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est known congregations in America. Its identity is rooted in the founding. And yet in
another it is not the well-known one. Its prominence and location made it a primary
staging and meeting space for the civil rights activities of Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, Dr.
Martin Luther King, and the movement that resulted in the pivotal protests and the related

executed the secured drawings of the church for archival in the Library of Congress. On February 2, 2001, the church was officially dedicated as a National Historic Landmark by the United States Department of the Interior.

As part of Birmingham's Civil Rights District, which is promoted by the city for heritage tourism, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church receives over 200,000 visitors annually.

The church is currently engaged in a major renovation of the building, which has had persistent deterioration problems and is facing future of the exterior. The first phase of renovation, including waterproofing, has been completed. To assist in this effort, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church has just received a grant from the Save America's Treasures organization.

The other history of Sixteenth Street is the ordinary history of congregation that has been in one place for a long time. That church has faced the usual struggles to the church in downtown. The confluence of these two histories in the years since September 9 has inked the two together. The changes that that single event brought out not only in the church but the city and of American culture brought out changes that ironically endangered the future of the church's viable congregation even as it sustains an icon of the Civil Rights Movement.

Sixteenth Street Baptist Church was organized and is the first African American Baptist Church in the city of Birmingham. The city had been founded on a rocky outcrop years earlier. The current site moved to its present location in 1859. The current building is a suit in 1892. Its central location and historic prominence have made it a place where many famous visitors, speakers, and preachers have performed through the years.

The present building is a modified Romanesque and Byzantine design by the prominent architect George R. Yriebe, constructed by the local contractor

According to the internet Wikipedia article such notes as one of the primary institutions in the city community. Sixteenth Street Baptist has hosted prominent visitors throughout its history. E. B. DuBois, Mary McLeod Bethune, Paul Robeson, Jackie Robinson, and Ralph Bunche spoke at the church during the first part of the 20th century. The sanctuary also served as one of the largest auditoriums available to the city citizens of Birmingham. Concerts by notable artists such as Chubby Checker frequently filled the building in the evenings. It continues to be a prominent meeting space for national and locally significant gatherings, especially regarding race relations. http://www.birmingham-heritage.com/iki-co-iki/index.php?title=Sixteenth_Street_Baptist_Church

⁴ H in *Behind the Stained Glass* p

of white families to the success the changes in the Civil Rights movement and its focus after the death of Dr. King and the cultural changes that followed in American politics and religion presented their challenges to the church

Furthermore the church faced many great internal challenges in the period since 1960. During this time the leadership of the church according to Hill often struggled with pastoral leadership over many issues. Hill writes in a sentence that they have discovered some congregation leaders that when he arrived in 1969 that I discovered that Sixteenth Street Baptist Church one of the nation's most prestigious churches was in spiritual ruin paralyzed in need of major renovation restoration of its facilities and sustained by less than 20 members. He saw great potential. This led Hill to conclude that the rebuilding of trust and relationships were paramount for the church. When he began his ministry

This second history is the internal and self-conscious Christian history of the church. If it has been difficult for the congregation it is understood. It is hard to know how any church would have handled the massive publicity the urban and cultural changes the population shifts the intrusion of national and international politics and personalities and the financial challenges that came after 1960. Sixteenth Street went from a typical African American congregation in a major American city to a curiosity.

So its second history is still ongoing. It is its history to recover restore and rebuild its internal Christian identity even as it carries the unvoided presence of its historic place and vision for the world. This second history brought challenges to its denomination and spiritual self-understanding. In terms of larger connections Sixteenth Street Baptist is affiliated with the more conservative Black Baptist group the National Baptist Convention USA. As it faces its future it continues to face the challenges Black Baptist churches do in the face of post-denominational times to its historic identity. However with the

- Ibid p. iv

Ibid p. 9

Another group in the current church is less concerned with the church's history. They want to be nurtured and empowered here so to live Christian life in secular society.

Chris Hill's choice of stained glass for the metaphor in his title for the history he wrote is interesting for a couple of reasons. First the beautiful rose window in the sanctuary suffered a terrible and ironic bit of damage on that day. It is one of the major features in the sanctuary and it is a very traditional stained glass window, a portrayal of Revelation 2 at the end of John's letters from God to the seven churches of Asia Minor.⁹ It is a picture of Jesus Christ standing at a door and knocking.

