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The Baptist Church of Pacific Grove **History 1907-2009**

The Baptist Church of Pacific Grove is the first African-American public establishment in the Peninsula. It offered a sense of hope and belonging for the local black population as a center of identity affairs, where the NAACP of Monterey was born. Despite the extraordinary effect of the church in the Peninsula, its history has received minimum efforts of proper documentation. The fact that a Black church has developed in the midst of a highly prejudiced all-white town makes the church an important case study for the African American history not only at the local level but also at the national one.

The purpose of this work is to collect the largest possible information about the church as derived from a variety of sources but mostly archives and interviews. However, the specific dates, full names of persons, and detailed biographical information of leading individuals are not always available.

This deficiency in information is due to a number of factors the most important being the change of church structure. Reverend Nance remembers that when the old structure was being demolished, a church member came shouting; asking if the church records were taken out¹. Tragically, the person responsible for clearing the church did not take out the church records. Hence, the rich history of the church was permanently gone; making the documentation process for future generations a much difficult matter.

The insufficiency of documentation, at times necessitates the need to make associations with relevant available data and thus perform analysis and interpretation to supplement and fill-in the incomplete pieces of information.

Background:

The Pacific Grove was documented in 1875 as a white religious retreat, where Methodist church meetings were held². Within few years, the retreat developed into a conservative community; and remained unexposed to the outside world.

Leaders of the retreat then introduced laws (or covenants) to regulate the behavior of the community especially that was associated with entertainment such as dancing, playing

¹ Richard Nance, Information on the history of the First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, telephone interview, 9 Jan. 2009.

² Augusta Fink, *Monterey County the Dramatic Story of Its Past*, Western Tanager Pr, 1978 167.

cards, dice, and billiards³. Even businesses to sell items other than medicine were restricted⁴. Adding to these and above the already existing isolation of their community, the community leaders built a physical fence around their retreat.

Hence, for a long time the Pacific Grove society remained traditionally conservative and intolerant to change. That is despite the removal of the fence in the 1880's, the increase of tourist mobility following the establishment of the El Carmelo Hotel in 1887, and the building of new residences as well as other forms of urban developments.

The attempt by Chinese immigrants to setup a village in Pacific Grove was as well not tolerated. In 1906, the village was set on fire and ravaged by local white residents⁵. In consequence, the Chinese villagers permanently departed.

In that same year, following the occurrence of the great San Francisco earthquake, Mrs. Emily McFarland moved to Pacific Grove to join her husband⁶. Observing the widespread racism of the time and the dispersion of black population throughout the Peninsula, Emily realized the urgent need of the blacks for a center of communal and spiritual belongingness.

News about the church creation was reported for the first time in *The Daily Review* newspaper on July, 1st 1907, with a large heading, "Church for the Colored Residents"⁷. It is reported that a certain Rev. Lewis from San Jose came to El-Bethel Mission (i.e. , located at the corner of Fountain and Light House Avenues⁸) and conducted church service for the black residents of Monterey. The report stated that Rev. Lewis service "resulted in the organization of a Baptist church on a Sunday afternoon" and that Rev. Lewis would hold service "once a month". The article also indicates that a certain Mrs. Rodgers has offered to open her home for church service in case no other place was available.

³ Fink 168.

⁴ Fink 168.

⁵ Fink 173-174.

⁶ Sharon Randall, "P.G. has 'grandmother' of Peninsula black churches," *Herald* 25 Feb. 1990: 1D+, California History Room Coll., Monterey Public Lib., Monterey.

⁷ "Churches for the Colored Residents," *The Daily Review* Vol. 6 No. 99 (1 July 1907).

⁸ *Property file for 246 Laurel Avenue*, Community Development Department, Pacific Grove.

Church appointments were listed as follow: “Miss May Johnson was chosen secretary, Mrs. Rodgers a treasurer, and Mesars Walker, Jerry McFarland and John Gatlin were elected as deacons”. The report further indicated that “sixty colored residents” from the Monterey Peninsula had identified themselves as members of the church.

Hence, the wording of the 1907 Daily Review article- “resulted in the organization of a Baptist church” and that “Rev. Mr. Lewis is coming down once a month to hold services”- makes it relevant to conclude that the first formal church service actually took place in 1907, and not in August 12, 1909 as indicated in the church documents⁹. It is most likely that the later date referred to a second meeting aimed at formally reorganizing the church. Fortunately, later church historians disregarded 1907 as the date of the first formal service, mostly because there have been no full-time minister appointed on the concerned time. That is probably also why historians have chosen to disregard 1907 as the date for the first minister installment.

