

Rev. Dr. James J. Durham

James J. Durham was born April 13, 1849 near Woodruff, in Spartanburg County, South Carolina. His parents were James W. Durham, a wealthy white farmer, and Dorcas Durham. As a child, his father held him as a slave.

Around 1859, his parents moved to a farm near Cashville, in Spartanburg County, and he worked on the farm for five years. He was apprenticed to a blacksmith at the age of 15 and continued at that trade until 1870.

Durham's conversion took place in July 1867, and he joined Pilgrim Baptist Church in Greenville County. He was licensed to preach and entered the ministry in 1867. He was called to the pastorate of Foster's Chapel in Spartanburg in June 1868 and subsequently was ordained. The church was located 15 miles from his home, and he traveled either by mule or on foot. He served the church for 18 months.

He was deeply affected by his call to the ministry, but his lack of formal education was a source of consternation. As a child, he learned to read and write through diligent study. After resigning the pastorate at Foster's Chapel in 1870, he used money saved from his earnings as a blacksmith to pay for room and board and attended the school nearest his home for three years.

While at that school, Durham hired an instructor as a private tutor to learn Latin and Algebra so he could enter South Carolina College (the precursor of the University of South Carolina), which had been opened to black students. He entered the senior preparatory class but failed to enter the freshman class and thereby qualify for state financial assistance. He appealed to and received the first-ever assistance from his father, in the amount of \$50, which enabled him to remain in school. He entered South Carolina College in October 1874, receiving a state scholarship of \$20 a month. At the end of his sophomore year, South Carolina's government had fallen into control of the Democratic Party, which made no appropriations for the college, resulting in its closing in the spring of 1877. That fall, Durham entered Atlanta University as a junior and remained until May 1879. He moved to Fisk University in March 1880, graduating in May with a B.A. degree.

Upon graduation, he returned to Columbia and took charge of Nazareth Baptist Church. It was during this time that he decided to enter medical school so that he could be more useful to the black community. He entered Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, graduating as valedictorian of his class in 1882. He was a member of the school's debating team and later became a national debater.

After earning his medical degree, Durham assumed the pastorate of Bethesda Baptist Church in Society Hill, South Carolina, where he also served the community as a medical doctor.

In 1883, the American Baptist Publication Society appointed him as its representative in South Carolina, replacing E.M. Brawley. He also served as corresponding secretary and financial agent of the Baptist Educational Missionary and Sunday School Convention. He resigned his pastorate and gave up his medical practice to carry out those responsibilities for eight years.

He received his M.A. degree from Fisk University in May 1885.

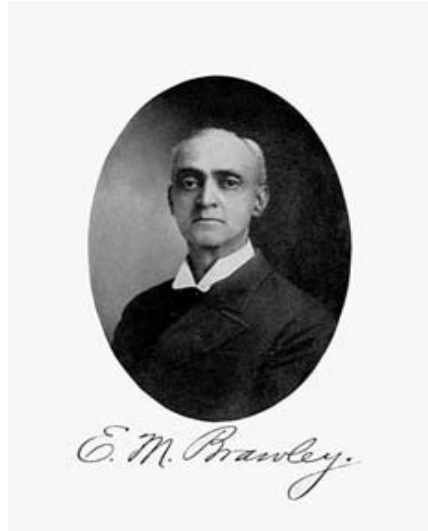
In 1888, he served as a member of the Constitutional Committee for the Woman's Educational and Missionary Baptist Convention of South Carolina.

In addition to being a doctor of divinity and medicine, Durham was a blacksmith, scholar, lecturer and botanist. He was also a Prince Hall Mason.

His other pastorates included Morris Street Baptist in Charleston, South Carolina, Friendship Baptist Church in Aiken, South Carolina and Second African Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia (1891-1902). He also served as faculty member at Allen University in Columbia, S.C.

He served as president of the Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention of South Carolina from 1909-1915.

