***Church History***

*Through the eyes of Evangelist Missionary Tasheba Lanae Washington*

The founding and persistence of Trinity Temple Church of God In Christ is a testament of the faithfulness of God to the covenant that He made with COGIC's founder Bishop Charles Harrison Mason in March of 1897. "If you take this name, The Church of God In Christ (1 Thess. 2: 14) there will never be a building large enough to house the people whom I will send you". To that end, God's hand and providential care was at work in the formation and continuing progress of Trinity Temple Church through its seventy-nine years of faithful service to the people in and around the surrounding areas of Montclair New Jersey. God has blessed Trinity with four visionary and charismatic leaders, each building upon the work and success of the other that has made Trinity Temple into what it is today, a loving body of saints, "in the heart of the city with the people of the city in its heart."

The history of Trinity Temple Church begins with its first pastor and founder Bishop Fredrick Douglass Washington. The then Elder Washington, as reported by senior pastor of Trinity Bishop Norman Prescott, was traveling down from Caldwell into Montclair when he spotted an abandon showroom of an automobile company at 195 Bloomfield Ave. He was able to secure the property and started a ministry there in March of 1943. He named the church Trinity Temple COGIC. As it happened Elder Washington was pastoring Church of God In Christ Holy Tabernacle in Caldwell at the time. When he left Holy Tabernacle he took the instrument of incorporation with him, as a result many believe that Trinity Temple originated in Caldwell and that its first pastor was Elder John Darden. However, this train of thought is erroneous. Trinity Temple and Holy Tabernacle have always been two separate established churches. Holy Tabernacle was started by a missionary by the name of Epps in 1931. As reported by Mother Mary Newman the first services were held in the home of the three Yarbo sisters. After the establishment of Trinity Temple Church, Holy Tabernacle continued to be a functioning church in Caldwell well into the 1970's,

Elder Washington started pastoring Trinity Temple Church in March of 1943. Early on in his ministry he started live broadcasting. He had a Hammond organ and anointed musicians. For a church to have radio broadcasting and a Hammond organ in the 1940's was a novelty. In its heyday crowds would flow into the services at Trinity Temple to hear the anointed singing of Madame Ernestine B. Washington, who was a gospel singer in her own right, and the dynamic preaching of Elder Washington. Every Sunday night saints would flock to Trinity Temple to catch a part of the dynamic service that was heard broadcasted live over the air waves. The church would be full to over flowing. Elder Washington continued to pastor the church for the next eight years. He saw the church through its pioneering stage, its peak stage and at this time its declination. One day while driving in Brooklyn on Fulton Street he saw this lot and decided this would be a good place to have a tent service. He started having tent services there in the summer. His able preaching and charismatic personality drew crowds of people. Elder Washington eventually left Montclair but held on to Trinity Temple for about a year. He placed as his successor the Elder Kilmo Porter from Jersey City. Elder Porter pastored Trinity Temple for the next ten years. The congregation at the time was a little more than an intimate size. Elder Porter made structural changes to the building. He replaced the plate glass window at the front of the church that still lingered from the automobile showroom. He added a brick front, with doors and a small narthex. After serving the church for ten years Elder Porter had a desire to grow. He had an opportunity to become pastor of First Church of Newark.

At this time New Jersey only had one jurisdiction and Bishop Keith who was over the jurisdiction sent Elder Porter to pastor First Church. After Elder Porter's departure it was rumored that the Bishop was going to place someone at Trinity Temple who the congregation was quite apprehensive about, so Elder Washington decided to take the church back. At this time Elder Washington had been in Brooklyn for about twelve years. He had purchased the Loews Theatre that later became Washington Temple, which had a very large congregation. At the beginning of 1963 Elder Washington would send his youth minister, Elder Norman Prescott to Trinity to preach. In his own words, Bishop Prescott stated this is what generally would happen; "I would get a call, usually on a Saturday evening, from Madame Washington saying your Papa wants you to go to Montclair." When Elder Prescott would go to preach at Trinity, he would generally stay over in New Jersey for the day in the homes of some of the saints who treated him and his family with loving Christian hospitality. Elder Prescott always spoke very warmly of what seemed to be an unspoken network of saints at Trinity who had taken it upon themselves to care for Elder Prescott and his family. Sister Bell, Mother Arcola Faison, Mother Christmas, Jake and Mary Newman and the Turner family all took turns having the Prescott’s over for dinner each week. What was not Known to Elder Prescott was the fact that while he was preaching at Trinity as an itinerant preacher, Elder Washington was about working him into the life of the church. It continued that way for about four years with Elder Prescott becoming the assistant pastor and then co-pastor. Then in the fall Of 1967, Bishop Courtney who was by this time over the jurisdiction in New Jersey came out one Thursday night and installed Elder Prescott as pastor of Trinity right there on the spot. Elder Prescott started pastoring the church with the cloud over head that the location of Trinity was in a 49 acre parcel of land that the Montclair urban renewal wanted to deal with.

