

History of Ebenezer Ministries

The rich history of Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church first began on the second Sunday of May 1969 with the Rev. Clarence Knox at its helm. What began as a Mission with eight dedicated members who held their first meeting in the United Methodist Church on the corner of Lippincott and Center Roads would decades later expand to more than 1,000 members who worship in a church more than three times the size of the original building.

A few months after its inception, on Sunday, September 21, 1969, the Mission met at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church for the purpose of organizing a church, which was later established with 37 members. One of the charter members, Sister Betty Petty, suggested the church be named after the Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, in honor of the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Consequently, services for the church were held every Sunday at 1 p.m. at the United Methodist Church. Approximately 14 months later, the membership had increased to 65, who, along with the Rev. C. Knox, raised a total of \$11,000 to purchase six lots on Eckley and Kent Streets for the purpose of building their own house of worship. Unfortunately, they met with much opposition from the neighbors in the area and were unable to use the lots.

As a result, the Rev. C. Knox and the church went into prayer and asked God to lead them to a church site. And as is His usual practice, God answered and lead the congregation to 2140 South Center Road. The church however, did not have enough money to purchase the land so the Pastor and his wife Mary stood in the gap and loaned the church what was needed.

Unfortunately there were still roadblocks that had to be overcome. Shortly after the church began to hold services in the basement of the house that was purchased with the land at 2140 South Center Road, neighbors began to complain, which led to a legal battle with the officials of Burton Township. Shortly thereafter the church returned to the United Methodist Church for its services.

But all was not lost. Upon their return to United Methodist, the Lord saw fit to bless Ebenezer with more members and more money. The church's first two acting deacons were the late Brother John Abell and the late Brother Ira Crawley.

Through hard work, prayer and sacrifice, a tabernacle was soon erected to worship God at 2130 South Center Road in Burton. And on Sunday, December 10, 1972, the Reverend Clarence Knox, along with 110 members, marched into the tabernacle.

In 1973 the Lord blessed the church with another 180 members, giving the church roll a total of 290, including the Reverend Jay Watkins from Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church and the Reverend Walter A. Holbrook.

There is absolutely no doubt that the Reverend C. Knox was a passionate and positive leader for Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church. Under his leadership, six members received their calling into the ministry, eight

deacons were ordained, and the following church organizations were formed: a Deaconess Board, five choirs, four Mission Circles, a Nurses Guild, a Floral Club, a Pastor's Aid Society, and a very strong Trustee Board.

Other growth came in the form of the installation of the PA System, the purchase of income property at 3479 Farley, the purchase and installation of central air conditioning, the paving of all parking lots, and the purchase of two lots (adjacent) north on Center Road, which have been used as garden spots. For the Van Ministry, two passenger vans were also purchased.

In 1983, Ebenezer was blessed with many souls who came to Christ. Also, Ebenezer accomplished many things through Christ, such as sinking of the baptismal pool, the purchase of 14 choir chairs and nameplates for donors of the church. In July of this same year, a sketch of the new addition to Ebenezer was introduced and accepted.

On September 15, 1985, the Ground Breaking Service was held for the church's new addition, which included five classrooms and a Fellowship Hall. Dr. Avery Aldridge, Pastor of the Foss Avenue Missionary Baptist Church in Flint, led the service.

Ready to relinquish his leadership role, Pastor Clarence Knox officially retired on the third Sunday of September 1994. His youngest son, Minister Urundi "Ron" Knox became the Pastor of Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church. Within a year, under the auspices of Pastor Urundi Knox, more than 200 new members were added to the church body.

More than ready to assume his leadership role, Minister Urundi Knox created two programs in 1995: Sis. Dana Bush became the leader of a woman's program entitled W.A.V.E. – Women Achieving Victory Everlasting; and Bro. Victor Johnson became the leader of P.A.C.E. – Prayer, Action, Commitment and Evangelize, a men's program. These ministries were established to build strong support systems, provide encouragement, and strengthen families and relationships within the community.

The church continued to expand under the leadership of Pastor Urundi Knox, and on September 29, 1996, the congregation broke ground for the building of a new sanctuary of God, which cost in excess of \$1 million. On Sunday, September 7, 1997, Pastor Urundi Knox, along with his father, Senior Pastor Clarence Knox, the congregation and friends, joyfully marched into the new sanctuary.

1 Samuel 7:12 reads "Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebe-ezer saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Pastor Knox's vision for the church was to reach out and help the community.

In order to broaden the church's purpose and minister to those in need, the name of the church was officially changed in 1999 from Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church to Ebenezer Ministries. With a mission of serving the congregation and community, additional outreach ministries were created and implemented by Pastor Urundi Knox, including an Elderly Ministry, Abused & Battered Women Ministry, Prison Ministry and Street Ministry, all which provide an array of help and hope to the residents of Genesee County. One of the largest

community outreach projects implemented under the direction of Pastor Urundi Knox was the “Take Back the City Crusade,” in which Sunday morning services were taken outside the walls of the church and held in downtown Flint at Riverbank Park in 1999 and 2000. The hungry and homeless were fed and clothing was distributed to the needy. Keynote speakers included the Mayor of Flint, The Genesee County Sheriff and well-known celebrities.

1999 was an especially noteworthy year in the church’s history, as 20 acres of land were purchased adjacent to the church between Center Road and Lippincott Boulevard, expanding the church’s reach considerably.