Rev. Edward M. Brawley



Edward MacKnight Brawley was born March 18, 1851 to James M. Brawley and Ann L. Brawley, both of whom were free blacks, in Charleston, South Carolina,

As a child, he attended a private school in Charleston. When he was 10 years old, he was sent to Philadelphia to be educated. He attended grammar school there for three years before entering the Institution for Colored Youth where he studied until 1866, completing his preparation for college. He returned to Charleston because his parents thought he needed to learn a trade. He was apprenticed to a shoemaker for three years, returning to Philadelphia in 1869 as a journeyman.

He was baptized at Shiloh Baptist Church in Philadelphia in April 1865 at the age of 14. Acknowledging an early call to the ministry, he became active in Sunday School work. He entered Howard University in 1870 as its first full-time theology student. However, after three months there, he decided to go through college. He left Howard, and in January 1871, entered Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, where he was the first Black student ever admitted. Although he was supported by a scholarship, Brawley earned money by preaching during vacations and teaching vocal music to fellow students and others.

At the end of his sophomore year, he was licensed to preach by the white Baptist church in Lewisburg. Brawley graduated on June 30, 1875 as Bucknell's first Black graduate and was ordained on July 1 by the vote of a 35-member council--- the majority were college professors---of the same church. The American Baptist Publication Society immediately commissioned him as its missionary for South Carolina.

In South Carolina, he concentrated on organization at the local and associational levels. This work culminated in the founding of the Colored Baptist Educational, Missionary and Sunday

School Convention of South Carolina at Sumter in May 1877. Through the years, he served the convention in various capacities, including corresponding secretary, financial agent, and historian. In addition to state mission work, the convention opened a mission field in Africa during his leadership.

Brawley first married Mary W. Warrick, a native of Virginia and alumnus of Howard University, in January 1877. They had one child; however, both she and the child died by the end of the year. He then married Margaret S. Dickerson of Columbia, South Carolina, in December 1879. They had four children. One of his sons, Benjamin Brawley, was an ordained Baptist minister, literary scholar, college professor, author and poet.

He accepted the position of president of Alabama Baptist Normal and Theological School (now Selma University) in October 1883 and remained there for three years, until his wife's failing health prompted his resignation and return to South Carolina where he served as editor of "The Baptist Tribune," a weekly denominational publication.

He served pastorates in Greenville, S.C, Darien, Georgia, Palatka, Florida and Durham, North Carolina. He also served as Editorial Secretary of the National Publishing Board in Nashville, Tennessee.

Brawley received his M.A. from Bucknell University in 1884 and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from State University in Louisville, Kentucky in May 1885.

He served as fourth president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc from 1891-1892.

Rev. William M. Downs

William M. Downs was born in Greer, South Carolina on August 21, 1908, the foster child of William D. and Rachel Downs.

He was educated in the public schools of Asheville, North Carolina and entered the ministry on January 10, 1931. He married Marion Jackson of Columbia, S.C. on October 2, 1934.

He graduated from Benedict College and pursued graduate studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York and Moody Bible College in Chicago, Illinois. On May 19, 1957, Morris College awarded him the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree. He received the Doctor of Humanities degree from Monrovia College, Monrovia, Liberia on January 24, 1961.

Rev. Downs served as assistant pastor, Zion Baptist Church, Columbia, S.C.; chaplain for the State Penitentiary, Columbia, S.C.; and pastor of the historic East Mount Zion Baptist, Cleveland, Ohio, from 1939-1976.

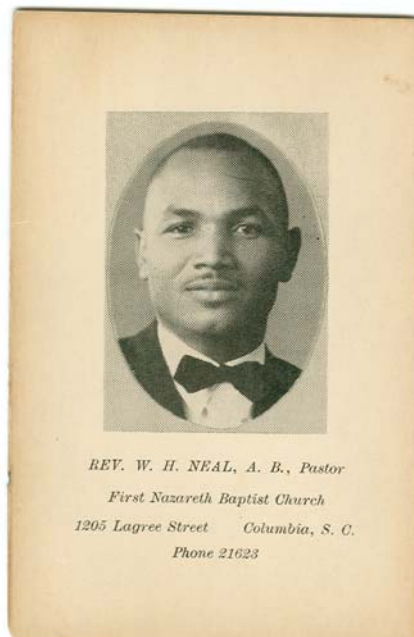
Rev. Downs served as reporter for the National Baptist Convention, a member of the Executive Board of the Ohio General Association and national representative for the American Bible Society.