Although the First Baptist was undoubtedly a colored church since the beginning, its members were not exclusively black; at least during the early 1900s. Sometime in 1990 the Monterey Herald conducted an interview with Mrs. Evelyn Smith, wife of Rev. Wellington Smith, who was also at some point pastor of First Baptist¹⁰. On that interview, she said that the church “was originally an inter-racial church” that was “organized by whites, but also attended by blacks who gradually assumed its leadership”. “By the time we were there in the early 30s, it was an all-black church”, she stated. Tolerance and acceptance has always been central aspects of the church; the church has not only advocated but acted upon the principles of integration and acceptance.

The church meeting of August 12, 1909 mentioned on the 1995 church history report, took place at Bethel Mission, 541 Lighthouse Avenue in Pacific Grove under the leadership of Rev. Lewis¹¹. The 1995 church report point’s out a Reverend that only appeared a week later, i.e., Rev. Emmet Reed of Spokane (i.e., in Washington), as “the first pastor”. Crudely written, the same document indicates that the first church service was conducted at another meeting at a house in the corner between Laurel Avenue and the Fifth Street on the week following August 12 (i.e., where eighteen persons were baptized)¹². Hence, the information on the 1995 report is clearly contradictory and the

⁹ For example of document with August 12, 1909 recorded as the date of the first formal service see: Rose C. Beene, “The History of The First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, California 1909-1995,” *The History of the First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, California 1909-1995*.

¹⁰ Randall.

¹¹ “History of First Baptist Church 1909-1995,” The First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, Pacific Grove.

¹² “History of First Baptist 1909-1995.”

first formal service and possibly the first minister appointment was most likely conducted in 1907, and not 1909.

Few years later, church documents show that Mrs. Bodfish, the wife of a coal and wood businessman, donated a considerable amount of money to purchase a land lot in the intersection of Fourth Street and Laurel Avenue¹³. This location became the first church building; with its cornerstone laid by a church member named Brother Alvin Lewis¹⁴. Due to her donations, Mrs. Bodfish was honored to name the church, which she named "Saint John Church"¹⁵. Because of conflict with another church few years later, the name of the church was then amended to the "First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove"¹⁶.

Mrs. Bodfish is perhaps the only church founder whose identity can be confirmed with much certainty and specification. Her husband was most definitely Mr. George Fenwick Bodfish, member of the prestigious Bodfish family of Barnstable, Massachusetts, and the well-to-do coal and wood businessman¹⁷.

Mrs. Bodfish was born in 1859 in San Jose. His father, George Homer Bodfish, was a California pioneer of 1849. Mr. Bodfish utilized the 17 Mile Drive ground as his cattle range. In 1906, he purchased the hay, wood, coal and feed business from the J. C. Anthony Company in Pacific Grove. In 1900, he bought the luxurious house at 128 Forest, which remained until about 1943¹⁸.

Back in 1884, Mr. Bodfish married Brenda Rose Praigg, the daughter of the Hon. James Bryce Praigg of Carrollton and wife Marie Fenwick Watkins¹⁹. Boards and Batters list

¹³ Rose C. Beene, "The History of The First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, California 1909-1995," *The History of the First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, California 1909-1995*.

¹⁴ Nellie P. Lewis, Vivian Downing, Evelyn Phillips, and Clara Rentie, *First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, California- Diamond Celebration: Seventy-Five 1909-1984*, First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove.

¹⁵ Randall.

¹⁶ Randall.

¹⁷ "George F. Bodfish, Early Pioneer of Pacific Grove," *The Board and Batten* (Aug./Sept. 1993): 6-7, P.G. Heritage Society folder Local History File, Pacific Grove Public Lib., Pacific Grove.

¹⁸ "George F. Bodfish."

¹⁹ "Death Takes Pioneer Peninsula Resident," *Tide* 13 Sept. 1940: 9.

Mrs. Bodfish as one of “the social and civil leaders of the peninsula”²⁰. The couple had four children: two boys and two girls.

