyra and Noah came from Jubilee Temple CME in Chicago to St. Luke not as strangers. Willia grew up in St. Luke. Rev. Brown joined St. Luke while a student at the University of Illinois and was baptized by Rev. Earl Kennedy in 1974. The Browns were married in St. Luke in 1975.

Rev. Brown received his call to the ministry in 1976 and, while based in St. Luke, served the Allen Chapel CME Church in Springfield from 1980-82. He played the bass guitar under Willie Summerville until 1980. In 1984 he left St. Luke to pastor the Bray Temple CME Church in East St. Louis. Nine years later, after completing his Master

of Divinity Degree at Chicago Theological Seminary, he returned to pastor St. Luke.

In his pastoral role, Rev. Brown especially encouraged young adult members to serve as Stewards and Trustees, supported the One Church One School volunteer program with Stratton School, and began to document the history of St. Luke through taping members' stories during the annual church anniversary celebrations. The History Committee has followed his lead by annually displaying members' pictures and compiling this book to help members and others learn the rich legacy of St. Luke.

Rev. Brown's activities in the community included substitute teaching in Champaign Unit 4 and Urbana 116 schools. For three years he also taught courses at Parkland College on topics such as the New Testament, *The Introduction of the History of the Black Church*, and *The Burning of Black Churches*. He was a former campus minister at the University of Illinois, and he served as a Youth Counselor at the Lincoln's Challenge Program in Rantoul, Illinois. There he counseled at-risk teens, helped them earn their GED, and find a positive life direction. Rev. Brown was president of the Ministerial Alliance of Champaign-Urbana and Vicinity and an Executive Board member of Religious Leaders for Community Care. He was a member of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Advocacy for Justice Committee and on the Institutional Review Board at the University of Illinois.

Rev. Brown wrote several articles in the C.M.E. newsletter, *The Christian Index*. He served as Assistant Secretary of the Southeast Missouri, Illinois and Wisconsin Annual Conference, and as alternate Clergy delegate and appointed Orderly for the Third Episcopal District at the 1998 General Conference held in Birmingham, Alabama.

Mrs. Willia Brown served as Stewardess, directed the children's choir, Youth of Promise, was a member of the New Life Choir, and pursued a Music Education degree at the University of Illinois. Noah was a member of the New Life Choir and assisted in directing and accompanying the adult, youth and children's' choirs. Tyra was also active in these three choirs and studied for a music degree at Columbia University in Chicago. She was married at St. Luke, to a member of St. Luke, Cedric Nesbitt, the oldest son of William and Juanita Nesbitt.

**Rev. Dr. Jesse L. Douglas, Sr.**  
**Serving St. Luke from 2000 - Present**

Rev. and Mrs. Douglas came to St. Luke C.M.E. Church after pastoring since 1990 at Allen Metropolitan C.M.E. Church in Chicago, Illinois. He accepted his call to the ministry in 1955 in his native home of New Orleans. His pastorate services include John Wesley and Garner Chapel in Phoenix City, Alabama; First C.M.E. Church and Jamison Memorial C.M.E. Church in Kansas City, Missouri; and the Carter Metropolitan C.M.E. Church in Detroit, Michigan.

Rev. Douglas has been active in civil and political events. In 1960, he filed a lawsuit against the State of Georgia, which desegregated eating facilities in the State Capitol. He served as the fourth president of the Montgomery Improvement Association in Montgomery, Alabama, which started the Montgomery bus boycott under the leadership of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Rev. Douglas has traveled in West Africa, Jamaica, Haiti and the rest of the Caribbean Islands. In 1972, he spent two weeks traveling throughout Nigeria, West Africa, visiting several university campuses, cities and towns. He also spent four weeks traveling throughout Ghana, West Africa, while living on the campus of the University of Ghana.

Rev. Douglas has been the recipient of numerous awards including an Honorary Doctorate of Law degree from Union Baptist Theological Seminary in Birmingham, Alabama, and the Annual Bronze Award from the Southern Beauty Congress for outstanding civic and religious contributions to the Birmingham community.

Rev. Douglas received a Bachelor degree from Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee, a Bachelor of Divinity from Phillips School of Theology in Atlanta, Georgia, and Master and Doctorate of Ministries in Theology from Colgate Rochester Divinity School under the Martin Luther King Black Studies Program in Rochester, New York.

Rev. Douglas is married to the former Blanche Y. Gordon of Nashville, Tennessee. They have two sons and one daughter and are blessed with four grandchildren.

CHAPTER 4

**CELEBRATING  
OUR HISTORY**

**T**he first recorded celebration of St. Luke's History was under the leadership of Rev. Earl Kennedy when the church marked 64 years. A banquet was held honoring outstanding members within the church. The following article covering this event appeared in *The News-Gazette*.

St. Luke  
C.M.E. Church  
Marks 64 Years

St. Luke Christian Methodist Episcopal Church has been on the corner of 5th and Tremont (809 N. Fifth St.) in Champaign for 64 years. Several of the present church members have been attending there for almost as long.

Rev. Earl Kennedy, pastor of the church for seven years, was prompted by his wife, Ethel Mae, to honor all surviving members who have attended that church for 50 years or more. Recognition was given to these outstanding members at 7 p.m. Saturday during a special banquet at the church.



Also honored at the banquet were the five drivers of the church pick-up van.

Twelve members were given certificates of commemoration for 50 years or more of dedicated loyalty and service to the church.

Mrs. Rose Shelby, 73, of 1210 Doriemiller Drive, C, has been at the church longer than any other surviving member. She has given 62 years of service to the church.

Mrs. Ruth Ray, 77, of 1106 N. 5th St., C, has attended 60 years; Mrs. Luella Connell of 208 W. William, C, 60 years; Mrs. Lorine Dixon, 77, of 1618 W. Lock Raven, C, 59 years; Mrs. Pearl Wells of 1101 W. Hill, C, 58 years and her husband, Harry, 76, same address, 57 years; Mrs. Lovie Anderson, 69, of 603 E. Washington, C, 56 years; Mrs. Emma Speed, 71 of 1204 Paula St., C, 55 years; Mrs. Sadie O'Neal, 79, of 1902 Sumac Drive, C, 51 years; Mrs. Clara Jackson of 108 W. Washington, C, 51 years; Mr. John Hannett, 81, of 407 E. Beardsley, C, 50 years; and Mrs. Annie Seats, 83, of 11 Columbia Place, C, 50 years.

Collectively these members represent 669 years of devotion and service to the church and the community of Champaign-Urbana.

Rose Shelby came to Champaign from Marion, Kentucky in 1919 at the age of 11. She joined St. Luke that same year, and has served in several capacities at the church since then. She is a former member of the Choir and Usher Board, and she served as Church Clerk for several years.

John Hannett has been a church Steward for 42 years. At one time, he was a church soloist. "I played the organ every once in a while," he said.

Lorine Dixon joined the church in 1922. Her sister, Pearl, joined one year later. Harry Wells joined in 1924, met Pearl, fell in love, and married her soon after. Harry and Pearl have been at the church longer than any other surviving married couple — a combined total of 115 years.

Clara Jackson is a former Superintendent of the Sunday school. She joined the church in 1930.

At the age of 83, Annie Seats, holds the distinction of being the most senior of the honored guests. She is a former member of the Number One Stewardess Board.

Lovie Anderson has been President of the Number Two Stewardess Board for 11 years. She said her most memorable experience at the Church was when a former pastor appointed her overseer of a fund-raising drive to get a new red carpet for the church. She said that when she went home to iron, she was so excited about planning ways to raise funds, that she fainted and burned her arm on the iron. Now every time she looks at the red carpet, she thinks about how she almost lost her arm because of it.

But, she said its all been worth it. "I've brought many young people to Christ," she said, "and they've all given me love in return." She said she received so many Mother's Day cards this year, that she barely had time to read them all.

Luella Connell came to Champaign in 1921, and started attending St. Luke that same year. She had recently married her husband who had been a soldier in WWI. She said she always stressed the importance of a good education to her four children.

Ruth Ray said she's served in every capacity at the church, "except pastor." She is now serving her third term as President of the Number One Stewardess Board. She has been head of the Youth Department, served as President of the Missionary Society and taught Sunday school.

Emma Speed is a former member of the Organ Club and the Stewardess Board. She and her late husband donated the piano to the church.

Sadie O'Neal has been a server in the church for several years. She said she's served food at practically every social event at the church.

Also honored at the banquet were the five men who drive the church pick-up van. The drivers rotate Sundays, each taking a turn to pick up all members who need transportation to Sunday school or church.

Drivers receiving certificates were: Cle Easley of 1307 Garden Lane, C, an employee of J. M. Jones Co.; Syral Easley of 1109 W. Hill, U, an electrician; Nate Dixon of 1716 Burnetta Drive, C, a program coordinator for the Champaign Park District; Jim Casey of 1 Canterbury Court, C, principal of Columbia Elementary School and Waddell Hill, 507 E. Columbia Ave., C, fire inspector for the City of Champaign.

## 86 YEARS

St. Luke's celebrated 86 years of service on June 25, 1995 with the theme, "Reclaiming Our Heritage." The choir sang songs from one of their albums made in 1968, *Hold the Light*, including "Hold the Light," "Over My Head I Hear Music In the Air," "Come Go with Me to My Father's House," "I Was Glad When They Said Unto Me," and "God is My All and All." During the program several members offered their versions St. Luke's beginnings.

Mrs. Myrtle Chatman told us about the original church; Rev. O.G. Monroe spoke about the old bell tower and the ministers who stopped by to preach the Word of God; Mrs. Maudie Edwards gave us an educational history of working with the young people and taking them to Washington, D.C., to sing.

Mr. W.T. Summerville told us about the choir and the many places they have sung. He told the congregation how dedicated and unique the choir had been in the past and how they have improved over the years. Mrs. Edna Booker told us about Stewardess Boards Numbers One and Two and how they all stuck together and helped one another. Mrs. Dora Jamerson spoke about the Missionaries and said that we all have a mission and it should be utilized daily by visiting the sick and offering comfort to one another.

After a roll call of the deceased members, current members belonging to St. Luke for more than fifty years were recognized. A standing ovation was given to Mrs. Lovie Anderson who had been a member for sixty-nine years. A display of pictures provided by members was available for review. The program opened with the song "Rejoice." The Mistress of Ceremonies, Ms. Hattie Hicks, was introduced. She related how the church began with family members and has continued even today with many members related to each other. The song "Blessed Assurance" was chosen, because we have been blessed with assurance that the Church and its people will go on in Jesus' name. Ms. Julie Kendrick read the scripture from Hebrews and the Welcome was given by Mr. Nate Dixon. Prayer was by Minister Julio Andujo, and the choir gave a rendition of songs from their original albums, *Hold the Light*, and *We've Come to Praise HIS Name*, including "Over My Head I Hear

Music In the Air" and "I Was Glad When They Said Unto Me, Let Us Go Into the House of the Lord." The church history, written by Mrs. Mary Campbell Herron, was read by Noah Brown.

## ST. LUKE IS A FAMILY CHURCH

In an interview from 1995 Mrs. Chatman told how St. Luke is a family church where most of the members are related in some way, many to the original families in the church which include the Pickens, Pettifords, Nesbitts, Tisdales, Hopkins, Miles, Valentines, and Abernathys. These early leaders met in a home in Urbana and later carried bricks and other construction material to 809 N. Fifth Street (the church's present location) to help build the church. They worshipped with Bethel A.M.E. Church. The members saved their money and eventually moved out of Bethel.

