

**THE  
GOLDEN JUBILEE OF NEW HOPE  
BAPTIST CHURCH**

*and*



**The Thirtieth Anniversary of the Pastorate**

*of the*

**Rev. J. Edward Harris**

**Cherry and Orchard Streets, Danbury, Connecticut**



1896

1946

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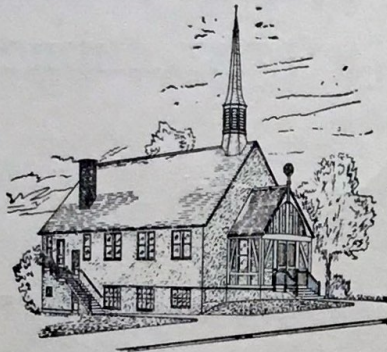
*of the*

**Rev. J. Edward Harris**

**Cherry and Orchard Streets, Danbury, Connecticut**







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“And so through all the length of days,  
Thy goodness faileth never:  
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise  
Within Thy house forever.”

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## HISTORICAL SKETCH OF NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH

A notable event in the history of the colored people of Danbury was the founding of New Hope Baptist Church. It was back in the years known as the “Gay Nineties” that the colored people from the South began to migrate in any considerable numbers to New England and some came to this community. Of the few that were already here, some worshiped with the various churches of their choice; others spent their Sunday hours at home, on the streets, or in the homes of their friends. With the coming of the colored people from the South, who had worshiped, for the most part, in separate racial groups, came the idea of a church home, where one might worship God, “under his own vine and fig tree,” and where none would be embarrassed or made afraid. So, counselling together thus, as many as were of a similar mind decided to meet and hold cottage prayers, and preaching service whenever a minister was available and a temporary place therefor could be found. For a number of years this mixed group of various denominational persuasion worshiped as a community group, but with the coming of the Rev. Thomas Garnett, a Baptist minister from Virginia, a few men and women of Baptist predilection withdrew from the group and were duly organized, February 16, 1895\* under his leadership, into a regular Baptist Church, with the name, New Hope Baptist Church of Danbury, Connecticut.

The following names represent a few of the original members of the organization: Stephen Drew, George Johnson, Jacob Wilson, Kate Bailey, Priscilla Butler, Welanna Jones and Matilda Randolph. Among those of the council that endorsed this organization, December 2, 1897, were the names of Dr. A. C. Hubbard, pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Danbury, and the Rev. Moses Taylor, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Stratford, Connecticut.



The following names were a part of the subsequent addition to the early roll of the church: William Brown, Henry Kearney, William Cruse, Arthur Jones, Benjamin Perry, Mary Baldwin, Bertha Brown, Elizabeth Brown, Mary Brown, Mildred Conway, Martha Evans, Eliza Faulkner, Roxy Hilton, Rebecca Marrable, Laura Marshall, Esther Pembleton, Laura Spratley, Carrie Taylor, Mary Taylor, and Mary West.



Interior of Church

Not having a permanent place of worship, this body moved from place to place as convenient, while making repeated but unsuccessful attempts to procure a permanent church building. After fourteen years of pastoral service here, the Rev. Mr. Garnett retired from the pastorate and was succeeded by the Rev. D. C. Thomas, also a Virginian. Mr. Thomas served the church for a brief period, then withdrew from the parish, but returned in a few years to resume the work. After a stay

of less than two years he was called to New London, Connecticut, and was succeeded in turn by the Rev. J. Edward Harris, the present pastor, and who is also a Virginian.

New Hope Church has featured accomplishment rather than numerical growth. The history of the present administration has been marked by steady and continued achievement. An impressive, modern stucco church edifice with hard wood floors and light oak finish has been erected and all indebtedness therefor liquidated, including the inherited indebtedness for the ground and an adjacent cottage thereon.

