

# HISTORY OF



## MT. ZION BAPTIST CHURCH

2019 FISHER STREET  
MADISON, WI 53713  
REV. DR. MARCUS ALLEN SR.  
PASTOR



## **Mt. Zion Baptist Church History**

What was life like in 1911? In the United States 1911 marked the year that Woodrow Wilson began his political career as governor of the state of New Jersey. In New York City the Triangle Shirt Factory went up in flames killing 146 workers, mostly women, in less than 18 minutes. In the state of California women were given the right to vote and on April 17, 1911 there was an all-time record day at Ellis Island where 11,745 immigrants were processed for admission into the United States. The following month the Mt. Zion Baptist Church of Madison, Wisconsin would have its beginnings.

Rev. Vernon Phillips of the First Baptist Church of Madison with the help of Rev. Elijah J. Fisher (Pastor of the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, Chicago, IL), Rev. D. W. Hulbert (Secretary of the State Baptist Association), Rev. O.J. Fox (Milwaukee, WI), and Rev. George E. Duncan (Chicago, IL) organized the Mt. Zion Baptist Church as a mission. The church began as a Baptist Church above a harness shop at 118 East Washington Avenue. During a meeting in June, 1911 Rev. J. Pierce of New Orleans, Louisiana was called as the church's first pastor. On May 27, 1914 the Mt. Zion Baptist Church incorporated under the auspices of the Wisconsin Secretary of State. Public records indicate that the rent for the initial site was \$10 per month and services for a minister from Chicago cost \$10 per Sunday plus room and board. The public records also indicate that meetings were held on a weekly basis in the lecture room of the First Baptist Church of Madison, located in downtown Madison.

The first deacons of Mt. Zion Baptist Church were Robert White, Thomas Thornton, T. Hines, J. E. Adkins, John Davis, Henry Davies, L. E. Green, William Taylor, Emmett Williams, James Talioferro, James Jordan, Joseph Gentry, J. E. Guy, and Samuel Moore.

From 1921 to 1924 Rev. Zachary Smith served as pastor of Mt. Zion. Under his direction and guidance from the National Baptist Convention, Mt. Zion was recognized as a Baptist Church and plans were formulated to purchase property at 548 West Johnson Street as a church site. Rev. Eugene Cunningham served as pastor from 1925 to 1927. Rev. Joseph Washington, Sr. served as the senior pastor of Mt. Zion from 1927 to 1955 and continued to serve as an assistant minister until his death in 1985. Rev. Washington was well known in the Madison community as a humanitarian and for his commitment to civil rights. He had the distinct honor of being the first

recipient of Madison's newly established Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award in 1974.

In 1955 Rev. Joe E. Dawson (Rockford, IL) was called to pastor Mt. Zion. During his tenure, the parsonage, located on Williamson Street, was sold and the proceeds from its sale were used to pay off the mortgage on the church building at 548 West Johnson Street. The mortgage burning ceremony took place on December 19, 1955. The University of Wisconsin-Madison informed Rev. Dawson and the congregation that the properties along the north side of the 300, 400, and 500 blocks of West Johnson would be demolished to make room for the construction of new dormitories for students and parking lots for the university community and general public. At the same time the city's Madison Redevelopment Authority (MRA) began discussions with Rev. Dawson regarding the possibility of the church purchasing a number of parcels of property between Baird and Fisher Streets, specifically in the 2000 blocks on both streets. Rev. Dawson chose these parcels because he learned that MRA planned to locate and construct approximately 30 low-income units in the same vicinity.

Rev. Dawson, a true visionary, proposed a plan to the congregation after a Sunday morning worship service. His plan included the following: (a) purchase the land on Fisher and Baird Streets, (b) purchase nails and other usable building materials from several old buildings and homes in South Madison slated for demolition, (c) begin immediate construction of a new Mt. Zion Baptist Church and (d) request that each member make a special building fund contribution at the church's next business meeting. It is important to note that the proceeds received from the sale of the Williamson Street parsonage were not enough to purchase the Fisher and Baird Street parcels. Rev. Dawson asked each deacon to contribute \$1,000. That would be the equivalent of asking each deacon to contribute almost \$7,000 in 2011 dollars. After prayer and without discussion, the congregation approved Rev. Dawson's plan.

