

# **Pleasant Gift Missionary Baptist Church**

## **A Community Beacon**

### **Church History**

**Revised December 2022**

**“Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it:  
except the LORD keep the city, the watchman walketh but in vain.”**

**Psalm 127-1**

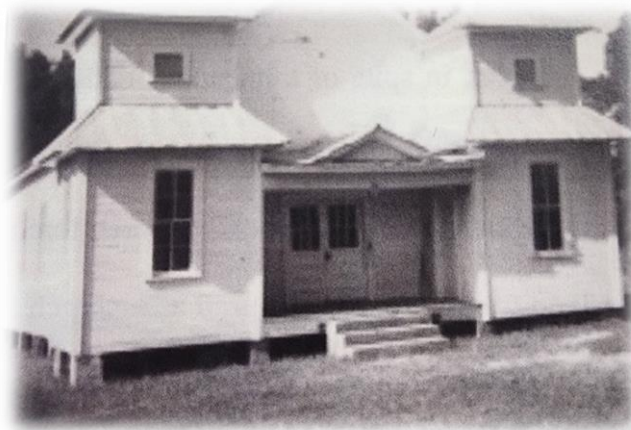
On the right-side of the entrance to the Pleasant Gift M.B. Church building is a cornerstone that pronounces the date of origin for the Church as 1850. In 1850, Mississippi was a repressive slave-holding state. Not only were black people enslaved, but they were forbidden by law to learn to read and write. Slaves were property and even religious gatherings had to have a white observer present. Slave marriages had no legal basis. The majority of slaves generally lived on cotton plantations alongside, on average, two dozen others. The state’s total population was 607,800; and that of Jackson was a mere 1,881. In Mississippi, as throughout the South, cotton was king and life for blacks was turbulent.

Yet, in spite of tremendous odds, the founders of Pleasant Gift pursued their desire for a place to gather and commune with God. According to reliable accounts, the church site was initially called “Bush Harbor.” Church lore maintains that “someone was inspired to give a parcel of land to the group to be used as a church site. The gift was deemed to be so “pleasant and very much needed” that our forefathers proclaimed that the church should be named “Pleasant Gift.”

Details surrounding the “gift” for the initial church site cannot be historically ascertained. But by injecting divine intervention, we can borrow from Psalm 44:3 and intimate that our forefathers “got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them...” but it was at the hands of the

Almighty that the favor was bestowed on them Pleasant Gift appears to be among the first three black churches established in Madison County (after Asbury United Methodist in Canton, 1824; Mt. Olive Way Baptist, 1850 - Jennifer E. Cheeks-Collins, Madison County Mississippi [2002] pp. 26, 33, 35). Both Rising Chapel and Pine Grove Churches are believed to be outgrowths of Pleasant Gift.

As early as 1877, official records show that church deacons took steps to ensure and formalize ownership of the land on which the church was established. In January of that year, church leaders paid H.E. Pitchford and John C. Pitchford \$250.00 for land to be used exclusively as church property. Thirty-two years later, on December 24, 1919, the church paid to four heirs of Frank Cheeks, \$85.00 for two and a half acres of land it had used for many years for church and school purposes. The church cemetery was also located on this parcel of land.



The first church edifice was a wood frame building with wooden floors, a wood burning stove and wooden benches. *Wooden Church picture* It had no modern conveniences, but the membership persevered toward their goal of advancing God's kingdom. This first building burned in 1914, and was later replaced with another

modest wood-framed structure. The new structure, like its predecessor, had no classrooms, no indoor plumbing and was heated with a wood burning stove. The congregation met every Sunday for Sunday school but only held worship services on the second Sunday of each month.

The early members of Pleasant Gift, though people of modest means, were forward looking and self-reliant. In 1895, they organized the Willing Workers Society #20. The Willing Society purchased a community bell rang to announce death within the community and tolled at beginning of funerals. The "Society" as it was commonly referred to, was a part of a self-help movement initiated in many African American Communities after the Civil War. As a general rule, the newly freed blacks emerged from slavery with little more than the clothes on their backs.

With little help from the government, self-help societies provided an opportunity for blacks to unite and work for their own common good. The Pleasant Gift Willing Workers Society established and operated a church/community cemetery, provided burial assistance to its members and often provided help for the sick and needy in the community. *Picture of Harry Washington & Otis Sawyer* For a fee that ranged from five cents per month at the turn of the century to the current monthly fee of fifty cents, members were assured a burial plot, grave digging services, and financial assistance toward funeral costs.



