

News/Sun
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Greater Travelers Rest Church Celebrating 107 Years Of Service

It will be a "family affair" at the Greater Travelers Rest Baptist Church banquet at 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 6, at the Twin Towers in downtown Atlanta.

The occasion is a celebration of "one hundred and seven years of proclaiming the power and glory of God's kingdom," and the commemoration of ten years in a sanctuary at 2589 Tilson Road, Decatur.

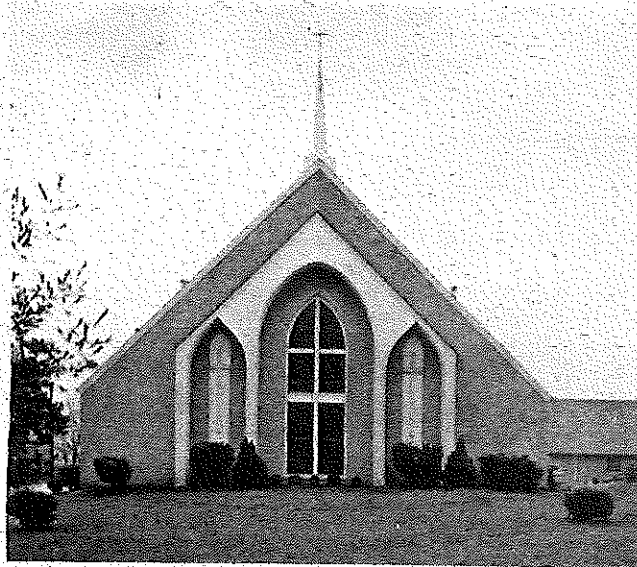
The church congregation of approximately 1000 had its beginning in a little wooden building on Flat Shoals Avenue. It was significantly named Travelers Rest because Civil War soldiers used it as a resting place on their march through Atlanta.

GREATER TRAVELERS Rest Church was organized in May, 1876, by the Rev. William Tillman, pastor of the Wheat Street Baptist Church, Atlanta. Before this, Brother Sam Stinson, who lived on McDonough Road, about three miles from the city limits, had carried on Sunday School work in a little one-room house. As the Rev. Mr. Stinson, he was to serve the church as the first of its 21 pastors.

In addition to the present pastor, the Rev. Hubert F. Shepherd, two former pastors, Dr. Martin Luther King Sr. and Dr. S.F. Ray, survive.

Pastor Shepherd, installed in 1957, has the distinction of being the first church member to become its minister.

The church has faced many trials since its first



Greater Travelers Rest Baptist Church

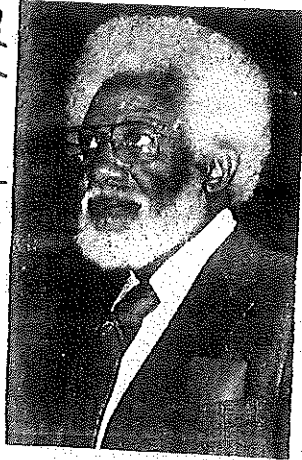
bought one and one-half acres of land from Van Epps, at a cost of \$98 and built the first house of worship owned by the membership. In 1920, Travelers Rest was destroyed by fire. They held services in other churches for several years before building at 119 Mayson Avenue.

This church had to be rebuilt and funds were raised with rallies and pledges. During one building program 75 members signed for a \$30,000 loan from the Decatur Federal Savings and Loan Association.

The church moved, in 1973, to its present location at 2589 Tilson Road, acquiring the property for \$500,000.

Music has always played a significant part in worship services at Travelers Rest. Nathaniel Protho Jr. is organist for the Church Choir and the Senior Choir. Assisting him is Mrs. Lillie Nicholson, organist for the Celestial Choir; Eugene Slaughter, with the E.R.S. Choir; Mrs. Christine Reese, H.F.S. Male Choir; and Mrs. Parrish Stanley, substitute organist for the Celestial Choir.

DeKalb Neighbor 3/19/82



REV. HUBERT SHEPHERD
Pastor For 25 Years

Church Has Long Past

By **REBECCA WHITCOMB**
Feature Writer

Greater Travelers Rest Baptist Church on Tilson Road in Decatur has "traveled" throughout DeKalb County for more than 100 years, before coming to a rest at its present location.