During the pastorate of Rev. William Downs (1933-1939), the choir became widely known throughout the community as the First Nazareth Radio Choir with its rendition of "Wade In The Water," led by Deacon Isaac Russell, which was broadcast every Sunday night on WIS radio station.

The Church Aid Club, Sunshine Garden Club and Vineyard Workers Club were organized during Rev. Down's pastorate. Additionally, the church's charter was renewed during Rev. Downs' tenure as pastor.

He died August 29, 1976 in Cleveland, Ohio.

Rev. Westberry Homer Neal, Sr.



The roots of Rev. Westberry Homer Neal, Sr. reach back to the early 18th century. He is the great-grandchild of Jim and Tena DeVeaux, who were brought to America aboard a slave ship, as husband and wife, with sons and daughters. They were brought ashore in Charleston, S.C. and sold into slavery to a kind slave master whose name was Jackie Neal.

His great-grandparents settled in Eastover, South Carolina area on the plantation of their new master. His grandfather, Ephraim (son of Jim and Tena) migrated to the Hopkins area after Emancipation in 1863. He settled there with his wife, Eliza Eichecutter, who came from Beaufort, South Carolina.

Rev. Neal's father, Jessie William Neal (son of Ephraim and Eliza) married Minnie Holley in 1895, and they settled in Hopkins, South Carolina. Born May 9, 1908, he was the eighth of 16 children.

He completed grammar school and entered Morris College in Sumter, South Carolina in 1926, obtaining his high school diploma, Bachelor of Arts degree (1935) and Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1956. He pursued further studies at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary in New York City. For 35 years, he was a public school teacher in Fairfield, Leesville, Horry and Sumter counties in South Carolina and in Georgia. He also was a driver training instructor. He

wrote a play entitled, Physical Fitness.” He was bestowed the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by Morris College in recognition of his lifetime achievements.

He served as pastor of Saint John Baptist in Hopkins for 57 years, Mount Moriah Baptist Church in Hopkins for 40 years, New Light Beulah Baptist Church in Hopkins for 22 years, Siloam Baptist Church in Hopkins for seven years, Mount Zion in Eastover for four years and Weeping Mary in White Oak for four years.

He was named as pastor emeritus of Saint John, First Nazareth, Mount Moriah and New Light Beulah churches. In 1935, he was elected “pastor for life” at Mount Zion.

Rev. Neal served as chairman of the Morris College Board of Trustees for 35 years, the longest record of any chairman in higher education in the nation. He became chairman emeritus and a life trustee on July 1, 1985. He served as interim to the President’s Office in 1970-71 and 1973-74.

He was a member of the Foreign Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention of America for 42 years, state representative of the Foreign Mission Board for 14 years; moderator of the Gethsemane Baptist Association and Cedar Creek Union; clerk of the Wateree Baptist Association-Upper Division; chairman of the board of directors of Victory Savings Bank for 15 years and member of the board of directors for 28 years. He also served as vice chairman of the board of Respite House, advisory committee for continuing education at the University of South Carolina, chairman and member of the Richland County Department of Social Services Board.

Rev. Neal was a Prince Hall Mason, member of the United Order of Odd Fellows, the Elks and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

Over the years, he received numerous awards including the Presidential Citation from the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education and the title of Mr. Baptist from the Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention of South Carolina. In 1980, the Neal-Jones Fine Arts Center at Morris College was dedicated in his honor and in 1991; he was inducted into the Athletic Hall of Fame at Morris College. He received the Order of the Palmetto from the State of South Carolina and Trustee of the Century Citation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

He was first married to Mary Letman, who died in 19 . They had two children, Marilyn Rochelle Neal and Westberry Homer Neal, Jr. At the time of his death, he was married to the former Audrey Potts of Sumter, South Carolina, a public school teacher and vice president of the Women’s Auxiliary of the Baptist E&M Convention.