The ground was broken, May, 1923, by the Revs. D. C. Thomas and J. Edward Harris. The cornerstone was laid September 14, 1924, and the building dedicated April 12, 1925. Dr. Elbert E. Gates, of Hartford, preached the dedication sermon. During the five year missionary campaign known as The New World Movement, this church was the first in the state to complete its allotment and since that time has striven to meet its yearly quota on schedule.

\*Corrected from a recently discovered record.





## HISTORICAL SKETCH OF PASTOR

The Rev. James Edward Harris was born in Mathews County, Virginia, of Christian parents who had been slaves, and who although possessing but little of this world's goods, had a wealth of vision and energy. They succeeded in educating seven children, of whom the subject of this sketch was the sixth.

Mr. Harris professed faith in Jesus Christ at the tender age of eleven years and joined the First Baptist Church of his childhood community. He received his



Rev. J. Edward Harris

literary training in the one-room rural school of his district and the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute, now Virginia State College, Petersburg, Virginia. After completing a teaching contract of two years in Virginia, he entered Lane Theological Seminary, Cincinnati, Ohio, from which he graduated with honor, being appointed one of the commencement speakers for his class. His older brother, the late Dr. H. H. Harris, of St. Louis,

Missouri, was also an alumnus of Lane Seminary.

Mr. Harris spent his early pastoral years in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Newport News, Virginia, and came to Connecticut, where he has rendered his longest and best service. He came to this city in November, 1916, to finish the unexpired pastoral contract of the Rev. D. C. Thomas, deceased, and since coming here he has established a record in length of pastorate in this place. He has done a commendable work in developing the parish, has endeared himself to his parishioners and has won the admiration of the community at large. He is held in high esteem by the Baptists of the state, having served on various and important committees for the Fairfield Baptist Association and the Connecticut Baptist Convention, respectively.





Mr. Harris is an earnest and acceptable preacher, and has delivered the Annual Sermon on three occasions for the Connecticut Baptist Missionary Union (a), once for the Fairfield Baptist Association (b), once for the Connecticut Baptist Convention (c), and once for the greater New England Baptist Missionary Convention (d).

Reverend and Mrs. Harris have two sons who saw service overseas, one in Europe and one in India and Burma during World War II.

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- (a) Grace Baptist Church, Waterbury, May, 1908.
  - (a) Union Baptist Church, Stamford, May, 1910.
  - (a) Immanuel Baptist Church, New Haven, May, 1929.
  - (b) New Milford (Northville), Sept., 1937.
  - (c) Central Baptist Church, Norwich, Oct., 1943.
  - (d) Ebenezer Baptist Church, Boston, June, 1909.

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The following is an excerpt of a letter received from the Reverend Elbert E. Gates, D.D., ex-General Secretary of the Connecticut Baptist Convention, September 18, 1946:

Dear J. Edward:

. . . I am deeply sorry if this (I cannot be present) is a disappointment, it is certainly a regret to me. You know that I have always enjoyed to the full my visits to you and your church. You always treated me far better than I deserved and your church people exercised great patience and charity whenever I preached in New Hope. In the thousands of pleasant memories that I have of my life and work as the Secretary of the Convention, New Hope and J. Edward Harris, wife and boys are very prominent.

Kindly give our warmest greetings to your church. The splendid record the church, under your devoted and able leadership, made in the raising of money and paying off the mortgage, is notable. The standing of the church and pastor in the city and in the state is exceptionally high. You personally played the game with the Convention and with the friends who expressed their confi-

dence in words of praise and material gifts. I also recall that during the years in which you and the church were so valiantly and successfully reducing the indebtedness on the building you were faithfully doing your part in building the Kingdom of God, "in Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth". Such a church and such a pastor are a joy to any secretary, a worthwhile partner in any Christian enterprise, a worthy helper of Jesus Christ and loyal "labourers together with God". We pray God's blessing upon you during the Golden Anniversary and throughout the years. . . .