At the next deacons' meeting, 11 deacons—George Harris, Jim Porter, Walter Hargrove, Palmer Maiden, John Parrish, Mose Johnson, J. E. Guy, John Davis, Joseph Gentry, Jim Jordan, J. W. Adkins, and 1 member, Zachary Trotter, each brought \$1,000. Some of those contributions came in metal crayon boxes, shoe boxes, stuffed in socks, small grocery and other shopping bags. None of the contributions were in the form of checks or money orders. Each contributor brought cash.

In 1960 the church purchased 3 lots on Fisher Street. Rev. Dawson built the parsonage, a 3 bedroom structure at 2025 Fisher Street, himself. Also in 1960 the members broke ground for the new church at 2019 Fisher Street. Rev. Dawson began construction with the help of church volunteers. Church members pulled nails,

recovered boards and other materials from demolished buildings. Rev. Dawson, a skilled brick mason and builder, completed most of the construction with the help of church members. Mt. Zion dedicated both its church and parsonage on May 17, 1961. The first service, including baptism, took place on Easter Sunday morning, April 2, 1961. The mortgage burning for this property at 2019 Fisher Street took place on November 25, 1962. On July 15, 1979 Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr., father of the slain civil rights leader, preached at Mt. Zion Baptist Church to commemorate its 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In order to accommodate a growing congregation, the church constructed a major new addition to the existing building in May, 1981.

Mt. Zion began serving the needs of the wider community by establishing a food pantry in September, 1982. Additionally many associate ministers served under Rev. Dawson's leadership. They included O. D. Smith, Elmer Donaldson, James C. Wright, Frank Davis, Kwakye Akyeampong, Min. Abraham, Lorenzo Barnes, Larry Jackson, Elward Ellis, Alan Ferguson, Ron Greer, and Ronald Myers. In 1985 Rev Dawson retired after 30 years of dedicated, faithful service to Mt. Zion Baptist Church and the Madison Community. In 1989 God called Rev. Dawson home to rest in glory to a mansion not made by hands!

In 1985 Rev. Charles L. Garel, a local retired United Methodist minister, volunteered as an interim pastor while the church searched for a permanent pastor. Rev Garel volunteered his service at a crucial time in the church's history and Mt. Zion will be forever grateful to him for unselfishly sharing his theological expertise and love for the Mt. Zion family. The church needed Rev. Garel's managerial skills at a time when it lacked spiritual direction and unity. He was part of the coalition that successfully petitioned for the name change of Monona Avenue to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. Rev. Garel graciously rendered his services to Mt. Zion Baptist Church until 1986, when Rev. Tenolian R. Bell, Sr. of St. Louis, MO accepted the call to pastor Mt. Zion.

Rev. Tenolian Bell preached his inaugural sermon on Sunday, September 21, 1986. Under his leadership Mt. Zion established its Homeless Meal Ministry, Youth Ministry and Children's Choir. Also, Rev. Muriel Johnson became the first female minister licensed to preach the gospel at Mt. Zion Baptist Church. During Rev. Bell's tenure, Mt. Zion was blessed with visits from renowned Catholic Sister Thea Bowman and Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa. Rev. Bell's time as pastor of Mt. Zion also included partnerships with Dane County Mental Health Center to create Black Other Outreach Support Team (BOOST) and the African American Counseling service. Mt. Zion housed the counseling service in its basement until 1989 when it moved it to a church owned renovated property at 2017 Fisher Street. Mt. Zion renamed the project

UJIMA to represent the Kwanzaa principle of collective work and responsibility. Rev. Bell served as pastor of Mt. Zion from September, 1986 to July, 1990.