The church, originally located on Flat Shoals Road, was established in 1876 on a plot of land purchased by congregation members. The name "Traveler's Rest," is derived from the original home where weary travelers and Civil War soldiers stopped to rest more than 100 years ago.

The church flourished at that location, until it burned in 1920, said Rev. Hubert Shepherd, the church's pastor for the past 25 years. Members rallied then to another location, and were taken in by members of the Gresham Road Baptist Church. Rebuilding and construction efforts were made on another church on Mayson Avenue. The present location on Tilson Road was established in 1973.

The 800-member congregation has the philosophy of a "working church with a workable program," said Rev. Shepherd. "The congregation is relatively young," said Shepherd. "Although we do have one member who was baptized in the first church, and we honor her as the oldest living mother on Mother's Day."

According to Shepherd, the congregation is involved in many activities. Choirs dominate the musical side of the church, with a youth choir, men's and women's choir. "The women's mission is involved with orphanage homes," Rev. Shepherd added. Congregation members support a blind girl who lives near the church. Toys are distributed to needy children; and the women actively minister to the needs of women incarcerated in a woman's prison.

Rev. Shepherd is a long-standing member of the Greater Traveler's Rest Baptist Church. Baptized in the church when he was 7 years old, he began preaching before the congregation when he was 17 years old.

HISTORY OF THE GREATER TRAVELERS REST BAPTIST CHURCH

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the household of God and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom ye also are builded together in a habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians 2:19.

This definition of the "Church" is a characteristic of the Greater Travelers Rest Baptist Church, and we pause this year to pay tribute to a group of saints who have bound themselves together. And have remained together for one hundred years for the cause of advancing the Kingdom of God through Christ Jesus.

The Greater Travelers Rest Baptist Church was organized in May 1876, by the Reverend William Tillman, Pastor of the Wheat Street Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia after Brother Sam Stinson, and others who lived out on McDonough Road about three miles from the city limits, had carried on Sunday School work, in a little one room house for several months. In this little room, weekly prayer meetings were held, with Brother Sam Stinson conducting them. These prayer meetings were very warm and even spiritually hot at times, and served to help the people of this McDonough Road community to keep faith in God, and the place of church in the world. Brother Sam Stinson was convinced of his calling to the ministry, and urged the Sunday School followers and the prayer meeting supporters to come together and organize a church. They sent for Father Tillman, as he was affectionately called in those days by the Wheat Street members and all others who knew him, and Father Tillman took Reverend Sam Stinson and seven other members from other churches and organized what was named Greater Travelers Rest Baptist Church.

The name was the result of the Little House by the Side of the Road, in which the Church was organized, that had been used in the Civil War days as a Rest House for weary travelers. And since our organization, we have tried to live true to name and make this place, one place of spiritual fellowship that would give to our weary souls on this Pilgrimage of Life, rest, peace, and happiness in the work of kingdom building. The history of the Greater Travelers Rest Missionary Baptist Church is the history of great pastors, deacons, officers, and members who have carried on for the past one hundred years.

The first pastor was Reverend Sam Stinson, who served the church for twelve months. It was during this first pastorate that Governor Joe Brown, in 1877, gave the Church a plot of ground out on Flat Shoals Road, near the East Atlanta Bank, to be used for a church, but for some reason, did not deed the land to the church. This, naturally, was not satisfactory to these forward looking members, who desired a free participation in a church of their own. Therefore, Deacon Judge Hawkins, Nesbit Daniel, and Deacon Reggins, led the church to buy one and one-half acres of land from Mr. Van Epps, at the cost of \$98.00, and built our first church house of worship owned by the membership.

The second pastor was the Reverend Martin Scruggs, who served the church for a few years and during his pastorate the church house was rebuilt. The church has had up to date, twenty-one pastors.

Rev. Peter James Bryant	Rev. Zinnerman
Rev. Anderson Lee	Rev. Cyrus Brown
Rev. Frank Evans	Rev. Paul Scruggs
Rev. John Parker	Rev. B. J. Johnson, Sr.
Rev. Sanders	Rev. Clifford Holt
Rev. Anderson Smith	Rev. Eddie Barber
Rev. T. T. Golston	Dr. M. L. King
Dr. S. F. Ray	Dr. J. W. Tate
Dr. O. J. Moore	Dr. Leander Asbury Pinkston

We have had our trials and tribulations. In 1920, our Church was destroyed by fire. The First Baptist Church in Reynoldstown, now First Baptist Church of Gresham Road, opened its doors to us, and we worshipped there for nearly two years. The Beulah Baptist Church opened its doors for us, when we finally found it necessary to move. Rev. T. T. Golston was our pastor then, so he and the following Deacons, J. W. Avery, Chairman; Henderson Lee, James Newman, Henry Dixon and Sister Emma Newman, found a site at 119 Mayson Avenue, and the church bought it and erected House of Worship in 1923. The church was rebuilt in 1934, by Rev. J. W. Tate, and the unfinished task was carried on by Rev. T. T. Hoppins, Supply Pastor - Rev. O. J. Moore, Pastor.

