

Francis Burns United Methodist Church History

It was in the fall of 1961, a survey was initiated by the Reverend I. Dequincy Newman, Field Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and an active member of the SC Conference of the Methodist Church, along with the Board of Missions of Wesley United Methodist Church to determine the need for a new church in the Northeast section of Columbia, SC. With the approval of the Board of Missions and other Methodist churches, our first worship service was held on January 14, 1962, at the Fairwood Elementary School in Columbia.

In February 1962, our chartering ceremony was conducted by our District Superintendent, Rev. William M. Stokes, and Rev F. G. Dubois, Pastor of Wesley Church where the ceremony was held. The chartering members of the church were Rev. I. Dequincy Newman, Mrs. Ann Newman, Mr. John Gass, Mrs. Sarah Gass, Morris Newman, Mrs. Emma Abel, Kevin Abel, Miss Elizabeth McMickle, Mr. Stanley Marshall, Mrs. Verdella Marshall, Mrs. Margaret McNeely, Mrs. Ola Wakefield, Mrs. Bernice Chess, Mrs. Surleaner Murray, Mrs. Olivia Naudin, Mrs. Elizabeth Moore, Rev. Alonzo Harley, Mrs. Lillie Woods, John Gass, Jr., Gregory Gass, Mr. Theodore Murray, and Willie Lee Murray.

Our first elected officers were Mr. John Gass, Sr., Mrs. Emma Abel, Mrs. Ann P. Newman, Judge Matthew Perry, Ms. Elizabeth McMickle, Mrs. Sarah Gass and Mrs. Margaret McNeely. Members of the Trustee Board were Mr. Joseph Hope, Mr. Claude McCollom and Mr. Vernon Spells, all members of Wesley Church in Columbia, SC. Until the site at the corner of Koon and Ames Road was purchased in February 1963, worship services were held at the homes of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Gass and Reverend and Mrs. I DeQuincy Newman.

The name Francis Burns was designated to honor and perpetuate the name of the first African American to be elevated to the episcopacy of the Methodist Church. Reverend Burns a native of Albany, New York, was a highly intelligent and highly cultivated man of considerable talent, a former teacher, and ultimately a dedicated minister of the gospel was elected bishop in 1805. He served in the mission conference of Liberia, West Africa.

Until the site at Koon and Ames Roads was purchased in February of 1963, the worship services were held at the homes of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Gass and Reverend and Mrs. I. DeQuincey Newman. On April 7, 1963, a formal opening service was held in a house on the site.

Francis Burns' growth from 1963 to 1968, paralleled the Methodist Church's process of eliminating the Central Jurisdiction.

From the time of conception, Reverend Newman served as pastor of Francis Burns United Methodist Church, until 1964. In May 1964, the work was continued, and the edifice was built and completed under the ministry of Reverend Samuel Gadsden. On October 2, 1966, formal dedication ceremonies were held for the completed church. In June 1972, Reverend John W. Robinson was appointed pastor, and under his conscientious and dedicated leadership, FBUMC purchased a parsonage and paid off the mortgage, one year before it was due.

In May 1976, Reverend William. M. Stokes was appointed and served until his death in July 1983. Reverend H. Samuel Johnson served as interim pastor until the appointment of the Reverend Edward H. McDowell, Jr. in October 1983. Under Reverend McDowell's leadership plans were made for a new edifice.

On January 16, 1994, the members of FBUMC made a Pilgrimage from the Ames Road Church to the new and beautiful edifice for the first worship service. On June 16, 1997, the Reverend Mack C. McClam was appointed the new spiritual leader of FBUMC, and Reverend Leatha Brown was appointed the first associate pastor in 2006. In 2008, Dr. Thomas J. Bowman was appointed pastor, and Dr. Shelia Elliott was appointed the associate pastor, with Reverend John Pearson assisting them. Francis Burns was blessed to engage in a mortgage-burning celebration on May 30, 2010.

In June of 2021, the Reverend Ernest Etheredge was appointed the new leader of Francis Burns United Methodist Church. Reverend Etheredge served faithfully until his retirement in June of 2016. In June 2016, the Reverend James Friday was appointed as the spiritual leader of Francis Burns United Methodist Church and was assisted by the Reverend Martin Luther Quick. Reverend Friday and Reverend Quick served until June of 2019 when Francis Burns United Methodist Church received its first female senior pastor the Reverend Geneva Stafford. Under her leadership, the church and its over thirty ministries continue to grow and provide strong Christian leadership in Columbia, South Carolina.