Birmingham Baptist Churches Exploring their Black History Project

Oral history Interview of Mrs Cassetta Williams, 4 July 2025 @ New Christ Baptist Church.

Conducted by: Gale Richards (principal investigator) and Edwin (Ossie) Daly (co-researcher).

Start at

Gale: I'm Gale, you tell me your name and your story.

Cassetta: I'm Cassetta Williams. I joined Christ Church in 1963. And the same week I came to England, I actually went to church. Because I was only living five minutes or less than five minutes' walk to the church.

Gale: What's the name of the church?

Cassetta: New... The church was Christ Church Baptist, Christ Church Baptist. As a member of the church in Jamaica, I was given a letter to represent me to the church, I would join in England. The letter stating the church name where I came from, and address. Also stated that I was a Sunday school teacher, in which I was welcome at Christ Church. As a first black Sunday school teacher for Christ Church also a first lay preacher for Christ Church. I join, I join the old church over the road from this new one There wasn't any... I came here when there was a pastor. I forget his name now, but shortly after he left and there wasn't any pastor for quite a while. It was run by deacons. But more, all, the officers were white. Thinking about as I can remember, Mr. Williams he was from Wales, but he was in the church for a very long time Remember Mr. Lloyd. We also had a doctor. His name was Dr. Massey, and a lawyer also, but I forget the name. I don't want to guess. Mr. Michael would became a treasurer. We would have lay preachers each week preaching because there was no pastor as I have already said. During that time, we have girls brigade and boys brigade and this was run by Mr. Lloyd. The posts I hold in the church – this is some of it – was a Sunday school teacher, Sunday school superintendent, deacon, building treasury - treasury for the building fund, church treasury. After the church recognized how well I do with the building fund, the church decided that I should be their treasurer. And I did that for over 20 years…most of the fundraising was by me with other friends helping. But I was the one who proposed the fundraising. Fundraising, we have yearly trips, I can remember the first trip that we had, the second trip, we had we had three coaches leaving here…and a Caribbean evening was actually proposed by my daughter. Me and she helping. We proposed concert and I believe is the first concert that held in the area of Aston and around. And the concert was proposed by a lady

named Mrs. McDonald, but she left the church for a very, very long time. But I keep going with Sister Pryce helping, and also Sister Ellis. But I have to do all the paper works. Okay. Running the church, after I was here for a while without a pastor. I run the church for at least five years on one occasion. And do all the works that the pastor normally does. Because I actually have the pastor books that I could learn from, as a lay preacher - Baptist lay preacher. Most people call me 'Pastor Williams'. I blessed baby, I train candidate for baptism and baptize new members, but I always call or invite another professional pastor with me, during the baptism. I receive member into membership, do preaching, leading Ladies Fellowship, and all the meetings for the deacons and church and church meetings. We…the pastor… the first pastor that we had come to help us was Pastor Payne. He was very, very, good, but he's passed now. Then we have, I have Pastor Pebble which would help me sometime, along with Pastor George at Grange Road, and Pastor George is the one that helped me to put up the overhead projector, that's when we started that new overhead projector. And yes, and then we have Pastor Brownlee, and then he left. Then we had Pastor Frank Mardel. Then he passed, he did he retired and passed. Pastor Amos also retired. Then we had for the first time a Black pastor, Pastor Patrick, and he came. Actually, as a student pastor, for this was his first church. Me stop there. You may ask me other questions. This was just a little something I put down [referring to notes she had with her]. You know but I mean it could be more, you understand.

Gale: So, let me ask you some questions. So, Mrs. Williams...you came to this church in 1963…

Ends at 9.30.

Starts at 9.43

Gale: And when you came, were there any other Black people in the congregation, when you came? Were there any Black, other Black men or women, or was it just you when you first came?

Cassetta: I can't remember, but I believe maybe, maybe, Black people was here, but I don't…

Gale: You don't remember?

Cassetta: Yes, I don't, yeah, but they didn't take any part. Yeah, we're coming, but I don't remember them taking part.

Gale: And did you become a member very quickly?

Cassetta: Yes, very quickly.

Gale: So, you think the same year you became a church member?

Cassetta: Same year, because, as a Sunday school teacher…

Gale: So how quickly did you become a Sunday school teacher?
So, if you arrived in 1963, when do you think you started to become a Sunday school teacher?

Cassetta: I don't remember rightly, but it couldn't be less than about three months or so. Because they did like my... all the choruses from Jamaica, and I was giving it to them, you understand, so they love the choruses So they enjoyed you know...
Ends at 10.54

Starts at 11.30
Gale: …And how would you describe the way in which the church received you, and the other Black church members? How would you describe it?

Cassetta: To be frank, I, I had no problem with them.
Gale: They were good to you.
Cassetta: They were very good to me…
Ends at 11.49