Sometime in the middle of 1951, under the Pastorate of Rev. L. A. Pinkston, it was discovered by the officers of the Church, that the ceiling of the Church was coming down. A contractor was called in to make necessary repairs, but upon inspection it was found the truss of the of the roof had given away. Therefore, it was necessary to raise money immediately with which to take down the roof and two sides, with the idea of rebuilding. The first thought was to replace the sides and roof; but, after seeing the type of material used in the two ends that were standing, the officers and church decided to rebuild from the basement up. This work was done by Elmer Lewis Contractor (taking down the sides and roof), for the price of \$1,350.00, which also included placing a suitable roof over the basement and lights in same.

The Church decided to rebuild in 1952, and many efforts were put on in the form of rallies, pledges from members and auxiliaries. The following amounts were raised during the following years: 1952-\$4,795.00; 1953-\$3,239.00; 1954-\$4,107.53; 1955-\$3,408.97; 1956-\$3,247.39. Rev. L. A. Pinkston resigned as pastor of the church in March 1957 and the Rev. Hubert F. Shepherd was called to be our Pastor in October 1957. That year the church raised \$3,336.08. In 1958 the church began to realize that it was almost possible to build, and they rallied to raise \$5,176.67, which gave a total of \$24,301.97, in the Building Fund Treasure. It was at this point that Rev. Shepherd had a vision, and went to the Decatur Federal Savings and Loan Association in Decatur, Georgia, for a loan. The loan was finally approved for \$30,000.00 with the signatures of seventy-five members of the church - notwithstanding, this was not the first time the church had applied for a loan. Application had been placed with the Citizens Trust Company on Auburn Avenue, but they did not give an answer to our application. The terms on the loan

was for ten years at \$338.08 per month. The plans were first drawn by Mr. S. Walton Peabody, but revised in 1958, to give the church twenty additional feet in the back. The contractor, Mr. W. M. Abernathy, was found by seeing a church from the outside on Hardee Street and later upon investigation about other churches that he had built. There were several good recommendations about his workmanship. Notwithstanding, there was a little trouble about him building without a Bond, but the advice from a lawyer, Mr. J. C. Daugherty, it was found that we could be secured by also including his property in the agreement from him.

The total price of the the building was \$58,270.00 The Church only had \$24,304.97 on hand, and were getting \$29,370.00 from the bank, after service charges, which meant that the Church should raise an additional \$4,500.00. The contractor began working on the church the first of March, 1959, and finished in August, 1959. When the job was completed the church had raised the \$4,500.00, of which they were very thankful to God. The Church was built under the supervision of the Trustee Board (Deacon William F. Butts, Chairman; Deacons Wilburn Edwards, Irvin Lee, Isacc Goolsby, Thomas J. Butts, serving as Chairman of Building Committee, Brother George M. Butts, Henry Elliott, Deacon Frank Hightower, and James Harper, and the Pastor, Rev. H. F. Shepherd)

October, 1957, new leadership came to our Church. Never before in the history of the church had we used one of our own members as a pastor. We can truly say that this was an era of New beginnings for the Greater Travelers Rest Baptist Church. With the motto "A Working Church With A Workable Program", everybody would have a chance to become an integral part of the church and its program.

A building had to be re-erected and money with which this would be accomplished had to be raised. Under Pastor Shepherd's leadership the church's program was re-organized and given new directions - as before mentioned by the late Deacon Thomas J. Butts, Clerk. The building was completed and rededicated September 1959.

The Working Church With A Workable Program was already on its way and there was no stopping it. New members were added and a new zeal, and a new kind of unity was among the members as never before.

