**ANNIVERSARY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JERRY HARDEE**

**“Rooted in the past, With a Vision for the Future.”**

Hello ladies and gentlemen! What a fine day for a very significant anniversary celebration! There’s a word for a one hundred and fifty year celebration or commemoration... It’s called a **sesquicentennial**.... and I think I now know why and how it evolved... it takes **ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS** just to **LEARN HOW TO SPELL AND PRONOUNCE THE WORD**!!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). I’d like to acknowledge \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for inviting me to speak with all of you today. It’s been a while.... a **REALLY** long while since I’ve been back to Brunswick, but I’m happy to be here, to speak to all of you, revisit my youth and revive my connections to this great and storied city, and discuss the history of this church, our faith, and how we can move forward in a world that provides tests to our spirit, our determination, and our beliefs and strengths that endure... over time... that got us where we are today.

As an educator, as a doctor, (**you are an MD, yes? I see you are a doctor of Chiropractic medicine**) and as a person who is proud of his faith, his heritage, and his relationship to G-d, history means a lot to me. It’s important to know our past and to learn from the trials and travels others have done before us. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr reminds us, “We are not makers of history. We are **MADE** by history.” That is so true... and what’s even **MORE TRUE** is that this congregation, Grace United Methodist Church, has stood by for the past one hundred and fifty years and observed so much of life, conflict, progress, and, of course, brotherhood... and sisterhood, that the vessel... the conduit... the object that has held this community together for so long, now becomes the **STORY**. It’s so important to acknowledge the vital elements that contribute to our own individual and collective make up, and it doesn’t make a difference how old you are, how long you’ve been involved with this church... even if it’s your first visit, the depth of its symbolism and the importance of its place in Brunswick... and to all of you... is significant.

No matter how much time has passed... no matter how many times the world turns and global conditions shift, one thing is certain... and that is found in Hebrews 13:8... “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” So while we go through evolution and **RE-volution**.... and everything in between, we have our foundation... our backbone... our spiritual connections to guide us as we recall the past, record the present, and prepare for the future.

Marcus Garvey said, “ A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots.” ... quite simply, a tree without roots does not survive very long, so let’s discuss the history of this church, this congregation, and this city. Remember also the expression by George Santayana who said, “Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”

So... what do we know and what have we learned about the past of this congregation? What lessons have we learned by researching the layers of memories and experiences witnessed by this congregation and its forebears? I did some research.

From what I’ve learned, some highlights of the background of this church are impressive. Grace United Methodist Church was founded on November 18, 1868. Samuel Gray is largely responsible for setting up and establishing the church. It has also been explained that Mr. Grey actually **BUILT** the church with determination, dedication, and purpose. and he invited the Reverend J.C. Cruse to lead the congregation. Reverend Cruse was eventually appointed by the Presiding Bishop to be the very first pastor of this church. Over the years, this congregation has been guided by **FIFTY-EIGHT** (**Please confirm this number... it’s from 2014.. I don’t know if anyone new has taken the position.... from the website, it states Reverend Cleo Gilchrist is minister**) intelligent, caring, wise ministers and each one brought with him a unique perspective, all of which combine to form the narrative of this church. We also learn from research that the earlier building had no kitchen... **NO KITCHEN???** Talk about the risk of failing to learn from history!!! You all **KNOW** this church **NOW** has a **KITCHEN**!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

There’s a term called “pentimento.” The dictionary tells us that it means, “The presence of earlier images, forms, and strokes that have been changed and painted over.” We are sitting in this present church, right here and now, but this building is relatively new... it was built and went into use in 1968. Even though this physical church has only witnessed one third of the history of this congregation, I am sure that **if these walls could talk**..... (**Wait for the laugh**). This was the church that was standing when I lived in Brunswick... and although I did not personally attend services here, I had friends and classmates way back when, who did. Talk about pentimento!!! There are a few people here today whom I have known that long who would be able to dig up plenty of “history,” so I’ll beat them to it... and tell our experience of what it was like growing up and learning precious lessons from our youth. Each one of us has carries job jmany “layers” painted by time, but friendship and faith and community endures. There’s a few gentlemen here today who would easily back me up, so let me try to tell one of the “legendary” tales of what Brunswick was like “**back then**...” (**Tell one of your high school stories here**).