<http://mooressanctuaryamezion.org/history/>

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The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was founded in New York, NY in 1796 and is known as the “Freedom Church”. The AME Zion denomination grew rapidly with the ordination of black ministers, but was mostly confined to the northern United States until the conclusion of the American Civil Wa**r**. In the first decade after the war, together with the AME Church, AME Zion sent missionaries to the South to aid freedmen in starting churches.

Consequently, the history of Moore’s Sanctuary AME Zion Church dates back to the early reconstruction in Charlotte Mecklenburg after the Civil War. Unlike some southern cities, Charlotte was not damaged in the Civil War and the city grew rapidly between 1860 and 1870, during which time Moore’s Sanctuary was founded—having been one of the first AME Zion churches to be established in the county.

Moore’s Sanctuary has a long illustrious history in Mecklenburg County, and like many early southern churches had its beginning in Sloan Quarters in 1870 as a brush arbor, and has never moved from its original location at 4101 Morris Field Drive. Brush arbors were usually first built when churches were being formed and later converted to outdoor churches.  The arbor was usually laid out so as to be about 20 feet wide and 25 feet long with a slight pitch to the roof.

Moore’s Sanctuary was named for the late Rev. Dublin Moore and Bishop John Jamison Moore. The first pastor was Elder Thomas and the organizers: Jimmy and Rose Jones, David and Mary Moore, Anderson and Easter McDonald, Charles and Rachel Parker, Ben and Eliza Nance, Andy and Caroline Alexander, Frank and Sarah Harris, Jackson, Minerva Jamison, Mrs. Harriet Sadler and Mrs. Sarah Torrence. The organizers soon had the foresight and recognized the need to build God a ‘sanctuary’. Property was donated by Ben Nance, Frank Harris, Charlie Torrence, and Lewis Moore. Charlie Parker and Samuel Lee Taylor donated additional property for the cemetery which was adjacent to what would later become Plato Price High School.

During the formative years, from the brush arbor the A shaped building was erected on the site of the current cemetery. The first sanctuary was built prior to 1930, and renovated in the early 1940’s under Rev. T. M. Powe and relocated to the current site. The two-story educational wing and the fellowship hall were added in 1966 under Rev. David Pharr, Sr. He gave of his time and tithe and, along with some members of the church, he gave his talent as brick mason—whereby most of the brick exterior work was done for a nominal fee. During the formative years, worship services were held every other Sunday until the members determined that the spiritual needs of the church required that they meet every Sunday.

An editorial appraisal about Rev. Pharr described him: “Upon assuming the pastorate of Moore’s Sanctuary in 1960, he found a people discouraged, harassed, and ready to abandon the dwindling heritage of their fore-bearers quietly and without pomp or ostentation. Rev. Pharr began to rebuild, first in their minds, hearts and souls; soon he revived hope in their ebbing hearts, and revived the dying and he resurrected what was dead, spiritually and physically.”

Ground was broken in December 1973 under the pastoral leadership of the Rev. John M. McCall and the congregation moved into the current location in June 1975.  Rev. McCall was followed by Rev. William R. Robinson in 1981, who was instrumental in liquidation of the church mortgage in December 1984. The burning of the church mortgage on September 21, 1986, was one of the first major accomplishments by the church under the pastorate of Rev. John I. Jackson. Appointed to Moore’s Sanctuary in December 1984, he was the visionary and Oscar W. Bidgood and Ervin Reid served as chairpersons of the building committee for the final phase of Moore’s Sanctuary, the John I. Jackson Family Life Center, which was completed and dedicated February 21, 1999.

Plato Price High School, like the early Rosenwald Schools, had a deep-rooted and profound impact on the Moore’s Sanctuary community of believers—enabling the church to grow and spiritually undergird the children–reinforcing the home, church and school concept in the area. Many of the students who attended Plato Price became members of Moore’s Sanctuary and held and continue to hold key positions in the church today:  Namely, O. W. Bidgood, Ervin Reid, Ruby McDonald Mitchell, Joyce Blake Reid, Thelma McClain Ardrey, Vera Torrence Gladden, Louise Cooper Pruitt, Carolyn Davis Moore, Ruth McClain Robinson, Edith Hill Massey, Booker T. Alexander, Robert Hill, Rev. Charles E. Woods and Rev. John E. McClain.