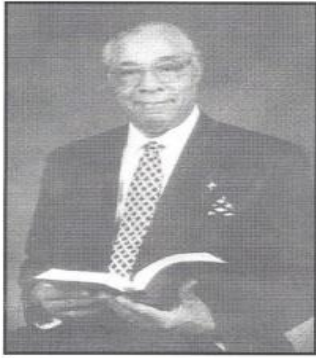
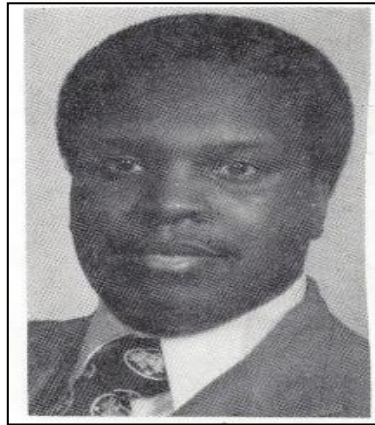


# Saint Stephen Missionary Baptist Church

## Pastors



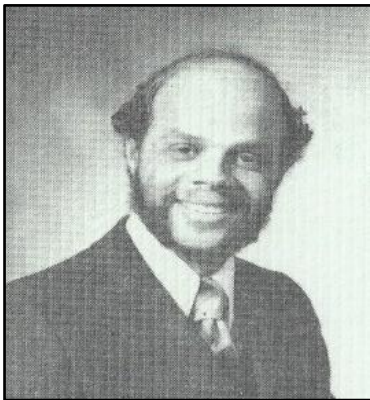
**Reverend Ezekiel Wright**  
September 1967 - thru October 1975



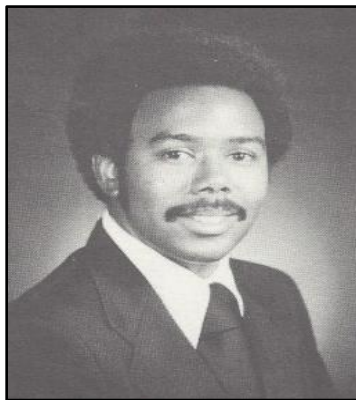
**Reverend Jerry Henry**  
April 1976 thru July 1976



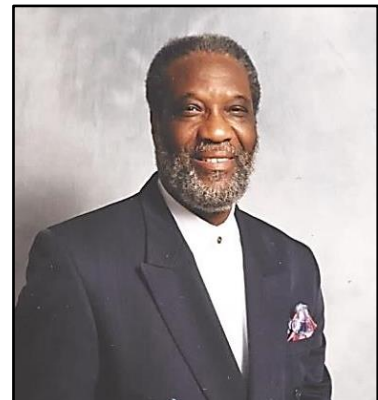
**Reverend Michael J. Millben**  
November 1977 to June 1980



**Reverend Leroy Burden**  
January thru September 1981



**Reverend Lenworth R. Miner, Jr.**  
May 1988 thru January 1991



**Reverend Al James Terrell**  
October 1991 to present

*Reverend Al Terrell served as interim Pastor at all periods when there was a Pastor vacancy. That was until October 1991, when he officially became Pastor. Installation services were held in January 1992.*

# *Saint Stephen Missionary Baptist Church*

## *Pontiac, Michigan*

In March of 1967 the members of an organization called the “Christian Progressive Club” decided to hold Sunday worship services. Mr. Clifford Coit was asked to secure the Franklin Elementary School as their initial place of worship. On July 30, 1967, the first worship service was held with Deacon James Threlkeld as chairman of Devotion and the Reverend Ezekiel Deleon Wright Sr. as acting Pastor.



Through close fellowship and inspirational services, a rich and abundant spirit was created. There was such a favorable response that new members were added each week and the Christian Progressive Club pressed forward to establish a Baptist church. The youth of the group, led by young **Sharon Gordon** (*Kennebrew*) was asked to select a suitable name for the new church.

