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# Salem Missionary Baptist Church

*I think Gregory and his committee did a good job.*

# 150<sup>th</sup>

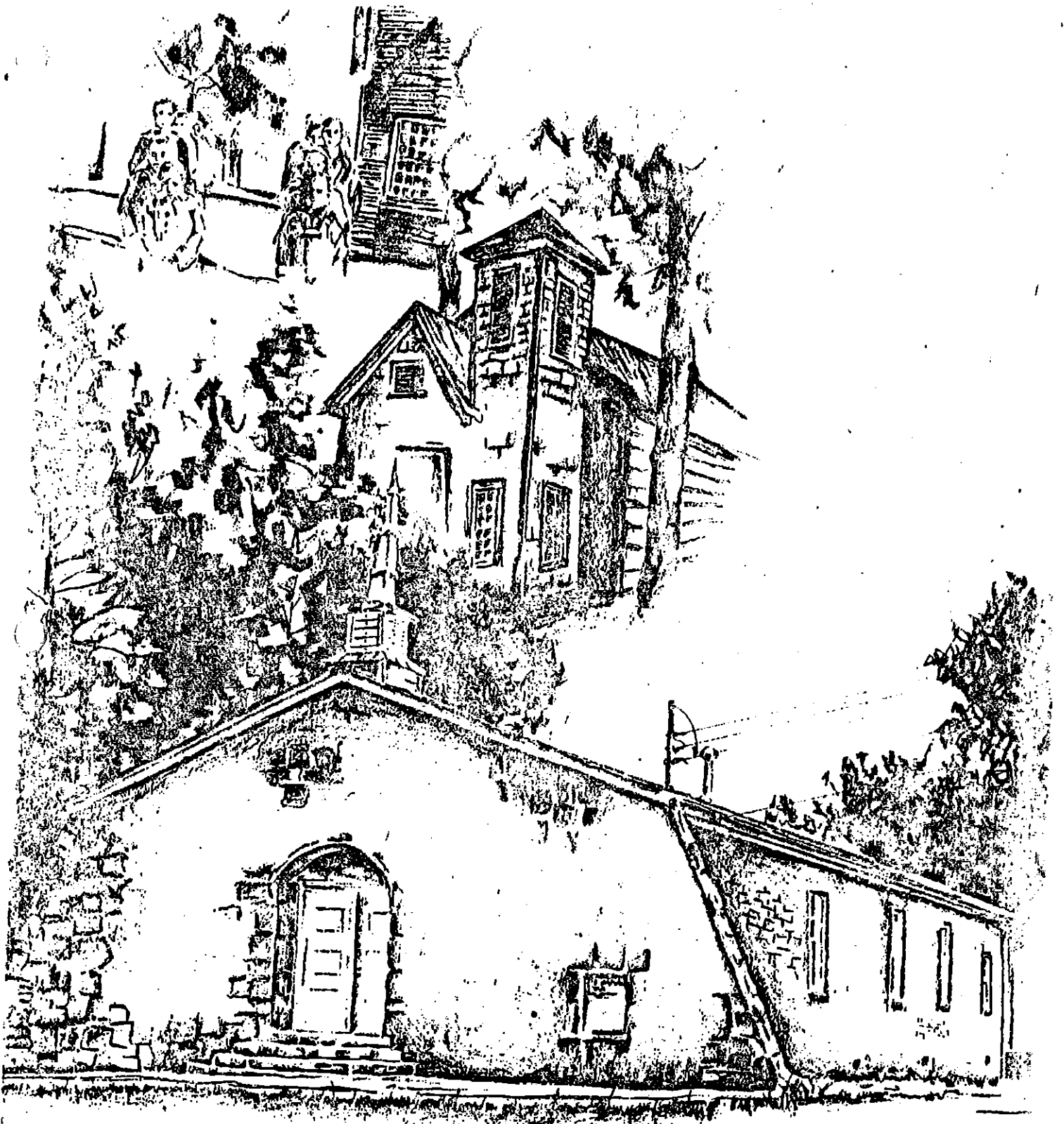
## ANNIVERSARY

**October 1-7, 1984**

**Rev. D. Sherrer**  
Pastor

**A Bold Heritage.....**

**A Bright Future.....**



# A Bold Heritage

FROM THE PASTORS DESK

A Bold Heritage and a bright Future Salem Baptist Church is indeed the place where for a hundred and fifty years (150 years) heaven and earth have met with a common cause.

We thank God who has kept us together in fellowship and love. We have been sometime up and sometime down, because there have been forces within her that causes some changes, thanks be to God. He has never left her alone. Some of her strongest leaders have left and some have gone on to glory. But thanks be to God Old Salem has kept her unity in God. (One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism- in fellowship and a holy love for each other.

Salem must ever keep in step with God. She must not forget her call is Holy Divine She must gleam and continue to keep before her the words of Paul "Therefore, my beloved brethen,

be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." 1 Cor 15:58- Paul call upon his followers to endure for christ sake.

