

A joyful noise in Frostburg



Mark Simons/Times-News

Attending Sunday's dedication service at Dickerson African Methodist Episcopal Church in Frostburg are (from left) the Rev. Constance Wheeler, pastor; Presiding Bishop

op Vinton Anderson, Second Episcopal District, AME Church; Mayor John Bambacus; and Presiding Elder Goodwin Douglas, Capitol District.

Dickerson AME Church renovating, reaching out

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FROSTBURG — Joyful music and praise emanated from the Dickerson African Methodist Episcopal Church Sunday afternoon as the congregation made plans to expand its ministry.

Their base is a historic white-frame church that sits on top of a hill at West Mechanic Street.

The church is looking at land for an adult day

care center, said the Rev. Constance Wheeler.

Dickerson AME's exterior has been renovated, and for the first time in its 154 years, the building has an indoor restroom.

"It's been 154 years in coming, but thanks to God, we have been blessed in this effort," the pastor said.

What did the congregation do before?

Dickerson

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"Fortunately a member's house was very close and she graciously allowed its use," said Bishop Vinton Anderson, of the AME's Second Episcopal District.

"Well, you didn't eat a large breakfast before church," added the Rev. Goodwin Douglas, the presiding district elder and past Dickerson pastor from 1965 to 1973.

"And you don't drink much water, either," joked the bishop.

Anderson and Douglas traveled several hours to join in the celebration and pray for the future.

Also taking part was the Rev. Gary Curtis, pastor of Metropolitan AME Church, Cumberland, and past Dickerson pastor.

Bishop Anderson said the congregation has been active in its

community and is historically significant "because Dickerson was founded only 29 years after our AME denomination was founded."

Dickerson is one of 385 AME churches in Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and the District of Columbia. Frostburg's first AME church was at Ormond Street, and known as Hall's Chapel. In 1881 the church was rebuilt at West Mechanic and Pine streets.

Wheeler said the congregation is one of hope, optimism and service.

"We're looking to do more outreach and serve as God would have us to do," Wheeler added.

The congregation of 23 holds a regular Sunday school and weekly services, feeds and ministers to shut-ins and helps students at Frostburg State University.

The church distributes Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets to people who need help.

Mayor John Bambacus and his wife, son and daughter and Frostburg Administrator David Cotton attended the service.

Bambacus said the church has seen good and other times because it flourished even when discrimination limited where African-Americans could attend religious services.

"It's one of our oldest churches and an important part of the community," Bambacus said.

The city provided in-kind services to reduce the cost of the renovations that were financed by the congregation, other AME members and many of Frostburg churches contributed as well. Some contractors contributed.