Following Rev. Bell's resignation in July, 1990, Rev. James C. Wright accepted the position of interim pastor on October 14, 1990. He became the church's permanent pastor in 1991 and served the church faithfully in that capacity until his death on February 23, 1995. As previously noted, Rev. Wright served Mt. Zion as an associate pastor under Rev. Dawson from 1960 to 1984. Rev. Wright's associates included, Minister Ron Greer, Minister Orlando McGruder, Rev. William "Rick" Badger, and Minister Larry Jackson. Under Rev. Wright's leadership, Mt. Zion went through a process of healing and restoration. Rev. Wright's tenure saw the organization of the Young Adult Choir, the Social Concerns Committee, and the initiation of the Brotherhood and American Baptist Men's and Women's Ministries. During a moving ceremony on October 25, 1992, Clara Franklin became the first woman to be ordained a deacon in the church's history. Rev. Wright presided over Mt. Zion's third mortgage burning ceremony on November 21, 1993. On December 4, 1994, Minister Muriel Johnson became the first woman minister from Mt. Zion to be ordained as a minister of the gospel. Rev. Wright also oversaw the development of the Mt. Zion Baptist Church Economic Development Corporation (later renamed Genesis Development Corporation). As a business incubator and profit making entity, the corporation legally separated from the church. Today, the church's major parking lot that was constructed on September 10, 1995 (on the Baird Street side of the building) is dedicated to the memory of Rev. James C. Wright.

On February 11, 1996 Rev. Gabriel S. Lee, retired minister from New Orleans, LA, accepted an assignment from the American Baptist Minister-at-large Program to serve as interim pastor of Mt. Zion. Around the same time the church established a memorial fund in honor of Deacon William Colfield to expand the church library. The church established scholarships in memory of Rev. Joe E. Dawson, Rev. Orlando McGruder and Rev. James C. Wright.

On November 23, 1996 the church voted unanimously to extend the call to Rev. Dr. Terry Thomas of Apex, NC to become its permanent pastor. Rev. Thomas began his tenure at Mt. Zion on March 1, 1997. Under his leadership the church established over 15 new ministries and activities including the Mt. Zion Summer School Program, Mt. Zion Goes to the Park Community Picnic, the Family Night Ministry, the Marriage Enrichment Ministry and the Parish Nurse Ministry. The church's Food Pantry resumed food distribution to meet the needs of the South Madison Community. A Capital Fund Campaign was launched in October, 1999. The Cooper Family Foundation gave a \$1 million gift for the building of a new church.

Mt. Zion ordained two ministers, Rev. Adam Bond and Rev. Larry Jackson and licensed 5 additional ministers, Price Davis, Melva Bishop, Marino Bruce, Jacqueline Colbert and Emmett Woodward, during Rev. Thomas' tenure. Following Rev. Thomas' resignation in July 2001, Rev. John P. Harris from Milwaukee, WI served as interim pastor from March, 2002 to October, 2003. In July 2003 a ground-breaking ceremony was held and construction of the new church began in the fall of 2003.

On April 4, 2004 the church extended the call to Rev. Richard L. Jones, Sr. from the St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church of Racine, WI. Rev Jones was installed as Mt. Zion's permanent pastor on July 11, 2004. Following a 3-day revival led by Bishop Lawrence L. Kirby of St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church of Racine, WI, the Mt. Zion Church Family marched from the old sanctuary to a new church building for a service of dedication and consecration on August 29, 2004. Deacon Percy Brown, chairperson of the Building Ministry, was recognized and honored for his steadfast faithfulness, true visionary spirit and spiritual leadership in the building of the new Mt. Zion Baptist Church. The family dedicated the entire building by anointing and praying over every room, doorpost and piece of equipment.

In November, 2004 Pastor Jones presented the church with God's Vision for Mt. Zion. Under his leadership, Pastor Jones resumed the Historical Black Colleges and Universities Tour and ensured that the church participated in the development of the "church tent" at Madison's Juneteenth Celebration. Mt. Zion also accepted membership and became active in the African American Council of Churches and served as the primary host to its annual Holy Convocation.

