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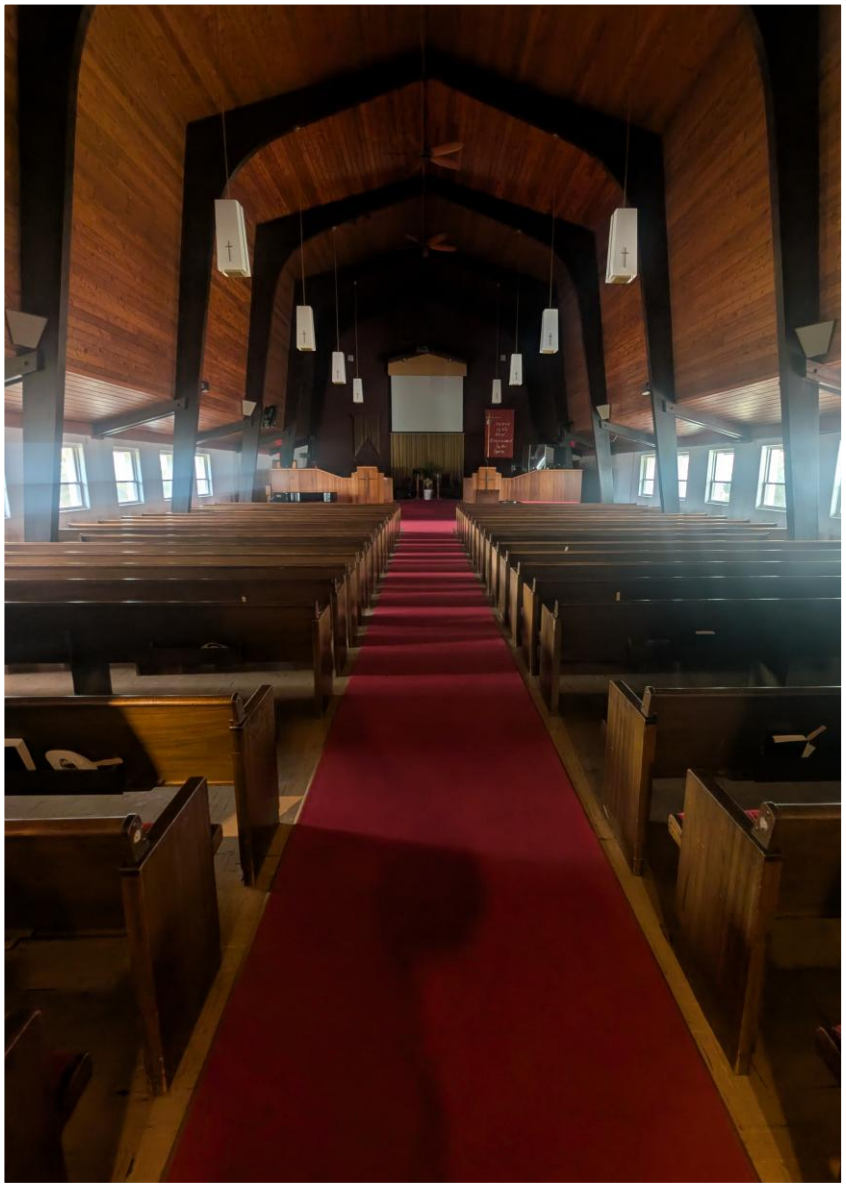
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Statistics & Letter



BELIEFS

“We are committed to biblical preaching, historic Christian faith, congregational life, and gospel mission in our city and beyond.”

1

Authority of Scripture

The Bible is our final guide for doctrine, teaching, and daily discipleship.

2

Triune God

We worship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one God.

3

Salvation in Christ

Forgiveness and new life are found through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

4

Baptism & Communion

We practice the ordinances with reverence and obedience.