Similar windows can be found in Baptist churches all over the South throughout the deep South today especially those built around the early twentieth century. St. Seventh Street Church is this image's common theme in revivalist preaching of that era and to the present day among conservative evangelical Christians. It is often used as a picture to individuals to repent of their sins and accept Christ's Savior. He is often described as knocking on the door of a person's heart. To be a Christian is to open one's heart and life to Jesus and receive His Lord.

The interesting rendering of this text itself to the revivalists and its very individualistic interpretation of that time.

However another interpretation of this text sets it in the context of Revelation 2

and . It connects the end of seven letters to the congregations encouraging them to

repent . . . 9 s . . . 4 . . . 4 . . . i 2 . . . s . 4 . . . cluinte 9 g 9 . . . 4 . . . 4 . . . 4 . . . 9 . . . 4 . . . f . . . s . . . es

the text says and therefore here we do good to the we do good to Him here we find to do good to the or her the we do the same to Christ Him in describes the
ind thus

The es ind for A [is/ u tico ored ind fe turing esus of Africa n herit ge hose rge h nds re e tended in revo ution ry protest nd God s reconciling ove Petts sed his i ge of esus on picture he h d seen of ck protester t king p rt in street de onstr tion in the South The n s r were f ung ove his he d nd his ody s gyr ting s he s ss u ted with fire hoses The esus in the ind Petts designed sy o ized the crucified Christ nd for s the upright e of cross hi e sty ized stre of ter fro fire hose for s the cross e Petts nted to connect the Bir ngh Civi Rights ove em with the ongoing strugg e in South Africa nd there y sy o ize oppression every here So he p inted u ets onto the top e of the cross to represent the innocent children nd du ts eing gunned d n in Sh rpevi e South Africa nd other p ces in the or d He used r in co ored ni us on the Christ figure in the ind to sy o ize th t God oves every person equ without respect to n tion ity r ce or creed for e re one in Christ esus At the otto of the ind Petts p ced the ords of Christ the ords th t Reverend Cross h d intended to sy in the ser on he did not give on Sunday Septe er 9 You Did It to Me

Ironic y once ore these ere the ords of the te t th t Rev ohn H Cross p stor of Si tenth Street B ptist h d intended to pre ch on for his ser on on Septe er 9 when the o ent off He never de ivered th t ser on

In the se ent of the church there is c ock th t stopped t o ent of the o ing of Septe er 9 I h d once suggested in convers tion with Arthur Price th t this is good et phor for the church they re trying to st rt the c ock g in They re ho ding in tension these v ues of honoring the history nd eing vit congreg tion th t e pvers peop e tod y

M tth 2 4 s ys for s hungry nd you g ve e food s thirsty nd you g ve e so ething to drink s str nger nd you e co ed e s n ked nd you g ve e c othing s sick nd you took c re of e s in prison nd you visited e Then the righteous i nger hi Lord here s it th e s you hungry nd g ve you food or thirsty nd g ve you so ething to drink And here s it th e s you str nger nd e co ed you or n ked nd g ve you c othing And here s it th e s you sick or in prison nd visited you And the king i nger the Tru y I te you just s you did it to one of the e st of these ho re e ers of y f i y you did it to e

H in *Behind the Stained Glass* 1 1

show growth. The overall metropolitan region of Birmingham continues to grow over
the region encompasses sixteen school districts and cross county lines.²

This presents a theoretical problem that the downtown churches represented by
Sixteenth Street Baptist face declines in those who might be members of the church.
And it presents that churches like Westview Hills Baptist theoretically ought to grow
as well. In fact this is not always the case since churches are experiencing
organizational issues. It is possible to see tiny congregations in thriving suburban areas that seem to
have been passed by the growth of the region. There are many reasons why this may be
so: conflicts of leadership, problems with ethnic identity that makes adaptation challenging,
denominational issues, and many others.

The Leadership of Arthur Price

At Sixteenth Street the young pastor faced a challenge that was larger than he
comprehended at first. He saw that his church needed to provide structure and even firm
leadership. He believed that the church needed revitalization from within. Its role in the
community was eroding and even unvoided due to the changing realities of its immediate
field of service. He sees its struggle to redefine its inner vitality after 9/11 left the
church's predecessor hard gripped with a more difficult set of inward challenges
than perhaps you would meet the untrained eye.

