



## HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE CALLED CHELSEA



*'Looking back with Gratitude; Moving Forward by Faith - A New Beginning.*

*"Chelsea is not her own. She has been brought (redeemed) with a price far beyond silver and gold. Her redemption lies in Jesus Christ, as a result of that gift of salvation. We commit ourselves as servants of God and people. Chelsea exists as a station of God where God is at work."*

The people of the Chelsea Community have always realized the need to find favor in Our Lord through worship. Originally, the community worshipped at Popular Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church located in the vicinity of the present Patton Road on Redstone Arsenal. However, as the Chelsea Community grew, the people of Chelsea organized their own church in 1904. The Christian leaders of the community namely Mr. Will Owens, Mr. Henry McDonald (the father of the late Elder Willis McDonald) and Mr. Dick Horton organized and started the *Chelsea View Cumberland Presbyterian Church* (refer to the original deed). They were the first elected officers of the church. The church was located in the Masonic Hall that was also used as the school for the children of the community. The Masonic Hall was located on Chelsea Lane where the late Mother Nannie L. Woods built her home, and where Brother and Sister John Jones have ownership of the residence. The first minister was Joe McDonald, whose selfless ambition led to our church to continue to grow and prosper. The membership grew after a Church Revival. It is recorded that some of the first Mothers of the church were Sister Kate Jordan and Sister Susie McDonald (the Great Grandmother of the Cowan and Morton progeny). These women of God exemplified *'good works of charitable deeds.'* (Acts 9:36)

A severe storm devastated Huntsville in 1913, and the Masonic Hall was destroyed. *'The Lord will provide'* according to Our Father Abraham. Mr. Charles Henley who was one of the first African American attorneys in Huntsville, and his wife, Elizabeth, came forward and donated acreage on Johnson Road (then called Sibley Lane) where the church is currently located. Trustees of the church, Amos Lanier, Daniel Harvey and Will Owens, negotiated the transfer of this property to the Chelsea View Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The original deed was notarized on November 27, 1906 by Mr. H. C. Binford, the original owner of the Royal Funeral Home, which is the oldest African American business in Huntsville. The deed was filed in Probate Court and executed by Probate Judge W. T. Lawler on January 14, 1907. Under the strong leadership of Reverend Joe McDonald, the first church was built on its present site in 1913. Although very small and heated by a potbelly stove, the church stood as a beacon of light and hope to the community. It was also used as the school for the community. The Chelsea school's first teacher was Rosetta Powell, wife of the first African American postman for the city of Huntsville. Mrs. Florence McCaulley, who retired from Ridgecrest Elementary after 40 years of service, was the last teacher responsible for the education of the Chelsea community.

*"Apply thine heart unto instruction and thine ears to the words of knowledge"*  
*Proverbs 23:12*

The church bell tolled for significant events in the neighborhood such as church services, school and the announcement of deaths of neighbors and friends. Regular church services were held twice per month and communion was administered quarterly. As the community continued to grow, many residents changed their membership from Popular Hill (currently Madkins Chapel CPCA) to Chelsea. Prayers of the righteous during revivals added additional members to church rolls.

Approximately forty years later, a new building was erected under the leadership of Reverend Aaron Toney. The Chelsea Church members were very active with the governing bodies of the Church: Session, Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly. One of the highlights of growing up in the church was its strong Sunday school held every Sunday regardless of alternating regular church service schedules. The opportunity to attend the Sunday School Convention held under the auspices of the Presbytery was an honor. The Christian fellowships and friendships made during these meetings have withstood the test of time. Finally, under the pastorate of Reverend Aaron Toney, the harvest during one of the revivals was so plentiful that it has been called even to this day a "Great Revival."

*"...O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years..."*  
*Habakkuk 3:2*

Reverend Robert L. Blackburn has the distinction of having the longest tenure as pastor of the church. His ministry at Chelsea started in 1952 and culminated in 1972. He was affectionately referred to as "Neckbone." He was small in stature but his delivery of the Gospel was like "A Mighty Rushing Wind." The church again had a growth in membership and a new building was erected in 1959. Chelsea became an outstanding leader in the Presbytery and was known for the melodious and spirit filled voices of its Senior Choir organized under his leadership in 1952. (refer to the Sanctuary Choir's History)

Again, the Church was struck with physical devastation. The infamous Tornado of 1974 destroyed our church building. "The Lord will provide" according to Our Father Abraham. Services continued at the Royal Funeral Home's Chapel for three years before another church was constructed. The Chelsea Community owes a debt of gratitude to Mr. James A. Jones, the owner of Royal Funeral Home, for providing a place for us to continue God's Work.

*"In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you"*  
*I Thessalonians 5:18*

A fourth building was dedicated on July 10, 1977 under the pastorate of Reverend David L. Robinson. Reverend Robinson provided leadership to our church for seventeen years. Many of our current Mothers and Officers were dedicated during his tenure. In addition, a Young Adult Choir was active and supportive in the spiritual education of the church.

Reverend Dr. R. Stanley Wood was a dedicated leader and a servant of the church beginning in 1990. With Reverend Wood's guidance many feats were accomplished namely formalizing the Order of Services, renovation, and construction of a new facility, expansion of acreage and the development and operation of a Child Development Center. More importantly, Reverend Wood continued the tradition of his predecessors of preaching about the Love of Jesus and proclaiming His Promise. Reverend Wood moved to Memphis, Tennessee in 1999 to accept the position of Associate Professor and eventually Dean of Students at the Memphis Theological Seminary. Reverend Wood continued to shepherd the flock at Chelsea for several years while traveling to Huntsville each weekend. As he advanced in his career at Memphis Theological Seminary, the demands of his position and health issues forced him to resign as our pastor in February 2004.

*"But if any man love God, the same is known of him"*  
*I Corinthians 8:3*

We were without a spiritual leader until we were sent Reverend Brian E. Winston, who was selected as our pastor in July 2004. Pastor Winston is a young man of 28 years. He completed his Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology and Human Development and Family Studies at Alabama A&M University. Pastor Winston is currently pursuing an advanced degree in Christian Counseling. He is married to the former Charmaine P. Bossie and they are the parents of Acharian Danielle and Wynter Aundrell. God called Pastor Winston into the ministry January 2000 and he was ordained in July 2002. Although he has proven he has a "Preaching" ministry, teaching is very important to his ministry. We expect great leadership, understanding and growth under his pastorate.

*"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..."*  
*Hosea 4:6*

We cannot complete our history without recognizing the Missionary Society that has been instrumental in providing spiritual, financial and moral support for the growth and development of the church. The current president of the Missionary Society is Mother Annie Allison Rooks, who also has the blessed distinction of being the oldest active member of the congregation. In addition to the Missionary Society, all other organizations continue to serve steadfastly to help promote the mission of the church to include the Sanctuary Choir, the Musical Director, the musicians, acolytes, ushers, Elders, Deacons, Mothers, Sunday School Department, teachers and Youth Department.

*"..Go ye into all the world and preach to every creature."*

*St. Mark 16:15*

One hundred years of spiritual legacy is not easily obtained. Without the ever present comfort of the holy spirit and stubborn faithfulness of our forefathers, we would not be here today.

*"Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour"*

*Proverbs 3:16*