

A Note from
CHS President Gary T. Johnson

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January 9, 2006
Fire at Pilgrim Baptist Church: A Terrible Loss

The fire at Bronzeville's Pilgrim Baptist Church has caused a terrible loss. I have posted a [photographic tribute](#) to the church on my personal website and include the text of a letter sent this morning to the acting pastor below.

Please consider making a donation to the rebuilding effort. Send donations to:

Pilgrim Baptist Church
PO Box 94433
Chicago, IL 60690-4433

Please note that while this address was updated on January 17, 2006, donations sent to the previously posted address will also be received by the church.

Here is the text of the letter dated January 9, 2006:

Rev. Robert Tribble, Acting Pastor
Pilgrim Baptist Church
3301 South Indiana Ave.
Chicago, IL 60616-3838

Dear Rev. Tribble:

On behalf of the Chicago Historical Society, I would like to express our deepest sorrow over the devastating fire at your church. The destruction of an historical site causes irretrievable loss, and your site was the home of Gospel music. The loss of an architectural masterpiece is tragic, and your building was one of the most important in the city. The loss of a house of worship is particularly shocking, and your church was the scene of events in the life of family and community, a place where people felt the presence of God.

On December 3, a friend and I had the opportunity to explore your church, along with Tim Samuelson, the city's cultural historian. We always will be grateful to your deacon who unlocked the door for the three of us, showed us around and shared many personal memories, including memories of Dr. Dorsey. It was a gloomy day, but the light streamed in the windows.

I enclose a disk with my snapshots of that visit. Use them any way you like, including for

insurance. I am posting them on my personal website as a [photographic tribute](#). Among them, you will find a digital image of your portrait of Dr. Dorsey, taken from a close range. If the original was lost in the fire, I would like to present you with a large print of this photograph.

We are heartened to hear that you will rebuild. I also will post information about how to make donations to your rebuilding project through the account at Amalgamated Bank.

May the words of Dr. Dorsey bring you comfort — the words he wrote during his first year as your choir director when he suffered his own devastating personal loss, the words that have become so familiar to all of us as a Gospel classic:

"Precious Lord, take my hand,
Lead me on, let me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.
Through the storm, through the night,
Lead me on to the light.
Take my hand, precious Lord,
Lead me home."

Sincerely,



Gary T. Johnson
CHS President

Related Links

Please note that these links will take you off of the CHS website. CHS is not responsible for the creation, maintenance, or content of linked sites.

- Photographic Tribute: [Pilgrim Baptist Church \(Images from December 3, 2005\)](#)