

THE INFORMER

Spotsylvania Sunday School Union Newsletter

January

Vol. 2021 #1

President's Pen 

Hello my Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

Happy New Year! Once again, we are in a new year full of expectations and blessings. Isn't it amazing how the scriptures apply to our daily lives! In [Nehemiah 4:6](#), the writer says, "So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together to half its height, for the **people had a mind to work**." This beautiful scripture is the foundation scripture of the Spotsylvania Sunday School Union's constitution because our forefathers and mothers had the Christian initiative and shrewdness to work across political boundaries and across diverse communities against the challenges of Jim Crow, to build this Union to help educate African Americans in the Spotsylvania community. An organization that is still vital and relevant yet today.

Although we may face many challenges in this year, we will not face them alone because **we have a mind to work!** We have the assurance of a God whose name is VICTORY. We know this because of our faith and proud history! Oh yes, our faith will keep us strong and help us remember who is really in charge. God gave us His victorious word, which provides the pathway in which we should walk and talk triumphantly; wisdom and knowledge to conduct ourselves in a manner in which he would approve.

Let us remember that we are called to work together with everyone, to join in building this wall of faith, through God's grace and mercy. We must recognize that we are one team in Christ, we cannot exist as a Union by ourselves. So please join us in truly making

this Union remarkable. No matter what belies us in 2021, be encouraged. Attend a Christian Bible-centered church regularly. Attend Sunday School and Bible Study often. It's especially convenient now and you may attend by phone, zoom, Facebook, etc. Practice speaking boldly with faith, a watch circumstances change. . . "thanks be to God, who gives us the **victory** through our Lord Jesus Christ." - [1 Corinthians 15:57](#). As Chuck Swindoll has boldly states, "We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations." Allow God to transform whatever insufferable challenges you may face in 2021, through your courage to lean on your audacious Christian prayers, faith, and your confidence in Him.

Be Blessed by the Best in 2021

Thomas Roberson, President, SSSU

Membership Update

Individual Membership (January – December)	\$12.00
Lifetime Membership	\$125.00
Representation Dues (Union Churches)	\$300.00

If you haven't joined the Union yet, we solicit your membership now!

Make checks payable to: SSSU
Mail to: Attn: Deborah Tibbs
PO Box 78
Thornburg, VA 22565

Thank you for your Membership!

**HISTORY OF THE SPOTSYLVANIA SUNDAY
SCHOOL UNION**

On July 5, 1905, the Spotsylvania Sunday School Union was formed. This SSSUnion was comprised of all the Black churches in the county, which at that time included: Bethlehem, Beulah, Branch Fork, First New Hope, Little Mine Road, Mount Hope, Mount Olive, Mount Zion, Piney Branch, Second New Hope, Sylvannah, and Zion Hill.

The mission of the SSSUnion was and continues to be to provide Christian and formal education for Black youth. The first SSSUnion President was John J. Wright, an educator, farmer, and a civil rights activist.

In 1908, the SSSUnion President purchased 158 acres of land at the cost of three dollars per acre near Snell, Virginia, and presently located three miles south of the Spotsylvania Courthouse.

In 1922, the Snell Training School, the first Black school providing education beyond the elementary level, was completed through the united efforts of the local Black community. During these early years of the SSSUnion, two former Superintendents of the Branch Fork Sunday School were instrumental in the accomplishment of its goals. These servants were Rev. Fennell F. Terrell and Rev. Joseph Despot. Both became ordained ministers and served for many years as representatives to the SSSUnion. Rev. Terrell became the pastor of the St. John Baptist Church of Louisa, Virginia, and Orange Grove Baptist Church, Orange, Virginia. Rev. Despot became pastor of the First Baptist Church of Louisa, Virginia. The formation of the SSSUnion may well have been the single most important factor in the achievement of higher education for Black youth in Spotsylvania.

In the 1920's, the first Black elementary schools were formed in Spotsylvania County. The elementary school established to serve the Stubbs area was located directly across from the Branch Fork Baptist Church. Stubbs School was built between 1934-1935. According to a former student, Dea. Harweda Terrell, the original structure was the reassembled former one-room school for the 'white' children that were trucked to a wooded location across the road from Branch Fork Church. It was disassembled again in 1999 to be shipped for future reassembly in Spotsylvania County to serve as a historical landmark.