On April 4, 1931, the Society acquired two additional acres of land from Julia Williams to expand the cemetery. Charlie Whitehead, Sr., Charlie Whitehead, Jr., Lennie McGruder, Joe Nathan and Cora Day, Robert Seals, Sr., Amos and Laurie Sutton, E.B. Perry, Maude Washington, Martha Cheeks, Otis Sawyer, John W. Pugh, and Harry Washington, Sr. were among those who served as officers and Board Members of the Society at some point between the 1930s and the decade of the 1990s.

The forward looking membership at Pleasant Gift also played a leading role in education in Madison County. Church leaders recognized that education was essential for the economic, social and religious growth of the Black community. It was among a number of progressive black churches that assisted in providing educational opportunities for black citizens. In the early 1870s, church leaders worked with the county to establish Pleasant Gift Elementary School. The precise establishment date of Pleasant Gift School has not been documented, however, several sources identify it as one of the eighteen elementary schools for blacks operating in Madison in 1872 (Carol Lynn Mead, 1987, pp 82-83;169).

Like most of these early church schools, funds were limited. The two-room school covered pre-primer through seventh grade. There were usually only two teachers who taught all seven grades and all subjects. The school did not have a principal *Picture of School House* but at some point after 1905, black schools in Madison County received a boost in funding from the Anna T. Jeanes Fund. This fund paid

teachers known as Jeanes Teachers who traveled throughout the county to assist and supervise instruction in black schools. Their supervision usually meant greater quality and continuity of instruction.



Former students speak fondly of their time at Pleasant Gift Elementary School even though facilities and resources were limited. Many said that they or members of their families walked miles to and from school each day: “in the cold and rain, in winter and the hot sun during late spring.”

Dorothy Jean Blackmon, a former student, speaks of her experiences at Pleasant Gift School

*My first memory of school was in a wood frame two-room building. The year was 1952. I started school early because my cousins were going and I didn't want*



*to be left at home when they went off to school. I went to school there for my first four years ... and none of us felt deprived of an education. Today I sometimes wonder about all [the] fancy methodology for teaching, all of the different tests out there today; we didn't have any of those. The main courses [at Pleasant Gift] were the 'three R's': reading, 'riting. and 'rithmetic... [but] the teachers were effective, caring and dedicated.*

*On cold days, the older boys would make a fire in the old iron stove. If no dry wood was gotten in the afternoon before we left for home and it rain overnight, we stayed cold until a fire could be built and the building warmed. Sometimes it would be 12 o'clock before the building got warm because the wood would be wet.*

Another former student said “For drinking water, boys had to walk to a neighbor’s house, often several times a day, since the school had only one tin bucket.” According to many sources, switches were ever present in classrooms and were used with great regularity by teachers.

The school year for Pleasant Gift, like most local black rural schools, was usually only four months. Most students, especially the boys, were needed in the fields during planting and harvesting seasons. Teachers who taught at Pleasant Gift School included Robert Luther Branson, Daisy Lyles, Lula Brooks, Pearline Brooks, Jimmie Cheeks, J.T. Dawson and his wife Catherine Dawson, Rev. D. S. Williams and Mrs. Williams, Mary Jones and Cora Day. Former students remember other teachers only by their last names.

On December 13, 1943, the Trustees at Pleasant Gift transferred to the Canton Separate School District property to be used for school purpose. The property was used as a school site for 19 years. At the end of the 1962 school term, Pleasant Gift Elementary School officially closed; and on August 31, 1962, the school building and surrounding property was quit claimed back to the authority of Trustees of the Pleasant Gift Willing Worker’s Society No. 20.