Mrs. Chatman stated that her aunt, Mrs. Pettiford, helped with the building. Mrs. Pettiford was born in Kentucky. Mrs. Chatman's grandmother, Mrs. Dorcas Hopkins, was born in slavery and worked as a house slave. Mrs. Hopkins' son came to the University of Illinois as head of the cavalry. His name was John Smith. Mrs. Hopkins' family followed. Mrs. Hopkins was the mother of 8 children who all belonged to St. Luke. Wendell Evans was Mrs. Chatman's stepfather.

## EARLY MEMBERS

Other early members became spiritual leaders who are still in the church, i.e., Rose Shelby, who came in August, 1919 from Marion, Kentucky; Mrs. Lovie Anderson; Annie Mae Pickens; Belle Turner; Mrs. Snell was Superintendent of the Sunday School; Mrs. John Hannett; Mrs. Odelia Wesley and J. C. Steward taught Sunday School, Vacation bible School, and sang in the choir; Mildred Derricks taught Sunday School, was active in the Missionary, and served as Church Secretary; Mrs. Hart, Anna McNeal, Mr. and Mrs. Bracey Easley; Mrs. Mary Campbell Herron, mother of Nathan Wallick; Tressa Easley; Anna Mae Crowder; Anna Mae Dixon; Dorothy Luckey; Ruth Fonville; Nannie Pickens; Anna Bell Pettiford; Mrs. Christine Nesbitt; Mrs. Smith; Mrs. Ruth Brown did the first picture directory for St. Luke; Clara Jackson served as Sunday School Superintendent, read the Church announcements on Sunday mornings, was active in the Mis-

sionary, and got the group at St. Luke to participate in city-wide missionary activities; Ruth Ray and her husband; and Mrs. Anna Bell Ganns, grandmother of Vernon Lewis.

#### BAPTISM

The pool for baptizing used to be underneath the pulpit. Mrs. Chatman said it used to be a large tub. After the fire, it was removed and rebuilt in the basement. Over the years it has been closed off and has never been used again. The last children to be baptized in the pool were Lisa and Edward Hicks, children of Hattie Hicks. They were nine and eleven years old. They were baptized by Rev. Earl Kennedy and helped by Mrs. Lovie Anderson, Mrs. Edna Booker and Mrs. Mary Campbell Herron.

#### 88 YEARS

Remarks by Mrs. Myrtle Williams Chatman

*Anniversary  
Celebration  
June 29, 1997*

I am Myrtle Williams Chatman, a member of one of the founding families of this church, the Hopkins/Pickens family. My generation didn't get to have much choice about what church or what Sunday School they attended. My grandmother, Ms. Pickens, was Colored Methodist Episcopal, i.e., St. Luke, and my grandfather was Free Will Baptist. Most of the family attended St. Luke. (I think it was because it was just across the street.) It was the rule in the Pickens household that on Sunday, if you didn't have a high fever, "Get up, Get ready, and Go" across the street to St. Luke. "Behave yourself, Respect everybody," if not, well, you know — Nannie Pickens didn't take any stuff. I'd just like to share with you what I remember and how I felt about St. Luke and some of St. Luke's finest (in my eyesight) at the ages of 10 to 12 year old.

#### MOTHERS OF THE CHURCH

The Number-One Lady was my great-grandmother, Dorcas Hopkins. Grandma Hopkins was the Mother of the Church. She was tiny and fragile looking, but ever so strong, devout and respected by all. I remember one of Grandma's duties was to make the sacrament bread. Sometimes on First Sunday one of us kids had to go to Grandma's and get the bread and bring it to the church, so the Stewardess' could prepare the Holy Sacrament table. I do remember watching my grandmother take a hot flat iron and iron this dough mixture flat and crispy; the hot irons cooked the bread. It is said that Mother Hopkins was the person who advised the early church that the time had come to build a church — thence St. Luke C.M.E. Church as we know it now.

The Number-Two Lady was my grandmother, Nannie Pickens, daughter of Dorcas, green eyes and a heart so big there was room for *anyone* who thought they *needed someone*. Mom was a very dedicated member of St. Luke; if she was asked to do something, I never heard of her saying, "No."

Katy Abernathy: It seemed she was Best Friend to Ms. Pickens. Ms. Abernathy was always pleasant and she seemed always willing and working with St. Luke. Ms. Abernathy was the mother of Connie Woods and Alta Stansbery and Lou Abernathy's mother-in-law.

Cousin Rose Shelby: She has been a dedicated member up until now. Rose was an usher, and any Sunday that she wasn't working, she was On Duty ushering, if needed. Rose was always pretty, always smiling, and very spiritually congenial. That's how I saw her. Praise God, she is still with us.

Auntie Annabelle and Uncle Fritz Pettiford were among the founding, paying members of St. Luke. Auntie was a Stewardess and Uncle Fritz a Trustee. They were very good workers until death.

#### COOKS

I want to drop just a few names of some of the people who stand out in my memory as the best cooks in the world. (You gotta know I knew the cooks.) Ms. Tillie Hegman, Agnes "Can" Giles, Christine Nesbitt, Lorene Dixon, Mr. Jerry Faulkner, and still with us today, loved and respected, Ms. Lovie Anderson. These are just a few of the early church people in my memory.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

Now, let me tell you what I remember about Sunday School. At that time Mr. Snell was our superintendent. Mr. Snell seemed to us to be a little grumpy, but he was so good at his job — Sunday School and children. He was always there for us children. These are some of my memories. My best memory is of the Sunday School cards. We had little 3" x 4" cards with pictures representing the subject on the front and the story of the picture on the back. To me it wasn't like "Reading for College"; it was colorful and picturesque, and even though we seemed like we weren't listening, I, among others, will always remember Sunday School and picture cards. I was asked to substitute for someone one Sunday, one only, that I remember. Since then I try to say I was a Sunday School teacher. It was the card class (little ones). I remember Chauncey Wood (Mike Wood's dad) was one of my class. And I gave them candy.

## CHILDREN

I remember Rozelle Nesbitt taught Sunday School, among others. I remember these women as being dedicated to us children: Clara Boles Jackson, Odelia Wesley, Vergie (Dorothy Lucky's aunt), Sadie Crain, to name a few. They watched over the children at church and at affairs and on the street — anywhere we were, someone was there for the children.

Christmas for the children of St. Luke meant an afternoon program and a Christmas tree in the southwest front corner of the church. There were presents under the tree and bags of candy with fruit. The children sang songs and said speeches, and then were called up front by name to get their presents. Beautiful Memories!

Easter Sunday was a big Sunday at St. Luke. We'd have new clothes (Spring). Sometimes we'd be so cold, but we wouldn't wear our old winter coats. We had to show off our new dresses. There were speeches, skits, singing, colored eggs, and candy eggs.

On Children's Day, the third Sunday in June, the children were recognized. There was an afternoon program. Any excuse you had wasn't good enough for you to miss these events. These were a must. Our founding relatives and friends showed their caring to St. Luke's children.

## CHURCH EDIFICE

St. Luke's church building had a belfry. If they ever had a bell, it was before my time. The belfry was a home for pigeons. My uncle, Clyde Pickens, said he and some friends skipped school once and came to the church to shoot pigeons with B-B guns. He was so excited about skipping school, he forgot that he lived across the street. He told me that Mom saw him and came and marched him home with a switch.

## FUND-RAISING DINNERS

The fund-raising dinners were delicious. Once a year they barbecued a pig over a pit and sold sandwiches and dinners. I was told that my Great-Uncle George Simpson was one who sat up all night preparing this delicacy.

My memory will not allow me to go any further. I do know that I will always remember St. Luke as being my Home Church, and I hope that any newcomers will remember something good about St. Luke Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

## CHURCH NEIGHBORS

Rev. King Nesbitt and his wife Florence Nesbitt lived across the street from the church. The Connells had a son who had three boys and one girl. One boy died of TB. Their daughter, Neppie Mallory, played the piano for Macedonia Church. Other folks in the neighborhood included the Varnados (Mr. Varnado was a barber); a white family, Mr. and Mrs. Sawyer, who lived in the big white house now owned by the Britts, and owned a storefront directly north of the St. Luke; Mr. George Person owned a grocery store; Eddie Glover was a barber; Margaret Minor, a beautician, had her shop in Mr. Persons' store. (Later she moved the shop to her residence at 1202 Crispis Drive); Geneva Britt and Gladys Donaldson also were beauticians.

## OTHER BUSINESS PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Lincoln Wesley, husband of Odelia Wesley, was a barber and had a shop on North Fifth Street. Mrs. Wesley was a teacher and later became a principal. Marshall Britt trained horses. Later he worked as a parking attendant at Busey Bank. John Hannett was a painter and wallpaper

hanger. He Lived at 407 East Beardsley. J. W. Pirtle owned a Shell gas station/beauty shop/cab service on Fourth Street. He still owns the building which has housed two small grocery stores and a beauty shop. Now called Pirtle's mini mall, it is home for WBCP, the first black-owned and operated radio station in East Central Illinois. In the spring of 2002, Mrs. Ether Huffman started working for her brother J. W. at WBCP.

## CHAPTER 5

### CHOIRS & MUSICIANS

**S**t. Luke as a community of believers who follow Christ's example of sharing God's love is like a living body. Bones that support and allow us to move are the written and preached word; breath is God's spirit within us; and the blood that carries our joys and sorrows and nurtures our spirit is music. Throughout 93 years, choirs and musicians have richly blessed us and kept that blood flowing.

*Mrs. Myrtle  
Williams  
Chatman  
Remembers*

You have probably heard me talk about the choirs before: the Gospel Choir with their new gospel pearl books, swaying down the aisle singing, "Holy, Holy, Holy" with all their hearts. Mrs. Lovie Anderson was a frequent soloist who sang beautifully.

Mr. W.T. Summerville came here as a graduate student in 1966 and has been here ever since. There were several musicians here before him — Rev. Wormacks' son and Rev. Crowder's son who

both played the piano, Mrs. Daisy Sayles, Anna Wall Scott, Roy Williams, Paul Jones, Dr. Holloway, Wayne Easley and Mrs. Thornton. Others have served with him in the Senior Choir, including Stanley Butts, III, Noah Brown, and Titus Nesbitt. Rev. Roland Brown was the first bass guitarist, Rev. John McCoy the first drummer. Cedric Nesbitt, Matthew Nesbitt, Byron Smith, Jr., and Delacio Kelly were also drummers. Luana Williams sang, and Pamela Pirtle branched out in her own singing career. The first flutist was Carla Samuel. At one time the church choir had over 100 voices. They sang at so many rural and local churches that we couldn't name them all. There were also 2 rehearsals a week.

The choir was not allowed to rock or clap until after the Annual Conference (around 1972) when they got the okay from the bishop. The main choir has had several name changes. They went from *Youth Choir* to *Young Adult Choir* to *New Life Choir*, the current name of the adult choir. There has also been a *Senior Choir*.

The former youth choir, *Voices of Praise*, combined with the children's choir, *Voices of Promise*, to become the *Youth of Promise Choir* under the direction of Mrs. Faye Weatherspoon in May of 2001. Currently they have 15 members ranging in ages from 7 to 17. They bless us with song on the fourth Sunday.

We are indebted to the choirs of St. Luke. Not only do they perform in Sunday worship services, at funerals, for special church days, and back up our pastors when they preach in other churches; under Mr. Summerville's leadership they have gone on several tours. The most celebrated was a trip to the Capitol Rotunda in Washington, D.C., in 1972.