5

The Church

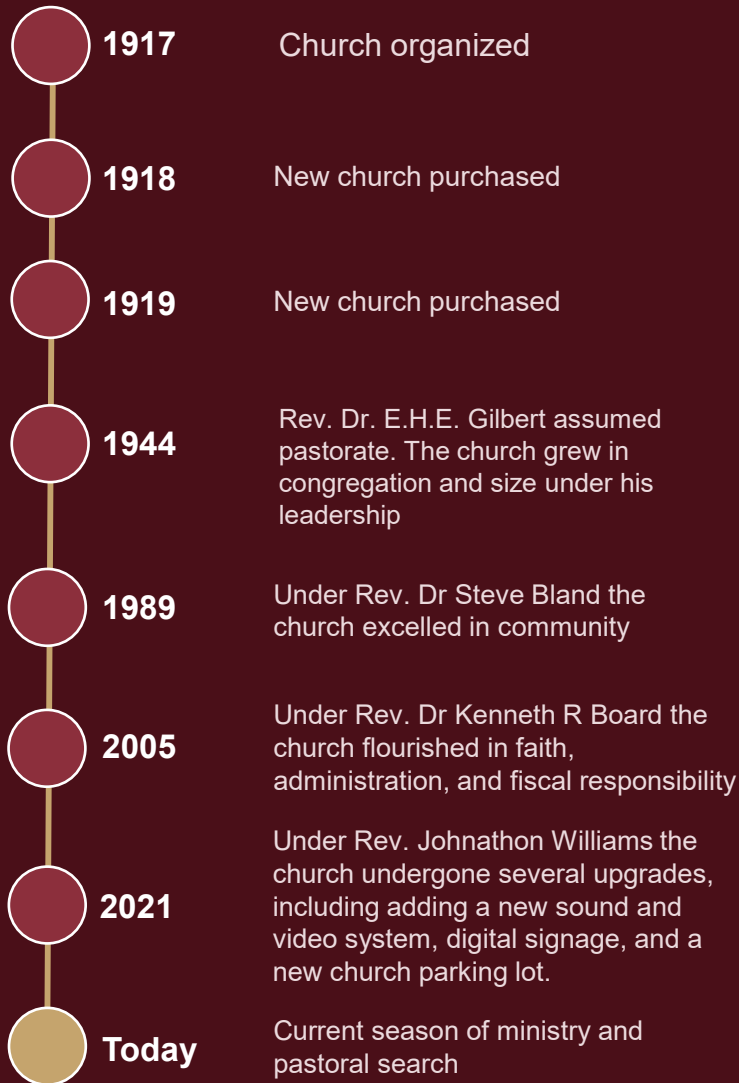
Believers are called into covenant community for worship, care, and service.

6

Mission & Evangelism

We are sent to make disciples locally, regionally, and globally.

OUR HISTORY



Pastoral Summary

- 1917 - 1918 – Rev. T.P. McGee
- 1918 - 1918 – Rev. Jessie Walden
- 1919 - 1920 – Rev. G. W. Dudley
- 1920 - 1922 – Rev. J.W. Fitts
- 1923 - 1934 – Rev. W. R. Jackson
- 1934 - 1944 – Rev. H. W. Woods
- 1944 - 1989 – Rev. Dr. E.H.E. Gilbert
- 1990 - 2004 – Rev. Dr. Steve Bland, Jr.
- 2005 - 2020 – Rev. Dr. Kenneth R. Board
- 2021 - 2023 – Rev. Johnathon Williams

OUR HISTORY

(BRIEF) HISTORY OF PILGRIM BAPTIST CHURCH

In May of 1917, the Lord inspired Grant Madison, Louis Branch, Walter Brooks and Mr. Banks, and revealed to them the need to organize a black Baptist church which was unknown to the minority citizens of Rockford. Services started in the form of Sunday School, and prayer meetings. The Rev. Mr. J.C. China was elected the Superintendent of Sunday School.

As others who believed in Christ joined and united their faith, it was possible, on August 6, 1917, to organize the church. It was named Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church. The Rev. Mr. Adam Madison is credited with the church organization.

The first address was 812 West Street, the home of Grant Madison. The Rev. T. P. McGee was called as the pastor in October, 1917. There were twenty-two charter members present at the organizational meeting including three ministers. Under the eight month leadership of Rev. T. P. McGee, a new church home was purchased at 846 Montague Street. It was the 3rd Sunday in June, 1918 that the entire church jubilantly marched to the new location. There was also a baptism in Rock River of seven candidates. The subsequent month, July, brought an ex-army chaplain by the name of Rev. Mr. Walden as pastor. Rev. Walden was from the old local Camp Grant Army division, and his stay was short. He resigned and organized the First Baptist Church, which is now known as Bethel Baptist Church.