The new millennium brought about a new Ebenezer Ministries. The church began moving in ways not seen in the Flint area ever before. During this time, Brothers Victor Johnson and Norman Freeman began their public ministry under the leadership of Pastor Urundi Knox. Rev. Johnson eventually became Assistant Pastor of Ebenezer and Rev. Freeman was appointed Pastor of St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church in Miami, Florida. Also under Pastor Knox, 24 members received their calling into the ministry, 14 deacons have been ordained, and 5 licensed ministers have joined Ebenezer. Additionally, Pastor Knox was one of the first African American ministers in the Flint community to license and value women in a traditionally male-dominated field, and, as a result, 14 women ministers have served under him. Additional ministries created under the auspices of Pastor Knox include the CK Travelers (for senior citizens), Save Our Sons (SOS) mentoring program, Daughters of Destiny mentoring program, a Motorcycle Ministry, a Health Ministry, a Marriage Ministry, a Junior Deacon Board, and a popular outdoor concert series, “Gospel Under the Sun.”

As it became apparent that the work of Pastor Knox and Ebenezer Ministries was transforming the city, others began to take notice and recognition followed shortly. In 2000, Ebenezer and Pastor Knox were presented with the “Key to the City” by the 45th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, AL. And in 2001, Ebenezer was cited in an article prepared by the Harwood Institute for the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation entitled, “Creating a New Story, Flint’s Struggle to Move Forward” and listed as a “hidden do-gooder, bringing neighbors together.” Other accolades have included various local, regional, and national newspaper articles; awards; citations; radio interviews; and television appearances.

If you tell them, they will come...

Pastor Knox’s marketing expertise has served him, and the community, well. To share the good news of the gospel and Ebenezer Ministries, the church has purchased well-received, and sometimes controversial, ads on billboards across the city as another way of reaching the various audiences in Genesee County. Despite the controversy, Ebenezer’s membership rolls continued to grow and the church held a mortgage burning ceremony to celebrate the pay-off of the new sanctuary in December 2001, years before it was due. Never feeling like his work is done, Pastor Urundi Knox has continued to fulfill his God-given visions and move Ebenezer Ministries forward with the following projects and ministries:

In 2003, a “porte-cochere” was added to the outside of the Sanctuary entrance and named after Deacon Oscar & Deloris Hawthorne. This was the beginning of a concept Pastor Knox had to create a campus-type atmosphere on the church grounds.

In 2004, to better reach the surrounding community, a large and bright LED sign was purchased and placed at the Center Road entrance. Ebenezer's website HYPERLINK <http://www.EbenezerMinistries.com> was created as well.

Also in 2004, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held to celebrate the "John & Maxine Evans Pavilion" and the "Dr. Clarence & Sis. Mary Knox Memorial."

In 2005, the Deacon Earl & Vernell Fuller Park & Playground," the "Temple of Praise Amphitheater," and the Deacon Clarence & Almarie Ryans Waterfall" were built and named after senior members of the church. Pastor Knox's vision was to create a place that was member-owned and where members could come with their family and enjoy the facilities. The church's parking lot was re-surfaced as well, and 60 parking spaces were added.

On Thanksgiving Day 2006, church service was held for the inmates of the Genesee County Jail and dinner was provided to the inmates.

In November 2006, Ebenezer purchased a former engineering building at 2096 S. Center Road and transformed it into Ebenezer Ministries' Ministry and Community Center. "Black Sunday" was held on June 10, 2007 to celebrate the pay-off of the \$335,000 mortgage, less than one year after the loan was taken out. In 2007, Pastor Knox, Genesee County Sheriff Robert Pickell, Judge Archie Haman, Judge Nathaniel Perry and Ebenezer's Motorcycle Ministry presented the book, "Talks My Father Never Had With Me" to the male inmates of the Genesee County Jail. The concept was to encourage the inmates to read the book and have talks with their children to show them a better way of life.

In 2008, a regulation-size basketball court was built on the church grounds as the church "campus" continues to expand and gives members another facility to enjoy.

Also in 2008, Pastor Knox was selected as an official motorcycle safety ambassador for the Public Safety Department at Charles Stewart Mott Community College and presented with a brand new Harley Davidson motorcycle to use for two years. At the same time, Cummings Harley Davidson in Davison, Michigan, selected Pastor Knox as a mentor from the State of Michigan to be featured in their national "Share the Spark" mentoring campaign. They appreciated the number of individuals Pastor Knox has mentored and kept safe through example and safe riding techniques. As a result of these two accolades, Pastor Knox was deputized as a Public Safety Mentor by Genesee County Sheriff, Robert Pickell on Sunday, October 12.

In 2009, the "Anointed Women's Ministry" was developed, with Sis. Monica Byrd and Sis. Dana Bush as co-leaders. The ministry allows all the women of Ebenezer to come together to fellowship, mentor, worship and encourage one another through quarterly programs.

August 16 – September 13, 2009, Ebenezer Ministries celebrates its 40th Church Anniversary and Senior Pastor Urundi & Sis. Michele Knox celebrate his 15th Pastoral Anniversary. With a membership of more than 1,000, it can truly be said that the Lord has blessed Ebenezer. Ebenezer is grateful to all of its members, many friends and well-wishers for their support, encouragement and prayers throughout the years. Our constant prayer is that we will continue to do the will of God in rendering Christian service to mankind.