

Telling Our Stories

Civil Rights, Black Power and the Church's Response

1950s and 60s

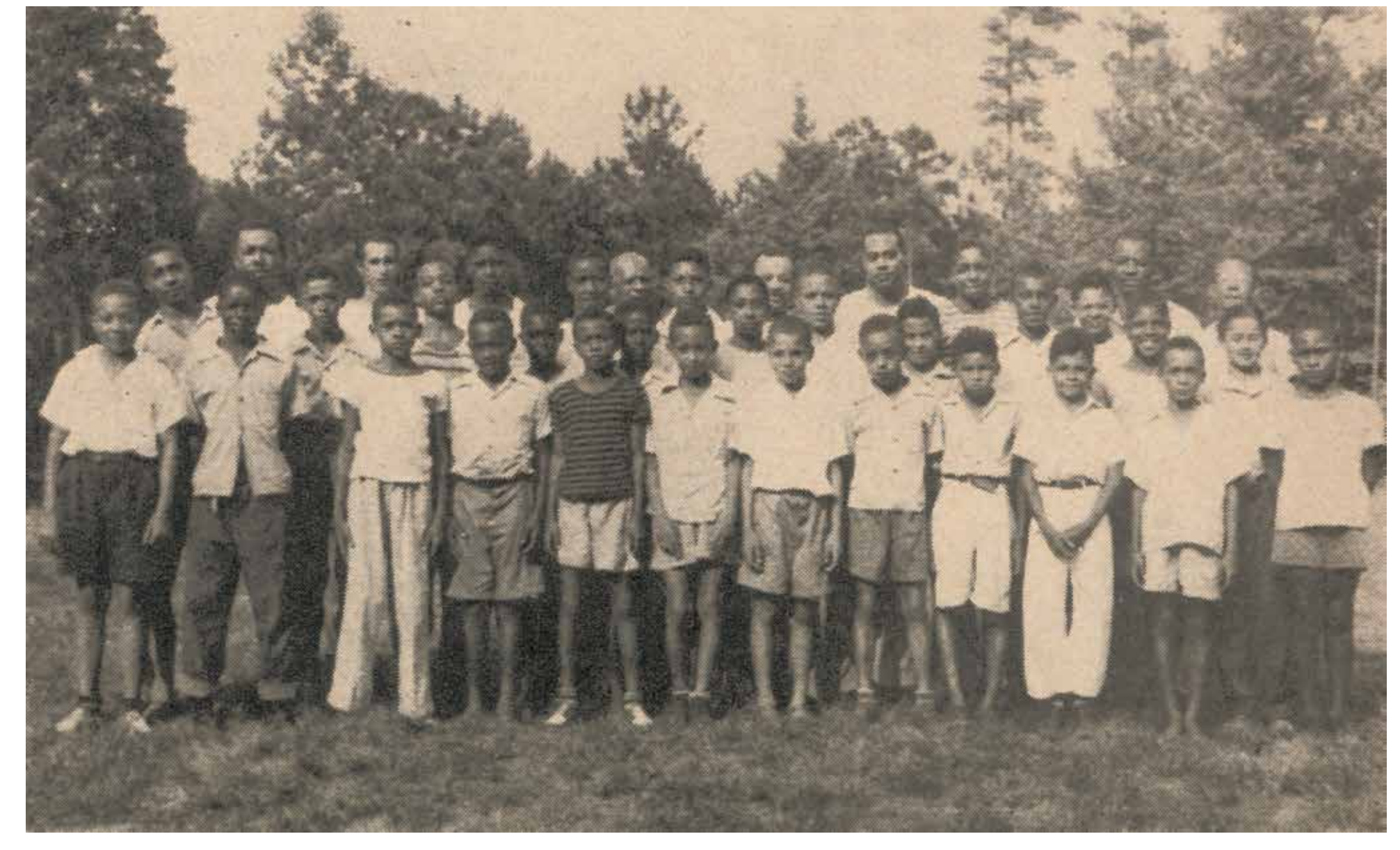
By the mid-1950s, the Diocese faced a two-fold challenge. Black congregations and institutions were languishing. Only one Black priest was added to the clergy rolls in the 1950s. There were no Black churches where the priest had just one parish as his sole responsibility, and three congregations were without priests altogether in 1959. Particularly dismal was the state of Camp Delany, a facility for Black children that was deemed “a disgrace to the Diocese.”

At the same time, the Civil Rights movement put pressure on church and society to desegregate public institutions. Our bishops, Penick and Baker, were avowed gradualists when it came to desegregation: They upheld it in principle but urged gradual implementation. The result: It took until 1965 before diocesan camps and conference centers were fully integrated, even though Camp Delany had been closed since 1956.