The original school was a simple wood-framed box structure that was similar in appearance to other one-room schools of that day. It housed grades one through seven in a much uncomplicated manner. The facility lacked electricity, running water, bathrooms, air conditioning or central heat. All of the children had to walk to school. Several walked many miles daily for their education through the woods.

The normal school day's activities began with the devotional period in which all assembled gave thanks to God for the meager material blessings they had and asked for strength to work hard and learn all that they could. Following devotions, the teacher and students would begin the class work for the day. Older students often assisted the teacher working with the younger pupils. Later they would eat their lunch they bought in the tin lunch pail, if they had any, and take a break which today is known as recess and then close for the day.

Many of the founders, teachers and leaders in Black schools were ministers and officials of the local Black churches. During these years, the SSSUnion continued to assist with funding and financing of higher education at the Snell Training School. In 1950, the first Black high school was completed on the property originally purchased by the SSSUnion in 1908, and after the SSSUnion first President, John J. Wright High School.

During this same period, the SSSUnion acted as a catalyst for the twelve member churches. The SSSUnion disseminated information and guidance to the individual church Sunday Schools to provide a unified method of teaching and presenting Christian education to teachers and students.

SSSU HISTORICAL TIMELINE

- 1905 – SSSU formally established in July
- 1909 – SSSU purchased 158 acres of land for \$3 an acre
- 1910-1912 – Alfred Fairchild began construction on building
- 1913 – First classroom opens in the Snell Training School
- 1922 – Snell Training School was completed for \$7,500.00.
- 1927 – October - cornerstone laid and school was dedicated
- 1931 – John J. Wright passed; buried at Beulah Baptist Church
- 1941 – Snell School was mysteriously destroyed by fire
- 1942 – John J Wright School opened in temporary buildings
- 1950 – Ground breaking Ceremony for John J Wright Consolidated School
- 1951 – July - Cornerstone was laid for John J Wright School
- 1952-1953 – John J Wright Consolidated School was opened
- 1968 – John J Wright Consolidated School was integrated
- 1978 – School name was changed to J. J. Wright Intermediate
- 2005 – SSSU celebrated its 100th Anniversary
- 2008 – Rites of Passage co-sponsored by NAACP & SSSU
- 2014 - SSSU acquired an office inside of J. J. Wright School
- 2014 - Partnership with Spotsylvania Public School System
- 2015 – SSSU celebration of its 110th Anniversary
- 2016 – Improved, named, and dedicated the Booker T. Ross Memorial Building
- 2018 – Hall of Fame for Union Pastors serving over 20 years
- 2019 – Upgraded the basketball court and patio area at the Parksite
- 2019 – In concert with John J. Wright Museum, the SSSU succeeded in securing a Historical Marker for the property



ANNOUNCEMENTS

SSSUnion Annual Events

January 2021 - Dr. M. L. King, Jr. Breakfast has been canceled

February 2021 - Black History Program has been canceled

To Keep up with any annual events of the Union, please visit the website at:

www.spotsylvaniasundayschoolunion.com



SSSUnion Scholarship Update

The SSSU Scholarship will be ready after the committee review and update it by March 31, 2021. The deadline to mail it in will be June 30, 2021. The committee is encouraging all high school graduates to take advantage of this scholarship to help with their college education. The scholarship amount is still \$500.00 per graduate.

Visit our website:

www.spotsylvaniasundayschoolunion.com

after March 31, 2021 to download your scholarship application.

With great expectations for our youth,
Trustee Brenda Dobbins, Scholarship Chair

CHURCH HISTORY

Bethlehem Baptist Church

In the year 1865, the old patriots began to work on the project of organizing one of the first "colored" churches in Caroline County, Virginia. This was a first step toward independent Negro worship. The Colored people of Caroline County - slaves and free blacks - had been allowed to worship in the gallery of the Baptist Church of Caroline. After having come through slavery, these free people thought it would be best that they establish a place to worship in which to thank God for His goodness.

Reverend Richard Buckner gave an acre of land and a brush church was built for service. The first service was held in the brush arbor in June 1865. The congregation named the church "Bethlehem" and a log cabin was built in the winter of 1865. In 1870, the Trustees paid \$10.00 for a second acre of land to build a frame church. In 1893, the Trustees paid \$20.00 for three more acres of land for Bethlehem. In 1910, the Trustees borrowed \$800.00 to build a new church.

