

THE MONUMENTAL BAPTIST CHURCH A HISTORICAL SKETCH

Monumental's story began during the third decade of the 19th century, thirty-seven years before Emancipation. African Americans, even in the north, suffered from racial injustices. For instance, Philadelphia's citizens celebrated Independence Day on July 4, 1824 in segregated ceremonies.

On the twenty-fourth day of March 1826 a group met in the home of George Black, when this section of Philadelphia was known as Hamilton Village, Blockley Division. There were five other people in this group, namely: Sarah Black, Abel and Ebba Ward, Jacob Gardner, and Nancy Francis.

These organizers held meetings in their homes until 1844, when work was started on a church building. It was completed by 1846 at a cost of sixteen hundred dollars. Though it was a small building, (twenty-three by forty feet), it marked a great achievement for our spiritual ancestors, and the building remains as a testimony of their faith in God. The church was given the name African Baptist Church, but was later changed to the Oak Street Baptist Church. The new church soon became a station along the Underground Railway, as slaves made their way north in search of freedom.

The membership grew, and by 1853 needed a larger building. They purchased a lot for two hundred fifty dollars from a Mrs. Washington. This land had been used for a burial ground, but according to an agreement, the bodies of the dead were not to be disturbed except those in the way of the foundation. This new building was erected at the corner of what is now 41st and Ludlow Streets, and the name was changed to Monumental because the church would stand as monument to the dead buried there.

This new addition included a larger sanctuary. This work was begun under the pastorate of Rev. Robert Pinn, whose 18 years of leadership was longer than any previous pastorate. In 1914, under the pastorate of Rev. J.M. Moses, the annex was enlarged.

The following is a list of ministers who served the congregation from its birth:

Rev. George Black	- 1826-1829	Rev. Richard Coulter	- 1867-1868
Rev. Leven Stokely	- 1830-1834	Visiting Ministers	- 1868-1869
Rev. George Black	- 1835-1837	Rev. Robert A. Pinn	- 1869-1887
Rev. John Givens	- 1837-1840	Rev. Wm. H. Davenport	- 1888-1890
Rev. William Jackson	- 1841-1854	Rev. Eugene Evans	- 1890-1895
Rev. Samuel Miles	- 1854	Rev. Alexander A. Gordon	- 1895-1912
Rev. Edmund Kelly	- 1855-1859	Rev. James M. Moses	- 1912-1927
Visiting Ministers	- 1860-1861	Rev. Walter J. Moss	- 1928-1932
Rev. Charles Rogers	- 1862-1863	Visiting Ministers	- 1933-1934
Rev. Caleb Woodard	- 1864-1865	Rev. Joseph H. Jackson	- 1934-1941
Rev. Frederick Boaze	- 1865-1866	Rev. M. Marquette Peace	- 1942-1986

Rev. Joseph Harrison Jackson accepted the call and was installed as pastor May 27, 1934. While pastoring Monumental, Rev. Jackson was appointed Executive Secretary

of the Foreign Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A. Inc. In 1941, he resigned and accepted the pastorate of the Olivet Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois; and subsequently was elected president of the National Baptist Convention. Dr. Jackson was known as one of the most gifted preachers and orators of the 20th century. He was succeeded by the Rev. Moses Marquette Peace, who was then pastoring the Friendship Baptist Church in Aiken, S.C. Rev. Peace became pastor in 1942 and his ministry extended over a period of forty-four years, the longest of any pastor in Monumental' s history.

The year of 1967 was a memorable one in our history. Under the leadership of Rev. Peace, on Sunday, April 2, we marched into our new church building (which was purchased at a cost of \$250,000) at 50th and Locust Streets. A beautiful building, Gothic in design, it is well situated in the heart of West Philadelphia. Rev. Peace, known by many as a "prince among preachers," was given pastor emeritus status by the church and continued to be supportive of his successor until his death in 1991.

The call to the Monumental Baptist Church was extended to Rev. Dr. Jesse Wendell Mapson, Jr. on June 18, 1987. Rev. Mapson, who was then pastoring the Union Baptist Church, Elizabeth, N.J., accepted the call the second Sunday in July and began his pastorate the first Sunday in September. The installation of Rev. Mapson as the 20th pastor of Monumental Baptist Church was held on the second Sunday in November 1987.

Under Pastor Mapson's dynamic leadership, the congregation continues to grow spiritually as well as numerically. Under Rev. Mapson' s pastorate, the following initiatives have been taken: the Christian Education and Family Life Ministry (which includes the children' s, youth, young adult, singles, seniors', men' s, and women' s ministries) Seminars and Workshops, the annual Jackson-Peace Church-Wide Institute, the Higher Education Ministry, Bible Study, a media ministry, the greeters' ministry, the air conditioning of the sanctuary, the centralization of the pulpit, the installation of a baptismal pool, the renovation of the chapel, the purchase of a grand piano, Counseling and Hospital Ministries, the dedication of a "Living History Room", the purchase of a 15-passenger Van, a new sound system, the purchase and renovation of the J.H. Jackson Annex, a feeding ministry, the creation of the Church Choir, the enlarging of the church staff to include an administrative assistant, a Minister of Music and an Assistant Minister of Music; the Monumental Summer Day Camp, a Parenting Class, a Church Library, and an After-School Program with a computer lab.

In the year 2000, we began an extensive renovation project including the cleaning of the stone on the exterior of the building; a new ladies' room and lounge; the enlarging of the choir stand; the painting and re-carpeting of the sanctuary; the re-upholstering of the pews; the installation of a remote video taping system with closed circuit hook-up in the fellowship hall; the repair of the church tower and handicap accessibility.

Under Pastor Mapson's leadership we are attempting to become a Christ-Centered and Spirit-lead congregation seeking to glorify God through worship, ministry, evangelism, fellowship and discipleship.

May God continue to bless us with the Glory of His presence as we continue our journey here at Monumental, *"the church where Jesus Christ is central."*