

A special note from William H. Conklin
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Regarding :
Genesee Baptist Church
And Pastor Vera E. Miller
149 Brooks Avenue
Rochester, New York 14619

October 31, 2005

The Genesee Baptist Church has existed for over 135 years in a local community in Rochester, New York where my Mother has faithfully attended for over 75 years, where I grew up in the Christian Religion with my two sisters and other family members such as my paternal grandparents, aunt and uncle and cousins (the McSweeney Family). It has always been a focal point for love and affection within our family and also a place of solace, love, refuge and sanctuary for our family when tragedies visited our family.

My Mother Emily and my sister Gayle are still active members while others in the family have moved away or are no longer able to participate in the daily operation of the church (except for Joe McSweeney who still stops by the church now and then and fixes something that needs his talents). However, the church edifice, pastors and congregation past and present were and are a constant source of love and inspiration to our family.

At this point I would like to share a prayer of Thanksgiving to all of you reading this message that it might be a comfort to your life and a gift from my church and family to you as we are entering the holiday season.

“Receive a blessing for all that may be required of you, that love may drive out fear, that you may be more perfectly abandoned to the will of God, and that peace and contentment may reign in your hearts, and through you may spread over the face of the earth. The blessing of God, Giver of Life, Bearer of Pain, Maker of Love, Creator and Sustainer, Liberator and Redeemer, Healer and Sanctifier, be with you and all whom you love both living and departed now and forever. Amen.”
(Jim Cotter).

The Genesee Church founded in 1871, is still flourishing under the exceptional Pastoral Leadership of Reverend Vera Evans Miller (a part time pastor who has a full time position teaching high school classes, because of the financial limitations of the church to provide a full time position).

The history of this church is rich as well in its struggles. The struggles are far more notable in that the congregation managed through the years to make both courageous and unprecedented changes. The church, under the pastorate of the Reverend Bruce M. Lambert (a personal and close friend of mine) took a stand and signed the resolution supporting racial integration.

Genesee has become an idealistic, diverse community of faith. The congregation consists for about fifty percent European (White) Americans and about fifty percent African and Caribbean (Black) Americans. The diversity also, extends to many senior whites and younger black Americans. It is the diversity that represents the richness of the love within the congregation and also the challenge it offers the community.

In the 125th Anniversary Message , the Pastor, Vera E. Miller stated:

Truly God's presence has been with us in this year that I have been Pastor of the Genesee Baptist Church. We managed to plan and witness my installation service on May 26, 1996 and we are praying for a successfully planned 125th Anniversary.

Since January , we have organized a Young Adult Group. Ten ascensions have been made. Six have come through baptism, three have come through Christian experience and one for re-instatement. Three infants have been dedicated to God.

Truly God has been good and present in this church!

“I (Pastor Vera Miller) close with this message with the words of a hymn:

Forward through the ages, In unbroken line
Move the faithful spirits at the call divine
Gifts in differing measures, Hearts of one accord.
Manifold service , One the sure reward.

Not alone we conquer, Not alone we fall;
In each loss or triumph, Lose or triumph all.
Bound by God’s far purpose in one living whole,
Move we on together to the shining goal.”

Pastor Miller also, was quoted in the Rochester local paper as saying “Just think, if we all practiced love, there would be no violence in our schools and our community.”

The Genesee Church is a beloved part of my family and my life and I wish that it should continue to flourish and be a beacon and focal point for community diversity and love. Unfortunately the church’s finances are strained to say the least and help from all people regardless or race, creed or religion would find this church a worthy cause to support by financial assistance.

If only 100 people came forward and pledged \$2000/year, the current annual budget would be secured for the coming year! I am pleased to say that I will step forward and be one of the one hundred for the year 2006!

If your heart has been moved by my personal rendering of the history of this wonderful, diverse, community church, I urge you for your sake and mine to help them in their struggle and join me and be a part of the One Hundred Club. Without your support, Genesee Baptist Church will continue to struggle, but God willing it will survive because it has a great tradition and future mission in the community it serves.

Please give this message some serious thought and please forward it to all people on your email lists.

May God bless you and keep you, now and forevermore,

Yours very sincerely,

Bill Conklin