Arthur set out to do as he described it to develop others by developing their
potential and build up the leadership and ministries of the church. He believes that a lot
of churches are hindered because of uncertainty. He saw his church as one to carry direct
leaders to mission motivated ministry.

He so acknowledged that this was a role expected of him. The African

Arthur finds not exactly courteous but reserved is probably better term. He is so what of an introvert and therefore does not always offer what is going on with him.

Arthur described the difference in our leadership styles similar to that between Paul and Barnabas in the New Testament. He likened himself to being more like Paul who he described as a more direct style of leadership in the sense that Paul was more concerned about conflict and its impact temporarily on relationships. The down side of this of course is the isolation misunderstanding and loneliness that sometimes comes

in every current American congregation of course but at Fifteenth Street faces these
▼ e . One wonders if its place in the nation is being hastened by the loosening of
its ties with tradition and denomination itself

In terms of outreach for people the church is the kind of unique setting that could consider itious y in the sense of ition for the gospe . Many eg churches today e si y dr e ership fro r dius of thirty ies . In etropo it n re ike Bir igh the gre ter re of hich cont ins out i ion peop e . Si teenth Street cou d envision inistry th t dr peop e h e nted to identify ith the congreg tion nd ke co it ents to e p rt of its unique vision of prophetic nd ev nge istic inistry .

Even though its ission fie d ight continue to e the d n n re nd the neigh orhoods round its ev nge istic fie d ight e uch rger . Arthur h s e pressed hope th t his church i see the need to e ore intention in this ork of outre ch . He s id

The serious re ities nd ch anges eft for Si teenth Street re outre ch history identific tion s tourist ttr ction st ffin g needs orship sty e conf icts nd sp ti i it tions . The outre ch ch enge e ists ec use for so ong Si teenth Street h s een identified s the p ce to go to thus cre ting for the church person of r ying p ce for individu s to f ock . The church h s not therefore fu ye r ced the necessity to re ch out nd co pe en nd o en to co e thus fu fi ing the Gre t Co ission s out ined in the vision ⁴

The good n s is th t his congreg tion h s he rd nd understood his fr ing of this issue t e st theoretic y . One e e ho is e der hen interv ed y e s id e shou d e seeking the ost nd ring the to Christ .

story of pilgrim people who voluntarily take the commitment to be
affiliated with this process and story. Further, it can be a mode of church here, soci-
ministry to the best of these is not in contradiction to the robust passion of disciples
sharing their faith in Jesus and helping one another grow in their faith.

It seems obvious to me both in talking with the pastor and the people that they
understand that these are their challenges. They see the need to do it. The ongoing
challenges include the loss of funding and processing pathways to that possible future. They
must not only see that they should grow and reach out, but so how this requires changes
in the way they think about doing church together. The pathways which those
identities can actually connect rather than dividing. In practice, reality people often
prefer one over the other.

Still in the light of the Old Testament prophets remembering us as you try to understand the present and upon up the future Martin Luther King his sermonsterful doing this calling America to repentance and to imagine new structures of justice and life not only new things but you better understanding the things we're doing now. It's the words of our own Constitution the Declaration of Independence the Holy Scriptures and especially the teachings of Jesus that most Americans cited some allegiance to that called us to change.

This new synthesis is of course that Sixteenth Street is congregation that could be a powerful future by attempting this in its life. Its pastors since 1962 have with varying success sought to lead the church through this changing journey.

It is so clear to me that the metropolitan area of Birmingham and not simply the city itself has this disconnect. I find it curious that in the suburbs here I live that for citizens not to talk much about the Sixties and what happened. For some the theories reappear. For some it rings nigger. For many it is a hardness or the feeling that it has so much cost on the community and lighted its public image to the world.

Many business people I know in the suburbs and I can recount this perhaps happening dozens of times over the years since I came to the second coast word for word. A people think about when they think of Birmingham is dogs and fire hoses and the bombing. It is startling to me how deep this sense of frustration is.

My reaction has often been why aren't we proud of what has happened here? The world changed here. I lived in other places up North when this went on. I know racism was there too. I saw it. But things changed here. It is curious to me why no suburban people have never been to the Civil Rights Institute or the church to visit. Many have of course but there is still a sense of emotion and geographic distance between the city and the outlying areas though no longer segregated by race for people of all races live in the suburbs including many affluent blacks.

