

September 29, 2010

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a historic institution of faith in the Third Congressional District. This November, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Temple will celebrate its 110th anniversary, and I would like to highlight some moments from the history of the church and its contributions to our community.

The seeds of Sixth Mount Zion were originally planted in 1900, when transplanted citizens from Charles City County and Richmond, working in the Newport News Shipyard, sought to establish a Missionary Baptist Church in the area. The first services, officiated by Rev. N.E. Nelson, were held in a private home on 22nd Street in Newport News. Rev. Chase Patterson assumed control of the church for a brief period, and started to organize Sixth Mount Zion as a Missionary Baptist Church.

Third Pastor Rev. W.M. Greene continued to organize the church, founding a Recognition Council to establish the congregation as an independent body, and in November 1901, that recognition was granted. After this initial establishment, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church went through 19 pastors until the church installed Rev. W.J. Brown as pastor in 1912. During this era the church worshipped in a borrowed building on 24th Street.

Rev. Brown served Sixth Mount Zion faithfully for 45 years until his death in 1957. He was succeeded by Rev. James Melvin Owens, who was installed as pastor in 1959. That same year, a fire destroyed the church building, but through the faithfulness of the congregation, a new building was built in the footprint of the old one at 643 24th Street.

Rev. Owens passed away in 1964 after 6 years of service to Sixth Mount Zion. The search for the next pastor took over a year, but on June 19, 1966, Rev. M. Ivory Jefferson was installed as the official pastor. One of his first actions, the establishment of a building fund, proved to be essential, when the redevelopment plans of the city of Newport News forced the church to relocate. Sixth Mount Zion met in several different locations from 1973 to 1976. In June of that year, the church purchased a site at 2003 Kecoughtan Road in Hampton, and the church was renamed Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Temple. The building was finally completed in 1978.

The move to Hampton was not the only change under Rev. Jefferson. During his tenure, the church also began a radio ministry, arranged annual interstate worship trips, and trained and ordained two Associate Ministers. Rev. Jefferson retired in 1996, and Sixth Mount Zion elected

Assistant Pastor Rev. Jerome A. Barber to serve as head pastor in 1997.

The church has grown significantly from 300 to over 4,000 members since Rev. Barber's installation. The church has also been involved in outreach ministries in both Virginia and abroad. Sixth Mount Zion has mobilized action in Kenya, Uganda, and most recently Brazil, providing medical clinics, teacher workshops, and conferences for women and youth.

With its rapid, recent growth, the church outgrew its Kecoughtan Road location. In January 2001 the church moved to its present location at 3100 Butternut Drive in Hampton. In 2002, Rev. Barber established the Six House at the Temple's old Kecoughtan Road location, where the church holds education programs for children, young adults, and lifelong learners.

As Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Temple gathers to celebrate its 110th anniversary, the church can truly remember its past, celebrate its present, and focus on the future with great expectations. I would like to congratulate Rev. Barber and all of the members of Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Temple on the occasion of their 110th anniversary. I wish them many more years of dedicated service to the community.