

HISTORICAL BRIEFS
OF
TORRENCE CHAPEL
A. M. E. ZION CHURCH

D. L. BLAKEY, A.B.

W. L. E. W. A. S.
HISTORICAL BRIEFS

OF



Torrence Chapel

A. M. E. Zion Church

D. L. BLAKEY, A.B.

DEDICATED TO ETTA

WHO HAS STOOD BY ME IN ALL OF MY UNDERTAKINGS;
FOR THE GLORY OF GOD; AND ZION METHODISM

"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Preface

Having been inspired by the loyalty of this membership, I feel divinely inspired to write this "Historical Brief" of the various aspects of Torrence Chapel A. M. E. Zion Church. I pray that this little booklet will serve to commemorate the works of past members who played important roles in establishing this church; to inspire present members to greater religious zeal, and to leave a historical foundation upon which future generations can build a bigger and better Zion. With these things in mind, I send this little booklet forth in the name of God, for I believe that it is the duty of every man to follow the wisdom of Solomon: "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shall find it after many days."

In my attempt to treat this subject, I have tried to be, as much as within me lies, impersonal; for I know that history deals with facts and what is not factual is not historical material. Since Torrence Chapel has existed for more than 80 years, I have gathered such historical material as I thought valid, from various secretaries of the church, from inscriptions on corner stones, from papers delivered by members during the "80th Anniversary Week," and from personal inquiry of individuals of the church and community.

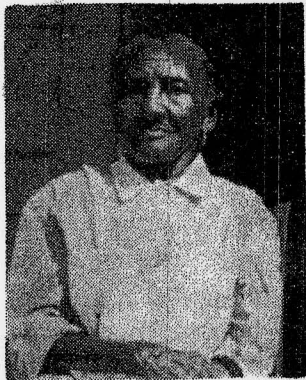
For such information, I am especially indebted to Mr. Shedd Culps, 89 years old; Rev. Bro. James Torrence, 84 years old; Mr. D. S. Reid, 70 years old; and Mr. William M. Works. I further wish to express gratitude to Professor L. C. McCrary for proof-reading and to Rev. John S. Mills for his assistance in typing.

Torrence Chapel A. M. E. Zion Church, with two towers, surrounded by a graveyard, a grove of tall oaks, a green lawn and an arbor, located on highway 144, one mile north of highway 73 in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, stands magnificently reflecting the laborious sacrifices, religious enthusiasm and joys of one of the most loyal memberships of Zion Methodism.

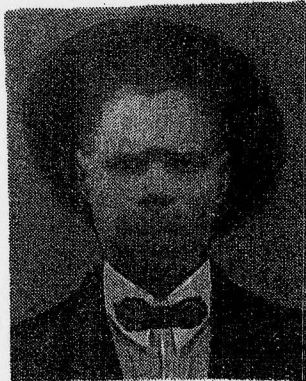
This loyal membership pauses for a series of services, October 17th to 23rd, 1949, commemorating the church's 80th anniversary, and will reflect its historical beginning, development, progress and contributions.



Charlie Torrence
Age 69—Pastor's Steward



Mrs. Julia Torrence—Age 78
Member of the Stewardess Board



Jordan Withers
Sec. Steward, Trustees—deceased



Lottie Mae Watts, Montro Seldon, Lillie W. Grier

Historical Sketch

I.

This "Historical Sketch" includes information about the "Founding Minister and Laymen."

Torrence Chapel's historic beginning was similar to that of most rural churches. With only a few members, it was organized by Rev. Ephrim Torrence, a few years prior to the year of 1869. Rev. Torrence came from Charlotte, N. C., nineteen miles south of Cornelius. After many trials and hardships, a "Brush Arbor" was built, near the Township of Cornelius, N. C., in a small Negro settlement called "Smithville." A few years later, the membership moved to the present location and built a frame structure (in the year 1869), on a site of land given to them by white friends: the Glaspies.

