

PRESIDENT CALLS FOR PRAYER GBSC REACTS TO TRAGEDY IN CHARLESTON, SC



Sanctuary view of Mother Emanuel A. M. E. Church in Charleston, SC which is the site of a mass shooting on Wednesday, June 17. Nine persons including the pastor died.

Tragedy struck Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, South Carolina on Wednesday night, June 17. Nine persons were murdered by a 21-year old gunman who began shooting after the Mid Week Bible Study ended. Among the persons who lost their lives was the Church's pastor, The Reverend Clementa Pinckney, who was also a South Carolina State Senator.

In reacting to the shocking news, President Nilous M. Avery, II, issued the following statement: "Many of us awoke this morning with shock and sadness after hearing news of a tragic mass shooting in a Charleston, South Carolina church that left nine dead on Wednesday. The Emanuel A.M.E. Church was hijacked by evil, and our collective hearts break with the senseless loss of innocent lives. Our General Baptist family prays for all whose lives have been touched by this

tragedy, as well as for those who have been affected by other acts of violence. We pray for strength, comfort, peace, and perseverance from the Lord Jesus the Christ Whose own suffering brought us life, here and for eternity. May we find solace in the words of the songwriter Thomas Moore: Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal."

The Church (known as Mother Emanuel) is the oldest African Methodist Episcopal Church in the south tracing its roots back to 1791. According to the National Park Service website, "The history of this congregation reflects the development of religious institutions for African Americans in Charleston. Its roots stem from a religious group of free blacks and slaves organized in 1791. In 1816, black members of Charleston's Methodist Episcopal church withdrew over disputed burial ground, and under the leadership of Morris Brown, formed a separate congregation. The church's 1400 members soon thereafter established themselves an African Methodist Episcopal church, a denomination formally established in 1816 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Two years later, Brown and other ministers of the church were jailed for violating state and local laws which prohibited religious gatherings of slaves and free blacks independent of white supervision. In 1822 the church was investigated for its involvement with a planned slave revolt. Denmark Vesey, one of the church's founders, organized a major slave uprising in Charleston. Vesey was raised in slavery in the Virgin Islands among newly imported Africans. He was the personal servant of slave trader Captain Joseph Vesey, who settled in Charleston in 1783. Denmark remained with him until in 1799, when he was able to purchase his freedom with a winning lottery ticket worth \$1500. He became a successful carpenter, especially among Charleston's majority black population. Beginning in December 1821, Vesey began to organize a slave rebellion, but authorities were informed of the plot before it could take place. Three hundred thirteen alleged participants were arrested, and 35 including Vesey were executed. The plot created mass hysteria throughout the Carolinas and the South. Brown, suspected but never convicted of knowledge of the plot, went north to Philadelphia where he eventually became the second bishop of the AME denomination."

President Avery is calling upon every General Baptist Church in North Carolina to observe a moment of silence during worship on Sunday, June 21, and to offer prayers for our sisters and brothers in the A.M.E. tradition.