During Rev. Jones' tenure 32 ministers accepted the call to ministry: Bryon Harris, Lin Sanford-Keppert, Peggy Williams, Angela Jones, Brenda Brown, Stephanie Harris, Viola Miller, Anthony Wade, Lifutso Rantimo, Leroy Marshall, Phil Bostic, Charlene Benford, Brian Britt, Darrell Butcher, Jr., Emma Chaudhary, Rena Crispin, Arkea Echols, Tonya Ellis, Billy Fletcher, Jessie Hewing, Jr., Tabatha Jackson, Melvin Johnson, Courtney Kapinus, Taneka Miller, Bernadette Pendleton, Kristine Pruitt, Avrial Reid, Katherine Smith, Ray Seeley, Letrice Stanley and Munroe Whitlock. Fifteen ministers were licensed: Lin Sanford-Keppert, Peggy Williams, Angela Jones, Brenda Brown, Stephanie Harris, Viola Miller, Anthony Wade, Bryon Harris, Joseph McLean, Lifutso Rantimo, Letrice Stanley, Phil Bostic, Brian Britt, Jessie Hewing and Ray Seeley. Seven ministers were ordained: Elder Renita Evans, Rev. Lin Sanford-Keppert, Rev. Dr. Peggy Williams, Rev. Melva Bishop-Hewing, Rev. Jacqueline Colbert, Rev. Anthony Wade and Rev. Dr. Price Davis. An additional eight also served under Pastor Jones: Rev. Anthony Bondon, Minister Dorothy Corder, Rev.

Jeremiah Covington, Minister Jimmie Duncan, Rev. Jerome Jones, Minister Dr. Jonathan Overby, Minister Gloria Denise Williams and Minister Emmett Woodward.

Eleven deacons were ordained: Lionel Norton, Joseph Thomas, Billy Fletcher, Dwight McDonald, Ritchie Sturgeon, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Benjamin Bryant, Claude Gilmore, David McCullough, Ruben Anthony, Jr. and Tommy Jones, Jr. They joined the current Deacon Board of Percy Brown, Clara Franklin, Richard Harris, Julius Johnson, Farrell Joshua, Harry Ogden, Hertis Smith and Leotha Stanley. Other deacons who have been significant in the church's history include Deacon Bolling Smith who was responsible for collecting much of the church's early history, Deacon Isaac Perry whose melodious voice regularly led the congregation in devotional songs, Deacon Leon Bond who led the pastoral search committee that led to the call of Pastor Jones and Deacon Oliver Davis who remained devoted to an invalid wife and maintained his commitment to Mt. Zion. We would be remiss if we failed to mention other faithful deacons such as Deacon John Hobbins, Deacon Herbert Williams, Deacon Larry James, Deacon Ron Williams and all the other Mt. Zion Deacons who have graced the church with their presence and service.

Mt. Zion added a number of ministries including, the Levites of Zion Praise Team, Spiritual Intercessors of Translation (a spoken word ministry), Silent Praise (a Mime ministry), Coats for Mt. Zion's Kids Ministry, Boyz to Men (boys and young men's ministry), Sisters of Virtue (girls and young women's ministry), the Academic Learning Center, Health and Emergency Response Team Ministry and Singles Ministry. A "Building Up, Reaching Out" Fund appeal was initiated in June 2006 for the second phase building project. The church's membership rolls grew from a little over 400 members to over 2,000. To accommodate its growth Mt. Zion added an 8:00 am Sunday morning worship service. Mt. Zion was the first African American Church to host the Solomon Carter Fuller community lecture on Alzheimer's Disease in February 2011 with Dr. Goldie Byrd from North Carolina A&T as the speaker. Dr. Solomon Carter Fuller (1872-1953) was the first African American psychiatrist and a pioneer in Alzheimer's disease research. He played a key role in the development of psychiatry in the 1900s. Fuller worked closely with Dr. Alois Alzheimer, whose pioneering brain research resulted in the disease being named after him. Mt. Zion celebrated its 100-year anniversary on May 15, 2011. Rev. Jones resigned as Pastor in August, 2013. Following Rev. Jones resignation, the church established a 7 member Pulpit Search Committee to seek the selection of a permanent pastor for the church.