Among the lay-members who participated in organizing Torrence Chapel were Mr. Miles Work, who died fifty years ago at the age of seventy-five years old, and Harrett Torrence, who died at the age of 106 years old. Names of several other lay-members who helped organize this church, would be listed, if we had substantial evidence as to their identity. Nevertheless, the names of persons not listed, as well as the names of those listed, have a host of living relatives to perpetuate the memory of many of the founders who did great work in creating this ever growing, ever enlightened, and ever loyal church.

*Ephim Torrence
first pastor*



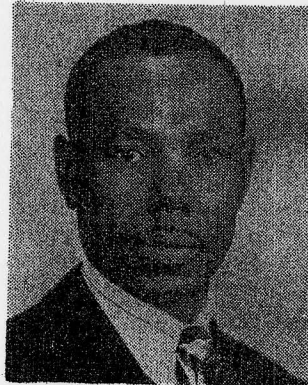
Mrs. Maggie Lee Reid
Deaconess, Class Leader, Missionary



Mrs. Bertha Jones



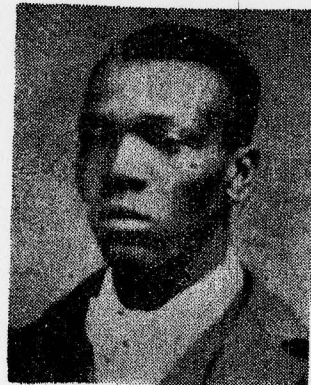
R. C. Jones



Jordan W. Withers, Jr.
Secretary



Mrs. Thelma Graham



Joseph D. Grier
Was Pastor's Steward

II.

Torrence Chapel has developed remarkably in physical structure and organization.

Growth of the membership and decay of the old building, necessitated a new structure. Hence, another frame structure was completed in the year of 1909. Rev. A. L. Newby was Pastor. The present brick structure (replacing the old frame structure), was begun by Rev. B. A. Crawford in 1928. Several lay-members (who began and finished this building) are still living, namely: Mrs. Bessie Bush, 68 years old; Mrs. Julia Torrence, 77 years old; Mr. James Torrence, 84 years old; Mr. David S. Reid, 70 years old; Mr. W. M. Work, and Mr. John Brice, who helped build this frame structure.

Various organizations developed simultaneously with the physical plant to meet the increasing needs of the membership.

1. The "Trustees Board" began with the founding of the church. Mr. Jack Glaspie, Mr. Plumber Johnson, and Mr. Rufus Potts were among the first trustees. A list of the present Board members follows: W. M. Work, Wilson Black, John Brice, D. S. Reid, Towey Withers, James Derr, Ozan Brice, James Barringer, Johnnie Heath, and James Davis. There are several active members who were former members of the Trustees Board, namely: C. C. Cornelius, Jordan Withers, R. C. Jones, Kenny Davis, Elracor Davis.

Original copies of deeds will give the names of others who served on the Trustees Board throughout the years.

The first deeds read thus: "F. A. Goodrum and wife to trustees of Torrence Chapel A. M. E. Zion Church—\$12.50, 18th day of November 1902—filed for registration on the 30th day of June 1903, at 6:40 o'clock P.M. and registered in the office of the Register of Deeds for Mecklenburg County, N. C., 1st day of July 1903, at 2:30 o'clock P.M. in book 179 of Deeds, on page 258. (Signed) A. M. McDonald, Register of Deeds." Notice individual names of trustees are not listed on deed.

Second deed: "From C. A. Caldwell and wife Mary Caldwell to the trustees of Torrence Chapel A. M. E. Zion Church—consideration of \$200.00—12th day of February 1923. Filed for registration—19th day of February 1923 at 2:00 o'clock P.M. and registered in the office of the Register of Deeds for Mecklenburg County,

North Carolina, the 20th day of February 1923 at 10:45 o'clock A.M. in book 488 of deeds and page 295, etc. (Signed) J. R. Renflow, Register of Deeds." Trustees: "G. M. Burton, John Brice, Graham Patterson, Troy Pharr, David Reid, Thomas Brown, C. H. Watts, Will Work, and J. D. Grier."

