



**THE HISTORY OF  
EBENEZER AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
THE LIGHTHOUSE AND WAY STATION IN THE  
BRUNSWICK, MARYLAND COMMUNITY**

*Updated November 2019*

*A glance back to acknowledge the past so that we may embrace the present with hope in preparation for the leap toward the future.*

This narration acknowledges the importance of being acquainted with our beginnings. As a membership, we recognize that the past can help us gain a sense of who we are collectively, and more importantly, what God declares we are to be. With the benefit of hindsight, we are grateful to the initial membership who, so many years ago, had a mind to worship and work. Accordingly, because of the legacy, we have been instilled with a passion to pass on what we know and to press on in the work of the Lord.

A glance back reveals that in 1787 during a worship service at St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Black worshipers were pulled from their knees while kneeling at the altar in prayer and ordered back to their designated seats. It was this act of unchristian conduct that caused the group to seek a place where they could be free of humiliation and segregation in the house of God, and freely worship the Lord.

As the years passed, the number of people of color increased and eventually the group split into two groups...the Episcopalians and the Methodists. The leader of the Methodists was Richard Allen. After much tribulation, a place of worship was erected and was named Bethel.

In 1816 other people of color at Baltimore and other places, who had been similarly mistreated, determined to form a connection. In April of that year, a General Conference was held in Philadelphia when these people determined to unite into one body under the name and style of the African Methodist Church. It was during this year that Rev. Richard Allen was consecrated as the first African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Bishop.

Since that time, A.M.E. churches have been established throughout the entire United States and into Canada, the West Indies, South America, and Africa. Ebenezer- Brunswick is one of those churches, which had its beginnings as the first "Black" church on Wenner's Hill with a Rev. Bowie being the first of 26 Pastors.

The same attitude relative to having a place for free worship, and the commitment to carry on the work of the church, is evidenced by an appeal made on August 19, 1904, by Dr. William Henry Bell and other Ebenezer members to the Brunswick Community for help in erecting a church edifice.

Subsequently, the property on which the Ebenezer church building now stands was purchased on December 1, 1906, for \$75.00. The property was purchased by a group of Trustees (namely, William Brooks, Lewis Hardy, James King, Charles Herbert, and Thaddeus B. from joint owners Louis and Ella Largent of Paw Paw, West Virginia; John and Rebecca Williamson of Anacostia, D.C.; and John and Matilda Oglebee of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania.

Surnames that made up the church membership included the King, Bell, Walker, Holland, Jackson, and Stanfield families. An existing cornerstone names Rev. J. Bundy as the Pastor in 1907.

An existing house on the property was used for worship services. Subsequently, a church edifice was built in 1920. Rev. Armstrong was the Pastor. During this time, an organ was purchased. However, membership declined causing the church to be closed. After reopening a few years later, the church began to prosper, and the Sunday School was in full operation under direction of George Albert Hardy, the Superintendent.

Years later, the church was again closed. During wartime (1940's) attendance declined because of men/husbands being away and a lack of transportation. Along this same timeframe, Rev. Steward was Pastor, and he decided to have the Ebenezer members attend Union Bethel A.M.E. Church located in Petersville, Maryland. Some of the members refused to go, and in the 1950's succeeded in having the church re-opened.

Prior to the 1960's Ebenezer was served by a number of Pastors. The Pastors included (alphabetical order) the Reverends Armstrong, Bailey, Bowie, Bundy, Butler, Chew, Cotton, Fields, Matthews, MoLock, Penn, Schibner, Sharp, Smith, Snowden, Steward, and Terrell.

Presiding Elders who had oversight of the church district of which Ebenezer is a part included (alphabetical order) the Reverends Barnes, Edgehill, Freeman, Harris, Hayman, Hill, Tomlin, and Wilson. From the early 1980's until 2001, the Presiding Elders included Rev. Sherman L. Greene, Jr., Rev. Alexander J. Mattison, and Rev. George A. Manning. Rev. Dr. Louis-Charles Harvey (April 2001 to April 2014). Rev. Dr. Ronald E. Braxton is the current Presiding Elder of the Potomac District and has served since April 2014.