The Deacon's Board under the Chairmanship of Charlie Curtis, James Harper, and John T. Smith has given supportive leadership that has brought about a satisfying influence among the total membership. We had a job to be done and here in the Board of Deacons it was to start. The Board of Trustees, Chaired by William F. Butts, Henry Elliott, Steve W. Bookman, Sr. and Zelom Parks, joined forces with the Deacons in a supportive and promotive role in getting the job done.

The reorganization of the finance committee gave great impetus to the whole program. Deacon Eugene R. Slaughter served as Chairman the bringing together of all finance into one central treasury, passing financial lists of contribution given by members and auxiliaries, and the monthly statements of all income and disbursements helped tremendously.

The Woman's Missionary Department, Chaired by Sister Willie White, Beatrice Morris, Ella Mae Clark and Callie Lowe, has helped the fellowship to be more missionary minded. This department working with the women and Sister Norma Moore and the Youth Steering Committee with the young people have made a tremendous contribution to the over all growth of the church.

Willie T. Durden, Horace Clark, and Danny Edwards have made significant contributions with the men in the church through its Brotherhood Commission. Music has always played an important part in religious worship services. Annie Lester Clark, Eugene R. Slaughter, Olivia Butler and Ivory Collins Shepherd gave rise to great music in our Church. Annie Lester Clark working with Choir #2 and later with the Senior Choir has been a great inspiration to the church. Eugene Slaughter also working with the Senior and organizing the young adult choir (now E. R. S. named for him). Olivia Butler worked with the young adult and for a time was the church organist. Ivory Shepherd worked with children and the teenage choir. Mr. Joseph Wright was our first minister of Music. Under his ministry all choirs began singing together on third Sunday and the Church Choir came as a result of this endeavor. We have had several musicians who served as well - Mr. Parrish Stanley and Grady Shy were among them.

Presently our minister of music is Mr. Nathaniel Prothro, Jr., who is the organist for the Church Choir and Senior Choir. Assisting him is Mrs. Lillie Nicholson - organist for the Celestial Choir; Mr. Eugene Slaughter - organist for the E. R. S. Choir; Mrs. Christine Reese - organist for the H. F. S. Male Choir; Mr. Parrish Stanley - substitute organist for the Celestial Choir.

In 1968 the property at 121 Mayson Avenue was purchased (\$15,000.00) to enlarge parking facilities. In 1971 the property at 107 Mayson Avenue was purchased for the same purpose mentioned above for \$5,000.00. After the acquisition of this land the pastor asked the joint boards (Trustees and Deacons) to form a committee to formulate plans for renovations and the remodeling of the present church building. Included in this would be plans for building an educational building. After a great deal of discussion - it was learned that the membership was thinking of moving.

At this point, in the history of our church, a church planning committee was appointed by Pastor Shepherd, and approved by the church membership, for the purposes of answering several questions:

- 1) How much does it cost to do the necessary work at 119 Mayson Avenue?
- 2) Does the Church - sincerely - want to relocate in a new community?
- 3) What will be the cost?
- 4) How will the money become available?

This committee was Chaired by Deacon William Frank Butts and in the following months - they were organized, went forward in doing a fine job in answering the above mentioned question.

The cost to renovate and add an educational building was too expensive for the community in which we were located - therefore, it was recommended by the church planning committee that we relocate into another community.

After much searching and praying for Divine Leadership - we settled on the church that we now occupy - 2589 Tilson Road, Decatur, Georgia. This property was owned by the Gates of Praise Pentecostal Church, Inc.

After continuing in prayer and negotiations we finally entered into an agreement with the above mentioned church for a price of \$500,000.00. This agreement was predicated on the understanding that we would buy if we were able to sell the property at 119 Mayson Avenue for \$125,000.00 and that we would be able to secure a loan for \$400,000.00 from Decatur Federal Loan.

This agreement was made in May of 1973 and we moved from 119 Mayson Avenue to 2589 Tilson Road, Decatur, Georgia, December 2, 1973.

"The die was cast." We learned more than ever, during the preparation for this move, to lean and depend on God. Three years have passed - several new auxiliaries have been added to reinforce the Kingdom of God, hundreds of new members have been added to the church, the budgets of each auxiliary has increased, consequently increasing the overall finances.

May this Church continue to train its members through the practice of God to be servants to others, to the end that Christ's likeness may become common property.

