

The Greater Solid Rock Baptist Church

“From Where God Has Brought Us”

(1923-2015)

In 1923, The Solid Rock Baptist Church was organized in the home of The Reverend and Sister B. Randall. Reverend Thomas, Reverend Tener, and many others were a part of this organization. Tradition has it that the church name was suggested by Sister Alberta Randall. The newly formed Solid Rock Missionary Baptist Church met in a rented house located at Grady Avenue and Glenn Street. On October 18, 1923, The Reverend J.W. Calhoun was called to the pastorate of the church. He served until December 22, 1923.

On January 2, 1924, Solid Rock Baptist Church called The Reverend G.L. Spears as pastor. There was continued growth under his dynamic leadership, which necessitated moving into a larger facility. With some 100 members on roll, the congregation moved into its Farrington Avenue sanctuary. The church, its members praying consistently, continued to grow.

In January 1926, the pastor and deacons asked the church to ordain The Reverend E.D. James to serve as assistant pastor. His duty was to assist the Mothers in their programs and serve in the absence of the pastor. Reverend Spears served as pastor until January, 1927. Reverend James led the church as an interim pastor until a new minister was named.

On March 4, 1927, the church called The Reverend S.M. Johnson. He served until May 1927, when he was called to eternal rest. On August 5, 1927, the church called The Reverend P.T. Steels as its leader. Reverend Steels served until March 1929, the time at which the congregation discovered that it had not rightly acquired the Farrington Avenue property. The returning owners laid claim to the property. As this was happening, Reverend Steels left the congregation.

The decade of the 20's was coming to a close and struggles had begun to occur within the congregation. In 1929, the congregation was forced to move from its Farrington Avenue location. Thus, there was no place to worship and no minister. A faithful few, believing and trusting in God, rented the second floor of a building at Martin and Love Streets in Summerhill where they held their Worship Services. Eventually, The Reverend Wilkes was called to the pastorate of the church. Reverend Wilkes did not remain at Solid Rock very long.

The Reverend E.D. James, Sr., fulfilled the role of acting pastor, a role he played many times in his long association with the church.

On August 27, 1929, The Reverend J.L. Russell was called to pastor the congregation and served until June 2, 1930. On August 20, 1930, the church called The Reverend W.M. Tucker as its leader. The church began to grow again. Under his leadership, the congregation purchased a building located 747 Reed Street, in the Summerhill Community. The purchase of this site took place on November 30, 1930. Reverend Tucker served until December 7, 1932. From June 5, 1933 and during the Depression, The Reverend A.L. Humphrey served the congregation.

Weathering various storms, strong leadership came from within the congregation. The congregation converted the structure at 747 Reed Street from a house into a church. Here the congregation had periods of growth and decline. The faithful held on and in spite of circumstances, improvements were made and the mortgage was paid. Reverend Humphrey's service was surrendered in July 1942. The church called The Reverend N. Davie. He served until November, 1944. The congregation then called The Reverend W.J. Cox in March, 1945. Under his leadership, the church increased its membership and became active in a number of associations. Reverend Cox remained with the church until October 7, 1949.

The Reverend J.H. Sanders served the church briefly as pastor from May 5, 1950 until August 3, 1951. Following Reverend Sanders was The Reverend G.L. Shaw, who served as pastor from November 30, 1951 until death in 1966. The church, while under Reverend Shaw's leadership, once again began to grow. The "new" members became active as the congregation continued to make improvements upon the structure.

Upon Reverend Shaw's death, The Reverend L.C. Robinson was called to guide the congregation. Under his leadership, the congregation acquired a new edifice in which to worship, located at 88 Martin Avenue in South Atlanta. The congregation entered its new sanctuary on April 19, 1970. The name of the Church was changed to The Greater Solid Rock Baptist Church in order to indicate its progression and optimism of the congregation. In 1976, The Reverend Robinson resigned as pastor.

The congregation called and ordained a young man who was serving as director of the choir, The Reverend B. Copeland. Reverend Copeland led the congregation from 1976 until 1979.

For six months, the church was without a minister. In June, 1979, the congregation installed The Reverend W.O. DeVaughn as its pastor. In October 1980, Dr. John W Waters was asked by the congregation to assume responsibility for the ministry of the church. He served the church in this capacity through August 31, 2005.

During the year 1985, the congregation decided to relocate. The target date was set for November, 1988. However, in the spring of 1986, the congregation decided to enter into negotiations to purchase the property at 6280 Camp Road in Riverdale, Georgia. Committing itself to hard work and prayer, the congregation began to worship on Camp Road on Sunday, May 18, 1986. Papers to purchase were signed August 15, 1986.

Under capable leadership in its present location, The Greater Solid Rock Baptist Church was reorganized with a primary focus on missions. There is a Church Council, the decision making body when the church is not in session, representing the various ministries of the congregation. The council meets monthly. There are two congregational conferences each year.

