



## THE HISTORY OF RISING SUN BAPTIST CHURCH

Called by God to establish this branch of Zion, Rev. Willie B. Baskerville in 1950 began organizing what became known as the Rising Sun Baptist Church. Armed with the Word, his loving wife Grace, and a small group of friends, including Deacons Charles Bailey and John Ellis and Sisters Hattie Jett and Gertrude Minor, Rev. Baskerville led a march from his residence to the Southern Friendship Baptist Church at 10th and M Streets northwest where Rising Sun held its first worship service. Grace Baskerville, Rev. George Fox, Eunice Fox and Viola Brown Lane were its charter members.

Shortly thereafter, a Recognition Council was held. The Council, comprised of representatives of the New Line Baptist, Carron Baptist, First Baptist and Rehoboth Baptist churches, recognized Rising Sun as a regular Missionary Baptist Church.

A dynamic preacher and loving shepherd, Rev. Baskerville dedicated his life to Rising Sun. His sermons were fiery, yet simple enough for the youngest members to grasp. In him, members had a confidant, counselor, spiritual leader—a man filled with the Holy Ghost, wisdom and truth. He visited the sick often and would pick up anyone who needed a ride to church. He was beloved by his members and had a special affinity for the children.

During his 27-year pastorate, the church was physically relocated six times. In January 1970, worship services were held at 3702 13th Street N.W. where the church was blessed to make, for the first time, a modest down payment and to assume a mortgage. God allowed his devoted servant to reach that milestone before calling him home on January 23, 1977, at the close of the morning service. After preaching a sermon titled "What is Man?" Rev. Baskerville requested that the Youth Choir sing "May the Work I've Done Speak for Me." As they sang, he succumbed to a heart attack and went home to Glory.

The home going of Pastor Baskerville left the church with a strong leadership void. In the ensuing 11 years, Rising Sun had four pastors. The first two – Reverends Thomas J. Blair and George W. Fox – served successively as acting pastors between 1977 and May 1979. They were followed by Reverends Ernest Stevens (June 1979 – February 1984) and his son Jesse V. Stevens (April 1984-1988).

While this proved to be a turbulent period in the history of Rising Sun, the Lord remained true to his promise to “never leave us nor forsake us”. With God’s help and the steadfastness of a handful of members and friends, particularly Trustee Grace Baskerville, Deaconess Elizabeth Byrd and Deaconess Doris Woods, the mortgage was burned, the constitution ratified, needed repairs were made to the edifice and thirsty souls were continually fed.

On April 30, 1989, the Lord smiled down on Rising Sun and Rev. Samuel Mitchell, Jr. was installed as pastor. When Rev. Mitchell began his pastorate, there were only six active members holding up the bloodstained banner – Deaconess Grace Baskerville, Deaconess Doris Wood, Deacon David Baskerville, Deaconess Marie White, Deaconess Elizabeth Byrd and Deaconess Azalean Littlejohn. But praise God for the anointing. As Rev. Mitchell began preaching deliverance to the brokenhearted and ministering to their families, the Lord began adding unto the church.

Led by the Spirit and blessed with strong administrative and organizational skills, Rev. Samuel Mitchell’s 10-year pastorate was nothing short of exemplary. To name a few blessings under his leadership; four ministers were licensed – Evangelist Marie White, his daughter Rev. Juanita Brower, Rev. David Gatling, and Rev. Willene Dugger. Reverends Grover Gilbert and Melvin Wallace joined the church and became Associate Ministers. Three deacons were ordained, and several trustees and deaconesses were added to the boards. His son, Marlow Mitchell, served as Chairman of the Deacon Board, Sis. Jeraline Fennell chaired the Trustee Board and his wife Sis. Robertha Mitchell became President of the Deaconess Board.

A Young Adult Choir, the Samuel Mitchell Sunbeams, the Senior and Junior Usher Boards, The Helping Hand Club, The Progressive Club and The Youth Commission were organized. Also, Rev. Mitchell began a weekly outreach service, Bible Study, Prayer Service and a New Members Class. To help get members to and from church, a 15-passenger van was purchased. The sanctuary was completely renovated and refurnished and other renovations and repairs were made throughout the church.

On August 18, 1995, Rev. Mitchell led Rising Sun to its present church edifice at 3126 South Dakota Avenue in northeast Washington, DC. The Entrance Service was held on September 23, 1995. Dedicatory Services were held September 24-29, 1995. A Baptismal Pool was installed, and Rising Sun no longer had to rely on others to carry out the sacred ordinance of Baptism.

Due to his failing health and that of his wife, Rev. Mitchell announced his retirement effective March 31, 1999. The church approved a seven-member Pulpit Committee, chaired by Sis. Pamela D. Mitchell, to examine pastoral candidates. Pulpit Committee members included Trustees Cornelius Reeder, Jeraline Fennell, Grace Baskerville, Deacon Claude Johnson and Sisters Andrea Reeder and Rita Hinton. The Committee faithfully completed its assignment on December 11, 1999 and presented two candidates for consideration as pastor. The candidates

were accepted and the ballot prepared. However, in a subsequent meeting in January 2000, the ballot was rejected.