Yours,  
ELBERT E. GATES

The extract which follows is from a letter, dated 25 September 1946, received from the Reverend William Sale Terrell, D.D., Executive Secretary of the Connecticut Baptist Convention:

Dear Brother Harris:

. . . Your unfailing fidelity to the preaching of the Gospel of Christ and your fine loyalty to the program of the Convention make it a peculiar privilege to share with you and your people on this significant occasion. . . .

Fraternally yours,  
WM. SALE TERRELL  
Executive Secretary





## PROGRAM OF EXERCISES

### Sunday, October 27—Thirtieth Anniversary of Pastorate

11:00 A.M. Preaching by Pastor.

Subject: The Unfailing Promises of God.

6:00 P.M. Preaching by the Rev. James N. Zeigler,  
Pastor of Community Baptist Church, Norwalk.

Subject: The Unashamed Workman.

Music by the Community Baptist Young People's Choir.

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### Thursday, October 31

8:00 P.M. Preaching by the Rev. Luther Holloway,  
Pastor A. M. E. Zion Church.

Music by the A. M. E. Zion Choir.

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### Thursday, November 7

6:00 P.M. Church Banquet.

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### Thursday, November 14

8:00 P.M. Preaching by Dr. John B. Pharr, Pastor  
Community Baptist Church, New Haven.

Subject: The Church Beautiful.

Music by the Community Baptist Church, Quartette.

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### Thursday, November 21

8:00 P.M. Grand Musicales, under the direction of Mrs.  
Mildred Jackson and Mrs. Forresta Bowman.

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### Sunday, November 24, Golden Jubilee Anniversary of Church

11:00 A.M. Preaching by the Pastor.

Subject: In the Shadow of His Hand.

6:00 P.M. Preaching by Dr. William S. Terrell, Gen.  
Sec. Connecticut Baptist Convention.

## THE OFFICIAL BOARD AND GENERAL COMMITTEE

Charles Holt	William Cruse	Thomas Taylor
James Cromwell	Theodore Burch	William E. Harris
Raleigh Cruse	Andrew James	Floyd Gregory
Robert Holt		Henry Holt
J. Edward Harris	Mrs. Mildred Jackson, Clerk	

### Program Committee

Mrs. Zelma Cruse	Mrs. Forresta Bowman
Mrs. Anna Jaynes	

### Vestment Committee

Mrs. Laura Holt	Mrs. Zelma Cruse
Mrs. Anne Darden	

### Refreshments Committee

Mrs. Laura Holt	Mrs. Willimae Cruse
Mrs. Pearl Beale	
Mrs. Alice Gregory	Mrs. Mary Ferris
Mrs. Flora Hannibal	Mrs. Mary Hines

### Decoration Committee

Mrs. Margaret Burch	Mrs. Loretta Sledge
Miss Clara Jaynes	Miss Margaret Beale
Miss Gloria Jaynes	Miss June Jackson

### Music Committee

Mrs. Mildred Jackson	Mrs. Forresta Bowman
J. Edward Harris, Minister	



## THE PROMOTION AND BUILDING COMMITTEE

Dr. A. B. Coates	Mr. Charles Mallory, Chm.
Dr. E. E. Gates	Mr. Frank Lee, Sr.
Rev. Ellis Gilbert	Mr. Warren C. Mercier
Rev. A. C. Coburn	Mr. Geo. F. Green
Mr. Fred L. Lamson	Mr. Edwin Targett
Mr. W. P. Petrie	Mr. John F. Woodruff
Mr. Henry D. Kearney	Mr. L. W. Andrews, Treas.
Mr. William Cruse, Sr.	Rev. J. Edward Harris

### Those who broke ground:

Revs. D. C. Thomas and J. Edw. Harris

### Those who placed Corner Stone:

Mr. Charles E. Prior                  Rev. W. N. Morton

### Those burning first mortgage:

Mr. Fred L. Lamson                  Dr. E. E. Gates



Pastor Harris' Home in Norwalk