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The Historic Jones Tabernacle African Methodist Episcopal Church was birthed from a split from Morris Brown African Methodist Episcopal Church, which was founded in 1881, and named after the second Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. In the year 1930, Bishop Richard R. Wright, Jr. (then Rev.), left Morris Brown and organized Jones Tabernacle AME Church “to propagate the seeds of African Methodism.” Jones Tabernacle was named after Bishop Joshua H. Jones, the thirty-eighth Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Bishop Jones was consecrated in 1912 and served on the bench of Bishops for twenty-two years.

Because of the overwhelming support of the First Episcopal District’s leader, Rev. Wright named the church Jones Tabernacle in his honor.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church was known for bishops who were also authors, and Bishop (then Rev.) R.R. Wright was no exception. In his autobiography, *Eighty-Seven Years Behind The Black Curtain*, Bishop Wright writes, “...Bishop Jones said to me, “Wright, I am thinking of moving you. Ward Church is too small for you. I have a great challenge.” My answer was “You are the bishop. It’s yours to command, mine to obey.” Wright reflects in his autobiography about the split of Morris Brown, and the formation of Jones Tabernacle, and how he persevered through many setbacks to secure a church building. After finally securing a building Wright records

On July 15, 1930, we marched out of Morris Brown Church, walking down Jefferson Street, to 20th Street, up 20th Street, to the new church Jones Tabernacle, which we entered on the 75th birthday of Bishop Joshua H. Jones...Some went in autos, but most of them walked, having on their uniforms as stewardesses, ushers, etc., led by their choir and the pastor, trustees and stewards. When we got into the church, it was so full that all our members could not get in.

After founding the church and serving for two years Rev. R.R. Wright, Jr., was appointed to Wilberforce University as President, and the church was appointed a new pastor, Rev. William P. Stevenson. It was under the leadership of Pastor Stevenson that Jones Tabernacle moved from their location at 20th and Dauphin to their current location at 2021 West Diamond Street.

Jones Tabernacle became a beacon of light in the North Central Philadelphia community: the church was open five nights a week for service and youth activities, a nurses unit was established, major renovations—both interior and exterior—were completed, The Jones Tabernacle Cathedral Choir was established and radio broadcasting began on WIP radio each third Sunday during evening hours. By 1949 membership had exceeded 1,300.

Jones Tabernacle was truly thriving in the community, but in 1966, under the leadership of Rev. Emmer H. Booker the church split, and half of the congregation followed Rev. Booker to a newly created non-denominational church, Temple of Divine Love. History shows us that the church spilt did not destroy the church, but that Jones Tabernacle recovered and continued to worship the Lord.

The location of Historic Jones Tabernacle AMEC has been recognized for its historic status. Originally a combined Methodist Episcopal church, it was built in 1889, and the rectory was added in 1894-95.

Today the edifice has been traced to Benjamin Franklin and the founding of the University of Pennsylvania through the Whitfield Academy, once housed at this location. As a result, The United States Department of the Interior and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania entered the edifice of Jones Tabernacle A.M.E. Church in the National Register of Historic Places on October 15,1980.

Historic Jones Tabernacle has had eleven pastors in its history: Bishop Richard R.

Wright, Jr. (1930-1932); Rev. William P. Stevenson (1932-1949); Rev. Seymour H. Barker (1949-1963); Rev. Emmer H. Booker (1963-1966); Rev. Eustace L. Blake (19661976); Rev. Harry J. White, Jr. (1976-1988); Rev. Eugene McAshan (1988-1997); Rev.

Ellis Louden (1997-2008); Rev. Stephen M. Lewis (2008-2011); Rev. Manuel Biagas (2011-2013); Rev. Stanley Hearst, II (2013-2017); Rev. John C. Reynolds (2017-2018) and Rev. Dr. Miriam J. Burnett (2018 - present). Historic Jones Tabernacle AMEC is a member of the West Main Line District of the Philadelphia Annual Conference, of the First Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

“Jones Tabernacle AME Church,” Bryn Mawr Education, accessed January 1, 2014 [http://www.brynmawr.edu/cities/archx/05-600/proj/p2/cpl2/jones\_tabernacle\_ame\_church.htm.](http://www.brynmawr.edu/cities/archx/05-600/proj/p2/cpl2/jones_tabernacle_ame_church.htm)

Richard R. Wright, Jr., *Eighty-Seven Years Behind the Black Curtain* (Nashville, TN: A.M.E. Sunday School Union, 1965), 121.

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