

Good Morning Christian Friends,

Today New Hope celebrates 46 years of being a 'beacon' light in the city of East Orange welcoming lost souls to Christ. We keep hearing Rev. Williams talk about signs, miracles, and wonders. guess what you're sitting in a miracle church. Over these last few years, some had counted us out and didn't think we were going to survive as a church but God had other plans for us. It is my esteemed honor to give you the condensed version of New Hope's rich history within the next few minutes.

New Hope was built solely on love, trust, and faith in God, when 41 humble, baptized believers, filled with the Holy Spirit split from Mt. Olive Bapt. Church in East Orange under the pastorate of Rev. Russell Fox in 1977. The reason for the split was that Rev. Fox dismissed the Deacon Board. For several weeks, our founding members met in the homes of Deacon James McLeod, Chair and Deacon Willie Beard, Vice Chair to discuss continuing fellowship with one another. At their final meeting on Oct. 30, 1977, they decided to form a church and call it New Hope Baptist Church of East Orange. The first offering taken was \$54.40, the first officers were named, and the first ministries and committees were formed.

Our founding members prayed that God would help them find a place to worship and in a month or so the newly formed congregation found a home at Upsala College's Christ Chapel, East Orange. They were led there by Rev. Wilton Gyant, a friend of Deacon Beard, who worked at the college. New Hope's first service was held on Sunday, Nov. 6, 1977 and about 100 people joined that day. (including me) Prior to getting a Pastor, the Deacons made sure that different ministers came to preach on Sundays. The seven member Adult Choir, attired in long black skirts and white blouses sang every Sunday. Numerous services were also held at Calvary Baptist Church,EO

One year later, 5 Deacons put up their homes as collateral to purchase our first sanctuary, located at 144 Norman Street, which was being used as Upsala College's Art Studio. New Hope members became the laughing stock of the community as some thought it couldn't be done. Members worked well into the wee hours of the morning, cleaning and preparing the building for worship. The first pews that looked like theater seats came from a Catholic Church in New York that had a fire and were cleaned with Easy Off Oven Cleaner. The first organ came from the Christian Scientist Church in East Orange that was closing and it is still in the Chapel today. On Sunday, Oct. 29, 1978, New Hope members, friends and family members along with city officials and others marched down Prospect Street to its new home.

New Hope's first pastor, the Rev. Leonidas B. Young, a native of Richmond, Va was installed on Sunday, May 4, 1978. He had been the pastor of the historic Bethel Bapt. Church in Gloucester, Va and was introduced to the New Hope family by Deacon J. Henry Phillips. Rev. Young's tenure with New Hope lasted for 10 years. During that time a 2nd service was added (8:00 A.M.) to accommodate New Hope's growing congregation. Several additional choirs were formed.(8:00,

Mass Choir, Youth Choir, Male Chorus, Voices of Hope). The church's motto became "Come Grow With Us" and church programs flourished. The church's 1st mortgage was paid off on April 13, 1986, in less than 10 years which was a surprise to many. Rev. Toney E. Jackson, served as Rev. Young's Special Assistant to the Pastor for 8 years.

Rev. Young decided to leave New Hope and relocate back to his home in Richmond, Va. He preached his farewell sermon on November 26, 1989 thus causing NH to have an empty void to fill. As time progressed Rev. Moses A. Knott, Pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, Hackensack was named Interim Pastor. On May 28, 1991, Rev. Knott was installed as New Hope's 2nd pastor. His tenure was short lived and he was dismissed as pastor. He preached his farewell sermon on Nov. 15, 1992. When Rev. Knott left, he took numerous members with him and they formed Imani Baptist Church of Christ, East Orange and later Nia Fellowship Baptist Church, West Orange.

Rev. Dwight D. Gill, Pastor of Cedar Rock Bapt. Church, Castalia, NC was introduced to the New Hope family by Deacon Samuel Harrison and his wife, Deaconess Susan Harrison. It was love at first sight for the New Hope family. Rev. Gill was installed as New Hope's 3rd pastor on August 23, 1993. Rev. Gill's tenure with New Hope lasted for 25 years in which the church continued to grow physically, spiritually, and financially. The church's motto changed from "Moving from Mission to Ministry" to "Striving in Unity to Win Souls for Christ Through Love and Service" and a 5:00 Service was added to accommodate the membership.

A ceremonial groundbreaking service complete with a balloon launch took place on Sunday, Nov. 7, 1999 which was Chaired by Sister Greta Shepherd and CoChaired by myself. The ribbon cutting for our present sanctuary, took place on Feb. 17, 2005. The entire building process took less time than what was expected thanks to the prayerful efforts of the Building Committee whose Chairs were Dr. James Wilkerson and Sister Denise Brooks along with Brothers Frank Fraser, Greg Matthews, and Robert Ross. There were some that didn't think that New Hope would get the money to build a new sanctuary but God intervened like he always does.