As your Minister, let me say to you the Salem Family you have a bold Heritage to be proud of but you cannot at this junction stop in the middle of the road gleaming over your past- you must look ahead to the future, because the Lord expect great things from us.

  
Reverend Dewitt Sherrer

Pastor

"SALEM"

She stands quietly, silently, solemnly.

She stands unmoved, undaunted, not  
wavering.

She is standing the test of time.

Winds blow and storms rise, but  
solemnly she stands.

When all around the night grows  
dark

She stands shining as a beacon;  
bidding come to the light.

When men would revile and curse  
and destroy her people

She quietly says "I am love"

And yes, she is a haven of joy,  
a home of jubilee, a demander  
of respect, and a place of rest.

She is a mighty fortress, a bulwark,  
a strong hold.

She is the church of a living God.

She is a place called Salem.

Gregory L. Bailey

In the early 1800's, thought to be around 1834, after living in his Rockbridge Road Plantation in the city of Lilburn for five years, Mr. Thomas Carroll instructed his slaves to construct six small frame buildings. Five of these were tenant houses or dwellings for the slaves. But one was a church, a meeting place for the slaves to gather and worship. This small frame building became what we know today as the Salem Missionary Baptist Church.

It is thought that before the church was constructed slaves worshipped at the Camp Creek Church in Lilburn. Not only did slaves owned by Mr. Carroll attend this early Salem, but also those owned by the Pickens, McDaniel, Carter, McCurdy and Hunt families. This church operated under the auspices of the Carroll Plantation for approximately thirty two years. In the year of 1862, in the midst of the Civil War, Mr. Darling Carroll, son of Mr. Thomas Carroll, donated a parcel of land to the "slave church". These new freed slaves with the help of Mr. Carroll built the second "meeting house" across the street from where the church presently stands. Here the church was formally organized as it's own sovereign body.

The record of our beginning at Salem indicates that the church was founded by a few determined people whose family names include: Stevens, Nesbitt, Bailey, Williams, Hopkins, Harrison, Phew (Pugh), McCurdy, McDaniel and Jackson. (We feel there are others whose names were not recorded.) These family names are still proudly recognized on our church register.

In November, 1886, under the spiritual leadership of Reverend S. S. Harrison, a committee was appointed to find ground for a new church. The committeemen were Brothers Jones, Bryant, Nesbitt, Hopkins and McCurdy.

The Committee went about its work and reported to the church body in conference in December of 1886 that a suitable and affordable site had been located. A motion was brought before the body to vote on remaining in the existing location or moving to new ground. The motion was executed, but the church was not in full peace and fellowship and the conference adjourned to meet again in December 1886.

The record indicates there was much debate and uncertainty about moving to new ground. The church body came together in conference in December, and immediately Reverend Harrison called for a standing vote by the entire body on moving to new ground. Those in favor carried the vote.

The committeemen were authorized to finalize the purchase of new ground. A plea was made to all men to meet again on the first rainy day to cut logs and rip boards to begin construction of a new building—thirty feet by forty feet. The conference was adjourned by Reverend Harrison with the entire body in full peace and fellowship. Also at this time delegates were sent to help organize the Hopewell Baptist association.

The church served as a stabilizing force in the community, chastising its members for social, as well as spiritual inequities. Members were brought before the body in conference for behaviour in public unbecoming a Christian. Charges were often brought against members for going to parties, drinking alcoholic beverages, physically fighting, and against husbands and wives who did not show due respect for the vows of marriage, as well as for various other reasons.

Members who were absent from conference three times in succession were obligated by the church to present a lawful reason for their absence. Often a committee was appointed to sit with a member in prayer and fellowship when it was believed the member had acted in a manner beyond that accepted by the church.

Salem Baptist church and the church community accepted a form of communal practice until the early 1920's. It was expected and accepted by the church community to sit with the sick around the clock. The church community lived off the land and often went to the aid of a neighboring farmer to help work his crops in times of family illness.

(This practice seems to have stopped in the late 1920's as a number of church members began to relocate in other areas of what is now known as metropolitan Atlanta. Younger sons and daughters migrated to the midwest, settling in Chicago; and others moved to the northeast, settling in New York.)

Years passed, and the church family again found the need to acquire new ground and a new building. A committee was appointed to search for new ground. Following a diligent search, the committee reported to the church conference of an available parcel of land with two houses and a well that was approximately one mile from the existing facility.

In 1907 the church body agreed by a show of hands to swap deeds with a one Mr. Massey to exchange Salem's existing property for his parcel of land. The deeds were legally exchanged, and the records indicate that the deeds were filed with the proper Gwinnett County office.

It is by word of mouth that we can trace the beginning of Salem public school to the late 1800's. Previously, a public school for colored children was located in the nearby community of Luxomini on the property of a black man by the name of Bill Darling. It is believed that the school, for reasons unknown, was moved to the Salem Baptist Church sometime between 1885 and 1890. The Salem school served to educate the young of the Salem church community until 1951.