Third deed: "We J. F. Gamble and wife M. E. Gamble, Will Work and wife, W. H. Blakely and R. C. Hayes, and Cora Roberson, all owners of land adjoining the hereafter described land—released and forever quit claim and by these presents do for ourselves, our heirs—forever quit claim unto James Torrence; Gospie Burton; David Reid; Will Work; Norman Bush; Elrado Davis; Clifton Watts, Troy Pharr and Charlie as trustees of Torrence Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church." Registered: State of North Carolina: "County of Mecklenburg, this 17th day of July 1930. (Signed) Hattie L. Neely, Deputy Clerk, Superior Court."

Fourth deed: 10th day of December 1941, by Will Work and wife Henrietta Work—to the Trustees of Torrence Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (\$100.00) dollars and the valuable consideration—(signed) J. B. Readling, Notary Public. Individual names of Trustees not listed. Deed has not been registered.

Fifth deed: "This deed made this the 14th day of September, AD, 1949 by and between William Work and wife, Henrietta Work of the County of Mecklenburg and the State of North Carolina. Parties of the first part and Trustees of Torrence Chapel A. M. E. Zion Church and their successors in office: Ozan Brice, James Derr, J. H. Heath, Will Work, Towey Withers." This deed not registered.

2. The Board of Stewards was organized about the time that the Trustee Board was organized. Members often served interchangeably on both boards. The following includes names of "Preachers Stewards" as near as we can determine: Jack Glaspie (deceased), Aron Burton (deceased), Alex Pickens (deceased), Julius Reid (deceased), I. A. Withers, Graham Patterson (deceased), Charlie Torrence (deceased), Jordan Withers, and James Derr. Members of the present Stewards Board are: James Derr, James Davis, Ozan Brice, John Brice, Johnnie Heath, Ferman Hill, Willie Sloan, Wilson Potts, and James Forney.

3. Class Leaders were organized into a working body along with the development of the church. Among the first leaders were Rufus Potts, L. Potts, Green Grier, and Sam Stinson, all deceased. Present leaders: W. M. Work, John Brice, Towey Withers, D. S.

Reid, Mrs. Maggie Reid, Mrs. Mary Cornelius, Mrs. Bertha Jones, Mrs. Geneva Black, and Mrs. Francis Reid.

4. The Sunday School was among the original organizations. A few of the former superintendents are: Sam Glaspie, L. A. Little, Jim Dean, G. A. Burton (all deceased), C. A. Caldwell, D. S. Reid, W. M. Work, Augustus Work, James Davis. R. C. Jones is present superintendent.

5. The Senior Choir was organized in 1885, and Monroe Johnson was elected chorister. This organization has kept a fair record, giving the number of years each chorister and president served—1890 to 1900, John Johnson, chorister; 1910 to 1918, J. A. Dean chorister, and I. A. Withers, president; 1918 to 1933, Mrs. Susan Brice, chorister, and Gospie Burton, president; 1933 to 1935, R. C. Jones was again elected chorister; at which time Towey Withers was elected president; both are serving in their respective offices at present. Today this organization has about 20 members. Present officers are: Towey Withers, president; R. C. Jones, chorister; Mrs. Henrietta Work, secretary, and Johnnie Heath, treasurer.

6. The Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Society was established as a working body in 1910 and Mrs. Maggie Reid was the first president of the "Parent Body." She was relieved for three years by Mrs. N. V. Jones. Officers of the present organization in this society are as follows:

(a) "Parent Body": Mrs. Maggie Reid, president; Mrs. Bertha Jones, vice-president; Mrs. Roberta Derr, secretary; Mrs. Henrietta Work, assistant secretary.

(b) "Buds": Mrs. Geneva, superintendent.

(c) "Young Women": Miss Katherine Work, secretary.

(d) "Supply Captain": Mrs. Cora Robberson.

(e) "Home Mission": Mrs. Roberta Derr, president.

