

ST. JAMES BAPTIST CHURCH

St. James Baptist Church is one of two churches organized for the African American residents of [Steptoe](#). Saint Luke's African American Methodist Episcopal Church (demolished in 2003) was formed in 1879 and St. James Baptist came along in 1883.

In the early 1870s, Reverend Henry Robinson, pastor of 2nd Baptist Church at 10th & Charlotte, came to the Steptoe neighborhood and preached to the people in a home or wherever they could find a vacant building. In 1883, L.N. Leonard arrived in Westport and the congregation began to grow, and in 1886, a building was erected at Mill Street and High Street (now 40th Terrace). This building served the African American Community in Westport until 1938.

That year the neighboring Manor Bakery purchased the building to expand their operations. Members of St. James purchased property at 43rd and Washington - and also bought the adjoining house at 4224 Washington - and held services in the home until the new church was completed in 1939. The church served as a community center, and elected officials, such as Congressman Richard Bolling, came and spoke to the congregation and to gather input about the pending Civil Rights Act. The church has continued serving the residents of the Steptoe area from this location.

St. James Baptist Church was added to the Kansas City Register of Historic Places on November 7, 2013.