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BETHEL CHURCH PLANS TO PAY OFF MORTGAGE IN YEAR

A target date in November 1961 for the clearing of all indebtedness on the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church was announced today by the pastor, Dr. Harry J. White, after a successful Fall Mortgage Rally.

Dr. White said a total of \$10,101.66 was raised in the special campaign. Of that amount, he said, \$5500 was turned over to the Presbytery of Western New York, thus reducing the mortgage to \$7000.

The church building at 1525 Michigan Ave., formerly the Covenant Presbyterian Church, was purchased under a mortgage loan from the Presbytery.

Dr. White said the balance of the money raised in the special campaign will be used for benevolences and regular church expenses.

If the November 1961 target date can be met successfully, Dr. White said, the mortgages to both the church and the parsonage will be burned in a special ceremony in June 1962.

Library Room Dedicated To Serve Church

A new library room to serve Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and the community was dedicated yesterday in the church building at 1525 Michigan Ave.

The library was named after the Rev. Harry J. White, pastor of the church. The Rev. Mr. White said the honor was one of the outstanding milestones in his ministry.

Others who participated were the Rev. Harlan M. Frost, executive secretary of the Council of Churches of Buffalo and Erie County, and ministers of several neighboring churches.

The library will be open Wednesdays and Fridays from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Sundays from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. The librarians are Mrs. Jean Kidd, Mrs. Ellen J. Sloan, Dolores Durant and Marie Washington.

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Church News

Church That Hid Slaves Observes Its 125th Year

A NEGRO church which once served as an underground-railroad station for slaves fleeing from the South to Canada will celebrate its 125th anniversary tomorrow.

Historic Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church at 1525 Michigan Ave. is the oldest Negro congregation in Buffalo. Its original meeting place was on Washington St.

Anniversary services will be held in the present church at 1525 Michigan Ave., which the congregation purchased in 1953. The property formerly was owned by Covenant Presbyterian Church.

Dr. Harry J. White, pastor, will preach at 10:30 o'clock on "Christ, the Chief Cornerstone." Church organizations will sponsor a tea from 4 to 6:30 o'clock. A musical program will be given at 7:30 o'clock by the Evening Choir. Mrs. Alberta Nelson will direct the group and speak. Lay people participating in morning and evening services have been members of the church for 25 years or more.

A small frame building at Washington and Carroll Sts. was the first meeting place of the congregation. In 1845 the congregation moved to a brick edifice at 17 Vine St.

Both buildings were used as underground-railroad stations before and during the Civil War. Negroes coming North were brought in from Rochester and hidden in the church cellar. After dark small groups were taken down to the foot of Ferry St. where sympathizers rowed them to the Canadian shore.

Bethel members worshipped in the Vine St. church until 1928 when the building was razed for the William St. extension. Before moving to its present site, the congregation met at 551 Eagle St.

Bethel Church was organized April 29, 1831, the year before Buffalo was incorporated as a village. The AME denomination, which today has a membership of about 1,200,000, was started in Philadelphia in 1816 by a former Negro slave, Richard Allen.

Since Dr. White became pastor four years ago, Bethel has received 500 members and raised \$185,000 for all purposes. There are 1200 members. A \$125,000 mortgage on the new property has been reduced to \$45,000.

Under Dr. White's leadership five new organizations have been started — Young Matrons Club, Evening Choir, Children's Choir, Brotherhood and President's Council.