PRIMARY SOURCE

A WHITE PASTOR'S JOURNEY THROUGH THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERA

John
SEGREGATED CHICAGOLAND

BY

JOHN F. BAGGETT III

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#Cover Photo from front page of an August 1963 *Chicago American* newspaper

DEDICATION

Primary Source, *A White Pastor's Journey through the Civil Rights Era* is dedicated to the memory of my beloved sister, Margaret LaVur Baggett Britton, who died on March 22, 2018, following a long courageous battle with Parkinson's Disease. While only two years older than me, she helped to guide me and care for me during the difficulties of my childhood, especially during those tough times when my mother was seriously depressed. While a professor of sociology at Kentucky Wesleyan College, Margaret was the first to ask me to speak about my journey through the civil rights era. Moreover, she inspired me with her own battles for justice. Rev. Jessica Patchett, Margaret's granddaughter, when speaking at Margaret's memorial service, reminded our family that Margaret believed "*Women should be compensated fairly. People of color should have equal access to education. Ex-offenders should be welcomed back into society. People living with diseases should be cared for, no matter how they got the disease or what the cause.*" I cannot imagine my own journey without the inspiration, passion for justice, and support of Margaret.

John F. Baggett III (2018)

Margaret LaVur
Baggett Britton

PREFACE

In 2015, I began, at the invitation of Virginia Hamilton, and other Brevard County Florida school teachers, a series of presentations to classes in local schools in which I shared personal experiences as a participant in the American Civil Rights Movement. I first conceived the idea for this book of memories and reflections during preparation for those school programs. The title was suggested when I was introduced to a set of secondary school classes by my daughter, Sarah Baggett Aloise, who, at the time, was the media specialist at Satellite Beach High School. Sarah shared with the students that she remembered, as a child, participating with me in a Civil Rights march in Chicago. She then introduced me to the various classes, as a “Primary Source,” someone who had actually lived through the historical experiences presented. The “Primary Source” designation was only partially true, as my presentation briefly overviewed the entire scope of almost 400 years of African American history, and, in 2015, I was a mere 79 years old. Nevertheless, I made clear in my talks that the centuries before my time were deeply personal, both because the generations of slavery and the Jim Crow era were the preconditions leading to and shaping the Civil Rights Movement, and because I had ancestors who were intimately involved in those times.

Civil Rights Presentation Indialantic Elementary School

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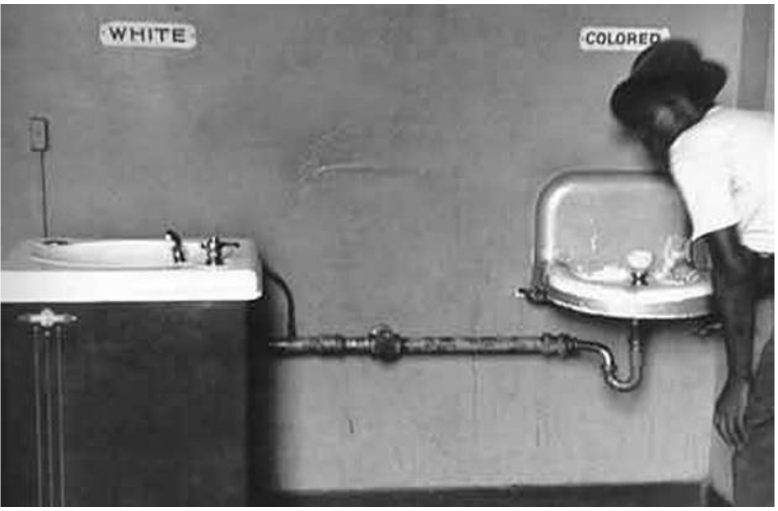
I. GROWING UP IN THE SEGREGATED SOUTH

When I was in the third grade I lived with my grandparents, Mimi and Bookie, in Sewanee Tennessee. In 1944, during WWII, my father was in the Navy and stationed at Portsmouth Virginia. My mother, who lived in Sewanee with us early in the war, later moved to Portsmouth to be with Dad, and left my sister and me at Mimi's.

D . . . _
School Days
19 44



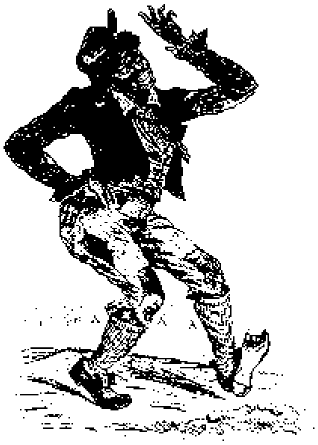
In 1944, Sewanee, located in Franklin County Tennessee, was a typical segregated southern town. I attended an all-white elementary school and became aware, at a very early age, that there were "white" or "colored" signs above every water fountain and public restroom in the county. Stores and restaurants often greeted customers with similar "whites only" signs on their entrance doors. Segregation was the law of the land, and those violating these laws and customs were at risk of being arrested, or worse. At the time, most American southern communities had active chapters of the Ku Klux Klan who used lynching and other terrorist tactics to keep African Americans from violating segregation practices. I am confident Franklin County Tennessee was no exception.

THANK YOU
FRANKLIN Co.

Sewanee Elementary School

Mimi

During my third grade year, my teacher and school principal decided that our class would put on a "minstrel show." Minstrels were a form of American entertainment in which white actors and actresses blackened their faces, and ridiculed African Americans as dim-witted, lazy, buffoonish, superstitious, and happy-go-lucky. Most minstrel shows originally involved music, dance and stereotypical characters such as "the slave," the dandy" and the "black mammy." Minstrels originated in the early 1830s, during slavery, and painted a picture of African American slaves as happy in their servitude. Evidently, after viewing a minstrel show, white slave owners could rest peacefully in the illusion that slavery was not cruel and inhumane, but a generous blessing to "all those simple black folks." The popularity of minstrels continued through the Jim Crow era. In fact, *Jim Crow*, after whom the post-Civil War era of segregation and discrimination was named, was originally a famous minstrel character.



Many of the movies I saw as a child contained elements derived from the minstrel art form. For example, in the 1942 film, *Holiday Inn*, Bing Crosby performed a song in black faced minstrel style. A popular 1947 movie, *My Wild Irish Rose*, featured several scenes of white performers in black faced musical numbers. Such "entertainment" would repulse most audiences today, but, when I went to the movies on Saturday afternoons in the 1940s, I do not remember those scenes offending anyone. On the contrary, the minstrel pieces appear to have consistently delighted my fellow movie goers. Minstrels, as a form of entertainment, did not fade away until the Civil Rights era of the 1960s.

Our 1944 third grade minstrel play in the auditorium of Sewanee Elementary School did not involve music and dance, but we children were made up with black faces, and our memorized lines were filled with depreciating dialogue intended to amuse white audiences, and, in so doing, to reinforce racial stereotypes.

I was cast as a black preacher. At the climax of the play I was scripted to perform a wedding ceremony. I do not recall the entire scene, but I do remember that the wedding vows were extremely brief, and, that I was supposed to pull out a sandwich from my pocket in the middle of the wedding and consume it, and then say to the couple "You married." I assume the improperness of stopping in the middle of a wedding for the preacher to have a snack was intended to be hilarious.

As I performed the role of black preacher that evening in 1945, I had no way of anticipating that I would, twenty-two years later, be a real ordained minister, and, natural white face and all, be the pastor of an African American congregation on the Southside of Chicago.

In 1944, white people not only justified segregation by dehumanizing people of African descent, but also by misinterpreting passages in the Bible they believed supported the practice of segregation. In the thirties, forties and fifties, throughout the Southern states, most people, including my maternal grandparents, believed African Americans were inferior to Caucasian Americans, and thought segregation was the way God intended things to be.

An incident that occurred during that same third grade year in Sewanee underscored this unpleasant reality. I walked a couple of miles each way to and from school. A wooded path took me by a run-down neighborhood of tiny unpainted frame homes where several African American families lived. One day, while walking home, I met an African American boy who appeared to be about my age. He was playing in a small dirt yard in front of his house. As the weeks of school days went by, we became good friends. At the time, I was convinced the other children in my class did not like me, and that I did not have any good friends my own age. Each afternoon, I was excited to see and talk with my new friend. One day I invited him to come home with me to my grandmother's house to spend the afternoon. Mimi had a large fenced front yard that was a great place for boys to play. It was equipped with a badminton court, a croquet course, and trees and bushes for playing hide and seek. My friend agreed to the invitation, and we walked together to my grandmother's home. We had only begun to run around the yard chasing each other when my grandmother came to the front porch and yelled at me. She was as mad as a wet hen. She called me over to her and told me in no uncertain terms that my friend could not stay and play in her yard. I obediently told my friend he had to leave, even though I knew in my heart that it was the wrong thing to do. Before leaving to go live with my Dad, my mother had drilled into me that it would be wrong to disobey my grandmother, no matter what the circumstances. From that point forward, when I walked through my friend's neighborhood, he no longer came out to the path to talk to me. Understandably, he chose not to be my friend anymore.

Somehow, I knew in my heart, even at the early age of eight, that my grandmother, whom I respected and loved dearly, was wrong in her racial attitudes and opinions.

Twenty years later I would become deeply involved in the Civil Rights Movement, would march with Dr. Martin Luther King, and would return to the American South to be arrested during a demonstration in Selma Alabama. I am grateful I could be a part of a movement that changed our national culture. I trust the children and grandchildren of my childhood friend now have a life of dignity not possible for African Americans when we were children.

I know now that much of my personal journey would not have been possible if I had not learned an important lesson about life from both my third grade teacher and my grandmother. That lesson was: *people in authority are not always right.* I had been raised to respect my elders and those in authority, but, during that third grade year in Sewanee Tennessee, I began to develop what I believe to be a healthy skepticism toward authorities, and, simultaneously, a growing confidence in my own intuitions about what was right. This truth about life has served me well throughout my journey.

Don't get me wrong, Mimi, my grandmother, was an amazing woman. I knew her to be a kind and nurturing mother figure. When I lived with her during World War II, I got in trouble on a number of occasions. I am still awed as I remember the way she could discipline me, and, at the same time, continue to communicate warmth and love. It was Mimi, and not my grandfather, Bookie, who performed most of the heavy labor around her house. She was the one who cut the wood for the iron stove, built cabinets, and killed the chickens she cooked for us every Sunday. And it was Mimi who wiped away my tears after I learned my Uncle Edwin had died in the war. I loved her dearly and it continues to pain me today to realize this wonderful woman had racist opinions. Yet, I also know that she not only succumbed to the Jim Crow mentality of the times, but that she came by those beliefs as family traditions. She was descended, as were all my family, from a significant number of ancestors who had, through the generations, helped perpetuate the suffering of slavery and segregation in this country.

II. THE SINS OF MY FATHERS

The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation. (Numbers 14:18)

In those days they shall no longer say: "
'The fathers have eaten sour grapes,
and the children's teeth are set on edge.' (Jeremiah 31:29)

The Beginning of Slavery in America

In August of 1619, a little over a year before a Pilgrim passenger ship, *The Mayflower,* anchored in Provincetown Harbor on the New England coast, another ship, *The White Lion,* arrived not far from Jamestown Virginia, at Point Comfort, which was located in what is now Hampton Virginia. This ship brought with it about twenty African slaves which its captain traded, in exchange for food, to two prominent Jamestown citizens, Governor George Yeardley, and Cape Merchant, Abraham Peirsey. Abraham Peirsey (1577-1628) was one of my 8,192 Twelfth Great Grandfathers.

The White Lion, captained by John Colyn Jope, had sailed earlier from Holland and bore a Dutch letter marque, which authorized the ship to function as a privateer plunderer of Spanish cargo ships. When *The White Lion* first crossed the Atlantic, it was accompanied by *The Treasurer*, which also bore a marque. *The Treasurer* was an English ship partially owned by Virginia's deputy governor, Samuel Argail. It was the same vessel that had earlier crossed the Atlantic in 1612 in the fastest time of any ship to date. It was also the ship that delivered the famous Native American princess, Pocahontas, to England in 1616.

On its 1619 voyage *The Treasurer* accompanied *The White Lion* as a partner in its privateering mission. Sometime before August of that year these two ships attacked a Portuguese slave ship, named *Sao Joao Bautista*. The Portuguese ship had captured around 350 Africans along the coast of Angola which the captain intended to deliver to Spanish colonists in Vera Cruz, New Spain (Mexico today). Delivery of two hundred of the slaves was supposed to fulfill a contract between the captain and a slave dealer. But the ship delivered only 142 slaves to its Vera Cruz destination. Missing from the shipment were about 50 Africans, presumably some of those had been pirated on the open seas by *The White Lion* (about 20 Africans) and *The Treasur*er (about 30 Africans). Historians have concluded that the remaining 150 Africans captured in Angola perished during the Atlantic crossing. Such deaths were certainly not uncommon as slave ship conditions tended to be horrifically unhealthy.

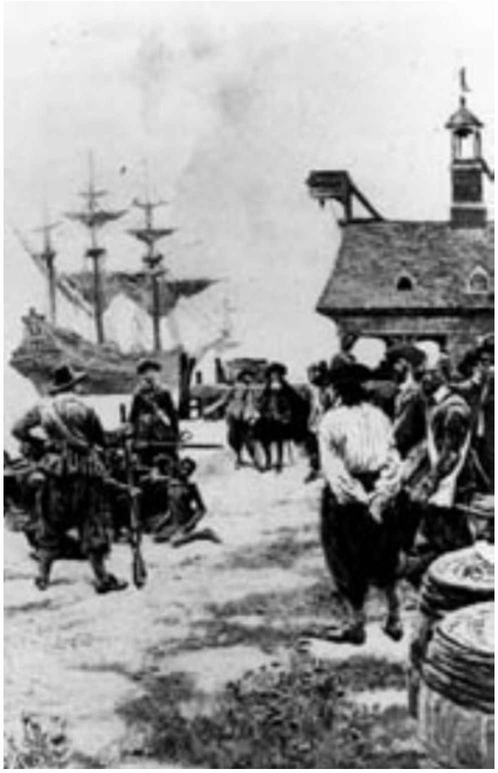


Illustration by Howard Pyle 1911

Lerone Bennett, Jr., in his classic African American history text, *Before the Mayflower* (Johnson Publishing Co. 1962; Penguin 1966) described slave ship conditions as follows:

> The newly purchased slaves, properly branded and chained, were towed out to the slave ships for the dreaded Middle Passage across the Atlantic. They were packed like books on shelves into holds which in some instances were no higher than eighteen inches. "They had not so much room, "one captain said, "as a man in his

> coffin, either in length or breadth. It was impossible for them to turn or shift with any degree of ease." Here, for the six to ten weeks of the voyage, the slaves lived like animals. Under the best conditions the trip was intolerable. When epidemics of dysentery or smallpox swept the ships, the trip was beyond endurance.
>
> 'On many of these ships,' a contemporary said, 'the sense of misery and suffocation was so terrible in the tween-decks-where the height sometimes was only eighteen inches, so that the unfortunate slaves could not turn round, were wedged immovably, in fact, and chained to the deck by the neck and legs—that the slaves not infrequently would go mad before dying or suffocating. In their frenzy some killed others in the hope of procuring more room to breathe. Men strangled those next to them and women drove nails into each other's brains."
>
> It was not unusual, John Newton (A former slave ship captain, English clergyman and the author of "Amazing Grace") said, to find a dead and living man chained together. So many dead people were thrown overboard on slavers that it was said that sharks would pick up a ship off the coast of Africa and follow it to America." (Quoted from pages 40-41 of The Penguin Edition)

According to a letter from Jamestown's, John Rolfe (an original 1607 settler and tobacco farmer who married Pocahontas), written to the Virginia Company of London treasurer, Sir Edwin Sandys, *The White Lion* arrived first, and landed at Point Comfort (present day Fort Monroe in Hampton, VA) sometime late in August, having lost its "consort ship" (*The Treasurer*) on the passage from the West Indies. Rolfe mistakenly described the ship as a "*Dutch man of Warr,*" perhaps because it bore the Dutch letter of marque. According to Rolfe, "He (the ship's captain) brought not anything but 20 and odd Negroes," which the governor, Argall's successor, Sir George Yeardley, and the cape merchant, Abraham Peirsey (my 12th GGF), "bought [the slaves] for victualle [food] … at the best and *easyest* rate they could." *The Treasurer* arrived at Point Comfort three or four days later carrying between twenty-five and twenty-nine additional slaves. The captain of *The Treasurer* was unable to negotiate a deal with the local settlers and soon sailed to the English colony at Bermuda where he sold fourteen Africans for 50,000 ears of corn.

It is not clear to historians whether the Africans were purchased by Yeardley and Peirsey as indentured servants or as slaves. Many early colonists, especially those from the upper classes, depended heavily on the labor of indentured English born servants for their economic well-being. Many of these servants were required, often in return for the cost of travel to the colonies, to work as farm laborers a set number of years in order to become free. Some Africans in colonial Virginia were recorded as having fulfilled a predetermined number of years of servitude and thereby obtained their freedom. Slavery, as it is usually understood was generally frowned upon by English Americans in the early colonial years, and, in 1619, Yeardley and Peirsey may have believed they were trading food for indentured servants. Be that as it may, by 1705, thousands of Africans were working on the plantations of Virginia, and the law governing servitude had been codified to insure that African "servants", who were considered an inferior race, were slaves for life, with no hope of obtaining their freedom.

Although Yeardley and Peirsey may have sold one or more of the Africans they had purchased from the captain of *The White Lion* to other Jamestown settlers, both men undoubtedly kept most of these persons as laborers for their respective plantations – Flowerdew Hundred and Peirsey's Hundred. A 1623 census of Flowerdew Hundred, taken following the Native American massacre of Jamestown settlers in 1622, listed seven African men and one African female. In 1624 Abraham Peirsey purchased Flowerdew Hundred from his friend, Governor Yeardley, and the purchase appears to have included eleven Africans. Slaves were considered "property." They were often included as bequests to their children and grandchildren in the wills of deceased owners.

My 12th GGM, Frances Grevill (1590-1635), was one of four women who arrived at Jamestown from Bristol, England in September 1620 aboard the ship, *Supply*. She was first married to Captain Nathaniel West, brother of Thomas West, the third Lord Delaware, who had been governor of Virginia beginning in 1610. Several years after West's death, Frances married my 12th GGF in my maternal line, Abraham Peirsey. Abraham and his first wife, Elizabeth Draper Peirsey, had a daughter, Elizabeth, my 11th GGM. When Frances married Abraham she became the stepmother of Elizabeth.

Abraham Peirsey had purchased Sir George Yeardley's Flowerdew Hundred Plantation after Yeardley's death, and, several years later, when Peirsey died, the plantation (presumably including the Africans still working on it) passed to his widow, Frances. Frances next married Samuel Mathews. (Mathews is a 12th GGF on my *Father's* side.) One of their children, Samuel Mathews Jr., became a Commonwealth Governor of Virginia (1656-1660). A daughter, Anne, would become my 11th Great Grandmother on my paternal side. So, Frances was both a step-mother to one of my maternal ancestors (Elizabeth Peirsey) and mother to one of my paternal ancestors (Anne Peirsey) who became the wife of Samuel Mathews Jr.

Samuel Mathews Sr. first owned Mathews Manor, a family plantation, so he may already have owned some slaves when he obtained the one's originally owned by the Peirseys. By 1649, Mathews appears to have had 40 slaves (approximately 1 in 8 of all the Africans in the colonies according to Haywood and Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles,, and the Foundation of the Americas*). The number of slaves is found in the following description from a 1649 promotional pamphlet encouraging migration to Virginia, titled, *A Perfect Description of Virginia:*

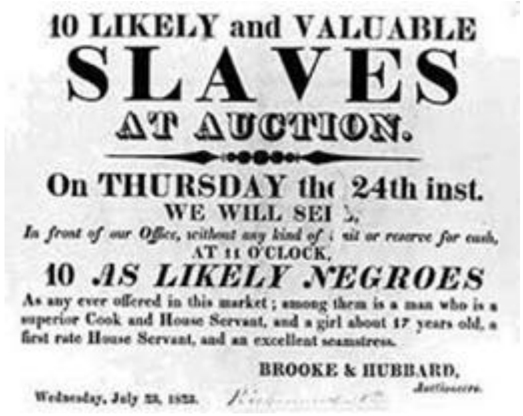
> *"Worthy Captaine Mathews, an old Planter of above thirty years standing, one of the Counsell, and a most deserving Common-wealths-man. I may not omit to let you know this gentlemans industry. He hath a fine house, and all things answerable to it, he sowes yearly store of Hempe and Flax, and causes it to be spun: he keeps Weavers and hath a Tan-house, causes Leather to be dressed, hath eight shoemakers employed in their trade,* ***hath forty Negroe servants****,* ***brings them up to Trades in his house.*** *He yeerly sowes abundance of Wheat, Barley, &c. The Wheat he selleth at four shillings the bushell: kills store of Beeves, and sells them to victuall the ships when they come thither: hath abundance of Kine, a brave Dairy, Swine great store, and Poltery, he married the Daugher of Sir Tho. Hinton, and in word, keeps a good house, lives bravely, and a true lover of Virginia, he is worthy of much honour." (Anonymous, A Perfect Description of Virginia . . . ., London, 1649.)*

The claim in this description is that at Mathews Manor, “negroes” were being taught artisan skills, which would have not only made them valuable laborers for Matthews, but would one day give them an advantage over field hands if they were in fact indentured servants who would at some point become free men.

In the decades following the 1619 arrival of the first “20 and odd Negroes”, the number of African slaves in America increased by many thousands. More than 600,000 Africans were enslaved, shipped and sold to colonial landowners of European decent prior to The Revolutionary War.

THE COTTON PLANTER AND HIS PICKERS.
WEST POINT. MISS.

Peter Cocke (1732-1803), my 6th GGF in my Grandmother Baggett’s line, served as a private, in the North Carolina militia, during the Revolutionary War, from 1777 to 1778. After the war, due to his service, he received a substantial land grant in Montgomery County Tennessee. There he became a prosperous tobacco farmer and the father of 13 children. By the time of his death in 1803 he had expanded his original grant to hundreds of acres of land which he willed to his wife and children. He also divided among his heirs seventeen slaves (7 men, 4 women and 6 children) and any future offspring they might produce. Peter Cocke’s will included specific instructions involving five named slaves which he left to his widow. At the time of his wife’s death, the slaves were to be sold, and the proceeds of their sale divided among the younger Cocke sons.



10 LIKELY and VALUABLE

SLAVES

AT AUCTION.

