

September 22, 2010

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate an institution in Norfolk, Virginia. On Friday, September 24, 2010, Union United Church of Christ will celebrate its 100th anniversary, and I would like to highlight some moments from the history of the church and its contributions to our community.

Union United's history began in 1908 with a small prayer band made up of new arrivals to Norfolk who found no Christian church in their area. The church formed as Union Christian in 1910 and was organized and led by Rev. J.J. Faulk.

Many pastors served Union Christian faithfully in these early years, including Rev. G.T. Hall from 1929-1930, Rev. R.J. Alston from 1931 to 1934, and Rev. S.A. Howell from 1934 to 1935. Under Rev. Alston, the church was renamed Union Congregational Christian Church.

Rev. Mann assumed the pastorate in 1935 and served the church faithfully until 1951. His leadership saw both milestones and improvements, including the burning of the church's mortgage.

Rev. Z.P. Jenkins served as pastor from 1953 to 1960. During this time the church was renovated, and the church bought a house on Bane Street to serve as a parsonage. It was also during Rev. Jenkins' tenure that nationally the Evangelical and Reformed Church merged with the Congregational Church to form the United Church of Christ.

The church underwent multiple changes under the leadership of its longest serving pastor to date, Rev. Joseph M. Copeland. Arriving in 1960, Rev. Copeland instituted a Deacon Board, and the church became very active in the community. A Citizen's Club, Boy Scout Troop, USDA Share Program, and 4-H Club were all founded under his direction.

Another milestone during the tenure of Rev. Copeland was the relocation of the church. In 1971, the church was forced to move due to redevelopment projects in the city of Norfolk. The present site on Goff Street was purchased, and a new church was built and dedicated in January 1977. Through the dedication of the congregation, the church was able to pay off the mortgage in just 11 years and held a burning ceremony in May 1988. Rev. Copeland retired in 1992 after 32 years of service.

The church continued to make history under seventh pastor, Rev. Anthony Taylor, ordaining its first female deacon. Rev. Taylor served for eight years, leaving in 2000 to serve his country in the U.S. Army. Rev. Copeland returned for a brief period as interim pastor in 2000, at which point Union United made history yet again.

In 2001, Associate Pastor Linda Clark was installed as Union's Pastor, the first female to serve in this post. Under her leadership, Union United re-dedicated itself to the community by establishing after-school tutorial programs and a Narcotics Anonymous program, and doing outreach work with the Norfolk State University School of Social Work. Currently serving under Rev. Clark is her twin sister, Rev. Brenda Brown.

As Union United gathers to celebrate its centennial, the Church can truly remember its past, celebrate its present, and focus on the future with great expectations. I would like to congratulate Rev. Clark, Associate Pastor Brown, Pastor Emeritus Copeland, and all of the members of Union United Church of Christ on the occasion of their 100th anniversary. I wish them 100 more years of dedicated service to the community.