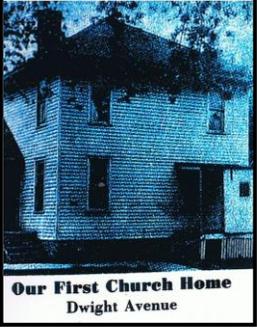


## *First Trinity Missionary Baptist Church History; God's Edifice*

On Tuesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1956, thirteen members of Mt. Olive Baptist Church met at the home of Mrs. Ray Garrett for the purpose of organizing a Missionary Baptist Church. At first they were known as "Christian Workers", later they called themselves "Volunteer Baptist Missionary Movement." This group of baptized believers in the Lord consisted of A. Calloway, Jetty M. Chick, A. Garrett, Bertha Hayes, Joseph Norman, Solomon Patillo, E.C. Robinson, Edith Robinson, H. Ross, W. C. Ross, Edward Waller, Rovenia Williams, and Bobbie Wilson.

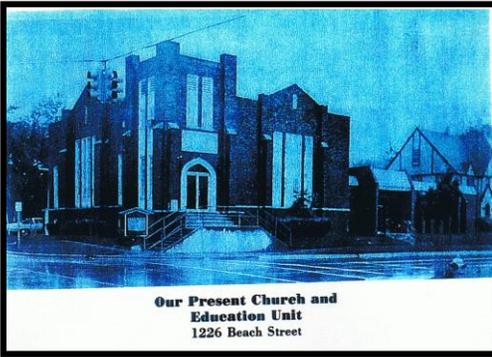


These faithful few continued to meet at their homes, to work and trust in the Lord until they decided on the rental of the Eureka Lodge/Masonic Temple at 2014 Dwight Ave. Records indicates the name then was **Trinity Baptist Church**. On June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1956, Rev. L. W. Pryor, Pastor of Antioch Baptist Church and a member of the Ministers Council, met with the members in their new church home. Other Pastors and Ministers of the city were in attendance also: Rev. Avery Aldridge, Associate Minister of Antioch (who later became Pastor of Foss Ave. Baptist Church) Rev. Isaac Epps, Pastor Good Hope Baptist Church, Rev. J.C. Curry, Pastor Macedonia Baptist Church, Rev. Matthew Montgomery, Pastor Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, Rev. Booth and Rev. Robinson of New Zion Baptist Church, Rev. C.R. Neal, Pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, Rev. Gordon Robertson, Pastor of St. Paul Baptist Church and a representative from Mt. Olive Baptist Church. They were there to give counsel to the church and to lead them in becoming a duly organized church. The official date was set for June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1956. It was then the official name of the church would be **First Trinity Missionary Baptist Church**, the Articles of Faith and the Church Covenant would be their guide, and Rev. L. W. Pryor would be the church Moderator. He advised them to elect officers and offered guidance in selecting a Pastor: Pastors and Ministers of the churches represented volunteered to preach until then.



**Pastor Alfred F. Thomas**, a native of Dallas, Texas, arrived in Flint to actively become the church Pastor. Pastor Thomas came from Mt. Olive Baptist Church, Longview Texas where he supervised the construction of the House of Worship, regarded as the most modern church in that city, at that time. He held a Bachelor of Theology and studied at Moody Bible Institute and graduated from Bishop College in Texas. At the time of his arrival there were twenty-six members and the membership steadily increased under his leadership: there was an apparent need for a more accommodating church home. A building was purchased at 1601 Clifford St. The Congregation vigorously repaired and decorated it at a cost of \$5,000.00. The church family officially moved in March, 1957. Pastor Thomas made a recommendation and it was approved to purchase the first parsonage at 707 E. Third St. in June 1957. It is written that Pastor Thomas was a good man of God, dependable, untiring and unselfish. He was a counselor and a loyal friend that aided the members of the church and others within the community. He served in the District as an Instructor of Deacons, Corresponding Secretary for Wolverine State and Chairman of the Home Mission Board. The membership grew, (600) the existing Auxiliary's expanded and new ones were organized, and the church debt grew. Baptismal Services were held at Antioch Baptist Church for a donation for the maintenance of the pool. On March 18, 1961, after five years, First Trinity negotiated the purchase price of the Central Church of the Nazarene; 1226 Beach St. @ Eighth St. for \$48,200.00, down from the asking price of \$90,000.00. The structure was erected in 1926, it included two adjacent houses. They were used for the parsonage and activities building. They relocated January 1, 1962.