Despite the fact that no documents have been found to affirm a particular building, the “Acknowledgement” section on *The History of the First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, California 1909-1995* indicates that tax records of the Heritage Society of Pacific Grove trace the original building of the church structure to 1914²¹. Also existing maps from the Heritage Society from 1914 and 1926 confirm the establishment of the building²². The original address of the church was 229 on Forth Street. On the 1930 directory, First Baptist Church is listed on 258 Laurel Avenue²³. The church is also listed on a copy from the city directory dated to 1926²⁴. In this document, the church is shown located on the corner of Laurel Avenue and Fourth Street.

Due to lack of historical records, the circumstances leading to the creation of the church are not so clear. However, it is reasonable to assume that the idea of creating a colored church would have received serious opposition from the city’s white population.

The creation of the First Baptist Church must have represented a breakthrough into the highly conservative Pacific Grove society. Unfortunately, due to lack in documents, not much can be written about the struggle efforts of the early church founders.

The fact that a colored church was founded in a city as prejudiced as that of Pacific Grove, at about the same time when the Chinese residents have chosen to depart from the cruel discrimination of the locals, indicates the extraordinary communal and spiritual solidity that the church has launched within its community.

Black members of the church came out as one entity not only from Pacific Grove but from all over the Peninsula; Monterey, Pebble Beach, Seaside and Salinas. The church have brought under its roof diverse backgrounds: workers at the canaries, railroads,

²⁰ "George F. Bodfish."

²¹ "Acknowledgements," *The History of the First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, California 1909-1995*.

²² *Copies of maps from Pacific Grove dating to 1914 and 1926*, Pacific Grove: Pacific Grove Heritage Society.

²³ *Polk's Salinas Monterey and Pacific Grove Directory 1930*, R.L. Polk & Co., of California, California History Room Coll., Monterey Public Lib., Monterey.

²⁴ *Copy of page from Polk's City Directory dated to 1926*, Pacific Grove: Pacific Grove Heritage Society.

servers in hotel and restaurants, as well as military personnel, i.e., the earliest being soldiers of the 9th regiment of the U.S. cavalry²⁵.

Mother Church:

The church represented the starting point for the establishment of colored and minority churches in the Peninsula including the Victory Temple in Seaside, established in 1940, and the Ocean View Baptist Church in 1948²⁶. Other churches that branched from Fir Baptist include Bethel Baptist Church, Emmanuel Church of God in Christ, Yielded Vessels Ministries, Inc., Holy Assembly Missionary Baptist Church, Mount Nebo Baptist Church, Hayes C.M.E. Church, Progressive Baptist Church, New Hope Baptist Church (in Santa Cruz), Community Missionary Baptist Church, Christian Memorial C.O.G.I.C., New Hope Baptist Church, Lighthouse Full Gospel, and Friendship Baptist Church²⁷.

In 1952, a newspaper reports a statement by Rev. Joseph S. Sutton of Seaside's Friendship Baptist church: "All the Negro Baptist churches on the Peninsula, he said, sprang from the First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove. It wasn't so much a matter of splitting off, he said, as one church giving birth to another of like faith and order, in the Baptist tradition."²⁸

Speaking on behalf of the church staff, Rev. Richard Nance in 1990 stated to a Herald reporter, "We're the mother church of most of the black churches in Seaside – Friendship Baptist, C.M.E. Hays, even the Victory Temple – if we are not the mother, then we are the grandmother"²⁹.

Discussing First Baptist as the mother black institution, it is essential to give a word about the person who came to represent the qualities of motherhood; that person was

²⁵ Juan J. Cortez, Cynthia Gonzalez, Khea Gumbs, and Viana Torres, *The Untold Story: The African American Experience in Monterey Bay, Reclaiming the Diverse Voice of Cannery Row's Past*, CSU-Monterey Bay, 3 Feb. 2009 <http://www.startitup.org/c_row/student_reports/Final_AfAm_Report_Group.htm>.

²⁶ For Victory Temple see: Ken Schultz, "Pastor-Redevelopment Director Helps Build Dept-Free Church," *Monterey Peninsula Herald* 24 Nov. 1983: 25, California History Room Coll., Monterey Public Lib., Monterey, and for Ocean view Baptist Church see: "Ocean View Baptist Church celebrate it's 27th anniversary," *Monterey Peninsula Herald* 15 Feb., 1975, Coll. of Churches, California Room, Monterey Public Lib., Monterey, CA (4 Feb. 2009).