Salem prospered as a spiritual beacon in the Lilburn community until the late 1920's. Families began moving away from the farm seeking other means of earning a living. It was believed that Salem Baptist would perish. However, a few faithful families continued to serve at Salem and call on the name of the Lord.

The congregation seemed to experience very little growth until the 1940's when the Reverend C. B. Reeves was called to labor at Salem. Slowly, the church began to pick up in spirit and numbers. The goodness of the Lord found favor in our congregation, and the body moved to construct a new cinder block building on this site in 1961. This is the third building existing at this location.

Baptismal ceremonies at Salem had been conducted in a pond (Young's Pond) on property under the care of the late Robert B. Bailey. Brother Bailey was called from service to reward, and future baptismal ceremonies were moved to Hopkins Pond.

Reverend Reeves was not satisfied with having to leave the church premises to baptism waiting candidates. In 1965 the church constructed the baptismal pool. On the third Sunday in September, 1965, the congregation witnessed 27 candidates meet Jesus at the liquid grave on the grounds of Salem Baptist Church.

Salem is indebted to Reverend C. B. Reeves for leading the flock through difficult times. He was instrumental in preserving Salem when it seemed as though all support and growth has been lost. In 1978 the Lord saw fit to call Reverend Reeves home to a long deserved rest in His Kingdom of Heaven.

God, in his eternal way, had prepared a new leader for Salem and had him waiting in the brush for his calling. Shortly after the passing of Reverend Reeves the board

of Deacons, under the leadership of Brother Alton Clark, called the Reverend Dewitt Sherrer to labor at Salem and lead its flock till evening;

On May 20, 1979, Reverend Sherrer was installed as Salem's new Shepherd. The service was under the auspices of Dr. E. W. Lumpkin and the Hunter Hill First Baptist Church. Reverend Sherrer, a young and dynamic minister, is disciplined in the spirit and blessed with the wisdom of foresight.

Dewitt Sherrer is an aggressive minister. Immediately he embarked Salem upon a course of progress. The church interior furnishings were upgraded with new pews, refinished floors and carpeting. These material things were not enough for Reverend Sherrer, for he is, most of all, a teaching minister.

The church rekindled its participation in the district and state convention, taking full advantage of many learning opportunities of the state conference. Reverend Sherrer began personally to instruct a Bible class, organize BTU and a Youth Department. He is leading us as a skillful engineer toward the light at the end of the tunnel of time.

History is the story of the past that seems to have a parallel course with the future. We are and should be proud of Salem's past years, beginning in a midnight hour in the 1830's, struggling to remain a spiritual force in the 1930's and 40's. We are the heirs of a determined people who never dreamed of doing other than God's will. Yet, we must be careful for the parallel courses of history are in our hands.

From its humble beginnings Salem has been a stabilizing force in the Gwinnett County community, a place of rest, refuge and worship. We thank God for the bold heritage and we praise him for the anticipation of the bright future.

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SALEM SCHOOL

Salem was a center of activity in the community; serving as the House of Worship on Sundays, the schoolhouse on weekdays and the meeting place for prayer service no less than one night a week.

The church served as the one room schoolhouse for approximately sixty years. Our church stood with its doors open during a period in time when formal learning opportunities were a hardship for black children.

The teachers who often journeyed far from their homes to teach our children were dedicated to the field of education. We are proud to recognize those teachers whose names we were able to discover.

- |                           |                       |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Mrs. Mary Rainwater       | Ms. Estell Summerhour |
| Mrs. Ida Goldston         | Ms. Ellen Prince      |
| Mrs. Moss                 | Ms. Jo-Ann Parks      |
| Miss Dixie Nesbit         | Ms. Edith Wood        |
| Miss Clara Nesbit         | Ms. Gladys Turner     |
| Professor Hopper          | Mrs. Alston           |
| Mrs. Auford               | Mrs. Bell Kemp        |
| Mrs. Annie Mae Washington |                       |

(Not necessarily in chronological order of service)

We are deeply indebted to each of the educators who served at Salem school. If we were unable to find your name, your memory will forever be with us.

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IN MEMORY OF THE MINISTERS WHO HAVE SERVED SALEM.

"MAN GOETH FORTH UNTO HIS WORK AND TO HIS LABOUR UNTIL THE EVENING."  
PSALMS 104:23.

REVEREND WM. HENRY STRICKLAND

W. S. JONES

H. MCDANIEL

S. L. HARRISON

W. H. MEADE

J. S. SAMUEL

J. W. WILLIAMS

JAMES WALKER

GUS ACRES

R. G. ECHOLS

BRODEN MAY

L. T. JONES

E. T. ECHOLS

G. J. CLARK

WM. MAXON

PALM JONES

O. L. JACKSON

C. B. REEVES

(NOT NECESSARILY IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF SERVICE)