In 2018, Rev. Thurselle C. Williams was hired as New Hope's first Executive Pastor. She is a well known teacher and much sought after preacher in the area. She helped Rev. Gill with the day to day operations ...etc. of New Hope and continues to serve in that capacity. (and sometimes in more than one role) We give honor and thanks to the angel of our house for helping to keep our church family together and getting us back on track. We look forward to what God has in store for her.

Members were surprised by Rev. Gill when he announced at a church meeting on June 21, 2016 that he was retiring because he wanted to become a global missionary and write a book. After several joyous retirement celebrations, Rev. Dwight D. Gill preached his farewell sermon on Sunday, Sept. 30, 2018 after 25 years of dedicated service to New Hope. Once again, New Hope had an empty void to fill.

A Pastor's Search Committee was formed and Sis. Michelle Softley was elected Chair. She and her committee had the task of looking for another pastor. Members prayed that God would send them the right shepherd. New Hope members were instantly hooked when Dr. Vernard E. Hinton of Chesapeake, Va came back to NH to preach a 2nd time on Sept. 2, 2018. On Dec. 17, 2018, 86% of the membership voted for Dr. Hinton to become New Hope's 4th pastor. Dr. Hinton started off by coming for Watch Night and by commuting back and forth for 4 months prior to becoming installed. The Transition Team Chaired by Deacon Deriadre Brewster Reyes made sure that Dr. Hinton had the necessary information that he needed in order to make a smooth transition.

Dr. Vernard E. Hinton was installed as New Hope's 4th pastor on Sunday, May 5, 2019. He initiated the church's motto "Igniting Hope and Empowering People" and was responsible for New Hope having a logo and being put on various forms of social media. His main goals were Effective, Efficient, and Excellent as he strived for New Hope to be the church that God would have it to be. During his pastorate New Hope grew physically, financially, and spiritually.

New Hope's doors physically closed the 2nd Sunday in March 2020 due to the pandemic. During that time our hearts were broken due to the loss of many New Hope members, family members, and friends. However, Dr. Hinton and his wife, First Lady Tracey Hinton broadcasted Sunday Services, Wednesday Night Bible Study, and Noon Day Prayer from their home. The Praise Team kept the music going on Sundays.

At a Emergency Church Meeting held on October 1, 2021, members were stunned to learn that the Deacons had decided not to renew Dr. Hinton's contract, which expired Dec. 31, 2021. This decision rocked the very core of the church. As storms have come and gone through out the years, members have always prayed and stood strong in their faith and trusted that God would make a way.

New Hope has always been known as a friendly, caring, family and service oriented church with over 25 ministries for its members to be involved in. It has also been known for good singing, good preaching, and being well known in the community. Through the years New Hope's theme song has become "We've Come This Far By Faith".

Rev. Young, Rev. Jackson, and Rev. Knott along with most of our founding members have passed away. Of the original 41 founding members only 6 are still with us. 4 remain at New Hope (Louretta Boyd, Trustee Emeritus Idell Germany, Olivia Jackson, and Trustee Emeritus Jeanette Parker) and 2 have relocated (Carolyn Jackson and Arnold Rogers). Trustees Idell Germany & Jeanette Parker retired from the Trustee Board in January of 2021 and both were named Emeritus Trustees.

Without our 41 founding members there would be no New Hope. There are only a few of us left who joined New Hope the first Sunday in November 1977 or came later that year that remain active in the church. Some have relocated, some are deceased, and some no longer attend.

Sister Jeanne Suggs is the only original Sunday School teacher left and she taught up to when the church closed during the pandemic. Emeritus Trustee Jeanette Parker is the only original choir member who was still singing up until the time the church closed.

New Hope's 46 year journey, hasn't always been easy. Each pastor came with his own preaching style, teaching ability, leadership qualities, and charisma with the membership. Each pastor played a significant role in New Hope's growth and development for which we are truly humbled and sincerely thank you. Under each pastorate New Hope flourished physically, financially, spiritually and ministries flourished. After each pastor left there was always an empty void to fill as hearts were saddened. Some even left New Hope after their favorite pastor left, some to return, others never to come back or an undertaker rolled some in and some out.

New Hope's main premise has always been about worshipping God from its early beginnings until now. Because of that, our Deacons have made sure that there is a minister in the pulpit on Sundays to bring us the Word. At a church meeting held on Saturday, October 29th, 2022 another Pastor's Search Committee was approved by the church and Sister Francine Finley was appointed Chair. Members are praying that God will send us the right shepherd.

New Hope's doors reopened the 2nd Sunday in March 2022 after being closed for almost two years and God hasn't stopped blessing us yet. During the pandemic our Food Pantry continued to feed the hungry and those in need. Although we may have left the building, God's spirit has remained which is obvious as we've had some spirit filled services. Members and friends are coming back while others opt to watch online via Facebook or other social media. Ministries are beginning to restart themselves. Ain't no stopping us now because God has too many blessings in store for us.

In closing, members please keep in mind these four things;

As long as we keep the Faith, there will always be a New Hope.

As long as we have Hope, there will always be a New Hope.

As long as we keep our Joy, there will always be a New Hope

And most importantly, as long as we keep Jesus as the central focus of New Hope there will always be a New Hope.

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