Following are newspaper articles which feature the choir, their tours, and a choir reunion held in 1985. Articles appeared in *The News-Gazette* and *The Courier*, an evening newspaper whose headquarters have since become The Courier Cafe in Urbana.

JANUARY 15, 1972:

St. Luke's  
To Honor  
Youth Choir  
Director

The St. Luke C.M.E. Church will honor W.T. Summerville, director of its 60-voice youth choir, at the Sunday morning service and at a dinner after the service.

Summerville has been director of the choir since September 1966. The choir has grown in that time from 15 active members to its present membership of 60.

The choir has made a long-playing record, *Hold the Light*, and has been invited to perform at Allen Temple C.M.E. Church in Portland, Oregon, this summer.

JULY 12, 1972:

Choir  
Seeks Funds  
for  
Capitol  
Trip

The 70-voice St. Luke's C.M.E. Church Youth Choir is trying to raise \$4,200 to appear in a concert July 29th at the Capitol Rotunda in Washington, D.C.

To help raise funds, the choir will present a program of gospel music at 6 p.m. Sunday at the University Place Christian Church, Wright Street and Springfield Avenue.

Donations will be accepted at the concert, or contributions may be mailed to the choir director, Willie T. Summerville, 2306 Lantern Hill Drive.

The invitation for the choir, which has made numerous appearances in this area through the years, came from Illinois Senator Charles Percy, Summerville said.

The choir, directed by Summerville for the past six years, is composed of ages 12 to 25. Stanley Butts, III is choir president.

Plans are for the choir to travel by two chartered buses on the four-day trip that also will include appearances in some churches in Washington and Virginia, plus a short sight-seeing tour.

The concert Sunday also will feature the Springfield Community Choir of Springfield. The selections will include "It is Well with My Soul," with Mrs. C.T. Thornton, wife of St. Luke's pastor, as soloist; "You Need Jesus" with Willia Harris as soloist and other selections.

The choir has appeared in many local churches, has made numerous television appearances, presented concerts at Illinois Wesleyan University, Chanute Air Force Base and in communities in Wisconsin and Indiana. A new album, *We've Come to Praise His Name*, has been recorded by the choir.

JULY 25, 1972:

St. Luke's  
Choir Plans  
Fund-Raising  
Concert

The 70-voice St. Luke's C.M.E. Church Youth Choir will present another concert to raise money to appear in concert July 29th at the Capitol Rotunda in Washington, D.C.

The fund raising concert will be at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at King School in Urbana.

W.T. Summerville, director of the youth choir, said Tuesday that nearly \$1,000 have been raised. The goal is \$4,000. "We believe all things are possible with God's help," he said.

Donations will be accepted at the Wednesday concert or contributions may be mailed to W.T. Summerville, Brookens Jr. High, Urbana, or to the church at 809 N. Fifth St., Champaign.

The choir was invited to the nation's capital by Illinois Senator Charles Percy.

Plans are to take two chartered buses to Washington. The trip will also include appearances in some churches in Washington and Virginia, plus a short sight-seeing tour.

Summerville said the choir has conducted a "very mild, unaggressive kind of fund raising campaign. We have not been stomping from door

to door with baskets, cups, envelopes . . . we have not had our members badgering any of the major businesses for funds . . . we have not had any of our choir members out selling gimmicks trying to get help."

The choir has previously appeared in many local churches, made numerous television appearances and presented concerts in other communities.

JULY 30, 1972:

Going to  
Washington

W.T. Summerville, Director of the St. Luke's C.M.E. Church Choir, tells choir members that the group will be going to Washington, D.C., Monday to participate in a concert in the Capitol Rotunda. The choir made an intensive effort to raise funds for the trip. As of last Monday, they lacked \$3,000 dollars. By Saturday, they had reached their \$4,000 goal.

MARCH 16, 1974:

Youth Choir  
to Perform

St. Luke's Youth Choir will present an afternoon of classical and gospel music Sunday at 3:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary of St. Luke C.M.E. Church of Champaign. The choir is directed by Willie T. Summerville, choral music director of Brookens Jr. High School.

The choir will perform works by Bach, Handel, Schubert, Mattie Moss Clarke and others. In addition to the choral selections, Cauthel Thornton will perform "I know My Redeemer Liveth" and "Rejoice" from Handel's *Messiah*, "I Walked Today Where Jesus Walked" and others. Leroy Thornton, a freshman at Lane College, Jackson, Tennessee, will sing "But Who May Abide" from Handel's *Messiah*.

There is no admission charge, and the public is invited.

JUNE 30, 1974 from *The Courier*:

YOUTH CHOIR  
SUCCEEDS  
WITH HARD  
WORK,  
DISCIPLINE

WILLIE SUMMERVILLE DIRECTS AT ST. LUKE'S CME  
Hard work and discipline make a choir good enough to be invited out as often as the St. Luke C.M.E. Youth Choir. Performances throughout the Champaign County have been well-received, with several earning standing ovations.

"The choir usually is the most attractive youth program of the black church because they love music and the choir gets to travel and perform," Willie Summerville, Director, said.

Summerville, who teaches at Brookens campus of Urbana Junior High School, also enforces a few rules for the church choir. Those include no foul language, no smoking even in social gatherings of the choir, no running in and out during practice and a strong measure of respect for the director.

"Many members are from broken homes where there isn't a strong mother or father figure. I think they welcome the discipline," he said.

#### *Respect*

"It's a relaxed atmosphere, but the leader-follower type of respect is prevalent."

Summerville's relationship with the younger members of the 55-person choir, he described as a parent-child concept.

"A child is looking for respect and love from a parent. He's not looking for a buddy."

The choir at St. Luke is composed of persons between the ages of about 12 to 25, and being a Christian is not a requirement for membership.

"I don't ask them, 'Can you sing,' I say 'Do you have a good attitude.'" Summerville said. "I treasure a good attitude over a good voice."

"If they have a bad attitude when they join, it usually changes. I don't have to do a lot of talking about it. When they get in, they know respect and discipline are the order of the day."

Hard work and travel are two ingredients bringing choir members and their director together.

#### *Close*

"We are close," Summerville said. Many of the choir members ask his help with family problems, school or personal difficulties.

He said he hears primarily about major problems rather than small ones. With six choirs, not including the school groups he directs, Summerville may not always be accessible.

In dealing with youngsters' problems, he said he tries to help them look at a problem realistically without divorcing Christian solutions.

"I'm careful not to come out with a pious answer. I'm not so naive as to do that, but we try to foster the idea of Christianity as part of the choir and with that, maybe we can look at a problem in a different light."

In some cases, he said, the choir offers a sense of direction.

"Mr. Summerville inspired me to go to church more," said Diane Nearing, 17, a choir member for three years. "I've always been a Christian, but I'm more dedicated. He's also a personal friend."

Miss Nearing and Herbert Nesbitt, 15, both commented that experiences in the choir had helped them overcome shyness and learn to meet people easily.

"Being around the choir and new people taught me that one way to meet people is to just go up and talk. I don't feel left out any more," Nesbitt said.

#### *Trips*

The choir practices each Wednesday and Saturday for performances at St. Luke, churches throughout the Midwest and for special trips such as one two years ago to sing in the Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C.

The Rev. H. J. Thornton is pastor of St. Luke.

"It's a good choir," the director said. "We've been together so long, they know me. It's an all-volunteer church choir, but the attendance is just great."



"When I became choral director, I extended the rehearsals (now a total of 5-1/2 hours weekly). They used to practice once a week, but the choir was progressing well and needed a challenge."

Attendance is important for learning gospel music which is a major feature of the repertoire. The black gospel music must be learned by rote, unlike the written works by Bach, Handel or Schubert which the choir also performs.

Almost all the music is selected by the director who determines the concern according to the particular church's service.

"Be ye ready" is his motto, and the choir prepares several numbers which they can begin after a short piano introduction.

Choir members attend from throughout Champaign-Urbana. One child used to come from Rantoul for rehearsals.

"If they get there," Summerville said, "we'll get them home."

JULY 20, 1985:

St. Luke's  
Choir  
To Reunite

In the three decades since its founding, the St. Luke's C.M.E. Youth Choir has eased tensions during racial unrest in the 1960's, brought its music to the Senate Building Rotunda and along the East Coast, and trained a host of future choir directors.

For the first time in 30 years, the choir will hold a reunion. And nearly 100 alumni will come from California, Virginia and Texas to the church Sunday at 809 N. Fifth St., Champaign, for what promises to be a major celebration.

"We're very proud of our people and very grateful for support from the community all these years," said choir director Willie Summerville.

The Youth Choir began as a community choir, and repaid the community a decade later with a series of concerts at a time when souls needed all the peace they could find.

"It was a period of unrest, and gangs were rampant in the North End," Summerville remembered. "A lot of those people had a positive influence in keeping a lid on the violence."

A few years later, then-Senator Charles Percy, R-Illinois, won the choir a tour of the East Coast that culminated in a meeting with the late Hubert Humphrey. During that time, the choir recorded two record albums: *Hold the Light* and *We've Come To Praise His Name*.

In recent years, fruit of the choir's labors include such top gospel musicians as Stanley Butts, director the Black Choir at Purdue University, Pamela Pirtle, director at Illinois State University, and three ministers, including Rev. Pam Alexander, now in Texas.

Sunday, the choir will perform at the regular 11 a.m. service and a special 3:30 p.m. concert. A free dinner open to all will be offered after the 11 a.m. service.

Summerville's performance plans include "O Happy Day," portions of Handel's Messiah and works by such newer composers and arrangers as Andrae Crouch and Douglas Miller.

St. Luke, one of the oldest black churches in the area, was organized in 1909, when services were held in an Urbana home. In 1911, the present site at Fifth and Tremont streets was purchased. Three years later, the first part of the church was built. In 1961, an addition was built, and in 1968 a fire made extensive remodeling necessary.

## CHAPTER 6

### BOARDS AND AUXILIARIES

Our St. Luke body has thrived for 93 years with the strong muscles of its Boards and Auxiliaries. Among these are the Stewardesses (Mothers of the Church), the Ushers (Doorkeepers of God's House), the Stewards, Trustees, and Lay Ministry; Christian Methodist Men, Women of the Church, and the E.P. Murchison Club. Several members who have served St. Luke in these ministries have kindly shared their memories and experiences.

#### STEWARDESSES

During the first twelve years of our history, the C.M.E. Church gave no official place for women to work in the affairs of the Church. The first resolution calling for Stewardesses was presented by G.W. Usher in the 5th General Conference in 1882. At the General Conference in 1894, the office of the Stewardesses was instituted.

St. Luke, but for the Mothers of the Church, would not exist. As we have seen from the Official Church History, Sister Dorcas Hopkins was the oldest Mother of the Church and selected the present location of the church. The Stewardess Board was the first and only Board during St. Luke's founding years. They made sure there was enough money to carry on our mission. Their President was Jennie Tisdale and Tillie Hegman was Secretary.

*Mrs. Edna Booker Remembers* Mrs. Edna Booker, Past President, has been on the Stewardess Board almost since it began, along with Mrs. Lovie Anderson, Mrs. Lansford, Bessie Harris, Ernestine Preister, Mrs. Patterson, Mrs. Sophie Roberts, Juanita Nesbitt, Donna Butts, Tonia Hill, Malinda Owens Wallick, and Willie Mae Hicks.

Mrs. Booker served under Pastors Doty, Crowder, Taylor, Bishop, Thornton, Kennedy, Johnson, Brown, and Douglas. She said she was young when she came to St. Luke and her father told her to always associate with church people, because they will always help you in one way or another. She has been at St. Luke for over fifty years. She has approximately two hundred family members.