On March 28, 2014, the church acquired a key property at 2029 Fisher Street to accommodate the future development of a community life center. The property currently houses the Mt. Zion Food Pantry.



On January 12, 2015, the church voted unanimously to select the Reverend Dr. Leonard Thompson, Sr. as its Interim Pastor through an assignment with the American Baptist Transitional Ministries Program. Rev. Dr. Thompson had just completed sixteen successful months as the Interim Senior Pastor of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church of Minneapolis, MN. Rev. Dr. Thompson preached his first sermon as Interim Pastor on Sunday, February 15, 2015. He and his wife, Carolyn, were welcomed to Mt. Zion and the community at a reception following the service. Rev. Dr. Thompson worked with the leaders and members to strengthen the church in preparation for a new permanent pastor.

The weekend of April 22 – 24, 2016, Mt. Zion celebrated the 30-year Anniversary of the Children's Choir and the 20-year Anniversary of the Liturgical Dance Ministry with a fellowship reunion on Friday, an awesome concert on Saturday and ministry at both worship services on Sunday. During that weekend, Sister Carola Gaines, announced that she was stepping down as the director. Everyone was asked to recite the Ministries' Prayer of Protection: "The Light of God surrounds us; The Love of God enfolds us; The Power of God protects us; The Presence of God watches over us; Wherever we are, God is! Amen"

The church has increased its emphasis on Mortgage Reduction on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of each month to pay off the current mortgage. The church closed on the refinancing of the current mortgage with U. S. Bank on May 4, 2016. The goal for 2019 is to raise \$110,000 toward the mortgage retirement. Effective April 14, 2019, the church has raised more than \$50,000 toward the goal.

The Church voted to extend the call to Reverend Marcus Allen Sr. to become its permanent pastor at a special call meeting on August 14, 2016. Reverend Dr. Leonard Thompson Sr. preached his last sermon as Interim Pastor at Mt. Zion on Sunday, October 9, 2017. A farewell reception followed. On the following Sunday, October, 16, 2016, Reverend Allen preached his first sermon as Pastor Elect of Mt. Zion Baptist Church. He was installed as Mt. Zion's permanent pastor on March 5, 2017. He and his wife, Terra Cook Allen, and children Mekiyah, Marcus Jr. and Alexandria have all joined the church. First Lady Allen is serving as the Director of the Academic Learning Center. She and the children are actively involved in a number of other ministries, including Music Ministry, Marriage Enrichment Ministry, Levites of Zion Praise Team, Youth Ministry, Campus Ministry, the Children's Choir and Youth Usher Ministry.

During his Tenure, Pastor Allen has started the Mt. Zion Morning Motivation Prayer Conference Call on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 7:00 a.m. He has conducted a church survey to assess the needs of the church and has formed a

Transition Team to assist him in prioritizing goals and objectives and developing a vision for the church. Pastor Allen has changed the New Family Members Class to the second and third Sunday of the month from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and Baptism to the first Sunday of the month during the 10:45 a.m. morning worship. Pastor Allen will be conducting Leadership Training quarterly as well as meeting with the Ministerial Staff, on a monthly basis.