**In the late 1950s,** Rev. Seawood Blackstone served as the Pastor. Rev. Blackstone was an extraordinary man of faith and a great preacher who relished the Word of God. He was family-oriented and believed in being a part of the community in which he served. After serving the Brunswick circuit, Rev. Blackstone was assigned as Pastor of St. Luke AME Church. After 50 some years of ministry, he retired from pastoral ministry at Ebenezer AME Church in Galesville, Maryland. Pastor Blackstone gained his eternal reward in heaven on November 7, 2019.

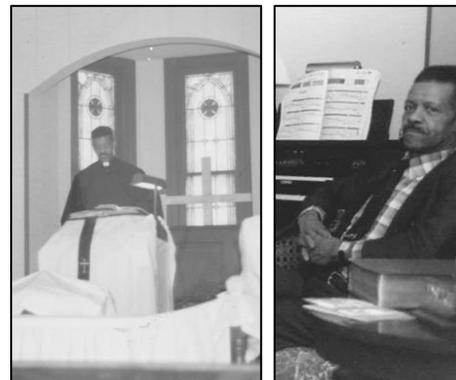
**Up to 1964,** Rev. Charles Whims was Pastor. Rev. Whims served the Lord and the church with gladness. During his tenure, running (cold) water was installed. A communion table and accessories were donated by member, Edna Holland, who was pianist and directress of the Ebenezer Church choir and a community youth choir.

Throughout the many years of Ebenezer's existence, the church doors closed three times. One closing was due to a fire in 1962 caused by poor wiring. After renovations, the church was reopened.

Rev. Whims served Ebenezer and later Ceres Bethel in Burkittsville, Maryland. Rev. Whims has gained his eternal reward in heaven.

**From 1964 to 1982, Rev. Louis Bowie was Pastor.**

When Rev. Bowie arrived in 1964, there was no indoor bathroom or furnace. After purchasing and installing a furnace, Rev. Bowie personally partitioned off the basement and created a dining and kitchen area. He then installed in-door bathrooms, and to Ebenezer's delight, afternoon fellowship services began with other congregations.



During Ebenezer's earlier days, the community of Brunswick assisted the Ebenezer membership in church enhancement projects. In 1979 Rev. Blucker, a local minister, and Town Councilman Jim Main organized a project to restore the building. The community worked together painting the church building, putting in a sidewalk, and erecting new steps. The bell that historically stands in the front of Ebenezer was donated by the B&O Railroad.

After nearly two decades of service, Rev. Bowie, along with his wife Sister Edna Bowie, was reassigned to Cowdensville A.M.E. Church in Arbutus, Maryland. Rev. Bowie has gained an eternal reward in heaven for his faithful, dedicated service.



**From April 1982 to November 22, 1986,** Rev. Clifton E. Sparrow and Sister Lyndra Sparrow served as the leadership of Ebenezer. When the Sparrows arrived in 1982, the church membership enrollment was four. During Rev. Sparrow's stay, enrollment reached 32.

His main objective was to teach the membership about agape love, which he did by example. As babes in Christ, this teaching became the foundational component of our growth in the Lord and proved to be fundamental in every aspect of our Christian walk.

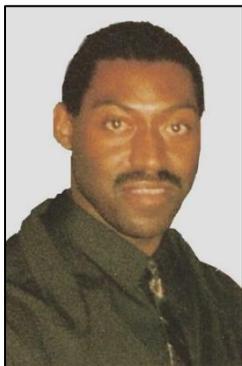
During this time of restoration, church organization was established by putting official boards in place. Bible study was begun, and Sunday School enrollment reached high numbers under the direction of Anne Whisonant, Superintendent, and Lillie Morris, Assistant. During this time, high school seniors were honored yearly during a special graduation dinner and program. A guest speaker was invited to address the graduates. Fun trips and cultural trips were sponsored by the Sunday School, and the Clifton E. Sparrow scholarship fund was established. Because of the guidance and unselfish assistance of the late Timothy Hay, a strong church school program was put in place at Ebenezer.

