

St. John's Baptist Church

Our History

1878 – 2025



In the year 1878, a hundred and forty-seven years ago, a determined group of Black men and women gathered in unity and deemed the necessity to assemble in a common place to give thanks, praise, and worship to our Lord and Savior.

St. John's Baptist Church was organized as a mission and recognized in 1878. Services were held in an old blacksmith's shop located at the corner of Wahsatch and Cimarron Streets. In 1887, almost ten years later, St. John's Baptist Church was incorporated, and a seal was procured.

The church and a parsonage were erected at 227 Pueblo Avenue with rocks brought on the back of wagons and by hand to set the foundation. So determined were they that under the direction of Reverend Clifford Gladden, the dream through hard work and faith in God, became a living reality. The construction lasted through the year 1907. A coal stove and modern gaslights were symbols of success.



As people moved west, the church membership increased and so did segregation. St. John's Baptist Church became the home of Black worshippers. In an effort to bury their dead, members purchased thirty-five lots in the Evergreen Cemetery.

Seven pastors later, a tragedy came upon the congregation when one Sunday night in August 1952, at the close of service the church was partially destroyed by fire. Services were temporarily held in the Colorado Community Center. Eleven more pastors would accept the call to lead the flock of St. John's Baptist Church, with lengths of pastoral service ranging from three weeks to forty-seven years. St. John's remained at the Pueblo Avenue location until moving to its present location.

Reverend Milton E. Proby became the pastor of St. John's Baptist Church in 1958. Within two years of his pastoral leadership and following a careful study for a new location, the property at Prospect and Fountain was purchased. In September 1969, the doors opened for services at 902 South Prospect Street and since that time, many

people and ministries have passed through this church.

St. John's Baptist Church has remained active with the Colorado Baptist Southern District Association, the Western States Baptist Convention, and the National Baptist Convention USA Incorporated. Under the leadership of Pastor Proby, the Food Bank Ministry was established in 2000 with an addition to the building that continues to serve our community. The name was changed to The Milton E Proby Food Bank in 2024.

On May 21, 2005, the Lord called our beloved Pastor, Rev. Dr. M. E. Proby home after serving St. John's for more than forty-seven years. During the years since his passing, the Lord has continued to bless us in many ways. In October 2014, the congregation led under the pastoral leadership of Reverend Calvin Johnson burned the Mortgage on the building at 902 South Prospect Street.

In June of 2017, St. John's licensed two women ministers who have stood in the gap serving faithfully through several transitional periods. Both are daughters of this ministry and have established roots at St. John's as well as the community.



As the members of St. John's continue to "faith" forward in steadfast prayer, we are forever grateful and thankful that the LORD has blessed us to serve His people and this community for 147 years. In 2023, Pastor John W. Richardson, Jr. was called to shepherd St. John's. He, along with his lovely family, have been a blessing to this Ministry. Pastor Richardson is

future-focused and eagerly anticipates , God's omnipresence. God who is not bound by time, for He created time, has the collective best interests of this church family in mind. We cannot wait to see what the future holds!



Pastors that have served at St. John's Baptist Church:

Reverend Clifford Gladden	1897 – 1905
Reverend Johnson	1905 – 1907
Reverend Tillmore	1907- 1913
Reverend W. B. M. Scott	1914 – 1914
Reverend B. Allard Smith	1915 – 1918
Reverend P. A. Pinckney	1918 – 1923
Reverend James Kelley	1923 – 1925
Reverend F. O. Brown	1928 – 1929
Reverend Price Kentucky	3 Weeks
Dr. Augusta Jones	1931 – 1932
Rev. Dr. G. W. Prince	1932 – 1933
Reverend Short	1934 – 1934
Reverend C. A. Miller	1935 – 1945
Reverend S. C. Williams	1945 – 1946
Reverend S. S. Smith	1946 – 1950
Reverend James A. Meador	1951 – 1955
Reverend Elray Johnson	1956 – 1958
Rev. Dr. Milton E. Proby	1958 – 2005
Reverend Willie J. Sutton, Jr.	2007- 2011
Reverend Thomas B. McCray, Sr.	2013
Reverend Calvin Johnson	2013-2015
Reverend Arthur Landfair, Jr.	2016 - 2018
Reverend Martin L. Felder	2019 - 2021
Reverend Thomas B. McCray, Sr.	2021 – 2023
Reverend John W. Richardson, Jr.	2023 - Present

Note: This is a brief history of St. John's Baptist Church