**CURRENT MEMBERS:**

Mrs. Malinda Owens Wallick, President  
 Mrs. Nettie Howell, Vice-President  
 Mrs. Genora Jarrett, Chaplin  
 Ms. Darlene Pearson, Secretary  
 Mrs. Ethel Kennedy  
 Mrs. Willie Mae Hicks  
 Mrs. Dorothy Chapple  
 Mrs. Edna Booker, (Past President)

**PAST MEMBERS:**

**Mother Hopkins, Founder of the St. Luke Stewardess Board**

Mrs. Donna Butts (Past President)  
 Mrs. Juanita Nesbitt (Past President)  
 Mrs. Mary Herron (Past President)  
 Mrs. Annabelle Pettiford (Past President)  
 Mrs. Mary Lankford      Mrs. Rosie Mays  
 Mrs. Eunice Patterson      Mrs. Ada Turner  
 Mrs. Savannah Marion      Mrs. Lella Connell  
 Mrs. Ernestine Priester      Mrs. Annie Seets  
 Mrs. Sophie Roberts      Mrs. Ruth Ray  
 Mrs. Gertrude Robinson      Mrs. Tonya Hill  
 Mrs. Bessie Edward      Mrs. Rose Mays  
 Mrs. Rosie Easley      Mrs. Bessie Harris  
 Mrs. Charlotte Miller      Mrs. Bessie Osby  
 Mrs. Margaret Barnes      Mrs. Ara Wood  
 Mrs. Christine Nesbitt      Mrs. Ceola Perry  
 Mrs. Tishan Smith      Mrs. Pearl Milner  
 Mrs. Lorine Dixon

**MISSIONARY SOCIETY**

*Mrs. Dora Jamerson Writes*

When Mrs. Jamerson came to St. Luke, the Missionary Society was well organized under the leadership of Mrs. Florence Nesbitt who was the president (1962). Women were elected as delegates to the Conferences. Mrs. Jamerson also had the pleasure of working with Mrs. Elam, and Mildred Derricks (one of the Teaching Missionaries). She worked closely with the stewardesses. When Mrs. Derricks passed away in 1983, Mrs. Jamerson became the president. Rev. A.W. Bishop was pastor.

Since 1982 the Missionary Society has grown a great deal. Missionary Society members attend the Conferences across the District as well as the Annual Conference. The Missionaries have also

worked in the local church under the leadership of Pastors Rev. A. W. Bishop, H. J. Thornton, Earl Kennedy, DeRon Johnson, Roland Brown and the Rev. Dr. Jesse L. Douglas, Sr. Mrs. Jamerson says the Missionaries pray that God will help them do more each day. In 2001 after serving as President for 18 years, she stepped down and that position was taken on by Mrs. Jacqui Davis.

Past Presidents of the Missionary are Florence Nesbitt, Clara Jackson, Edna Elam, Mildred Derricks and Dora Jamerson.

CURRENT OFFICERS AND MEMBERS:

Mrs. Jacqueline Davis, President  
 Mrs. Maxine Brown, Vice-President  
 Mrs. Genora Jarrett, Spiritual Advisor  
 Ms. Evangeline Foster, Secretary  
 Ms. Kathy Lockett, Treasurer  
 Mrs. Dora Jamerson      Mrs. Dorothy Chapple  
 Mrs. Tressa Easley      Mrs. Belle Miller  
 Ms. Princess Miller      Ms. Jennie Sheffield  
 Mrs. Helen Creighton      Mrs. Edna Booker  
 Mrs. Blanche Douglas      Mrs. Dion Jones  
 Mrs. Suzanne Parker      Mrs. Malinda Wallick  
 Mrs. Vessie Harley      Ms. Ceola Kinard  
 Ms. Gail Thorpe      Mrs. Ethel Kennedy  
 Mrs. Katherine McCutchen

USHERS

*Mrs. Ether Huffman Writes* Ether united with St. Luke C.M.E. Church in 1952 under the pastoralship of Rev. J.S. Turner after relocating here from Dyersburg, Tennessee. Shortly after joining St. Luke, she became a member of the Usher Board. Mrs. Mattie Clemons was President of the Board at that time. Due to failing health, Mrs. Clemons stepped down, and Mrs. Geneva Britt became President, later followed by

Mrs. Lola Weatherspoon and Mrs. Ruth Brown. In 1958, Ether became President of the Usher Board under the pastoralship of Rev. A. W. Bishop. She remained President until October 2000, when the position was assumed by Cyrus Williams.

*Doorkeepers During Hard Times*

According to Ether, the Board went through some hard times during the 1950's due to the frequent change of presidents, but they managed to hold the Board together due to their good working relationship, always trying to put God in their work as *Doorkeepers* of His house. She also credits Mrs. Sophia Roberts for her encouragement, always available to listen and give advice. St. Luke's Usher Board was the first to have an Annual Usher Day in the community.

It has been a longtime desire of Ether's to form a Junior Usher Board. Attempts in the past have been unsuccessful as far as keeping such a Board together for any length of time. However, she continues to work with the Junior Usher Board at this time and remains in prayer that they, too, will continue to work together and grow together spiritually as *Doorkeepers* of God's house.

Ether was married to the late Herman Lincoln Huffman and has two children, Rose M. Huffman-Thomas and Herman L. Huffman, Jr.

DECEASED MEMBERS OF THE SENIOR USHER BOARD:

Mattie Clements	Ruth Brown
Lucille Williams	Ruth Blackwell
Lillian Evans	Aeta Stanberry,
Louise Walker	Josie Jones
Evelyn McHaney	George Ray
Dorothy Jordan Luckey	Geneva Britt
Esmus Kinard	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Josie Harmon	Donna Tinsley
Louise Thadison	Bertha Williams
Ether Huffinan	Ronald Lewis
Ronald Casey	Susanne Parker
Cyrus Williams	Mary Williams
Margie Upshaw	Betty Thomas
Katherine McCutchen	Angie Lovell
Ceola Kinard	Joyce Cowan

JUNIOR USHERS:

Marissa Abernathy	Lonnie Kinard
Kendric Huffinan	Wesley King
Shalinka Huffinan	

INACTIVE:

Vertie Smith	Rose Shelby
Eddie Thorpe	Verine Cole
J.W. Pirtle	Margaret Minor
Lola Weatherspoon	Pat Hayn
Michael Wood	Maxine Brown
Josephine Weatherspoon	Helen Creighton
Carmen Wood	Michael Wright
Marcus Brown	

LEFT TOWN:

Ruby Phillips	Brenda Owens
Izetta Braden	Azell Alexander
Terry Hill	Mildred Easley

*From "St. Luke  
Boards,  
1969-70"*

STEWARDS

Mr. Sam Langford	Mr. Harden Clark
Mr. King Nesbitt	Mr. Van Dyson
Mr. Richard Snell	Mr. George Ray
Mr. Attrice Dixon	Mr. Charles Miller
Mr. James Miles	Mr. John Hannett
Mr. Bracy Easley	Mr. Ellis Barnes
Mr. William Herron	Mr. Fred Morris
Mr. Harvey Mays	Mr. Earnest Davis
Mr. Clarence Williams	Mr. Armster Jarrett

Mr. Bernard (Bo) Miller	Mr. Will Pirtle
Mr. Theodore Booker	Mr. Arzell Chapple
Mr. Vernell Weatherspoon	Mr. Will Smith

STEWARDS SERVING 2002-2003:

Mr. Harold Jones, Recording Steward	
Mr. Sylvester Pelmore, Jr.	Mr. Ezell Derricks
Mrs. Mae Kendrick	Mrs. Patricia Lewis
Mrs. Henrine Casey	

TRUSTEES

*From "St. Luke  
Boards,  
1969-70"*

Mr. Fritz Pettiford	Mr. William Priester
Mr. Phill Milliner	Mr. George Person
Mr. Wilbert Anderson	Mr. Bracy Easley
Mr. Theodore Booker	Mr. George Roberts
Mr. William Speed	Mr. Ellis Barnes
Mr. Osborne Cole	Mr. Wendell Evans
Mr. Wardell Hill	Mr. Louis Alexander

LAY MINISTRY

*Submitted by  
Jo Samuel,  
2002-2003  
Conference Year*

It is the purpose of the Lay ministry at St. Luke to aid the local church in equipping and enabling the members of the church to engage in more effective ministry in the Name of Jesus Christ. To this end, over the past several years the Lay Ministry has instituted the One Church One School Partnership with Stratton Elementary School, given new life to the Membership Class, started a Tuesday afternoon prayer service and provided encouragement and assistance to the various church ministries.

I am deliberately not going to mention the various members who have participated in the Lay Ministry activities over the past few years because I would not want to leave anyone out. I will take this opportunity to thank all of the laity of St. Luke for supporting the various ministries with their time, talents and finances. To God be the Glory!

For the first time in the history of the Lay Ministry at St. Luke, a lay representative was sent to the Connectional Lay Institute. The 12th Connectional Lay Institute was held at the Peabody Hotel in Little Rock, Arkansas, December 26 through 29, 2001. Dr. Victor Taylor, General Secretary of the Lay Ministry convened the Institute.

The Lay Ministry of St. Luke is standing on a firm foundation. With continued love, commitment and perseverance we know that the increase will come through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

#### CHRISTIAN METHODIST MEN OF ST. LUKE

The Purpose is to serve The Lord first of all! Within this framework, we need to get the Christian men of St. Luke C.M.E. Church to use their God-given gifts and talents to become active and involved to make a difference in the following areas: the home, the church, the community.

Continue to pray for one another and be encouraging.

#### CURRENT OFFICERS:

President - William Nesbitt  
 Vice-President - Ron Lewis  
 Secretary - Cyrus Williams  
 Treasurer - Phillip March  
 Chaplin - Vincent Townsend

#### E.P. MURCHISON CLUB

The E.P. Murchison Club was organized in honor of Bishop E.P. Murchison by Rev. Earl Kennedy during his pastorate of St. Luke. The Club sponsors the following activities during the month of February in observation of Black History Month:

- 1) National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Read In. The Read In is nationally observed the first Sunday in February by

*Written by  
 William  
 Nesbitt*

*Written by  
 Henrine  
 Casey*

churches and the first Monday by schools and other organizations.

- 2) The Home State Rally and Black History Trivia Contest. This program recognizes the heritage and contribution of African Americans to our society.

#### CURRENT MEMBERS:

Gloria Dixon - President	
Henrine Luckett Casey	Jacqui Davis
Nate Dixon	Maudie Edwards
Brenda Foster	Vernon Lewis
Patricia McKinney Lewis	Jo Samuel

#### ANNUAL CELEBRATIONS

##### WHITE HOUSE TEAS

*The White House  
 Teas were held  
 from 1954-1989*

In 1954, Mrs. Mary Campbell Herron introduced the White House Tea to St. Luke. While the plot was a fictitious one, it was with the deepest respect that *The First Ladies of Our Country* were portrayed. This proved to be a successful annual event for the Church.

##### WOMEN'S DAY

*Women's Day:  
 First Celebrated  
 in 1982*

Women's Day is an annual event at St. Luke which began in 1982, and was chaired by Mrs. Dorothy Jordan Luckey. The annual speaker for this event is the Rev. Brenda Little, a Champaign native. This year, 2002, marked her 20th celebration with St. Luke.