On September 10, 1967 at 3:00 p.m. the **Saint Stephen Missionary Baptist Church** was constituted with a charter membership of 87 including one deceased, Mr. Leon Tolbert. This new church was sponsored by Columbia Avenue Baptist Church in affiliation with the Oakland County Baptist Association, the Baptist State Convention of Michigan and the Southern Baptist Convention. Reverend E. Clay Polk of Columbia Baptist Church officiated. On October 29, 1967 Reverend Ezekiel Wright was installed as the first Pastor.



Worship services continued to be held at Franklin Elementary until May 19, 1968. That following Sunday, May 26, 1968, the members marched to their newly purchased church at **69 South Astor Street, Pontiac, Michigan** (*formerly the Friendly General Baptist Church*). Church dedication services were held on June 16, 1968 with the Reverend Vernon C. Wickliffe of the Oakland County Association of Southern Baptist delivering the dedication sermon. The church motto: “**As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.**”

There were many things needed in the new church. With a membership of 108 and the blessings from God, new carpeting, pews, Baptismal drapes, pulpit furniture and a piano were purchased under the close supervision of Henry McShan. These purchases were dedicated to the Kingdom of God in February 1972.

Yes, there were indeed some exceptional “warriors” in this congregation working hard to do God’s will.



Deacon Gordon



Deacon Cooper



Erma & Clifford Coit



Sarah Washington





There was **Gertrude Strickland**, who (*strenuously*) inspired the young women to get involved in service and was a “drum major” for the Missions ministry; **Clifford & Erma Coit**, who stepped up as leaders in so many capacities for the betterment of the church; there was **Sarah Washington**, whose love of people, no matter what, served as an example of how the church was to treat their fellowman. There were the deacons like **Deacons Wilford Gordon and Paul Cooper** who served as spiritual leaders in support of the Pastors and the church.

When it came to the Music ministry, **Deacon James Threlkeld** was the choir director and set a high standard for the music ministry that we still try to maintain today. Mrs. Strickland played the piano and **Pecola Burns** was the organist.



Others who stood out include **Mattie Taylor** who was “all things in the kitchen” and a leader in the Altar Guild. Our first Trustee Board included **Nathaniel Terrell, Robert Burns, Henry McShan and Clifford Coit**. The Mothers of the church included **Cornelia Calhoun, Sarah Washington and Gertrude Strickland**.

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Under the leadership of these Pastors, Saint Stephen Missionary Baptist Church continued to flourish. This truly showed us what God will do when His people put their minds to work for the Kingdom.

Through it all, Saint Stephen had its ups and downs, but with their unwavering faith and a strong commitment to continue the work of the Church, the members found no task too great. On the 20<sup>th</sup> Church Anniversary (1987), **Marian Baker**, the church Historian, had this to say: *“The past 20 years have been fruitful, we have accomplished a lot and worked to secure the necessities we needed, but it is the spiritual accomplishments that we will have to give an account for. What has each of us done to lead a soul to Christ?... God has given us, the church, a task to do. When we are called to give an account, let all of us at Saint Stephen be able to say ‘Lord I’ve done Your will.’”*



One exceptional ministry at Saint Stephen is the **Food Program**. The story goes that needy citizens would come to the church on Sunday morning asking for money to buy food. This became such a habit that Deacons Gordon and Cooper began to collect canned goods and other staples with the help of **Hattie Manley** and Clifford Coit. **Dorothy Jackson** would prepare baskets and hand them out to the needy every Wednesday and Saturday. As the need for assistance grew, God made a way for more food to be donated to the church. The program was very successful. “Feed the poor” was a command that the church took very seriously and many dedicated members have pitched in over these many years to help.



Under the leadership of Mrs. Manley (*Mother Manley* to most) and her “side-kick”, **Betty Hughley**, outside agencies took notice and began helping each year - donating food, supplies and monies. To this day the “Outreach” ministry serves over two hundred families each month. After the passing of Mother Manley in 2020, the baton was passed to Monetta Foster and the program is still going **STRONG**.