On THURSDAY the 24th inst.
WE WILL SELL,
In front of our Office, without any kind of limit or reserve for cash,
AT 11 O'CLOCK,

10 *AS LIKELY NEGROES*

As any ever offered in this market; among them is a man who is a superior Cook and House Servant, and a girl about 17 years old, a first rate House Servant, and an excellent seamstress.

BROOKE & HUBBARD,
Auctioneers.

Wednesday, July 23, 1823.

The life of a slave between 1619 and the Emancipation Proclamation in 1864 was horrendous. Slaves were considered property and often treated as if they were live-stock. The selling of slaves at auction frequently destroyed families, as wives and husbands, children and parents were sold to different owners. Slave owners could beat slaves for the slightest of infractions, but slaves were prohibited by law from striking back. Slaves usually worked at hot exhausting labor from early morning until after dark while surviving on meagre portions of food. They had little time to themselves and were even prohibited from worshiping without the presence of a white observer. Of course, some slave owners were probably relatively kind to their slaves, as long as the slaves were loyal, hard-working, respectful, and did not cause any trouble. Other slave owners, no doubt, treated their slaves horribly. Sometimes that included sexually abusing and raping female slaves, a practice that often resulted in mixed race offspring, infants who also became slaves.

Small Farm Slavery

Many of my ancestors, during the late 18th century and pre-Civil War 19th century, owned small tobacco farms in Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee, and, while some were too poor to own any slaves, and depended mostly on large numbers of offspring for farm labor, others did own a few slaves. So far as I know, none of my ancestors, during this period, owned major plantations and large numbers of slaves, but it was common, in the Post-Revolutionary war era, and during the first half of the nineteenth century, for owners of small farms to own a few slaves to serve as household and field labor. I have not been able to determine just how many of my ancestors were slave owners, but census data in the 1800s documents the following information.

In 1830, William Batte Cock, a son of Peter Cocke (see above), and my 5th Great Grandfather on my father's side, owned 5 slaves (4 more than he had inherited from his father). That same year, Eaton Powell a 3rd Great Grandfather on my Father's side owned 7 slaves, but by 1840 that number was down to 2. Felix Whitman Harper another 3rd Great Grandfather on my father's side owned 5 slaves in 1820. By 1840 he owned only 1. Economic pressures probably account for reductions in slaves in the 1830s and 1840s, but the slavery controversy in the nation at the time, including slave unrest in the South, cannot be ruled out as reasons for small households to get out of the slavery business.

Col. Richard Durrett, a 7th GGF, in my maternal grandmother's line also bequeathed, in 1784, three slaves to his grandchildren, but stipulated, if his grandchildren did not want them, the slaves should be sold, and the proceeds divided among the grandchildren,

In 1840, Charles Cocke, another 3rd Great Grandfather on my father's side owned 3 slaves. Also in 1840, Pleasant Stribling, a 3rd Great Grandfather on my mother's side, owned 1 slave.

*****

Several lines of my ancestors appear to have never owned any slaves. For example, my 8th GGF Bartholomew Vawter, an ancestor of my maternal grandmother and a Virginia colonist, bequeathed his plantation to his oldest son, but mentioned no slaves in his 1717 will. Some of my ancestors, such as Andrew Falls Scott (2nd GGF; 1826-1894) were originally Pennsylvania settlers, a land greatly influenced by anti-slavery Quaker culture. Scott, Edwin Geroge and others were non-slave owning Middle Tennessee immigrants from Pennsylvania and other abolitionist leaning states in the North.

*****

I have no way of knowing how my ancestors treated their slaves. I would like to think they were not cruel and heartless people, but, it is likely at least some of them were typically harsh masters. It is difficult for me to acknowledge this shameful and horrible heritage, but, given the sins of my ancestors, I am glad I have been able to play a small part in addressing the racism of my own era. Nothing I could have done would ever have made up for the horrors of the past, but, I believe, throughout my adult life, I have consistently chosen to try to alleviate the ongoing suffering created by this legacy.

III. LEGACY OF COURAGE

Montgomery County Tennessee Pioneers

My Baggett grandparents were born in Montgomery County, Tennessee. The first ancestor in my Baggett line to settle there was my 4th Great Grandfather, James Baggett Jr. (1756-1853). He came there because he received a grant of land in a Federal reserve west of Nashville for his service in the Revolutionary War. The first ancestor in my grandmother Baggett's line to settle there was a North Carolina born veteran of the War of 1812, Felix Whitman Harper (1797-1874) who also received land for his service. Tennessee became a state in 1796. Many pioneers migrated to Middle Tennessee from Virginia, North Carolina and other states as former Native American territories were opened for settlement. Other ancestors who settled in Middle Tennessee during the early 1800s include Eaton Powell(1793-1855), Adam Stack (1790-1860), Wyatt Shearon (1805-1876), Nancy Miles (1805-1866), Elizabeth Cocke (1802-1873), Samuel Felix Greene (1788-1851), and William Lewis (1782-1854).

The Civil War

The Civil War was fought over slavery. President Lincoln was determined to preserve a union divided over slavery, and northern abolitionist congressmen were determined to abolish slavery. Southern states were equally determined to defend what they believed to be their new country, their homes, and their slave-owning way of life. Much of the national debate raged around the rights of states to make their own laws, but, make no mistake, the Civil War was not about "state's rights." The laws in question were those designed by Southern state legislatures to legitimize the slavery of African Americans by white landowners. While the war was about slavery, many of the men who fought and died in the war were neither pro-slavery or anti-slavery fanatics, but went to war out of regional and national loyalty. Confederate prisoners of war, when asked what they had been fighting for, would not usually answer with a defense of slavery, but with something like - “because you “Damn Yankees” attacked us. I have included information about three ancestors who fought for the Confederacy and one who fought for the Union Army in the Battle of Gettysburg in the *Appendix* at the rear of this book.

My Great Grandfather Harper and the Yankee Soldiers

I was born seventy-three years after the end of the Civil War. When I was a toddler, there were people still living who could remember the war, One of them, my great-grandfather James Randolph Harper (1861-1940), my Grandmother Eva Harper Baggett’s father, had memories, from his own very young childhood, of the Union Army’s occupation of Clarksville Tennessee.

In the spring of 1861, following the bombardment of Fort Sumter in South Carolina, President Lincoln called for volunteers to serve in the Union army in order to suppress a growing Southern rebellion. On June 8, 1861, Tennessee voted to secede from the Union. It became the last border state to do so. By then, some of my Baggett and Harper ancestors had farmed land in Montgomery County Tennessee for several generations. Most residents had opposed secession as recently as the preceding January, but when war became inevitable, my Montgomery County ancestors and their neighbors united in support of the Confederacy. Only three citizens in the entire county voted against secession.

Great Granddaddy Harper
as a young man

The Civil War began in April of 1861. By 1862, as the fortunes of war shifted between the Union and Confederate armies, Clarksville Tennessee, and the Cumberland River that flowed by it, held significant strategic value for both the Union and the Confederate forces. Clarksville, was the center of both rail and river transportation of great importance to both armies. It also had a foundry capable of producing cannons. Perhaps of even greater significance for the armies of the time was the fact that Montgomery County was well known for the breeding of fine horses and strong working mules. After the Union army, under the command of General Ulysses S. Grant, defeated Confederate forces at Fort

Henry, located in Stewart and Henry County on the Tennessee River, and then Fort Donelson a few miles outside Nashville on the Cumberland River, in February of 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant and the U.S. Navy took control of the Cumberland River. During that same month, Union forces occupied Clarksville and Montgomery County. In Clarksville, the Union army captured the Confederate Fort Defiance located at the junction of the Cumberland and Red River.

The Union occupation of Montgomery County, like any enemy military occupation, was not pleasant for my ancestors, as my Great Grandfather Harper soon learned sometime before his 5th birthday. Grandparents and great grandparents often tell and retell their more memorable stories over and over. Great Granddaddy Harper was no exception. I listened with great fascination as he told me several times of his childhood encounter with Yankee troops.

During the late 1930s my family lived in a house made out of a boxcar on Reynolds Rd, Southeast of Nashville. The land where we lived was a portion of the 40 acre tract of farmland owned by Granddaddy Baggett. My grandparents lived in “the Cabin” which was their home when they were not living in a parsonage somewhere. My great grandfather James Randolph Harper lived with my grandparents in the Cabin when he was in his late seventies. He died in 1940 when I was only 4 years old so my memory is from a very young age. I do remember a not too well kept family secret that grandpa Harper enjoyed a nip of whiskey now and then. He often carried a little flask in his overalls, which was quite scandalous at the time, as his son-in-law was a well-known Methodist minister.

About fifty yards below our house, a small creek ran through the Baggett property and crossed Reynolds Road where it continued through farmer Pulley’s land. When we first moved to the boxcar house, the bridge over the creek was old, wobbly, and made from rotting wood. One day a construction crew showed up from the county and began to work on a new concrete bridge. My great-grandfather must have thought that to be quite entertaining as he had a cane back chair brought from the cabin to the bridge so he could spend the day sitting, sipping from his flask, chewing, “spittin’ backy,” and watching people work. That is where I got to know my great-grandfather Harper. He loved to tease me. Teasing very young children seems to have been a great sport for senior citizens back then. He also enjoyed telling me stories of his childhood.

I only remember one of his stories. It seems when he was a toddler, he lived on a farm in Montgomery County, not far from Clarksville. When he was about three years old, his parents gave him a pony which he was very proud to own. Shortly afterward, Yankee soldiers came to the Harper farm to confiscate horses for their army. The soldiers led several horses from the barn. When one of them started to lead his pony away, my great grandfather cried. One of the Yankee men slapped him and yelled, “Shut up, you little Rebel.” It made quite an impression on him. His story did on me, as well.

The Ku Klux Klan

The Jim Crow years of segregation between the end of the civil war and 1965 was tragically marked by terrorist groups known as the Ku Klux Klan. The first Klan began in

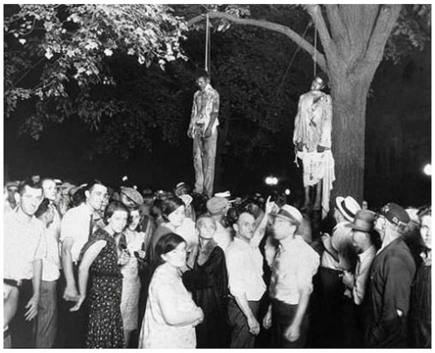
1866, in a judge's office in Pulaski Tennessee. Klan groups appeared throughout the south in the late 1860s. They were made up of white Democrats, many of them former Confederate soldiers, who wanted to undermine and overthrow the Republican dominated legislatures in the southern states. Through threats of violence, setting fires, and lynching, the Klan was able to suppress Black voting and participation in the political process. Federal Troops moved to defeat the Klan and it disbanded around 1871. In 1915, the Klan sprang back to life, inspired by the movie, "The Birth of a Nation," a film based on the book, The Clansman, by Thomas Dixon Jr. This time, as portrayed in the film, Klansmen dressed in white sheets and burned crosses.

This early 20th century Klan was anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant, pro-white American, and pro-prohibition. By 1915, southern legislatures had returned in governance to the pro-segregation Democratic Party. The rebirthed Klan focused on ensuring segregation laws and the "separation of the races." Its racist ideology also had advocates beyond the south. Klan chapters were formed throughout the nation. At its peak in the 1920s The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan claimed over four million members. White hooded Klansmen rode at night, burned the houses and churches of African Americans, and lynched any black man, and sometimes black women, whom they perceived to be a threat to white supremacy.

Photo of KKK Hood & Sheet

The Tuskegee Institute determined 4,743 people were lynched between 1882 and 1968. Lynching were sometimes public events, a demented form of entertainment, to which people would often travel for many miles to witness.

News Photo of a Lynching



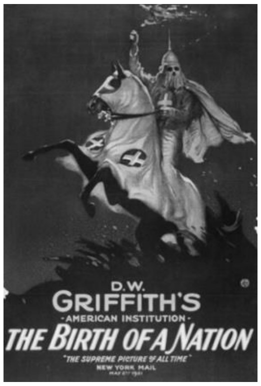

D.W.
GRIFFITH'S
AMERICAN INSTITUTION
THE BIRTH OF A NATION
"THE SUPREME PICTURE OF ALL TIME"
NEW YORK MAIL

Photo of Poster Advertising Film

Granddaddy Baggett and The Ku Klux Klan

In 1924, twelve years before my birth, my grandfather, and namesake, Rev. John Foster Baggett Sr., became the 34 year-old pastor of Woodbine Methodist Church. The church was located in a south side neighborhood of Nashville Tennessee in a community known colloquially as “Flatrock”. Granddaddy served Woodbine from 1921 through the spring of 1924. Granddaddy was beloved by his congregation. During his three-year Woodbine ministry, a total of 516 members were added to the church roll. Although a popular pastor, he did not shy away from controversy. One Sunday, he preached a sermon in which he criticized the Ku Klux Klan for hypocritically acting in an unchristian manner while claiming to be a Christian organization. Not long after, at a Sunday evening worship service, the Klan paid my grandfather and his congregation an unwelcome visit.

Woodbine Methodist Church
Nashville, Tennessee

Middle Tennessee had long been a Klan friendly environment. As noted earlier, some ex-confederate soldiers first organized the Klan in the southern middle Tennessee town of Pulaski. Later, in 1867, a meeting held in Nashville organized the KKK into a national organization, with a former confederate general, Nathan Bedford Forest, a native of Chapel Hill, Tennessee, as its Grand Dragon. (In 1869, General Forest, disillusioned by the lawlessness of local Klan groups, unsuccessfully attempted to dissolve the organization).

In the post WWI era, local Klan groups all over the nation became outspoken and active in an “anti-alien” terrorist movement targeting African Americans, Catholics, Jews, and various immigrant populations. They saw themselves as “a white Protestant” supremacist movement dedicated to restoring “traditional” American (i.e. southern white Protestant racist) values. The Klan also saw itself as an enforcer of traditional Protestant morality. Among their identified enemies were “bootleggers” and “wet” anti-prohibition politicians. Klan vigilantes sometimes burned down saloons, intercepted and destroyed shipments of moonshine, and tarred and feathered bootleggers.

During a Sunday evening service, shortly after my grandfather's sermon criticizing the Klan, a few men, in cone shaped hooded masks and costumes made from sheets, entered the Woodbine Methodist Church sanctuary. They paraded up and down the aisles, picked up the offering plates, and slung the currency contents around the church.

Granddaddy Baggett was never one to back down from a fight. He remained standing behind the pulpit, and, in his booming preacher's voice, he called the Klan visitors "cowards" for hiding behind their masks. The Klansmen soon exited the church, and, as far as my grandfather knew, they never returned again, with or without their masks.

While my grandfather took a strong stand against the Klan, it is somewhat ironic that the local Klan tried to terrorize him and his congregation. Granddaddy Baggett did not in any way believe in the message of hate preached by the Klan, but he did share their general views on prohibition. He would never have condoned the terrorist tactics the Klan used against bootleggers, but in 1933, a few years after the Klan's visit to his church, Granddaddy Baggett served as chairman and leader of Tennessee's United Prohibition Forces.

In a conversation with my grandfather many years later, he told me he did not believe, as did many Americans, that prohibition had been a failure. He believed, instead, that it had never been seriously tried. On another occasion, he told me he believed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was the greatest man of our times, and that he would continue to detest the Klan and what it stood for until the day he died.

My Father and the Ku Klux Klan

During the 1960s, when I was living in Chicago and becoming increasingly involved in the Civil Rights Movement, my mother and father moved from Raleigh to Hickory N.C. where Dad became the manager of the "H &B" Building Supply Company. In 1967, Dad helped organize a Kiwanis Club in Hickory, and was evidently involved in scheduling speakers for the group. For one of the programs Dad invited the local leader of the Civil Rights movement in Hickory to speak. Evidently, it was a great speech in which the vision of a just and fully integrated society was articulated. The following day, a major article about the presentation appeared in the local newspaper. The newspaper gave Dad due credit for arranging the program. Then, on the following day, when my Dad arrived at his office at H&B, he found a note on his desk that said, "We are watching you. *KKK*."

My father sometimes had more guts than good sense. He began to ask around town about the local KKK. Someone told him about a man who lived not far from town that was supposed to be the local KKK leader. Dad drove to the man's house and knocked on his door. When the door opened, there were two other men standing behind him. Dad introduced himself, and said, "I understand you have something to say to me." The Klan leader stared at him a moment, and said, "We don't like who you are associating with." Dad looked at the two men behind their leader, and said, "I don't like who you are associating with either, and the next time you have something to say to me, have the guts to say it to my face."

"We are going to be watching you." was the response.

"I'm going to be watching you too, Dad said.

He left, and, fortunately, the KKK never bothered him again. But sometimes in the evenings over the next several months, Mom and Dad would take long rides on the country roads of Iredell County N.C. and drive slowly past Klan rallies in progress, in order to make sure someone knew he was still watching them.

IV. COMING OF AGE IN THE SEGREGATED SOUTH

Doing the Dishes

Some of my favorite memories are about spending time helping my mom with the dishes. That's right, drying dishes and putting them away. This was years before automatic dish washers in the home, so all dishes had to be washed by hand, placed in a wire counter top container to drain, wiped with a dish cloth and put back in the kitchen cabinets. Mom used those times to prepare my sister and me for life, and to inspire us to strive above mediocrity. Mom saw dish time as an opportunity to challenge us to serious thought about social issues, about the Bible and theology, and race. She raised us to *be critical thinkers, not critical persons*. She wanted us to question the status-quo and to empathize with those for whom the current ways of understanding things and doing things was not working well. She challenged us not just to think about how things were affecting us. My Mom taught us that discrimination and segregation were wrong. Given her upbringing during the Jim Crow era, I have never been sure where her anti-racist views came from, but she was unwavering in her beliefs. What a great gift those conversations were to me. They prepared me to one day become a demonstrator for justice in the struggle for civil rights.

Martha the Maid

Mom, however, did not always practice perfectly what she preached. She would sometimes mutter under her breath about a "colored person" she had encountered on a bus or in a store who acted "uppity," and did not know "her place." It is hard to outgrow your upbringing. We also had an African American maid, named Martha. She worked for us a couple of days a month, mostly ironing, which my Mom hated to do. Many African American women worked as "domestics", during those years, in order to support themselves and their families. Martha was an intelligent woman who embraced her servant role with amazing dignity. But Mom, who swore she loved Martha, was bothered, if Martha failed, which she seldom did, to demonstrate the expected subservient role to everyone and to always use the accustomed responses of "Yes Mam, No Mam, and Thank you Mam."

Martha also worked for my Aunt Dot, my Mom's older sister. One day, in 1962, after I was married and in seminary, I dropped by to visit Aunt Dot, Martha happened to be working there that day, and we had a remarkable conversation. The Nashville sit-in movement, led by a classmate of mine, was underway at the time. I let her know I supported what was happening, and she let me know that pleased her a great deal.

Mr. Wiggins

Another African American with an extended relationship with our family was a Mr. Wiggins. I never knew his first name. Dad, called him "Wiggins." Calling an African American male "Mr." was something white people seldom did during the 1940s and 50s. To address an African American male as "Mr." indicated a level of humanity and respect that whites at the time believed unworthy of those they considered to be an "inferior race." It is no mystery why the male black garbage truck strikers during the protests that brought Dr. King to Memphis in 1968 carried picket signs saying: "I AM A MAN." For southern whites to acknowledge the full humanity and dignity of black males was perceived, at the time, to risk the "natural advantages" of being born white. I don't believe the white people I knew, when I was a young man, *hated* black people, as much as they *feared* losing their privileged status in society. Be that as it may, the white man's myth permeated the culture. To my mother's credit, she insisted I always call my Dad's African American employee "Mr."

Mr. Wiggins worked for my Dad at a lumber company prior to Dad's service in the Korean War. When, in 1952, Dad returned from his assignment in Norfolk, Mr. Wiggins was then working as a Porter on one of the Nashville trains. When Mr. Wiggins spied Dad getting off of his train, he ran to him and said, "Mr. John, when can I come to work for you?" I take two things away from the incident. Despite my father's unwillingness to call him Mr., I think it likely my Dad had a history of treating Mr. Wiggins more humanely than did Mr. Wiggins' supervisors at the N&O Railroad. I also think this incident helped inspire my father to start his own lumber business, which he soon did.

After Mr. Wiggins went to work for Dad at his new business on Murfreesboro Rd., he would sometimes walk up Thompson Place, where we lived, in order to do some odd jobs for our family. Our neighborhood had no African American residents. I had a collie-shepherd mix dog, named Honey. Honey must have drunk some racist water at some point as she always barked longer and louder when Mr. Wiggins came up the road, than at any other person.

"Honey"

Public Schools

I graduated from High School in 1954, the year of the Supreme Court desegregation decision. So, I spent all twelve years of my public education in segregated schools. Our history books only told the story of America from the standpoint of white European and Southern white mythology. During our classes we learned nothing of the genocide of Native Americans to make room for European settlers, nor about the horrifying and dehumanizing realities of slavery and segregation for African Americans. We never learned of the important inventions and other substantial contributions of African Americans to our country. Our classrooms were usually surrounded, above the blackboards, by pictures of white presidents, and adorned by an American flag, to which we said allegiance each day, with no sensitivity to the irony of such phrases as "for liberty and justice for all." Teachers were not always discreet about their political and social views. I remember a 5th grade teacher telling our class how awful she thought President Roosevelt and President Truman were because they did not believe in the "separation of the races." A sixth grade teacher had a slightly different story. She thought those same two Democrat Presidents were wonderful, since they allowed the states to "control their rights." It was all quite confusing for a kid. I don't know what would have become of me, if it had not been for those dishwashing conversations with my mother when she encouraged critical thinking and corrected the biases of my teachers.

Arlington Church

My family attended Sunday school and church at Arlington Methodist Church, located on Murfreesboro Rd. near the Nashville airport. During my High School years, I belonged to the Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF) which met at the church on Sunday evenings. At Arlington, I learned to love the many gospel hymns found in a brown "Cokesbury" hymnal. Much of what I learned from my Sunday School teachers, my MYF leaders, and my pastors were important basic training for my life work as a pastor.

I do remember, however, one not so helpful lesson. One of our leaders invited a guest speaker one day to talk to our youth group about "crime prevention." When I learned a former law enforcement officer was coming, I became excited with anticipation. During my childhood I had read stories of kids who had become "crime stoppers," helping to solve mysteries and preventing bad things from happening.