Rev. Little is pastor of the Bethany Baptist Church in Evanston, Illinois. A graduate of Champaign Central High School, she received her Master of Divinity Degree in Parish Ministry and Pastoral Counseling from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. She holds a Bachelor of Religious Education Degree from Chicago Baptist Institute and received her nursing degree from the Michael Reese Hospital Medical Center School of Nursing. In addition to her pastoral duties at Bethany

Baptist Church, she is a Doctoral candidate at the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, chairperson of the Midwest Clergywomen Association in Chicago, and nurse manager of the Behavioral Medical Department at Jackson Park Hospital and Medical Center in Chicago.

Rev. Little is the first female to serve as a Protestant Chaplain at the Westside V.A. Hospital in Chicago, is a Christian education writer, and has preached in many churches throughout the United States, in foreign territories, and across denominational lines. She is the wife of The Rev. Alfred Little of Chicago, Illinois, and the mother of three children. Her parents are Mr. and Mrs. James L. Williams of Champaign, Illinois.

## CHAPTER 7

### ST. LUKE CELEBRATES LIVING MEMBERS

**S**t. Luke's living members are her hands, feet and voice in the world. Through her we are touched by God's spirit, fed by God's Word, and energized in worship. We all, because we have allowed God to influence our lives, give life to the folks around us. Members whose names are called out below have shared their stories of being part of St. Luke and/or have been recognized in the press for their efforts in the community.

*Mrs. Hentrine  
Lockett  
Casey*

Mrs. Casey united with St. Luke C.M.E. Church under the pastorship of Rev. Thornton. She is currently a member of the E.P. Murchison Club and the Steward Board. Her immediate family consists of her daughter Carmen C. Casey, son Ronald W. Casey and father Mr. Henry Lockett.

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever." Psalm 118:29

The following is excerpted from an article in *The News-Gazette* which appeared on July 15, 2001. Three members of St. Luke were featured: Mrs. Lula Conner, Mrs. Maudie Edwards, and Mrs. Patricia McKinney Lewis.

*Black Women's  
Accomplishments  
on Display*

Accomplishments of women in the local black community include picking cotton to stuffing quilts and to becoming president of Parkland College.

The determination and skills of black women have helped mold Champaign County — in education, health, politics and region.

On display at the Early American Museum, north of Mahomet, are biographies of 82 black women, both living and deceased, plus 16 pieces of needlework done by black women with East Central Illinois connections.

Some of the women spotlighted at the museum were homemakers and quilters whose material came literally from the fabrics of their life.

**Lula Conner**, of Champaign, used ties that her late husband wore for the fabric in her mostly blue and burgundy quilt.

**Maudie Edwards**, of Urbana, is displaying not only a quilt she stitched, but quilts her grandmother, Pocahontas "Pokey" Schaffner McKinney Nathan, and mother, Lavana McKinney Flake, made.

Edward's own quilt is a red and white Little Red Schoolhouse pattern that features the signatures of people she worked with during her last year (1984-85) teaching at Robeson School in Champaign.

**Patricia McKinney Lewis**, assistant principal at Jefferson Middle School, Champaign, was chair of the Reading is Fundamental Project Committee for 21 years. She is known as "The Book Lady" to hundreds of children at the Don Moyer Boys and Girls Club and Douglass Center Day Camp.

Excerpts from the following article by Steven Bauer appeared in *The News-Gazette* on December 1998:

**3 HONORED FOR NEIGHBORHOOD WORK**

**Maudie Edwards** taught in the Champaign schools for 26 years and then, when she retired, continued helping children learn as a tutor.

Kelly Tsai, a University of Illinois student, helped coordinate a group of Volunteer Illini with a tutoring program.

Mike Novotny, a Champaign city staffer in Neighborhood Services, helped clean up blighted properties.

*Douglass Park  
Grass-Roots  
Group Gives Out  
Honors*

What they have in common is helping the community, said Catherine Hogue, President of the Concerned Citizens for Better Neighborhoods. Edwards, Tsai and Novotny received awards from the group at an annual recognition dinner Thursday at the Douglass Center Annex.

The Concerned Citizens group organized in 1987 to deal with drug trafficking around Douglass Park. It expanded from neighborhood watch activities to after-school tutoring, summer recreation and other activities for youth.

"We think we have made some changes for the better," said Hogue. "We want to continue doing that."

Mable Thomas, Champaign's neighborhood services coordinator, said it's important to recognize special people who have made particular contributions to a neighborhood. Many people have worked with the Concerned Citizens group to improve the Douglass Park neighborhood, she said.

"A neighborhood is a very fragile thing," Thomas said. "It takes a lot of people who each give a little to keep a neighborhood going."



Edwards was a grade-school teacher for more than 40 years, including 26 years in Champaign. When she retired, she volunteered as a tutor for several years at the Douglass Branch Library and with the Concerned Citizens tutoring program.

"I really enjoy working with children," Edwards said. "My life with children and the people in the community has done so much in helping me to understand what I am to do."

"Most of you here are doing something to help young people move along and be successful," she said.

Tsai said the Volunteer Illini has about 1,300 student volunteers in different service projects. A dozen college students were regular tutors with youth at the Concerned Citizens after-school program this year, she said.

From a letter by Mrs. Maudie Edwards written in 1995:

*Mrs. Maudie  
Edwards' Cousins  
at St. Luke*

Mrs. Rosie Shelby is a cousin of Mrs. Myrtle Chatman who is a niece of Mrs. Pettiford and granddaughter of Mrs. Dorcas Hopkins, church founders. Mrs. Maudie Edwards is a cousin of Mrs. Lovie Anderson. Both Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Odelia Wesley, a friend and member of St. Luke, were influential in Mrs. Edwards' coming to Champaign-Urbana in 1959 from southern Illinois and later finding a new church home at St. Luke.

Mrs. Edwards was a teacher and principal in the Champaign/Urbana school system for about 35 years. She became a co-director of the St. Luke Youth Choir. She worked with Mr. Summerville, Mr. Casey, and Mr. Hunt for several years. The choir made their first recording during this time. She was involved with the choir in their concerts

for many organizations and churches, large and small, urban and rural. Mrs. Edwards and Mr. Casey helped with taking the youth choir to Washington, DC., where they sang in the capitol rotunda. They also helped with Vacation Bible School for many years. One summer she sponsored a trip to Brookfield Zoo for all the classes.

Mrs. Edwards is a member of the E.P. Murchison Club, Sunday School and attends prayer meeting each week. She is also an active volunteer in the community. Mrs. Edwards stated that you received your education through the community, because you are not allowed to live [just] anywhere in Champaign.

Excerpts from the following article by J. Philip Bloomer appeared in *The News-Gazette* on January 29, 2001:

*Nate Dixon  
Stood Up  
for Civil Rights*

To Champaign's Nate Dixon, the state of race relations is kind of a case of the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Without a doubt, things have changed dramatically in the nearly 30 years he's worked for the Champaign Park District. Athletic teams are well-integrated. Blacks live all over town instead of just north of University Avenue and east of Neil Street. Whites even go to Douglass Center.

But as the 62-year-old Dixon steps down from his post as director of community services, he sees clouds forming in areas such as in school vouchers.

"(Vouchers are) A camouflage for separation," he said. "Seems like they're always coming up with something."

Dixon won't be in the front lines in this fight. Friday was his last day of work at the district, the conclusion of a career that began when Douglass Center had to be shut down in Octo-

ber 1970 after former director Percy Gordon was burned trying to light a boiler.

Gordon was in the hospital. The center was shut down. Kids were on the street.

Dixon was working as a counselor at the old Adler Mental Health Clinic when he was contacted by Robert Toalson, the park district general manager, who was fairly new to the job and the community himself.

Toalson said he knew Dixon because he had worked as a volunteer coach and helped out at Douglass Center.

These were troubled times, to put it mildly. The Peacestone Rangers had been in control of the center for the bulk of the summer, Toalson said; then Gordon got hurt.

"We needed somebody to step in and Nate did it. He really brought it around," Toalson said.

Dixon knows something about opening doors.

Old newspapers and *Life* magazine pictures testify to Dixon's role in the history of school integration. Dixon was one of 10 black high school students who, in 1956 under federal court order, had to be escorted by 160 National Guardsmen, past rows of fist-waving white people, to school in Sturgis, Kentucky. Until then, he had been bused 11 miles to the black school, a one-room affair where all the grades were taught at once.

Dixon stood out in the group, having established his credentials as a star basketball player. As a sophomore, the year before, his old school had taken third place in Kentucky's black high school state tournament.

But Sturgis was a different story. It was one thing to go to school there, another to play sports.

Dixon said school officials told him that if he went out for sports, they couldn't protect him on the road. They added that if he agreed not to play, they'd guarantee him a college scholarship somewhere.

At first, he wasn't going to play. Then he thought about the need to set an example for his little brothers and others coming up behind him. Some other youths in their little band of 10, some who weren't even athletes until that point, agreed to go out together, he said.

The students and teachers from his old school took a bus to see them play in their first basketball game.

After a few wins, the white players and the community began to warm to him.

"I was the best player," Dixon shrugged. "They were packing me off the floor."

The competition wasn't always as comforting. One town, Clay, Kentucky, forfeited to Sturgis rather than play a team with a "Negro" on it.

Dixon went on to become an all-stater his senior year. Adolph Rupp, the legendary University of Kentucky coach, told Dixon he'd like to offer him a scholarship, but the SEC was still segregated at the time. Dixon went on to play at Utah State, which achieved a ranking of fifth in the nation.

Dixon later came to the University of Illinois to finish his degree and, of course, never left.

*Mrs. Dora Jamerson*

Mrs. Dora Jamerson credited Mrs. Sophie Roberts with bringing her here to St. Luke and Mrs. Lovie Anderson with feeding her and being friendly. She has been a member of St. Luke for 40 years.

Dora united with the St. Luke C.M.E. Church in 1962 under the pastoralship of Rev. A. W. Bishop. Since then, she has been an active member of the Church working with several organizations. She has been President of the Missionary Society and says she believes the Missionary has been her mission. She was a member of the Choir. She is Assistant Adult Sunday School Teacher, a member of the Lay Council, and the Women's group. She feels that the younger generation should talk to the older members more often. She has tried to get the younger generation involved.

Dora was married to the late Fred Jamerson. Together they had two daughters, Geneva and Bessie. In addition, she has two granddaughters, three brothers and lots of extended children.

*Mrs. Ethel Mae  
Kennedy*

Mrs. Kennedy was married to Rev. Earl Kennedy for 51 years and 23 days. She has 2 sisters, 4 nephews and 5 nieces, 2 great-nieces and 7 great-nephews. She belongs to the C.M.E. Ministers' Wives and Spouses Alliance of the Chicago District and to the Southeast Missouri, Illinois and Wisconsin Wives and Spouses Alliance. She also belongs to the Champaign-Urbana Ministers' wives alliance. She is a member of Church Women United and was on their nominating committee for 1998-99.

Mrs. Kennedy belongs to the St. Luke Missionary Society and to the Steward Board and loves prayer meeting and Bible Study. She enjoys knitting crocheting, sewing, growing flowers and bowling.

*Ms. G.  
Marvarine  
Pirtle*

Marvarine united with St. Luke C.M.E. Church in October 1959 under the pastoralship of Rev. A. W. Bishop after relocating here from Dyersburg, Tennessee. She accepted Christ at the age of 11 while living in Dyersburg.

She is presently a member of the New Life Choir, having joined the Senior Choir in 1966. Under the pastoralship of Rev. Deron Johnson, the Senior Choir and the Young Adult Choir were joined to become the New Life Choir.

Marvarine is presently the President of the Trustee's Board. She joined the Board in 1996, and was elected President in 1997.