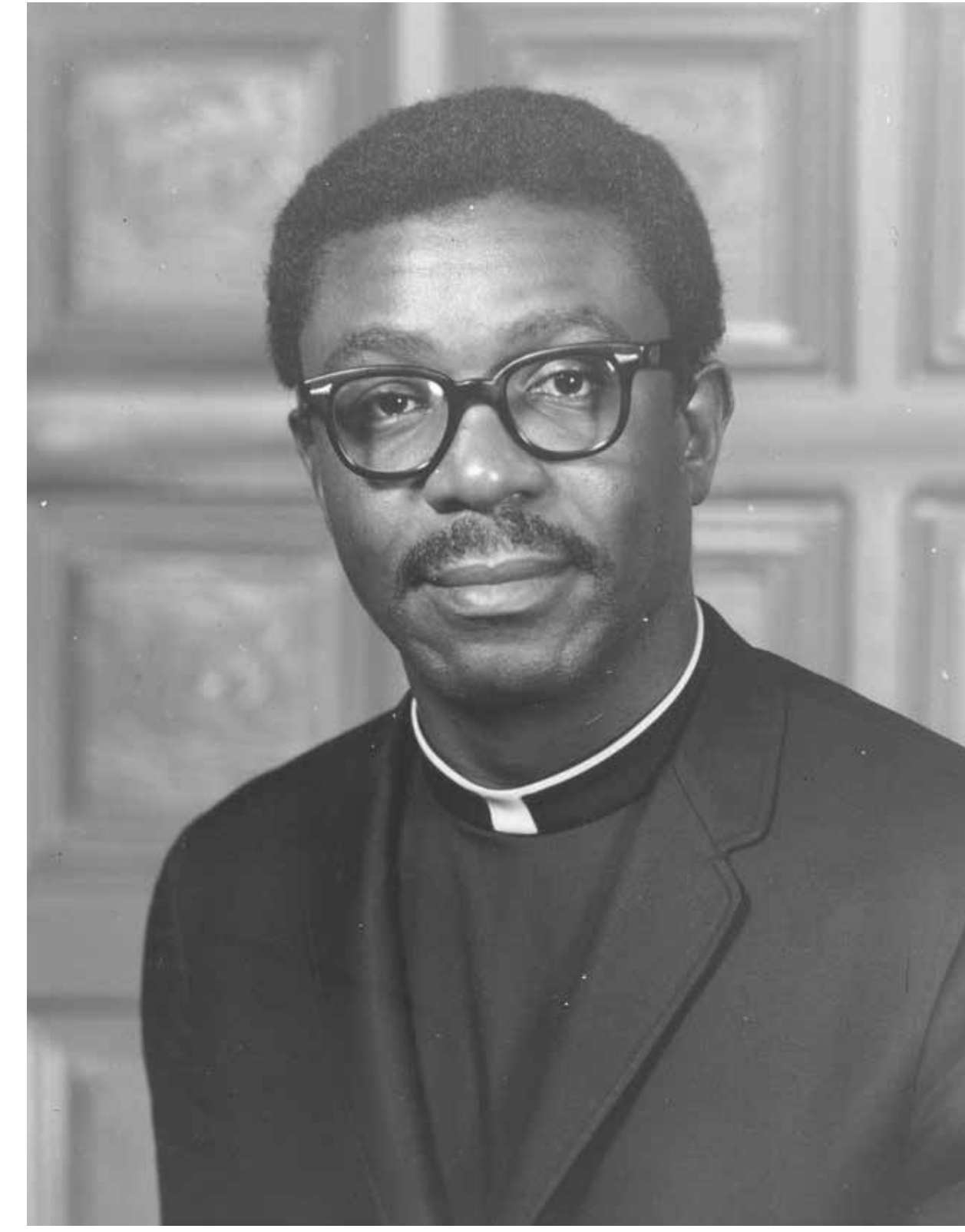
In 1967, The Episcopal Church authorized a major initiative to address the “Urban Crisis” of widespread racial unrest in American cities: the \$9 million General Convention Special Program Fund (GCSP). Our diocese initially embraced this initiative, forming a biracial Urban Crisis Committee and creating an Urban Crisis Center at St. Titus’, Durham, under the direction of the Rev. Nathaniel Porter.

But controversy erupted in 1969 over a GCSP grant to the Malcolm X Liberation University in Durham, leading to a \$165,000 shortfall in pledged income to the Diocese in 1970. Black Episcopalians responded to this abandonment of support for Black-led initiatives by organizing the Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE). By 1974, both the Episcopal Church and the Diocese had retreated from the bold initiatives of the late 1960s.