In 1967, the church continued to progress when the old wood church building was torn down and a larger, more modern, brick structure was erected. **1967 Church** The late Deacon Charlie Whitehead, Jr. reflected on the church’s history in an eloquent speech in 1981 with these words:

*The first light that was shed in the minds of the group of organizers of this church has spread with such force that it has become a beacon in the center of the hill that beckons men and women into its path. **Picture of Whitehead, Jr** From the [first] insignificantly small edifice, lacking in detail of so many things, it has grown into this capacity with the banner of Christ ever hanging high [so] that men may follow... and be led to eternal salvation.*



The 1967 Church Structure

During a church anniversary, Rousce Cheeks Washington explained that ministers were not always paid cash instead they were sometimes paid with peanuts, potatoes, corn, peas and other harvested produce. Over the years, Pleasant Gift has been led by a total of 17 pastors. Pastors included: Reverends: Jake Lambert, Taylor Brown, Louis Moore, West Johnson, DD Pernell, S. Jordan, John Taylor, Walter Merriweather, M. H. Calhoun, W. M. Slaughter, Roby Harris, G. H. Hines, Herman Moore, J. S. Reed, Joe Blackmon, Garfield Hubbard, and Joseph Barte, Sr. Rev. Louis Moore is believed to have been pastor when the first wood structure burned in 1914. Rev. Herman Moore added an additional worship service, fourth Sunday. **The 1967 Church Structure.** Rev. J. S. Reed was the last of the traveling preacher to lead the church. He would travel by Trailways Bus from Itta Bena, MS to Canton for worship service, spending the night with Deacon John Pugh and returning by bus on Sunday evenings. Rev. H. D. Hines was at the helm when the modern brick church building was erected in 1967.

Rev. Joseph Bartee has served the longest tenure (forty-one years) as pastor and has had a profound impact on church growth. Under his leadership, the church experienced new growth and revitalization. Worship service moved from two Sundays to full-time. The land base was expanded to 8 ½ acres in 1997 and in that same year, the church building underwent another significant transformation. The sanctuary was refurbished, the choir area enlarged and an indoor baptismal pool was installed. The renovated facility included a pastor's study, a library, six classrooms and a kitchen. Additional building expansion under Pastor Bartee's leadership during the last two decades included new bathroom facilities, a larger foyer, an expanded video room, a front drive-thru, expanded fellowship hall and extended parking.



*Picture of 1997 Church Expansion*

Church organizations also experienced growth under Pastor Bartee's leadership. The Laymen ministry was revitalized, Junior Matrons organized, Vacation Bible School revived, a newsletter initiated and the music department greatly expanded and energized with the addition of Rev. David Jackson as minister of Music.

*Picture of David Jackson* Rev. Jackson and Pastor Bartee mentored and groomed three homegrown musicians with the goal of providing continuity within the music department. Sisters Sheila McGruder Simpson, Linda Foster and Bro. Kenneth McGruder fulfilled that goal during a transition period.

As noted, seventeen men have led this historic church; pastoring for different lengths of time. Of the current leadership, many wonderful qualities can be noted; but chief among them is Pastor Bartee's emphasis on training and learning. He

initiated a bible study program and constantly encouraged the congregation to attend Sunday School. Brother Lonnie Rogers, Sunday School Superintendent, often comments on Pastor Bartee's exemplary interest and participation in Sunday School class each Sunday. In addition, he and other members of the congregation systematically share ideas they acquire from their participation in state and national conferences and classes. A practical testimony of the effectiveness of such training was shared with the congregation by Sisters Catherine Wilson and Morzell Foster on proper church etiquette and the important role of ushering and insuring an orderly church service as a follow-up to workshops and conferences.

Striving alongside the pastors— and sometimes dominating the affairs of the church— have been a cadre of devoted deacons and trustees. The list includes: Luther “Sonny” Adams,. Thomas Miggins, Jim Little, Charlie Whitehead, Sr, Joe Nathen Day, Charlie Whitehead, Jr, John W. Pugh, Len McGruder, EB Perry, Robert Seals, DD Foster, Lonnie Rogers, Larry L. Day, Earnest Sanders, John W. Wilson, Larry L. Day, II and Willie Earl Ford. The worshiping testimonials of some of the elders were so spirit-filled that they could impact others for a lifetime. For example, one church member recalls his boyhood experiences in this church from over fifty years ago: “I can still visualize Deacon Luther Adams (1884-1962), Cousin Sonny, as he was called, leading devotion with unmatched enthusiasm, revealing his heart and soul... in song and prayer.



