**The History of the Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church**

**Established 1891**

The Jerusalem Missionary Baptist church has historically been a source of hope and strength for the local African American in the Grover community of St. George, SC. This church was founded by a group of individuals who formerly were members of the Bethel Baptist Church in the Texas community of St. George, SC.

Jerusalem was organized in 1891 by families living in the Grover Community. A small group of young people began to have church service under a bush arbor and were soon joined by some of the elders in the community under the leadership of the late Reverend William Billy Holmes, who became Jerusalem’s first pastor. They banded together and raised the walls of Jerusalem Baptist Church. The Reverend William B. Holmes name will continue to ring on to this day in Jerusalem. His family members are yet today members of this great church (Jerusalem Baptist Church). Mrs. Bernell Holmes Heyward, and Mrs. Lillie R. Holmes Utsey and their families, (Heyward, Utsey, Jenkins, and Lemon) carry the Holmes blood line in Jerusalem.

The original building, a wood frame structure, was destroyed by a fierce storm in 1953 that tore through the Grover/ St. George, SC area. Service was then held in the small wooden school house whose remains still stands across the street from the church. The new sanctuary was completed in 1958 by African American tradesmen from the community, and is the current beautiful brick building that houses a warm spiritual membership today. In the history of Jerusalem there has been one church birth from it which is known as the Oakman Branch Missionary Baptist Church.

Jerusalem has been blessed with strong leaders and families who have banded together to provide a nurturing environment for the growth of their faith in God.

God has provided Jerusalem with many great pastors who left indelible imprints on the church and its members. These pastors include the following:

Reverend William Billy Holmes

Reverend W.W. Owens

Reverend Charlie Cobbs

Reverend Jim Adams

Reverend Charlie Coger

Reverend Barnwell

Reverend S.B. Rickenbacker

Reverend John L. Jenkins

Reverend Norman Wilson

Reverend R. E. Shaw

Reverend J. S. Utsey

Reverend C. L. Ulmer

Reverend S. B. Marshall

Reverend W. W. Wines

Reverend General Britt, Jr.

Reverend Randy Simmons

The Reverend General Britt, Jr. has been the longest serving pastor in the history of Jerusalem (30 yrs.) and he led the church to many milestones.

The Reverend Randy Simmons whom was installed as pastor on September 13, 2009 is the currently serving pastor, with a vision to move the church forward by standing on Gods promises. Under his leadership Jerusalem is continuing to impact the community. The church motto is “A Life Changing Experience” with God. They are currently operating a food pantry that feeds families twice a month and giving back to the community with a free all-day May-fest. On April 28, 2013 the first cornerstone was laid on the church.

On October 25, 2015 Jerusalem licensed Sister Edith Duggins the first woman into the ministry in the history of the church. There have been many improvements to the church as well as the spiritual well-being of Jerusalem, which is an ongoing effort. Jerusalem has been recognized for its time in history with letters of congratulations from the state (SC) Governor Nikki R. Haley, the Mayor of the town of St. George, SC Mrs. Ann Johnston, Dorchester County of SC Councilman (District No. 1) Mr. Willie R. Davis, and SC Senator (District No. 39) Mr. John W. Matthews, Jr.

We believe that greater is yet to come, and we will always be grateful to the small band of dedicated Christians who saw the need for a spiritual home in the Grover Community and the dedication to keep the spirit alive for the past 124 years. With the help of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Jerusalem will continue to grow and prosper, and we will continue to build on this solid foundation. **We say to God be the Glory!!!!!**