²⁷ Willie McCain, *list of churches*, Pacific Grove, 2009.

²⁸ "Seaside's Friendship Baptist Church Has New Site," 9 Aug., 1952, California History Room Coll., Monterey Public Lib., Monterey.

²⁹ Randall.

Mother Isom, who was less known by her full name Dora Isom Walker³⁰. Born on April 17, 1870, Mother Isom was esteemed and respected by everyone in the community throughout her humble life. She was best known for her generous service to the community and her courtesy and politeness. Mother Isom was renowned for her proficiency as midwife. It was recorded that she has delivered more than 7000 babies through her lifetime³¹. Her expertise was outstanding that doctors referred pregnant women to her. Mother Isom died on November 21, 1964 on the age of 94³².

Rev. Nance recalls that the outstandingly large numbers of people who attended her funeral. The church, which was fit for about 100 people, was too small to accommodate the attendance. Rev. Nance recalls that the gathering expanded outside the church that Laurel Avenue was blocked. He also recalls the sight of chairs that were distributed by the church for the crowd to sit.

Civil Rights:

Also, the church has been known to be a center of civil rights activities. As indicated on 1984 church documents, the Pacific Grove branch of the NAACP-- currently the Monterey Peninsula branch— was organized at the First Baptist Church under Rev. Criglar on February 20, 1927³³.

According to subsequent church documents, particularly that of 1995, the Pacific Grove branch of the NAACP-- currently the Monterey Peninsula branch-- was rather organized at the First Baptist Church by Rev. Wellington Smith in 1931³⁴. It is farther indicated that the “Pacific Grove branch received its charter in 1932”, which is a confirmed fact³⁵. Even after the establishment of other Black churches in the Peninsula, members of the First Baptist Church have received the highest numbers of NAACP honors and trophies³⁶.

³⁰ Richard Nance, Information on the history of the First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, telephone interview, 19 Feb. 2009.

³¹ Beene.

³² Nance, 19 Feb. 2009.

³³ Lewis.

³⁴ Beene.

³⁵ "About the Monterey County Branch of the NAACP," *Monterey County Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People*, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 6 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.naacpmonterey.org/about.html>>.

³⁶ Lewis.

One of the most famous members of the church was Stephen E. Ross (1918-1986), a former Mayor of Seaside from 1978 to 1980 and one of the active members in the NAACP³⁷. Up to 1984, two years before he passed away, he was listed as member of the Church's Board of Trustees³⁸. As member of the First Baptist Church, he signed the church's 1956 Articles of Incorporation³⁹. The NAACP branch in Monterey Peninsula has introduced an award after his name "The Stephen E. Ross Award" given in recognition of community service, and the city of Seaside has named a park after his name, the Stephen E. Ross Memorial Park, in Harcourt Avenue, Seaside.

In consequence of World War II and the Korean War, an influx of racially diverse population came along with the military base at Fort Ord during the 1940s and 1950s; a considerable segment of the population was black⁴⁰. This influx contributed to a radical change in the ethnic structure of the Peninsula population⁴¹. Experiencing racial segregation in the military, the First Baptist Church was the place for socialization and comfort for the black population of the Peninsula.

Constructions:

Following the original structure of the church in 1914, the church underwent a series of reconstruction activities. According to the Monterey County tax assessment records, the land property of the church at its existing location was acquired in 1959⁴². In late 1965, under the leadership of Rev. Richard Nance, the old church structure was demolished; the new church edifice was built in 1966⁴³. The new church included an upstairs worship area and a pool on the back of the choir stand, which represented a new addition to the old church.

³⁷ Seaside Branch Library, *the obituary of Stephen E. Ross*, Seaside, 2008.

³⁸ Lewis.

³⁹ "Acknowledgements."

⁴⁰ Carol McKibben, *material on the history of the African Americans in the Monterey Peninsula*, Seaside, 2007.

⁴¹ McKibben.

⁴² *Request for information on tax assessment*, Monterey County Government Center, Salinas, Feb. 2009.

⁴³ *Celebration In 1966- Choir sings at ground breaking for new building of First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, Peninsula's oldest black-owned church*, California History Room Coll., Monterey Public Lib., Monterey.

In 1987, about 2000 square feet of building addition was added at the east of the existing church⁴⁴. The addition included building a choir room, three classrooms, pastor's study room, and a church office⁴⁵.