The United States government decided to take 70,000 acres in Caroline County, VA pursuant to War Department General Order 5 to create an army camp -

A. P. Hill as a training acre for WWII. The government purchased the Bethlehem Church and land for \$800.00 and ordered everyone out of the "Area" by May 31, 1941.

From 1941-1942, the congregation rotated services between New Ark Baptist Church and Zion Grove Baptist Church. In 1943, the Trustees purchased the present site from Mrs. Lenora Walker. Ground was broken for the building of the new Church in May. In July, the foundation of the Church was dug out and erected. The first service in the present Bethlehem was conducted on the 4th Sunday in July 1943 with Reverend Dr. Samuel Carter as our Pastor. During this rebirth there were 40 working members. The main auditorium was completed in 1951 with the choir loft, new pews and gothic windows added during 1952-1953, The church mortgage was burned during the early 1960's. In 1963, a seven-room addition was completed which included the Pastor's Study, Choir Room, Sunday School classrooms, kitchen, dining room, lavatories for men and women and a baptismal pool. The work continues with additional renovations, carpeting, air conditioning, new pews, a pavilion, handicap ramp, fans, and lights for outdoor dining.

The Men's Fellowship sponsored a 50-Man March and established the Bethlehem Baptist Church Scholarship Fund (later changed to the Willis Little Scholarship Fund in honor of Pastor Little), to assist our children with their education; the Robert and Nancy Jones Scholarship was also established by Deacon Cecil Jones in honor of the Jones parents, Trustee Robert and Nancy Jones; the parking lot was also paved.

On April 11, 1998, a banquet in honor of Rev. Dr. Samuel H. Carter was held and on April 12, 1998, Rev Dr. Carter became Pastor Emeritus. In 2000, the Rev. Willis Little was elected as Pastor Pro Team and he donated the church bus to transport members to various church activities. Rev. Little was elected Pastor on July 21, 2001 and was called from labor to reward on August 28, 2001. Deacon William Stewart was licensed to preach and became an Associate Minister in 2001.

On January 20, 2002, Rev. Dr. Joel Nelson ordained Deaconess Mary Graves and Deaconess Frances Morgan and in 2009, the Diaconate Ministry was established with the combining of the Deacons and Deaconess.

Bethlehem has been blessed with nine Pastors: Rev. John W. Pendleton (1865-1897), Rev. J. H. A. Cyrus (1898-1907), Rev. T. M. Allen (1907-1922), Rev. E. R. L Guss (1922-1942), Rev. Dr. Samuel H. Carter (1942-1998), Rev. Willis Little (2001-2001), Rev. Wayne M. Robinson (2002-2008), Rev. Zackary R. Williams (2011-2015) and Rev. Gregory M. Grier (2019- Present).

CHURCH NEWS AND UPDATES

Second New Hope



“SKYEE MADDOX”



Skyee was selected as student of the week for her third-grade virtual class at Parkside Elementary. She was nominated by her current teacher, Ms. Fitz, and the principal read the write up in an announcement for the whole school to hear. This is what he read:

“It is very hard to pick a student of the week because each student is unique and special. This week I nominate a student who continues to impress me. This student has been more willing to try and answer questions in class. I can see her confidence growing. She is a joy to have in class. I look forward to seeing her and hearing what she has to say each day. She’s always respectful to her teacher and fellow classmates. She completes her assignments on time and has become a leader by example in our virtual class. I am pleased to nominate Skye Maddox as our student of the week!”



And after it was announced to the whole school, Skye received the following message from her other teacher, Ms. Sinton-

“Dear Skye,

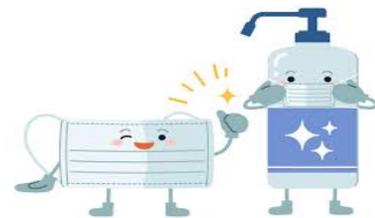
When I heard your name called yesterday morning for the Student of the Week, I smiled the BIGGEST smile possible. You have been working SO hard! I know because I keep checking in on you with Mrs. Fitz. We are both very proud of your hard work.

You are smart, kind, and beautiful inside and out! Keep up the GREAT work. Don't be afraid to take chances and always be the best you can be! Love, Mrs. Sinton”

Grandmother, Thea, stated *“We are all so proud of Skye! Some days I know I’m hard on her but she’s doing really well and improving every day! :)*



Congratulations! Skye, we all are so proud of you! Keep exemplifying Luke 6:31... **“Do unto others as you would have them do to you.”**



MASK AND SANITIZER DISTRIBUTION

The Spotsylvania Fire Department donated a limited quantity of face masks and hand sanitizers to community churches.