I remember very little of what our guest speaker had to say. But, what stuck in my memory is the fact he gave each one of our group an illustrated book that supposedly would help us identify criminals. When I looked through it, and studied the caricatures of persons likely to be criminals, the message of the book was transparent: "those who had non-Caucasian features, especially African Americans, were presented as prone to criminal behavior." When I showed the book to my mother, she became as angry as I have ever seen her. After glancing through it, she threw it into the garbage can, where, as I have looked back on things, I know it truly belonged.

Selling Fire Extinguishers

Between my Junior and Senior years of High School I worked as a laborer at Berry Hill Lumber Company in Nashville. I put on a lot of muscle from handling hundred pound bags of plaster, sheetrock, and various sizes of two inch thick lumber. The extra conditioning helped me finally make first string on my schools football team in the fall of my senior year. After graduating from Antioch in late May of 1954, I went back to work at Berry Hill, but this time as a salesman, selling "Florida rooms." I canvassed neighborhoods and gave free estimates for enclosing porches and breezeways with Clearview jalousie (louvered) windows. I made enough commission that summer to cover my freshman college tuition.

At the end of my first year at Martin Jr. College, I thought I probably would spend another summer selling windows, but my dad had another plan. He thought, with my sales abilities, we might both get rich if I sold household fire extinguishers. It turned out to be a tough gig. I had a lot of doors closed in my face.

On one occasion, Dad dropped me off in a middle class African American community in Nashville near Fisk University. I think he thought, for some reason, that people in that neighborhood might be more likely to be convinced of their need for a small kitchen fire-extinguisher. He was wrong. Even more doors were closed in my face. All except one. A very nice woman invited me into her living room. She had no interest in my sales pitch, but wanted to use the opportunity to try to educate this "white boy" who had the nerve to go house to house in her neighborhood. She interrogated me about my attitudes and beliefs about segregation, and lectured me for close to a half hour about the need for white people to get on the right side of the issues and bring about change. Evidently satisfied, she instructed me to leave the community and never come back. I believe that day ended all of our hopes of getting rich off of selling fire extinguishers.

First Sermon

When, in the Fall of 1954, I began my Freshman year at Martin Methodist Jr. College in Pulaski, Tennessee, I dreamed I would become a journalist, perhaps a sports writer. I loved sports. I even tried out for the college basketball team, and, although I was only six foot two, and had not played any high school basketball, I made the team as a second string center. (That fact undoubtedly said more about the questionable quality of our Jr. College team than it did about my athletic abilities.)

At Martin, I made new friends and achieved good grades in my classes. It was my first time to be away from home and I loved the independence, but I also found myself struggling with existential questions: "Who am I?" and "What am I going to do with my life?" The life of a sports journalist just did not feel right anymore.

A mandatory freshman Bible class taught by a recently appointed college president, Rev. Dr. J. Fort Fowler, encouraged me to consider my life questions in the light of Biblical understandings. I lived in the one and only Martin College boys' dorm. I soon fell under the influence of several of my new college friends who were pre-ministerial students. A tiny chapel, containing a cross, candles, and an altar, where students could kneel and pray, was located in the basement of the dorm. I began to go there every night to pray and to seek God’s guidance for my life.

It was in that chapel that I truly gave my heart and life to Jesus Christ and received the answer to the question of what to do with my life. One evening in early 1955, while kneeling at the chapel altar, I began to sing softly a song I remembered from my years in a church youth group, “Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to thee. Take my moments and my days. Let them flow in ceaseless praise.” As I sang this prayer, I felt the warmth of God’s grace enveloping me. I suddenly knew what God wanted me to do with my life. That night I accepted God’s call to preach.

I soon shared my call with my ministerial buddies. Not long afterwards, they invited me to go with them on a Sunday afternoon to the Giles County Jail where a small group of student Christians held church services for the prisoners each week. At the jail, we were led into a small area surrounded by cells containing prisoners. The service was simple. We would all sing a couple of hymns, and then one of the students would deliver a sermon followed by a prayer and a closing hymn. Each barred cell block contained a mixture of black and white faces. I remember thinking at the time the jail was probably the only truly racially integrated institution in 1955 Giles County Tennessee.

After attending several of these jail services, one of the group’s leaders asked me to deliver the sermon at an upcoming service. As the date approached, I meditated and prayed about my subject. I chose a text from the book of James, one which had spoken to me over the past several months of soul searching:

> *Whereas you do not know about tomorrow. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.”* (James 4:14)

On the Sunday afternoon I was scheduled to preach, our little group of seven or eight walked a couple of blocks from the college campus to the jail in downtown Pulaski. As we did so, we passed a building adorned by a plaque proudly proclaiming it as the birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan. More than 90 years earlier, on December 24, 1865. A group of six ex- confederate soldiers had gathered in the office of Judge Thomas Jones and organized themselves into a “social club.” They named themselves Ku Klux Klan as a play on the Greek word *Kyklos* which means “circle.” This little club grew into the nationwide white terrorist organization dedicated to segregation, and responsible, over 86 years, for lynching a documented 3,346 African Americans.

As I passed that notorious landmark on the way to preach my first sermon on that beautiful Spring Sunday afternoon in 1955, I was not unaware of the irony of preaching my first sermon to an “integrated” congregation, albeit a “captivated” one. Of course, I had no way of knowing that ten years later I would be arrested, along with a group of Civil Rights marchers, in Selma Alabama, and would be threatened by members of the Klan who worked as deputies of the local Sherriff, or that this white preacher would, in 1967, become the pastor of an African American congregation on the Southside of Chicago.

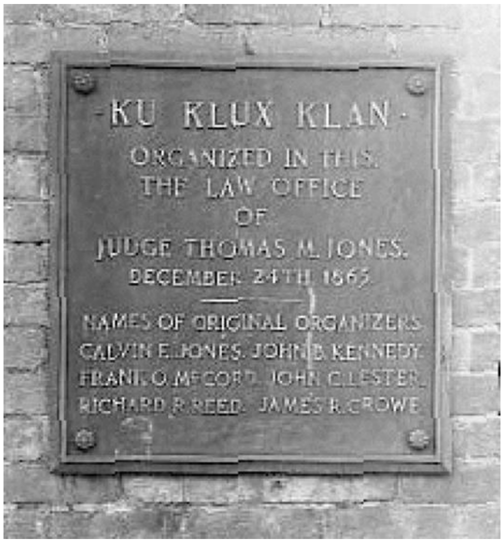

KU KLUX KLAN
ORGANIZED IN THIS,
THE LAW OFFICE
OF
JUDGE THOMAS M. JONES.
DECEMBER 24TH 1865
NAMES OF ORIGINAL ORGANIZERS
CALVIN E. JONES. JOHN B. KENNEDY.
FRANK O. McCORD. JOHN C. LESTER.
RICHARD R. REED. JAMES R. CROWE.

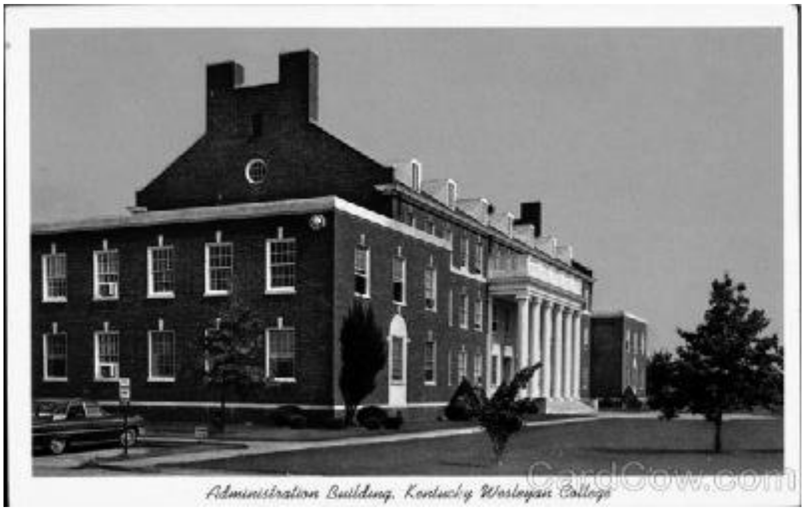
Photo of the KKK Plaque in Pulaski TN

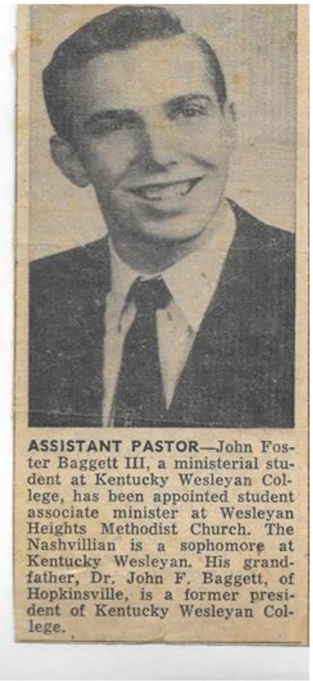
One of my memories of the service in the Giles County Jail is how differently, from my experience, the mostly African American men sang "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms." I had grown up in a church that sang this hymn at a fairly fast clip. The African Americans in jail that day had grown up in churches that sang it at a mournfully slow pace. Decades later I would still be able to hear in my head these men singing *l-e-a-n-i-n-g* slower than I would have thought humanly possible.

On that first sermon day, in the Giles County Jail, based on my chosen text from James 4, I spoke about the uncertainty and brevity of life, and how each of our lives is unique and precious. I talked about the fact that we only have one basic choice in life, and that is whether our lives will be an asset or a liability. I have no idea whether anything I said touched any member of that captivated Giles County Tennessee jail congregation, but preparing that first sermon, and the entire experience of that special day, certainly had an impact on mine.

V. KENTUCKY WESLEYAN COLLEGE

At the end of my freshman year at Martin, my parents wanted me to transfer to Kentucky Wesleyan, a four year Methodist college, some three hours by car north of Nashville. My sister, Margaret, and her husband, Joe, were already students at Wesleyan. They were not the only family connection. Granddaddy Baggett had been the President of Kentucky Wesleyan in 1950-5, when the 92 year-old school moved from Winchester Kentucky to Owensboro. The fact that my grandfather was a former President, and still a member of the KWC Board of Directors, likely saved me later from being expelled for circulating a petition demanding the school desegregate.


Administration Building, Kentucky Wesleyan College


ASSISTANT PASTOR—John Foster Baggett III, a ministerial student at Kentucky Wesleyan College, has been appointed student associate minister at Wesleyan Heights Methodist Church. The Nashvillian is a sophomore at Kentucky Wesleyan. His grandfather, Dr. John F. Baggett, of Hopkinsville, is a former president of Kentucky Wesleyan College.

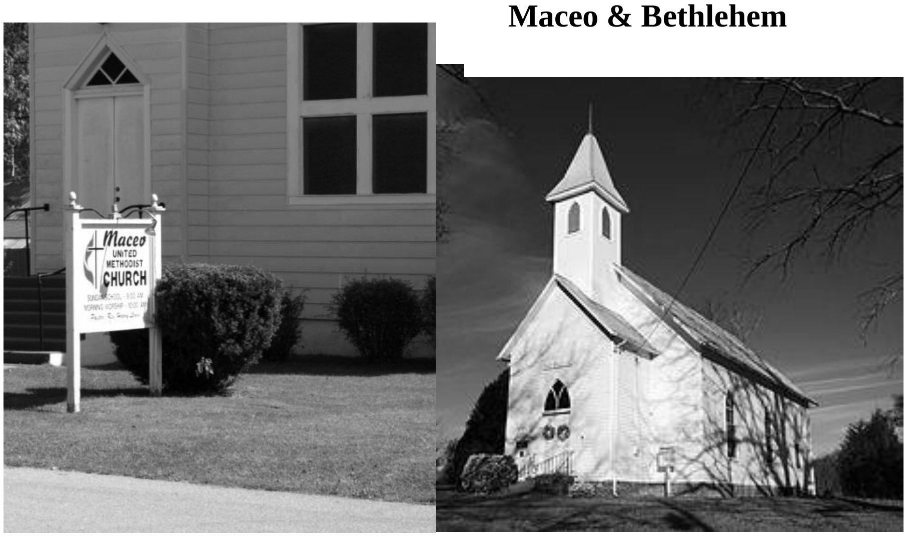
In the Fall of 1955, at the beginning of my Sophomore year at Wesleyan, Rev. Billy Joe Cox, a young pastor, who was attempting to plant a church near the campus, asked me to be his Assistant. It was a volunteer position with no salary, but I was glad for the opportunity and the experience. During the year, in addition to my school work, I pursued a “License to Preach,” which involved some correspondence study, mostly about Methodist history, and going before a committee of fully ordained clergy to be questioned. Because of a shortage of fully trained and ordained pastors, there were too few pastors for the large number of rural (and low paying) Methodist churches in Kentucky. For that reason, the Annual Conference depended on non-seminary trained persons to serve many churches. Some were men who had been in the work force awhile, had families, felt called to preach, but had no way to get the necessary education. Others, like myself and some of my buddies, were college students who were preparing for ministry and needed income to help pay for college.

In June of 1956, I was appointed Pastor of a two point Methodist charge. That meant, at the age of 20, I had become the senior pastor of two churches, Maceo and Bethlehem. Maceo was 12 miles east of Owensboro on the highway to Louisville. Bethlehem was a “country” church located five or six miles south of Maceo. My salary was $1800 a year.

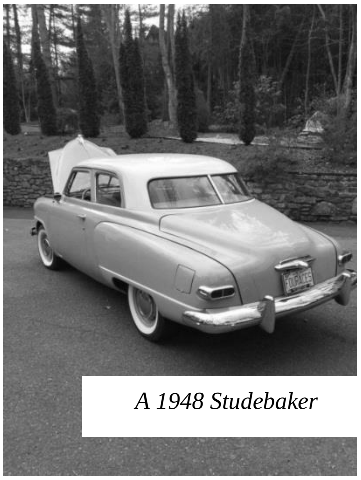
VI. MACEO BETHLEHEM CHURCHES

In June of 1956, with License to Preach in hand, I began serving the Maceo Bethlehem Charge (Circuit). I would hold services at both churches every Sunday, but would alternate an early service and the traditional 11:00 a.m. time. At first the congregations welcomed me appreciatively and warmly, but, a few months later, that changed when I began to preach against segregation.

After my appointment in June, I arranged for a special rate at a motel in Maceo as I was not enrolled in Summer School and not eligible for a dorm room. I also managed to purchase a very used 1948 Studebaker coup. When school started back in late August, I moved back into the dorm and commuted the 12 to 15 miles to my churches on Sundays. Every commute was an adventure. When travelling to and between my churches, a trail of blue smoke followed my brown Studebaker. I carried a case of oil cans in the trunk, kept an eye on the oil light, and stopped to add oil at least twice every round trip.



Maceo & Bethlehem



A 1948 Studebaker

KWC Desegregation Petition

Early in the Fall of 1956, my Junior year at Wesleyan, I began to date Millie Vaughn. I had known Millie the previous year, but both of us were dating other people at the time. Millie had spent an adventurous summer serving as a student volunteer worker at an African American church in Jamaica New York. She was also serving as the President of the Methodist Student Movement (MSM) for the state of Kentucky. The MSM was very progressive at the time, especially with regard to race. Millie was enthusiastic about the need to challenge segregation and found me to have a sympathetic ear for the cause. This was only three years after the 1954 Brown Vs. The Board of Education Supreme Court decision that declared segregated schools inherently unequal and ordered integration of schools in Kansas and other states. During some of her bus travels through the South, Millie had even chosen, on a few occasions, to ride in the back of the bus with the African American passengers. She could have been arrested for refusing to move, but that never happened.

Late in the Fall of 1956, Millie and I decided to try to get student and faculty signatures in order to present a petition to the Kentucky Wesleyan College Board of Trustees demanding the school be desegregated. The previous year, student protests had already broken out at Wesleyan over a very different issue. A substantial majority of students wanted the school to allow dancing, which at the time was prohibited. Many older Methodists, especially in Kentucky and other southern states, had been raised to believe dancing was wrong. Much of the financial support for Kentucky Wesleyan came from rural Methodist congregations, who would never have approved of the school allowing dancing. But a group of students decided the ‘no dancing’ policy needed to change. Several unofficial protest dances were held on campus in the hope of forcing a change. I have a vivid memory of “jitterbugging” until exhausted at a couple of those events. Dr. Lever, a very conservative former President of Wofford College in South Carolina who succeeded my grandfather as President of Wesleyan in 1951, initially refused to yield to the students. But, after consideration, he relented and allowed the student leadership to plan a formal dance. Efforts to desegregate Wesleyan would not prove to be as easily achieved.

Millie and I composed the desegregation petition, and began garnering signatures. As I honed my pitch to potential signers, my passion for the integration cause increased. Shortly after we began the campaign, I began to slip anti-segregation comments into my sermons at Maceo and Bethlehem. I naively thought members of my congregations understood that segregation was unchristian, and believed they would mostly agree with me that things needed to change.

In the winter of 1957, President Lever called me into his office. I knew I was in trouble when I encountered his red face. He let me know, in no uncertain terms, that our efforts to integrate KWC would never be successful as long as he was President. He also told me that if my grandfather had not been a former President, and, at that time, a member of the KWC Board of trustees, I would already have been expelled.

Our petition, containing signatures of more than a hundred students was finally sent to the chair of the Board of Trustees. We waited anxiously to know the Board’s decision. I learned later from my grandfather, who had no prior knowledge of our efforts, that the matter had never made it to the agenda of the Board.

One evening in early Spring I asked Millie to marry me. We decided to plan a wedding for June at her childhood church in Louisville. Excited to share the news, and, in the hope that after the marriage we could live together in the parsonage at Maceo, we stopped by the District Parsonage one afternoon to tell Dr. Paul Shell Powell, the District Superintendent of the Owensboro District, about our plans.

When I went to the door, Dr. Powell answered and angrily asked me, “What are you doing here?” He led me to a room and told me that he had been meeting with my Pastoral Relations Committee for the past hour. He suspected I knew about the meeting and had shown up uninvited for it. I assured him that was not so, and I was only there to share the good news of my engagement. He then took the opportunity to let me know he thought my preaching to my congregation about desegregating Wesleyan was highly inappropriate. I left his parsonage that day bewildered. I had always respected Dr. Powell, and believed him to be a good Christian leader. His lecture to me seemed out of character. I feared my pastorate at Maceo and Bethlehem was over, and that I would not have a church, income, or a parsonage, should I follow through with the planned wedding.

One member of the KWC Board of Trustees ran a funeral home in Owensboro. I held services for deceased members on several occasions. One day the funeral owner pulled me aside and let me know he was aware of my efforts to integrate the college, and that he would never agree. I said something to the effect that “heaven is going to be integrated, so he better get used to it.” He responded… “If there are *n*****s* in heaven, I don’t want to go. He has been dead a few years now. I have wondered at times whether things worked out as he wished.

I finished my appointed year at the churches. The wedding occurred as planned, and Dr. Powell saw fit to re-assign me to Maceo and Bethlehem, and to instruct the Maceo congregation to make the parsonage available for their pastor and his bride.

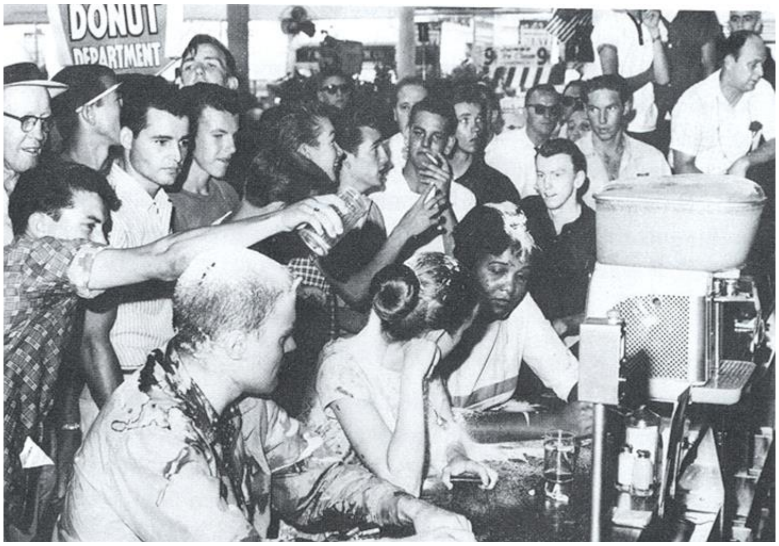
My senior year of college and my final year as pastor of Maceo & Bethlehem churches was relatively uneventful. As graduation approached, I researched, and prayed about, where to go to seminary. I decided to explore the possibility of returning home to Middle Tennessee and attending Vanderbilt. Vanderbilt Divinity School accepted my application and Dr. J. Dallas Bass, a District Superintendent in the Tennessee Conference, offered me an appointment. I moved in the summer of 1958 to Rover, in Bedford County Tennessee, to serve three Methodist churches on the Rover Circuit - St. Paul’s, Maxwell’s Chapel, and Zion’s Hill. In the Fall, I began my three years of seminary study at Vanderbilt.

VI. VANDERBILT DIVINITY AND JIM LAWSON

In 1959, while a student at Vanderbilt Divinity School in Nashville, a fellow classmate at the seminary was The Rev. James Lawson. Jim was the first, and, at the time, the only African American student at Vanderbilt University. Jim and I got to know each other when we were students in a Classical Greek class. I soon found out he was a former missionary to India who strongly believed in the non-violent protest methods of Mahatma Gandhi and of Martin Luther King Jr.

As a child growing up in the Nashville exurbs, I was quite familiar with the fact that most drug stores, such as Walgreens, "five and dime" stores, like Woolworths, and major downtown department stores, such as Harvey's, had lunch counters, These did a bustling midday business in the commercial sections of the city. My very first job was as a fourteen-year-old fifty-cents-an-hour "soda-jerk" at a local drug store lunch counter. Because Jim Crow laws required the segregation of public accommodations in Tennessee, African Americans were not allowed to eat at any lunch counter in public shopping areas. While people of color were welcomed to spend money for merchandise in the stores, prominent signs over the lunch counters read "Whites Only."

In February of 1960 a group of African American college students held the first modern civil rights era sit-ins, at Woolworths, in Greensboro, North Carolina. The sit-in movement quickly spread to other southern cities, including Richmond Virginia and Winston-Salem North Carolina.



News Photo of Sit-in

In the spring of 1960, my classmate, Jim Lawson, who was active in the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), as well as a branch of Martin Luther King's Southern Leadership Conference, led a series of training sessions in non-violent protest for a group of students from the local black colleges and universities. He then helped organize the first lunch counter sit-ins in Nashville, which consisted of small groups of black and white students enduring taunts and physical abuse while sitting and requesting service.