For the next fifty years Elder Prescott was the pastor of Trinity Temple Church. One of his first priorities at the Church was to centralize the economics and start a saving account. Elder Prescott continued to broadcast twice a week at night. His radio program was named After Hours with God. During the broadcast one would hear the anointed preaching of Elder Prescott and the Action Ministry choir. It also included Betty's Corner for Mother Prescott. Where she would impart words of wisdom on the issues of the day. The program received numerous awards and recognitions. Some of the outreach programs started that change the lives of many in the community were the Arnie Branch daycare, vacation bible school and the S.H.A.R.E ministry. Every Easter the twenty plus one group would host the residence of the Essex County Mental Hospital at the church. They fed them lunch and gave them gifts. Other outreach ministries at Trinity Temple included the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program that concentrated on people at a median level of income and prepared their taxes for them free of charge, thanksgiving baskets, the Boarder Babies program that give assistance to St. Joseph's Hospital for babies abandoned by their mothers and a food, and furniture pantry. It was during this era that my mother started attending Trinity Temple. As the kid of a preacher, I was curious to know what made her leave her home church where her father was an elder and start attending Trinity. She explained that there was something about Elder Prescott's preaching that convicted her of all the wrong that she was doing and made her wanted to stay. I for one appreciate the ministry at Trinity Temple and the true to the bible anointed preaching because I believe it's in part what led to my mom becoming a foster mother. As a single woman she adopted all nine of her children and raised with the help of some of the saints at Trinity and that has made all the difference in my life.

In 1983, Elder Prescott and the saints at Trinity Temple purchased an office building at 115 Greenwood Ave., and made alterations to it. This became the new site of Trinity Temple Church Of God In Christ. At that time, they also purchased a building at 85 Walnut Street, which now serves as the home of Community Development Corporation; CDC, if you will. In June of 1985, Elder Prescott and the saints held their final service in the morning at 195 Bloomfield Avenue. Then they had dinner and with the help of West Side High School’s Band and the Montclair Police Department, the Church members marched to 115 Greenwood Ave., where they had their opening service. Elder Prescott asked the late Bishop F.D. Washington to preach the maiden service in the pulpit.

While serving as Pastor of Trinity Temple Elder Prescott ascended to the office of the Bishop. During the 87th General Assembly of the Church Of God In Christ in November of 1994, Bishop Prescott was elevated to the position of Jurisdictional Prelate of the Third Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of New Jersey. Bishop Prescott continued to faithfully serve the Third Jurisdiction until his retirement in September of 2015. Before he retired as the Jurisdictional Prelate, he installed Elder Tyrone Hulin as the Pastor of Trinity Temple. Bishop Prescott, affectionally known as “Our Bishop” served as Senior Pastor until May 2022.

In Pastor Hulin’s tenure thus far, he has refurbished the Sanctuary pews and chairs, the fellowship hall, the women and men restroom, the office building and repaved the Church’s parking lot. He also instituted a 1½ year Discipleship training program to aid the members in Christian maturity to become more like Jesus Christ. Upgraded all of the Church’s technology to bring it up to the 21st century inclusive of TV monitors, whereas the Church can have interactive services online to reach many people. He has set out a vision for the Church to continue to meet the needs of the community by re-establishing the Church’s community faith-based organization with the help of the Church members; the organization is known as the Trinity Temple Community Development Corporation. It provides physical, social and mental services to the surrounding communities. He has formed partnerships with the Brother to Brother Mentoring Program of Montclair, which provides social and life skills to elementary, middle school and high school students, and with the City-to-City Redeemer Church, which has provided grants for the continued spreading of God’s Word and strategic planning for the Church’s Community engagement and the soon to be custom websites for both the Church and CDC. Pastor Hulin has proven to be a faithful servant of The Lord, a man of integrity, and an anointed fire brand preacher of the Gospel.

I am convinced of God’s love for Trinity Temple by his continued faithfulness to the Church. He has allowed it to continue for now 79 years and has blessed us with anointed shepherds after His own heart. These leaders of integrity and vision have done marvelous at blessing and enhancing the lives of those who have passed through Trinity Temple over the years.

I thank God for Trinity Temple and I pray it continues to be true to the tenants of its faith as set forth by Bishop C.H. Mason and The Church Of God In Christ.