Since Rev. Allen's arrival as permanent pastor, he has met with all age groups of the church. He has also met and formed collaborations with many pastoral and community leaders. He has attended numerous community events, has spoken at the Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast sponsored by the Urban League of Greater Madison, and the evening Good Friday Service sponsored by the African American Council of Churches(AACC) and led the prayer at the Wisconsin National Day of Prayer at the Capitol and at High Point Church. Pastor Allen has preached powerful sermons, taught the Word at Bible Study, and provided steady leadership in advocating giving toward the reduction of the mortgage and leadership training. The Church has embarked on an "iWitness" evangelism campaign based on Matthew 28:19-20, "I am inspired to intentionally invite the unsaved to Christ", and has witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of members both joining the church and attending both the 8:00 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. services as well as the 12:00 noon and 6:30 p.m. Wednesday Bible Study. In 2018 125 new members joined the church of which 34 were baptized.

Pastor Allen is a graduate of the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University with a Masters of Divinity. He received his Doctor of Ministry Degree from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary on May 19, 2018.

A Mt. Zion Baptist Church Choir Robe became part of the African American items placed on display at the Wisconsin Historical Museum on August 24, 2017.

Pastor Allen presented the new Mt. Zion **Mission Statement** (To be a Bible believing, Christ-centered church, committed to lifting our community, and converting sinners to Christ.), **Vision Statement** (To be an "Acts 2" church. We Do Everything For the Master. The five pillars of our work: Worship, Discipleship, Evangelism, Fellowship And Ministry), and **Core Values** (Live our Faith, Love our Family, Lift our Community) at the Annual Business Meeting in January, 2018. The theme for 2018 was "Live Your Faith." The theme for 2019 is "Love our Family". The Theme for 2020 will be "Lift Our Community".

Rev. Dr. Peggy Williams was hired as the Executive Minister and officially began in January, 2018.

March 4, 2018, we started Unity Sunday on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month with only one service at 10:00 a.m. We began Sacrifice Sunday on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month on April 29, 2018 at 4:00 p.m. The Nursery Ministry began on June 17, 2018, (Father's Day). A Deacon's Zone Ministry has been established in 2019 where each deacon is responsible for members in specific zip codes (zones). Wellness Thursday is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month where information on health, wealth and wholeness (mind, body and soul) is presented. In the fall of 2018, we began a monthly worship service on the University of Wisconsin Madison campus at the Upper House. Following the worship service, a home-cooked meal is served, and the students and members of the congregation are able to fellowship together. A team is currently working on creating a 501 (c)3 for the church. There is also a team working with One City Schools to negotiate a contract for their use of the lower level in the new church for class space. In 2019 Pastor began honoring a "Ministry of the Month".

Our Gospel Choir became the first Gospel Choir to sing at the Wisconsin Historical Society. The Gospel Choir ministered at the Progressive National Baptist Convention Regional Meeting in Wisconsin Dells on April 23, 2019. The American Baptist Convention USA is an Affiliate Partner of the Progressive National Baptist Convention (Mt. Zion is a member of the American Baptist Churches).

The Pastor, First Lady Terra and the people of Mt. Zion celebrated their 1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary on Sunday, March 4, 2018. Rev. William Johnson III preached the morning worship service. Rev. George Jolly and the Mt. Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church celebrated at the 3:00 p.m. worship service.

Pastor Allen has continued to participate in community events, working with the police and community to deter youth/teens from stealing cars, coordinating with Dane County Human Services to help start a Mentorship Program and the Adopt-a-School (Wright Middle School) Program. He has a monthly meeting with the South Madison Neighborhood Police officer. He is on the board of Housing Ministries of American Baptists in Wisconsin, Selfless Ambition and Kingdom Growth Conference in Milwaukee.

In July, 2019, Pastor Allen was named president of the African American Council of Churches.

A Leadership Retreat was held at Blackhawk Church on October 18 and 19, 2019 with over 75 attendees. The theme of the retreat was F3-Faith, Focus, Forward.