February of 1919 brought us Rev. Mr. G.W. Dudley, who was described as an energetic, strong leader, as well as a teacher and a builder. The post-World War I period brought increased migration into the Rockford area and the church membership grew rapidly under Rev. Dudley's leadership. In July, 1919, the old church at West and Morgan Streets was purchased from the United Brethren. Again, the third Sunday was the day the congregation marched to their new site.

After the June 1920 resignation of Rev. Dudley, a new pastor was voted in. His name was Rev. J. W. Fitts. Though he was able to attract some people to Pilgrim, his stay was short lived. Rev. Mr. W. R. Jackson came in June of 1922. The church grew during his entire stay, however, with any non-profit religious organization, there was debt that was difficult to eradicate. So, upon the resignation of Rev. W.R. Jackson, came Rev. W. H. Woods.

Once again, debt took its toll due to the depression which had a great impact upon the entire nation. Where the building payments were kept up, the pastor's salary was not. These were turbulent years, but the church prayed, stayed together, and decided to elect a new leader. This leader was a member of Pilgrim Baptist Church in his youth. His name is Rev. E.H.E. Gilbert. It was he who caused a revitalization in the church, and Christian stewardship, witnessing and responsibility reigned. The church flourished, and in 1947 decided to remove the "Rest" from the Pilgrim Church name. Pilgrim literally came up from the dust.

Through the leadership of Rev. Gilbert, members and ministries were multiplied, and in 1948, a housing development was spearheaded on Island Avenue. There were seventeen houses completed. In addition, we joined with the American Baptist Convention, increased to two morning services, sent numerous students to college, and helping adults to achieve better employment and housing. Pastor Gilbert was a pillar in the community, fearing no one when it came to facing injustices of any kind in the city or state and in our educational system. By faith, hope and determination, through Deacon Wright Brown, in 1958 the church acquired 3.7 acres at our current address, and built the Pilgrim Baptist Church.

OUR HISTORY

The congregation moved into the new church on March 12, 1961, and the mortgage was burned in April, 1973. Sadly, Rev. Dr. E.H.E. Gilbert's health began to decline. So much so that the church, with Dr. Gilbert's blessing, began preparing their minds for yet another pastor.

After a serious search, the committee and the congregation received Rev. Dr. Steve Bland, Jr. as their new pastor. Rev. Bland stepped into some of the shoes of Pastor Gilbert regarding his fights for educational and community equity. Through his leadership, many youth were added to the membership, most bringing their parents and friends. Ministries were developed specifically for youth such as, theater, step and praise dance ministries. Under his leadership, Pilgrim joined the National Baptist Conference. The theme of injustices in education raised its head again, and Rev. Bland joined forces with Pilgrim educators, two of which were Dr. Constance Goode and Dawson, as well as others in a case titled, PEOPLE WHO CARE, vs. ROCKFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION, SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 205. This suit was won by People Who Care. Rev. Dr. Steve Bland, Jr. served Pilgrim for 13 years.

Upon the leaving of Rev. Bland, Pilgrim chose as their pastor, Rev. Dr. Kenneth R. Board. Rev. Board came in with a big smile, a hearty laugh and a sincere heart to continue the legacy of education spiritually, as well as elementary, middle, high school and higher learning. Under his leadership, Pilgrim began to up their mission giving monetarily as well as time and talent, inside of Pilgrim, the USA and out of the country. By tithing out of our general giving, into a mission account, we not only blessed others, but began to be blessed abundantly as a church. He served on the American Baptist Conference Board, and was an adjunct professor at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. He continued to be a recognizable face at City Hall during meetings and facing adversity, as our previous pastors had done, told the truth when the truth was not the favorite choice. Rev. Board served Pilgrim for 16 years before retiring.

Once again, Pilgrim was in search of a pastor to continue their journey. Rev. Jonathon Williams was added to the church in October, 2021. He was instrumental in restoring the Mass Choir and adding musicians to the music ministry. He also continued our membership with the National Baptist Convention, he spear-headed a campaign to resurface the parking lot, replace the sign outside to a digital sign, and upgrade the sound system in the sanctuary. Rev. Williams resigned after two years of service.

Pilgrim has continued as a lighthouse to our community and beyond. We are not perfect, but we continue to seek God, who is the head of our lives and our every move as a church family. We thank God for every season, and the ability to move with hope, faith and grace to our next assignment.

