

Church Profile

First Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church, an inner-city church located in Washington, D. C., was organized December 13, 1936 with ten members:

Deacons William Foster

William A. D. Cook

John Ball

Mrs. Bessie Galloway

Mrs. Lillie Tucker

Mrs. Eva Cook

Mrs. Eva Foster Brooks

Mrs. Daisy Ball

Mrs. Julia Jeffers

Rev. E. Lucas

Of these 10 founders, Deacons William Foster, William A. D. Cook, and John Ball were the first officers. First Rising Mount Zion is a Missionary Baptist Church, a member of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., and the National Baptist Congress of Christian Education.

The first pastor, Rev. George E. Galloway, the husband of Mrs. Bessie Galloway, one of the ten founders, was called in 1937. Under Rev. Galloway's pastorate the church grew rapidly and several clubs, auxiliaries and choirs were organized, namely:

Pastor's Aide Club

Banking Committee

Usher Board

Missionary Society

Deaconess Board

Gospel Chorus

Flower Club

Junior Choir

Nurses Unit

In 1939, the church moved from its original location in the Moses Hall at 9th and Barry Place, NW to 11th and Q Streets, NW. The church was incorporated in the District of Columbia on December 5, 1944. Also, in 1944, the church purchased property at 1215 8th Street, NW, and remodeled it into a

church building. In 1948, the church expanded by acquiring the property at 1213 8th Street, NW. Rev. Galloway served faithfully for fourteen years until he was called to rest on January 1, 1951. Mrs. Galloway was funeralized in March 1989.

Rev. Ernest R. Gibson, Sr. was called as the second pastor of First Rising on January 14, 1952 and began his tenure of service on February 3, 1952. He came to First Rising with his wife, Mrs. Etta C. Gibson, and three children, Ernest, Jr., Delores and Mark. During Rev. Gibson's tenure, payments on the property at 1215 8th Street, NW were completed in 1952. In December 1954, the red brick church on the corner of 6th and N Streets, NW was purchased; the second trust of the church was paid off on October 22, 1966, and the mortgage burning ceremony was held on Sunday, May 21, 1967.

In April 1969, the church accepted a resolution for developing the First Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church Housing Corporation, Incorporated. The purpose of this organization was to provide housing for families of low and moderate income. A letter of feasibility on the project, Gibson Plaza with a total of 217 units, was received, and the ground breaking for the ten story apartment building occurred on November 22, 1971. The building, located at 1301 7th Street, NW, was completed and dedicated in 1973.

In 1970, the church accepted a resolution for a two-phase building program. The Founder's Education Building, the first phase of the program, was completed in 1980. The last worship service was held in the red brick church on July 5, 1987, and the new church building, the second phase of the building program, was completed in February 1989.

Under Rev. Gibson's pastorate the church continued to grow both spiritually and numerically. To satisfy the needs of the wide range of members, additional choirs, usher boards and clubs were organized. In addition, in its commitment to serve as a refuge and center for relief to the community in times of crises, the church has become a center for distribution of food to relieve hunger, provides clothing to those in need, and has housed four drug treatment programs: Comprehensive Rehabilitation, Narcotics Anonymous, the Shaw Abstinence Program, and the NARANON Family Groups. The church also participated in the Council of Churches Program of Prayer and Action Against Drugs and Violence. The church started a College Scholarship Program to assist students of the church wishing to obtain higher education. The program, which was initially funded through the Glass Recycling Program, has since been renamed the "Ernest R. and Etta C. Gibson Scholarship Fund." It continues to provide financial assistance to our youth who are trying to meet their educational goals. The church has also housed the Summer Youth Employment Program and the Child Development Center. Rev. Gibson provided faithful and dedicated service until he was called to rest on November 1, 1998. Mrs. Gibson was called to rest on December 29, 1999.

In November 1998, immediately upon the passing of Rev. Gibson, in accordance with the church's Constitution and Bylaws, the Deacon Board, under the leadership of Deacon Nathaniel Banks, Chairman, and Deacon Harold Gilliard, Co-Chairman, assumed the administration of all church affairs including both spiritual and temporal oversight of church activities and worked in harmony with the sons and daughter of the church to supply the pulpit for preaching.

In 2001, the church held two pastoral elections. Both candidates were unsuccessful.

On May 5, 2002, Rev. Dr. Clark A. Houston was elected as Interim Pastor. Rev. Houston filled a gap in the worship service and provided a sense of continuity until the election of a new pastor in March 2003. Rev. Houston was called to rest in October 2008.

On March 29, 2003, the church elected Rev. Raymond C. Bell as the new Pastor-elect. Rev. Bell was officially installed on August 17, 2003, and the church welcomed Rev. Bell and his family, Mrs. C. LaVerne Bell and son Kenneth. Under Rev. Bell's leadership, the church's organizational structure was changed to help members distinguish between church work and the work of the church. As a result, all clubs and auxiliary organizations were known as ministries and grouped under the umbrella of individual councils. In addition, Midday Prayer Meeting and Bible Institute were added to the schedule of weekly activities.

On March 1, 2004, the church paid off the mortgage on the sanctuary. By 2005, the church expanded its evangelism and outreach efforts by participating in the DC Festival, a citywide evangelism event, becoming a member of the Downtown Cluster of Congregations, and implementing the Cancer Support Ministry, the Life Recovery Ministry, and the annual Community Fair.

On December 16, 2006, Rev. Lucy G. Horne became the first ordained daughter of the church and is currently director of the Outreach Ministry. Also, during that year, a new Chairman and a new Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustee Ministry were approved, and two Deacons were ordained. In April 2008, First Friday, an experiment in youth and young adult outreach and evangelism, became a permanent part of the church's worship experience.

In year 2009, the church accepted the recommendation to hold one worship service each Sunday during the month of August. Also, during that year, three ministers and two deacons were ordained.

On May 15, 2011, our last living founder, Mrs. Eva M. Cook, along with the church, celebrated her 75th Anniversary. Mrs. Cook served as Deaconess, Sunday School Superintendent, and leader of the Eva Cook Missionary Circle. She also participated in and supported many of the in-reach and outreach programs until her health failed. In recognition of her dedicated service to the church, on May 5, 2010, the fellowship hall was dedicated as the Eva Mae Cook Fellowship Hall. On May 21, 2011, Mrs. Cook went home to the Lord.

On January 7, 2012, at a special business meeting, the church, led by the Board of Deacons Ministry, in accordance with the church's Constitution and Bylaws, declared the pulpit vacant. On January 8, 2012, the Board of Deacon's Ministry again assumed full oversight of the spiritual and temporal welfare of the church body and worked in harmony with the sons and daughters of the church to supply the pulpit for preaching.

As of July 2012, the Rev. Reginald M. Green, Sr. is serving as Interim Pastor. Under Rev. Green's leadership there has been a spirit of reconciliation and healing.