He died March 4, 2003 and is buried at J.W. Neal Memorial Gardens, Saint John Baptist Church, Hopkins.

Rev. Blakely Nelson Scott

Blakely Nelson Scott was born in Columbia, South Carolina to Lillie Mae Neal and Blakely Scott, Jr.

He graduated from C.A. Johnson High School, Palmer College and the University of South Carolina, Morris College School of Religion and the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. He was conferred the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by Morris College in May 1993.

A life member of First Nazareth Baptist Church, Rev. Scott received his calling to the ministry in 1974 and was licensed to preach by the congregation of First Nazareth Feb. 17, 1974. He was ordained by the Wateree Baptist Association-Upper Division on April 19, 1975. He served as pastor of Mill Creek Baptist Church, Lykesland, South Carolina, from March 6, 1977 until June 30,

1979. He was called to the Mount Moriah Baptist Church, Hopkins, South Carolina, on June 28, 1978. He assumed the pastorate of First Nazareth Church July 1, 1979. The formal installation service was held Dec. 2, 1979.

In addition to his pastoral responsibilities, he serves as an instructor in the Morris College School of Religion Extension Program, moderator of the Midlands Baptist Association, Inc., a member of the KOBAN Board of Columbia, member, Board of Trustees, Morris College.

At the 1983 annual session of the Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention of South Carolina, he presented a paper on female ministers, Preach on Sister. At the 1995 annual session, he delivered a paper on teenage pregnancy, A Theological Response to Teenage Pregnancy that is included in Speaking the Truth in Love, a manual for use in teen pregnancy prevention programs.

He served as moderator of the Wateree Baptist Association-Upper Division from 1981-January 2000; dean of the Young People's Christian Assembly at Benedict College from 1985-2001; assistant secretary and secretary of the Gethsemane Baptist Association. He presently serves as moderator of the Midlands Baptist Association, Inc.

Rev. Scott's honors and awards include: Outstanding Young Men of the Year; Living the Legacy Award presented by the Columbia Council-National Council of Negro Women; Who's Who in Religion; and 2004 inductee, Columbia Housing Authority's Wall of Fame.

He is a Prince Hall mason, member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and Alpha Phi Omega, national service fraternity.

He is married to the former Mary Brooks, a career employee of the S.C. Department of Corrections, who retired in 2001. They have two daughters, Mina Scott Barnes and M'Lilian L. Scott, and one grandchild, James Blakely Scott Barnes.

Rev. Isom W. Simons

The son of William Henry and Fannie Syrene Simons, Isom Wesley Simons was born Feb, 6, 1849. He received his call to preach in 1888 and returned to Benedict Institute where he received his diploma in religion in 1891.

He married Minnie Josephine March 23, 1880 at Nazareth Baptist Church. Dr. E.J. Godspeed, president of Benedict Institute, performed the ceremony. She died June 2, 1927.

They had 12 children: William Henry; Phillip Miller; Bertha Leah; Arthur Augustus; Ethel May; Alfred Edgar Sr.; Evelyn Esther; Frances Henrietta; Elizabeth Poinsetta and Minnie Josephine. Lillian and Ruth died in infancy.

He wanted to go to Africa as a missionary, but was unable to do so. However, his oldest son, Henry, spent 14 years in Africa.

Rev. Simons died June 16, 1914. His funeral was the first held in Nazareth's new location in Waverly.

Rev. Andrew C. Richbourg

Andrew C. Richbourg, a native South Carolinian, was born in November 1860. It is believed that he was born near Chester and moved with his family to Richland County after Emancipation.

He attended Benedict Institute, where he was a student of theology and instrumental music.

At the age of 20, he married Gracy Hopkins and 11 children were born to them

He served as pastor of New Light Beulah Baptist Church in Hopkins, South Carolina and the Old St. Matthews Baptist Church in Eastover, S.C. He was the first pastor of Union Baptist Church in Columbia, S.C.

He died in 1912.