

History of Lighthouse Baptist Church (from inception to 2023)

While serving at a church in Waldorf, Maryland, Reverend Calvin Johnson was told by God to start a church—a beacon of faith for the community. His wife, Burnell and Deacon Frank Boone, who are known for their steadfast faith and unwavering dedication to the Lord's work assisted him in this effort.

On September 1, 1996, Lighthouse Baptist Mission held its first service in Reverend Johnson's garage at his home in Waldorf. Those present included Calvin Johnson, Burnell Johnson, Frank Boone, Kimberly, Treymane, and Clamaria Burley, Rev. Vernon and Mary Clark, Kandace Johnson, Rev. LaTanya, Cheryl, and Whitney Johnson, Kimberly Johnson, Willie Kelly, Joseph, Antwan, and Ricky Washington.

As the congregation flourished and grew in number, it became abundantly clear that the modest garage could no longer accommodate the growing congregation. On November 3, 1996, their earnest prayers were met with a blessing when they secured Eva Turner Elementary School in Waldorf as their new place of worship. However, the school could only offer its facilities between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., which greatly limited the church's ability to provide a comprehensive array of spiritual programs, such as Bible Study, Sunday School, Choir Rehearsal, and Out-Reach Missions. Undeterred by this challenge, the congregation embarked upon yet another quest to find a more suitable sanctuary that could fully embrace their expanding spiritual needs and aspirations.

Once again, on February 2, 1997, Lighthouse Baptist Mission's sincere prayers were answered when they moved to a new location at 10735 Theodore Greene Blvd, White Plains, Maryland. Reverend George Horton, Pastor of New Fellowship Baptist Church, led the dedication ceremony for this building on March 16, 1997. Immediately following this important occasion, the church diligently embarked on the detailed tasks of completing all necessary procedures and paperwork to become legally recognized as a State of Maryland Corporation, setting the foundation for their future endeavors.

On April 2, 1997, Lighthouse Baptist Mission formally became known as Lighthouse Baptist Church of White Plains, incorporated under the laws of the State of Maryland. Around this period, Reverend Calvin Johnson, guided by his faith in God, was inspired to pursue the development of a larger, permanent church home. He envisioned a facility that would include a sanctuary for worship, a fellowship hall, as well as a nursery. The long-term vision extended to setting up a childcare center, a gymnasium, and a Christian school. The congregation embraced Reverend Johnson's vision and began efforts to turn this dream into reality.

On October 12, 1997, Reverend Calvin Johnson was formally installed as the first Pastor of Lighthouse Baptist Church of White Plains. The installation ceremony was officiated by Reverend Chester McDonald, Chancellor of Maple Springs Baptist College, with the assistance of Dr. Richard Logsdon, Director of Missions of the Potomac Baptist Association.

Later that month, on October 27, 1997, Lighthouse Baptist Church joined the Potomac Baptist Association as a sister church to the Southern Baptist Convention. As a startup church, Lighthouse was unable to pay a regular salary, so the Potomac Baptist Association provided Pastor Johnson with a monthly stipend. Also, it was during this time period that Lighthouse ordained and installed its first deacons who were Dale Contee, Burnell Johnson, and David Birts.

Dr. Richard Logsdon suggested to Lighthouse that it should deepen its engagement within a local community to better meet their needs. Following his advice, the church congregation decided that it would relocate to the Westlake Community. Then for several years, Pastor Johnson and Deacon Boone searched throughout the Waldorf Area for a future home for the church. They pursued many different locations including vacant land, as well as vacant buildings, but on every occasion, they were met with unsuccessful outcomes.

During 1999, Lighthouse was issued its 501(c)(3) designation from the Internal Revenue Service.

Being committed to moving to the Westlake Community, the church began renting space at William B. Wade Elementary School on Smallwood Dr. West in Waldorf. On July 1, 2000, Lighthouse conducted its first Sunday School and worship service in the Westlake Community.