Pastor and People's 3rd Anniversary was celebrated on March 1, 2020 with Rev. Edwin Coffie, pastor of Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, Palm Coast FL in the morning and Rev. George Jolly and Mt. Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church fellowshipping in the afternoon. Following a joyous celebration on that Sunday, Mt. Zion was forced to go to

Parking Lot Service for 8:00 a.m. and Virtual for 10:45 a.m. service on Sunday, March 15, 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The church was officially closed and all meetings and events switched to Virtual. Mt. Zion certainly fulfilled the theme for 2020 of “Lift Our Community” by helping provide food, money for shelter and many other services to individuals and families in 2020.

S<sup>2</sup>MARTLY in the Park summer learning program for 3rd and 4th graders, sponsored by Mt. Zion Baptist Church and led by a group of educators hoping to help students avoid a “summer slide” amid an unprecedented time in education was started in the summer of 2020 by Deacon Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings and Sister Andreal Davis with Minister-in-Training Richard Jones Jr. as Director.. The activities were focused on science, technology, engineering and math — or STEM — and taught three mornings a week over a three-hour, outdoor class at Penn Park. They also highlighted successful African Americans in STEM and other fields to create a culturally relevant curriculum for the mostly Black students in the program.

Mt. Zion was a site for free COVID-19 testing on Saturday, July 25, 2020 in the church parking lot.

School Without Walls began in September of 2020 as an offshoot of S<sup>2</sup>MARTLY in the Park to give parents an academic support program for those students who did not have access to WiFi at home and those who were struggling learning from home. The program ran 3 ½ hours per day for 5 days per week. The church’s prominent role in the city and the involvement of renowned University of Wisconsin-Madison-based education scholar Deacon Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings — also a longtime Mt. Zion congregant — helped School Without Walls attract a range of partners; the United Way, anonymous donors, and Dane County Human Services all contributed staff funding. Edgewood College, a local liberal arts school, supplied and paid for several undergraduates studying education to be classroom assistants.

Pastor Allen issued a challenge to the members toward paying off the mortgage so we would be able to move forward with Phase 2 of our building project. Many Mt. Zion members, local churches and members of the community stepped up in the middle of the COVID-19 Pandemic to help Mt. Zion pay off the mortgage. One anonymous donor gave \$150,000 which was the entire payment which allowed all other donations to go toward the new Phase 2 building fund. A Mortgage Burning Service Celebration was held on Sunday, September 13, 2020 at the Alliant Energy Parking lot.

Mt. Zion opened a drop-in Mental Health Clinic on Tuesday, October 6, 2020 after the official ribbon cutting ceremony on Monday, October 5, 2020. The drop in clinic is in partnership with Anesis Mental Health and is staffed from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. every Tuesday with therapists from the clinic.

The first ever, Halloween “Trunk or Treat” was hosted by the Christian Education Ministry in the Mt. Zion parking lot on Saturday, October 31, 2020. Over 200 children and their families were served in a COVID-safe outdoor environment.

The 2021 Vision was unveiled at the Annual Meeting and is 3-D Vision--Disciple, Develop, Devotion.

In 2020 Mt. Zion hired a new Communications Director--Sister Alexandra Cordell and a new Youth Ministry Director--Minister-in-Training Richard Jones.

Mt. Zion created its own “MTZLIFE” app where members can donate, watch worship service and Get Connected.

Mt Zion was the first African American Church to host a COVID vaccine clinic on April 8, 2021. Seventy five vaccines were administered.

Mt. Zion opened for a slow re-entry process into the building with safety precautions on Sunday, May 2, 2021. Parking lot worship resumed May 2nd at 8:00 AM! This was held in the parking lot of The Village on Park Street (2222 South Park Street). It was over a year for many of us to be able to worship in the building but we were able to and will continue to provide Virtual Worship Services via YouTube and Facebook and our Virtual Church headed by Minister Emmett Woodward and Deacon Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings.

Surely, those 17 founding members who sought to establish a place of worship 108 years ago are rejoicing in heaven knowing that their legacy of faith and hope has continued and is being passed on and that the Mt. Zion Baptist Church continues in a steadfast faith and belief that God is who He says He is, “a rewarder of they that diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

Updated, May 6, 2021