On **Saturday, December 12th** **Second New Hope** made distribution of the masks and sanitizers given to those in the community and within the church family!

CHURCH NEWS AND UPDATES

Second New Hope

PRAYING FOR OUR COVID-19 FRONTLINERS



WE ARE
IN THIS
TOGETHER
AS ONE



From the Sunday School Ministry, to the generous and kind-hearted people of Second New Hope, our Sister Churches and community who participated in the monthly Second New Hope Baptist Church Drive-By Food Donations Campaign:

Words cannot express our gratitude of how grateful and appreciative we are for your monetary, canned-goods and/or nonperishable donations. During the holiday season, along with the added strain brought on by the COVID-19 Pandemic, you took the time while shopping to include additional food items for those in need. You sacrificed your hard-earned dollars to support those who are experiencing financial difficulties. **We thank you! We thank you!** All proceeds have been given to the Fredericksburg Regional Food Bank, who are also humbled by your generosity.

Because of your thoughtfulness, during the months of March through December 2020, the following donations have been generated:

- **\$8,507 - Monetary Donations;**
- **1,347 – Food items; which**
- **provided a total of 10,309 meals to those in need!**

To God Be The Glory
for the things HE has done



“Michael (Mikey) Mickels Jr.”



Mikey is in the seventh grade at Spotsylvania Middle School and, although he misses being in class with his peers, he has adjusted well to distance learning and is maintaining honor roll! When he’s not doing school work, Mikey enjoys being outdoors working on his football skills and overall fitness. He’s also been in the kitchen with his mom learning to cook! So far mac and cheese is his favorite dish to prepare (with minimal help from mom.



We’re so proud of your achievements Mikey! Mac and Cheese; sounds yummy! *“Don’t doubt your value. Don’t run from who you are.”*



Zion Hill



Sylvannah

Congratulations FALL 2020 GRADUATES

Ayanna Sims: North Carolina A & T State University, Greensboro, NC Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemistry

Trevian S. H. Thom: Germanna Community College, Associate of Arts and Sciences General Studies Degree (**Summa Cum Laude**),

Certificate General Education. He will continue his studies at George Mason University for a bachelor's degree in Cyber Security Engineering.

Military Assignments:

USAF: Amn **Tariq J.I. Thom** is stationed in Spangdahlem(Binsfeld, Germany)

SSgt Ryan Thom, (Cybersecurity) Deployed in Turkey; next assignment: Ramstein, Germany

First New Hope

First New Hope is currently seeking a pianist and drummer for 2nd and 3rd Sundays. Any interested candidates can send their resume to:

fnhbcmusic@gmail.com.

Due to the pandemic, all interviews will be conducted via ZOOM. If you have any questions, please email the Minister of Music, Sister Stephanie Burchett at fnhbcmusic@gmail.com or contact her at: 540/907-7842.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fundraiser for the Betty J. Hunter Bazemore Scholarship Fund

JANUARY

Application available for high school seniors and returning college students

APRIL

Community Shred Day
Partnership with Iron Mountain

JUNE/JULY

Community Pool Party at Dixon Park

SEPTEMBER

Community Shred Day
Partnership with Iron Mountain

NOVEMBER

Gospel Concert

Contact information:

Rochelle Bazemore Fountain, President
540/845-5103 //BJHBSCHOLARSHIP16@GMAIL.COM

Executive Board Update

The nominating committee of Rev. Charles Hilliard, Loretta Hill, and Betty Parker gave the following report at the SSSU December executive meeting. These are the names and positions given.

President – Thomas Roberson
1st Vice President – Carolyn Chew
2nd Vice President – Rev. Randy Phillips
Secretary – Jerri Fortune
Assistant Secretary – Open
Treasurer – Deborah Tibbs
Assistant Treasurer – Open

The report was accepted and approved by the board. The committee was thanked also for their services.

THE PRAYER CORNER

*Let's continue to keep our senior citizens, youth, front line workers, our members, and families in prayer. Also, remember those who have been sick and shut in as well as the families of those who have turned in their cross for a crown during this Covid-19 pandemic.
God is still in control.*

*Behold, I will bring it health and healing;
I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth. Jeremiah 33:6*