We were blessed to form a Senior Choir in November of 1982 and a Junior Choir performed in December of the same year.

The first Missionary society was established in 1983 under the direction of Sister Sparrow and named after Hester E. Hardy (now deceased), who had been a long-time member of Ebenezer since 1922. As a functioning board of the church, the “Hester E. Hardy” Women’s Missionary Society purchased much needed bibles and hymnals for the church. The Missionary Society exhibited a true example of working together for the good of the Lord.

As the membership grew, members began to use their gifts, talents, and skills for the benefit of the church. Church bulletins were prepared and used in the worship service.

During 1985 a building fund was started, and the church membership began dialogue regarding enlarging the church structure. In November 1986, Rev. Sparrow was reassigned to Mt. Pleasant A.M.E. Church in Owings Mill, Maryland. Effective April 2017, he serves as Pastor of Ebenezer-Baltimore.



**From November 1986 to April 11, 1991,** Rev. Steven K. Blackstone was the Pastor of Ebenezer. Sister Debora Blackstone was our First Lady. It was Rev. Blackstone’s desire that Ebenezer walk in unity and in faith. Therefore, teaching the Word of God and biblical principles was a main objective of Rev. Blackstone’s. Under his administration, in-home services for the sick and shut-in were started. A “Pause for Power” mid-week service was held and the exhorters and licensed



preachers had the opportunity and shared responsibility of bringing forth the preached word. In addition, Sister Blackstone instituted weekday intercessory prayer.

Sunday School was in full operation under the direction of Anne Whisonant, Superintendent, and an outreach Sunday School was set up at the Sagner Complex in

Frederick, Maryland. Classes were held every Saturday, and Lillie Morris assisted with this great endeavor.

Fifth Sundays became Senior Citizen Day, a day of special recognition of the Ebenezer and community seniors. Rev. Blackstone was effective in garnering the help of Robert Nawah-Smith of Nawah-Smith Ministries to assist the choir. Later, Eddie Lewis of Thomas Tabernacle Holiness Church (Frederick, Maryland) shared his musical gifts with Ebenezer serving as director, pianist, and songwriter. For the first time in decades, Ebenezer had a minister of music.



Also, during Rev. Blackstone's tenure, plans to renovate the 1920 structure were finalized. Under his guidance, the present-day edifice was constructed in 1987. This construction project enlarged the building by three times the original size.

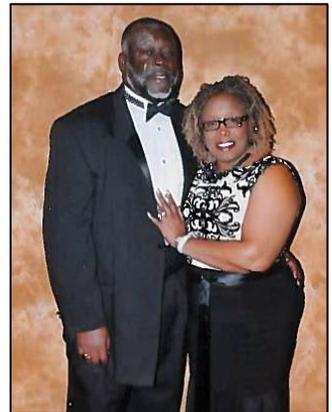


On September 20, 1987, Bishop John Hurst Adams, Presiding Prelate of the Second Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Church, dedicated the renovated sanctuary for God's service. The facility was completed and dedicated in the same year as A.M.E. Church bicentennial celebration.

In April of 1991, Rev. Blackstone was reassigned as Pastor of Ebenezer-Charlotte Hall, Mechanicsville, Maryland.

**From April 12, 1991 to November 23, 1996**, Ebenezer was under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Michael A. Bethea and Sister Ann Bethea.

Praise and worship became an intricate part of the worship experience. The stewards and exhorters took an active role in the church ministry, and Rev. Bethea specifically taught Ebenezer the value of confronting and dealing with issues from a biblical standpoint.



Goals and objectives were established, and the importance of church administration and organization was clearly demonstrated and taught by Rev. Bethea. With the influx of technology, a computer and printer were installed in the church office.