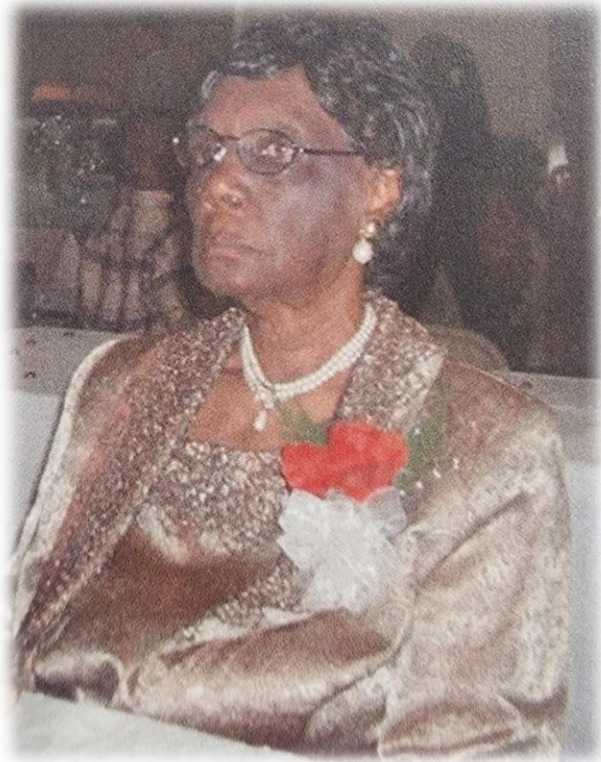


To this very day, Velma Day Chambers can still hear Deaconess Minnie Pearl Pugh lead the congregation in song: ‘Pass me not oh gentle Savior, Hear my humble cry. While on Others Thou art calling. Do not pass me by.’ Sister Mattie Lou Johnson, also a long time member, speaks with enthusiasm about the spiritual power she felt when “Deacon Joe Nathan Day line the old hymn ‘Father I Stretch My Hands to Thee, No Other Help I Know’; Deacon John Pugh would charge the church with ‘When I Can Read My Title Clear to Mansions In The Skies. I’ll Bid Fare-Well to Ev-ry Fear, and Wipe My Weeping Eyes’, Deacon Charlie Whitehead, Sr. would remind all that we had a duty by singing ‘A Charge To Keep and a God to Glorify’ and Deacon Charlie Whitehead, Jr. would warn the congregation to keep their eyes on the Lord, because ‘That awful day would surely come’.

2009 *Deacon Pictured Pugh, Whitehead McGruder Seals, Day*

Sister Velma Day Chambers recalls Judge and Priscilla Beard. Mother Beard as remembered as the last of the “shouting mothers” Almost all can recall that on any given Sunday, Sis. Lillie Nash would stand and command tears with her rendition

of Today: 'Have I given anything today— Have I helped some needed soul on my way'. Mother Nash helped whenever and wherever she could every day. **Picture of Sisters Beard and Nash** After the death of Sis. Nash, the remaining four oldest members of the church **were** Sisters Annie Johnson, Melinda Washington, Mattie Bell Seals and Minnie Foster.



### **Major Programs and Community Events**

#### **Annual Revival**

Several weeks after Annual Revival beginning on Monday after the second Sunday in July, those seeking salvation would sit on the front pews “mourning bench”. A conversion “getting religion” the new converts were brought forth to be baptized. People from near and far converged at Grandson Seals’ pond to witness the pastor and several deacons conduct the baptism ceremony. Even people who did not normally attend church would come to witness and often express opinion on which of the new converts “had something” and who did not. With the completion of the 1997 building expansion, which included an indoor pool,

baptism became a part of the regular worship service and less of a community attraction.

### Dinner on The Ground

Before a kitchen was added to our building, some special events were celebrated with food served outside on tables. We called this “Dinner on the Ground”. The ladies would prepare dishes--- greens, pies, peas, chicken, corn, beans, cakes, potato salad---and served these dishes from tables under the trees. Teenagers, especially in the presence of the opposite sex, often pretended not to be hungry and therefore would not eat. Also, it was always interesting to see whose dishes people flocked to; and observe which tables were noticeably avoided.

### Adams/Washington Family Celebration

Over the years, family and community celebration have been a constant thread throughout our growth. These celebrations usually began with family members leading worship service and ended around the dinner table with good food and much needed fellowship. Examples of this celebration included the Washington/Adams celebration held each year in August, the Foster celebration held first Sunday in January and The Cheeks/Seals celebration. These celebrations were attended by relatives and acquaintances and served an enjoyable event that kept friends and families connected.