*After leading God's people for five years and ten months, Pastor Thomas submitted his resignation to the church effective September 30, 1962.*

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*Rev. L.W. Pryor was present again and presented a Service Agenda to the members, listing the Pastors of the city that was willing to serve the Church, during Worship Services, each*

*Sunday. The Pastors that volunteered were; Rev. R.R. Gordon, Rev. Seldon Williams, Sr., Rev. L.W. Pryor, Rev. Alfred Robbs and Rev. E.B. Allen.*

*Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and I will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more... 2 Samuel 7:10a*

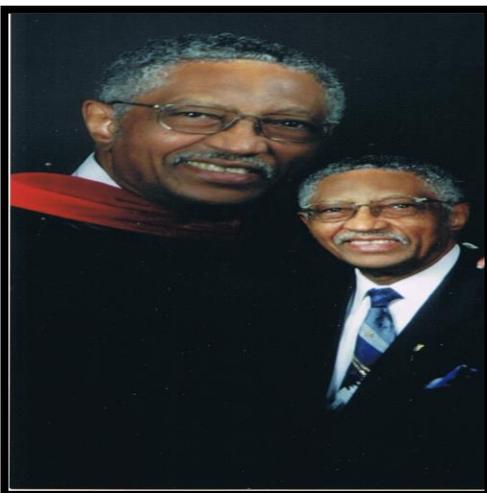
### ***Reverend Grady L. Bennett, Jr., Our Second Pastor***



*Rev. Grady L. Bennett, Jr., a native of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, graduate of Morehouse College and Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia arrived in Flint on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1963 to become the second Pastor of First Trinity Missionary Baptist Church. Dignitaries from Flint and Detroit took part in the nightly Installation Services that lasted one week. Rev. A.A. Banks, Pastor of Second Baptist Church in Detroit and President of the Wolverine State Baptist Convention, preached the sermon for his Installation. Under the Leadership of Pastor Bennett, the Lord continued to bless First Trinity and the church continued to progress.*

*Many souls were led to Christ and the membership continued to increase. Pastor Bennett and the Officers of the Church consecrated on liquidating the Church debts and redecorating the church. The Congregation led a devoted prayer life and was obedient to the will of God and celebrated their seventh Church Anniversary. In 1968, Pastor Bennett lead the Church in purchasing property on Center Road, in order to build a new Church, but resigned before the project was carried out. The property was later sold for use in renovating and updating the current church. On September 8, 1968, Pastor Bennett made the decision to resign and became a Civil Servant in the Flint Community.*

### ***Rev. Dr. F. O. Hockenhull, Our Third Pastor***



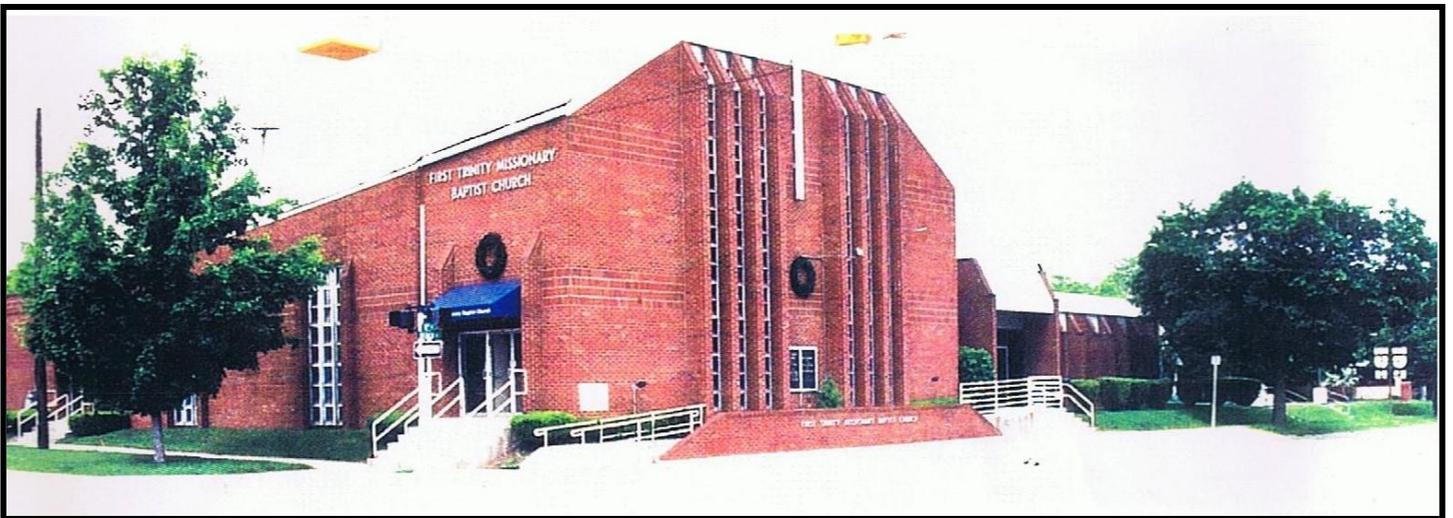
*In January, 1969, Rev. Dr. F.O. Hockenhull, a native of Detroit, Michigan, embarked on his spiritual journey with God and First Trinity Missionary Baptist Church. Pastor Hockenhull had an extensive spiritual experience: He was the Pastor of Jehovah's Missionary Baptist Church in Detroit, president of the Michigan District of the Sunday School and Baptist Training Union Congress, a member of the Inner-City Crime Commission, Chaplain for the Wayne County Jail and Contact Representative for the W.J. Maxey Boys' Training School before relocating to Flint. As a member of the National Baptist Publishing Board, he had been an Instructor in the Congress for 10 years and later became a member of the Board of Directors. Dr. Hockenhull*

