

Greater Saint Paul Church celebrates 67 years of community service

Written by Timothy Houston
Tuesday, 19 August 2014 15:57



Every significant Black movement in this country has its roots in the African American church. From Civil Rights to Voter Rights, the Black church has been the catalyst for change. In 1947, Harry Truman was president, bread was 13 cents a loaf, gas was 15 cents a gallon, Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers, Israel became a nation, and my home church, Greater Saint Paul Church of God in Christ (COGIC) opens its doors. Elder J.C. Wiggins and the congregation built this historic church from the ground up on the corner of 40th and 4th Avenue South in Minneapolis. 67 years later, the church continues to be a pillar and light to the community. This month, as the church celebrates its 67th Church Anniversary, I want to highlight a few of its accomplishments.

First, Greater Saint Paul COGIC has outstanding accomplishments in the community within the social services ministerial support. It is also recognized as a church of love with a solid foundation based on the word of God. The church is equipped with several ministries and has been meeting the needs of the total man, which includes Family Ministries, Bible Study/Worship Services, Women, Men, Children, and Prison Ministries, retreats, and mentoring and tutoring. Whatever the needs, Greater Saint Paul COGIC has been there for seven decades to help meet those needs. No community can be better without its members becoming better, and that which lifts one of us, lifts all of us. Greater Saint Paul Church has been committed to helping and uplifting people.

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Secondly, Greater Saint Paul COGIC has provided consistent leadership. In 1966, during the height of the civil rights movement, Supt. Vernell Thomas became the pastor of Greater Saint Paul. This was the year that James Meredith was shot in Mississippi, riots were breaking out throughout the country, and the Vietnam War was under way. No neighborhood was excluded from the impact of these significant events, and strong spiritual leadership was needed during those difficult days. Pastor Thomas answered the call, and he has been an influential pastor and leader for the past 48 years. With over 57 years of marriage to 1st Lady Loretta Thomas, they have been a godly model of family and marriage. South Minneapolis and the state as a whole are better because of their unwavering commitment to their community and to God.

Finally, Greater Saint Paul has provided uncompromising spiritual support. Year in and year out, it has been committed to daily 5 AM prayer for the church and community. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" James 5:16. Prayers offered in faith can restore a sin-sick soul, community, or nation. What ails our nation is spiritual as much as it is physical, and spiritual problems require spiritual solutions. Having a church keep its promise to spiritually uplift its people for over 67 years is not only noteworthy, but also a model for others to follow.

Come join me, Pastor and 1st Lady Thomas, and the Greater Saint Paul Church family August 22-24, 2014, at 4001 4th Ave S. Minneapolis, MN for a celebration of family and community. Friday night will be a banquet, Saturday a community celebration and carnival on the church grounds, and Sunday will be a church reunion tent service followed by feeding the community. For more information, email gspcogic@msn.com or call the church @ 612-827-5267.