

During the early years, several ministers were called to the church during the period from 1921 through 1930. In 1930, the church was moved from its original location to its present site on the corner of McGee Avenue and Stuart Streets in Berkeley. During the Great Depression, the Mt. Pleasant Church building was destroyed by fire and was rebuilt under the direction of Pastor C. Brown. In 1935, Reverend James Dee Wilson accepted the pastorate of Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church. Through his leadership and ministry, Mt. Pleasant became a moving force in the life of Berkeley. In 1944, the name of the church was changed from Mt. Pleasant to McGee Avenue Baptist and incorporated during the same year.

Reverend Wadie H. Sybert, serving in the capacity of Assistant Pastor, accepted the call as pastor of the Church in 1950. He was a man of versatility and was an accomplished pastor as well as an educator. The mortgage of the Church was burned under his leadership and Rev. Sybert retired in 1971. Reverend James H. Stewart accepted the pastorate in October 1971. He took the reins of leadership with enthusiasm and expanded the church programs to great proportions. He upgraded the existing facilities and acquired additional properties.

During the late 70's and early 80's the church expanded its mission to feed the indigent and unemployed. Two hundred to three hundred persons are provided hot meals three days a week. After 21 years as pastor, Rev. Stewart retired in June, 1992. On February 21, 1993, Rev. D. Mark Wilson was installed as pastor of McGee Avenue Baptist Church. Within a 6-year period, Rev. Wilson has led the Church to new heights. McGee Avenue Baptists Church became a strong and well-represented Church in the American Baptist Churches USA and as a member of the Progressive National Baptist Convention.

Under Pastor Wilson's administration, the thousand members historic black Baptist Church has strengthened spiritual witness and fellowship with the congregation and in the local community. The Church has received funding from the City of Berkeley to expand its social justice ministries. It continues in collaborative efforts with local community-based organizations in establishing outstanding programs for youth and adults: HIV and Aids Education, Computer Literacy, Educational Aid and Bible Study.

Pastor Wilson is well known throughout the country as a dynamic preacher, musician and social justice activist. He has served on numerous boards and organizations as past Chair of the Political Action and Human Rights Committee of the Progressive Baptist State Convention and a former Northern California Regional Convenor of the American Baptist Black Caucus.

In 1996, the Church created the McGee Avenue Baptist Church Community Development Corporation for senior housing and facilities for the Church outreach program. Pastor Wilson, with the congregation, defined the motto and mission statement of the Church. On September 8, 1997, construction began on the McGee Avenue Baptist Church Kitchen Remodeling and its completion assured the continuation of its food project. McGee Baptist Church established a fully equipped Community Computer Center, instituted Home Bible Studies and has licensed and ordained a growing number of ministers of the gospel.

I join in joyous celebration with Pastor Wilson, the McGee Avenue Baptist Church members and its friends and look forward to continued growth, worship, grace and service to God and the people.

A SALUTE TO FATHER AUSTIN R.
COOPER, SR.

HON. LOUIS STOKES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 23, 1998

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to pay tribute to Father Austin R. Cooper, Sr. Later this month, Father Cooper, who serves as a rector at Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church, will retire after 38 years of ministry and service to the church and community. As Father Cooper prepares to depart, the St. Andrew's Church family is hosting a series of special events to commemorate Father Cooper's extraordinary and distinguished career. I join St. Andrew's and the greater Cleveland community in saluting Father Cooper on this occasion. I want to share with my colleagues and the nation some information regarding this outstanding individual.

Austin Rellins Cooper, Sr., is the son of the late Benjamin and Louise Cooper. His parents were two very devout Anglicans from the Bahama Islands who came to America as teenagers. Father Cooper graduated from St. Augustine's College in Raleigh, North Carolina, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology. He received his Master of Divinity degree from Seabury-Western Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois.

Mr. Speaker, on September 15, 1970, Father Cooper was installed as rector at Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church. Before coming to Cleveland as a pastor, Father Cooper held other positions in the Episcopal Church including assignments which found him in Florida, New York and Texas. Father Cooper is greatly admired by his parishioners for his spiritual guidance, management of the church and leadership of the congregation. In fact, every place that Father Cooper has served has been touched by his determination and commitment.

When Father Cooper was installed as rector of St. Andrew's Church, the parish was suffering financially. Undaunted, Father Cooper wrote "A Master Plan for St. Andrew's Parish." The plan included parish renewal, neighborhood outreach, property acquisition and economic development. Under Father Cooper's leadership, an endangered church became a financially sound institution that bought its mortgage ahead of time.

With Father Cooper at the helm, Saint Andrew's Church has also been a beacon of light in the Cleveland community. The church has placed a strong emphasis on education, providing mentoring and tutoring programs for the youth of our community. As a testament to his efforts, I am proud to note that Father Cooper has served longer than any other priest in the history of St. Andrew's.

In addition to his work at Saint Andrew's, Father Cooper is a member of the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Ohio and he is listed in Who's Who Among Black Americans and Notable Americans. Additionally, he is the cofounder and past president of the Union of Black Episcopalians, and the past president

and a life member of the NAACP, having received that organization's "Black Church Religious Leadership Award" and its "Distinguished Service Award."

Mr. Speaker, as he prepares to depart St. Andrew's, Father Austin Cooper, Sr., will be remembered as a strong leader whose selfless devotion is unmatched. I have been privileged to share a special friendship with Father Cooper and members of his family. He is someone whom I respect and admire. He is also a confidant whose wisdom and guidance has meant a great deal to me. I extend my best wishes to Father Cooper, his devoted wife of 37 years, Patty, and the Cooper children; Austin Rellins II, Angela and Patricia. I join the St. Andrew's Church family in wishing him Godspeed in the years to come.

DOLLARS TO THE CLASSROOM
ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 18, 1998

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 3248) to provide Dollars to the Classroom.

Mr. ADAM SMITH of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to explain my support for the Dollars to the Classroom Act. As a strong supporter of local control of the public education system in our country, I believe a top priority of Congress should be to assure Federal funds for education go to the local level where members of our community can determine the best use of these funds. In light of this view, I support the concepts encompassed in this legislation of block granting select education programs and assuring 95 percent of Federal funds go to the local level. I will vote for this bill because I see it as a step in the right direction.

The underlying question we must ask in this debate is "Do we believe in local control?" If we say that our local teachers, administrators, and parents should have control over the education of students, we must carry through with that ideal and hand over the decision making authority for education dollars to these individuals. I fundamentally believe in local control because the people in my community who dedicate their lives to educating children know better than Members of Congress how funds could best serve our students.

In addition, when I visit schools in my district, teachers and administrators tell me they need more funds for education and fewer regulatory requirements from the Federal Government. This legislation begins to focus on the problem of Federal Government regulations and takes step to eliminate the requirements for funding with which teachers and administrators must comply. For example, I strongly support the expansion of the ED-FLEX program to all 50 States included in this bill. This program provides the regulatory flexibility that the schools in my area are asking for and I am an advocate of expansion.

I share the concerns of my Democratic colleagues that historically block grants lead to cuts in funding over time. I plan to be vigilant in assuring that the Federal Government continues to provide adequate education funding.