

# THROUGH THE YEARS

AFRICAN - AMERICAN HISTORY IN CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

SPRING 2002

## Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church



Pioneers from Fourth Street Church

By Mrs. Kathryn Humphrey

On March 16, 1916, the Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church was organized by Reverend D. J. Tyler, assisted by Amelia Tyler, Tolie and Eva Nunn, Morgan and Nora Knox, all of whom were former members of their sister Church, the Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church of St. Louis, Missouri.

The original church began with prayer meetings in the home of Tolie and Eva Nunn at 1110 North Fourth Street and spread from house to house; including neighbors and friends. The prayer band grew in numbers.

Recognizing the need for a church, Sister Eva Nunn, with the consent of the prayer group wrote to Reverend D. J. Tyler, inviting him to come to Champaign and help organize the Church. He responded

immediately and came to Champaign, called a Council meeting consisting of himself, the Reverend Owen and Reverend Rivers of the Salem Baptist Church, other missionaries and friends and began to make plans for organizing the Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church.

Their first priority was to acquire land on which to build. They were able to purchase two houses located on a lot at 1111 North Fourth Street from Alexander Lumber Company. This made the vision become reality and the Church's membership began to increase.

The first Pastor was Reverend D. J. Tyler, the first Deacons were Brothers Tolie Nunn, Morgan Knox, Johnny Sykes, Aden Williams, Jesse and Claude Britt and Sylvester

Hampton. The members carried chairs from their homes to sit on and donated coal from coal sheds to provide heat. Everyone went to Sunday school, Prayer Meetings and all joined in to help whenever and wherever needed.

The old church at 1111 North Fourth Street, or the Church "up in the field" as it was lovingly referred to, grew and prospered under the ten pastors who followed its founder Reverend D. J. Tyler.

In 1958, the Reverend J. E. Graves came and, under his leadership and support of the membership was able to buy the land at 808 East Bradley and build the present sanctuary building and purchase and remodel a parsonage. In 1969, Reverend James Offut became the pastor and the church was able to pay off the mortgage and purchase a new parsonage.

The present Pastor, Reverend Lundy Savage, a true visionary as well as being a dynamic pastor has been successful in expanding the ministry to include preaching, teaching and evangelism, all of which is reflected in the development of a College Student Ministry, and youth-oriented programs to encourage them to participate in the ministries so necessary for their development as our leaders of the future. All of these programs commanded more space and Pastor Savage has been very successful in bringing about the expanded sanctuary; the building of an Educational Section which includes a Pastor's Study, 12 Classrooms, Church Office, Women's

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Reverend  
Lundy Savage



Groundbreaking ceremony in 1958

Lounge, Men's Restroom, a modern state-of-the art kitchen and Parish Hall.

From 1916 to the present, the Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church stands as a monument to a community of faith from the small church "up in the field" at 1111 North Fourth Street to its present location at 808 East Bradley. Its history is ongoing.

Kathryn Britt Humphrey is among those who are part of its history. Her parents, Jesse and Vennie Britt, were founders of the original church. Her father was a Deacon and her mother a devout member. Kathryn

became a member at a very early age and has been active in many ways up to the present time. Mrs. Juanita Campbell, 97, mother of Juanita Mason, also a member of the church. "Mother" Campbell, as she was called by all who knew her, was very active in the church as well as in the community. Her love of people was exemplified by her interest in them and this love endeared her to all who knew her.

Many more members, both older and young and too numerous to mention, still contribute their time and energy in supporting their beloved Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church.



Jesse and Vennie Britt



From top left clockwise:  
Claude Britt, Hester  
Britt, Kathryn Britt  
Humphrey



Standing: Bob and Juanita Mason  
Seated: Mother Campbell



# Church Women United in Champaign-Urbana

By Mrs. Betty Westwater

In 1921, a group of eleven women from eleven churches of five denominations felt a need for a cooperative effort to work on projects to best serve the community. They called themselves the interdenominational Council of Missionary Societies, later named Champaign-Urbana Missionary Union. The group became inter-racial in 1926 when the Union affiliated with the national groups, the Council of Women for Home Missions and the Federation of Women's Board for Foreign Missions.

Tot Lot was an early project sponsored and managed by the unit. A minister's wife who saw the need for the care of young children while their mothers worked or attended classes during the day started this program. For more satisfactory housing, it was moved to Salem Baptist Church. In about 1970 it was closed as the Head Start Program replaced the need.

Blanket Sunday was a time when people brought good used blankets to their churches where they were put in cartons and mailed to Church World Service distribution Centers. When postage became too much, gift certificates were issued for people to donate money to buy blankets by CWS. This emphasis is in May.