Since its relocation, the church established The Solid Rock Academy, Inc., obtained a 501(c)3 status, and sold its two previous locations, Reed Street and Martin Avenue. It has replaced its entire heating and air conditioning systems, acquired heating for the balcony, installed a sound system and purchased a Yamaha Grand Piano.

In the tenth year at Camp Road, due to interior water damage, the decision was reached to repair the interior ceiling and replace the baptismal curtains. Deciding to do so led to a major renovation project:

Project Sanctuary Renovation. This project included a complete renovation of the sanctuary, purchase of new interior furnishings for the pulpit and sanctuary (pew), new carpet for the entire main level, repairs and repainting of all exterior wood, installing gutters, etc., and the expansion of the sound system. This resulted in a “new” sanctuary. The debt for the renovation was retired within one year.

In July 2000, the church ordained two deacons, Ms. Ann Huff and Mr. Marvin Henderson. Deacon Ann Huff became the church’s first ordained female deacon.

In the fall of 2001, under the auspice of the Building Endowment Committee, we completed a major renovation of our downstairs area. In March 2002, our downstairs renovation area was dedicated as the “*John W Waters Education Complex.*” This is “a multi-functional training and community service center established for the purpose of assisting with and enhancing the overall mission and operation of The Greater Solid Rock Baptist Church...”

In addition, stained glass windows were installed in our sanctuary. Each window is a memorial so that others will know those whose lives enriched ours.

In November 2001, we served as host for the Annual Meeting of the New Era Missionary Baptist Convention of Georgia, Inc. We accepted this challenge by default. Nevertheless, this, our first for hosting a convention, was a stellar success. The opening night celebration was unique in its music and honor of those whose lives were lost on 9/11. Our Music Ministry, under the directorship of Rev. Cynthia Rivers, presented “*The Sounds of the Harvest.*” We still receive rave comments about the quality of what we did for the 40th Annual Meeting of New Era.

Our Education Complex has served for numerous workshops, meeting, seminars, etc. Monthly, the Association of Black Christian Ministers of Clayton County met in our facility. Our sanctuary has become a popular place for weddings. Persons from the community have had their weddings performed in our sanctuary.

MasterLife was introduced as a major discipleship program. This has been placed under our Deacons Ministry. The most recent twenty-six week session was been facilitated by Deacon Marion Hughes. We have discovered others, having heard of MasterLife, who have wanted to participate. Class sizes are limited to twelve participants. As a focus on stewardship and debt-free living, Crown Ministry was introduced to our congregation in 1998. This debt-free, Bible-based program for personal finance is placed with our Trustees Ministry. Mrs. Sharon Ingram and Mrs. Beverly Taylor served as facilitators of this project. Those completing Crown Ministry testify of the good feeling to be debt free.

These training programs are in addition to our regular Sunday School offerings. We continue to move toward the G.O.S.S. model. Seeing the need for adequate space for classrooms, we engaged the Georgia Baptist Convention to conduct a Space Analysis. From this study, we were committed to relocating and enlarging our nursery. This was accomplished primarily by our membership, under the leadership of Deacon Bill Weems and assisted by Deacon Kendall Jackson.

The Greater Solid Rock Baptist Church has always emphasized Christian Education. Beginning with our 2003-2004 fiscal year, this commitment was presented as a challenge to grow each of our Sunday School classes by one new member per month.

The Greater Solid Rock Baptist Church holds membership in the New Era Missionary Baptist Convention of Georgia, the Georgia Baptist Convention, the Clayton County Chamber of Commerce, and the Clayton County Branch of the NAACP. It supports missions through regular and continuous contributions to agencies and institutions external to the church. Among these are the UNCF, Morehouse School of Religion, Carver Bible College, Southern Crescent Habitat for Humanity, AID Atlanta, Samaritans Together, Rainbow House, Calvary Refuge Center, etc. Our membership is active in the life of the Fairburn Baptist Association where Mrs. Barbara Morris held the position of Director of the WMU and Mrs. Deborah Sneed was the Mission Director.

We have come a long way since October, 1923 in Peoplestown. Spiritual and numerical growth we attribute to the grace of God. There are committed, dedicated, and loyal members who work to maintain our buildings and grounds.

Those who tithe assure us of financial stability and the ability to plan for the future. We have a mortgage on our property which with aggressive and asserted effort could be retired within the next five years.

In January 2003, we added a 7:45 AM Worship Celebration with an up-beat, contemporary format. Our 10:45 AM Celebration was also modified.

On September 24, 2004, we acquired a 2+ acre tract of land at 2040 Conkle Road, at the corner of Camp Road. This property across the street from our main location was dedicated in November, 2004 as The Greater Solid Rock Baptist Church Community Outreach Ministry. It serves primarily as classrooms for the Church School.

In November 2004, the church installed an elevator/lift. This serves the needs of handicapped and the physically challenged. Entrance is from downstairs to the first floor level. Mr. Jerome Harris took leadership in this project.