The church was growing fast! So much so that on April 13, 1997, dedication services for the **Clifford Coit Education Center** was held. This new building would serve as a place to house Sunday School, tutoring classes and a much needed fellowship hall for special events. It was named in tribute to Mr. Clifford Coit, a founding member who worked tirelessly for this church and believed strongly in educating the youth of the church and the community. Soon after, the land behind the Clifford Coit Center was cleared by the men to create a park for church picnics and other outside events. The park was given the name "**M.O.S.S. Park**" (Men Of Saint Stephen) by Marian Baker.



God continued pouring out blessings with a steady increase in membership and new ministries sprouting every year. So on August 29, 2004 the Saint Stephen Church family broke ground for a new Sanctuary that would be attached to the Clifford Coit Center. On April 5, 2005 the congregation marched from its old home to the new sanctuary. Soon afterwards, the old building was converted into one solely dedicated to the Outreach Ministry.

As with all churches in the city, the year 2020 brought unique challenges to the church. March 2020 marked the beginning of a state-wide "STAY HOME" ordinance due to the Coronavirus pandemic. As a result, no gatherings were allowed at church, including Sunday School and Sunday morning worship. So on Sunday, April 5, 2020, Pastor Terrell delivered his first VIRTUAL message from home. Subsequently, "Live Stream" services from the church sanctuary began until Sunday, May 30, 2021 when we resumed "in person" Sunday Morning Worship Service starting at 11:00 a.m.



From the beginning, the 87 founding members, some who are still with us today, envisioned St. Stephen as a spirit-filled church guided by the Holy Spirit and fueled with the Word of God. They showed unwavering faith and God was pleased. We celebrate this great heritage of Kingdom work and can see God's hand in it all. We must continue to live the motto that our founders laid down for this church (whether virtual or in-person): "**AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD.**" *Praise God!!*



**Donna Coit, Church Historian**

*In memory of, the late "Marian Baker - former Church Historian*

# *Saint Stephen Charter Members*

Dorothy M. Alexander	James F. Hunt	Vernon M. Page
Katie Allen	Jean C. Hunt	Gloria L. Rogers-Carlisle
Marian Baker	Purvis L. Hunt Jr.	Mildred Russell
Verda Billings	Purvis L. Hunt Sr.	Gertrude Strickland
W. T. Billings	Theresa A. Hunt-Hubbard	Lillian Tademy
Marva C. Burns-Pope	Lola Johnson	Mattie Taylor
Pecola Burns	Aleen Jones	Barbara J. Terrell
Robert L. Burns	Lee A. Jones	Nathaniel Terrell
Stacia A. Burns-Gray	Rayford Jones	Betty Threlkeld
Cornelia Calhoun	Riley L. Jones	James Threlkeld
Cecil Coit	Rollie L. Jones	Janice M. Threlkeld-Brown
Clifford Coit	Hattie Manley	Lawrence Threlkeld
Donna Coit	Nadine Mathes	Michael Threlkeld
Erma Coit	Oliver Mathes III	Theodore Threlkeld
Annie M. Dancer	Vivian Mathes	L. T. Tolbert
Jeanette Drayton	Larry McConner	Ladia Mae Tolbert
Francis Drayton	Mary E. McGhee	Dorothy Turner-Coleman
Mary Drayton	Russell McGuire	Bertha Walker
Ben Gales	Audrey McShan	Annie Walton
Sheila Gales	Henry McShan	Charlie Walton
William A. Garling , Jr.	Joseph McShan	Sarah Washington
Mary Gordon	Manola McShan	Frances L. Wise
Sharon Gordon-Kennebrew	Tommie Mills-Ballard	Charles E. Wright
Wilford Gordon	Herbert Mullen Sr.	Ezekiel D. Wright Sr.
Hayward Gullatte	Herbert R. Mullen	Margaret A. Wright
Pearl M. Gullatte	Jacqueline Mullen-Thomas	Michael Wright
Cecelia M. Hunt	June R. Mullen	Ronald Wright
Elizabeth Hunt	Justine Mullen	Wilbur Wright
	Albert J, Murray	Wilbur B. Wright
	Anna M. Murray	