A pantry was constructed, and Ebenezer began more outreach through the food and clothing ministry under the guise of the Missionary Society. The Love Ministry, which reaches out to the community via get-well and sympathy cards, floral arrangements, and/or fruit baskets, was started as an extension of the Missionary Society. The Jail/Prison ministry was geared toward in-mate males. An intercessory prayer group met weekly, a nursing home ministry was launched, and successful women's retreats were held yearly. For the first time, Ebenezer had a youth activities coordinator.

During a critical time, Rev. Bethea successfully re-negotiated the church mortgage from a balloon payment to a fixed rate, leaving Ebenezer in better stead.

Academia also merited high value. As a result, an on-site continuing education program was begun, and Ebenezer served as a satellite to Maple Springs Baptist Bible College and Seminary (MSBBC&S) of Capitol Heights, Maryland. Rev. Bethea and other faculty from MSBBC&S traveled to Ebenezer weekly to teach. The curriculum included general studies and seminary courses. The majority of the Ebenezer adult members were enrolled in the continuing education program of MSBBC&S in preparation for formal and informal ministry. This educational opportunity was extended to whoever desired to enroll. Students were from the tri-state area of Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. Appropriately, a church library was created.

In November of 1996, Rev. Bethea was appointed as Pastor of Hemingway Temple A.M.E. Church in Washington, D.C. In April 2016, he retired from the Pastorate.



**From November 24, 1996 to April 21, 2006,** Rev. Hedy L. Drummond served as the Pastor. She was the first female to serve in this capacity at Ebenezer. Rev. Drummond strongly believes in the importance and the power of prayer. Her passion for prayer was obvious. As such, Ebenezer was encouraged to draw nearer to God with fasting and prayer.

During this period, youth sermons were incorporated into the 11:00 a.m. worship service. In addition, Kaye Coates and Jacqueline Dorsey were ordained as local deacons. As well, Geraldine Jackson, Charles Jackson (deceased), Mary Bowie, and Jamil Thomas accepted the call to preach.

An exciting and informative trip was made to Bethel in Philadelphia to retrace our history. In addition, a tape ministry was launched, and worship services were recorded to enhance our outreach endeavors. The "Kaye C. Coates" Scholarship Fund and a Lay Organization was established, and the YPD was reactivated. Fifth Sundays were dedicated to youth leadership and participation in the worship service. A much-needed food and clothing

pantry was dedicated, and the Missionary Society began to collaborate with other organizations such as the “Dottie Wilson Ministries” to meet community needs. The “Stone of Help,” a church newsletter, was published and shared with sister churches specifically and the public generally. This was a joint undertaking of the Lay Organization and the Missionary Society.

Goals and objectives were set, updated computers and computer systems were installed, and record-keeping practices were put in place. As well, a tutorial and mentoring program was initiated.

In 2002, Ebenezer was blessed to purchase the Fauntleroy property adjacent to the church facility. The existing building on the property has since been renovated to include an efficiency, a nursery, a conference room, and computer center.

To better utilize our God-given talents and abilities in an effective manner, Ebenezer went through a strategic planning process in 2004, which proved to be beneficial for the effective operation of the church.

In April of 2006, Rev. Drummond was reassigned as Pastor of St. John A.M.E. Church in Benedict, Maryland. Since April 2015, Rev. Drummond serves as Pastor of Ebenezer-Galesville.



**From April 22, 2006 to April 21, 2017**, the Rev. Donald L. Marbury served as Pastor of Ebenezer. He, along with his wife Sister Sheila Marbury, lead with vision and purpose. From the beginning, the undertakings of his leadership were evident, and it was obvious that God was doing new things at Ebenezer.

Rev. Marbury’s ministerial passion crosscut the many segments of the ministry. During a short span of time, his personal outreach to the community was phenomenal, and his wise counsel positively affected individual lives in the community and surrounding areas.