*attended Arkansas State AM&N College, studied at Wayne State University and the University of*

*Detroit. He was a Graduate of Detroit Bible College and received an Honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree from Arkansas Baptist College on May 26, 1976. He was appointed Second Vice-President of the Great Lakes District Baptist Congress during this time also. He brought a vision from God for First Trinity and he implemented that vision tirelessly. This man of God was not only a Preacher, but a Teacher, and a Lecturer; he loved God and First Trinity and they loved him in return. Each conversation had with him was "a mini-sermon." Under Pastor Hockenhull leadership, God bless First Trinity: the congregation of First Trinity Missionary Baptist Church broke ground for a \$250,000 Educational Wing, (on the same site) the first of two units planned for construction, in September 1975. (The church was 49 years old/erected in 1926) The construction was erected on the parking lots to the north and the west of the sanctuary and later the sanctuary was replaced. The new building housed more than 20 classrooms, plus a Fellowship Hall to seat 350 people and a kitchen. On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1989, First Trinity dedicated its new \$700,000.00 sanctuary, which seats approximately 650 people. The large contemporary building can be easily seen from I-69, the brick exterior soars over three stories. According to Pastor Hockenhull, "the front has the following representation to the Bible: the three stain windows represent the Trinity and the four brick pillars in between represent the four Gospel writers-Matthew, Mark, Luke and John." During the 43 years Pastor Hockenhull led God's people at First Trinity, he made sure the church had a (class A) representation at the local, state and national level.*

*On October 31, 2010, the mortgage of all the renovations and construction were burned. The Lord kept His Promise: We showed our faithfulness, of Pastor's teaching of God's Word, by bringing the Lord our tithes and offerings. We can say the Lord has showed us His faithfulness by blessing it and rewarding us with the burning of the mortgage. We have been bless, as will be future generations of Christians, as they enjoy the fruits of Pastor Hockenhull's labor of love.*

*Then on March 16, 2012, after 43 years as First Trinity Pastor, the Lord transitioned him from labor to reward.*





### *Reverend Ezra L. Tillman, Jr. ~ Our Current Pastor*

*On May 1, 2014, the Lord gave First Trinity another Pastor that loves the Lord, the church and the members. One who supports us with prayer and spiritual guidance: Pastor Ezra L. Tillman, Jr. He has enhanced our spiritual growth with his preaching and teaching and tirelessly reaches out to spread God's Word when requested by others. By the time we celebrated our 60<sup>th</sup> Church Anniversary (June 2016) he had updated the business office and had the church to purchase the following instruments: drums, a keyboard and a Leslie speaker to further improve and intensify the sounds of our Music Ministry and our Worship Services. He has instilled in us "Christians are merely Servants of the*

*Lord." As Servants, we focus on Pastor Tillman's leadership skills and teachings: where Christ is the message, Ministry is the mission. We love and appreciate our Pastor and his support as he fulfills the vision that the Lord has given him; Pastor continues to encourage and inspire us to grow in God's Word. In Pastor's own encouraging words, he has stated, "In order to grow spiritually, we're tested and tried. The test allows storms in our life, but our faith in God is the storm breaker. **We must hold on to our faith!** We are full of gratitude, for we have seen the hands of the Lord working through Pastor Tillman daily.*

*The Lord has led and guided him to accomplish Certificates of Recognitions from the local, state and national level for his dedication to the community during the Flint Water Crisis and because of his love for the Lord, to preach and teach throughout the United States and Jerusalem. He is preparing him for even greater things ahead. The Lord has blessed us with a Leader and a Teacher, and we shall continue to follow his leadership!*