"I thank God for the opportunity to serve him through my church."

The following notice appeared in *The News-Gazette* in May 1998:

*Doctoral degrees have been awarded by various universities to several area residents*

CARLA D. SAMUEL-PARKS, daughter of Jo L. Samuel, Champaign, graduated from the Georgetown University School of Medicine, Washington, D.C., on May 23, 1998. She resides in Saline, Michigan, and will be in the medical residency program at Oakwood Hospital, Dearborn, Michigan.

*Mrs. Carla  
Samuel-  
Parks*

Carla completed her residency in June of 2001. Currently, she is in family practice at Cooper Clinic in Bangor and Covert, Michigan.

Carla graduated from Central High School in 1984. While a student there she won numerous awards. They include: Dr. Martin Luther King Scholarship Award, Urban League of Champaign County Scholarship Award, Alpha Kappa Alpha Award, Airon Award in 1983, D.A.R. Award and scholarship, National Achievement Scholarship Program for Outstanding Negro Students (a scholarship), John Philip Sousa Band Award, and "Outstanding Senior" honored by both the Rotary Club and the Kiwanis Club.

In addition, she was the Senior Band Representative and a member of Peer Ear, a peer counseling group of Central High School. She was Vice-President of Principal's Scholars, on the Robeson Board which sponsored volunteer activities and twice a year held fashion shows at the Robeson Department Store, and secretary of the Key Club, a social club that did volunteer projects in the community.

Carla was St. Luke's first flutist and taught Sunday School for 2-3 years. She was a member of the choir from age 12 through high school and participated in several mid-western tours.

The following notice appeared in *The News-Gazette*:

*Mr. Samuel and  
Mrs. Nina Sibley* *Samuel S. and Nina P. Sibley — 50 Years of Marriage*  
In November 1999, Mr. and Mrs. Sibley celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at the Ridgeway Center in Champaign. They were married November 19, 1949 in Champaign.

They are the parents of Samuel Sibley, Madison, Alabama; Theresa Sibley-Williams, Champaign; and Alicia Lowery, Champaign. They have six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Mr. Sibley retired August 30, 1985 as a janitor at the University of Illinois. Mrs. Sibley is a homemaker.

## CHAPTER 8

### ST. LUKE CELEBRATES MEMBERS WHO HAVE PASSED ON TO GLORY

**W**e hold the treasure of life in Jesus in clay jars. When we pass on to Glory, these earthly bodies are transformed and our spirits are freed to be with our Creator. At St. Luke we treasure the memory of the Saints who have lived and worked among us. Every one of them has contributed to our church life and body. Reading their obituaries shines another light on St. Luke's 93 years.

MARY LOUISE ABERNATHY  
DECEMBER 8, 1921-MARCH 5, 2000

Mrs. Abernathy was born December 8, 1921 in Louisville, Kentucky. She was the daughter of Charles Buford and Anna Lee McGrew. She was reared in Decatur, Illinois, where she attended the Decatur public schools. She was united in holy matrimony to Carl Lorensley Abernathy. To this union, seven children were born. She relocated to the Champaign-Urbana community from Decatur, Illinois. She joined St. Luke C.M.E. Church where she was an active, dedicated member of the choir, and served faithfully in other auxiliaries until her health de-

clined. She was employed at the Urban League of Champaign County as an intake representative for several years. A lady of fashion and style, she enjoyed sewing and traveling. She was a Past State Grand Loyal Lady Ruler, Order of Golden Circle of Illinois State Grand Assembly, Past Loyal Lady Ruler of Menelik Assembly #58, Springfield, Illinois, Past Illustrious Commandress and Past Imperial Deputy of the Oasis, Sudan Court #19, Daughters of ISIS (PHA), Champaign, Illinois, and Past Worthy Matron of Deborah Chapter #27 Order of the Eastern Star, Champaign, Illinois.

**LOVIE MCKINNEY ANDERSON**

MAY 12, 1912-APRIL 22, 2000

Mrs. Anderson was born May 12, 1912 in Ullin, Illinois. She was the daughter of Agrippa and Leoria McKinney. She was adopted by her cousin, Mary "Cam" Mattis at the age of twelve. They moved to Champaign, Illinois, and she became a member of St. Luke C.M.E. Church. She became and remained a Mother of the Church and active Stewardess until the Lord called her home. She was united in holy matrimony to Wilbert "Snooks" Anderson. To this union, one daughter was born, Dorothy M. Davis. Her employment had been that of domestic work. She worked as a receptionist for senior citizens' social gatherings. She enjoyed entertaining guests, cooking, canning, gardening and knitting. She was a loving, kind mother and wife. Her home was a loving place to go for comfort, and her kitchen was always open. Her heart seemed always big enough to mother "just one more." Her kindness and loving spirit will be remembered and admired in the hearts and minds of those she loved and touched.

**REV. AUGUSTUS (A. W.) BISHOP, D. TH.**

JULY 16, 1919-JANUARY 13, 1983

Rev. Bishop was born July 6, 1919 in Humphrey, Arkansas. He was the son of F.P. and Esther Marie Jackson Bishop. He married Dorothy M. Parrish in Kansas City, Missouri. He was a graduate of Loueture High School in McAllister, Oklahoma. He earned Bachelor and Divinity degrees from Texas C.M.E. College in Tyler, Texas. Later, he received Master and Doctorate degrees from St. Andrew University in New York, New York. He served thirty-two years throughout the Third

Episcopal District, which included Kansas-Missouri, Michigan, Indiana, Southeast Missouri, Illinois and Wisconsin Conferences. He pastored St. Luke from 1959-1970.

**THEODORE BOOKER**

FEBRUARY 13, 1908-APRIL 17, 1977

Mr. Booker was born February 13, 1908 in Milan, Tennessee. He was the son of Eugene and Pearl Gather Booker. He was a member of St. Luke C.M.E. Church. He moved to Champaign, Illinois, in 1938. He was employed by Alloy Engineering and Casting Company until his retirement.

**DAISY MAE BROWN**

SEPTEMBER 11, 1911-JUNE 16, 1979

Mrs. Brown was born September 11, 1911 in Atlanta, Georgia. She was the daughter of Esco and Alena Clements Harris. She was a member of St. Luke C.M.E. Church, and was the founder of the Youth Choir. She was a member of the Eastern Star Lodge. She had three sons — James Grider, William Carl DeSayles and Alvin DeSayles.

**MRS. RUTH G. BROWN**

DECEMBER 29, 1929 - SEPTEMBER 29, 1989

Mrs. Brown was President of the Usher Board. She left a legacy in her smile and quietness and her son Marcus Brown and his children, sons Marcelle and Shamir Brown, and daughters Shamira and Shaniya Brown. Her son Marcus served on the Usher Board.

**GLADYS M. CARTER**

JANUARY 21, 1913-MAY 20, 1996

Mrs. Carter was born January 21, 1913 in Ripley, Tennessee. She was the daughter of Willie T. Lee and Deska McCadney. She was married to Mitchell T. Carter. Together they had a daughter, Joyce Bradley. In 1937, she relocated to the Champaign-Urbana area, and united with St. Luke C.M.E. Church, where she served on the Stewardess Board.

**ARZELL CHAPPLE**

AUGUST 15, 1924-SEPTEMBER 19, 2000

Arzell Chapple was born August 8, 1924, in Milan, Tennessee, the son of Samuel Chapple and Sophie Roberts, who preceded him in death.

He married Dorothy Mae Givens August 4, 1945 in St. Louis, Missouri. She survives. Also surviving are five daughters: Rochelle Jones (Tony), Lovanda Wood (James), Patricia Walker (Landon), of Champaign, Illinois; Venus Lewis of Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Arzetta Reid of Sacramento, California; one brother, Alvin Weatherspoon and two sisters, Lucille Stacker and Mae Kendrick, all of Champaign, Illinois; eighteen grandchildren, twenty-six great-grandchildren; a host of nieces and nephews and friends.

He was a member of St. Luke C.M.E. Church and past President of the Steward Board. He was a retired carpenter for Local Union 44.

**REV. M.A. CROWDER**

1888-JUNE 23, 1972

Rev. Crowder, a native of Mississippi, was preceded in death by his wife, Lacey. He is survived by a son, Robert of Cincinnati, Ohio; two daughters, Mrs. Cora Lee Young, Chicago, and Mrs. Anna Mae Dixon, Champaign; four grandchildren, John, Charlene and Perry Dixon, and Gloria Hopkins; and nine great-grandchildren. He served as pastor of St. Luke three times and was once a Presiding Elder of the Christian Methodist Church.

**LORINE DIXON**

JUNE 19, 1903-AUGUST 29, 1995

Mrs. Dixon was born June 19, 1903 in Decatur, Alabama. She was the daughter of Harden and Minnie Clark. On January 3, 1931, she was united in holy matrimony to Attrice Dixon, Sr. To this union was born three sons, Attrice, Jr., Milton, Sr. and Ellis, and two daughters, Geraldine Jackson and Shirley Evans. She was a faithful member of St. Luke C.M.E. Church, where she was a member of the Choir and Stewardess Board.

**ROSIE LEE EASLEY**

MARCH 12, 1910-DECEMBER 4, 1984

Mrs. Easley was born March 12, 1910 in Henderson County, Tennessee. She was the daughter of John and Dora Frame Pearson. In 1925, she was joined in holy matrimony to Bracy B. Easley in Henderson County. Together they had two children, Syral and Mildred. In 1939, she and her family moved to the Champaign-Urbana area from Carroll

County, Tennessee. She was a member of St. Luke C.M.E. Church, where she sang with the Senior Choir for several years and later became a member of the Stewardess Board No. 2. She had four grandchildren, Rosa M. Allen, Sheila D. Seward, Wayne Easley and Kathy Lockett. She had three sisters, one of whom was Sophie Roberts.

**CARRIE B. FERDINAND**

SEPTEMBER 7, 1929-APRIL 6, 1982

Mrs. Ferdinand was born September 7, 1929 in Brookhaven, Mississippi. She was the daughter of Elijah and Lottie Butler. She was preceded in death by her husband, T.J. Ferdinand, and one daughter, Carolyn Ferdinand. She was a member of St. Luke C.M.E. Church and the Victory Temple #530 Daughters of Elks.

**BERTHA GARY**

Bertha was born in Corinth, Mississippi, on Christmas Day in 1899. She first moved with her family to Arkansas before coming to Champaign in 1917. For many years, she worked as a maid in dormitories at the University of Illinois.

She has always had a special love for children. Until 1981, she worked with the foster grandparent program and, as her nephew says, "She has spent years helping children — not just her relatives' children, but all children."

**MARY AGNES HALL GILES**

DECEMBER 25, 1865-APRIL 15, 1958

Mrs. Giles was born December 25, 1865. She was the daughter of Hardin and Lucille Hall. She relocated to the Champaign-Urbana area from Chatam, Virginia. She had three sons and three daughters. She was the grandmother of Vernon Lewis.

**JOHN C. HANNETT**

FEBRUARY 28, 1900-AUGUST 23, 1987

Mr. Hannett was born February 28, 1900 in Caruthersville, Missouri. He was the son of John W. and Bertha Duke Hannett. He was a model man. When a child, he was manly and obedient; when a young man, he was respectful to everyone; when he took his place as a grown man, he laid aside childish ways and proved himself a worthy man. In 1939, he was united in holy matrimony to Miss Mardie Marzil at St. Luke

C.M.E. Church in Champaign, Illinois. He was an ideal husband. His high elevation, his pure joy, his bright earthly honor was in his home. It was there that the soundness of his judgment, the wisdom of his counsel, the mildness of his temper, the firmness of his purpose, the affectionate tone of his manners, the tenderness of his heart and the dignity of his virtues appeared in all their strength, and only those who really knew him can truly estimate his worth.