"Speak Lord, we are listening." To God Be the Glory! Great things He Hath Done! impact upon the entire nation. Where the building payments were kept up, the pastor's salary was not. These were turbulent years, but the church prayed, stayed together, and decided to elect a new leader. This leader was a member of Pilgrim Baptist Church in his youth. His name is Rev. E.H.E. Gilbert. It was he who caused a revitalization in the church, and Christian stewardship, witnessing and responsibility reigned. The church flourished, and in 1947 decided to remove the "Rest" from the Pilgrim Church name. Pilgrim literally came up from the dust.

OUR TEAM / STAFF



Deacon Chairman
Oliver Emerson



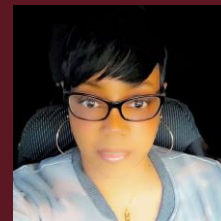
**Deacon Vice Chairman
Co-Trustee**
Eugene Rigsby



Office Manager
Beverly Owens



Office Assistant
Lorraine Wilson



Church Clerk
Sharon Thurmond



Minister
Willie Reed



Minister
Earnest Evans



Minister
Carl Towns



Minister
Kevon K Hayes



Co-Trustee
Dr. Vinest Steele

OUR TEAM / STAFF



Usher Chairman
Deacon

Darrel Mitchell

SERVICE / LITURGY



Worship Flow

Opening song • Call to Worship • Welcome & Announcements • Offering
Prayer • Choir • Sermon • Invitation • Benediction

Bible Study / Sunday School

Wednesdays 6PM / Sundays 9AM

Ordinances

Every first Sunday / Baptism and Communion

Tone of Service

Traditional

SERVICE / LITURGY - ORDINANCES

An ordinance is a ritual, law or practice observed by a certain group. We as Baptists observe two ordinances: **Baptism** and **Communion**.

Baptism

Baptism is an ordinance of Christ's Church. Baptism is the immersion in water of the believer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. It symbolizes the remission of sins and the fellowship or union with Christ in His death and resurrection. Matt. 3:7; Matt. 21:25; Mark 1:4; Rom. 6:4; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12; I Peter 3:21; Mark 1:9; Acts 2:38; Acts 2:41; Acts 8:38; Acts 18:8; & Gal. 3:27

Communion

Communion is the other ordinance of Pilgrim Baptist Church, wherein the elements are bread and wine. The bread symbolizes the body of Christ given for the salvation of humanity and wine symbolizes His blood shed for the remission of sins. The participants of this ordinance are those who have been baptized upon a profession of their faith and who walk in an orderly manner as members of a church of Christ.

WHAT WE SEEK

Top 8 leadership character strengths we desire in our next pastor...

1

Biblically grounded preacher

2

Prayerful leader

3

Trustworthy and transparent

4

Compassionate shepherd

5

Vision-minded strategist

6

Relational with all generations

7

Humble servant leader

8

Disciple-maker with outreach heart

WHAT WE SEEK

Top 8 pastor skills our congregation desires in our next pastor...

1

Preaching

2

Church Growth

3

Counseling

4

Worship Preparation and Leading

5

Communication

6

Interpreting the Faith

7

Nurturing Fellowship

8

Education

JOB DESCRIPTION

Key responsibilities we are seeking

Preaching & Teaching

- Prepare and deliver biblically faithful sermons
- Lead Bible studies, classes, and discipleship pathways
- Apply Scripture clearly to everyday life

Pastoral Care

- Provide visitation, counseling, prayer, and support
- Officiate weddings, funerals, baptisms, and dedications
- Coordinate care with deacons and lay leaders

Leadership & Administration

- Lead staff and key ministry teams
- Work with boards / elders / trustees / committees
- Manage planning rhythms, reporting, and communication

Community Engagement

- Represent the church well in the city
- Build bridges with schools, ministries, and partners
- Encourage evangelism and outreach beyond church walls

Spiritual Development

- Mentor leaders and develop volunteers
 - Call the church to prayer and spiritual formation
 - Equip members for service and mission
-

QUALIFICATIONS

Include committee-approved requirements only

Education

- Master’s Degree, MDiv preferred
- Continuing education

Ordination

- Ordained information
- Denominational standing
- Licensing or credential notes

Experience

- 5 Years of ministry

Skills

- Strong communication
- Team leadership
- Administration and follow-through
- Ability to connect with the congregation and community

