

## **130<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Calvary Baptist Church**

**O**ne hundred and twenty-nine years. That is how long Calvary Baptist Church has continued its mission to give service to the Lord, the community, and its members.

The railroads brought many people to Spokane in search of a better life. Among them were Black people searching for a niche to call their own. They came in search of homes, work and places of worship. They found no shortage of churches in Spokane, but none they could call their own; none that could be truly called their church home.

In 1890, one year after Washington became a state, the state's first African-American church was established in the city of Spokane by a small group of African Americans. A handful of Black settlers who had been attending the First Baptist Church at Lincoln and West Second decided that it was time to organize a church of their own.

**O**n Sunday, February 9, 1890 at 8:30 pm, a service was held. The sermon was titled "The Gifts and Calling of God." A meeting was held immediately following the worship and all present agreed that there was a need for a Black church and committed themselves to making it happen. During the evening of February 16, 1890, the small group voted to establish Calvary Baptist Church. The meeting concluded with a sermon entitled, "Awake the One Sleeping and Arise from the Dead." There was a great deal of joy and anticipation about the future. February 16, 1890 began a legacy that has grown stronger each year.

Calvary Baptist Church was not just a place of worship but a community gathering place for African Americans. It was the meeting place for: *The Colored Men's Business League*, The Masonic Lodge, and the local *NAACP*, as well as served as home to strangers, and service men's families. It forged a strong supporting partnership with sister churches across the region, participated in cultural exchanges with area colleges and established its voice as an advocate for freedom by hosting mass meetings for human rights and justice.

Some of the historic achievements of Calvary include Lifelong membership in the *NAACP*, founding the *Pacific Northwest Baptist Convention*, participating in the *Expo 74* ceremonies and opening its doors in the 1970's for the first *Head Start Day Care* program in a Black church in Spokane. Calvary is recognized for its historical significance by *Eastern Washington University*, *Whitworth University*, and *Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture* and is featured in the *Seattle African American History Museum*. We are proud that the Senior Choir of 1977 recorded a long playing record and toured the Northwest, and that an ongoing college scholarship was established. Calvary continues its outreach mission to the community through the soup kitchen that provides food and clothing for those in need. Recently, the parsonage, home of *Calvary's Soup Kitchen*, was renamed the Andrews Annex and a television ministry was added. Last year the history of the church was featured on Channel 2 during Black History Month.

Calvary has the honor of having 14 outstanding pastors who have each contributed to the growth, development and spiritual warfare of its members over the past 129 years. Each pastor knowing the service rendered to others is the rent paid for one's room on earth.

Under the leadership of Rev. Dr. C. W. Andrews for the past 45 years, the church has continued to prosper. Through his sound fiscal management and organizational skills, the church building has been updated, new ministries added and the membership continues to grow.

Calvary is still growing from the seeds of faith that were planted by the pioneers. The roots are alive and strong today. This church is a gift for those who worship here and for those who live in our community. 129 years strong! God Bless Calvary Baptist Church!

*Submitted By Teresa Hemphill*