



The St. Paul Baptist Church Children's Choir gets ready to travel to a temporary chapel for church services as director Shari Ashley gets everyone dressed in their choir robes. Structural damage to the roof and walls of their sanctuary have forced the undaunted congregation to hold its services at a nearby church.

Darin Oswald / The Idaho Statesman

Faith of a congregation

By Susan Whaley

The Idaho Statesman

The members of St. Paul Baptist Church have seen it all since 1908: floods and cracked walls alongside weddings, funerals and unbowed spiritual joy. Through all the ups and downs, the one thing that has held the fiercely loyal congregation together can be summed up with one powerful word.

"Faith," said longtime church member Clarisse Maxwell.

It's the kind of faith that believes the Lord will provide as long as his believers will listen.

Even today, as the church faces yet another challenge — structural damage to the roof and walls of the sanctuary — the mood is not gloom and doom.

"It's a great time in the life of the church as we come to-



Photo courtesy of St. Paul Baptist Church

St. Paul Baptist Church on Broadway Avenue in 1979. The tiny church, built in 1921, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982 and eventually found its way to Julia Davis Park, where it now serves as the Idaho Black History Museum.

gether and make a decision" to refurbish or rebuild, said Rev. Michael Ross, the church's new pastor of just 10 months.

A month ago, the congregation began worshipping at another church down the street while awaiting an engineering report about the condition of their building, whose walls appear to be bowing under the weight of the roof.

The manner in which

church members are facing this latest chapter of St. Paul's history exemplifies the unbroke spirit and can-do attitude that has held the church together for 94 years.

Trial by water

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See St. Paul's on page 7

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Regina Cunningham, right, and Shoshonna Henderson sit together and share thoughts St. Paul Baptist Church Sunday school.



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Soon the rapidly growing and increasingly diverse congregation was looking for a larger building. "Within a year and a half, we probably had 100 people to church on Sundays," said Mapp, who would go to the church two hours early to crank up the old building's air conditioning and heating systems so the sanctuary would be comfortable for church services.

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Divine Intervention

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"In the life of the community, it has played a pivotal role as a place where African-Americans gather to pray and experience spiritual growth," Ross said.

To offer story ideas or comments, contact reporter Susan Whaley at swahaley@idahostatesman.com or 377-6431.

Museum, BSU group plan black history events

Black History Museum
WHERE: 508 Julia Davis Drive
HOURS: Wednesday-Saturday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
ON DISPLAY: "Harlem Renaissance; An Era of African-American Expression," photos and sculptures.
INFORMATION: 433-0017

Boise State University Black Student Alliance
"Roots," Part 1, the mini-series and discussion, 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 5, at the Student Union Berquist Lounge, Free.
"Poetry of the African Diaspora, African-American poetry readings, 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 7, J.D.'s & Friends, 1519 W. Main St. Free.
"Roots," Part 2, the mini-series and discussion, 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 12, at the Student Union, Free.

Poetry of the African Diaspora, African-American poetry readings, 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 14, J.D.'s & Friends, 1519 W. Main St. Free.
"Roots," Part 3, the mini-series and discussion, 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 19, at the Student Union, Free.
Roots and Reparations: Making Amends for Slavery, discussion by BSU Professor Marcy Newman, 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 19, Student Union Berquist Lounge, Free.
Poetry of the African Diaspora, African-American poetry readings, 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 21, J.D.'s & Friends, 1519 W. Main St. Free.
AIDS in Africa, panel discussion, 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 26, in the Student Union Hatch Ballroom D, Free.
The Black Experience in the Music Industry, featuring rap artist Cool Nutz and Too Real Records owner Dominique Halls, 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 28, Student Union Farnsworth Room, Free.



Darin Oswald / The Idaho Statesman
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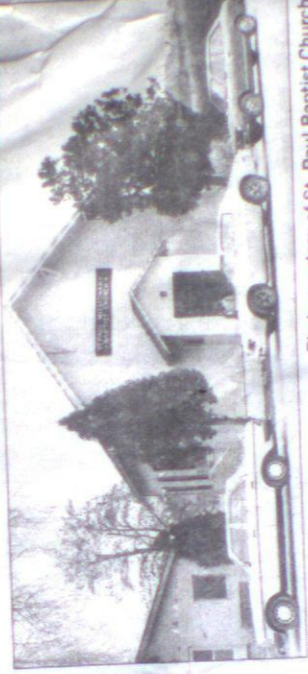


Photo courtesy of St. Paul Baptist Church
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 WHERE: 508 J Street
 HOURS: Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

ON DISPLAY: "African-American Portraits"

INFORMATION:

Boise State University

Black Student Union

> "Roots," Part 1

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> "Roots," Part 3

> "Roots," Part 4

> "Roots," Part 5

> "Roots," Part 6

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An unbroken thread

The thread of faith and commitment holding St. Paul's Baptist Church together lives in the family of Cherie Buckner-Webb, whose children represent six generations in the church.

Her great-great grandfather, Rev. William Riley Hardy, the first pastor and a carpenter, built the first church building with his own hands. She remembers hearing her uncle, also a pastor, preach in the 1950s.

"There's a reverence of those people who came before you. There's a responsibility to do proud to your elders, to understand their values of service to God and your fellow men," Buckner-Webb said. "That's the tradition that I feel I have a responsibility for."

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