Of particular focus was evangelism and youth ministry. Likewise, men’s ministry proved to be of great importance to this leadership. Early on, Rev. Marbury started the Men’s Bible Study and Fellowship under the guise of the “Sons of Allen” organization named for Brother William C. Hardy, Sr., Church Father. Brother William Hardy made his transition to glory on March 25, 2014. Also of importance to Rev. Marbury was establishing a greater relationship with the A.M.E. connection.

Under his leadership, Ebenezer experienced many firsts. Ebenezer was well represented at the 2006 Youth and Leadership Congress held in Hampton, Virginia, from July 16-19, 2006. The theme for the Congress was “Ministering to Youth: Hip Hop and Old School.” Along with Rev. Marbury, Sister Marbury and Rev. Coates, the youth participants included Keanu Hannah, Derek Coates, and Maegin Williamson and Ashlee Cutliff.

A church nursery was put in place and fully functional. The women’s ministry dubbed “The Gathering” was started and led by Rev. Kaye Coates. Additionally, Ebenezer’s Dancing Angels, a youth liturgical dance team, was started. To enhance the worship experience, a sound/media booth was built and outfitted with appropriate sound boards and recording equipment.

Although two years behind schedule, another major milestone was the 100-year church anniversary celebration held in November of 2006. We were blessed to have Bishop Adam Jefferson Richardson as our guest preacher for the afternoon worship service. It was a grand occasion well attended by family and friends from near and far. Because of this major milestone, we are grateful to the many people who, over the past 100 plus years, have supported Ebenezer or played a part in keeping her doors open.



Additionally, on September 13, 2009, a service of dedication was held for the building adjacent to the Ebenezer facility that had been purchased in 2002. The facility was named the “George C. Hardy, Sr., Center of Hope” in honor of a faithful, lifetime member of Ebenezer whose earthly journey ended on March 28, 1993. Although Brother

Hardy did not see the completion of his dream for Ebenezer, his works helped to lay a solid foundation upon which we now build. Thus, the George C. Hardy, Sr. “Center of Hope” was named for a man who had so much hope for a future Ebenezer.



In keeping with modern day communications, in 2010, Ebenezer developed and posted an informative website representative of the Ebenezer ministry and fellowship, which can be found at [www.EbenezerAMEBrunswick.org](http://www.EbenezerAMEBrunswick.org). Additionally, the Ebenezer Facebook page was created and can be found at [www.Facebook.com/EbenezerBrunswick](http://www.Facebook.com/EbenezerBrunswick). As well, modern conveniences and software are utilized for bookkeeping and to maintain church records.

Spiritual, training, and educational goals were established, roles identified, expectations set, and the strategic plan implemented. Weekly worship services included a youth moment and youth leading the memory verse. Fifth Sundays were designated for youth to lead the

worship service in its entirety. Informative bulletins are created weekly and include articles addressing issues of the day.

In April of 2017, Rev. Marbury was reassigned as Pastor of Ebenezer A.M.E. Church in Hagerstown, Maryland.

**Starting April 21, 2017**, Rev. Louis M. Kelly was assigned as Pastor of Ebenezer-Brunswick. He along with his wife, Sister Sheila Kelly are servants who are leading with heart and skill. Pastor Kelly has a heart for serving community and especially for fostering the youth. He leads by example and is calling and preparing Ebenezer to be what God has ordained the church to be. This is obvious in his preaching and teaching. By the Holy Spirit, he is moving Ebenezer forward in innovative ways to better serve our community and human-kind.



As we identified some of the complexities of our community, we determined that our first focus would be on the opioid crisis, an epidemic that is plaguing our communities. Thus, in August 2019, we hosted an opioid crisis forum entitled “There is Hope.” Having seen the brokenness that this issue can bring, Ebenezer believes “there is hope” even in seemingly hopeless situations. Representatives from various fields (county and local government, medical, law enforcement, mental and behavioral health) participated and resource providers were present. This forum differed in that Ebenezer offered the spiritual component that is often missing from other forums.

