



REV. DR. WILMER T. FRAZIER, JR.  
Pastor

Saint John

## African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

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DONALD MACKALL  
Chair, Trustees

KATHY WALLACE  
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Co-Pastor & Poor Steward  
Notary

PAMELA LUCKY  
Co-Pastor's Steward

WENDY WHITTAKER  
Church Secretary

BRENDA JENNINGS  
Treasurer

August 26, 2020

Mr. Devon Dodson  
Maryland Department of the Environment  
1800 Washington Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21230

RE: Chesapeake Terrace Rubble Landfill – Conway Road, Odenton, MD

Dear Mr. Dodson:

St. John African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Zion Church is located in the community of Wilsontown that was established and settled by former slaves in 1875. The church was previously called Forks AME Zion Church and was organized on March 19, 1887 and erected on May 31, 1908 under the Pastoral leadership of the Reverend L. T. Conquest. They first worshipped in an 18<sup>th</sup> century fieldstone building donated to the freed slaves by the Quakers. It sat on the west side of the railroad tracks previously owned by the Baltimore-Potomac Company, then the Pennsylvania Company and now by Amtrak which employed many of those freed slaves living in the community. The name Forks was given to the church in recognition of their location at the Great Fork of the Patuxent River. The current edifice is the third building where some of the descendants of those former slaves are still currently worshipping. The church was relocated to its current site when Fort George G. Meade U. S. Army Installation (Ft. Meade), previously known as Camp Meade, purchased the property on the west side of the railroad tracks to expand Ft. Meade. The trustees purchased the current property and the church was rebuilt and completed on May 5, 1942 under then Pastor, the Reverend J. J. Howard. Twenty-five years later in 1967 under the appointed Pastor, the Reverend French Myers, the name of the church was changed to St. John African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (St. John).

The church has been a long-standing fixture in the community. The community has recently received local and state recognition of being a historic community and are working on national recognition. We have been partnered with the surrounding communities against the Halle Company/Chesapeake Terrace since 1990 when they filed two special exception

requests with Anne Arundel County to operate a rubble landfill and surface mining business. Our Pastor was the Reverend Maxwell Minnix when we had to put on our battle armor. Chesapeake Terrace now has only one way to enter its property and it's via Conway Road directly across the road in front of St. John A.M.E. Zion Church. They are unable to enter on Patuxent Road which would affect the neighboring community of Woodwardville which is historic and restricted to truck traffic. The Forks of Patuxent Improvement Association along with Two Rivers and the Greater Crofton Council are non-profit special interest groups that have been tirelessly opposing the Chesapeake Terrace project. In the beginning, for a period of 17 months from April 1992 - September 1993, there have been 16 hearings held before the Anne Arundel County Board of Appeals. On December 23, 1993, the Board of Appeals granted Chesapeake Terrace a special exception approval. This exception stated the entrance location, the hours of operation (7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.) for (12) years, with upgrades to Conway Road.

In 2002, Chesapeake Terrace even attempted to have the Delaware Nation Tribe, an Oklahoma based Indian tribe, purchase the property and thereafter sell it to them. The purpose of this proposal would eliminate the State of Maryland and Anne Arundel County from any jurisdiction over the property since it would fall under the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Federal Government. In 2004, the Delaware Nation Tribe of Oklahoma applied to purchase the property but lawmakers opposed the acquisition.

Chesapeake Terrace has received numerous 2-year extensions and has been referred from the Court of Special Appeals to the Circuit Court. In 2018, Chesapeake Terrace received another 2-year extension. It is now 2020 and we have been partnered in this battle for 30 years for freedom from this constant thorn. It's long overdue for this thorn to be removed from the members of St. John, the non-profit special interest groups, the community of Wilsonstown and the surrounding communities which have been affected and will be impacted by this rubble landfill.