### Cleaning the Cemetery and Church Fence

Today, the job of upkeep of the cemetery is contracted to Harry Washington, Jr whose father, Harry Washington, Sr served as grave digger for the community for many years, however, prior to contracting this job, the community came together once a year to cut bushes and grass and do whatever other maintenance work necessary. The men and boys did most of the work. People brought their own axes, shovels, hoes, sling blades, pick-forks, saws, etc. The work was long and difficult. The women in the church and community brought food for lunch because the men worked for hours. The young men often dreaded that annual clean-up; where in addition to the hard work, one had to be on constant guard against wasp stings and snakes. After adding the fence during previous renovation, the Laymen and their

sons washed the white wooden fence as a group which created memories and developed long lasting fellowships.

### Family and Friends Day

For many years, the church observed The Twelve Months Program sponsored by Sister Cora Day. That program evolved into what we now call “Families and Friends Day. Each third Sunday of February, families and friends gathered and celebrated their rich culture through song and praise. The program committee chose themes that addressed family concerns. For example, in 2008, Rev Reginald Buckley addressed the audience using the theme “Unity: Families Standing Together. Committed to Faith, Love Peace & Joy Gen 28:14. The committee invited speakers with connection to the church/community. The speakers included reverends: Floyd Chambers, David Jackson, Robert Kelly, Leroy Lacy, Charles Nash, Stanley Perry, Fredrick Walker and JP Walker. The celebration concluded with refreshments with foods like sandwiches, fruits, salads, African cuisines and sometimes a full southern dinner of greens, peas, butterbeans, fried and baked chicken and dressing, steaks, pork chops, potato salad and macaroni & cheese and of course, plain and layered cakes, egg and sweet potato pies and home-made banana pudding. This celebration served as a Homecoming for the many who came to visit.

### Harvest Festival

For years, the church celebrated its annual picnic on the church grounds, at River Bend Park, at a Jackson Bowling Alley and other remote sites. But in more recent years, the picnic moved toward our current annual Harvest Festival held on the first Saturday in October. The first festival, the brain child of Deacon John Wilson, an ardent fisherman, was held October 5, 1997. Deacon John Wilson wanted to share his usual large catch of fish with his church family and the community. The Laymen and Junior Laymen gather early in the morning to set up, fry the fish and barbecue. Each year since 1997, Deacon Wilson has provided the fish and other members have added their favorite dish: Deaconess Gracie Sanders’ famous cakes and cookies; Bro. Paul Caldwell’s fried turkey; Sis Willie Mae



Laster's Rice Krispy treats; Sisters Alice Rae Reed's and Jeanette Cole's spaghetti casseroles. These dishes completed the meal and made the event very enjoyable.

As is practically always the case, central to the well-being and development of this church family have been devoted and dedicated women. Among the many such women that could be cited are the late Deaconess Cora Day and Sister Minnie Foster. Sister Day was at one time one of the teachers at the Pleasant Gift School before it closed in 1962. Additionally, she was an influential deaconess and served as a powerful role-model; and she was blessed to see her only son follow in his father's footsteps as a church deacon and Chairman of the Deacon Board. Sister Minnie Foster, the granddaughter of Melinda Willis, served as a Sunday School teacher for more than 50 years. She personally touched almost every young convert dating back more than half a century. Into her 90's, she continued to serve, absent only by doctor's orders. Whether it is Vacation Bible School, Weekly Bible Study, Mission Meetings – when the church doors opened, Sister Foster was always ready to serve. She, too, has witnessed one of her sons, DD Foster, become Chairman of the Deacon Board, – and of her four sons-in-law, three are deacons and one is a preacher.

**PICTURE** Deaconesses who provided leadership into the 21st century included (l to r) Gracie Sanders, Diane Day, Heloise Rogers, Lillian Wilson and Linda Foster. The youth have always been a major focus of the church leadership, especially the women. Sisters, Lillie Nash, Lillian Whitehead, Cora Day, Desiree McGruder, Lilly Pearl Pugh, Martha Seals, Rosie Day, and Minnie Foster all had a noted and profound influence on the development of young women and men in the church. These leaders trained the youth of the church in public speaking, leading devotion, ushering and other church activities. They took them to local church conventions and served as Christian role models. Today, Sister Diane Day and other church ladies, whose names may not appear here, have accepted the call to train the youth and to serve.