During this time, I was the pastor of three all-white country churches in Bedford County Tennessee. I soon found myself struggling with the question of whether I should join the lunch counter demonstrators. . Based on my previous experience, I was very clear, if I were to participate in the Nashville sit-ins, it would almost certainly create unrepairable controversy and opposition among the members of the congregations I served.

Rev. James Lawson

I decided to consult with my friend and classmate, Jim Lawson. When I began to convey my predicament to him, Jim interrupted me to tell me, while he appreciated my willingness to consider participation in the demonstrations, he thought I could probably contribute more to the movement by continuing to love, preach and teach in my current congregations. The time might come in which other things would be required of me, but that could surely wait, at least for now. His words were prophetic. A few years later, I would participate in a number of Civil Rights demonstrations.

I came away from my conversation with Jim with the phrase “strategic love” bouncing around in my head. I am not sure Jim used those exact words, but, nonetheless, they made a deep impression on me. As I understand it, “strategic love” meant that we are not just called by Jesus to do the right thing so we can feel good about ourselves, but we are called to love people in *effective* ways – in ways that create the conditions for positive life changes, ways that make possible reconciliation with God, and with neighbors, and genuine citizenship in the kingdom of God.

In the Spring of 1960, the Nashville papers carried headlines about the sit-ins and named Jim Lawson as their leader. When the news that a Vanderbilt student was leading the movement became public knowledge, The Board of Trustees at Vanderbilt University decided to expel Jim.

News Photo of Jim Lawson’s Arrest during The Nashville Sit-In Movement

The Dean and ten distinguished professors at the Divinity School were so disturbed by the action of the Trustees that each of them submitted letters of resignation in support of Lawson. I was in my second year of a three year divinity program, and, despite my worries about my academic and personal future, I too wanted to do something to support Jim. I wrote several other seminaries to see if I could transfer and complete my degree elsewhere. Then I prepared a letter of resignation to the school. I eventually received letters welcoming me to Perkins Theological Seminary in Dallas Texas, and Union Theological Seminary in New York, but by the time I received them, the Board of Trustees at Vanderbilt had agreed to let Jim Lawson graduate. All but a couple of the professors returned. Greatly relieved, I chose to complete my Vanderbilt degree.

After graduation, in 1961, I became pastor of Community Methodist Church in Chicago. Jim continued to be active in the Civil Rights movement and became pastor of Centenary Methodist Church in Memphis Tennessee. In 1968 he was involved in a sanitation worker strike in Memphis. Most of the workers were African Americans and several belonged to Jim's church. In order to drum up support for the strike, Jim invited Dr. King to Memphis. Dr. King accepted the invitation, and, on April 3, 1968, Dr. King gave his "I've Been to the Mountain Top speech." The following morning Dr. King was assassinated. James Earl Ray, an ex-convict who supported the racist views of then presidential candidate Governor George Wallace, was soon arrested, charged, convicted of the assassination, and sentenced to prison for ninety-nine years. Consistent with Lawson's philosophy of non-violence and forgiveness, Jim became a personal pastor to the prisoner, James Earl Ray, visiting him many times and even performing his wedding at the Brushy Mountain State Prison in Tennessee. Lawson, along with members of Dr. King's family, eventually came to believe Ray was wrongly convicted, that he was a patsy in a larger conspiracy, and even advocated for a new trial. Ray eventually died in prison.

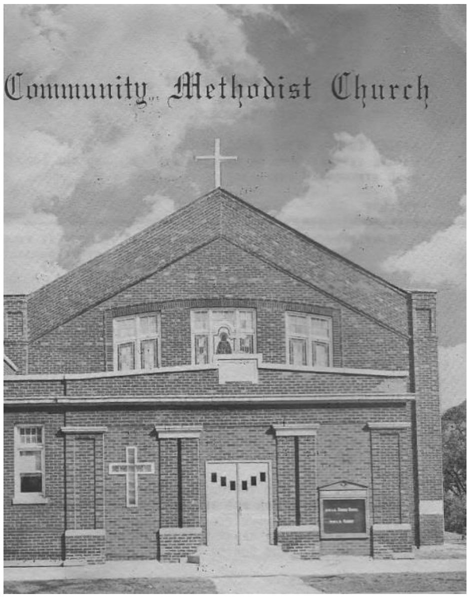
In the late 1960s, when I was a pastor of Woodlawn Methodist Church, an African American congregation in Chicago, Jim came to town and was a guest speaker at a meeting of The Inner City Methodist Minister's Fellowship, an association of Chicago pastors. That day, Jim and I were able to renew our friendship. Lawson later became pastor of a church in Los Angeles and continued to speak and teach about the civil rights movement, the non-violent protest philosophy, and its methods.

Jim Lawson later received a formal apology from Vanderbilt University, a distinguished alumni award, and, in 2006, a Vanderbilt faculty appointment.

VII. COMMUNITY METHODIST CHURCH, CHICAGO

Toward the end of my seminary studies, I felt called to serve an urban inner city church. I first spoke with the bishop of the Tennessee Conference and he basically told me, Methodist preachers did not ask for specific types of appointments, but went wherever they were sent by their bishop. I believed I knew better than the bishop what God had in mind for me so I wrote letters to bishops in New York, Chicago and Cleveland. I received a letter almost immediately from the bishop of New York offering me a church there.

Then, about the same time, I received a call from Frank Countryman, a District Superintendent for the South Chicago District of the Rock River (now Northern Illinois) Conference. Dr. Countryman and his wife were driving through Tennessee on their way to Florida for a vacation and wanted to meet me. A couple of hours later they interviewed me in the Rover Church parsonage. They told me, before they came to the house, that they had stopped at one of the two local country stores and asked if anyone there knew me. Evidently what they heard of my reputation in the community pleased Dr. Countryman. He offered to fly Millie and me to Chicago to meet with the pastoral relations committee of Community Methodist Church. We agreed. When we met with the committee, it could not have gone better. They were pleased at the prospect of having a young pastor who could relate to the young people in the church and community.



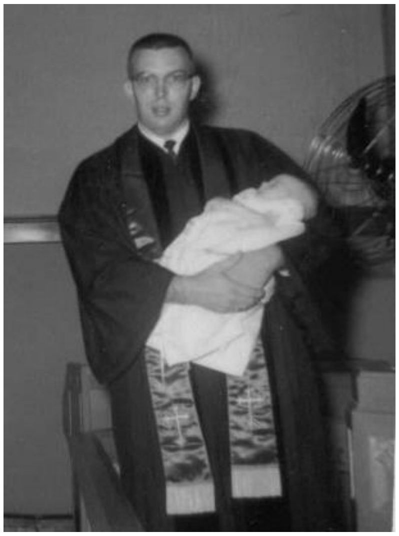
Community Methodist Church was located at 1842 West 50th street, on the Southwest side of Chicago in The *Back of the Yards* neighborhood, immediately south of the mostly abandoned stockyards. The Back of the Yards, at the time, consisted of twelve square blocks, with a population of over 200,000 persons, served by twelve Roman Catholic churches, each representing a different European ethnic group. The one Missouri synod Lutheran church, and the one (Community) Methodist church served the Protestants in the area.

Millie and I were, initially, a little disappointed that Community Methodist was an all-white church in an all-white neighborhood, as we had envisioned our inner city ministry in either an African American community or a multi-racial one. Nevertheless, this church in the Back of the Yards neighborhood in Chicago had its own challenges, and, after praying about it, I accepted the appointment. It would prove to be a good decision that would prepare me for other challenges in the future.

VIII. CIVIL RIGHTS – CHICAGO ILLINOIS AND SELMA ALABAMA

“Are You a Father?”

My daughter, Sarah, and son, John Mark, were born during my seminary years while I was serving the Rover Circuit. I became a father for the third time 0n July 27, 1963, when my son Samuel David arrived.



Baptism of Samuel David Baggett

Two to three weeks after Sam’s birth, an African American family moved into an all-white, mostly Roman Catholic, Chicago community that lay between my neighborhood, the Back of the Yards, and Englewood, a community that had transitioned during the 1950s from white to African American. A railroad system separated the two communities, and those who lived on the white side of the tracks thought it to be a permanent barrier, a belief as firm to them as any Southern Jim Crow law.

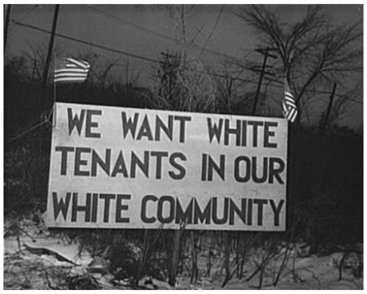
Photo by Jim Northcutt, from the IRM Collection

www.Chicago- .org

Railways are often barriers
between Chicago communities

One day, while my son Sam was still a tiny infant, I received a call to put on a clerical collar, and to join some fellow clergy in trying to prevent white neighbors from continuing the riots and threats that had begun as soon as the black family moved in. I could not imagine how terrifying the experience must have been for them. I had heard rumors that some, in similar situations, had rocks, bottles, and homemade incendiary devices thrown through their windows.

For several decades, "blockbusting" had been a common practice in Chicago. Realtors. By convincing residents that a neighborhood was about to transition from white to black, and thereby creating panic, the realtors stood to make substantial profits in previously all white neighborhoods. The most unscrupulous real estate investors even paid young African American males to create public disturbances. They ensured, through "For Sale" signs and real estate showings, that white residents got the message their neighborhoods would soon become black ghettos. In the panic, real estate prices dropped dramatically, making the homes more affordable to African Americans. Real estate investors bought the discounted homes at low-ball amounts and then sold them to African Americans at inflated prices .



When I got the call to help quell the riot, I briefly panicked, not so much because I feared the danger, but because I did not own a clerical collar. (It would have felt ludicrous to wear a "roman collar" around the Rover Tennessee Circuit.) My colleague, who requested my help, made it clear a clerical collar was essential. Virtually all of the rioters had been raised catholic. The collar was essential to insure respect and safety. I managed to find one at a religious supply store.

COMMUNITY
METHODIST
CHURCH

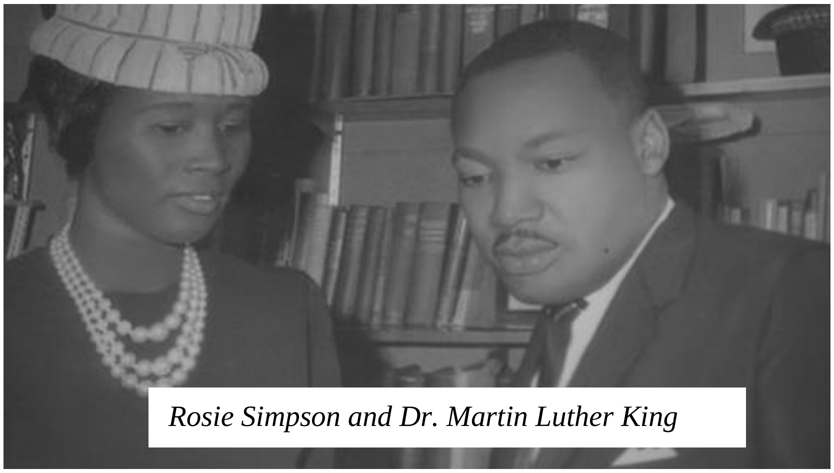
First Time Wearing Clerical Collar

As evening approached, I cautiously drove to the area where a crowd was gathering. I parked, and joined some other clergy in “guarding with our bodies” the home in question. As darkness enveloped us, the crowd became increasingly rowdy. At one point, a coke bottle whizzed by my head and crashed to the sidewalk of the residence. A few minutes later, a rock barely missed my shoulder.

Some of the growing mob tried to engage me in a conversation. Evidently, for some reason, they did not recognize me as one of their local catholic priests. “Are you a Father?”, one of them shouted. I thought about baby Sam, peacefully sleeping in his crib. “Oh, yes. I am a father!” I responded with conviction. The group, who had been crowding my personal space moments before, drew back a few feet. Chicago police soon arrived on the scene. The crowd mysteriously, disappeared. About eleven o’clock that night, thankful to still be alive, I drove back to the parsonage, looked in on baby Sam, and kissed him goodnight.

63rd and Lowe Demonstrations

That same summer of 1963, I participated in my first Civil Rights demonstration. African American parents were protesting against the use of so-called “Willis Wagons.” These were mobile classrooms, named by the leader of the local parents group after the Chicago Public Schools superintendent, Benjamin Willis. “Willis Wagons” were deployed disproportionately on the South and West Sides as overflow space for African Americans whose segregated schools were overcrowded. African American parents argued that these “trailers”, which were typically placed on school parking lots or playgrounds, were being used to keep black students out of white schools in nearby communities. Some of the “white schools” were underpopulated and had empty classrooms. When schools opened that August, the parents led a boycott in which more than 200,000 students, mostly African Americans, stayed home.



Rosie Simpson and Dr. Martin Luther King

The movement began at a school located near 73rd and Lowe, in Englewood, on the South Side of Chicago. Parents led protests against the installation of mobile classrooms. Rosie Simpson, a mother of six, President of the 71st and Stewart Committee, led the demonstrations. (Rosie and I would later work together on school problems in the Woodlawn community). As "Willis Wagons" were being delivered to a vacant lot in the area, Rosie's group picketed the site. Rosie and other demonstrators even placed their bodies on the ground in front of the delivery trucks and the heavy equipment being used to set up the classroom trailers. The protests attracted the press, and subsequent criticism from Superintendent Willis and Mayor Richard J. Daley Sr. who attempted to dismiss the demonstrators as instigated by "outside agitators." A cartoon in a local paper suggested these non-violent protesters were arsonists. Nothing could have been further from the truth. The demonstrations attracted members of CORE (the Congress on Racial Equality) some local college student organizations, and local clergy. Several persons were arrested, including a future Presidential candidate named Barry Sanders, who, at the time, was a student at the University of Chicago.

In the midst of this, I received another call from the same clergy friend who had recruited me to help quell the earlier riot. He instructed me to once again put on a clerical collar, so the press would know I was a member of the clergy, and to show up the next day to help picket the site. During the subsequent demonstration, involving more than a dozen of my fellow clergy, I carried a sign which read, "Segregated Chicagoland." A picture, which appeared on the front page of a major Chicago afternoon paper, is on the cover of this book. I was also interviewed by a reporter from another Chicago daily paper, who identified me, the church I pastored, and my quote about the injustice of neighborhood and school segregation. This information and quote appeared on the front page as well.

Since my church, Community Methodist Church, was located in the all-white European immigrant settled Back of the Yards, it is not surprising that a couple of days after the papers ran stories about the demonstration, two rocks were thrown through a front window of my church building. The rocks carried nasty notes that read "No N*****s". I also received several phone calls containing threats sprinkled with loud profanity. These experiences underscored to this southern born pastor that racism was still very much alive in the white neighborhoods of the northern city of Chicago.

"Cheap Unity"

In the Fall of 1963, several of my clergy friends travelled to Jackson Mississippi in order to participate in church "kneel-ins" designed to expose the segregated nature of Methodist churches located in the south.

White Bishop James Matthews from Boston, (a brother of Joe Matthews, who founded the Ecumenical Institute of Chicago) and African-American Bishop Charles Golden of Nashville were barred by ushers from the Galloway Memorial Church, in Jackson, while nine people, consisting of seven ministers and two African American worshippers, were arrested at the Capitol Street Church. Those arrested were imprisoned and charged with trespassing and disturbing public worship. More than forty visiting worshipers were arrested over a period of several weeks.

Because I was a southerner by birth and had served Methodist churches in the South, I was invited by the editors of *Behold* magazine, in December of '63, to co-author, with Rev. Phillip Dripps, a chaplain at the University of Chicago, an article about the visitations, in order to offer Methodists a theological perspective with which to understand the "visitations."

The article, titled *Christian Unity, The Methodist Church, and Jackson"* appeared in the December issue of *Behold*, a publication of Methodists for Church Renewal. The following quotes are representative of the entire document.

> "The words of Holy Scripture, the Methodist Discipline, and the newspaper of October 21 present a stark and tragic contradiction in the life of the Methodist Church. By command of God, the church is one; by the acts of men it is torn asunder. The arrest of Christians seeking to worship Almighty God in a Methodist house of prayer in Jackson, Mississippi reveals to the church and to the world that a crisis of the first magnitude confronts Methodism in all its parts."
>
> "…. Segregation exists in the whole church. That segregation exists both North and South is not only evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of churches are either all white or all Negro, but also by the very existence of the Central Jurisdiction."
>
> "It needs to be seen that any church that shuts its doors to a brother in Christ because of color shuts the door to Christ himself. Any Methodist church that shuts its doors to a person on the basis of color is in violation of our Discipline and should be faced with disciplinary action."
>
> "…Genuine unity in Christ is threatened by a false unity which might be termed *"cheap unity."*….the prophets of cheap unity declare a unity not in Christ as the Scripture declares (see Ephesians 4:4-6) , but a direct unity found sometimes in class, sometimes in color, sometimes in sectionalism, sometimes in loyalties to family, friends, and nation.
>
> "The whole church in every part of the world needs to re-evaluate its relation to the culture in which it dwells. For whenever a church capitulates to cultural values the unity of Christ's church is threatened. Our unity comes from the head of the body, the cornerstone of the building, the one Lord of our lives."
>
> "There are those who suffer in Jackson, Negro and white, because of their witness to the unity of the church. Can these persons be allowed to remain beaten and robbed beside the road while we attempt to conciliate the priest and Levite who pass them by?"
>
> "Is it too much to expect the Council of Bishops, the general Conference, the Boards and Agencies of Methodism to eradicate the blight of disunity which threatens to destroy the soul of the church?"
>
> "We pray that God will use the church to the full in this present crisis, for we are in the midst of evil days. But we need not despair for the grace of God is sufficient to meet every challenge."

This article was later quoted in *Racism, Southern Evangelicals and the Better Way of Jesus by Alan Cross 2014, published by NewSouth Books.* Also referenced *in*

Sanctuaries of Segregation:The Story of the Jackson Church Visit Campaign by Carter Dalton Lyon – University Press of Mississippi 2017.

McDowell House and Inter-racial Visitors at Community

Since the turn of the century, The Back of the Yards neighborhood had been home to McDowell House, a "settlement house", originally modeled after the better known Hull House. By mid-century, the programs originally provided to the immigrant community were no longer needed, largely due to the role of The Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council. In 1964, an African American social worker, then in charge of McDowell House, met me in my office and told me about a new mission of this service agency. Under new leadership, the McDowell House historic building had become a residential facility for persons with Developmental Disabilities. Eight clients were currently living in the home and seeking to participate in "normalizing" activities in the community. She told me there were two African American males in the group. She asked if it would be OK, if these residents came as a group on Sundays to attend my church. While I knew these "strangers" would make some of my current members uncomfortable, I assured her the group would be welcome. The following Sunday, these visitors arrived a few minutes before the service began, walked down the aisle, and found seats on the third row. I welcomed the group from the pulpit. I was proud of my congregation that day, and in the weeks to come. Members of our governing board welcomed our visitors and never once expressed displeasure about the disabled inter-racial group who had become a part of our church fellowship. This group attended every Sunday for the rest of my ministry at Community.

THE
MARY McDOWELL
SETTLEMENT

News Photo of McDowell House

Not long after the group began attending Community, I made a pastoral visit to a couple who had missed several weeks of church. They had immigrated to Chicago from the mountains of Kentucky around 1960. They had joined Community church shortly after my arrival in 1961. I think my southern accent had made them feel comfortable. But, by the time of my visit, they expressed extensive discomfort with our church. The husband said they could never go to a church with "colored people." He said, "Brother Baggett, you keep saying they is *human beings*. But we think of 'em as "being like monkeys." I prayed for wisdom, and tried to talk to them about the love of Jesus, but they wanted no part of me, the church, or a Jesus who loved anybody but white folks.

In 1965, inspired by the Jackson Mississippi church visitations, and, sadly aware of the segregated nature of neighborhood based congregations in Chicago, an African American group of Methodists began visiting Chicago Methodist churches in all-white communities in order to test the inclusiveness of hospitality in those congregations. One beautiful Spring Sunday two African American visitors showed up at my church. Not only were they warmly welcomed, they could not help but notice the inter-racial group of McDowell residents sitting on the third row. While integration had cost us a handful of members, I was greatly encouraged by the way other members had grown into their discipleship.

Selma March

"Martin has known from the beginning that the movement could cost him his life."

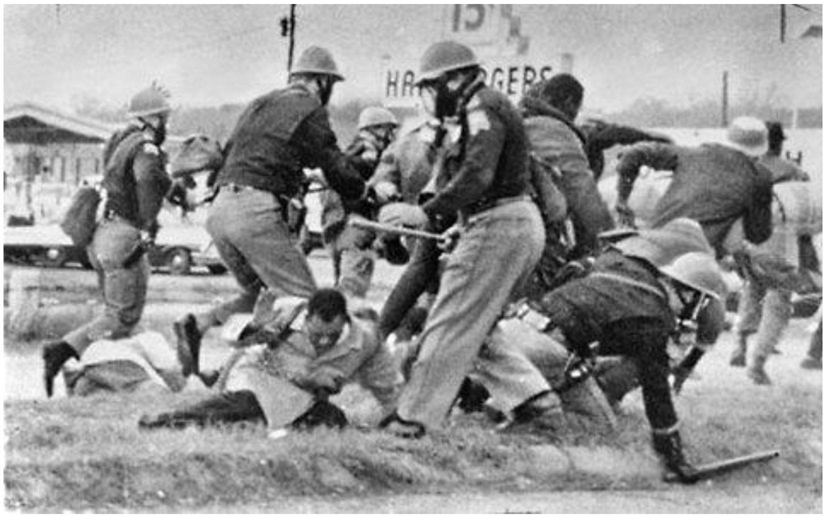
Over the years I have recalled many times these prophetic words spoken to me with serene dignity in private conversation, by Coretta Scott King, wife of Dr. Martin Luther King. At the time, Coretta, Rev. John Porter, and I were sharing a plane ride from Montgomery Alabama to Atlanta Georgia on the evening of Sunday, March 16, 1965. It was the end of the first day of the Selma to Montgomery March. Dr. King, as we all know, was gunned down by an assassin three years later on March 29, 1968.

Coretta, whose home had been bombed during the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955, was herself an amazingly courageous woman, risking her own life many times to walk by Martin's side. We had both marched that day, along with almost 8,000 others, made up mostly of African Americans, but with a sprinkling of white clergy from around the country mixed in. As the four lane road between Selma and Montgomery narrowed to two, only three hundred marchers were allowed by the court to continue toward Montgomery. Most of the rest of us returned to Selma and some of us headed home. When we shared that plane ride, Coretta was returning to her family in Atlanta, and I was on my way back to my family and church in the stockyards area of Chicago.

