

The Historic Wilborn Temple

First Church of God in Christ

1927 – 2013

Since 1927, the Wilborn Temple First Church of God In Christ, Inc., has been a house of worship. It all began when a Buffalo, NY Missionary, Charlotte Resper came to conduct a Revival at Union Missionary Baptist Church. The Revival reached beyond Union and continued to the home of Ms. Elsie Black, along with Mrs. Alice Charles Harmon, these sisters banded together in prayer and supplication, studying the Scriptures, and fasting. Other believers joined them, Elsie Dickerson and her sister Emilie Williams from New York City and Gladys Tucker-Robinson came from Baltimore, MD.

Wilborn Temple was born during the peak of the Black Migration from the South to the North of the country (1930s). At that time, Albany had only two prominent churches, Israel African Methodist Episcopal and Morning Star Missionary Baptist. Neither of these churches provided the “worship experience” that these new arrivals were familiar with. When Louis W. Parson arrived in Albany, he found a group of worshippers at 40 Franklin Street.

Church Locations:

40 Franklin Street
South Ferry Street
23 Dongan Avenue
79 Hamilton Street
121 Jay Street

Pastors:

Elder Louis W. Parson 1927-1940
Bishop William Wilborn 1940-1974
Elder Willie McCann April-August 1974
Elder Emmett H. Jeffress 1974-2007
Elder Solomon Dees 2007-Present

In 1949, the church received the New York State Corporation charter as the First Church of God in Christ. After acquiring the former Temple Beth Emeth Synagogue at 121 Jay Street, in 1957 the church was renamed Wilborn Temple in honor of Bishop Wilborn.

The Church Building

Wilborn Temple is located on Jay, South Swan and Lancaster streets. When built in 1885, this stone Richardsonian Romanesque house of worship was Temple Beth Emeth, the home of two Jewish congregations that were founded in the mid-19th century.

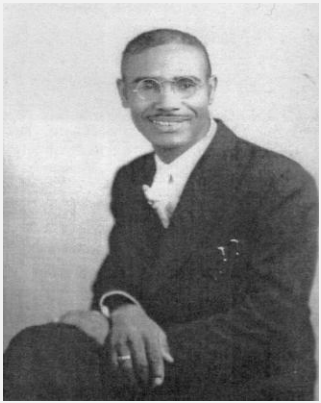
State architect Isaac Perry collaborated with a congregant, Adolph Fleischmann, on a design that echoed Albany’s city hall, then newly built, in its rustication, hipped roof, massing around a corner tower and arched entryway with an inscription in English and Hebrew. Jews who had helped develop the surrounding blocks, later moved to the suburbs like other city residents, and in 1957 a new temple was built on Academy Road with the original stained glass.

The temple building on Jay Street was sold to a Christian church and became Wilborn Temple First Church of God in Christ.

Wilborn Temple is now listed on the Center Square/Hudson-Park Historic District.

Did You Know?

Rapp Road Community Historic District – Beginning in the 30s, under the leadership of Elder Louis Parsons, “courageous” efforts were made to purchase land in the area in western Albany (presently known as the Pine Bush Preserve) to provide housing for those members new to the Albany South End and uncomfortable with its environment. The principal residents of the area were members of Albany’s First Church of God in Christ. In September 2002, the Rapp Road Community was designated a New York State historic district and in January 2003 designated as a National Historic District. This was the first designation of its kind in New York State and possible the nation.



Pastor Louis W. Parson 1927-1940



Bishop William Wilborn 1940-1974



Elder Willie McCann 1974



Pastor Emmett H. Jeffress 1974-2007



Pastor Solomon Dees 2007- Present

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