Shortly thereafter, Dr. Richard Logsdon informed Pastor Johnson that First Baptist Church of Waldorf had 5-acres of vacant land adjacent to Westlake Senior High School on Middletown Road for-sale. Under Pastor Johnson's guidance, Lighthouse started working vigorously to accumulate sufficient funds to make a down payment to purchase the land.

Early 2002, the church was able to purchase the 5 acres of land next door to Westlake Senior High School for \$100,000 with a \$32,000 down payment, which included a \$20,000 grant from Southern Baptist Convention. The Baptist Convention of Maryland & Delaware (BCMD) gave the church an interest-free loan to purchase the land.

On August 17, 2002, Lighthouse marked a significant milestone with a groundbreaking and ribbon-cutting ceremony at the property's entrance. The individuals who participated in the ribbon cutting were Frank Boone, Dale Contee, Beverly Starks, Kendal Elliott, Janee Johnson, Burnell Johnson, Pastor Calvin Johnson, Richard Logsdon, and La'Tanya Johnson. This event was a thrilling chapter in the history of Lighthouse.

After purchasing the land, Lighthouse discovered that only about half of the 5 acres purchased could be used because of wetland restrictions. This resulted in Lighthouse changing its vision from having three (3) buildings to having only two (2) buildings: a sanctuary for worship and a fellowship hall for other activities.

The church, being excited about its future location, quickly began clearing the land for its new home. However, after the land was cleared, a local neighbor expressed their discontent to the county about a church moving in next door. The county informed the neighbor that the

church had mailed a notification in accordance with county ordinances, and since they had not registered their complaint within the specified time frame, their concerns could not be addressed. In an effort to be a good neighbor, the church erected a tall fence to create a boundary between the two properties. This event marked the first significant hurdle that Lighthouse would encounter in its endeavor to establish its new home at 3150 Middletown Road.

After resolving this dispute, the church hired an architect to design a prefabricated building, aiming to cut down on construction costs compared to a traditional brick-and-mortar structure. The architect quoted \$25,000 for a complete design, but upon completion, the price escalated to \$75,000. The church refused to pay the extra \$50,000 and the architect sued the church. The court ruled in favor of Lighthouse and ordered the Church pay \$500 for court cost. This legal conflict marked the second significant challenge the church faced in completing its new home.

During this time period, Pastor Calvin Johnson ordained his first female minister, Cynthia Warren. On March 28, 2003, Rev Cynthia Warren started Shabach Evangelistic Ministries in Waldorf, MD.

Through great perseverance and determination, and with the assistance of Dr. Richard Logsdon, director of missions at PBA, Lighthouse successfully secured a construction loan to build their new facility. Construction began on October 21, 2003. As the foundation was being laid, the prefabricated building was simultaneously being constructed in Seattle, Washington. To save funds, the church ceased its operations at Wade Elementary School and rented a trailer to hold worship service and Sunday school at the new location. This allowed the church to save \$3,000 per month. Upon completion, the prefab structure was packaged and transported to Waldorf using nine (9) tractor-trailer trucks.

During February 2004, when everything was in place to assemble the prefab building, the Waldorf area was hit by the 5th largest snowstorm on record, dumping over 16 inches of snow in our area. This was the most challenging effort Lighthouse faced in establishing its new home at 3150 Middletown Road. The church had rented a crane, costing \$500 per day, but it remained idle for over 30 days due to the snowfall. This severe weather caused mishap after mishap, leading to cost overruns, which were more than a half-a-million dollars. It seemed the church was experiencing a "Job Effect," where everything that could go wrong, went wrong. This event was the third and most devastating challenge the church faced in moving to its new home.

After the snow cleared and construction re-started, the project manager, who had received \$55,000, left the job before completion due to delays and another commitment. Pastor Johnson then assumed the role of project manager. Subsequently, after the walls of the church were put up and the ceiling put in place, the county building inspector ordered that the ceiling be taken down and a sprinkler system be installed at an additional cost of \$35,000.