News Photo of Dr. King and Coretta Scott King Leading Selma March

My journey had begun two weeks earlier on Sunday March 7, 1965, a day which has come to be known in Civil Rights history as "Bloody Sunday." That evening, I watched the television in horror and disgust as white law enforcement officers and deputies mercilessly beat and tear gassed a non-violent group of 600 African Americans as they marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma. I knew in that moment that God was sending me to Selma that week.

The following Sunday, I announced to the Community Methodist congregation that I planned to go to Selma. After church, the chair of the church Trustees, handed me a hundred dollars to help with the cost of the trip. I have always been grateful for his generosity.



News Photo of Bloody Sunday in Selma Alabama, March 7, 1965

On Tuesday, March 9, Dr. King led a somewhat larger group back to the Edmund Pettus Bridge, but they turned around before there could be another confrontation. That evening, a friend of mine, Rev Jerry Forshey, who had participated in the Tuesday march, was in downtown Selma at a drugstore along with Rev. James Reeb, a white Unitarian Universalist minister. While Jerry was talking with someone in the store, Reeb left, intending to walk a few blocks back to the African American community. Reeb was surrounded by a group of men and beaten to death.

I arrived in Selma on Thursday. On Saturday, around 150 of us marched through the Selma mayor's neighborhood to protest the publicly sanctioned violence toward the protestors. Along the way people threatened us with curses and guns. Some of our group were viciously assaulted. We were arrested and herded into school buses where our bodies were packed together so tightly it was difficult to breathe. We were driven to the jail where we were required to stand outside in the hot sun for over two hours. There was no room in the jail so we were led to a community facility for incarceration. After a sleepless night in which we feared the Ku Klux Klan would bomb our temporary prison, our guards disappeared and we marched uneasily back to the movement headquarters at Browns Chapel Church.

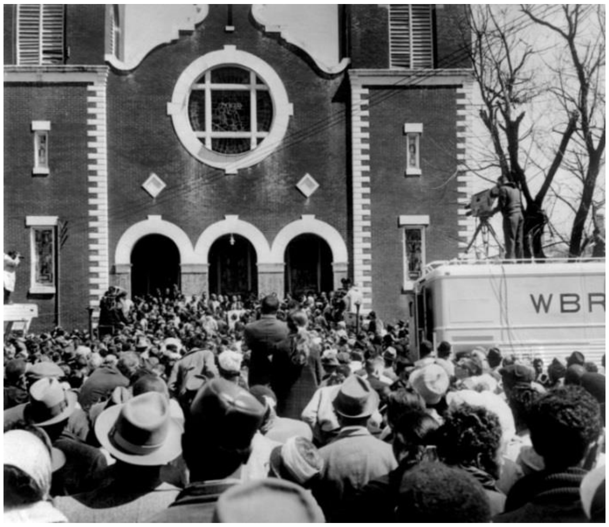
The lot outside the Selma Courthouse Where I was forced to stand for over two hours in the hot Alabama Son.

Picture taken on my return visit to Selma in2008

The Community Center Where We Were Jailed

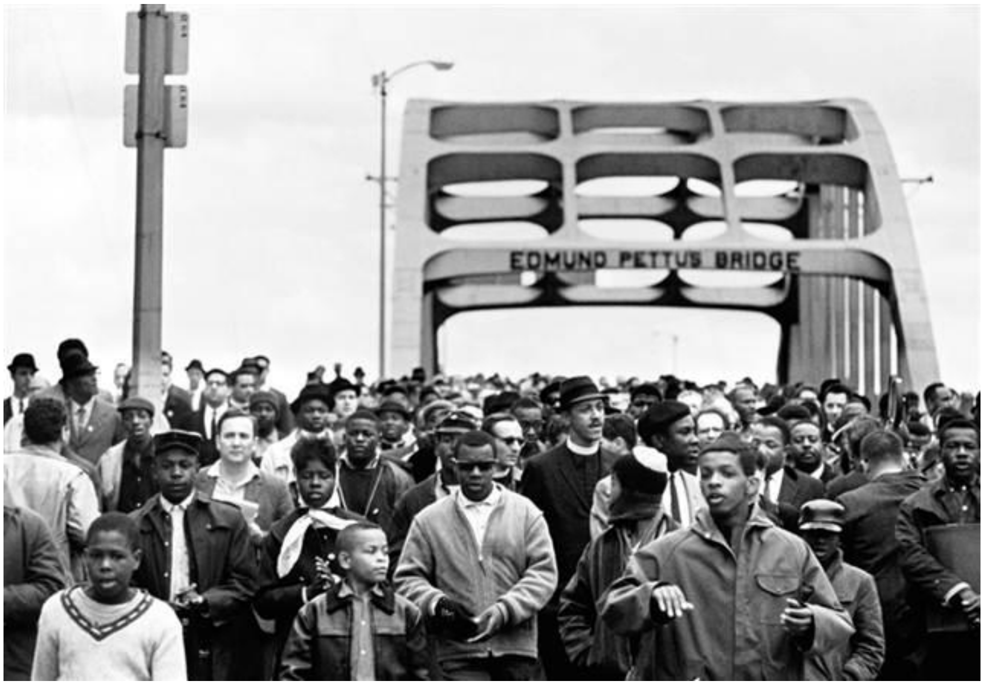
Picture Taken on My Return Visit to Selma in 2008

On Tuesday, March 16, thousands assembled outside the church. Communion was served and Dr. King spoke.



Selma March News Photo. I was near the front of the crowd on the left.

Now protected by Federal injunction and national guardsmen, we began to march through the streets and across the Edmund Pettus Bridge toward Montgomery. After several miles of marching, the majority of us returned to Selma.



News Photo: Crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge on March 16,1965

A Long Day's March

That night a kind African American older couple risked their lives to drive me to the airport in Montgomery. I lay covered by a blanket on the floorboard of the backseat of their car. If my white face had been seen by members of the Klan, we would all have likely been killed. Only a few days later, Klan members killed civil rights volunteer Viola Liuzzo on that same road.

And so I found myself sitting with Coretta on that plane ride to Atlanta. It is difficult today for us to understand the animosity that existed then. I have never before or since heard the level of vile language, or seen the kind of hatred in people's eyes, that I witnessed coming from the white people, many of them no doubt active church members, lining the streets of Selma during the marches.

The Selma to Montgomery march touched the conscience of America. Selma was about voting rights for African Americans in the South. Through a variety of strategies, including poll taxes, voter registration fraud, and violence, African Americans in the 1960s were denied the right to vote. Selma was the catalyst that made possible the Civil Rights Act, which was introduced in Congress on March 17, 1965.

The right to vote is a right of every adult American citizen. It has been paid for by every soldier who ever fought for our country, and by every civil rights worker who died or risked beatings and death to end voter discrimination. No matter what our politics, we must never ever allow any group of people, especially elected representatives, to hinder and deny the legitimate rights of American citizens to exercise their right to vote.

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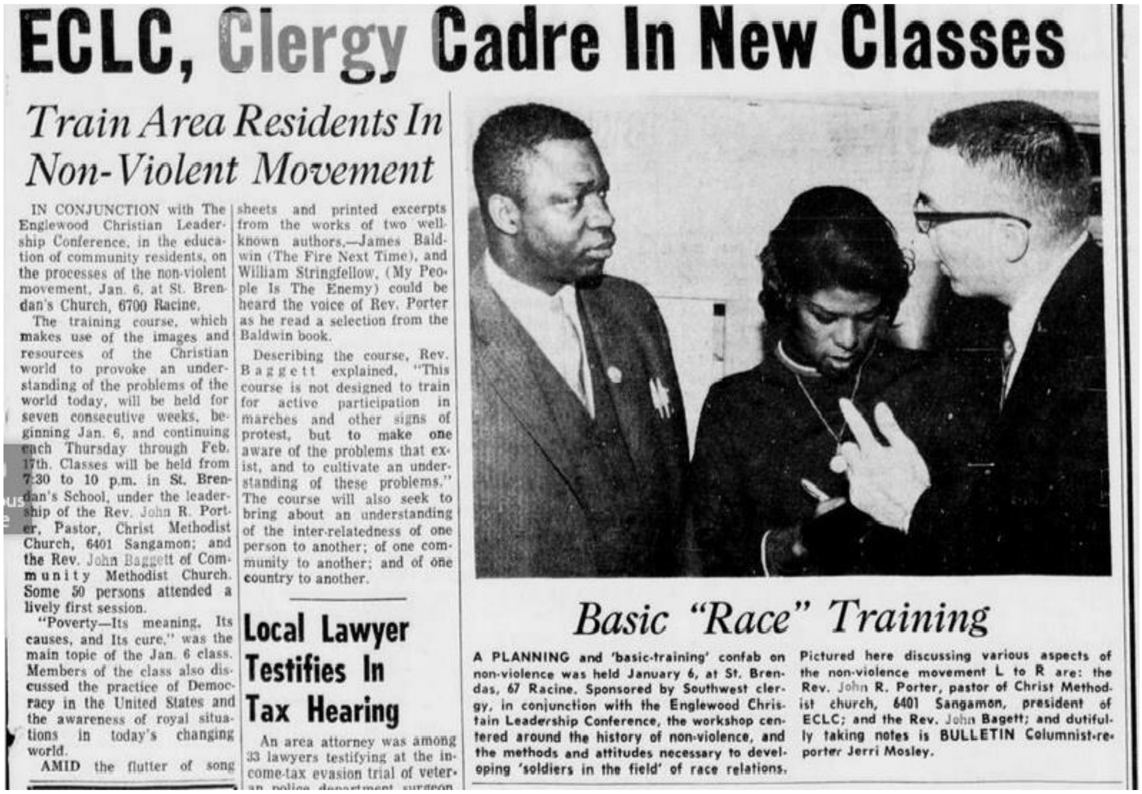
Southwest Clergy Cadre



ECLC, Clergy Cadre In New Classes

Train Area Residents In Non-Violent Movement

IN CONJUNCTION with The Englewood Christian Leadership Conference, in the education of community residents, on the processes of the non-violent movement, Jan. 6, at St. Brendan's Church, 6700 Racine.

The training course, which makes use of the images and resources of the Christian world to provoke an understanding of the problems of the world today, will be held for seven consecutive weeks, beginning Jan. 6, and continuing each Thursday through Feb. 17th. Classes will be held from 7:30 to 10 p.m. in St. Brendan's School, under the leadership of the Rev. John R. Porter, Pastor, Christ Methodist Church, 6401 Sangamon; and the Rev. John Baggett of Community Methodist Church. Some 50 persons attended a lively first session.

"Poverty—Its meaning, Its causes, and Its cure," was the main topic of the Jan. 6 class. Members of the class also discussed the practice of Democracy in the United States and the awareness of royal situations in today's changing world.

AMID the flutter of song sheets and printed excerpts from the works of two well-known authors,—James Baldwin (The Fire Next Time), and William Stringfellow, (My People Is The Enemy) could be heard the voice of Rev. Porter as he read a selection from the Baldwin book.

Describing the course, Rev. Baggett explained, "This course is not designed to train for active participation in marches and other signs of protest, but to make one aware of the problems that exist, and to cultivate an understanding of these problems." The course will also seek to bring about an understanding of the inter-relatedness of one person to another; of one community to another; and of one country to another.

Local Lawyer Testifies In Tax Hearing

An area attorney was among 33 lawyers testifying at the income-tax evasion trial of veter-

Basic "Race" Training

A PLANNING and 'basic-training' confab on non-violence was held January 6, at St. Brendas, 67 Racine. Sponsored by Southwest clergy, in conjunction with the Englewood Christain Leadership Conference, the workshop centered around the history of non-violence, and the methods and attitudes necessary to developing 'soldiers in the field' of race relations.

Pictured here discussing various aspects of the non-violence movement L to R are: the Rev. John R. Porter, pastor of Christ Methodist church, 6401 Sangamon, president of ECLC; and the Rev. John Bagett; and dutifully taking notes is BULLETIN Columnist-reporter Jerri Mosley.

January 13, 1966 Chicago Bulletin News Story

In 1965, after attending a Parish Leadership Course at Chicago's Ecumenical Institute, and gaining some tools for social change, I contacted several clergy on the Southwest Side of Chicago in the hopes of bringing together an ecumenical group dedicated to racial reconciliation in, and between, the communities we served. Our founding members included Methodist Pastors, Rev. John Porter, Rev. Robert Keller, Rev. John Hudson, but also others from diverse traditions, among them Father Peter Scholtes of St. Brendons Catholic Parish.

My dear friend John Porter, an African American pastor of Englewood Methodist, was the founding President of the Englewood Christian Leadership Conference, an organization affiliated with Dr. Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Atlanta. At Porter's insistence, the first major project of our group involved planning, scheduling and teaching a community workshop on Non-Violence. The event was held at St. Brendons and included a planning workshop for addressing barriers to racial reconciliation and community well-being.

During the mid-1960s, both Catholic and Protestant clergy were enjoying the spirit of ecumenism birthed at Vatican II from 1962 to1965. Our little ecumenical group met every couple of weeks and always began by singing a Civil Rights Movement Song, or Christian words sung to a well-known popular tune. For example, we sang Psalm 100 to the tune of "We Shall Overcome," and a song I wrote about God, to the tune of "Blowing in the Wind." Not long after our first meeting, Pete (Father Scholtes) brought his guitar and sang for us a song he had written a few days before. Then we all joined in. I remember getting goosebumps as we sang and aspired to live into the lyrics. For several weeks, Pete had been looking for a hymn for his youth choir at St. Brendons, one that reflected the ecumenical spirit of the times. Not finding any that fit his criteria, he sat down, and, in a day, wrote his own lyrics. I believe our little group was the first to hear and sing it. This amazing hymn is now in more than 40 Christian hymnbooks:

We Are One in the Spirit

We are One in The Spirit,
We are One in The Lord.
We are One in The Spirit,
We are One in The Lord.
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored.

Chorus
And they'll know we are Christians by our love,
By our Love,
Yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will work with each other,
We will work side by side.
We will work with each other,
We will work side by side.
And we'll guard each man's dignity
And save each man's pride.

Chorus
And they'll know we are Christians by our love,
By our Love,
Yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will walk with each other,
We will walk hand in hand.
We will walk with each other,
We will walk hand in hand.
And together we'll spread the News
that God is in our land.

Chorus
And they'll know we are Christians by our love,
By our Love,
Yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.

IX. THE ROCK RIVER CONFERENCE

After graduation from seminary and moving to Chicago in June of 1961, I was ordained an Elder by Bishop Charles Brasheres in the Rock River Conference, (This Conference was renamed The Northern Illinois Conference in 1968 when the Methodist Episcopal Church merged with the Church of the Brethren and became The United Methodist Church). In those years, the Conference leadership expected local clergy to serve, in addition to our regular pastoral duties, in various conference ministries and on boards and commissions. Most pastors in the Conference considered the mild summers in the Chicago area as family and vacation time. But, I soon learned, as a new member of the Conference, that I was expected to serve at least a week of my first summer in a Methodist Youth Camp.

Summer Camp

In the Summer of 1962, I became a counselor at the Methodist Youth Camp held each year at Reynoldswood Camp and Conference Center in Dixon, Illinois. During that week I was assigned, along with a co-counselor, to “parent” a group of twelve inner-city African American kids, all from Englewood in Chicago. None of these children had any experience with camping. We taught them to set up tents for sleeping, to make camp fires, to cook food over fire, to be kind and considerate of each other, and to sing a lot of camp songs. And yes, we did teach them to sing *kum-ba-yah*.

There were about sixty kids at camp that week. Each day we were scheduled for time in the camp swimming pool. On the first day, the life-guards required any child, who considered himself or herself capable of swimming in the deep end of the pool, to jump off the diving board, and swim the length of the pool. Most of the kids in my group gathered at the shallow end. Most inner city African Americans in the 1960s, they had never had the opportunity to visit a swimming pool, much less learn to swim. One of my group, however, a girl about twelve years of age, lined up to jump off the diving board. When her turn arrived, she boldly leaped several feet forward and into the water. She immediately sank. She then appeared to dangle lifelessly just above the bottom of the pool. When it became clear she would not be making any effort to save herself, one of the lifeguards dove in and pulled her out. The life guard assessed her, and, while the girl seemed a bit confused, he determined she did not need any other life-saving treatment. For the remainder of the swim session she was not permitted to go back into the water. When we returned to camp, I asked her why she had jumped off the board. Through tears she replied, "I thought I could swim, but must have been wrong."

During that week at camp, I grew close to the kids and they grew close to me. When it came time for us to leave, there were hugs and tears. I assumed I would never see any of them again. I was wrong.

About three weeks after camp, when I had resettled in my parsonage on West 50th Street in Chicago, four boys from my camper group knocked on my door. They had biked through several miles of traffic on urban streets, the entire way from central Englewood to The Back of the Yards. After they left their home community and entered the all-white community in which I lived, traffic was no longer the only danger they faced. They were harassed by white youth who yelled, "Let's get those blackies!" and other taunts.

After we had visited awhile and enjoyed some refreshments, I insisted on following the boys home in my car, just to make sure they arrived safely. I loved those kids. For an entire innocent week we had been family. It grieved my heart that, in Chicago, we now lived in worlds at least as separate and menacing as the world of my southern upbringing.

Board of Social Concerns

In the Spring of 1963, I became a member of The Rock River Conference Board of Social Concerns, with responsibility for developing and proposing Conference policy on social issues. My primary interest in serving on the committee was to promote racial justice. While we did pass some resolutions about the church and race, we spent much of our time on other issues. During my first year on the committee, we talked a great deal about "separation of church and state." It seems one of the senior lay members of the committee was very passionate about that particular constitutional principle. After several discussions, I realized his position derived less from his constitutional allegiance than his strong anti-Catholic bias, and his fear that government funds might be used to support catholic schools. Despite his efforts, the committee chose not to support his position. Most recognized that the Catholic Schools in the Chicago Area provided quality education that currently saved taxpayers millions in public school dollars. At some point the committee moved on to other concerns.

In July of 1963, I was elected chair of this committee. While I was successful in getting recommendations for resolutions supporting the openness of all Methodist

Churches to persons of color, we spent much of our time trying to address “smoking” from a health, rather than a moral standpoint.

The other issue, that became quite contentious had to do with the Viet Nam War. Protests against the war were in the news. Anti-war folk songs were popular among older teens and young adults. The country employed a lottery draft system in order to fill its need for troops. Some young men fled to Canada to avoid the draft. But President Johnson, the Congress, and many patriotic citizens, were convinced Viet Nam was a just war. Our committee was seriously divided. I planned and held a committee retreat for the purpose of finally developing a policy on Viet Nam we could recommend to the conference. The retreat resulted in a fairly benign compromise resolution which we presented to the Conference in the spring of 1965. After considerable debate, it failed to pass.

When my term on the board ended in 1966, I felt much relief.

Methodists For Church Renewal

From 1961 until 1969, I was an active member of *The Inner City Methodist Minister’s Fellowship*. This group changed its name in the late sixties to *Methodists for Church Renewal*. The group published *Behold*, a quarterly periodical contained intentionally prophetic articles and editorials addressing the problems of racial injustice, poverty and inner-city living. At least two articles I contributed were printed, as were a couple of my pen and ink drawings.

Several of our members were involved in southern civil rights campaigns, including Albany Georgia, Jackson Mississippi, and Selma Alabama. We also marched with Dr. King through Chicago’s segregated white neighborhoods. But, most of all, we focused on “renewing the Methodist Church” which had too long accepted and tolerated segregation and racism in its operations.

General Conference Delegate Rev. Edsel Ammons

The General Conference of the Methodist Church, a global assembly of Methodists that meets every four years on a year that can be divided by four. It has the responsibility of determining policy and practice for all Methodist churches. It met in 1964, and again in 1968. Each annual conference elected delegates to General Conference. At the Annual Conference of 1968, our Methodists for Church Renewal group decided we needed to work to get someone elected to General Conference who would represent our concerns for church and society. We first attempted to campaign for some of our own members. Because I was chair of a conference board, my name was one of the ones put forth. During conference balloting, I received 55 votes, not nearly enough to be in the running for delegate to General Conference. No one was elected in that first ballot, but when the second ballot was taken, I received the same 55 votes. My two colleagues who were also on the ballot, did no better. Our group caucused and decided to change strategies. Instead of running members of our group, we decided to get behind one of the few African American pastors serving in our conference, Rev. Edsel Ammons, and push for his nomination. While campaigning for him, we found substantial support for his candidacy among many delegates who were not members of our group. Edsel Ammons was elected and became the first African American delegate to the Methodist General Conference from our area. Nine years later, in 1976, he was elected bishop, the first African American so chosen from the North Central Jurisdiction of the Methodist Church. He served as Bishop of the Michigan Area until 1984 and the West Ohio conference until his retirement in 1992.

I have often wondered if the history of the Methodist Church in the North Central Jurisdiction would have been very different, had Methodists for Church Renewal not decided to back him as a delegate in 1968.

Ecumenical Institute Teaching

In 1962, the Church Federation of Greater Chicago founded The Ecumenical Institute, as a research, training, and community development ministry. A faculty of seven families, led by Joseph W. Matthews, a former professor of Social Ethics at Perkins Theological Seminary in Dallas, and originally associated with The Faith and Life Community in Austin Texas, moved to the former Church of the Brethren Bethany Seminary buildings, located at 3444 West Congress Parkway. The former seminary had moved away after the surrounding community transitioned to an African American one burdened by the usual inner city problems found in similar neighborhoods.

The Institute families set about enlisting members of the neighborhood in a plan to address the many problems of this troubled West Chicago area. It also began to offer classes to Chicago pastors, laity, and persons interested in learning about community reformulation. I attended a “Pastoral Leadership” program at the Institute a few months after it became operational. That decision would, in a few years, prove to be an unexpected pivotal event in my life journey. (In early Fall of 1969 I joined the Institute Faculty and moved my entire family to the West Side location, where I served the organization in a variety of ways for the next four years.)

Beginning in 1964, I became an adjunct faculty member of the Institute, and, in addition to helping teach classes at the Westside campus, I also flew to other cities on the North American continent to teach courses.

