

The Gospel Brunch celebrating the 190th Anniversary of Congdon Street Baptist Church
May 30, 2009

"190th Anniversary Purpose Statement"

We are gathered together today not only to celebrate God's 190 years of blessings on Congdon Street Baptist Church but also to remember how He brought us to this point.

Today we will celebrate the past remembering the sacrifices of those who established our church...

We celebrate those men and women who helped to make Congdon Street Baptist Church more than a just a place of religious worship but also a community center, and a school and refuge for its neighboring institutions of higher learning.

From our humble beginnings as the African Union Meeting House in 1819 Congdon Street Baptist church has served as a starting place for every church of color in 19th century Providence.

Today we will celebrate the present ...

As we continue our tradition of ministries of worship through our Deacons, Deaconess, Men, Women and Children's ministries; along with ministries of teaching Christian education that include Sunday Church School, Bible Study, Children's Church and most recently our Tutorial Program that has infinitely enriched the lives of our young people. These ministries along with numerous other committees and auxiliaries help to keep Congdon Street Baptist Church focused on God and our need for God in today's world.

Today, as we move forward into the future ...

"We thank God for Jesus; and for His Grace & Mercy in the history of our church, and how he has worked through frail human beings, to carry out His Will. We prayerfully ask for God's continued blessings on our church, so that we, too, can leave a spiritual legacy for future generations" (Deacon Harold Metts).

And, oh yes, today we will celebrate with music...

African American music is richly engrained in American History and deeply woven into the fabric of the Black church worship experience.

From the spirituals, those remarkable religious folk songs that were created by enslaved African Americans; Civil War period music which includes songs about African-American soldiers and the plight of the newly emancipated slave; Post-Civil War music reflecting the problems of Reconstruction and the beginnings of urbanization and the northern migration of African Americans; along with the roots of Blues, Jazz and Gospel.

It seems only fitting that we celebrate our music as we celebrate 190 years of worship!

Our 2009 church theme is: "Changing Lives, Empowering Communities, and Discovering Hope through the Spirit of Christ"

In Luke 4:16-19 (NIV) it is written of Jesus that ...

¹⁶He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. ¹⁷The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

My prayer today is that Congdon Street Baptist Church, its congregation and community continue to have the Lord's favor now and for many years to come. Thank you and God bless you.

Lillian L. Woodard, Chairperson Ministry of Christian Education
Congdon Street Baptist Church