**[EZ Speech Writers No. 15390]**

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Remarks by Mr. James Campbell on the occasion of the celebration of the 149th anniversary of the Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church in Gainesville, Florida.

REVERAND MCCLELLAN . . . LADIES AND GENTLEMEN . . . HONORED GUESTS . . . AND FELLOW CELEBRANTS . . .

I WOULD SPEAK TO YOU [TODAY/THIS EVENING] OF THINGS PAST, THINGS PRESENT, AND OF THINGS THAT ARE YET TO BE.

[BRIEF PAUSE]

THE YEAR WAS 1867. IT WAS LESS THAN 24 MONTHS SINCE GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE SURRENDERED THE CONFEDERACY AT APPOMATAX COURTHOUSE IN VIRGINIA, AND AMERICA’S BLOODY CIVIL WAR HAD FINALLY COME TO AN END.

THAT YEAR OF 1867 WAS TO BECOME AN EVENTFUL YEAR. FOR WHILE THE PRACTICE OF SLAVERY HAD BEEN OFFICIALLY OUTLAWED BY LINCOLN’S EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION, SLAVERY WAS DEAD IN NAME ONLY. WE ALL KNOW THAT JIM CROW DID NOT DIE AT

APPOMATAX THAT APRIL OF 1865, FOR ITS IGNORANT HATRED EXISTS YET TODAY THROUGHOUT THIS LAND, IN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THOSE WHO KNOW NOT OF TOLERANCE BUT ONLY OF PREJUDICE AND VIOLENCE. BUT PROGRESS *HAD* BEGUN.

ON JANUARY 8TH OF 1867, FOR EXAMPLE, AFRICAN-AMERICAN MEN WERE GRANTED THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. PERHAPS FITTINGLY ENOUGH, IT WAS IN OUR NATION’S CAPITAL THAT A BLACK MAN WAS FIRST ALLOWED TO CAST A BALLOT IN AN ELECTION ANYWHERE IN THIS COUNTRY.

ON FEBRUARY 3RD OF 1867, A BLACK BABY NAMED CHARLES HENRY TURNER WAS BORN TO A BLACK CUSTODIAN AND A PRACTICAL NURSE. HE WENT ON TO BECOME ONE OF THE NATION’S PRE-EMINENT RESEARCH BIOLOGISTS, EDUCATORS, ZOOLOGISTS, AND COMPARATIVE PSYCHOLOGISTS, AND HE WAS THE FIRST BLACK MAN EVER TO RECEIVE A GRADUATE DEGREE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI.

ON NOVEMBER 24TH, 1867, SCOTT JOPLIN WAS BORN, AND WITHIN 20 YEARS, HE BECAME KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE LAND AS “THE KING OF

RAGTIME,” AND WE SWING AND SWAY TO HIS INFECTIOUS RHYTHMS EVEN YET TODAY.

AND ON DECEMBER 23RD, SARAH BREEDLOVE —WHO LATER BECAME KNOWN AS MADAME C. J. WALKER — WAS BORN NEAR DELTA LOUISIANA, AND MADAME WALKER WENT ON TO BECOME A FAMOUS ENTREPRENEUR, PHILANTHROPIST, AND A POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVIST. AT HER FUNERAL, SHE WAS RECOGNIZED AS — BELIEVE IT OR NOT — THE FIRST FEMALE SELF-MADE MILLIONAIRE IN AMERICAN HISTORY — BLACK *OR* WHITE! NOT BAD FOR A LITTLE BLACK BABY WHOSE PARENTS WERE BOTH BORN SLAVES!

BUT I WANT TO CONCLUDE THIS LITTLE HISTORY LESSON BY MENTIONING ONE OTHER *VERY* IMPORTANT EVENT OF THAT EVENTFUL YEAR OF 1867, FOR IT WAS IN [MONTH] OF THAT YEAR THAT A GROUP OF FORMER SLAVES HEARD THE VOICE OF GOD, AND THAT VOICE TOLD THEM VERY SIMPLY THAT THEY MUST BUILD A CHURCH.