Clothing drives were held. Women gathered good used clothing or new children's clothing and layettes in their churches. Boxes of clothing were taken to a garage belonging to the Church of the Brethren where they were picked up by a CWS truck. Also sometimes, boxes were taken by truck or car as we attended State Assemblies where a CWS truck was waiting. This, too,



Left: Helen Johnson and staff with children at Tot Lot  
Below: Salem Pre-school, Helen Johnson, Director

became too expensive.

Work groups within churches or individuals made layettes, children's clothing, hospital gowns, bandages, healthkits, school kits, children's sweaters and baby blankets (cloth, crocheted or knit). These are mailed to CWS Distribution Centers.

Reading is Fundamental (RIF) Program was started by CWU in our community by holding book fairs in selected schools. Books were selected by a committee, ordered, and set up for the children to choose a book that appealed to each to want to read. These were given to the children, but paid for by donations from CWU members. After 3 years, another civic organization took responsibility for this project.

UNICEF Trick or Treat Collections in Champaign-Urbana and a few surrounding towns have been sponsored by CWU for many years. Collection boxes were ordered through our chairman. The children collected on the Sunday nearest Halloween. This was done in various ways. At first, driver chaperones took children into certain areas designated on a city map where the children went from door to door. Later it seemed safer for children to collect only from friends and neighbors. Another approach was for the children to put a collection box on a table at home and to deposit a coin at mealtime or whenever a glass of milk was drunk. Usually in each case, when the children returned the boxes to a church on the Sunday afternoon after collecting, a Hallow-



een Party was held. In 1955, the Ministerial Association helped organize the collection.

UNICEF Card sales date back to about 1969-70. The Friends and YWCA also sold cards so there was cooperation there. The cards sold have usually been for Christmas, but notepaper, Birthday cards, etc. are included. Through the years, the line of products has expanded to include calendars, puzzles and mugs. All emphasize learning about the customs of other countries.

Court Watching was done with the League of Women Voters. We attended court sessions to monitor the case being tried. We filled out charts with our findings.

The International Hospitality Committee receives an annual monetary gift. We have a liaison board member who is active on this committee which works through the University of Illinois. Some of our women help new foreign students with their families by working with English conversation groups, friendship groups, get-acquainted coffees, host families, cooperative dinners and maintaining a storeroom for lending

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## CHURCH WOMEN

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household items to the international families. The items are donated or bought at garage sales. We have joined in the moneymaking efforts of IHC.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society of St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Urbana has carried out the Winter Emergency Soup Program for several years. CWU became involved in January 1984. Women of CWU churches make high protein soup for the homeless during the winter months.

Meals on Wheels began in 1965 to provide hot nutritious meals to elderly and disabled persons who need such meals but who are unable to prepare them. The meals have been prepared at the Illini Union Building and delivered by volunteers. Family Service administered the program and the delivery was coordinated by CWU. The program has grown from 2 routes serving 10 people to 7 routes serving 110 people. Three of these routes are still coordinated by CWU and the others by the TeleCare Office. Clients enjoy the meals and visits by the volunteers. A few emergency situations have been noted and reported at the clients' homes. CWU also donates money to the program to pay for meals the clients cannot afford.

Summer School for Teachers of the Deaf was a project in the 1970's. We have given money and our presence at a program by the children to show their accomplishments.

The Youth Detention Home drew our interest in an effort to keep youths out of jail. We have served on that council.

CROP (Christian Rural Overseas Programs) has received donations by our unit.

The former Girls' Club of Champaign received our support by monetary gifts, books for their library, etc.

Spiritual Wells have been formed and at first met at the Sister's Residence across from Mercy

Hospital for the purpose of fellowship and spiritual growth, studying together a devotional book or portions of the Bible. These were held during Lent and Advent Seasons. Later they were held at other locations such as the Salvation Army Chapel, the Free Methodist Church, and in private homes.

The Dwight Chapel Project has been one of our most extensive collections of donations for the building of a chapel for the women's prison at Dwight, Illinois. This is a State effort to provide a place for the women to worship. Several women from our unit took a tour of the prison to see the need and led our unit to pledge \$10,000 which now has been exceeded.

Legislative issues have received our letters to show our position as we have written to our senators, representatives and other people of influence. One of our board members brings these issues to our attention.

Fellowship of the Least Coin is an international effort to establish schools, scholarships for training nurses and teachers, etc. in developing countries. It is a project in which each woman in the world can help by giving a prayer and a coin of the least denomination of her country.