In the summer of 1966, during my last year as pastor of Community Methodist Church, some faculty members at the Institute developed a course in African American History and Culture. Stokely Carmichael, a spokesman for SNCC (the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee) had used the term “Black Power” in a speech delivered in Greenwood Mississippi in June of that year, following the attempted assassination of James Meredith, a civil rights activist and the first African American to integrate the University of Mississippi. The term “Black Power” sounded more militant to white ears than the rhetoric of non-violence and racial integration proclaimed by Dr. King in his “I Have a Dream” speech. But, in reality, the term “Black Power,” mostly referred to self-determination, and the use of voting rights and other democratic institutions to achieve racial justice. Black Power, in the context of inner-city Chicago primarily meant organizing communities to help residents address the problems of their own neighborhoods, rather than expecting the white power structure to provide solutions. Be that as it may, the slogan became a backdrop to the Institute class in African American History and Culture. (This curriculum would also prove to be a defining moment for me, when, in 1968, Pastor Rick Deines, of the Woodlawn Lutheran Church and I began the Woodlawn School of Human Dignity.)

Rev. Dr. Harry Gibson

In 1964, Rev. Dr. Harry Gibson, an African American pastor, and a leader in the Chicago Civil Rights Movement, became my Methodist District Superintendent. Dr. Harry was the first African American to hold this high office in the Northern Illinois Conference. Not long after his appointment, he invited me, along with two other white pastors then serving churches in the Chicago Southern District, to his office, located in downtown Chicago. Evidently, Dr. Harry had quite a sense of humor. Upon arrival he introduced us to a beautiful young African American woman he said was his mistress. After observing the shocked expressions on our faces, he revealed that she was actually his daughter, Joya.

At first, I was not clear about the purpose of our meeting, but I soon learned it was to encourage us to continue our civil rights activities, and to assure us of his support. I could not help but recall the lack of support I had received a few years earlier from my Owensboro Kentucky District Superintendent because I had offended some members when I preached about desegregation. What a difference!

A few weeks later, Dr. Harry invited me back to his office for the purpose of introducing me to Whitney Young, the then President of The National Urban League. Under Young's leadership, the Urban League became one of the most influential Civil Rights groups in the country. Young had also been one of the key leaders who helped organize the 1964 March on Washington. He marched next to Dr. King at that event, and made a passionate speech at the "Washington Mall," during the same program where Dr. King delivered his famous "I have a dream" speech.

While meeting Whitney Young was a great honor, I began to suspect that Harry.Gibson was grooming me for something. I just did not yet know what he had in mind. In the Spring of 1966, as I approached the end of my fifth year at Community Methodist Church, Dr. Gibson's intentions became clear. He asked me if I was ready for a new adventure. It was his hope, during the 1966 Northern Illinois Annual Conference, a black pastor would be appointed to a white church and a white pastor appointed to a black church. That is when he asked me if I would be interested in an appointment to Woodlawn (Methodist Church). Prior to this, white pastors who had served African American congregations in Chicago had done so only after shepherding their congregations through transition as their neighborhoods changed. Before this, no pastor serving a white congregation had been directly appointed to a black church. I would be the first.

X. DR KING COMES TO CHICAGO

In 1965, The Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCO), led by a Chicago teacher named Al Raby, had been working toward a unified city-wide effort to address the education problems confronting African Americans in Chicago. It the midst of the schools campaign, it became clear to the Chicago civil rights leadership that the city's schools could not be addressed apart from the larger issues confronting the city's slums. In early summer of that year, the organization invited Martin Luther King to Chicago.

Dr. King and The Southern Christian Leadership Council considered the invitation and decided the time had come to bring the movement for racial justice to a northern city. Dr. King later explained the rationale:

> *The only solution to breaking down the infamous wall of segregation in Chicago rested in our being able to mobilize both the white and black communities into a massive nonviolent movement, which would stop at nothing short of changing the ugly face of the black ghetto into a community of love and justice. Essentially it meant removing future generations from dilapidated tenements, opening the doors of job opportunities to all regardless of their color, and making the resources of all social institutions available for their uplifting into the mainstream of American life. (From Chapter 28 of The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.)*

Rev. James Bevel, a member of King's inner circle, was sent to Chicago to do advance strategic planning for the Chicago Campaign. Bevel had been the chief strategist for the voter registration campaign in Selma Alabama, and was a brilliant orator. It was Bevel whose charisma had once inspired me, during a worship service in Brown's Chapel Church in Selma, to risk my life on a march through the Selma mayor's neighborhood. Bevel quickly became the chief strategist for the Chicago Civil Rights movement.

In January of 1966, Dr. King moved his family into an apartment in North Lawndale, a Westside slum not far from the Fifth City neighborhood where the Ecumenical Institute was located.

In the summer of 1966, clergy from across the nation gathered at the Ecumenical Institute for the purpose of formalizing a movement dedicated to church renewal. Because I was a local Chicago pastor, I was chosen to formally convene the meeting. I prepared a speech for the opening session in which I talked about the unique role of churchmen as "spirit revolutionaries" as compared to those who focused on economic and political change. As I began to address the group, Rev. James Bevel appeared at the back of the room and took a seat. I doubt he was as inspired by my presentation as I had been by his sermon in Selma, but I enjoyed the moment, nevertheless.

RNACLE
URCH

News Photo of Rev. James Bevel in Foreground

On July 10, 1966 Dr. King spoke at a "freedom rally" held at Chicago's Soldier's Field. An estimated 35,000 persons gathered for the event. My entire family attended. Afterwards, we marched with some of the crowd to City Hall, to protest housing discrimination. Sarah and John Mark marched beside Millie and me. I carried "little Sam" on my shoulders. The message of the demonstration was aimed at Mayor Richard J. Daley. It consisted of demands to change discriminatory housing laws and practices in the city, and for the city to address the problems of block busting, of absentee slum landlords, and poorly enforced housing codes.

News photo of July 10, 1966 Chicago Rally

Two days after the rally and protest march, a riot broke out on the West Side of Chicago. It was triggered by the arrest of a black man who was allegedly wanted for armed robbery. Black people took to the streets in anger. Arson, looting and gunfire followed.

Dr. King understood the anger. He saw it as the sudden release of a "pressure cooker" created by slum conditions. He also deplored the violence, and recommitted himself and his leadership team to the non-violent protest movement and to addressing the systemic and institutional causes of northern racism and African American inner city misery.

Later in July, Dr. King led marches through all white neighborhoods in Chicago. On August 23, 1966, I joined Dr. King and several hundred demonstrators in a march through South Deering located in the far southeastern sector of Chicago. South Deering had been the scene of a 1953 race riot. Tensions remained high in the 1960s as residents continued to resist residential integration. I drove three people, in my Ford Falcon station wagon, to the assembly location. As we marched, many young whites gathered along the sidewalks and taunted us with curses and racial slurs. After the march, when my little group returned to my car and started to drive away, several white youth belted my car with rocks. Fortunately, while there were dents on both sides of my vehicle, none of the windows were hit, and no one in our group was hurt. Less than two weeks earlier, on August 5,1966, Dr. King, was hit by a rock as he marched through Marquette Park, a then all white community on Chicago's Southwest Side. He would later comment that nothing he had experienced in the American South could compare with the hatred expressed by the people of Chicago's Southside white neighborhoods.

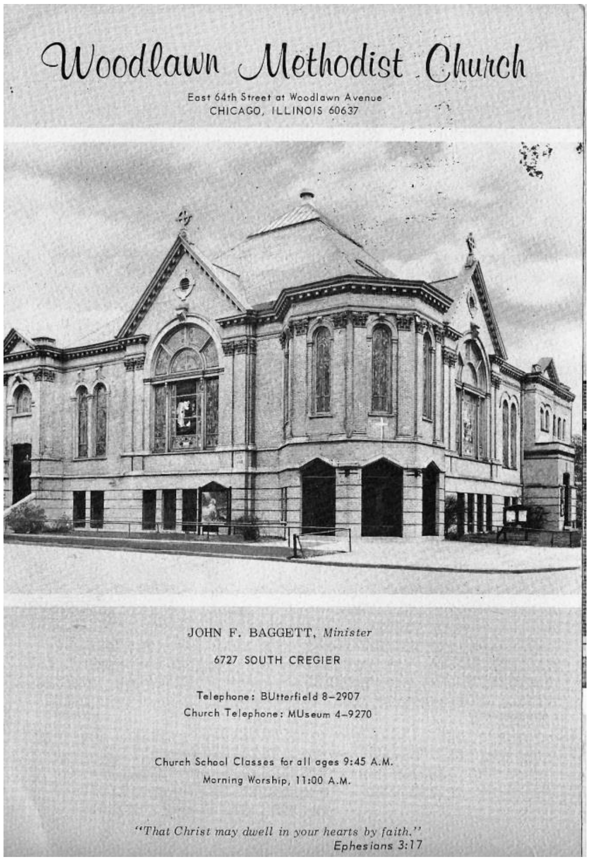
News photo of Chicago Neighborhood March

My Ford Falcon Station Wagon
Parked in front of Community Methodist Parsonage
About a year before it was stoned

XI WOODLAWN

The Woodlawn neighborhood lay on the Southeast side of Chicago, between Lake Michigan on the East, South Parkway (in 1968 renamed Martin Luther King Drive) on the West, Fifty-Ninth Street on the North, and Sixty-Seventh Street on the South. In 1967 it had a population of more than 80,000 people. 98% were African American. Woodlawn had once been a fairly upscale white neighborhood composed mostly of brick multi-story residences on quiet shaded streets. In the 1950s, and early 1960s, initially due to *blockbusting* , the neighborhood rapidly changed to an African American community of mostly lower income families, many living as tenants of absentee landlords.

The Woodlawn Community lay just south of Hyde Park, home of the University of Chicago. The University coveted land in north Woodlawn for its envisioned South Campus. Because the University had a history of using eminent domain and other tactics to remove residents in order to expand the campus, tension developed between the Woodlawn residents and the University. This conflict became the impetus for the formation of the *Temporary Woodlawn Organization (TWO),* which was created on the same Saul Alynsky model as *The Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council*. TWO was Alynsky’s first of many projects in African American communities.



Woodlawn Methodist Church

East 64th Street at Woodlawn Avenue
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

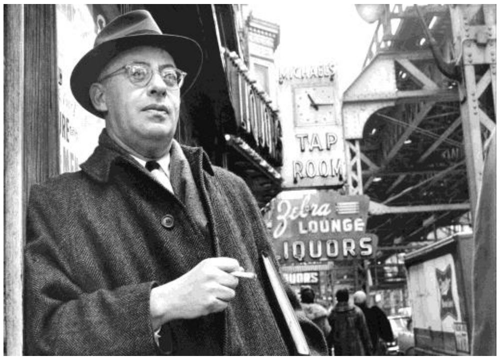
JOHN F. BAGGETT, *Minister*

6727 SOUTH CREGIER

Telephone: BUtterfield 8–2907
Church Telephone: MUseum 4–9270

Church School Classes for all ages 9:45 A.M.
Morning Worship, 11:00 A.M.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."
Ephesians 3:17



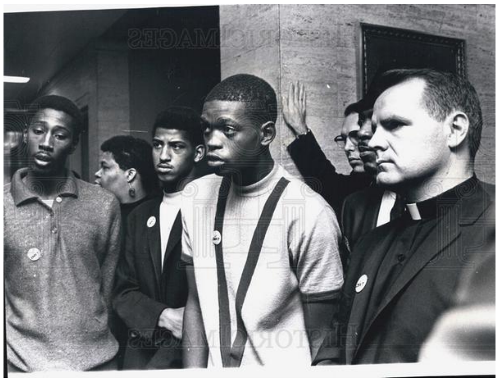
Saul Alinsky

TWO
THE WOODLAWN ORGANIZATION
TWO.

The Woodlawn Organization

Woodlawn Methodist, while built to hold 1200 people during worship, at the time of my appointment, had fewer than 300 African American members, and five white people who had stayed with the church through its time of transition. The pastor I followed at Woodlawn was a popular African American preacher named Charles Jordan. "Chuck" was appointed that year to an Urban Mission Leadership position in Rockford Illinois. Years later, in 1992, while serving St. Mark's United Methodist Church in Chicago, he was elected to serve as a Methodist bishop, and assigned to the Iowa Conference of the United Methodist Church, where he remained until his retirement in 2000.

Bishop
Charles Wesley
Jordan



I am in the background with my hand on the wall in this TWO meeting about gang violence.

First Impressions

Soon after I learned of my new appointment, I called Chuck Jordan and arranged time to talk with him about the Woodlawn church. We met first in his office, and then walked to 63rd Street, the business center of the community, for a cup of coffee. When it came time to pay, I reached for my wallet. It was not there. A wave of panic swept over me. Not only would I need "Chuck" to pay for my coffee, but I had somehow managed to lose my wallet while visiting a ghetto neighborhood. Was this how my ministry to a minority community would begin? I was convinced I would never see the contents of my wallet again. To my shame and delight, after Chuck picked up the tab and we returned to the church, I found my billfold safely resting on the floor beneath the chair where we had first talked. Evidently, it had slipped out of my pocket when I sat down. I tried to pay Chuck back for the coffee, but he refused to accept it.

Chuck spent more than an hour orienting me to my new church and community. It was only the beginning of my Woodlawn education.

Blackstone Rangers

In 1967, when I began as pastor of the Woodlawn Methodist Church, the Woodlawn community was the home territory of a violent youth street gang by the name of the Blackstone Rangers. When the Fort family moved to 65th and Blackstone in 1955, Jeff Fort was one of ten children in his family. Jeff, with a friend, another black youth named Eugene Hairston, would, between 1961 and 1965, organize what would become, in the mid-1960s, a gang of more than 5,000. Later, after expanding branches to other Chicago communities and to several major U.S. cities, this gang would claim more than 100,000 members.

News Photo of Jeff Fort

I had experience working with a white street gang called the "Muscadoodlers" in The Back of the Yards, but was totally unprepared for the reality of gang violence taking place in Woodlawn. During the 1960s, The Blackstone Rangers were at war over territory with "The Devil's Disciples," Woodlawn Avenue bordered the west side of my church building. The First Presbyterian Church, located across the street and slightly east of my church, was the gang's meeting place. It seems, the Rev. John Frye, the white Presbyterian pastor, believed, by providing church space to "The Blackstone Nation", he and his congregation were taking a stand against, and somehow correcting, the historic humiliation and subjugation of black young males in American society and history. In my opinion, John Frye was idealistic, but naïve. Fort, Hairston, and the other gang leaders, knew how to exploit white folks, and did so very effectively. From their headquarters in "First Pres," they plotted and planned criminal activities, including the murder of rival gang leadership. One day, Jeff Fort and three other youth visited me in my church office to see if I would make space available in my church for their expanding activities. I said I would think about it and get back to them. I never did.

Hundreds of young black males, dressed in their colors, marching and chanting through the streets of Woodlawn became a familiar, impressive, and unnerving sight. But that was not my most vivid memory of the Blackstone Rangers. One day, while at work in the church office, I realized I needed to visit a young man who had recently moved into an apartment above a store on 63rd Street. John Rapp, a young white man dedicated to peace and justice, had moved into Woodlawn, had visited my church, and had expressed interest in church membership. The day I decided to visit him, I wore, as usual, my dress pants, white shirt, and tie. His apartment was only a block from the church. All I needed to do was to walk across a vacant lot between the church and his building. As I cut across the lot, I heard a screech of tires and looked up to see a car stop in front of a service station on the other side of Woodlawn Avenue. Passengers in the car began to shoot at people inside the service station. Whoever, was in there, began to fire back. When one of the bullets whirred past my ear, I decided to "hit the dirt." I dove to the ground, and began to "belly" crawl, as I had often seen soldiers do in the movies. Every inch of the way, I prayed I would not become a casualty of this war between the Blackstone Rangers and the Devil's Disciples. After I had managed to maneuver about ten feet, the driver revved the engine and sped away. The shooting stopped. I stood, looked down, and, realized my clothes were covered with mud, and, while tempted to return to my office, or go home to change, I continued across the lot to my pastoral visit. I have always been glad I did. John Rapp warmly welcomed me, mud and all. He became the first white person to newly join the Woodlawn Congregation since the early 1950s. He would become a good friend and colleague. A few years later, he would also marry Beverly Vaughn, my sister-in-law, in a memorable Woodlawn wedding.

I felt endangered by gang gunfire on two other occasions. The church parsonage was located in South Shore, a mile or two away from the church. One day, when I was travelling from the parsonage to the church I went under a railyard overpass that was more than half a football field long. As I entered the "tunnel" I saw an African American youth running in the middle of the street toward my car. Then, another youth appeared at the far entrance to the underpass. He began shooting at the first runner. I looked at the concrete pillars of the underpass. There was nowhere for me to pull my car out of the line of fire. I scooted as far down in my seat as I could and hit the gas. As my car approached, the boy with the gun leapt behind a concrete barrier. I sped away.

The other gang related event that sticks out in my mind, occurred during one of our School of Human Dignity classes. We were teaching a class one dark night in the fellowship hall of the Episcopal Church located at 65th and Woodlawn. The room had windows that opened to an alley behind the church. We were in the midst of our class when we heard gunfire in the alley. We turned off the lights and told everyone to fall to the floor. More shots. We could see flashes through the windows. We heard a scream, followed by the blue lights of a police car. We learned the next day that a member of The Devil's Disciples gang had been murdered.

James Brown Concert

James Brown in a later news photo

Shortly after I began my ministry at the Woodlawn church, a representative of The Woodlawn Organization (TWO) approached me about the possibility of holding a fund-raising concert in my church sanctuary to benefit the work of the organization. Since TWO had already lined up James Brown, the top R&B singer in the country, a singer/songwriter/artist known as "*The King of Soul*," for the concert, TWO leadership expected a huge crowd, and believed they would need all of our building's 1200 plus seats for the event. I checked with the chair of the church's Trustees, and we decided to agree to the request.

The concert was an experience. While the Woodlawn Church Choir sometimes sang upbeat songs, our facility had never before experienced such blaring music. The pew where I sat began to shake. Throughout the evening, Brown's lyrics and actions became increasingly raunchy and suggestive. I began to worry. If such a concert had been held in any other Methodist Church I had ever been a part of, it would have created a firestorm of criticism. But, the Woodlawn congregation seemed not only to accept the event, but members appeared proud to have had a famous African American pop star perform his "funk music" in the sacred space of our church's sanctuary.

School of Human Dignity

In 1967, Pastor Rick Deines, of the Woodlawn Lutheran Church, and I became good friends. Together we organized "The Woodlawn Ecumenical Parish," an interdenominational association, consisting of the local Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopal, and Congregational churches. The association was dedicated to facilitating and coordinating our congregations in meaningful mission to the Woodlawn Community. After Rick and I were exposed to the Ecumenical Institute class on African American Heritage, we founded *The School of Human Dignity*, as the outreach arm of our parish ministry.

I constructed a sign out of plywood and paint containing our logo, a black hand holding a torch surrounded by the words: *School of Human Dignity*. The sign was posted inside my church's outdoor bulletin board.

In the summer of 1967, Rick and I put together a comprehensive African American history curriculum for a joint Vacation Bible School. We researched, wrote curriculum, trained teachers, and then, quietly and happily observed our church member teachers and the neighborhood children realize and respond to the reality of their own esteem as African Americans. At the end of the summer, we knew we were on to something important.

In the Fall of '67 we offered and taught our first African American Heritage adult class. We decided we needed a strong African American male teacher to co-teach with us, and were fortunate that my old friend, Rev. John Porter, was happy to join us. John was something of an African American history scholar who sprinkled his lectures with facts about African American contributions to American culture and history.

Over the next three years we held additional adult African American Heritage classes. A woman who was an active member of The Schools Committee of Jessie Jackson's *Operation Breadbasket* attended one and decided that all of the school principals in The Chicago School System needed to attend such a class. When Jackson and the Breadbasket leaders negotiated an agreement with the county school administration, part of the settlement required principals to take our class. More than 350 principals, out of more than 600, eventually did so.

Jackson's *Breadbasket* group, through targeted boycotts, and the threat of boycotts, also reached agreements with the management of Montgomery Ward Department Stores, and the Chicago area A&P Grocery chain. Those agreements not only mandated the corporations hire more African Americans, but the top management officials were required to take a course in "White Racism" from our School of Human Dignity. We adapted our curriculum for that purpose. When these highly paid executives arrived at the Woodlawn church, they were clearly nervous. They, no doubt, resented the fact that they were to be instructed by an interracial group of community activists in their early thirties, but it was probably the reality of visiting a ghetto neighborhood they had only previously heard of or read about that made them uneasy. Be that as it may, the executives proved to be good sports. The classes went well and our relationship with Jessie Jackson, and *Operation Breadbasket* was strengthened.

Photo of me as
Woodlawn Pastor
Ages 30-34

Operation Breadbasket Boycott

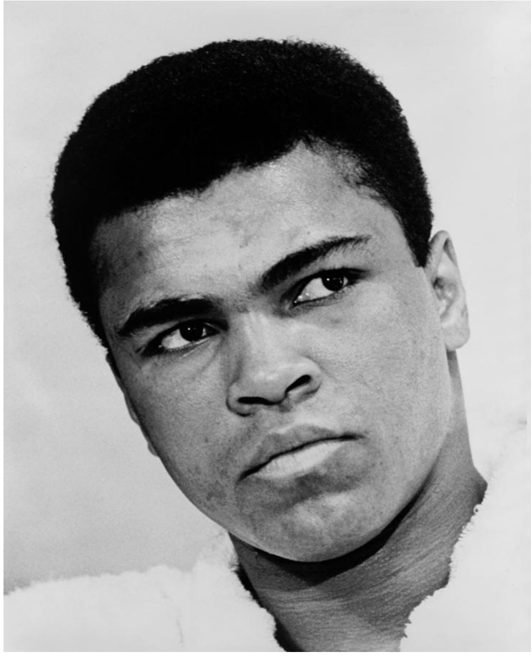
In addition to providing courses for people sent by *Operation Breadbasket*, I also assisted with the boycott of the A&P groceries by carrying a picket sign at a store located in Chicago's Hyde Park, a nearby interracial community. Some people, in need of groceries, ignored our pickets and shopped anyway. Others, when they saw this was one of Jessie Jackson's projects, turned around and left. I remember one white man who informed me that he was a member of a union and had never crossed a picket line in his life, and was not going to do so now.

Some of my good friends were very active in *Operation Breadbasket*. My best friend, Rev. Jerry Forshey, became good friends with Jesse Jackson. Another friend, Rev. Martin Deppe was a founding member of *Breadbasket,* and would, years later (2017), publish a history of the organization.