THEY FOLLOWED GOD’S VOICE HERE TO GAINESVILLE, AND HERE, WITH THEIR OWN HANDS, BUILT THE MOUNT PLEASANT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH. THEY BUILT IT STRONG. THEY BUILT IT RIGHT. AND THEY BUILT IT IN THE FAITH THAT — COME WHAT MAY — GOD WOULD KEEP IT

IN HIS HEART AND IN HIS SIGHT, WERE IT TO LAST A THOUSAND YEARS OR JUST ONE DAY.

WELL, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THEY SURELY DID BUILD IT RIGHT! THOUGH WE’VE STILL GOT A WAYS TO GO TO REACH THE THOUSAND-YEAR MARK, 149 YEARS OF CONTINUOUS EXISTENCE IS A MIGHTY FINE BEGINNING, DON’T YOU THINK?! WE’RE STILL HERE . . . STILL GUIDED BY THE PRINCIPALS AND IDEALS OF THE METHODIST SOCIAL CREED . . . AND STILL DEDICATED TO OUR OWN CHURCH’S CORE VALUES OF *WELCOMING, ENCOURAGING, CARING, ACCEPTING, RESTORING, AND EMPOWERING.* FOR 149 YEARS, WE’RE STILL HERE, AND STILL WE CARE.

WE ARE, HOWEVER, NOT THE SAME CHURCH TODAY THAT WE WERE A CENTURY AND A HALF AGO. THERE’VE BEEN MANY CHANGES IN THE MOUNT PLEASANT METHODIST CHURCH SINCE 1867. THIRTY-FIVE DIFFERENT MINISTERS . . . MANY CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP, AS THE WORLD AROUND US HAS CHANGED . . . NEW PROGRAMS . . . NEW MINISTRIES . . . NEW FACILITIES . . . SOME NEW AND NOVEL FORMS OF OUTREACH. AND WITH GOD’S HELP, OUR NEW FELLOWSHIP HALL WILL BE COMPLETED BY [MONTH & YEAR].

IT’S TRUE, OF COURSE, THAT THERE’VE BEEN TIMES OF TROUBLE AND TURMOIL AND TRIBULATION IN OUR CHURCH’S HISTORY; BUT THROUGH IT ALL, WE’VE REMAINED STEADFST IN OUR COMMITMENT TO KEEPING OUR CHURCH VITAL AND VIBRANT AND RELEVANT IN AN EVER-CHANING WORLD.

AND THIS BRINGS ME TO THE CONCLUSION OF MY REMARKS [TODAY/THIS EVENING]. I HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU OF THINGS PAST AND OF THE PRESENT. BUT NOW WE MUST TURN OUR HEARTS AND MINDS AND HANDS TO THE FUTURE. FOR THERE IS MUCH THAT STILL NEEDS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED HERE AT MOUNT PLEASANT UNITED.

I BELIEVE IN MY HEART THAT WE HAVE NOT BY ANY MEANS REACHED OUR LIMITS. I BELIEVE THERE ARE WAYS WE CAN STILL GROW STRONGER AS A FELLOWSHIP OF WORSHIPPERS. I BELIEVE WE COULD USE SOCIAL MEDIA MORE EFFECTIVELY AND CREATIVELY TO VASTLY EXPAND OUR MEMBERSHIP, REACHING OUT, ESPECIALLY, TO AT-RISK KIDS IN OUR COMMUNITY AND HELP THEM FIND A HOME WITH US HERE. AND I THINK WE CAN LEARN TO WORK MORE EFFECTIVELY AS A COHESIVE TEAM IN CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGES OUR CHURCH FACES TODAY, ESPECIALLY IN THE AREA OF FUNDRAISING.

AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, WE’VE DEDICATED OURSELVES TO RAISING AN ADDITIONAL $50,000 TO SUPPLEMENT THIS YEAR’S OPERATING BUDGET AND FINALIZING CONSTRUCTION OF OUR NEW FELLOWSHIP HALL. I THINK WE’RE CLOSE TO REACHING THIS GOAL. YET — AS I LOOK AT THE NUMBERS — IT WOULD SEEM THAT WE’RE ABOUT 20 YARDS SHORT OF THE GOAL LINE. WE’RE IN THE “RED ZONE” AS THEY SAY IN FOOTBALL. BUT AS THEY ALSO SAY IN THAT SPORT, THAT FINAL 20 YARDS ARE OFTEN THE HARDEST YARDS TO GAIN.

SO WON’T YOU JOIN ME [TODAY/THIS EVENING] IN REDOUBLING YOUR COMMITMENT TO GETTING OUR CHURCH OVER THE GOAL LINE THIS YEAR? IF YOU’VE ALREADY PLEDGED YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT — AND I DON’T CARE AT WHAT LEVEL — PLEASE MAKE GOOD ON YOUR PROMISE AS SOON AS YOU CAN. *WE NEED THE MONEY!* AND IF YOU HAVEN’T YET CONSIDERED MAKING A CONTRIBUTION, I URGE YOU TO DO SO [TODAY/THIS EVENING] BY SIGNING ONE OF THE PLEDGE CARDS YOU’LL FIND [LOCATION OF PLEDGE CARDS].

YOU KNOW, THE BIBLE SAYS THAT “*THE LOVE OF MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL.”* BUT I BELIEVE IN MY HEART THAT THERE IS ONE TRULY VALID EXCEPTION TO THAT DICTUM, AND THAT IS THAT WHEN THE PURSUIT OF MONEY IS SOLELY AND EXCLUSIVELY AND WHOLLY AIMED

AT HELPING US DO GOD’S WORK HERE ON EARTH, IT’S NOT ONLY AN ACCEPTABLE PURSUIT, BUT HOLY ONE.

FINALLY, I WOULD URGE EVERYONE IN THE AUDIENCE HERE [TODAY/TONIGHT]: IF YOU CANNOT GIVE MORE OF YOUR WALLETS, THEN PLEASE AT LEAST FIND A WAY OF GIVING MORE OF YOURSELVES. AND I’M THINKING IN PARTICULAR HERE OF OUR YOUTH MINISTRIES.

THERE ARE SO MANY AT-RISK YOUNGSTERS IN OUR COMMUNITY, KIDS WITH ONLY ONE PARENT AT HOME, KIDS WITH NO HEALTHY ROLE MODELS TO FOLLOW, KIDS WHO HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THEIR FREE TIME BUT TO GET INTO TROUBLE. THESE KIDS — GIRLS AND BOYS ALIKE — NEED MENTORS, THEY NEED ROLE MODELS, THEY NEED PEOPLE WHO’RE WILLING TO SHOW THEM THE WAY TO GOD AND TO A LIFE OF HOPE AND HAPPINESS. THEY NEED PEOPLE WHO’LL SPEND TIME WITH THEM, PLAY WITH THEM, TEACH THEM AND, PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, TO LOVE THEM.

EACH AN EVERY ONE OF YOU COULD BE THAT PERSON FOR AT LEAST ONE CHILD IN OUR COMMUNITY WHOSE HEART CRIES OUT FOR GUIDANCE AND FOR CARE. IF YOU’D LIKE TO VOLUNTEER AS A MENTOR AND LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR YOUTH MINISTRIES, I URGE YOU TO

CONTACT [NAME]. [HE/SHE] CAN BE REACHED THROUGH OUR WEBSITE, OR BY CALLING OUR MAIN PHONE NUMBER AT 352-372-4872.

WITH THAT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I WILL CONCLUDE MY REMARKS. I’M SO VERY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR TIME AND FOR YOUR ATTENTION. MAY GOD BLESS EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU, AND GRANT YOU PEACE.

THANK YOU.

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