He moved to Champaign, Illinois, in the 1930's, and worked as a self-employed painter and interior decorator. He professed his hope in Christ at an early age, and remained a faithful member of St. Luke C.M.E. Church where he served as a Steward. He previously served as Treasurer and Chairman of the Steward Board. He was known throughout the community as a dedicated musician. As a Steward of the Church, he was always trustworthy, regular in attendance, easy to approach, attentive to the receipts and disbursements and sure that the amount that was announced was correct.

**MARY CAMPBELL HERRON**

NOVEMBER 24, 1904-JULY 31, 1979

Mrs. Herron was born November 24, 1904 in Champaign, Illinois. She was the daughter of William and Cora Allison Nealy. She was united in holy matrimony to William Herron in 1956 in Champaign, Illinois. He preceded her in death in 1968. She had one son, Nathan J. Wallick. She was a member of the St. Luke C.M.E. Church. She was President of the Stewardess Board No. 1.

She was a member of the Rose of Sharon No. 3 Order of Eastern Star, Mothers of World War II, and the Douglass Center Senior Citizen Club.

**FRED BRUCE JAMERSON**

SEPTEMBER 11, 1924-MAY 11, 1987

Mr. Jamerson was born September 11, 1924 in Bellefontaine, Mississippi. He was the son of Elmer and Emma Dumas Jamerson. He was one of ten children born to this union. On December 18, 1943, he was inducted into the U.S. Army serving until April 29, 1946. During this period, his overseas duty was in New Guinea, Luzon. He earned the APTO Medal, Philippine Liberation Ribbon, Good Conduct Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal. He achieved the rank of Technical

Sergeant. He was a member of the American Legion Post #559 and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He was also a retired employee of the Collegiate Cap and Gown Company. He was united in holy matrimony to Dora Flowers on May 8, 1948 in Webster County, Mississippi. To this union was born two daughters, Geneva Gittens and Bessie Beckrum.

**REV. EARL KENNEDY**

DECEMBER 4, 1918-AUGUST 29, 1995

Rev. Kennedy was born in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, in 1918, and raised on a farm in Greensboro, Alabama. He was one of three sons of the union of Mose Kennedy and Sarah Cooper Kennedy. While still a child he was baptized at the Liberty Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in Sawyersville, Alabama. He moved to Chicago where he graduated from Englewood High School. In 1944, he was married to Ethel Mae Morris. He attended Moody Bible Institute, Chicago Baptist Institute, and Rock Valley College.

Rev. Kennedy studied for the ministry at ITL Seminary in Atlanta and Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, after which he became pastor of his first church in Robbins, Illinois. In 1954, he united with the St. Paul C.M.E. Church in Chicago, and later became the assistant minister of that church. He served in this capacity from 1954 to 1960. He was admitted in full connection with the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in 1957. From 1960 to 1963 he served as pastor of the Wheeler Chapel C.M.E. Church, Rockford and Coleman Temple C.M.E. Church, Kinloch, Missouri. In September of 1974, The Reverend Kennedy and Mrs. Ethel Mae Kennedy, relocated to the Champaign-Urbana community, where he served as pastor of the St. Luke C.M.E. Church for seventeen years.

Rev. Kennedy served politically in many community projects. He was as an election Judge in Champaign, Deputy Sheriff Bailiff for Champaign County, Director and Parent-Coordinator for Summer Head Start Program in St. Louis, Missouri; and worked with the Youth Commission in Rockford, Illinois. He officiated softball games, was the official volleyball umpire at the Douglass County Community Center, and the first male model in the Senior Citizens Annual Fashion Show.

The community responded to his service by bestowing upon him certificates, letters of appreciation, letters of recognition, and trophies including the Rotary Community Service Award from Chief of Police, William Dye, and a Certificate of Appreciation as Volunteer to Kinloch Senior Citizens. But the crown of his accomplishments was the "Pastor of The Year" award at the Southeast Missouri-Illinois-Wisconsin Annual C.M.E. Conference in 1984.

As Pastor of St. Luke he made many physical improvements to the church and parsonage, as well as founding several new church organizations. He installed a furnace and central air conditioning, a new roof, a lounge and small office in the church basement, and ceiling fans in the sanctuary; he had the pews cushioned and bought a new public address system, a copier, and a new piano. He was instrumental in purchasing three vacant lots adjacent to the church and bought the church van and a new marquee. He founded the E.P. Murchison Club, organized and established the Kennedy Club, the Male Chorus, and the Junior Usher Board.

"I love working with young people," said Rev. Kennedy. "I have certainly enjoyed my years as pastor at St. Luke. When I leave St. Luke, I will retire. I won't pastor at another church." But he did! For two years he worked as a supply pastor, filling in where pastors were ill or on vacation. For one year he was the supply pastor at Bray Temple in East St. Louis, Missouri. He also pastored at Columbia, Missouri and Mexico, Missouri.

Rev. Kennedy left a legacy of loving memories to be cherished by his devoted wife, Mrs. Ethel Mae Morris Kennedy; two sisters-in-law, Mrs. Nettie Hanible, Rockford, Illinois, Mrs. Lela Mae Walker, Bessmer, Alabama; one aunt, Mrs. Lela Hinkle, Detroit, Michigan; two nieces, Mrs. Katie Harris, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and Dorothy Brooks, Buffalo, New York; a very special nephew that he and Mrs. Kennedy raised from infancy, Mr. Samuel Cooper, Rockford, Illinois; many other nieces, nephews and adopted sons and daughters. Rev. Kennedy was preceded in death by both parents, and two brothers.

#### ESMUS KINARD

DECEMBER 11, 1928-FEBRUARY 10, 1999

Esmus Kinard was born in Holly Springs, Mississippi, of the union of

Dempsey and Verene Brock Malone. She was a faithful member of St. Luke, where she served as a member of the Usher Board. She leaves to cherish her with fond memories her beloved mother, Mrs. Verene Cole, one loving daughter, Dorothy Kinard, eight grandchildren, five great-grandchildren and a host of other loving relatives and friends. She was preceded in death by her father and one brother.

#### DOROTHY M. BATTLE (JORDAN) LUCKEY

MAY 22, 1922-MAY 31, 2000

Mrs. Luckey was born May 22, 1922 in Pulaski, Illinois. She was the daughter of Porter L. Battle, Sr. and Rosie Battle. She attended the Mound City public schools. She completed her secondary education at Carouthersville High School in Carouthersville, Missouri. She was joined in holy matrimony to the late Robert Jordan at Edwards Chapel, Pulaski, Illinois, on November 11, 1940. To this union was born one son, Virgil Gene Jordan. On March 3, 1976, she married William Luckey in Champaign, Illinois. As a young woman, she worked in civil service at Fort Leonard, Missouri. She moved to Champaign, Illinois, in 1944 where she continued her employment at Chanute Air Force Base and the University of Illinois until her retirement.

#### EVELYN GATLIN MCHANEY

AUGUST 5, 1864-OCTOBER 13, 1950

Mrs. McHaney, mother of Tressa Easley, served as President of the Usher Board.

#### SAMUEL MCHANEY

MARCH 7, 1888-JANUARY 31, 1985

In 1931, Mr. McHaney went into partnership with Mr. Joshua Parker who, at the time, had the first black funeral home in Champaign. In 1933, he started his own business on Dublin Street in Urbana. He later moved to East Vine Street. He operated the funeral home for nearly four decades. Over several years, he gradually went blind, and finally sold the business in 1972. He was the step-father of Tressa Easley.

#### ANNA MCNEIL

FEBRUARY 10, 1880 - FEBRUARY 18, 1980

Mrs. McNeil was born in Trenton, Tennessee. She was the daughter of Peter and Sarah Davis. She was converted in 1892, at the age of 12



and joined the C.M.E. Church. In 1903 she came to Champaign and joined the A.M.E. Church under the watch care of Reverend A.J. Jackson. She married Cosy McNeil in 1907. To this union three children, Willie Mae, Norman and Langley were born.

In 1914 the St. Luke C.M.E. church was built and Mrs. McNeil transferred her membership there during the administration of Reverend W.T. Whisitt. She was secretary of the church for 7 years, Secretary of Board Number One, president of the Gospel Chorus, and was an honorary member of Anna Tutt Honey's Senior Citizen Club of Champaign-Urbana.

**HOY WILLIE MINOR, JR.**

APRIL 19, 1918-JANUARY 19, 1989

Mr. Minor was born April 19, 1918 in Birmingham, Alabama. He was the son of Hoy W. and Lillie Pearl Goodlow Minor. He moved to Champaign, Illinois, at an early age, and attended Champaign public schools. During World War II, he served with the U.S. Air Force in several European countries. After returning to the twin cities, he married Margaret Smith in 1949. He worked for thirty years for the Illinois Central Railroad. He also worked in food and beverage service for many years at the old Urbana Lincoln and Inman Hotels. After retiring from the railroad in 1980, he began bartending at the American Legion Post #559, a position he held until the time of his death. He was a member of Lone Star Lodge #18 F & AM and the Thursday Night Supper Club. He had two daughters, Loretta Davis and Lavern Banks; and two sons, Earl and James.

**BRUCE NESBITT**

NOVEMBER 14, 1932-JUNE 20, 2000

Mr. Bruce Delmar Nesbitt, the oldest of 9 children (see Herbert Nesbitt, Jr., below), was born on November 14, 1932, to Herbert Nesbitt, Sr. and Pauline Gillespie Nesbitt in Champaign, Illinois. He graduated from Champaign Central High School in 1951, and served in the U.S. Army from May 22, 1953 to May 2, 1956. He married Charlotte Neither in 1957. They had 3 sons and 2 daughters.

Mr. Nesbitt worked at the Inman Hotel, Bongart Pharmacy, Champaign National Bank, the Housing Division of the University of

Illinois, and became a police officer in 1965. In 1973 he was recruited to be the Director of the Afro-American Cultural Program of the University of Illinois, a position he held throughout his working career. In that capacity he was a father figure to thousands of black students.

At the U of I he was involved with radio station WBML and the OMNIMOV Dance Troupe, established or helped to start the Mom's Day Fashion Club, the Association of Black Alumni, the Black Congratulatory Exercise and helped gain academic credit for members of the Black Chorus. He also helped Mike White recruit football players. He was advisor for the New Student Movement and African American Community Exponential Program.

Outside the university he started a student tutoring program at the Douglass Center and was president of the Don Moyer Boys and Girls Club board. He was a member and trustee at St. Luke C.M.E. Church.

**FLORENCE NESBITT**

JUNE 19, 1905-DECEMBER 10, 1975

Mrs. Florence Nesbitt was born June 19, 1905 in Forrest City, Arkansas. She was the daughter of Charles and Mariah Nash Caldwell. She was joined in holy matrimony to King Nesbitt in Forrest City, Arkansas, in 1922. She moved to Champaign, Illinois in 1928, and joined St. Luke C.M.E. Church.

**HERBERT ERNEST NESBITT, JR.**

DECEMBER 8, 1935-DECEMBER 6, 1979

Mr. Nesbitt was born December 8, 1935 in Urbana, Illinois. He was the son of Herbert and Pauline Gillespie Nesbitt. He had three brothers, Bruce, Clarence and William, and four sisters, Sanara, Janet, Mary Jean and Betty.