So for black people in Birmingham there is an unspoken and spoken anxiety that we can't forget those events and that time. For white and suburban people there is so much unspoken and spoken anxiety that we can't never expect to forget the story now you'd just as soon not keep ringing up. Our unwillingness to find the ways to do both it

possibilities Arthur and I discussed Kirk Hedgcock's fourfold congregation typology
as part of our study. Hedgcock identifies three typical understandings in churches

The chris tian mode gener ally rites history of gre t achieve ents ut so periods of intense confict decines nd strugg es over e dership nd uncert inty Arthur intuitive y recognized so e need for ore po icies processes org niz tion nd predict i ity for the church hen he rived Yet the e pect tion of ch ris tic e dership is not e sy to renegoti te ith congreg tion Bo D e once ch r cterized this s e ning th t ong ith the e pect tion of high degree of ction nd contro y the e der there ou d e ost corresponding degree of p ssivity in the church e ers 9

One of the ch anges for Arthur if he is to e d Si teenth Street t rds H d y s ide of congreg tion ife the inc rn tion is to do e ct h t he recognized s the gre t ch ange to he p ity t ke nership of their inistries Yet this sounds e sier in re ity th n it is in i p e ent tion He f ces the strugg e of h ving sufficient nu ers in order to h ve critic ss of e dership for inistries He h s ny e ers ho do not ctu y ive in the co unity ut h ve oved out to other re s nd sti co e out of oy ty to the church This e ns th t it is difficu t oth in ter s of ti e co it ents nd their sense of connection to the surrounding inistry fie d to identify strong y ith the needs nd opportunities th t re round

Sti these re ch anges th t to differing degrees ny churches f ce The over possi i ities nd strengths of Si teenth Street re tre endous Th t i y hy they c n continue to dr c p e e ders to their pu pit The prestige signific nce nd visi i ity of the church presents enor ous opportunities for profound inistry To return to the serious re ities th t the church f ces e ight so see tre endous possi i ities Those possi i ities c n on y e re ized y dr tic y different ppro ch to doing church in their oc tion

So e of these ppro ches re re dy unde y in so e of the inistries th t Arthur h s ed the church to do Yet in the re of outre ch there re so e t nt izing st tistics to think out In the S Census of 2 if one dr s circ e round Si teenth Street church th t goes out three i es in every direction e see gre t

potenti Td 4 e 9 4 ingd 4 9 4 4 4 2 g 2 2 o 9 e

events. This societal es rings hidden expectations out the role the pastor plays in community events.

As an outsider, Arthur Price has said that he doesn't know the players in town. His focus on rebuilding the church has meant that he has not always been as highly participative in city politics and events as some predecessors have been. One of the leadership challenges he faces is how to integrate the work of rebuilding the evangelistic witness, ministry and missions of the church and yet still preserving this societal witness identity of the church that is pervasive.

is usually internally and externally by the church.

and theological filters that help them always see the light through something that is significant in their lives

Westview Baptist Church is only fifty years old. It sits on a mountaintop from which the tallest buildings of Birmingham can only be seen at their very tops across Red Mountain in the distance. Its sanctuary was built in 1909 and a large iron cross affixed to the peak of the sanctuary facing off the mountaintop symbolizing the steel industry that built Birmingham and facing the downtown city to indicate the commitment of the church to the city and its needs.

Another striking aspect of Westview Baptist's architecture is its incorporation of natural beauty. There is little stained glass there on the floor plates. The windows instead are looking out on the spectacular natural beauty of the mountaintop.

Our churches could benefit from looking to each other. Westview Baptist is a symbol of the suburban churches whose members need to look through the windows and Christ knocking at the door to understand more deeply who our friends and neighbors really are in our own history has seen. But Sixteenth Street cannot so profit from windows or windows that look out onto its neighborhood and the enormous possibilities that are yet present. There is vibrant and living community nearby to be reached. They have strong young evangelists to help them go to that community. They have wonderful young leaders and a future of new and ongoing leaders. If their windows strongly symbolize their own stories of the past then symbolic centers and windows might be fitting images of their future. One thing is that to take them beyond rather than merely behind the stained glass.