



History of The Church of the Holy Cross

Prior to the formation of an organized and separate place of worship, African American Episcopalians in Pittsburgh belonged to their local church. In the late 1800's, several Blacks, concerned about the social isolation of their children and the segregated religious setting they experienced, began to push for the establishment of a separate mission to serve their needs. Among those who were instrumental in this effort was Sadie B. Hamilton, a graduate of Wilberforce University and a life-long Episcopalian. In response to this request in 1875, Bishop John Barrett Kerfoot (1816-1881) of the Diocese of Pittsburgh brought the Reverend W. F. Floyd to Pittsburgh to establish a mission among the "colored people" of this community. As a result of this effort, St. Cyprian's Mission was established and met in Trinity Church parish house. In December 1877, The Reverend W. F. Floyd transferred to Cincinnati.

On January 15, 1878, The Reverend William Wilson was ordained to the Priesthood in Trinity Church by Bishop Kerfoot and placed in charge of St. Cyprian's Mission, which held services in a building on Wylie Avenue in Pittsburgh's Hill District. The Reverend Wilson left Pittsburgh in 1897 and St. Cyprian's Mission was closed by Bishop Cortlandt Whitehead (1882-1922). The mission was reopened at the Church Army Headquarters under Captain William B. Anderson and Captain G. P. Hance (d.1954), who later became Brother Hance, founder of St. Barnabas Home. The mission was moved to a storeroom at the corner of Centre Avenue and Roberts Streets in the Hill District where Captain Anderson and Oliver G. Walter, a layman, conducted the services.

In the subsequent years of the parish's formation, worship services were conducted at various locations, including Trinity parish House, St. Mary's Chapel, St. Peter's Church., and Christ Church. The services were conducted by several lay persons and clergy, who included Messrs. Bratt, Corfield, Shoemaker, Logan and Archdeacons William M. Brown, J. R. Wightman, Homer A. Flint, and Flewellyn.

In 1905, Archdeacon Flint invited the Reverend Scott Wood to come to Pittsburgh to reorganize the mission. Under Father Wood's leadership, the mission was renamed St. Augustine. With the money given by a businessman named Stewart to William Tibbs, grandfather of Doris Brevard, the mission (which was then worshipping the Emmanuel Church on the Northside) was able to rent the Odd Fellows Hall at Jackson Street and Brighton Road. A building was subsequently purchased at 319 Jackson Street, marking, for historical purposes, the permanent beginning of a Black Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh.

As the Black presence in the Diocese of Pittsburgh grew, Father Wood established a mission named St. Phillip's in the Hill District. St. Phillip's later purchased the church building on Centre Avenue that was owned by the St. Paul's congregation, which had moved to Mt. Lebanon. Father Wood took charge of St. Phillip's and the Reverend Shelton Hale Bishop was called to St. Augustine. In 1917, due to failing health, Father Wood left his post and the two missions were united in the building on Centre Avenue under the name, The Church of the Holy Cross. The Reverend Bishop became priest-in-charge. Under his dynamic leadership, the parish membership and organizational life experienced dramatic growth. One of the oldest organizations, the Rector's Guild, was established in 1911. Moreover, parish life was strong and fervent as evidenced by the presence of a large Sunday School, nurtured and developed under its long time superintendent, E. C. Alexander; a committed

Altar Guild, headed by the legendary Dolly Johnson; and the Union Women's Auxiliary (subsequently renamed The Sadie B. Hamilton Guild).

In December 1923, Father Bishop resigned to become assistant rector of St. Philip's in New York City. He later succeeded his father as rector of that historic church.

In January 1924, the Reverend Robert D. Brown, a graduate of Dartmouth College and General Seminary, was called to the rectorship of The Church of the Holy Cross. He was an excellent preacher, a caring pastor, and was greatly loved by members and the community. In April 1940, while paying a parochial visit, taking communion to one of the members on Easter, he became ill and died before he reached the hospital. In the fall of 1940, the Reverend Lewis A. Baskerville of Calvary Church, Charleston, South Carolina, was called as rector. Before he could begin his ministry, World War II began and he joined the U.S. Army as Chaplain.

Due to the difficulty during the early war years in securing a full-time rector, Bishop E. Thomas Demby of Cleveland, Ohio consented to serve the parish until a new rector was called. His travel between two cities became too difficult to continue, and a new search was begun. This resulted in a call to the Reverend Charles Levy of New York. He served the parish until February 1945.

In December 1945, the Reverend Samuel D. Rudder of St. Barnabas, Brooklyn, was called and served until September 1953, when he accepted the position as Chaplain at St. Augustine College in North Carolina. In March 1953, the Reverend Walter P. H. Parker of St. Philip's, Syracuse, New York, was called to Holy Cross. It was during his pastorate that the congregation outgrew the existing church and the current property at the Corner of Kelly and Collier Streets, which formerly housed St. James parish, was purchased.

Upon the resignation of Father Parker in 1966 to accept a call to St. Philip's, Brooklyn, the Reverend Canon Junius F. Carter was called to the rectorship of Holy Cross, where he remained until his resignation on December 1, 1991. Under Canon Carter's administration, The Church of the Holy Cross was elevated to full parish status and began a highly visible community ministry.

To provide for continuity in the life of the parish, the Vestry authorized, with the authorization of Bishop Hathaway, the calling of The Reverend John Golden, as interim rector in December 1991. Father Golden served for 15 months, during which time he made a strong effort to empower the laity to assume more responsibility for parish life.

After a national search, and reflecting its desire for a strong spiritual leader, the Vestry called the Reverend Jerome W. Burns, then the rector of St. Stephen's, Petersburg, Virginia, as the eighth rector of The Church of the Holy Cross. On Palm Sunday, 1993, Father Burns preached his first sermon as rector. His ministry was characterized by steady care for the people. Father Burns accepted a call to St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Columbus, Ohio in 2002.

The Reverend Moni McIntyre, Ph.D. assisted Father Burns from 2000-2002 and became priest-in-charge in 2002 and rector in 2005. Since 2002, she has been contracted to work 12 hours per week for Holy Cross. Dr. McIntyre teaches full time in the Sociology Department at Duquesne University. She is a retired Navy Captain (O-6) and teaches health care ethics to senior Navy physicians and dentists at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland eight-ten times each year. During Dr. McIntyre's time as rector, Holy Cross replaced both the church roof and the choir room roof and restored both buildings. Following the condemnation and demolition of the St. Francis Parish House, the parking lot was paved. Many other significant capital improvements have been made during Dr. McIntyre's time even while paying off two previous heavy debts to the diocese. The big window in the nave has been restored.

Our goal is to have a safe and inviting building for worship, celebration, and outreach. Among Dr. McIntyre's many awards is the one for Faith presented in 2012 by the YWCA Greater Pittsburgh Center on Race and Gender Equity. Under her leadership, Holy Cross continues to be a warm and welcoming faith community and recently The Rev. Torrey O. Johnson became the Priest in Charge with the hopes of ushering in a season of community outreach and development.

Today, 144 years after the first Episcopal mission for the people of color was begun in Pittsburgh, and through the prayers, leadership and stewardship of hundreds of loyal and faithful parishioners— some known only to God—The Church of the Holy Cross stands firm and resolute in the mission to continue to work for our Lord Jesus Christ here in this realm.