**REV. KING NESBITT**

SEPTEMBER 4, 1893-JULY 27, 1965

Rev. Nesbitt was born September 4, 1893 in Forrest City, Arkansas. He was the son of Clarence and Florence Johnson Nesbitt. He was converted in 1909 in Forrest City, and moved to Champaign in 1928. He was united in holy matrimony to Florence Caldwell on February 25, 1923 in Forrest City. Together they had two children. He joined St. Luke C.M.E. Church in 1929, and was called to the ministry in 1944.

He was ordained by Bishop R. A. Carter. He was a World War I veteran. He was a former pastor of the C.M.E. churches in Carbondale, Springfield and Georgetown, Illinois. He served as Assistant Pastor at St. Luke.

**PAULINE GILLESPIE NESBITT**  
OCTOBER 16, 1913-MAY 9, 1985

In 1920 when she was 7 years old, Pauline Gillespie came to Champaign from her home in Homer, Illinois, "because we wanted to live where other black people lived. We were the only black people in Homer." When she came to Champaign, she recalls, most streets were unpaved and the North End was all white - mostly Germans.

For many years, her husband worked at the Inman Hotel. They raised 10 children (5 boys and 5 girls).

**SADIE O'NEAL**  
JULY 1, 1901-FEBRUARY 15, 1985

Mrs. O'Neal was born July 1, 1901 in Brookhaven, Mississippi. She was the daughter of Wilson and Jane Edward Tillman. She was joined in holy matrimony to Preston O'Neal in St. Louis, Missouri. To this union was born one daughter, Venetta Wilson. She had been a resident of Champaign-Urbana since the age of 19, after relocating here from Brookhaven, Mississippi. She was a member of St. Luke C.M.E. Church where she served on the Stewardess Board #3, and was a member of the Missionary Society and the Organ Club. She also was an R.S.V.P. Senior Volunteer, and was a recipient of the Friend of the Family Award by Family Services of Champaign County.

**MARY SHUMPERT PEPPERS**  
MARCH 20, 1945-OCTOBER 3, 1992

Mrs. Peppers was born in Tupelo, Mississippi. She was the daughter of George and Margaret Shumpert. She had five sisters and seven brothers, one of whom is Jim Shumpert Casey. She graduated from George Washington Carver High School in Tupelo in 1963. She received a Bachelor's degree from Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee in 1967. She married Sherman Peppers on February 3, 1967. To this union was born two sons, Lamond and Edward. She then went on to earn a Master's degree in Education at the University of Illinois. She pro-

fessed a hope in Christ at an early age at Stephenson C.M.E. Church in Tupelo. She later united with St. Luke C.M.E. Church, where she was a member of the Sunday School Department and the E.P. Murchison Club. She was a 4th grade teacher at Garden Hills Elementary School in Champaign.

**CHARLES PETTIFORD**  
MAY 1, 1894-DECEMBER 27, 1977

Mr. Pettiford was born May 1, 1894. He was united in holy matrimony to Annibelle Pickens January 9, 1921. He joined St. Luke in 1914. He was a member of the Committee of Precinct L. He worked at the Urbana School District.

**SOPHIE L. ROBERTS**  
JANUARY 30, 1908-JUNE 26, 1994

Mrs. Roberts was born January 30, 1908 in Carroll County, Tennessee. She was the daughter of John and Dora Frame Pearson. In 1942, she relocated to the Champaign-Urbana area coming from Kirkwood, Missouri. She united with St. Luke C.M.E. Church, where she served as President of the Stewardess Board, sang in the Senior Choir and was a member of the Organ Club. She was united in holy matrimony to Sam Roberts on May 28, 1964. Together they had two sons, Arzell Chapple and Alvin Weatherspoon, and two daughters, Lucille Stacker and Mae Kendrick. She had one surviving sister, Bessie Royal. Rosie Easley and Ordie B were deceased. Her brothers were Joe H. Pearson and Javous Pearson.

**ADOLPHUS LEON SIBLEY**  
MARCH 2, 1950-JULY 7, 1968

He was born March 2, 1950, and was the first son born to Samuel and Nina Pearl Harmon Sibley. He died July 7, 1968.

Had his life not been shortened by such an untimely death, the Lord only knows what he could have given to society. His dream from the fifth grade on was to become a biochemist, and there is no doubt in the minds of many that he would have done just that. He loved people, and people loved him.

Mr. Bruce L. Hicks, a professor at the University of Illinois, once stated that Adolphus had worked in his research group at the Univer-

sity of Illinois when he was only seventeen years old, a junior in high school. This was his very first job, and he gained so much knowledge of research, methodology and detailed techniques, a knowledge that college students seldom get in their first two years, if ever. He states "Mr. Sibley was a pleasant and eager worker with a lively mind." Professor Hicks predicted his success in this or in anything else that he would tackle.

Mrs. Louise Clark, a family friend, wrote "The death of Adolphus was a sad shock for me, the more so since I was planning to get him interested in college." With tenderest friendship she wrote, "Whether I live or whether I die, I am the Lord's. He is in the bosom of the Father."

From the Family: Adolphus was a member of the choir at St. Luke C.M.E. Church, an Usher and was elected President of the Youth Conference in 1967 held in St. Louis, Missouri. He attended Washington School from first to fifth grades where Mrs. Odessa Wesley was the Principal. He then went to Willard School, Edison Junior High School and Centennial High School, being one of the first students to attend the new high school. He graduated from high school in St. Paul, Minnesota. He played the clarinet from fifth to twelfth grades, winning awards on numerous occasions. He represented well when speaking at various churches for different ones that could not be present for whatever reason. They knew that he could handle it.

Adolphus' mother's greatest joy was listening to him play songs from the hymnal while she sang along. After almost thirty-four years of his being gone, she still misses this special time. His parents and siblings will always have a special place in their hearts for this beautiful young man.

"No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it." I Corinthians 10:13

**REV. HUGH JAMES THORNTON**

MAY 1, 1917—MAY 10, 1982

Rev. Thornton was born May 1, 1917 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He was the son of Professor and Mrs. James Rogers Thornton. During his youth, he accepted Christ, was baptized and became a member of Mt.

Zion Baptist Church of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He received his Bachelor's degree from Southern University, his Bachelor's and Divinity degrees from Oberlin Theological Seminary. He received his Bachelor of Religious Education (B.R.E.) from Central Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Kansas, and his Master of Education (M.Ed.) from Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado. He did further studies towards his Doctorate of Education at the University of Missouri at Kansas City.

After completing his formal education, he was united in holy matrimony to Cauthel L. Thornton, and together they had eight children. He received numerous community service awards. He served as Secretary of the Riverside Branch of YMCA (New York City), Executive Secretary of Watkins Branch of YMCA (Lynchburg, Virginia). He also served as Elementary and High School Principal, Dean of Rust College, Dean of Natchez College, Director of Student Teachers and Head Teacher of Indian Affairs (Gallup, New Mexico). He served on the Human Relation Commission (Champaign, Illinois), served as Director of the CC-OIC, and was a member of the Housing Commission. He was also a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and a 33rd Degree Mason. During his tenure as a minister, he pastored Epworth United Methodist Church (Ohio), Cain United Methodist Church (Virginia), Wesley United Methodist Church (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), Asbury United Methodist Church (Mississippi) and St. James C.M.E. (Oklahoma). While serving as the assistant minister of Beebe Cathedral (Oakland), he was responsible for setting up the Child Care Program.

While pastor of St. Luke C.M.E. Church, Rev. Thornton accompanied the 80-voice Youth Choir upon invitation from Senator Percy to sing at the Old Senate Building in Washington, D.C. He was also a member of the Champaign Urbana Ministers Association. After pastoring at St. Luke, he was sent to Century Chapel (Sacramento). He became President of the Ministerial Alliance and worked as Chaplain for the UCD Medical Center. He was sent to Hayes C.M.E. Church in Seaside. He was also employed by Grant Joint Union School District as an adult education instructor.

**JUNE BIGLOW THORPE**

SEPTEMBER 14, 1932- MAY 9, 2000

Mrs. Thorpe was born September 14, 1932 in Chicago, Illinois. She was the daughter of John and Elizabeth Travis Biglow. She graduated from Champaign High School. She married Eddie Thorpe on September 19, 1948. They had three sons, Eddie Jr., Terry and Gregory, and five daughters, Edna Pelmore-Gillispie, Eva Thorpe, Gail Thorpe, Donna Tinsley and Lisa Brooks. She was a member of St. Luke C.M.E. Church, Church Women United, the Church Missionary Board, and the Women's Fellowship. She was a volunteer for Meals on Wheels.

**N. ODELIA WESLEY**

JUNE 24, 1906-SEPTEMBER 24, 1987

Mrs. Wesley was born June 24, 1906 in Belleville, Illinois. She was the daughter of Richard and Sally Harrison Helm. She was united in holy matrimony to Lincoln Wesley on June 21, 1932 in Champaign. She received her teacher's certification from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1950 and a Master's degree in 1952, both from the University of Illinois. She taught school in Mount Vernon. From 1942 to 1946, she taught electronics and instruments at Chanute Field in Rantoul. In 1946, she taught at Lawhead Elementary School in Champaign. In 1951, she taught at Washington Elementary School in Champaign, and was later named Principal in 1954, a post she held until 1972. She was one of the first black principals in Champaign-Urbana. From 1973 to 1977, she served on the Board of Directors for Frances Nelson Health Center. In 1970, Wesley Park in Champaign was dedicated in her honor. Other recognitions included an Award for Outstanding Service from the Champaign Office on Aging; Delta Sigma Theta Sorority recognized her for actively combating illiteracy in 1987; Parkland College recognized her for outstanding services to the Program for the Long Living; and, in 1984 she received a Service Award from the Senior Citizens Resource Program.

**CLARENCE WILLIAMS**

Mr. Williams served on the Steward Board as President and Treasurer. He was a member of the Board of Christian Education and taught

Sunday School and Adult Bible Study. He supported the Young Adult Choir, Christian Men of St. Luke, the annual Walk-a-Thon, and the free dinner for Mother's Day prepared and served by the men.

**VERNELL WITHERSPOON**

BORN APRIL 23, 1923

Mr. Witherspoon was born April 23, 1923 in Cedar Grove, Tennessee. He was the son of Ollie and Bell Smith Witherspoon. He was married to Judean Bell in Champaign, Illinois. He was a World War II veteran. He was a member of St. Luke C.M.E. Church and the American Legion Post #559. He was employed by the Physical Plant at the University of Illinois.

**CONNIE WOODS**

Connie Woods was a Member of the Senior Choir. Alta Stanberry, sister of Connie, served on the Usher Board.



## CHAPTER 9

### ST. LUKE CELEBRATES THE SCROLL OF LIFE

**S**t. Luke's Scroll of Life has been unrolled. Our past is set before us. We can see that St. Luke is much more than a building on a corner where people have been getting together for 93 years. St. Luke Christian Methodist Episcopal Church is a living, breathing, body of believers who, being made whole by God's Holy Spirit in our lives, are a healing force within and outside our church community, extending from Champaign-Urbana, across our nation, and into the world.

We are thankful to the members of St. Luke who have made their stories available to us. Now we all can know St. Luke's rich legacy up to April of 2002. But today's present is tomorrow's past. What will today's 10-year-olds remember about St. Luke? What are they saying now? How will we know? How will they know what their parents and aunts and uncles and grandparents remember? With the inspiration of this "unrolling" we look forward to more members, young and not-so-young, telling their stories, sharing old and current news clippings, and writing a few notes, so that in the years to come, St. Luke's scroll of life can continue to be unrolled and be a blessing.