Our offerings sent to the national office have through the years, given support to many projects. One of these has been the program for the urbanization of the Native American,

to provide the public with information concerning legislation for or against the Native American, provide religious instruction in government schools, provide programs similar to the Home Bureau and 4-H, provide support for the low-income farming communities, provide churches, schools, clubs, conferences and institutes on farming for them and help for the migrants.

Our offerings sent to the State office have helped to provide chaplains for State institutions such as prisons and hospitals. They also have helped in lobbying for bills in the legislature on judicial reform amendment, creation of a children's commission, fair employment practices and open occupancy.

Our unit has sent letters to school boards and the Chamber of Commerce urging employment on merit. We put stickers on our letters and payment bills to businesses or wrote personal notes urging equal opportunity. We also favored the creation of the Champaign Human Relations Commission and attended its meetings. We supported the Youth Council Advisory Board, participated in the Youth Council, the Urban League, favored locating the State Mental Health Clinic in Champaign-Urbana, held educational programs concerning sanitation in church kitchens, opposed granting of additional liquor licenses in C-U, opposed the selling and display of pornographic literature, and sent a representative to the meetings of the United Community Council. We favored sex education in the schools.

We contributed to a fund to provide milk to every needy child in school, Huling Home, Frances Nelson Home, Youth Home and Tot Lot in the early stages of the program.

Some of our women have supported some Salvation Army programs by dressing dolls for the needy at Christmas, served as bell-ringers at the kettles and



Chapel at Dwight

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# Church Women United

Ester Kemp



Ester Donaldson



Doris Hoskins



Octavia Cole



Ellen Rivers

*By Mrs. Doris Hoskins*

Church Women United in Champaign-Urbana now has twenty-six active churches of different denomination of which six are African-American.

The National Office set up the "Valiant Woman Award" to honor a member of a local unit who has demonstrated her love and devotion to the purpose of Church Women United. Names of the nominees are sent to the National Office of CWU, along with the recommendation of the local unit and the \$50.00 fee for their approval. The Certificate of Recognition is received and presented to the woman at a Special Luncheon Ceremony, attended by all. Many local women have received the honor. Listed below are the African-American women who have been recipients through the years:

Ellen Rivers, 1972, a member of Bethel A.M.E. Church and Organist

for many years. Prior to becoming President of CWU, she served as her Church representative for many years.

Esther Turley Donaldson, 1983, a member of Salem Baptist Church where she served as Organist, Church Secretary and other positions. She became a member of CWU in Mt. Vernon, Illinois, in 1957 and upon moving to Champaign-Urbana in 1977, became involved in the local unit.

Octavia Cole, 1990, a member of the Mt. Olive Baptist Church and very active in the Women's groups in her Church and has served as the representative to CWU for over 50 years.

Esther Kemp, 1993, a member of the Bethel A.M.E. Church, Administrative Assistant to the Pastor, Past President of CWU, served as Secretary prior to becoming president.

Doris Hoskins, 2000, a member of the St. Mary's Catholic Church, served as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President under Esther Kemp; has been the representative from St. Mary for more than 20 years.

Church Women United in Champaign-Urbana is alive and well, serving the community with Christian love and devotion.





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#### CHURCH WOMEN Continued from Page 4

helping with the angel tree at the Market Place Shopping Center.

The Mental Health Camp Fund has used some of our contributions.

One of our members served on the Title VII Committee.

We are hosting the CWU State Assembly for the second time.

Community Forums sponsored by our unit have addressed the subjects of Peace, Death, Women's Rights in Divorce and Marriage and as a Single Woman, Dwight Prison (slides and talk which have also been to church and other groups), Dwight Prison (talk given by the Warden, Jane Huch), Original Native American Dress Design and Crafts and the Champaign County Child Development Center.

#### African-American History: Today and Tomorrow

The lifeline of any newsletter is the reaction of its readers. Please help us spread the word! Xerox and share this newsletter with others. Send your comments c/o Early American Museum, P.O. Box 1040, Mahomet, IL 61853 or phone 217-586-2612. If you would like to be included on our mailing list, please call 217-586-2612. More importantly, share in our mission by writing and sharing your reflections of our local history. We need YOU!

**Visit our website at:  
[www.advancenet.net/~early](http://www.advancenet.net/~early)**

The Champaign County African-American History Committee gratefully acknowledges the Community Foundation of Champaign County for sponsoring the printing of *Through the Years*.

#### Community Foundation of Champaign County

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Champaign, IL 61820  
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The *Through the Years* newsletter is a semiannual publication of the Champaign County African-American History Committee, Early American Museum. *Editor*, Cheryl Kennedy; *Graphic Designer*, Cheri Mayberry; *Contributing Writers*, Doris Hoskins, Betty Westwater, Kathryn Humphrey