Pastor Kelly believes that Ebenezer should have more than a ceremonial role in our community. Although, it is too early to chronicle the undertakings of the current leadership, it is evident that God is doing a new thing at Ebenezer! For example, as a visionary, he saw a need to focus on individuals who, for one reason or another, were not able to complete the educational requirements necessary to get their High School Diploma. Accordingly, under his leadership, Ebenezer is partnering with Frederick Community College (FCC) to offer free GED classes to Frederick County residents (especially in the Brunswick community) so they may earn their High School Diploma. This venture is proving to be a successful and much needed undertaking for our community.

In general, the Ebenezer ministry currently consists of 16 boards, organizations, and ministries. These include the Stewards, the “Hester E. Hardy” Missionary Society, the “Love Ministry,” the YPD (Young People’s Division), the Trustees, the Church School, the Lay Organization, the Evangelism Initiative, the Sons of Allen Men’s Ministry, the Women’s Ministry (The Gathering), the Usher Board, the Senior Choir, “Divine Favor” Male Chorus,

Ebenezer's Dancing Angels Liturgical dance team, the Tape Ministry, and the Finance Committee. These organizations work in conjunction with each other to meet the internal and external needs of the people.

Ebenezer means "stone of help." Rightfully, our calling is a ministry of helps addressing the spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional needs of all people equally by spreading the liberating gospel through word and deed without prejudice. Therefore, these organizations work in conjunction with each other to meet the internal and external needs of the populace.

Over the years, God has purposely used the Ebenezer leadership and others such as Rev. George A. Manning (Presiding Elder Emeritus) and Dr. Virginia Manning, Apostle Michael Grant and Pastor Freddie Grant (God's Prophetic Outreach Ministry of Jacksonville, Florida), Rev. Dottie Wilson (deceased, Maranatha Church of God of Frederick, Maryland) Evangelist Ida G. Brown and Bishop Roger E. Rollins (deceased, Thomas Tabernacle Holiness Church of Frederick, Maryland) to bless and train the Ebenezer ministry. As a result, today Ebenezer stands as a Lighthouse and Way Station in the Brunswick Community poised to support and promote the church mission.

Therefore, as a Lighthouse, Ebenezer promotes victorious living by tending to the spiritual well-being of believers and non-believers alike and providing the necessary training to enhance and support a Christian walk. As such, Ebenezer tends to the spiritual state of those that are lost by showing them the way to Jesus Christ through teaching and sharing the enlightening truth of the gospel. Accordingly, Ebenezer provides discipleship training to enhance the lives and walk of Christians by teaching the principles of Christianity and how they apply to daily living.

As a Way Station, Ebenezer promotes emotional restoration and healing, and reestablishment in the body of Christ by providing a safe-haven where people can seek support and basic tangible needs. Thus, Ebenezer provides assistance, refuge, spiritual counseling, and encouragement to those in need of refreshment on their journey to where Christ ordains them to be. Likewise, the Ebenezer ministry extends to those in prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, and like institutions. In conjunction, Ebenezer assists with food, clothing, shelter, and other basic needs, as required.

The Ebenezer mission is achieved using many vehicles and methods. To the extent possible, Ebenezer provides for the spiritual portion of its mission through worship, exhortation, personal witness, evangelism, teaching, instruction, social ministries, and community outreach. Ebenezer employs the gifts and talents of the local congregation, other parts of the Body of Christ, and other organizations deemed appropriate with which to network.

The scripture declares, “without vision, the people perish.” With strategic planning, we have charted the course for the progression of the Ebenezer church ministry. Clearly, we have penetrated the fog, and a path forward has been envisioned. For that reason, we are encouraged to stay the course by embracing this present-day ministry. As we launch into the future, a new season in God, we go “lock-stepped” with thanksgiving to a faithful God for every pastor, minister, and layperson He has sent to hone the “Stone of Help” for His purpose.

*A glance back to acknowledge the past so that we may embrace the present  
with hope in preparation for the leap toward the future.*

Respectfully Submitted  
Rev. Kaye C. Coates