While I never had a personal friendship with Jessie Jackson, my son Sam attended the same preschool as Jessie's son, Jessie Jr. Jessie Jr. would much later serve (from 1995-2012) in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Muhammed Ali

After defeating Heavyweight Champion Sonny Liston in 1964, Louisville born Cassius Clay joined the Nation of Islam, and became Muhammed Ali. In 1966, he refused induction into the army and spoke out in opposition to the Viet Nam war. He was charged with draft evasion, but instead of prison, he was stripped of his boxing title and prohibited from boxing for four years. In the late 1960s, most African American citizens perceived Muhammed Ali as a black hero, not only as "the greatest" boxer of all time, but also as a black man who stood up to the white establishment.



News Photo of Mahammad Ali

Ali was also one of my heroes. In our African American Heritage Course we had often quoted his words, 'I am the greatest!' in order to encourage "black pride."

Ali was a colorful personality. He enjoyed taunting his boxing opponents, and introduced almost rap like jingles, such as "The Thrilla in Manilla," to promote his fights.

In 1968, The Woodlawn Organization (T.W.O.) invited Ali to be a guest speaker at its annual convention. Over 500 people were in attendance. As I looked around the auditorium, I could not see any other white faces. Ali used the forum that evening to praise Elijah Muhammed, the leader of the Black Muslim movement in Chicago, and to parrot his leader's anti-white rhetoric. As Ali preached, he repeated over and over, "The white man is the devil. The white man is the devil." The longer he spoke, and the more he described the evil nature of white Americans, the higher my anxiety level rose. I was greatly relieved to make it safely home that evening.

Ali later converted, as did his mentor Malcolm X, from the American Black Muslim faith to Sunni Islam. With that conversion he found a different message and began to preach about racial reconciliation and integration. In the years before death (2016), Ali, largely due to his struggle with Parkinson's disease, also became a symbol of courage for persons with disabilities. Ravaged by the illness, he lit the Olympic Torch at the 1996 Atlanta Games. Most Americans witnessing the event were deeply moved.

X. THE ASSASSINATION OF DR. KING AND THE WOODLAWN RIOTS

I will never forget where I was or how I felt on Thursday afternoon, April 4, 1968 when a friend arrived at my office at Woodlawn United Methodist Church in Chicago. She informed me that Dr. King had been shot and killed in Memphis. I knew Dr. King was there at the time advocating for the welfare of the mostly African American city sanitation workers. King had been invited to Memphis by Rev. James Lawson, the former Vanderbilt Divinity School classmate who had led the Nashville Sit-in Movement. Since the 1963 Kennedy assassination, and especially after participating in the Selma march, I had thought it likely that at some point someone would try to assassinate Dr. King. While not that surprised, the news of the shooting still threw me into emotional shock.

News Photo of Dr. King at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis

The friend who told me about the murder of Dr. King that day was Rosie Simpson, a forty-year-old African American social worker and mother of six. Rosie was a personal friend of Dr. King. She and I hugged and cried. Dr. King was my leader, my hero, my inspiration. I was angry, nauseated, deeply sorrowed, and not a little fearful.

Rosie, had previously organized and led the “Willis Wagon” demonstrations in Englewood. She now worked for The Woodlawn Organization (TWO). She staffed the Education Committee of TWO, I was the committee chair. We were in the midst of a committee fundraiser that weekend in which some of our members and friends had volunteered to cook chicken dinners and donate them to the cause, while other friends and supporters had agreed to buy them. Rosie and I were planning to pick up the dinners from people’s homes and apartments on Friday morning, and deliver them that day to the homes of our Woodlawn friends and supporters who had ordered them.

Rosie Simpson

We agreed that our neighborhood was likely to have a rough evening and decided it best to return to the relative safety of our respective homes that afternoon, and to meet again on Friday morning, as we (foolishly) thought it unnecessary to cancel the fundraiser. The Schools Committee was devoted to assuring quality education for the public schools in our community. Like most ghetto schools, our neighborhood schools did not always have the most capable teachers assigned, or the advantage of having the best educational equipment and supplies. As noted earlier, in the sixties, school segregation and inequality had become major civil rights issues in Chicago, and that struggle had helped persuade Dr. King in 1966 to choose Chicago as the site of his first Northern non-violent civil rights battle. We convinced ourselves that Dr. King would not want us to cancel our chicken dinner fundraiser.

Our concern about what might happen in Woodlawn that night was realized when I started to drive home. There were cars passing me that carried TVs in their open trunks and other merchandise stacked inside the rear seat areas, stuff evidently looted from stores on 63rd Street (the commercial area of Woodlawn a block north of my church).That evening news reports told of riots across the country including Chicago. The West Side was especially hard hit. Woodlawn was the only Southside community that was the locus of a major riot. That night my family did not rest well. My wife, three children, and I, with bags packed for a quick escape, watched, from the upstairs bedroom window of our parsonage, located a couple of miles from all the action, the red glow in the sky over Woodlawn, where buildings on 63rd street were being burned. The fires continued throughout the night. Smoke hung in the air. In the morning we tried to assume things were going to be normal. We each went our separate ways, praying our day would be uneventful.

On Friday morning, April 5, Rosie and I picked up some chicken dinners and delivered them. We were on our way to pick up some more when we came upon a large group of angry neighborhood youth outside St. Cyril Catholic High School located a few blocks east of my church. Those gathered that morning were members of the Blackstone Rangers. I was ready to turn around and drive away as quickly as possible. Rosie stopped some young men and asked them what was going on. They said they were planning to burn down the Catholic School. She asked them where there leader, Jeff Fort, could be found.

When they pointed in the direction where Fort stood, Rosie had me park the car and we got out and let one of the young men take us to their leader. Rosie, who conveyed the authority of the stereotypical “Black Mama’” when she chose to, walked up to Fort and said, “Jeff, we have to talk.” The two knew each other, as staff of The Woodlawn Organization had been working with the Blackstone Rangers on a jobs training project. At the time, knowing the gang’s reputation, and how angry all black people were over King’s assassination, I feared for my life. I had the only white face in a sea of black ones. Jeff Fort and some of the other kids did know me by sight, as I was fairly well known as the Methodist pastor. But there was little comfort in that.

That day, I believe Rosie Simpson was God’s angel who was able to be the instrument of a miracle. When we went inside the school’s auditorium and met with Fort, Rosie was able to convince him to pull back his gang (the gang numbered in the thousands, several hundred were present that day), and convinced him that it would be better for everyone if they would try to stop the rioting on 63rd street and help protect the community from being burned down as the rioting would only hurt the black people who lived in Woodlawn. Fort immediately assembled his gang and gave them orders to leave the Catholic School alone and that they were going to become the “protectors” of the community. The Catholic School, along with the kids and faculty inside were spared. Rosie and I drove away a short time later. I was amazed and relieved. This story did not end there, nor is the ending as happy as I have thus far suggested. The merchants on 63rd street were soon paying the gamg for signs they could hang in their stores indicating the Blackstone Rangers were protecting them. In other words the gang leadership decided to protect the neighborhood by initiating a typical mafia type protection racket.

News Photo of Blackstone Rangers in Woodlawn

In the end, Rosie and I raised over $300 with our chicken dinner fundraiser, a remarkable day, under the circumstances. And, just as amazing, I was still alive, as, thankfully, were all the members of my family when I got home that evening.

That night (Saturday) the National Guard showed up in Woodlawn and they had orders to stop any group from assembling. On Sunday morning, as some of our church members exited public transportation and began to walk to the church, National Guardsmen pointed their bayonets at them and ordered them to move along quickly.

When I drove up to the church that morning, after all the looting and fires the last two days, a wonderful African American member of my church was standing at the door waiting for me. She yelled at me to get my “white face inside” immediately. The woman was Ida Wells Barnett II. She happened to be the daughter of the famous journalist and anti-lynching crusader, Ida B. Wells. Ida had no idea how exposed my white face had been on the preceding Friday. At the morning service, my sermon was in the form of a eulogy for Dr. King. Our overflowing church sang songs of the Civil Rights movement, wept, and mourned together the loss of our leader and hero.

News Photo of National Guard During Chicago Riots

Because Dr. King believed so strongly in non-violence, I cannot help but think he watched the riots from his home in heaven with profound sadness. His recorded words from the night before he was killed were played over and over on newscasts. They continue to resound through my brain these many years later:

> *Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land! And so I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!*

Dr. King was indeed the God-called Moses of our time who just wanted to do God’s will. He did not live to see the fruits of his labors, but what an amazing difference he made for the rest of us.

XIII. THE ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE

Throughout my Woodlawn pastorate, I stayed in close touch with the Ecumenical Institute. In the summer of 1968, the Institute held a summer Assembly for church laity and clergy from around the nation. Close to a thousand, mostly white, participants attended. One Sunday, the entire Assembly rode public transportation from Chicago's Westside to the Woodlawn Elevated train stop on 63rd street in order to attend worship. Their presence made possible the largest Woodlawn Methodist Sunday morning attendance in recent history. I had previously incorporated some of the experimental music I had learned at the Institute into the worship service. One of these was sung to the tune of *Michael Row the Boat Ashore*. Instead of a traditional *Gloria Patri*, usually sung in a Methodist Church, everyone robustly sang:

Glory be to thee O' God, Hallelujah.
Father Son and Holy Ghost, Hallelujah!

As I looked out over a congregation of interracial worshipers, I was filled with hope for the future.

That hope would soon face a new challenge. In 1969, the legitimacy of white pastors leading African American congregations began to be questioned by several of my colleagues. It was the era of "Black Power" and many civil rights leaders held the belief that as long as white folks were in charge of black institutions, including churches, these social entities would continue to embody the era of slavery and white paternalism.

I was not aware of anyone in my church who was dissatisfied with my leadership. But, with the help of several of my African American friends, I developed an increased sensitivity to the effects of racism and paternalism. I began considering other vocational possibilities.

In the Fall of '69, two leaders from the Ecumenical Institute took me to lunch and invited me to join the Institute Faculty. The Institute considered itself a "Family Religious Order." Since The Order was made up of families, accepting the invitation would make it necessary for me to move my entire family to Chicago's Westside. It also involved disposing of most of the possessions my family had accumulated over the years in order for us to move into a tiny apartment in the main building of the Institute. It was one of the more difficult decisions of my life, one finally made following tearful agonizing consideration of the impact on my family. My children already attended all black schools in South Shore. But this decision would send them to ghetto schools that might place them in significant danger. It was not an easy decision, but it soon began to feel like God's guidance. In the Fall of 1969, our family moved into a corner apartment at the Institute, located in the 3400 block of Congress Parkway.

We Moved to the
Middle Corner Apartment

While I had learned how to walk the streets of Woodlawn in relative safety, the neighborhood around the Institute confronted our family with new challenges. Traffic was light on the surrounding streets, but there was an ever present risk of being mugged and robbed. One dark night, a female member of the Institute faculty was assaulted and raped when she strayed too far from the building. When it was necessary for me to walk in the neighborhood, I learned to travel down the middle of streets, so that a mugger in wait in an alley, or between buildings, would have to venture away from the shadows in order to rob or harm me.

We kept doors and windows securely locked. There were no armed guards, but Institute adults took turns providing security by sitting at the front door, limiting access to the building, and by roaming the halls and campus.

During my first year at the Institute, I worked in the Development Office. Our job was to raise outside contributions for our non-profit work. In that role, I travelled to other cities to call on foundations and potential donors. I had no idea at the time how important that experience would later be when I attempted to raise funds for Louisburg Methodist College in North Carolina, NAMI-NC (The National Alliance on Mental Illness in North Carolina), and Family Promise of Brevard Florida.

At the end of that first year in the Order, I faced a heart-wrenching decision. Because the local Middle School was a center of gang activity, the Order leadership had previously decided that rising 6th grade students should be sent to other cities to live in Institute outposts called “Religious Houses,” where they could attend schools in safer environments. It was a well-intentioned policy, but one that also tore families apart. In the summer of 1970, my daughter, Sarah, was sent to a Religious House in Seattle Washington. (The following year, John Mark, was sent to Albuquerque New Mexico). After Sarah had left, I sank into a deep depression. A dark cloud of gloom engulfed my spirit. For almost three weeks, I spent most of my days in bed. I could not bear the thought of what my vocational decisions had done to my kids. But, at the time, I was unable to see a way out, or a way forward. In the end, I remained at the Institute for three more years, first serving as the Director of The Continental Training Office, responsible for scheduling of classes throughout North America, and then as the Deputy Dean of the Academy for Global Churchmen, an eight week residential training program. During my last year at the Institute, I served as the Dean of the Academy. In 1973, I finally packed up my family, left the Institute, and resettled in North Carolina.

The Academy

The Academy was an eight week training program for local churchpersons from around the globe. Most attendees came from North American urban areas. The curriculum consisted of Religious, Cultural and Practical courses intended to provide attendees motivation, contextual understanding, and skills for the renewal of the church, and the transformation of local communities.

Teaching in the Academy

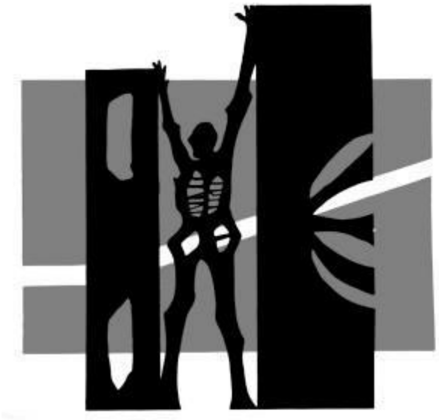
The Academy operation was located in The Program Center, a building which had once been used for industrial purposes. It was located several blocks from the main campus of The Ecumenical Institute. It had a large area on the second floor that served us well as a lecture hall where our participants, which sometimes exceeded two hundred persons a semester, could gather at tables and take notes. Both faculty and participants lived in The Program Center, most in dorm-like set-ups with multiple beds. Privacy was in short supply. Because the streets between the main campus and academy building were unsafe, the Institute created a shuttle service, utilizing member's cars, to transport us between locations.

One of my more vivid memories consists of our experience with Chicago rats at The Program Center. One of our development leaders had managed to obtain sacks of outdated grits as a contribution from The Quaker Oats Company. Grits appeared on the table at most of our meals. Large sacks of grits were stored in The Program Center basement. Somehow, some street rats were able to penetrate the concrete foundation of the building and slip into the basement to feast on grits during the black of night. One evening, I descended the stairs to check out the basement and a rat the size of a huge cat ran across my feet. My heart leapt into my throat. I had seen lots of field and river rats in my life, but nothing to compare with that one. Chicago urban rats can truly grow to become huge, and can often be seen scurrying across alleys.

Living in 5th City

The Ecumenical Institute, located at 3444 West Congress Parkway, Chicago, was surrounded by one of the poorest ghetto communities in the city. With the help of local citizens, the Institute leadership set about designing a community reformulation project, called 5th City, as a way of addressing the problems and needs of this neighborhood.

The name, *5th City,* grew out of the sense that this urban community was intended to be entirely different from the four socio-geographic "cities" that usually describe modern urban societies: downtown, inner city, neighborhoods, and suburbs. This new community was intended to be based not on geography, but on the empowerment of its citizens.



Iron Man Symbol of 5th City

The problems of this urban ghetto did not vanish as hoped. Immediately following the 1968 assassination of Dr. King, and before our move to the Institute, rioters burned and destroyed a number of stores and community resources. Arsonists even invaded the Institutes main building, moving from training room to training room pouring gasoline in the center of the rugs, and setting fires. One of the faculty members followed some distance behind them and doused the fires with an extinguisher. Thieves sometimes broke into member apartments and made off with televisions and other valuables.

During our third year at the Institute, my family was reassigned to an apartment a block north of the main building. During our fourth and final year there, we continued to keep that apartment while my family was assigned to work at the Kemper Building on Chicago's Northside, the new headquarters of the Institute. One day I received word that there had been a break-in at our apartment. When I arrived to examine the damage, I found our possessions strewn around the rooms. At the time, I still possessed a twenty-two rifle I had owned since my hunting days in Tennessee. I never thought of it as a means of protection. I suppose I still had the fantasy I would one day live where I could go hunting again. The rifle was still there when I arrived at the apartment, but it had been moved to our breakfast table, bullets and some old shotgun shells I had kept for some reason were scattered about. It is clear the thief was tempted by the weapon, but only some loose change we kept in a top drawer appeared missing. I was grateful I had been away during this home invasion. One of my colleagues who lived on a lower floor of the same building had not been so fortunate. A few weeks earlier thieves had caught him in his apartment, tied him up, threatened to kill him, stole his wallet, and other personal possessions.

I took away two lessons from these inner city experiences. The first lesson was the realization that no possession is as valuable as your life. The second was the awareness that guns that are legally owned are often the target of thieves. I have since learned that most criminals do not try to purchase guns legally, but buy them on the black market where stolen guns are sold. It is something for every legal gun-owner to consider.

XI. THE UNFINISHED DREAM

As I approach this final section of my memoir describing my journey through the civil rights era, it is now 2018, 50 years after the assassination of Dr. King. This has been a year when the daily news has constantly reminded me “the dream” remains unfinished. To be sure, since the days of my youth, some important things have changed. Public education is officially desegregated, and much improved for most minority children. Black unemployment is lower now, due largely to anti-discrimination laws in hiring. African American families are protected by anti-discrimination laws today when they are in the market for housing. Over the past few decades, African Americans have used their right to vote to change the political landscape of America, including the election of Barak Obama, the first African American President of the United States. But, sadly, as the traditional strategies for suppressing African Americans have been challenged and eliminated, some have persisted, and new ones have arisen.

Black Lives Matter

The *Black Lives Matter* movement began in 2013 following the acquittal of George Zimmerman after he had killed Trayvon Martin, a seventeen-year-old African American in Sanford Florida. The use of #**BlackLivesMatter** on social media, following that incident, quickly transitioned into a movement when demonstrators appropriated it following the police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson MO., and a similar shooting of Eric Garner in NYC, NY.

The *Black Lives Matter* movement tapped anger and frustration long present in African American communities. It pointed to the long festering problem of tension between mostly white police officers and African American citizens. When walking along the streets, Black people are often victims of “stop and frisk” practices. When driving, they are sometimes pulled over for DWB (Driving While Black). The high arrest and conviction rate of members of black communities, and the failure of police to protect law-abiding African Americans from crime and violence in their own communities, also contribute to the tension. Consequently, police, especially in urban communities, are often seen as “occupying forces” representing “white oppression.”

Publicity about the Black Lives Matter movement created a knee-jerk reaction among many white people. Social media was soon the conveyor of criticism of the slogan and declarations that "all lives matter," and "blue (police) lives matter." While these counter-slogans were also true, they arose primarily to distract and discount the legitimate claims of African Americans, and to perpetuate the myth that African Americans were a major threat to "white lives" and the accompanying belief that police, when shooting black males, were only protecting white Americans from this threat. Instead of sympathy for innocent African American victims of police profiling and shootings, many white Americans only sympathized with the police who "risked their lives to patrol these dangerous neighborhoods."

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of "The Black Lives Matter" movement has been its failure to bring about any real change. Because, many individuals in African American communities have responded to police violence with looting, arson, and violent rioting, the moral authority which Dr. King symbolized in his non-violent movement was lacking. The leadership of the movement also missed the opportunity to "negotiate" for change. While the "protesting phase" brought attention to the suffering of African Americans at the hands of Police, it did not result in negotiations that would bring about real and lasting change. When Dr. King and Jessie Jackson demonstrated against segregated housing, and boycotted discriminating businesses in Chicago their actions had a purpose – to bring white people in power to the bargaining table in order to negotiate changes in policy and practice.

I have been saddened, as I have observed these things, by the inability of those involved to envision clear goals and strategies for change. It is not enough simply to have the goal of ending, or even reducing, police brutality and killings. One must also ask the question of how to move beyond the current impasse.

The key to a way forward may be more obvious than those involved suspect. Instead of going to the streets in anger when a police officer is acquitted, it might serve the movement better if some thought were given as to why the officer was acquitted. The defense in cases of police shootings almost always involves an appeal to the fact the officer did what he or she was trained to do. But that fact alone offers both sides a place of agreement in which to begin to address the larger issues. If movement leaders were to negotiate changes in police training it might be a recipe for change.

Following a pattern of police shootings of mentally ill persons, The National Alliance On Mental Illness (NAMI) successfully negotiated changes in police training in several cities. Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), a 40-hour curriculum developed specifically for this purpose — is the most comprehensive police officer mental health training program in the country. It is now operational in forty-five of the nation's fifty states. CIT addresses both police understanding of mental illness, and strategies for de-escalation of potentially deadly confrontations. It is now credited with saving numerous lives. Similar best practice training designed to create awareness of the prejudices and fears of white police officers serving in black communities, along with tactical training designed to reduce the use of deadly force in confrontations, would undoubtedly save lives and reduce tensions in the nation's ghettos.

NFL National Anthem Kneel-ins

In 2016, Colin Kaepernick, quarterback for the San Francisco Forty Niners, knelt during the traditional playing of the national anthem. He did so to protest inequality and injustice, and in support of the "Black Lives Matter" movement. The "protest" soon caught on among players across the league who began routinely to kneel during the playing of the anthem.

The white backlash in the country was almost instantaneous. Critics appeared on cable news networks, denouncing the "unpatriotic" actions of the players. Even the President, Donald J. Trump, joined the chorus of denouncements in tweets and speeches. Under pressure from the President, the league leadership began enforcing a rule that prohibited kneeling, but did provide for players to stay in the locker-room during the anthem. Despite the rule, some players continued to kneel during the anthem.

Now, I am a patriot. I come from a long line of patriots who served this country in most, if not all, American wars, including The American Revolution. I display in my home a flag, given by my country to our family, in honor of my veteran father, who served in both WWII and the Korean War. But, as I observed the NFL protest movement in 2016 and 2017, I could not help but have flashbacks to the crowds of white people on the sidewalks, and along the roadside, carrying American Flags, accusing me of being unpatriotic, while cursing and threatening my life, as I marched in Civil Rights demonstrations during the 1960s. I found myself asking, "Who are those in our midst that are truly disrespecting our flag and national anthem?" Is it the NFL players who are taking a knee during the anthem, while exercising the freedom to protest, a freedom that so many suffered and died to insure; or, is it their critics who would deny them the freedom of protest and redress? Is it those who believe in a nation of "justice only for some," or those who are crying out for "justice for all?" Who are the real patriots today?

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. used to say that he considered himself a radical patriot. All he wanted was for this nation to live out the truth of its creed. Instead of being offended when people protest, I believe we should have learned from Dr. King and the Civil Rights movement that we as a nation need to pay attention when people protest injustice.