7. The Stewardess Board No. I was organized during Rev. H. H. Jackson's pastorate. Mrs. Liza Stinson served as president for about 40 years. Mrs. Bessie Bush served as president for seven years. Mrs. Lucile Patterson is the present president.

Stewardess Boards No. II and III were organized much later than Board No. I. Mrs. Nora Lee Caldwell is president of Board No. II, and Mrs. Susan Brice is president of Board No. III.

These Boards are working hard to carry out the programs of both the Local and General Church.

8. The "Pastor's Aid Board" is made up of a large number of young women: Mrs. Theolia Davis is president; Mrs. Essie Davis is vice-president; Miss Annie M. Gaston is secretary, and Mrs. Geneva Black is treasurer.

9. The "Deaconess Board" is comprised of seven faithful women ranging in age from middle age and older, namely: Mrs. Maggie Reid, Mrs. Lucy Patterson, Mrs. Lettie Black, Mrs. Macie S. Cornelius, Mrs. Macie Davis, Mrs. Agnes Potts, and Mrs. Cora Robberson.

10. The "Junior Usher Board" was organized during Rev. W. O. Welch's ministry (1932). This Board has a record of all its presidents and a few other officers. The record is as follows: Up to 1934, James Torrence, president; 1935-1939, J. W. Withers, president; 1940-1942, James Davis, president; 1942-1946, Mrs. Bobbie Potts, president; Etta B. Reid, secretary; Mrs. Edna Cornelius, treasurer; 1946-1947, Thomas Work, president; Miss Annie Gaston, secretary; 1947-1948, Miss Susie Work, president; Miss Mildred Henderson, secretary; Miss Annie M. Gaston, treasurer; 1948-1949, Willie Black, president; Miss Annie M. Gaston, secretary; Clifford Caldwell, treasurer. Thomas Work took over the presidency in March of 1949; the other officers remained as of 1948-1949.

11. The "Varick Christian Endeavor Society" was organized about 10 years ago. It is an effective working organization. Its officers are: Mrs. Geneva Black, president; R. C. Jones, vice-president; Miss Eudene Brice, secretary; Joe Black, treasurer.

12. The "Junior Choir" is largely composed of children ranging in ages from 12 to 16. Mrs. Susan Brice is director. There are 27 young voices in this organization; and they are trained to give their talents for divine service.

13. The "Junior Church" is taking its rightful place among the other organizations of the church; and Mrs. Bertha Jones is doing a fine job as leader.

14. The "Grave-Yard Committee," composed of D. S. Reid, Towey Withers, and Jordan Withers, was organized in 1933. This committee handles all burial procedures and uses its finances to buy property and other necessary things for the church.

15. The "Building Committee" includes D. S. Reid, Ozan Brice, R. C. Jones, and James Reid. This committee has charge of repairing all property and is now supervising the building of a new "Education Building," 22 x 52. This building is being added to the main edifice.

16. The "Young Men's Club" was organized during Rev. J. R. Hill's pastorate, 1945 to 1949. It comprises a group of 25 energetic young men. Its officers are: Carl Work, president; Muriel Reid, secretary; and Ozan Brice, treasurer. This organization has contributed largely to the improvement of the church. It has put new windows in the church; and it often contributes financially to the Trustees Board.

17. The "Stroller Chorus" was organized March 1, 1946, Rev. J. R. Hill, Pastor. It is composed of 32 men and women, including members of several churches of the community. Present officers are: James Derr, president; Miss Martha Black, secretary; Wilson Black, business manager.

18. The "Davis Harmonizers Sextette" is composed of members of one family, mother, daughter, and son. They lend their talents to interpreting Spirituals, ballads and folk songs.

19. Three "Conference Workers" have done much to support the programs of the District and Annual Conferences.

(a) "Conference Worker" Mrs. Geneva Black has not failed to raise her total assessment in 15 years.

(b) "Educational Worker" Mrs. Isadore Davis has served seven years, always making a round report.

