

# **SECOND EPISCOPAL DISTRICT**

## **Baltimore Annual Conference**

### **PERPETUAL CARE MINISTRY**

#### **Baltimore Annual Conference** **Perpetual Care Ministry Report on Mt. Zion Cemetery**

Mt. Zion Cemetery located at 3900 Hollins Ferry Road in Lansdowne, MD is a 15-acre cemetery located in a residential community and sits across from a public high school and library. Mt. Zion Cemetery has roughly 12,000 graves. There are fewer than 100 plots remaining.

Additional research has confirmed that Mt. Zion Cemetery was the cemetery of choice for many years because of its inexpensive burial cost.

Mt. Zion Cemetery is not affiliated with a particular AME Church. Public records from the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation lists the Baltimore Conference African Methodist Episcopal Church as the owner. Pinderhughes Title, Inc. is in the process of doing a Title Search so that we may have the appropriate documentation that proves ownership of the cemetery.

Bishop John Harrison Bryant is buried at Mt. Zion Cemetery. In addition, it is believed the remains of Bishop Daniel Payne and Bishop Alexander Wayman may be buried there as well. Monuments for Bishop Payne and Bishop Wayman are in the cemetery. Both are in extremely poor condition. The monuments were formerly in Laurel Cemetery, which was leveled and is now the home of Belair-Edison Crossing Shopping Center.

*Mr. Warren Harmis, owner of Western Star Mt Zion LLC, managed Mt. Zion Cemetery for at least 20 years. Mr. Harmis died in January of 2022. The cemetery went unkept from the time of his death, until Bishop Davis was contacted in June of last year.*

The cemetery was overgrown with weeds, uncut grass, and wildflowers. There are broken headstones, collapsing burial locations, and uninstalled headstones. In addition, much of the fencing is damaged or missing, as well as multiple trees needing to be trimmed or uprooted.

Since June of 2022 under the direction of Bishop Davis the following has been accomplished:

1. *Grass is being cut at least twice a month (April-October). Each cut costs \$2500.*
2. *General Liability Insurance has been secured (\$1564.00)*
3. *Title Search being done by Pinderhughes Title, Inc. (\$450)*
4. *Traffic and Parking Blockers have been purchased and placed at the 5 entrances to stem the flow of traffic (vehicles) into the cemetery. (\$2405.00)*
5. *Bids being obtained for repairing/replacing fencing around the perimeter of cemetery.*
6. *Bids being obtained for the removal and trimming of trees and brush along the perimeter of cemetery.*
7. *Potential grants have been identified.*
8. *Seeking to build relationships with Community Based Organizations and state and local government agencies.*

The Baltimore Annual Conference Perpetual Care Ministry recommends the following:

1. *Hire a person to manage the day-to-day affairs of the cemetery. This includes but is not limited to responding to emails and phone calls, managing records and the general maintenance of the cemetery. This is not a full-time job and can be done remotely.*
2. *Contract with a contractor(s) to maintain the cemetery. Cutting the grass on a regular basis, trimming branches, and repairing and replacing fencing etc.*
3. *Write a Maintenance, Policy, and Perpetual Care Plan for Mt. Zion Cemetery.*
4. *Form a committee to write grants to secure funding for the preservation and upkeep of the cemetery. There are local, state, federal and private grants available.*
5. *No additional plots be sold (Previous purchases should be honored)*

Our research has found that it could cost between \$50 and \$90 thousand dollars a year to maintain a cemetery of this size. Most of the cost would be for maintenance. For example, during the summer season there are roughly 24 cuts, costing an average of \$2500 per cut. Several local contractors were contacted, but only one cared to submit a bid. The bid *for year-round care* was \$84,000.00.

The Baltimore Annual Conference Perpetual Care Ministry is excited about the opportunity to serve and assist with the perpetual care of the cemeteries in the Baltimore Annual Conference.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Ricardo Burns  
Rev. Ellsworth Tolliver  
Rev. Reginald Bishop  
Mrs. Joann Harvin  
Mr. Thomas Gross

## **Summary of documents provided by Attorney Leronia A. Josey regarding Mt. Zion Cemetery:**

**July 27, 1979** – An agreement between the Mt. Zion Cemetery Trustees of the Baltimore Annual Conference (Trustees) and Mount Zion Memorial Park, Inc. (Corporation). The Corporation will manage and sell cemetery lots in the cemetery for the Trustees. Agreement included payments to be made through 2029.

**September 15, 1979** – Meeting of all deed holders and lot owners in Mt. Zion Cemetery at Payne AME Church. The Mt. Zion Cemetery Committee and prominent morticians of the city and the AME Church now responsible for maintenance and upkeep of said cemetery.