Committee Approval Check

- Criminal Background
- Schooling and Degree Alignment
- Polity Alignment

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

- Authentic and emotionally mature
- Approachable with strong listening skills
- Stable in doctrine and gracious in disagreement
- Able to connect with children, youth, adults, and seniors
- Comfortable leading change without losing people
- Humble, teachable, and rooted in prayer



COMMUNITY

Rockford, Illinois

Rockford is an aerospace and manufacturing hub. All major employers, hotels, recreation, and homes are within a 30-minute drive. Our city is home to two college campuses, Rockford University and Rock Valley College. With satellite locations to University of Illinois, Northern Illinois University, Upper Iowa University, and Rasmussen College. We have a busy airport that services Amazon and UPS and have many celebrities perform at Hard Rock Entertainment Venue.

Ministry Context

- Reset the church climate
- Discipleship
- Conflict resolution
- Community outreach
- Advocate for education



CITY

City Snapshot

Rockford is an aerospace and manufacturing hub. All major employers, hotels, recreation, and homes are within a 30-minute drive. Our city is home to two college campuses, Rockford University and Rock Valley College. With satellite locations to University of Illinois, Northern Illinois University, Upper Iowa University, and Rasmussen College. We have a busy airport that services Amazon and UPS and have many celebrities perform at Hard Rock Entertainment Venue.

Museums & Arts

- Burpee Museum of Natural History
- Rockford Art Museum
- Discovery Center Museum
- Frank Lloyd Wright's Laurent House

Restaurants & Coffee

- Fresco at the Gardens
- GreenFire
- Abeo
- Woodfire Pizza
- Salt.

Parks & Recreation

- Davis Park
- Sinnissippi Park
- Rock Cut State Park
- YMCA
- Sport Complex
- Ice Arenas, Bowling, and more!

Sports & Entertainment

- ISC
- Rivets
- IceHogs
- UW Sports Factory
- Hard Rock of Rockford



COMMUNITY STATISTICS

Census / Housing

147,486 Population	36.5 Median age
\$54,752 Median household income	\$129,000 Median property value

Other useful civic stats:

- Poverty rate21.3%
- School district enrollment.....28,162
- Largest Employers:
 - Rockford Public School
 - UW Health/SwedishAmerican Health System
 - Mercyhealth/Rockford Health,
 - OSF Healthcare
 - UPS, Collins Aerospace, Woodward Governor, Amazon, Wal-Mart, and Stellantis/Fiat Chrysler
- Commute time 21.9 min.

Pilgrim Community Involvement

Years in Community	108+ years
Dignitaries Hosted	Mayors, State Representatives, Current sitting Governor, Police Chiefs, and Aldermen
Outreach	Foreign missions, door to door outreach, food drives, and local jail outreach
Church Events	Lent, Maundy Feast, Picnic, Women's Day, Usher Annual Day, Church Anniversary Celebration, and City Choir performances.



DISCLOSURES

Church attendance, membership count, compensation, and will be disclosed upon interview.



LETTER TO THE PASTOR

Dear Future Pastor,

As we seek the Lord's guidance for our next pastor, we want to share what is most important to us. We are praying for a shepherd who loves Jesus wholeheartedly, handles God's Word with faithfulness, and genuinely cares for people. We desire a leader who will preach with clarity and conviction, foster trust among all generations, and help lead our church forward in faithful ministry.

We understand that no church and no pastor is without flaws, and we are not expecting perfection. Rather, we are asking God to provide someone who will lead with humility, boldness, and joy. We hope to walk alongside a pastor who treasures prayer, invests in people, makes disciples, and shares the gospel in our community.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this calling. If you sense the Lord may be leading you to learn more about our church, we would be grateful for the opportunity to begin that conversation.

*In Christ,
Minister Willie Reed, Selection Committee Chair
Ms. Emma Gipson, Selection Committee Co-Chair
Pilgrim Baptist Church*

CONTACTS

Search Committee Chair

Minister Willie Reed

Email: pastoralsearchcommittee@pilgrimbaptistrockford.org



Search Committee Vice Chair

Ms. Emma Gipson

Email: pastoralsearchcommittee@pilgrimbaptistrockford.org