Youth Education:

In addition to being the spiritual, cultural, and social center of the black community, the Church has played a central role in the youth education. In January of 1949, 79 children were reported on the *P.G. Tribune* to have been enrolled in the Sunday school of the church⁴⁶.

During the 1980's the school flourished and maintained classes not only for the youth but for adults as well. The classes were started by the minister's prayer; and songs were frequently performed by the church pianist⁴⁷.

At the times, the school included guest speakers. Although youth classes are no longer carried today due to limitation in facilities, the adult scriptural education is in effect every Sunday at 9am⁴⁸.

Ministers:

Unfortunately specific names and specific dates are sometimes lacking. For example, while Rev. C.R. Holmes was mentioned on Polk's city directory of 1930, his name did not appear on the church documents⁴⁹. Ministers who pastured the Church from the early 1900s to 1919 can be identified as Rev. Lewis, Rev. Emmet Reed, and Rev. J. L. Allen⁵⁰.

⁴⁴ *Property file.*

⁴⁵ "P.G. Baptists To Dedicate New Facilities," *Herald* 12 Sep. 1987: 21, California History Room Coll., Monterey Public Lib., Monterey.

⁴⁶ "The First Southern Baptist Church Of PG Shows Progress," *P.G. Tribune* 30 Sept, 1949.

⁴⁷ Lucy Dansby, and Shalon Story, "Exciting Day at First Baptist Church," *The History of The First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, California 1909-1995.*

⁴⁸ Richard Nance, Information on the history of the First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, telephone interview, 4 Feb. 2009.

⁴⁹ *Polk's.*

⁵⁰ *Beene.*

Starting form 1919 and through the 1930s, ministers were Rev. Wyle, Rev. Guyton, Rev. “Big” Williams, Rev. “Little” Williams, Rev. Hughes, Rev. Wright, and Rev. Criglar⁵¹.

From the late 1930s to 1955 ministers were Rev. C. R. Holmes, Rev. Wellington Smith, Rev. Young, Rev. W.F. Bailey, and Rev. E. H. Harris. From 1955 to present ministers were Rev. Henry H. Mitchell, Rev. Richard Nance, and Rev. Callaway followed by Rev. Nance again.

Pastors of First Baptist Church are known for their successful and professional backgrounds. For example, the third minister to pastor since the establishment of the church, Rev. J. L. Allen, was a prominent figure in the Northern California Baptist community. Rev. Allen came to Pacific Grove as missionary pastor in 1917 and served as pastor from the latter date until 1919⁵². Later Rev. Allen became one of the most California’s most renowned clergymen noted for establishing the Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland in 1919⁵³.

Rev. Willington Smith is one of the most influential pastors in the history of the church. According to his wife, in a statement given to the herald in 1990, the Reverend’s brothers, “Louis and Willie, had run away from home in Texas when they were just boys about 12 and 14 and joined the Ninth Cavalry”⁵⁴. Following the death of one of his brothers, Rev. Smith moved to the Peninsula, along with his wife, to provide financial support to his other brother and his family. Although Rev. Smith was originally a Methodist, he accepted to be pastor of First Baptist. Under his leadership, the church nourished and increased in membership. A major accomplishment of his pastorate was the organization of the Peninsula branch of the NAACP in 1931, previously mentioned. Although Rev. Smith organized the Saint James CME in 1939, he was still listed as pastor of First Baptist on one of the documents as late as 1941⁵⁵.

Rev. E. H. Harris is another example of the church’s most accomplished ministers; under his leadership, the church flourished and increased in membership. In the fall of 1955, he

⁵¹ Beene.

⁵² Beene.

⁵³ "Allen Temple Baptist Church (History)," *Allen Temple Baptist Church* 4 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.allen-temple.org/history/index.html>>.

⁵⁴ Randall.

⁵⁵ "Pacific Grove Has 14 Churches for a City of 6,000," 28 May 1941, Pacific Grove Heritage Society Coll., Pacific Grove.

ended his resignation and the church was without pastor until the appointment of Rev. Richard Nance in 1st June, 1956⁵⁶.

