

The History of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church

Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church was organized by 160 individuals who in November of 1962 separated from Shiloh Baptist Church to start their own congregation under the pastoral leadership of Reverend A. Henson Jarmon. The members began Sunday worship service at the House of Wills Funeral Home and later Phyllis Wheatley Association.

On December 12, 1962, a meeting was held to formally recognize the organization as a church. It was at this meeting, which was moderated by Ministers representing the Baptist Ministers Conference of Cleveland that the church established its name Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church of Christ, Inc. Later the trade name and legal description of the church was adopted as Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church.

Eighteen months later, after several months of accepting financial pledges and fund raising, the congregation was able to secure a loan and purchase the building at 1754 East 55th Street. The purchase price was \$140,000 and included furniture and equipment. On April 19, 1964 the congregation marched from their church at Phyllis Wheatley Association on Cedar Avenue to their new church home at 1754 East 55th. The church membership had grown to over 500.

Under the leadership of Reverend Jarmon, the first pastor of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church, the church organized the Fellowship Credit Union and purchased a building at the southwest corner of East 55th and Lexington, where they started a daycare for the community.

Pastor Jarmon was active in community affairs including the Cleveland Chapter of Operation Bread Basket, an affiliate of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., visited Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church due to the church's involvement in the SCLC.

Reverend A. Henson Jarmon died on April 2, 1970. He served seven years as Pastor of FMBC.

On September 5, 1971 Reverend Gabriel S. Lee, Jr. became the second Pastor of Fellowship. Pastor Lee, a strong believer in financial stewardship encouraged the congregation to make financial pledges in order to pay off the mortgage on the church. Under his leadership the church was renovated and an air conditioning unit was installed. The congregation contributed financially to foreign missions, helped students with college and seminary expenses. Pastor Lee studied abroad and served on several community organization boards. In 1986 the church accepted Reverend Lee's recommendation and became affiliated with American Baptist Churches, USA. The church also maintained its long standing affiliation with the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.

The property on the southwest corner of Lexington and East 55th suffered fire damage and the day care was closed.

After 19 years as Pastor, Reverend Lee retired his position on June 30, 1990. Under his administration many of the original members died or relocated and the membership declined to approximately 200.

On August 26, 1990 Reverend Andrew W. Edwards was elected to serve as the third Pastor of FMBC. Under Pastor Edward's leadership the church adopted the motto "A Church in the Center of the City with Jesus in the Center of Our Heart" and several service ministries were initiated including Feeding of the Homeless. The Church purchased a renovated brick building near the southeast corner of East 55th and Lexington, which became the home of the Fellowship Human Development Center. The Center administered social programs and received public funding to conduct outreach ministries. In April of 1996 the Center was officially incorporated as a not for profit organization and in 1997 was granted federal tax exempt status as a 501C-3. The members of the FHDC must be members of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church. The financial affairs and corporate board are separate from the church. The Center is currently the home of the Fellowship Day Care Center.

On August 31, 2014 Reverend Andrew Edwards retired as Pastor of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church. He served 24 years.

On May 31, 2015, Reverend David Hughes II was installed as the fourth Pastor of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church. Pastor Hughes has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physical Education from Delaware State University (DSU), Masters of Arts Degree in Practical Theology from Regent University in Virginia Beach, and he is currently pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree from Regent University. Pastor Hughes served as the president of Fellowship of Christian Athletes at DSU, a campus pastor at Norfolk State University in Norfolk, VA, an associate minister at Beulah Missionary Baptist Church in the Collinwood neighborhood of Cleveland, OH, and the lead pastor of One in Christ Church in East Cleveland, OH.

It is Pastor Hughes's prayer that people can come to Fellowship and get F.U.L. (forgiveness, unity, and love)! It is his vision that Fellowship pays off all debt, completely renovates the church building, grows to multiple services, and does life changing ministry in Cleveland, Northeast Ohio and throughout the world.

Pastor Hughes and Fellowship's Joint Board worked to update the 1995 Bylaws of the church. Through God's blessings and generous donations, the church has been able to replace the roofs of both the church and day care facility; tuck point the church building, repair and remodel the Church sanctuary, completely renovate its daycare facility, purchase a refrigerator, install new flooring in the lower-level restrooms and install a new heating system in the sanctuary. Furthermore, through generous donations, the church was able to purchase a 165-inch retractable projector screen, a high-quality projector, live streaming equipment, computers, and more.

On July 30, 2020, Fellowship began leasing our daycare facility to the Youth Euphoria Academy (YEA), and YEA continues to operate the daycare to this day.

In March 2020, when Governor DeWine issued stay at home orders, Pastor Hughes was resolved not to allow the COVID crisis to prevent the members and friends of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church from praising and worshipping God together. Fellowship leaders worked tirelessly to change a traditional church into a virtual church. Consequently, Fellowship did not miss one week of having worship services throughout the entire Pandemic.

In addition to Sunday school and midweek Bible study, Pastor Hughes and the great leaders of Fellowship established prayer conference calls, virtual small groups, a relationship livestream called "Love Talk", a weekly recovery ministry, discipleship classes, and a host of outstanding ministry programs throughout the year.

Finally, Pastor Hughes believes the most important thing our church can do (our purpose) is to make fully committed followers of Christ (disciples) by helping people connect to the Lord and to our church, by helping them grow in their spiritual maturity, and by helping them lead like Christ in the church and in society.