(c) "Supply Captain" Mrs. Cora Robberson has served ten years. She also makes round reports each year. She contributes considerably to the financial and spiritual support of the church and community.

20. Three groups have been organized during the present administration (D. L. Blakey, Pastor, 1949):

(a) The "5 W Club," meaning, "WE WILL WORK WON'T WE?", was organized July 1949. This club is composed of young women, mostly married. It is one of the busiest organizations in the church. Its efforts are untiring and its field covers every necessity of the church. Members and officers are: Mrs. Jennie

V. Brice, president; Mrs. Francis Reid, secretary; Mrs. Annie B. Brice, treasurer; Mrs. Bertha Jones, matron; Mrs. Willie Brice, Mrs. Frances Brice, Mrs. Mayzella Forney, Mrs. Lettie Howard, Mrs. Gertrude Long, Mrs. Mattie Reid, Mrs. Threatha Torrence, Miss Lillian Torrence, Mrs. Rissie Works, Mrs. Estella Withers, Mrs. Essie Davis, Mrs. Bobbie Potts, Mrs. Bernice Stinson, Mrs. Theolia Davis, Mrs. Mary Reid, and Mrs. Mouis Fourney.

(b) The "Davidson Circle" was organized in July of 1949. The purpose of this group is to give special attention to the religious and social welfare of members living in Davidson, N. C. Mrs. Thelma Graham is the chairman.

(c) The "Senior Usher Board" was organized October 16, 1949. Its members are largely taken from the 5-W Club and Davidson Circle. It is composed of 20 members. Its officers are: Mrs. Bobbie Potts, president; Muriel Reid, vice-president; Mrs. Rissie Works, secretary; Willie B. Torrence, treasurer.

III.

Torrence Chapel's progress can be seen in the increase of the physical plant and membership.

(a) The physical plant has grown from a brush arbor to the present brick edifice well equipped, with a new "Educational Building" being built onto the main edifice; an arbor for camp meetings, a modern parsonage, well equipped; a spacious grave-yard, and nearly four acres of land.

(b) As to the membership, it has grown to more than three hundred members. There is a record of 314 members, 56 added to the church since June of this year. Of this number, 75 per cent (235) support the church financially; 60 per cent (188) attend church regularly. Their numbers according to age groups are: Birth to 6 years old, 10 per cent (31); 7 to 12 years old, 15 per cent (47); 13 to 18 years old, 20 per cent (63); 19 to 25 years old, 25 per cent (79); 26 and up, 30 per cent (94). It can be seen from the statistics that this membership has all of the potentialities of future growth. Its stability and future depend upon week-day, as well as Sunday, programs to meet the economic, physical, educational, social and spiritual interests and needs of each respective age group. The "Lord's Acre" has been suggested to help meet financial obligations. A playground has been suggested to help meet physical and recreational needs. An educational building is being constructed to help serve educational and social needs. Various programs of a religious nature are being carried on weekly to enhance the spiritual needs of this congregation. It can be seen, from the organizational development, that every member who is of age and able, is working in the church. During this 80th anniversary week, every department and most every member took active parts, spiritually and financially; thus enabling more than \$800.00 to be brought into the church. However, the greatest thing to remember in the progress of this church is the fact that it is sponsoring an anniversary to verify and to perpetuate the work that has been done by both past and present members.

IV.

Having considered the historical beginning, development, and progress of Torrence Chapel, let us consider what particular contributions this church has made to the community, and the connection.

This church's influence is felt in most every aspect of community life. In politics many are voters, in economics, 85 per cent of the members own their own homes. As to the social life, "Boy Scouts," choruses and other social organizations are sponsored by the church. Practically every member of the baseball team is a member of Torrence Chapel. Their influence in the educational aspect of this community is no less important. Some send their children to college. Again, this congregation tries to cooperate with all religious activities carried on by neighboring churches.

This membership is also loyal to the Connection, in spirit and finance. It has contributed to the education of several ministers, among whom were Rev. N. V. Jones, Rev. V. R. Hills and Rev. D. L. Blakey, who is pastoring and attending Seminary.