Dr. Waters retired as senior minister of the church effective August 31, 2005. During February 2005, The Solid Rock Family honored him with a month long celebration that concluded with a banquet at the Atlanta Civic Center under the theme The John W Waters, PhD: Commemorative Celebration of Lifetime Achievement-Honoring Twenty-Fifth Anniversary as Senior Minister and Forty-Two Years of Christian Ministry. The Church named him Senior Minister Emeritus. During May, 2005, the Church ordained to the Christian Ministry, the Rev. Cynthia Rivers. The Reverend Rivers had served the Church for several years as its Minister of Music.

At the recommendation of Dr. Waters and approval of the Pastoral Search Committee, The Reverend Will D. Hayes, III, became Senior Pastor of the Church, September 1, 2005. He had served Solid Rock as its Youth Minister. His installation took place on Sunday, December 11, 2005. Under the Hayes Administration several members were ordained to the Christian Ministry. Among these were Carl Lowry and James Jordan, Sr.

During the year 2005, the church ordained two deacons, one of whom was female. This brought the second female into our Deacons Ministry, Deacon Marion Hughes. Two ministries were licensed into the Christian Ministry at Greater Solid Rock. The Reverend Carl Lowry and The Reverend James Jordan, Sr. became two additions to the Ministerial Staff.

In 2005, our Annual Fall Revival took on a special significance and character as we shared with some of the displaced members of the Franklin Avenue Baptist Church of New Orleans, LA. Its Senior Pastor, the Rev. Fred Luter, Jr., served as our evangelist. This must be set within the context of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the devastation along the Gulf Coast, especially in the City of New Orleans.

The Hayes Administration saw the completion of the Cornerstone Project under the leadership of the Building Endowment Ministry. The Church received a \$7,000.00 capacity building grant from AT&T during the 2005-2006 fiscal years to provide technical assistance and support to organizations looking to do work in the community.

The sound system was upgraded, two floor monitors were added to the pulpit area while two floor speakers were added to the main floor. The following year, video projectors and screens were installed in the sanctuary. Television monitors were also installed on the lower level allowing the services to be viewed from the nursery and fellowship hall.

The Deacons Ministry completed a Playground Project during the fall of 2006. During the 2007-2008 fiscal years, Deacon Ann Huff was named as our first female chair of the Deacons Ministry in the history of the church. We also installed the first phase of the Brick Pathway around the church marquee. The John W Waters Scholarship program was reconstituted as the John W Waters Endowed Scholarship Fund under the leadership of Deacon and Mrs. Herbert Hart. The pew dedications, which provided scholarships for graduating seniors within the congregation was implemented as part of John W Waters Endowed Scholarship Fund. Both the pew dedication and the Brick Pathway projects serve as memorials to our faithful members and friends. The church hosted the 2009 Adjourned Session of the New Era Missionary Baptist Convention of Georgia, Inc. Mrs. Barbara Morris served as coordinator for this event. The church property was refinanced successfully and the Reed Street Property was resold August, 2009, spearheaded by Mr. Romon Desessaure and Mrs. Beverly Taylor (Trustees Ministry).

Under the leadership of the Deacon Ministry, Conflict Resolution was sought through the Fairburn Baptist Association of the Georgia Baptist Convention due to tensions within the congregation under the Hayes pastorship. The Church holds membership in the Georgia Baptist Convention (SBC). In July 2014, at a called conference of the Church, Rev. Hayes resigned. For the first time in the history of The Greater Solid there was a church split.

Using the resources of the Georgia Baptist Convention, the Church, following the leadership of its Deacons Ministry began a program to fill the pulpit for Sunday worship with "supply" preachers. It was felt that the Church needed an appropriate amount of time to sort out its position and affairs prior to calling another senior pastor.

In April 2015, The Solid Rock family named as its Interim Pastor the Reverend Dr. Zeddie Scott from the Beulah Baptist Church of Decatur, Georgia. A Pastoral Search Committee was organized to lead the Church in identifying its next senior pastor based on the By-laws of the Church.

On February 21, 2016, The Solid Rock family voted on Rev. Dr. Anton Rowe, J.D. as Senior Pastor-elect. Previously, Rev. Rowe was the pastor of Raymond Hill Baptist Church in Snellville, Georgia. He began his duties on March 21, 2016. On February 12, 2017, Rev. Rowe was installed as Senior Pastor of The Greater Solid Rock Baptist Church.

The Solid Rock Church Family is spiritually aware that it is through the grace of God that it has been able to survive since 1923. Through faith in God, dedicated membership and the willingness to hold onto the assurance that God never fail, we continue to keep the dream alive by affirming a commitment to the spreading of the “Good News” of God’s salvation to others. Thus, “Through many dangers and storms, we have already come;” we are indeed, “A Church Where You Can Make a Difference.” This is as true now as it has always been.

Composed by:

Deacon Gus Prince (deceased)

Mother Grace R. Barksdale (deceased)

John W Waters, Ph.D.

Mrs. Cynthia Barnett

Pastor Will D. Hayes, III

Deacon Ann Huff

Ms. Reva Marsh

Revised October 2015:

Mrs. Beverly Taylor

Mrs. Barbara Morris