Pleasant Gift's membership has traditionally been rather modest, nevertheless, from her congregation, preachers, teachers, other professionals, and many God-fearing solid citizens have emerged to help make our world better. Inter-generational ties have been a hallmark for much of the history of this congregation. An outstanding example of how intergenerational family commitment has been demonstrated in major leadership roles is the late Junior and Senior Whiteheads, Joe Nathan Day's son Larry L. Day and grandson Larry L. Day II, as well as Robert Seals and son, Trustee, Robert W. Seals. For decades, Charlie Whitehead, Jr, a deacon and leader of the Willing Worker's Society #20 was very active in church matters until his death in 2003, at age 92; and his father, Deacon Charlie Whitehead, Sr., was also a longtime influential leader, during his lifetime from 1882 to 1971. Together theirs was a life span of 129 years; much of which centered around dedicated service to this church and community. Deacon Whitehead, Jr. was a major force in building and sustaining the Laymen movement at Pleasant Gift and in the Madison County Association. Deacon Larry Day, who learned at the feet of his own father, Deacon Joe Nathan Day and Deacon Whitehead Jr., assumed the leadership role of the Laymen movement from Bro. CH Whitehead, Jr. Dr. Day also served as Chairman of the Deacon Board, Sunday School Teacher, President of the Laymen, President of the Male Chorus and First Vice-President of the Madison County Laymen's Association. Because of his keen interest in education and his profound belief that education was the key to the success of young black males, Deacon Day influenced the Laymen at Pleasant Gift to establish the College Scholarship Fund and Christian Training Program for Junior

Laymen. To date, eight students have used this program to supplement their financial requirement. For example, Jamar Caldwell completed a business curriculum and is now employed as a store manager for Walmart Incorporation. After Deacon Day's death in 2009, leadership of the Laymen and the Precinct 526 Mobilized Community Action Group, which Deacon Day co-founded, was passed on to Deacon D.D. Foster and Bro. Kenneth McGruder both with intergenerational ties to church leadership.



Despite its rural setting, Pleasant Gift Church also has been blessed with members from outside the traditional generational divide. During first two decades of the twenty-first century, members joining Pleasant Gift from elsewhere play a vital role in carrying out the spirit of the church "Covenant and principles of God's Word." They included: Deacon and Deaconess Earnest and Gracie Sanders and Brother Willie and Sister Bobbie Killins are examples of this trend. Since joining the congregation, Earnest became active on the Deacon Board, a leader in the Laymen Movement, served as Sunday School teacher and church budget chairman. Gracie assumed a leading role in the fellowship ministry, started the first Newsletter and revived the annual Vacation Bible School. Willie and Bobbie became active in the laymen Movement and Mission Society, respectively and

Bobbie also worked with Vacation School and taught classes in the Madison County Association of Christian Education when needed. Also joining the church are Brother Arthur and Sister Jessie Johnson and Sister Deborah Caldwell and son, Jamar. Both Deborah and Arthur were active choir members.

### 2009 Pictured—Wilson, Sanders, Pastor Bartee, Rogers, D D Foster and Day

For more than a hundred and sixty years, Pleasant Gift has survived and thrived. Dr. E C Foster and Vernell Day Ingram, whose family roots in the church span more than one hundred years, did the following tribute on the occasion of the 150th Church Anniversary Celebration. The tribute is an ample summation of the church history and rich tradition

Dr Foster writes:

*Truly, God has blessed us to be here at this place for a Century and a half. Through slavery; through the cruelty of segregation; through a time of muddy roads, and dust sometimes so thick it would take ones breath away; and, yes, the fire on November 14, 1914, which burned the building to the ground. By the wonderful grace of God we are still here—probably stronger than ever before. Many of us present here remember times when we could not vote; today the church fellowship hall is an official voting precinct site. We thank God for all that He has brought us through. We thank God for all the leaders He has given us and for all the devoted souls whose dedicated service enable us to be where we are today. Certainly, we must thank God for the current under shepherd He has given us during the last quarter century; and for hopefully many years to come. Time will not permit a detailed discussion on the impact our current pastor, Rev. Bartee, has had in our growth and development.... His total dedication to the wellbeing of this church family is a true blessing... leaving no doubt about his commitment to do God's work as the leader of this historic flock. Ultimately, of course, to God be the glory.*