It has been said that history is the best teacher, so let's examine some of the history of rubble landfills and mining operations and the adverse effect on other historically African-American communities disproportionately impacted by the reach of environmental institutionalized racism which now seeks to place St. John A.M.E. Zion Church in the same compromising position. A March 20, 2009 article in the Capital News concerning nearby neighborhoods in Gambrills, MD stated, "Fly-ash contamination has become a concern in the Gambrills area after 2.4 million tons of the substance was dumped into a sand-and-gravel mine, contaminating nearby wells with a cache of chemicals, some hazardous. Baltimore Gas and Electric Co. and later Constellation Energy Group began dumping the substance in the mine in 1995. After testing a single well in 2006, the county Health Department found several potentially dangerous substances, including carcinogens, and began a wide-scale investigation, revealing contamination in at least 23 wells. Eventually, the Maryland Department of the Environment fined Constellation \$1 million and a subsequent class-action lawsuit filed by the citizens near the sand-and-gravel mine was settled for an estimated \$54 million." In a 1992 article about the Millersville Landfill contamination, the Baltimore Sun reported that, "20 residential wells show at least traces of pollutants similar to those found in ground water beneath the 567-acre dump. Four show levels above federal drinking water standards." Each of these surrounding communities has sustained years of environmental neglect and abuse and both communities are within a 25-mile radius of our beloved St. John A.M.E. Zion Church. As noted previously, with history

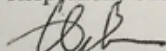


as the best teacher the likelihood of well water contamination as a result of rubble landfill and mining activity located directly across from the entrance of our beloved St. John is highly probable and concerning.

In the time and era of "**BLACK LIVES MATTER**", we find it inexplicable that the St. John A.M.E. Zion Church located in the community of Wilsontown does not matter. Wilsontown is a historically African American community. The residents of the Wilsontown community have well water and any possibility of contamination of their wells is unacceptable. In addition, the idea of any member of the community relying upon National Waste Managers (NWM) to first admit they caused the well water issue, and secondly for NWM to infer they will assist the homeowner in correcting the issue is a process void of any independent environmental oversight or regulation. There should be no assistance, rather 100% responsibility by NWM to remediate any issue of residential well water contamination. Further, the evidence of climate change is very real in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia (DMV). The areas are marked by rising temperatures, increased rainfall, and flooding, all factors that could lead to widespread contamination should run-off occur. The environmental racism in the black community will be further evidenced by NWM's need to purchase our land to widen the road to accommodate their daily estimated (83) commercial trucks to ingress and egress from the Conway Road entrance. Many members of St. John A.M.E. Zion Church are products of the Wilsontown community and it is incomprehensible that we have been fighting this same issue for more than 30 years.

For generations the minority community of Wilsontown has had to endure the environmental impacts of the sand quarries that existed in our midst. Now that the quarries have been reclaimed as the Two Rivers community, developers now want to impose a rubble landfill and mining operation practically in the back yards of residents bringing noise, unsafe heavy truck traffic, air pollution, erosion, sedimentation and runoff. For generations the people of Wilsontown have worked, lived and raised families on our own property during a time when it was nigh impossible to do so. Consideration must be given to the effects of the landfill on the Wilsontown community and the St. John A.M.E. Zion Church. The 1994 Presidential Executive Order 12898 enacted by President Clinton was made for cases such as this. We the members of St. John African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church demand that the landfill be denied. In the words of Congressman John Lewis, "When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have to speak up. You have to say something; you have to do something." As a church, as a community, as a voice of conscience, we stand to say **STOP** the injustice!

Respectfully Submitted,



The Reverend Dr. Wilmer T. Frazier, Jr., Pastor  
St. John African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

Sub-Committee Members:

The Reverend Jane Mackall, Associate Pastor  
Brenda Jennings, Church Treasurer and Trustee  
Wanda Jeter, Trustee and Leaders-of-Leaders  
Jerome Lucky, Trustee  
Wendy Whittaker, Church Secretary and Trustee