This fellowship of believers continued to go forward in God's name. In 1974 the church became a non-profit corp. under the Laws of Georgia. The Board of Directors replaced the Trustee Board. The Charter gives the church a broader base of operation and gives greater impetus to its leaders. The Board has nine members. Three permanent directors: the Pastor, the Clerk and the Treasurer; six regular directors - serving two year terms. Each director has a particular job. Giving leadership as Chairmen has been: J. T. Smith, Raymond Walker, Joseph Lewis, Ulysees Tuff, William F. Butts, Michael Wannamaker, Alonzo Moore and historically three women - Vashti Latimore, Maurice Dukes and Edna Fleming Killum.

Great and marvelous have been our accomplishments under this kind of cohesive leadership. In 1974 Mrs. Ivory C. Shepherd, the wife of the Pastor, became the first Director of Minister of Education. Under the ministry, a Board of Education consisting of the President of the Women Missionary Society, the President of the Brotherhood Commission, the Superintendent of the Church School, the Director of the B. T. U. and a special committee carry on the functions of the Board.

In 1974 Mrs. Betty Bookman, who for many years served as part-time secretary, became full time. In 1982 a Children's Chapel was organized with Portia Coombs as Director. The children of the church are taught the meaning of worship, there by gaining a greater appreciation for it - and a deep respect for the Church.

God blessed us overwhelmingly when we became bold believers in a Christian life style in our commitment, that the finances of the church rose to the point that auxiliaries could give their monies to other endeavors. They gave \$40,000.00 to help retire the mortgage. This \$40,000.00 was invested in certificates earning 11% per annum. At the same time we were able to pay five extra notes on the first mortgage monthly, thereby being able to pay it off in 1986 of \$168,000.00 - 13 years before time.

In 1985 we continued to grow spiritually as well. Brother Roy McLaughlin preached his trial sermon during a regular morning worship service and by acclamation was licensed to preach. The church has grown numerically as well - over 220 new members joined and 153 completed orientation and was received into this fellowship. Also in 1985 we installed new carpet in the Sanctuary and a new \$44,000.00 organ.

February 1986 Brother Jerry Alexander preached his trial sermon during a regular worship service and was licensed to preach.

October 26, 1986 was a historic day, three were ordained as preachers and five deacons. Rev. Roy McLaughlin, Rev. Jerry Alexander, Rev. Portia Coombs.. The Rev. Portia Coombs became the first woman preacher of our church. The five deacons are Aaron Knox, Clifford Hoggatt, Steve Jones, Bobby Whitaker, and James Hayes.

Since October 1985 our church has been a tithing church and the program has been remarkable. Since we are a tithing church we give 10% to Mission and 10% to savings. We added handbells costing \$5,000.00. The handbell choir is directed by Mrs. Sharon Phillips. Since 1985 we have given three full one year tuition college scholarship to a deserving graduation senior.

History has a way of repeating itself. In 1986, Pastor Shepherd appointed a building committee to look into the possibility of doing some renovation on the church. Robert Burroughs as Chairman and the following members: John Long, Sarah Riley, James Barron, William Butts, Portia Coombs, Maurice Dukes, Alonzo Moore, Ivory S. Roberson, Eugene Slaughter, Cynthia Sloan, Norman Thomas, Sr., Raymond Walker, Debbie Ward and Gloria Wright. After many meetings and much prayer and soul searching the committee recommended that we make an offer to the Mt. Carmel Christian Church to buy it. This was overwhelmingly accepted by the church. However, another church beat us to it. At this point it was suggested that if we could not get the Mt. Carmel Church, that we buy some land and build from the ground up, a new church. In September 1987, we made an offer to Mr. William T. Bryant for 15.63 acres of land at Whites Mills East and Lloyd Road in Decatur, Georgia for \$15,000.00 per acre. The land cost \$234,450.00 and now we are in the process of Drawing the plans to build a new church complex at approximately five million dollars. At this point we have a Contract - on our Church - 2589 Tilson Road from The Way, The Truth, and The Life Christian Center, Inc. for \$1,300,000.00

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Churches - Baptist -
Greater Travelers Rest Baptist
Church

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article
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Church located at 2589 Tilson Road, Decatur. The church congregation had its beginning in a little wooden building on Flat Shoals Avenue. It was significantly named Travelers Rest because Civil War soldiers used it as a resting place on their march through Atlanta. Church was organized in May, 1876 by the Rev. William Tillman, pastor of the Wheat Street Baptist Church. In 1920, Travelers Rest was destroyed by fire. Church moved in 1923 to 2589 Tilson Road.