Although he served as interim pastor for only few months through 1956, Rev. Dr. Henry H. Mitchell has been a quite influential figure in the history of the church⁵⁷. Rev. Mitchell was field secretary of the Baptist General Association and an official of the Northern California Baptist Convention⁵⁸. Beside other degrees, Rev. Dr. Mitchell holds Doctorates in Theology and Divinity. He was Pastor of Second Baptist Church, Fresno, CA (1959-1966) and Calvary Baptist Church, Santa Monica, CA (1966-1969)⁵⁹.

Rev. Dr. Mitchell was also the first “Martin Luther King, Jr.” Professor of Black Church Studies at Colgate Rochester Divinity School, Bex Ley Hall and Crozer Theological Seminary (1969-1974). Later, he became Director of the Ecumenical Center for Black church Studies in the Los Angeles area for sometime and Professor of Religion and Pan African Studies at California State University, Northridge. He is currently a well-known author with numerous publications on African American theology.

Like the former pastors of the Baptist church, Rev. Richard Nance has a highly professional background⁶⁰. Born and raised in Laurens County, South Carolina, Rev. Nance received BA degree from Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina, and a B.D. degree from the Seminary Department in 1953. In 1949, he was appointed pastor and served in three rural churches in Laurens and Spartanburg counties. In 1956, he received his MA from the Berkeley Baptist Divinity School, and thereafter received and accepted the call to serve as Pastor of the First Baptist in the same year Reverend Nance has four children; Christopher, Karen, Marcus and Gregory, and his wife, Esther Collins, is now deceased.

In striving to improve the conditions of the Black community in Pacific Grove, Rev. Nance has been president of the Pacific Grove Ministers Fellowship, the Monterey

⁵⁶ Beene.

⁵⁷ Nance, 4 Feb. 2009.

⁵⁸ Nance, 4 Feb. 2009.

⁵⁹ “The Reverend Dr. Ella P. Mitchell '43 & The Reverend Dr. Henry H. Mitchell '44,” *Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York*, Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, 6 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.utsnyc.edu/Page.aspx?pid=891>>.

⁶⁰ For example see: “First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, California, Diamond Celebration Seventy-Five Years, August 12, 1909-1984, 1909-1934,” First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove.

peninsula Ministerial Association, and of course the Monterey Branch of the NAACP⁶¹. In addition he was board member of the Pacific Grove Library, the Children's Home Society, Pacific Grove Kiwanis, Alliance or Aging, and the Tri-County Boy Scouts⁶².

As the pastor of the church since the 1950's, Rev. Nance has been a moral guide at a time when society is going through much social transformation. Ethics as spiritual values are being gradually replaced by a concept of freedom that limits the influence of moral and ethnical norms of society. According to Reverend Nance, today is a time when "People's moral consciousness is falling apart"⁶³.

In 1992 when Rev. Nance retired, he was succeeded by Rev. James H. Callaway. Originally from Carmeron of Texas, Rev. Callaway holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Elementary Education, with a minor in Religion from Paul Quinn College, Waco, Texas, and a Master of Divinity Degree from the Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, Georgia⁶⁴. He received the license to preach in 1961 and ordained in 1967 and joined the Air Force thereafter. He served as Chaplain of the Air Force from 1989 until 1993. (Rev. James H. Callaway) Rev. Callaway recently left the church, leaving it in the hands of Rev. Nance once again.

Conclusion:

For more than a century, the Baptist Church of Pacific Grove was a center of social and spiritual guidance for the Peninsula's black community.

In striving to protect the civil rights of community members, the church represented the core to manifesting the ideal and noble human qualities. In the process to establish bodies and mechanisms the church maintained the activities of the NAACP. A poem written by Clarie Rasmussen and published in the 1995 church booklet, perhaps best expresses the intimate relationship that developed between the church and its community members:

"It counseled me in youth, guided me in truth
That old church with its pews of Yellow pine.
Precious, sacred place, with the Pastor's kindly face,
The choir, the hymns, the bells that sweetly chime.
It points to Paradise, exalts the blessed Christ,

⁶¹ Dennis Sharp, "Rev. Nance is retiring this month," *Herald* Sep 19, 1992.

⁶² Sharp.

⁶³ Sharp.

⁶⁴ "Reverend James H. Callaway," *The History of the First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, California 1909-1995*.

Its teachings never from me will depart.
And that little church, to me, with its sacred memories,
Is a Towering Cathedral in my heart.”
-A. Clarire Rasmussen⁶⁵

⁶⁵ “My Church,” *The History of the First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, California 1909-1995*.

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