In spite of the numerous setbacks, the church kept the faith, worked diligently and secured additional funding. Pastor Johnson and his "rag tag" team of non-professionals kept the faith and worked hard, for mostly no pay. Then a ray of sunshine appeared, a mission team came from Boston, MA, and installed all the siding around the church at no cost. This was a great

blessing. The building was completed by the first Sunday of May, 2004. Although the church was finished and had passed inspection, worship services could not begin until the parking lot was completed. Faced with the expansion of Middletown Road from two lanes to four, Lighthouse was under intense pressure to finish the entrance way to the parking lot to avoid a \$75,000 charge for a deceleration lane. Since the parking lot could not be used because it was not paved, according to county code, a church family agreed to pave the parking lot if the church would approve their proposal to start a day-care center, which was approved.

During the final building inspection, the inspector discovered that the contractor had incorrectly installed the steeple, requiring that it had to be taken down and reinstalled. To do this, a large section of the ceiling at the front of the church had to be dismantled. Furthermore, an engineering blueprint was needed to ensure proper installation of the steeple. The total cost of this project was \$12,000. With the church's financial resources being depleted, Pastor Johnson stepped up and personally borrowed \$12,000 to pay for the necessary work. Within two years, the church repaid the loan.

With steadfast faith and God's blessings, Lighthouse held its first worship service in its new home during November 2004 with a total membership of 15 adults and 33 children and a \$9,000 monthly mortgage payment.

Once the church construction was completed, God's blessings began to manifest. The congregation began to grow steadily. In the first year at its new home, all of the new members were new converts who were baptized. Furthermore during 2005, a generous contribution from an anonymous donor enabled Lighthouse to purchase its first marquee.

In 2006, the Director of Missions for PBA, Dr. Richard Logsdon, his wife Freeda and Rev. Pepe Medina visited a church in Tlaxcala, Mexico in a very poor community. While there, Dr. Logsdon saw an opportunity for Lighthouse to get involved in supporting a foreign mission by contributing financially monthly. Lighthouse seized the opportunity and immediately began the monthly donation. In 2007, PBA funded a trip for ten (10) people from Lighthouse to visit Tlaxcala, Mexico to meet the people and see what impact their donations were having on the people in this poor community. On their first mission effort, Lighthouse conducted a VBS and the church was eventually named Lighthouse Baptist Church of Tlaxcala, Mexico. The group of members, including Reverends Calvin Johnson, Burnell Johnson, Dale Contee, and Deacons Ed and Viola Wooten, Joanne Fitzgerald, Juan Posey, Lynn Fendell, Deborah Mitchell, and Heather Williams along with Rev. Pepe Medina (our translator), traveled to this area and participated in this mission.

Lighthouse Baptist Church experienced growth by establishing a church plant, Faith Temple Baptist International, under the leadership of Rev. Kevin Simmons. Lighthouse supported Pastor Simmons by providing financial resources and personnel, training materials, Bibles, and communion supplies for 5 years. The first service of this new church took place on August 10, 2014.

During 2009, Lighthouse continued to move forward with its Great Commission efforts by donating monthly to Wycliffe Bible Translator USA, whose mission is to work with churches,

communities and partner organizations until everyone can access God’s Word in a language that touches their hearts - speaking or signing more than 7,000 languages worldwide.

In 2010, Rev Michael Klotz was appointed as Lighthouse’s first Assistant Pastor.

In 2015, Lighthouse organized a mission trip to New Orleans, Louisiana, to assist Pastor Josephine of “Pray the Word Say the Word Church” after the devastation of hurricane Katrina. This group included Reverends Calvin Johnson, Burnell Johnson, Michael & Jarred Hamilton, Dale Contee, Kandace Johnson, Hope McKinley, her son Benjamin, Chrystal Ramsaur, Michelle Bullard, Deborah Mitchell, Natalie and Jasmine Thomas. Also, the Whitehead family drove to New Orleans to bring a large generator for future power outages. Lighthouse members conducted a week-long VBS.

