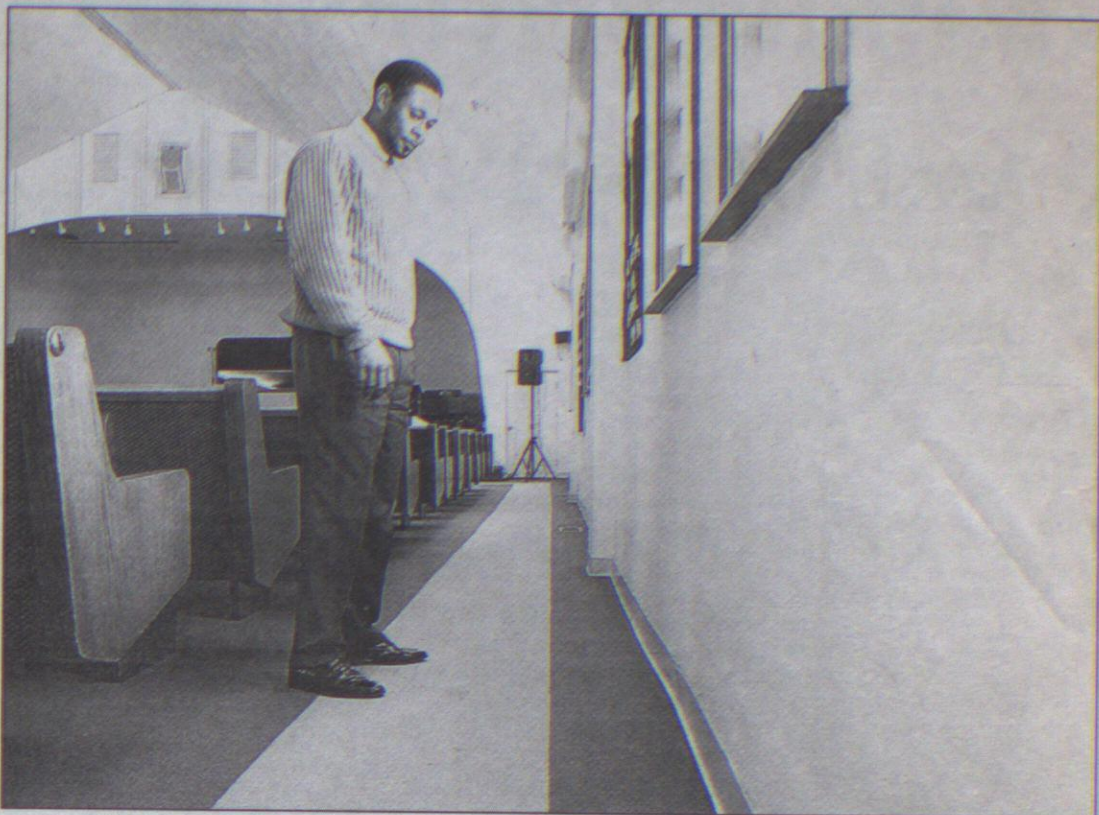


Curfman 1/12/07
es may force church move



Chris Butler / The Idaho Statesman

St. Paul Baptist Church Pastor Michael Ross Sr. stands near a wall in the sanctuary that has separated from the floor. The problem was spotted last week in the church, located at 306 N. 14th St. in Boise. Boise Building Department officials have ruled that the sanctuary is unsafe, forcing the congregation to move its upcoming Sunday service to the First Baptist Church at 307 N. 13th St. in Boise. Ross said he does not know when or if the damage can be fixed.

Temporary location

Because of the lack of structural integrity of St. Paul Baptist Church in Boise, Sunday service will be at 1 p.m. at First Baptist Church, 607 N. 13th St. in Boise for the next month. Plans for services later in the year have not been determined.

Sunday school will be at

St. Paul Baptist Church, 306 N. 14th St., from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. each Sunday.

To get involved

To help St. Paul Baptist Church, call the church at 344-0674. The church's part-time staff remains in offices at the church, 306 N. 14th St.

decided to have our services at First Baptist Church. From St. Paul, you can walk about five blocks and you are there — it is really close.”

And close is what Ross hopes the congregation will be through such adversity.

“I don’t see this as a catastrophe, I see this as an opportunity,” he said. “God has something better for us. We want the people to stay together.”

St. Paul’s congregation and board of trustees will spend the next few weeks considering the options of rebuilding or relocating.

“It’s going to take commitment and the congregation working as a whole,” Buckner-Webb said. “We have steered the course and we have an important job to do here.”

To offer story ideas or comments, contact reporter Eryn Curfman at ecurfman@idahostatesman.com or 373-6617.

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Ross, who recently relocated from Oakland, Calif., to lead the congregation, organized a prayer service Wednesday night for church members to come together in prayer to seek guidance for their church.

“We were packed in there,” Cherie Buckner-Webb, a church trustee, said of the well-attended

prayer service in St. Paul’s Fellowship Hall.

Buckner-Webb, whose great-grandfather, the Rev. William Riley Hardy, founded St. Paul Baptist Church, said that despite the difficulty of relocating church services, the congregation has been blessed.

“A number of local congregations have offered their sanctuaries for services,” she said. “We de-

Idaho Statesman 1/12/07
Wall woes may force church move

Historic black church in Boise needs major repairs

By Eryn Curfman
The Idaho Statesman

Since 1908, Boise has been blessed with the largest predominantly black church congregation in the state.

In its beginnings, the St. Paul Baptist Church congregation met in the homes of its members and in the back rooms of businesses until land on Broadway Avenue was available and church construction ensued in 1921.

The original church at 128 Broadway Ave. bestowed the black community with a meeting place that would welcome an increase of faith-finding community members. The building, on the National Register of Historic Places, was moved to Julia Davis Park in 1998 and houses the Idaho Black History Museum.

Seven years ago, the church exceeded the building's capacity, and St. Paul Baptist went looking for another house of worship to accommodate its growing membership.

Now with nearly 170 members attending Sunday worship at 306 N. 14th St., St. Paul's multicultural congregation faces another possible pilgrimage.

"On Friday (Jan. 4) one of the officials of the church brought to our attention that something was happening in the building," Pastor Michael J. Ross Sr. said. "There is some structural damage in the sanctuary, which we felt was putting people at risk, and so we have sealed off that area."

The old building's walls in the sanctuary are pulling away from the floor, and the ceiling shows obvious signs of warping.

The congregation spent Sunday receiving communion in the church's Fellowship Hall — the oldest part of the building, about a quarter of the size of the sanctuary.

"We had to use some of the pews from various parts of the church," Ross said. "We also moved the pulpit and the com-



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