**November 29, 1990** – Proposal for Mt. Zion Cemetery submitted by Warren E. Harmis. Mr. Harmis proposed that he “assume full responsibility for all functions of cemetery... Compensation, 20% of all cash receipts to be paid to present ownership...

**April 1991** – Mt. Zion Cemetery – Improvements and Startup Costs – Total Cost \$39, 200 (Single document)

**June 3, 1991** – Record of payments for April and May of 1991 from Western Star Cemetery. Letter addressed to Rev. Edward Wilson. Total collected April 1991 \$3335.00 (\$667 (20%) due to church). Total collected May 1991 \$6750.00 (20% given to church \$1350.00).

**July 13, 1998** – Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the BAC

- Two persons handling the affairs of the Cemetery-Mt. Zion AME, Presiding Elder Wilson and Ms. Moroe
- \$25-\$35K currently in bank under the elder’s control
- \$6-\$8K in bonds (Merrill Lynch)
- There is an arrangement with Mr. Warren Harmis who pays 20% of every burial.
- Many saints are buried there, including Daniel Payne and other bishops...

**September 1, 1998** – Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the BAC

- Elder Wilson asked and agreed to produce a written accounting of all monies in the cemetery account.

- Elder Wilson reported that there was \$22, 780.00 cash in Nations Bank and a CD of \$17,900.00 which matures in 1999 (Total \$42, 454.33)
- Three signers on the account: Board President – Rev. Frank M. Reid, III, Board Treasure – Rev. Ronald Braxton and Presiding Elder Edward C. Wilson
- Elder Wilson was authorized to change name on the account to the Baltimore Conference Cemetery and Trustee Fund.
- Mr. Warren Harmis proposed a slight increase in burial fees for establishment of perpetual care. The Board directed that any funds charged for perpetual care be maintained in a separate account.

**July 2, 1999** Letter from Attorney Josey to Presiding Elder Wilson

- Corporate signature document from Nations Bank bearing the original signatures of Dr. Reid, Rev. Braxton and Presiding Elder Wilson.
- Account Title: Baltimore Conference Cemetery and Trust Fund
- Name of Corporation: Baltimore Annual Conference, Inc

**September 14, 1999** Letter from Presiding Elder Wilson to Board of Trustees of MT. Zion Cemetery Board

- RE: Cemetery Name Change as authorized by Board of Trustees of MT. Zion Cemetery Board
- On record as “Baltimore Conference Cemetery and Trust Fund” formerly listed as BD. of INC of the AMEC
- Account is presently at the Bank of America, N.A. formerly “Nations Bank”.

**November 11, 1999** BAC Trustee Meeting (Letter from University of Maryland Law School)

- BAC and Cemetery Fund Claim for Restitution/Specific Performance (Fraud by Dave Rodgers employee of Mt Zion Cemetery)

**December 13, 1999** Fax from Leronia Josey to Derreck Boyd – Legg Mason

- Attached is a copy of Year-to-Date Statement from PUTNAM INVESTMENTS Account Balance: \$11,387.30
- Addressed to: Baltimore Conference cemetery Endowment Rev. Edward C. Wilson.

**December 1, 2005** Letter to Shore Bank from Leronia Josey; Re: Account 40-640-342-2 Bd of INC of AMEC T/A Mt Zion Cemetery

- Not to renew Certificate Account listed above.
- Please cash out Certificate and send balance (\$119,862.70)

**December 2, 2005** Letter to Shore Bank from Leronia Josey; Re: Account 40-640-342-2

- Seeking assurance that Certificate Account will not roll over.
- Two of three signers must come in and close account (Rev. Frank Reid, Rev. Ernest Montague, and Rev. Edward Wilson)

**December 5, 2005** Letter to Shore Bank from Leronia Josey; Re: Baltimore Conference Cemetery and Trust Fund CD# 40-640-342-2

- This is to advise that Presiding Elders Edward Wilson and Ernest Montague will come down December 8<sup>th</sup> to close the captioned account.

**February 6, 2006** Letter from Attorney Leronia Josey to Richard m. Duvall, Attorney At Law

- Re: Property Transfer: 416-418 Patterson Avenue Salisbury
- Shore Bank is hereby authorized to issue a cashier's check to the order of Manufactures and trade Trust Company in the amount of \$52,000.00 to be funded by Certificate of Deposit #406403422 in the name of Baltimore Conference Cemetery and Trust Fund, two thousand of which shall be allocated for closing cost.

**October 5, 2009** Baltimore Annual Conference Trustee Board Meeting Minutes

- Report of Cemetery Committee given by Presiding Elder Ernest Montague, Sr.)
- Presiding Elders Wilson and Montague met with Warren Harmis, Caretaker of Mt Zion Cemetery on September 23<sup>rd</sup> .
- Number of burials from 2004-2008: 2,442. Estimated number of remaining lots: 2,279
- Cemetery is well kept and vandalism has decreased.