*With our legacy from a Bush Harbor in 1850, to Pleasant Gift today, we can see that much spiritual fruit has been planted and harvested. But there is still work to be done— and we must work while it is still day. For as we are told in the Bible: "the night cometh, when no man can work." John 9:4. On this Christian journey let us join hand in hand always guided by God's unchanging hand... ever striving*



*to reach the promised land. To this historic church family and its many friends, I leave you with this challenge: pray, love one another and do God's Will; working and marching onward until we each hear the Master say "Well done" – "Well done."*

Vernell Day Ingram message centers around her early years. She writes:

*My parents introduced me to life in the Pleasant Gift Community before I fully knew myself. On Sundays, we would walk west on Robinson Road, past The Old Graveyard where we turned left and made our way across the property of Pat and Molly Williams. The path led us passed the men's Out House on to the church ground. At that point, we stopped dusted ourselves and sometimes changed shoes if it was muddy. Each Sunday, we made this trip and each Sunday, we would greet Brother Sonny Adams, deacon and superintendent, who was always there. Sometimes, we would ride with Brother Charlie Whitehead, Sr., and wife in their T-Model Ford...so exciting.*

*Sunday School lasted for about two (2) hours and combine that with worship service, we started our walk back home after 3pm. Following the days of the older generation (Charlie Whitehead, Sr, Sonny Adams and many others came three men who were at the helm as the church made major changes. These men, my father, Joe Nathan Day, Charlie Whitehead, Jr and John Wesley "Whit" Pugh were instrumental in getting electricity and gas installed and they also they made sure that church events began and ended on schedule. Even though these men had no formal training, they were wise and insightful. They appreciated what their forefathers and at the same time, they were wise enough to build on that legacy. They came! They saw! They conquered!*

*On those Sundays, I was taught the importance of church and community. Black churches provided African Americans a safe place for spiritual growth and self-expression. My experience at Pleasant Gift church inspired me to dream of an exciting new life. I watched my father, Joe Day, and many others plan for better days. I realize that EC and I are only one generation removed from his mother, Minnie Foster and my father & mother, Joe & Cora Day, and yet we are still using their lessons as roadmaps. To the leaders and members of this historic*

*establishment, you are building on a firm foundation, and it is your responsibility to continue to inspire others to dream as our forefathers did.*

Churches have always been a lifeline for people during difficult times and Pleasant Gift Church is no exception. The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be one of those times, and the church has been forced to adapt in many ways in order to continue its ministry. Despite the challenges churches and pastors have faced, many are looking to the future with hope and optimism. At Pleasant Gift, it is our hope that our church will emerge stronger from the pandemic as our leaders seek and embrace new methods to connect with our members. When public health orders limited in person gatherings beginning in March 2020, churches faced significant challenges moving worship services to the online platform.. The technology to meet remotely proved a blessing to many, To meet the needs of our congregation, we were forced to use electronic communication through Facebook to communicate and facilitate the teaching and preaching of the Word of God. To date, our adult Sunday School Class uses the Zoom Conference platform which offers our older to members a choice when needed while the youth meet in person. When we renovated our video department, we were not planning for a pandemic but because we continue to follow our forefathers' "forward thinking philosophy" we were blessed to continue our ministries when difficult times occurred..

# ***The Administrative Staff***

## **Pastor**

Joseph Bartee, Sr

## **Deacons**

Larry L Day, II

Willie Earl Ford

DD Foster, Chairman

Lonnie Rogers

John W. Wilson

## **Trustees**

Earlean Cheeks

Henry Day

Robert W. Seals

## **Deaconesses**

Diane S. Day

KaShonda A. Day

Mary Washington Ford

Linda Foster

Helois Foster Rogers

Lillian Foster Wilson

## **Sunday School Superintendent**

Lonnie Rogers

## **Church Secretary**

Helois Foster Rogers

## **Minister of Music**

Jimmy Brown

## **Usher Board**

Percy L. Cheeks

Morzell Foster

Randy Perry

Catherine Wilson, President

## **Auxiliaries and Organizations**

Junior Matrons

Laymen

Missionary Society

Sunday School Teachers