This marked the beginning of another turbulent period in the life of the church and the loss of most of its members. On March 5, 2000, Rev. Samuel Mitchell, Jr. agreed to resume the pastorate, and he served faithfully until his sudden retirement on November 5, 2001.

Acting on a recommendation by the pastor, the church called Rev. Marlow L. Mitchell to succeed his father as pastor. Rev. Marlow Mitchell, who at that time was serving as the Assistant Pastor, agreed to serve provisionally while he prayed and sought the will of God. On February 16, 2002, Rev. Marlow Mitchell accepted the call, and on May 26, 2002 he was installed as Pastor of Rising Sun Baptist Church.

A preacher, teacher, singer and musician, Pastor Mitchell is a prayer and praise warrior who boldly leads his congregation to the throne room of God. He has proven himself an earnest workman of the gospel, a lover of God's people, a visionary and an administrator poised to move the congregation to higher heights in the Lord.

Under his pastorate, Rising Sun began to heal and prosper spiritually, emotionally, materially and financially. He is a caring shepherd who preaches and teaches the saving love of Christ.

With his co-laborer and wife Pamela Mitchell at his side, Pastor Mitchell cast a missional vision that resulted in the church providing assistance to God's people locally and around the world, primarily through association with the Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention. Also, Rising Sun began partnering with various faith communities and organizations to provide assistance to select segments of the community, including the Washington Center for the Aging--a local senior nursing facility; Damien Ministries which provides food, clothing and case management services for HIV/AIDS clients; Yachad, an organization dedicated to rebuilding inner-city neighborhoods by repairing homes and non-profits in the greater Washington, D.C. area; Good Faith Community Coalition, a group of Faith Organizations that work to reduce homelessness in the District of Columbia; the Angel Tree Network which services children of incarcerated individuals; and the Washington Hebrew Congregation, an historic faith community rooted in social justice and service to humanity.

In addition to reviving pre-existing ministries, Pastor Mitchell inaugurated a number of new ministries, including the Prayer Ministry, Praise and Worship Ministry, Dance Ministry, Nursing Home Ministry, Comfort Ministry, Women's Ministry, Men's Ministry, Media Ministry, Manna Ministry, Culinary Ministry, Employment Ministry, Health Ministry, HIV/AIDS Ministry, Grace's Closet, the Angel Tree Ministry. Also, he established the Noon Day Tele-Prayer Service, the Christmas Morning Sunrise Service, The 12 Tribes of Rising Sun and a website.

To facilitate some of these ministries and provide for future expansion and growth, in November 2007, Pastor Mitchell led the church to purchase an adjoining corner property at 2407 Rhode Island Avenue, NE, Washington, D.C. While this house was in need of major repair and renovation, by faith and through partnership with Yachad and the activity of the Nehemiah Project Capital Campaign Committee chaired by Trustee Earthlean Brantley, repairs and renovations were completed in the fall of 2012. This house, named the Baskerville–Mitchell Family Life Center in honor of Pastor and Mrs. Grace Baskerville and Pastor and Mrs. Robertha Mitchell, now serves as a parsonage from which the community receives free food, free clothing, and HIV/AIDS testing, education and counseling. Also, gifts and services are provided to children in the neighborhood whose parent(s) is incarcerated.

Over time, several key positions were filled under Pastor Mitchell. Six Deacons were ordained; David Johnson, Sr. was selected as the Chairman. Eight Trustees were added; Quinzell Robinson was elected Chairwoman. Thirteen new Deaconesses were appointed; Robertha Mitchell continued to serve as President. Also, Pastor Mitchell named Joshua Mitchell the Youth Minister, Darlene Clements the Administrative Secretary, Earthlean Brantley the Assistant Financial Secretary, Dorothea Hudley the Church Clerk, and appointed a number of others to chair and direct the church ministries. He recommended that Rev. Samuel Mitchell become Pastor Emeritus and he licensed three ministers – his son Joshua Mitchell in August 2005, his sister Dorothea Hudley in September 2007 and Dwyer Galloway in December 2010.

Because of Pastor Mitchell's love for God's house, extensive renovations and repairs have been made to the church edifice. Pulpit and office furniture was acquired and central air conditioning was installed in the upper level. Realizing the importance of the music to the worship experience, Pastor Mitchell acquired a number of instruments, including a Hammond organ, a baby grand piano, a new digital piano and congas. God's house is constantly being improved.

Rising Sun is grateful for the mountaintop experiences and for the valleys that characterize its ministry. The church continues to press forward on this Christian sojourn mindful that one plants and another waters. And now, he that plants and he that waters are one. But all praise and adoration be unto God who gives the increase yesterday, today, and forevermore.