History of Ames United Methodist Church

"To God Be The Glory"



1983 – Front of Ames UMC



1983 – Back Parking Lot



2002 – Front of the new Ames UMC



2002 – Back Parking Lot

Methodism was an active force in Maryland in the mid-1800s. The Washington Conference was formed in 1864 with a Black governing board and with the first appointment of Black preachers and pastors. The Conference formed two Circuits: Chesapeake and Gunpowder. These Circuits, with appointed lay preachers, gathered classes for prayer, Bible study and individual witness. Thereafter, small Societies were formed and were visited by Circuit riding preachers.

It is not known where African American people held these early meetings in Bel Air, but on October 5, 1867, a lease was signed for a plot of ground for the present day Ames UMC. The Trustees were William Morgan, Henry Turner, Joseph Toney and Joseph Smith. These men of color, Trustees of the Methodist Church, were appointed for the sole purpose of building a church. Samuel Galloway, Trustee of Thomas A. Hays, received $20.00 yearly rent.

In 1876, The Trustees, Building Committee and Charter Members held a meeting and organized the first “colored” church in Bel Air. The group purchased a small warehouse from Mr. Robert Bounds and moved it across the Pike, locating it on the leased lot. That small warehouse quickly became a focal point for the African American community. People gathered not only to worship, but also to discuss education, employment and fund-raising.

In 1886, Ames was under the jurisdiction of the Washington Conference and Reverend Eden Hammond. As the congregation increased in membership, a decision was made to erect a larger church on the adjoining lot. The new sanctuary, which remained in use until September 2001 was dedicated and named Ames Methodist Episcopal Church in 1886, in honor of Bishop Edward Ames. The old warehouse was converted into a church hall and was used in that capacity until 1980.

Over the years, the church underwent many improvements. In 1919, the belfry was installed. Until the early 1930s, kerosene lamps were used for lighting, and potbellied stoves used for heating. It was not until the late thirties that the church was wired for electricity. Then in the following decade, a new sanctuary area, choir loft, partition, choir robe rooms and kitchen were built. New asphalt shingles were installed in 1946. Seven years later a basement was dug and shortly afterward, a modern gas furnace was installed.

In 1969, the Reverend J. David Townsend became the first white person appointed as pastor of Ames Methodist Church. He was also the first pastor not appointed by the Washington Conference. Three years later, in 1992, the Washington Conference merged with the United Methodist Church.

In 1980, the old warehouse, though still in use, was in need of major repair. The Pastor, Reverend George B. Gwynn, urged the Trustees to present his plan for a new, modified building to the Conference for consideration. Upon the Conference approval, the warehouse was demolished to provide space for the new addition.

On Sunday, May 30, 1982 at the 10:30 a.m. worship service, the new Fellowship Hall was consecrated. The District Superintendent of the Baltimore East District, the Reverend Robert Zimmerli, officiated. He was assisted by Reverend George Gwynn, Pastor and William Taylor, Chairman of the Trustee. The other trustees included James R. Dorsey, Sr., Hester J. Fisher, Lawrence Whittington, Francis C. Rose, Ruth Jackson, Thomas Williams and Evelynn P. Clayton. The Bishop was D. Frederick Wertz from the Washington area. A prayer of consecration was offered and the cornerstone was laid.

On Sunday, May 8, 1983, the new fellowship hall was named the George B. Gwynn Fellowship Hall.

As a result of an aging church structure, consistent growth in membership and the need for more space to accommodate expanding ministries, a vision committee was formed in 1992 guided in leadership by Pastor C. Anthony Hunt. After prayer and careful exploration, it was determined that the new place of worship would be constructed on the original Ames Church site.

After years of prayer, planning and preparation in 1998, during the pastorate of Rev. Eric W. King, Sr., the Lord accelerated the process and in September 2001, the groundbreaking ceremony was conducted and demolition of the 125-year-old church began.

The second-Sunday of May for the new church consecration is a prophetic time in the life of Ames United Methodist Church in that 125 years ago in May 1877, the second Sunday of May, the previous church building was consecrated.

Larry McCrae and Clarence L. White were co-chairs of the 2002-2002 Vision Committee. Guided through the new church construction project by the dedicated leadership and experience of Clarence L. White, Jr., Daryl Y. Williams, the spiritual leadership of Pastor Eric W. King, and commitment of the faith-filled family of Ames United Methodist Church, God once again entrusted the church with greater worship, work, and witness toward the revelation of kingdom excellence.

Ministers who served Ames prior to the merger with the Baltimore Conference:
1876: Eden Hammon
1886: T. H. Dansbury
1900: John W. Carroll
1907: Columbus E. Brown
1911: Charles H. Matthews
1922: Fairfax F. King
1922: George E. Curry
1929: Virgil N. S. Hughes
1931: Charles Carroll Nelson
1931: B. T. Perkins
1937: Nathan Minor
1941: Alvin Hall Whitefield
1944: A. Edward Berry
1946: Rufus Abernathy, Sr.
1949: Clarence L. Davis

1953: Uzzah D. Chambers
1953: Samuel Carter
1958: Harry J. McDonald
1960: Joseph W. Carroll
1964: Isaac Abraham Sherman

Ames UMC Pastors following the merger when the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church merged to form the United Methodist Church:

1969: Rev. J. David Townsend who became the first Caucasian person appointed as pastor of Ames Methodist Church. He was also the first pastor not appointed by the Washington Conference. (July 1969-June 1972)
1972: Rev. George B. Gwynn (July 1972-June 1983)
1983: Rev. Pearlena Woolridge - The first female pastor of Ames United Methodist Church (July 1983-July 1984)
1984: Rev. Esther M. Holimon (July 1984-June 1987)
1987: Rev. Victor E. Sawyer (July 1987-June 1990)
1990: Rev. Karl Thomas (July 1990-Jan. 1991)
1991: Rev. Jimmie Ward (interim: Jan. 1991-June 1991)
1991: Rev. C. Anthony Hunt (July 1991-June 1998)
1998: Rev. Eric W. King, I (July 1998-June 2003)
2003: Rev. Winifred J. Blagmond (July 2003-Dec. 2009)
2010: Rev. Albert Mosley (interim: Jan. 2010-Dec. 2010)
2011: Rev. Ronald Ward (interim: Jan. 2011-June 2011)
2011: Rev. Jay T. Blake (July 2011-June 2014)
2014: Pastor Michael A. Parker, II (July 2014-June 2016)
2016: Rev. Marlon B. Tilghman (July 2016)

Compiled by the Records and History Committee, April, 1987; Updates: 2000, 2002, 2005, 2010, 2014, 2019 (Evelynn P. Clayton, James R. Dorsey, Sr., Elsie Marie Niiler, Elizabeth Whittington, Darlynn McCrae)