Union Bethel AME Church and We Are Family CDC Agency History

Mission and Initial Founding

Union Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (UBAME), parent of the We Are Family Community Development Corporation (WAFCDC), interprets the scriptures as a mandate to respond to the needs of people. That is not done necessarily to grow the church and hence the outreach work is not conducted to glorify the church but to meet the needs of those requiring assistance. The AME Book of Discipline, which in its mission statement, lays out the biblical doctrine and mandate of the denomination under which the CDC operates. This statement in essence speaks to embracing people holistically by addressing their spiritual, social, economic, intellectual, and physical needs. In this way, the AME church empowers people. These people can be within and outside of the church. The theology has a belief in "*keeping the bread fresh*" or in other words, being aware of the needs of the people in the area that the church serves and then working to meet those needs.

> *The AME Church has a lot to do with social justice. That is one of the major reasons for the founding the AME Church. It wasn't to establish another branch of Methodism… So outreach ministries that benefit the neediest of us and those who are lost and forgotten are just crucial to everything that we do and everything that we believe. It is part of the work of Christ. Christ's ministry was conducted mainly outside of the temple.*

Therefore, that is how Union Bethel AME operates. This is how the church and its members reflect their faith. Having the CDC as well as the other ministries of the church allows services to be provided confidentially, with respect and dignity. Having the off-site location of the CDC greatly facilitates this.

The mission of We Are Family Community Development Corporation is:

> *to provide leadership, training, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to residents and businesses. Our objective is to empower communities in Northwest*

Baltimore County by strengthening the social, intellectual, and economic characteristics of the residential environments through ongoing education, training, and development which promote self sufficiency.

Although the church has supported the CDC in its formation and early years, it is now a stand-alone 501(c)3 with its own structure and its own funds obtained largely through a variety of grants. The Assistant Pastor, Rev. Linda Mouzon, serves as president and executive director of WAFCDC. Both the pastor and the assistant pastor grew up in the AME church. The CDC board does not require that members be from Union Bethel, but most are members. Three seats are reserved for UBAME members, the pastor and heads of the Stewardship board and the Trustee board. The church has a number of professional people in leadership roles in the county and state government as well as in business and entrepreneurial endeavors that have helped the CDC accomplish its goals.

Although the CDC was started with a number of volunteers from the church, it now employs a number of individuals who are not affiliated with the church. The church maintains a link to the CDC through an annual fundraiser it holds and through provision of off-site space for CDC programs and activities. No funds are received from the Washington Area AME Conference to which the church reports on a quarterly basis.

The programs of the CDC are: Christian-based Education Services – the Child Learning Center, Christian Academy, Summer Camp and Before and After School Programs; Homeless Prevention Program; Foreclosure Counseling and Foreclosure Prevention Program; Good Samaritan Emergency Assistance Program; Union Bethel AME Outreach; and the Community Meeting Center.

Milestones

1787 Creation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME).

1820's A parcel of land was set aside in Randallstown, Maryland for Negro families to use as a church.

1826 Good Hope Church was constructed and organized. It was also known as "Little Log Church."

1840 Union Bethel ("Little Log Church") unites with the A.M.E. Church and was assigned to the Baltimore Conference.

1870 A new church structure was completed and the first written deed to the land was obtained. Later, the church was severely damaged by fire and rendered unusable until 1881.

1967 A new church structure was built. The new church was dedicated on April 14, 1968.

1984 - Present - Rev. Charles T. Sembly was appointed pastor. Membership blossomed from 200 to over 1,200 members.

1992 The property at 8615 Church Lane in Randallstown, Maryland was purchased. The first worship service in the new building was on August 2, 1992.

1992-Present - Union Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church stands today with over 1,200 members and more than 45 ministries dedicated to serving Christ.

2003 Founding of We Are Family Community Development Corporation (WAFCDC) following participation in the Compassion Capital Fund Demonstration Program via intermediary Associated Black Charities and subsequent receipt of a Maryland Department of Education 21st Century Community Grant for the creation of the first CDC program, the Child Learning Center. The CDC participated in an Urban Development Assessment process and conducted a number of other assessments including that of its church members and community to develop its strategic plan. They determined their mission to be to empower individuals throughout the community and to reclaim and restore dignity to the people and their communities.

2004 Opening of the Union Bethel Child Learning Center, a Christian Pre-School which focuses on teaching Christian principles and developing the whole child.

2007 WAFCDC filed for a separate 501c3 status after coming under that of the church since its founding.

2009 Construction of the Family Life Intergenerational Center to house all of the community services funded by a State of Maryland Bond and the congregation

Finances

We are Family CDC was created with financial backing and infrastructure support from the church and congregation. At present time, funding comes mainly through a variety of grants, largely from governmental sources. Also, several of the programs of the CDC are fee-based. The structure of these programs was intentional to ensure the sustainability of the CDC.

Funding from the United Way of Central Maryland allowed for the moving of the CDC from the church to another church-owned building down the street from the church. The church still supports the CDC through provision of space and recently supported the construction of a Family Life Intergenerational Center, an expansion of the existing CDC building, to house CDC programs. An annual fundraiser conducted by the church brings in $8-10,000 from the congregation, along with other financial contributions throughout the year. Additional resources are from: the Maryland Food Bank, Freddie Mac, HUD, Maryland State Department of Education, the United States Department of Agriculture**,** FEMA*,* BB&T Bank, UMBC, and the Baltimore County Office of Community Conservation.

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