In 2018, fifty years after the assassination of Dr. King, African Americans continue to have a legitimate concern about the equality of justice in this country. Many African American parents rightly worry, when their black sons borrow the car to go somewhere that their young men will be pulled over for "driving while black," or worse - they might be shot by a nervous police officer mistaking a cell phone for a gun. Many African American families have witnessed their sons and daughters not experiencing the same level of justice in the courtrooms of this nation that white sons and daughters do, because persons of color are much more likely to be found guilty and sentenced to prison, and even to death row, than their white counterparts.

I believe, when we white folks deny, defend, and explain away, these injustices, we are the ones disrespecting our flag. I believe it is time for this one nation, under God, to repent. That will only happen if we who believe in the principles for which our flag stands, have the courage to face the injustices of our time, and create solutions that honor the freedom and dignity of all of our citizens.

Dehumanization of Immigrants

In 2015, when Donald Trump announced his candidacy for President, he declared, if elected, he would build a wall on the border between Mexico and the U.S. He said that Mexico would pay for it. In remarks, then, and during subsequent political speeches, Trump painted, with a broad brush, all immigrants coming across the border as criminals and otherwise horrible and dangerous people. Fanning the flames of xenophobia, he intentionally dehumanized all immigrants, the vast majority of which were brown skinned families, many fleeing horrific conditions in Central America.

Later, in 2018, during his second year of Presidency, Trump's administration presided over the incarceration of families crossing the border. As a warning sign to future potential immigrants, hundreds of children were separated from their families, with no plan in place to later reunite them with their parents. Then, as the mid-term elections drew near, Trump threatened violence against a large group of potential immigrants walking through Mexico attempting to escape the extreme poverty and violence of their native Central American home countries.

While a majority of Americans opposed the dehumanizing rhetoric and policies, a substantial minority found in their President, a powerful spokesman expressing their immigration fears and prejudices. Beneath the surface lay the fear that, if immigration continued at the current rate, it would not be long until white people would become a minority in America. The Trump slogan, "Make America Great Again," resounded in the hearts and minds of those who continued to be troubled by the gains made by people of color since the mid-1950s. A return to the "good old days" of Jim Crow, and a time when white Protestants ruled the American roost held great appeal to some.

Forgotten, and lost to the consciousness of many white Americans, is the fact that no persons of European dissent would be in this nation today, had not their ancestors first become immigrants to this country. Several hundred of my ancestors were among the earliest arrivals in the New World. I have no doubt that Native Americans, who first occupied Virginia Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, would have loved to have built a wall to keep my pale, weird looking ancestors out of their land. I have no doubt they believed these intruders to be immoral, violent, and sub-human. Ironically, most of the brown skinned immigrants, who are coming from Mexico and Central America today, have both European and Native ancestry. As such, they are doubly American.

Another disturbing sign of the times today is the fact that the contemporary debate over immigration is deeply rooted in "Islamophobia." Since the traumatic events of 9-11 2001, virtually every person of Middle Eastern descent in America has been subject to suspicion and hostility. Fear and hate have been projected onto people who have nothing to do with Islamic terrorism, many of whom believe Islam to be a religion of peace and compassion. Islamophobia has been taught and preached in some Christian churches, enabling nervousness about neighbors who look and dress differently to metastasize into hate in the hearts of believers.

Voter Suppression

For many decades following Emancipation, most African Americans voted Republican, the party of Lincoln. But since the Civil Rights movement of the twentieth century, a substantial majority of African Americans have voted consistently for members of the Democratic party.

In the early two thousands, legislatures with Republican majorities began to institute several strategies designed to suppress the African American vote, and to ensure future Republican control of local, state and federal governments. These strategies included photo identification requirements, purging of voter rolls, limitations on early voting, felon disenfranchisement, disinformation about voting procedures, deadlines for voter registration, and gerrymandering of voter districts. These strategies were designed to limit minority (Democrat) voting. For example, photo ID requirements disproportionately affect minority voters who are less likely to have driver licenses. Limiting early voting has prevented many African Americans from going to the polls due to work schedules in many jobs available to minorities.

While not as overt as the Jim Crow voting discrimination laws of the last century, these more recent tactics have been highly effective, discouraging or preventing an estimated four million potential African Americans from exercising their constitutional right to vote.

Unfortunately, these strategies can only be undone by the courts. But the same legislative bodies that have created these barriers to voting have also stacked the courts with judges friendly to their efforts. Perhaps the only way to battle this suppression is for African Americans and genuinely patriotic Americans, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, who believe in liberty and justice for all, to again become a Civil Rights movement.

A large number of us once risked our lives in Selma, Alabama, to end voter discrimination. Our efforts bore fruit in the Voting Rights Act of 1964. Perhaps what is needed today is a new movement of concerned persons willing to risk their lives for a new Voting Rights Act, one which outlaws the voting suppression activities of the twenty-first century.

Poverty and Unemployment

One of the last things Dr. King did was to focus his movement on the problem of poverty. He recognized, as long as many African Americans lived below the poverty level, his dream of a nation of equal opportunity and justice for all would never be realized. This awareness was clearly in his mind when he answered my friend Jim Lawson’s invitation to come to Memphis to help striking sanitation workers. Consequently, he died, not only in the larger fight to end racial discrimination, but in the midst of one specific battle to alleviate poverty.

Poverty and unemployment remain today as major obstacles to the realization of Dr. King’s dream. The facts speak for themselves:

- 1 of Every 5 children in U.S. is poor.
- 40% of children are either poor or on the verge of poverty.
- African Americans are three times more likely to be poor than whites.
- Unemployment – African American males have the highest unemployment rate.
- Ghetto Living – Housing discrimination and lack of low income affordable housing continue to confine African Americans to ghetto living.
- Health Care – African Americans receive worse care on 41% of quality and outcome measurements

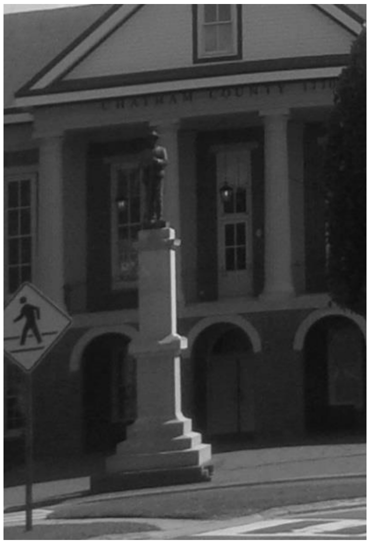
Criminalization

While Dr. King experienced police brutality and false imprisonment first hand, if he had lived another fifty years, he probably would be shocked at the growth in the criminalization of African Americans.

- Criminalization has grown largely because of “get tough on crime” “drug wars” and structured sentencing.” Due largely to racial profiling, African Americans have been more effected by these programs than European Americans. African Americans are incarcerated 5 times more often than whites, and make up 56% of the prison population today (while only 13% of the nation’s population is black)
- Sentences are harsher for African Americans.
- Upon release, African Americans find it more difficult to find jobs.
- Those convicted of felonies lose the right to vote, reducing the effectiveness of the “black vote” in addressing social ills.

Confederate Statues

In August of 2017, Charlottesville Virginia Ku Klux Klan groups, white nationalists, neo-Nazi’s and other racist groups gathered in Charlottesville Virginia to protest the planned removal of a statue of General Robert E. Lee, the Commander of the Confederate forces during the Civil War. The larger than life statue had been a landmark in Charlottesville since its erection in 1924. In the Spring of 2018, city officials, at the encouragement of African Americans, decided, to remove the statue. Racist demonstrators travelled from far and wide in an attempt to block removal. The racist demonstrators marched through town carrying torches, shouting racist chants against African Americans and Jews, and taunting counter demonstrators. Violence erupted. In the chaos that followed, dozens were injured and a young woman, Heather Heyer, who opposed the hate groups, was killed. She died when one of the white nationalists drove his car into a group of anti-hate demonstrators.



Confederate Statue in Pittsboro NC

I am southern born and southern bred. Although I have ancestors who fought on both sides of the civil war, I was raised in a culture that believed the south was unjustly invaded by the north. As the earlier section of this memoir describing my slave-holding ancestors illustrates, my confederate roots run as deep as anyone's. But the question for me is "what do those confederate statues symbolize?" Native southerner or not, I have to look at the confederate statue issue as a "golden rule" matter *i.e. What do confederate statues symbolize to my African American neighbors? And what do they symbolize to Ku Klux Klan members and to Neo-Nazis?* I have asked myself, "What would the erection of a statue of Adolf Hitler, or a huge swastika, in New York City, symbolize to my Jewish brothers and sisters?" "How would it make all of us who lost loved ones and relatives in World War II feel?"

Those who oppose the removal of Confederate statues argue that history is important. I agree that history is important, but primarily for the lessons history teaches us. One of those lessons is "all men are created equal. I also believe the historic symbols we celebrate should all be consistent with that truth.

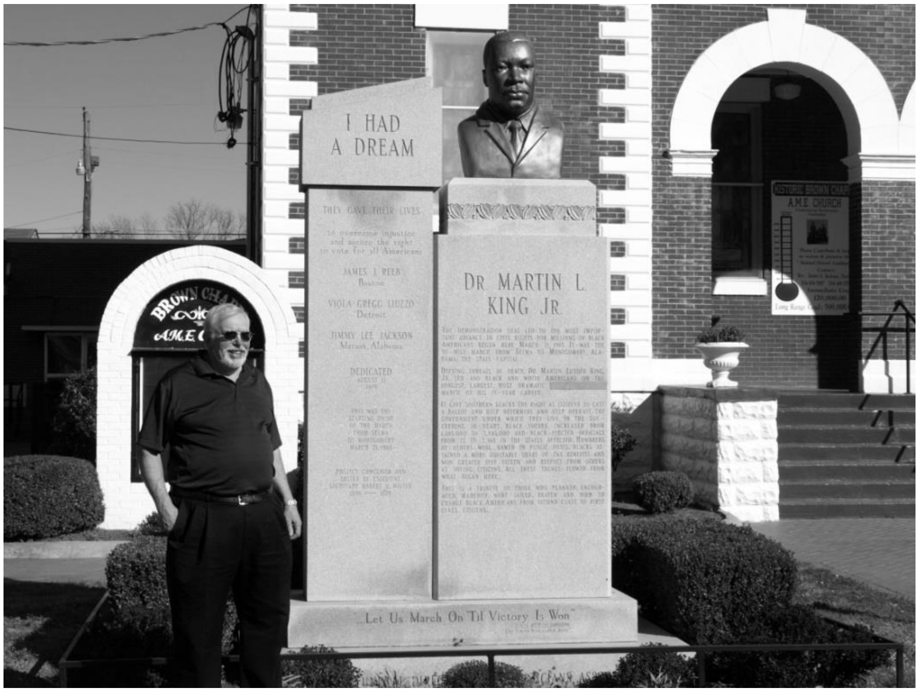
Symbols are important. The Pledge of Allegiance to the flag ends with "liberty and justice for all." The flag is an important symbol to me for its meaning, and that is why it bothers me deeply when anyone depreciates it, including those who wear flag designed bathing suits. I am not offended because of the cloth, or the colors, or the combination of stars and stripes worn, but because a bathing suit trivializes the ideals for which the flag stands.

Symbols *are* important… the cross is important to the faith of believing Christians, but the crooked cross called a swastika means something very different than the simple two directional cross that symbolizes reconciliation between god and humankind and between all of god's children. The flag is important and worth defending, but I do not believe we should waste our spiritual energies defending sacred cow symbols that stand for the unholy self-will of people who want to oppress others, including the symbols of slavery, hatred, discrimination, lynching, and the obscene and un-Christian notion that some of god's children are superior to others.

REALM NATIONAL ALABAMA
KKKK, INC.

Klan Robe and Logo in Selma Civil Rights Museum

While I believe Confederate Statues should be removed from County Courthouse entrances, and all government buildings and parks, I do not believe that all of them should be destroyed. Holocaust Memorial Museums, prominently display Nazi symbols of hate. The Civil Rights Museum in Selma Alabama displays a Klan robe and logo. Because these symbols are shown in the context of the terrible suffering caused by those who displayed them, I believe these symbols are appropriate for historical preservation. Consequently, a select number of Confederate Statues could legitimately be displayed in Civil Rights museums where the context of slavery, Jim Crow discrimination, beatings and lynching would also be evident.

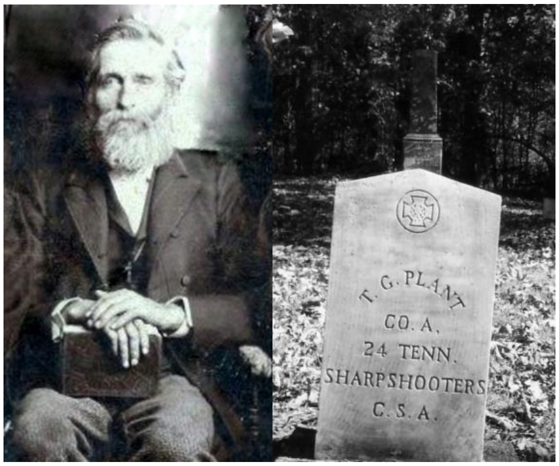

I HAD A DREAM
THEY GAVE THEIR LIVES
to overcome injustice and secure the right to vote for all Americans
JAMES J. REEB Boston
VIOLA GREGG LIUZZO Detroit
JIMMY LEE JACKSON Marion, Alabama
DEDICATED
DR MARTIN L. KING JR.
Let Us March On Til Victory Is Won
BROWN CHAPEL A.M.E.
HISTORIC BROWN CHAPEL A.M.E. CHURCH

The Monument to Dr. Martin Luther King in Front of Brown's Chapel Church in Selma Is a Monument To All Who Served & Sacrificed to Bring About Racial Equality

APPENDIX

Ancestors Who Fought in the Civil War

Thomas Gideon Plant (2nd GGF, 1842-1923)


T. G. PLANT
CO. A.
24 TENN.
SHARPSHOOTERS
C. S. A.

My grandmother Mimi's grandfather, ***Thomas Gideon Plant*** , served as a private in the Tennessee 24th Battalion, Company A, from Humphrey County Tennessee, Major Frank Maney in command. His unit was designated "Light Artillery." It formed in May of 1863, and disbanded at surrender on April 26, 1865 in Greensboro N.C. This unit participated in various campaigns of the Army of Tennessee from Chickamauga to Atlanta. It marched with General John Bell Hood in Tennessee, and was active in the war in North Carolina. At the battle of Chicamauga, it reported 22, of the unit's 39 troops, wounded or killed.

The Tennessee Campaign of 1864 was the Confederacy's last significant offensive operation of the war. The Union Army defeated the Army of Tennessee in the horrific battles at Spring Hill, Franklin and Nashville, destroying the Confederate Army's last hopes for victory.

Daniel Jesse Williamson (7th GGF,1833-1864)

My grandfather Baggett's 4th GGF, on his mother's side, Daniel Jesse Williamson, served as a private in Company F of the 4th South Carolina cavalry. This regiment fought with Butler's Brigade in the cavalry of Northern VA in1864. It saw heavy action at the battles of Haw's Shop, Va., Matadequin Creek, Va., and Trevilian Station, Va. Between May 28, 1864, and June 12, 1864, the regiment suffered more than 280 killed, wounded or captured. These battles were later seen as classic and, in some cases, decisive struggles between the forces of Union General Ulysses Grant and Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Sometime during his tour in Virginia, Daniel Jesse Williamson developed typhoid fever and was hospitalized at the Huguenot Springs Hospital, in Powhatan County VA. He died there on August 9, 1864 and was buried in the Huguenot Springs Confederate Cemetery along with about 250 other Confederate soldiers.

Minus Hillary Murff (6th GGF, 1820-1894)

ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA
CSA
CAVALRY CORPS

My grandfather Baggett's 4th GGF on his mother's side (my 6th GGF), Minus Hillary Murff served as a Confederate private in the 6th Cavalry Regiment of South Carolina, Aiken's Partisan Rangers. The 6th Cavalry saw action at Willstown and Pon Pon River in South Carolina, and then moved to Virginia with about 1,000 men. Assigned to General Butler's Brigade, the unit participated in The Wilderness and Cold Harbor operations and in various conflicts south of the James River. Later this cavalry was engaged in the campaign of the Carolinas where it was assigned to Logan's Brigade. The regiment surrendered in Greensboro N.C. with the Army of Tennessee on April 26, 1865. Murff and Daniel Jesse Williamson (see above) both served in the cavalry of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Murff's son, William Berry Murff (5th GGF, 1867-1898), and Williamson's daughter, Anna (5th GGM), both born after the war, would later marry and have their first child in 1894.

III. THE LEGACY OF OPPOSITION

I believe some of my ancestors did not support the Confederate cause. At least one fought for the Union Army at Gettysburg, some were Union sympathizers, and some spoke out against racism in their own times. Some may have even assisted with the freeing of slaves traveling the Underground Railroad.

I have no way of knowing why some of my ancestors did not own slaves, but some southern farmers during that era did not believe in it, and even actively opposed it. Some European Americans were involved in the Underground Railroad, a network of dedicated persons who assisted slaves in their escape to freedom. Still others volunteered to fight in the Union Army, risking their lives in order to preserve the Union and free the slaves. Still later ancestors took a stand against the terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan. I hope I have been able in my lifetime to contribute in some small way to this legacy of opposition.

UNION SOLDIER

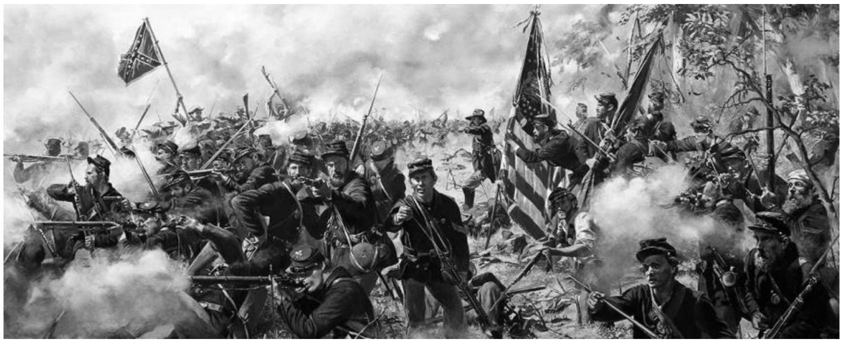
Edwin George (2nd GGF, 1834-1913)

Edwin George (2nd GGF in my Scott Line [my GGM Scott was a George]) was born in Lehigh Pennsylvania. His mother, Catherine Moyer (3rd GGM; 1802-1884) lived in Mercer County Pennsylvania which contained at least three “stations” on the “Underground Railroad.” The Underground Railroad was not an actual railroad, but a system of trails and domestic shelters to assist African Americans in making their way north (often to Canada) to freedom. Mercer County Pennsylvania was not unique. Every county in Pennsylvania boasts today of hosting, during the slave era, at least one “station” on the Underground Railroad. My nineteenth century Pennsylvania ancestors include, among others, Sarah Best (2nd GGM; 1825-1876); George Best (3rd GGF;1801-1876); and Edwin George’s wife, Wilhelmina Bright George (2nd GGM; 1832-1894). Each of these lived in Pennsylvania during the days of the Underground Railroad. While no evidence has appeared to date that any of my Pennsylvania ancestors were directly involved in helping slaves escape to freedom, there is good reason to believe they were members of communities that were sympathetic to the effort, and who never betrayed those who provided “stations.”

Edwin George and Gettysburg

Edwin George enlisted in K Company Pennsylvania 29th Infantry Regiment on 19 June 1863, and was in the field during the Battle of Gettysburg from July 1 to July 3, 1863. He mustered out on August 1, 1863 after less than two months of service, probably due to sickness or wound as his company did not fully muster out until July 17, 1865.

The Battle of Gettysburg Pennsylvania is considered the most important engagement of the American Civil War. After a major victory over Union forces at Chancellorsville, General Robert E. Lee marched his Army of Northern Virginia into Pennsylvania in late June 1863. On July 1, the advancing Confederates clashed with the Union's Army of the Potomac, commanded by General George G. Meade, at the crossroads town of Gettysburg. The next day saw even heavier fighting, as the Confederates attacked the Federals on both left and right. On July 3, Lee ordered an attack by fewer than 15,000 troops on the enemy's center at Cemetery Ridge. The assault, known as "Pickett's Charge," managed to pierce the Union lines but eventually failed, at the cost of thousands of rebel casualties, and Lee was forced to withdraw his battered army toward Virginia on July 4.



During the battle, Edwin George's Regiment, the Twenty-ninth, occupied a part of the line which extended through a hollow, and was somewhat protected by a ledge of rocks. At half past three A. M., when the contest began, the enemy commenced firing from behind rocks and trees. The action soon became general and raged with unabated fury, the troops being relieved as their ammunition was exhausted, and, when replenished, again returning to the line. The Twenty-ninth was relieved for this purpose, and was absent forty-five minutes, the men taking from sixty to eighty rounds each.

> "At half past ten A. M., the enemy advanced to the charge, led by Stewart's Brigade moving at battalion front. It was a trying moment for the Twenty-ninth, but the men stood manfully to their ground, firing with great rapidity and doing fearful execution. The rebel line came steadily on, though their ranks were perceptibly thinned, until within ten paces, when their column began to waver, and soon after fled in confusion, leaving their dead and wounded in frightful numbers on the field. Preparations were soon made to follow up this advantage, and General Geary's

Division charged over the ground lately held by the enemy, routing and driving them out and regaining the original breast-works.

The fight still continued, the enemy taking refuge behind rocks and trees in front of the entrenchments, and keeping up a rapid fire. The Twenty-ninth, having exhausted its last supply of ammunition, was relieved by the First Maryland, Colonel Maulsby, and moved out to replenish it, being heavily shelled while passing through an open field and losing one man wounded.

At half past two the regiment returned to the trenches, where the men were much annoyed by sharp-shooters. At nine P. M., the enemy made another attack, which was promptly repulsed, and the firing ceased with the exception of an occasional shot. Precautions were taken to guard against surprise, and the men rested in the trenches upon their arms. Much speculation was indulged in by the officers during the night respecting the events of the coming day, many believing that the fighting would be more sanguinary than on any previous one.

With the dawn of July 4th came hope that the struggle was over, for silence continued to prevail. General Kane ordered Colonel Rickards to send out a party of skirmishers to ascertain if the enemy was still in front. Company E was accordingly detached for the purpose, and proceeded to examine the woods, where the enemy had been posted; but he had stealthily departed, leaving the ground strewn with his dead and wounded. Five hundred rebel dead were found and buried in front of General Geary's Division alone.

The Twenty-ninth lost, during the three days in which it was engaged, fifteen killed, forty-five wounded and fourteen missing."

(Quoted from https://www.pa roots.com/pacw/infantry/29th)