It has given birth to two A. M. E. Zion Churches, namely: Union Bethel A. M. E. Zion Church and Reeves Temple A. M. E. Zion Church. Several other churches have received substantial numbers of their memberships from this church.

Torrence Chapel is loyal to the financial program of the General Church. They usually pay their full assessments. At present, four (4) Conference Workers support the District and Conference financial programs. It is interesting to witness how happily these Conference Workers labor in the interest of the Connection.

NOTE: Only three workers are named under Conference Workers. The fourth is the Home Missions president listed among the Woman's Home and Foreign Societies.

It is hoped that the contributions here mentioned will inspire other churches to be loyal to the spiritual and financial programs of the Connection.

Lest we forget, let us remember some of the oldest living members, some of the deceased members, and most of the Ministers who have contributed to the life of Torrence Chapel.

Oldest Living Members

BUSH, BESSIE: 68 years old. Mother of five children, was married to John Clark eight years before his death, has been married to Norman Bush 23 years, served as Conference Worker and Member of Stewardess Board.

CALDWELL, C. A.: 75 years old, was member 25 years, now a member of Union Bethel A. M. E. Zion Church, served as Superintendent of the Sunday School and Member of Board of Trustees.

CULP, SHEDD: 89 years old. Gave information on founding Torrence Chapel.

REID, D. S.: 70 years old, father of twelve children, active Member of Trustees Board, Building Committee and Grave-Yard Committee.

TORRENCE, HATTIE: 75 years old, has six children, four grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren. Served as Sunday School Teacher, Stewardess.

TORRENCE, JAMES: 84 years old. Served as Trustee and Chorister. Was licensed a Local Preacher by Presiding Elder P. A. Cople, 1903.

TORRENCE, JULIA: 77 years old. Served as Member of Stewardess Board and Missionary Society.

WITHERS, I. A.: 80 years old. Served as Steward, Trustee, and Class Leader. Now member of Union Bethel A. M. E. Zion Church.

Deceased Members

TORRENCE, AARON: died eleven years ago, at the age of 74 years old. Served as Trustee.

TORRENCE, CHARLIE: died at age of 68, helped make present benches, gave clock and mirror to church.

TORRENCE, HARRIET: died at age of 106, member of first church.

TORRENCE, JOHN: died ten years ago, at age of 70; served as Class Leader and Trustee.

TORRENCE, WILL: died fifteen years ago, at age of 63; served as Trustee.

WORK, MILAS: died fifty years ago at age of 75, was member of the first church and served as Trustee.

Ministers

(in order of service)

REV. EPHRIM TORRENCE: founder of first church. Served 1869—

REV. HUTTLE: served 1886—

REV. STITTS: served 1888—

REV. M. C. CRAY: served 1894—

REV. HITE: served 1896—

REV. S. W. HAMILTON: served 1898—

REV. MUDDOCK: served 1900—

REV. HITE: returned 1902—

REV. BLANTON: served 1904—

REV. J. J. PARKS: served 1905—

REV. NEWBY: served 1909, rebuilt church.

REV. JOE TORRENCE: served 1910—

REV. H. H. JACKSON: served 1911

REV. B. J. IVERY: served 1918

REV. MUSGROVE: served 1920—

REV. C. E. MORMENT: served 1921—

REV. LINSEY: served 1923—

REV. T. P. TURNER: served 1923—

REV. B. A. CRAWFORD: 1928-1931, began new church.

REV. W. Q. WELCH: 1932—

REV. ROBERT SIMMONS: 1933—

REV. L. E. CARR: served 1934, moved in new church.

REV. N. V. JONES: served 1936-1943, finished new church and built arbor.

REV. V. R. HILL: served 1944-1949, left June 12, 1949.

REV. D. L. BLAKEY: 1949—began service June 15th, 1949.

Among the Presiding Elders were:

REV. W. D. COOPER

REV. W. HUNTER

REV. J. W. HAYES

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