In 2016, Reverend Dale Contee was appointed as the next Assistant Pastor of Lighthouse Baptist Church, after having served and led several church ministries for many years.

Also in 2016, Lighthouse expanded its mission efforts to Soweto, Africa, a region that has faced numerous challenges, including a lack of basic necessities like running water, and a need for educational support. Moved by compassion, the church donated over \$36,000 over a period of 3 years to support various school projects and other needs in Soweto, contributing significantly to the community. With our financial contributions, they were able to support a school with 500 students, managed by Pastor Chris and his wife Joanne, and they were able to dig a well for fresh water.

In 2019, Lighthouse planted its 2nd ministry, Word Tabernacle Christian Center, Pastored by Rev. Patricia DeLoatch.

During 2020, Lighthouse continued to expand its mission efforts by financially supporting the Smiles Ministry of Puerto Rico (Changing lives one smile at a time). The Smiles Ministry supplies clothing, shoes, food, medications, toys and education supplies to the poor and the needy.

The year of 2021 was the year of celebrations and accomplishments. In 2021, Lighthouse Baptist Church marked a significant milestone. We celebrated both Pastor Calvin Johnson's 25th pastoral anniversary and the church's 25th anniversary. However, this was also a challenging year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, that not only touched the families of the church and the county but also had a significant impact on the church. Despite these challenges, the church held strong in its faith in God and adapted to the times by enhancing its communication and worship methods. We launched a new website (www.lbcw.org) to keep our members updated about our ministries and missions of the church. We also introduced live-streaming services on platforms like Facebook, YouTube, as well as our website to accomplish the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20). This allowed us to continue worship services for our members who couldn't attend in person and to reach potential new members online. We also installed a secured lockbox and instituted online, electronic giving which allowed members and friends to financially support the church. In addition to supporting foreign missions, Lighthouse has supported and continued to support many local mission efforts, such as Lifestyles of Charles County MD by hosting safe

nights, coat drives, book bags, personal care items and bottled water. We also support the women's and men's shelter in Charles County.

During 2021, the church saw a growth in children and youth membership. To support this, Pastor Johnson appointed Rev. Courtney Lewis as its first Youth Pastor. Rev. Courtney took on the role with enthusiasm, leading and educating our young members about Christianity and encouraging them to focus on their worship, schoolwork, and community outreach. She engages with them through Children's Church and weekly Bible studies.

In July 2022, the church upgraded its marquee to a new digital marquee. This LED sign, capable of displaying moving messages and images, enhances our ability to share worship times, upcoming events, and other important information with the community, reaching people whether they are on foot or in a car.

In August 2023, we dedicated the Lighthouse Baptist Church Memorial Garden. This new garden faces the entrance to the church grounds for all to see. It is to remember those members that have passed on and it serves as a tribute to the lives and the love they shared for the church. This garden was envisioned by Sister Carolyn Countiss and approved by Pastor Calvin Johnson. It was celebrated with a dedication ceremony during our Sunday Worship Service, followed by a fellowship reception, serving as a tribute to the love and legacy of those remembered.

In August 2024, we celebrated our 28th year in ministry, both Pastor Johnson and the Lighthouse Baptist Church. Awards were presented to Richard Logsdon, former PBA Director, and to Rev. Vernon and Mary Clark. We also had one of our church plants, Word Tabernacle Christian Center join us for this auspicious occasion, having Pastor Patricia DeLoatch minister the Word of God for this amazing service.

The scholarship committee held its first 100 Women In Hats Fundraiser on March 29, 2025. There were several purposes for the fundraiser: to support the scholarship program at Lighthouse; to provide financial aid to help students achieve their educational dreams; and to empower young scholars to overcome challenges and create a lasting impact. This event was a success on all points mentioned.