

HISTORY OF SILOAM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In 1844 a group of people gathered for spiritual fellowship, study and community good in a meeting place on Washington Street (now Dickinson Street). They called themselves Siloam Presbyterian Mission, after the name of the pool in Jerusalem where flowed the waters of the spring Gihon, intended for the city's supply. It began under the sponsorship of the First Presbyterian Church of Elizabeth.

In a time before public education, a school was soon established and after Sunday church services volunteer teachers spent the entire day teaching the rudiments of elementary education.

In 1850 the population of Elizabethtown grew and a public school system was formed, and took over the running of the church school. In 1854 the Elizabethtown African colonization society was quite active with a purpose of helping its members to return to Africa.

In 1866, the Siloam Presbyterian Mission officially became incorporated as Siloam Presbyterian Church. Some of the members of First Presbyterian Church transferred to Siloam. In 1871, a sanctuary was built on land deeded to the Presbytery in trust for the exclusive use of Siloam Presbyterian Church.

The first minister of the congregation was Rev. John H. Jackson. He pastored the church from 1867 to 1870. Other ministers who served in the early days were Rev. Reed, Rev. Hall, Rev. Lynch, Rev. Carr, and Dr. John H. Pingry, a minister and educator who also founded the Pingry School. Rev. George S. Stark from Princeton University came to the church in 1902. He later left to pastor at the Siloam Church in Brooklyn. Others followed. Rev. Shaeffer, Rev. Morrow, Rev. Bonfield, and Rev. Freeman.

In 1919 the Rev. S. D. Turner came to Siloam to a congregation of 30, with only 15 members active. The Sunday School was small and the only society in the church was the Ladies' Aid. The work had dwindled due to the illness and death of Rev. Freeman.

Rev. Turner was an energetic man. He made the church an asset to the community. New church groups were organized, The Lend-a-Hand, Have a Purpose, Phyllis Wheatley, and the Darby Brotherhood.

A Day Nursery for the care of children whose mothers had to work, a playground and an employment office were part of the church. The membership increased to 97 at the time of the death of Rev. Turner.

Rev. Charles Trusty, Rev. Y. S. Thompson, Rev. Robert Shirley were pastors from 1928 to 1957. In 1958 Rev. James L. Smith became pastor of the church. For twenty months he left at one point and pastored the Weequahic Presbyterian Church in Newark. Upon his return he served until his death in 1975, a total of 16 years.

On April 21, 1977, Rev. William F. Hawkins, Sr. was called to serve as Pastor. He later became the Pastor of the Siloam Hope Presbyterian Church until his death in 1997.

HISTORY OF HOPE MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In 1874, Hope became a "Mission." In 1894 Hope became a "Chapel." In 1925, Hope became a "Church" and this date marks one-half of the reason for our celebration today.

On a quiet Sunday afternoon in February, 1974, a group of 32 Christians gathered in a little school-house on Catherine Street, near East Grand, to hold a service. A group of members of the Third Presbyterian Church sponsored the mission and shortly after its inception the trustees purchased a building known as the Wolverton School and moved it from East Jersey Street to Olive Street where the Chapel began. Toward the end of 1885 it was decided that the care of the chapel be placed in the hands of the Westminster Presbyterian Church and at that time the property on Olive Street was purchased and the Hope Chapel built.

About 1910, the growth of the congregation and work of Hope Chapel had made it evident to many that facilities available at the Chapel were entirely inadequate for the work and plans were put under way to obtain larger and more suitable quarters. After sufficient funds were raised a new and modern church at Olive and Spring Streets. The corner stone was laid on August 10th, 1912. The Chapel was moved across the street during this time and was incorporated into the structure as the second floor gym. The new Chapel was dedicated on June 15, 1913. All the while it remained under the supervision of its "mother" church, the Westminster Presbyterian Church. During this time Hope was served by Rev. Carrington, Rev. MacKubbin, and Rev. Hamilton.

Autonomy for the Chapel was discussed over a period of years and by 1925 the people of Hope Memorial felt that they were strong enough to manage their own affairs. With the happy and combined efforts of both Westminster and Hope, Presbytery authorized the Hope Memorial Presbyterian Church, under Rev. Hamilton. He served for over 25 years, beloved by all, not least because he was a one-legged man, and preached using a crutch.

After Rev. Laurie's brief time as acting pastor, on May 19, 1927, Rev. John B. Crowell was installed. He was to serve for the next 58 years, one of the longest pastorates on record in the Presbyterian Church. In the 1930s Hope had annual boat excursions to Rye Beach in New York, to raise funds. And for many years it had fairs which lasted two-three days. There were decorated booths in the second floor gym where handmade items and baked goods were sold. Rev. Crowell died in . He was known as the congregation's spiritual adviser, friend, and counselor, and that "His Christian character is a living example of a life dedicated to the work of serving the Master."

History of Siloam-Hope Presbyterian Church

Rev. Dr. William F. Hawkins, Sr. was the first Pastor of the newly merged church in January, 1986. During his tenure the churches became one through the friendships formed in our common life in Christ.

Old organizations, like the Siloam Busy Bees, became a part of the Women's Association, and also formed our present Hummingbirds who sit around the fireside discussing ways to improve the building and grounds of the church and raise funds to that end. We also developed outreach ministries, opening our doors to the community through the use of the church by the city's Baby Keepwell doctor and nurses' station for our neighborhood's infants and young children health needs; and by Narcotics Anonymous on Tuesday evenings. Moreover, we mothered several new churches into existence: a Haitian church, a Portuguese church called End Time Ministries, now on First Street, and the Bodies of Christ Ministries.

On November 23, 1996, we were all pleased to honor Rev. Hawkins with "An Appreciation Day Celebration." It was attended by many in the church and community, and Rev. Joseph Garlic, the Director of the Elizabethport Center, was the main speaker. Rev. Hawkins was honored as a humble and spiritual man, held in fond appreciation by all.

Sadly, in August of 1998, our beloved Pastor Hawkins went home after a long illness. Just a few months later, in November of that year, we heard of Pastor John Crowell's passing in his retirement in Oregon. Rev. Joseph Garlic, newly retired, became the Stated Supply Pastor at that time. We were fortunate to have his able leadership at such a grievous, and vulnerable time in our lives. He served until April of 1999.

Rev. Charles A. Maxell, Sr., another Honorably Retired Presbyterian minister, became our Interim Pastor at that time and we were again fortunate to be able to enjoy another capable ministry among us. And in April of 2000 Rev. Douglas Grote began his ministry here as Interim Pastor.