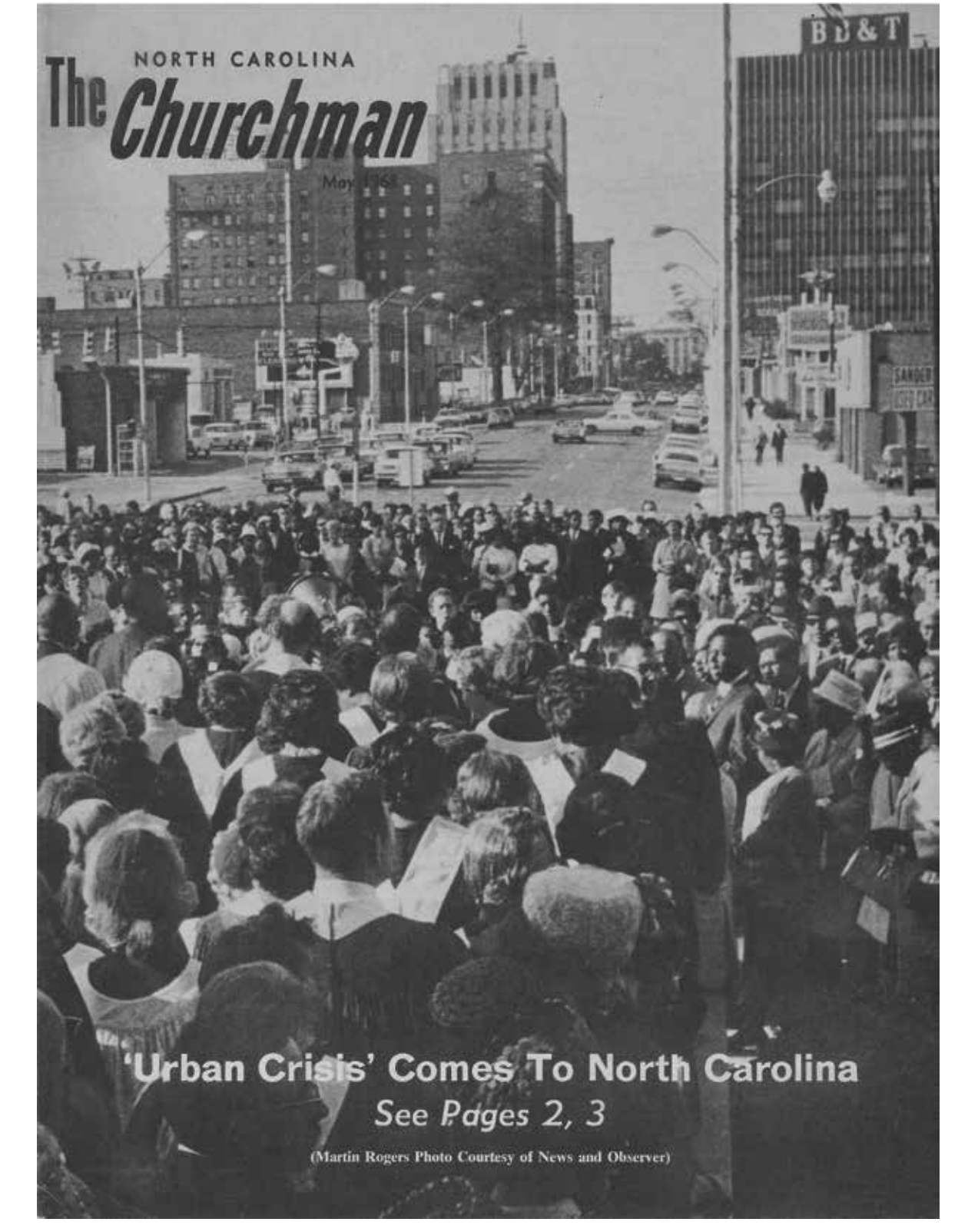
Black clergy and laity worked actively on behalf of Civil Rights. The Rev. Joe Green, the chaplain at St. Augustine’s, led student marches in the early 1960s and hosted the 1959 organizing meeting of the national church’s leading Civil Rights organization, Episcopalians for Cultural & Racial Unity (ESCRU). The Rev. Arthur Calloway, who served St. Ambrose, Raleigh, for 39 years, led efforts to integrate the city schools and elect African Americans to public office. Calloway himself served three terms on the Raleigh City Council.



Children at Camp Delany



The Rev. Nathaniel Porter, Director of Urban Crisis Program



The May 1968 cover of *The North Carolina Churchman*



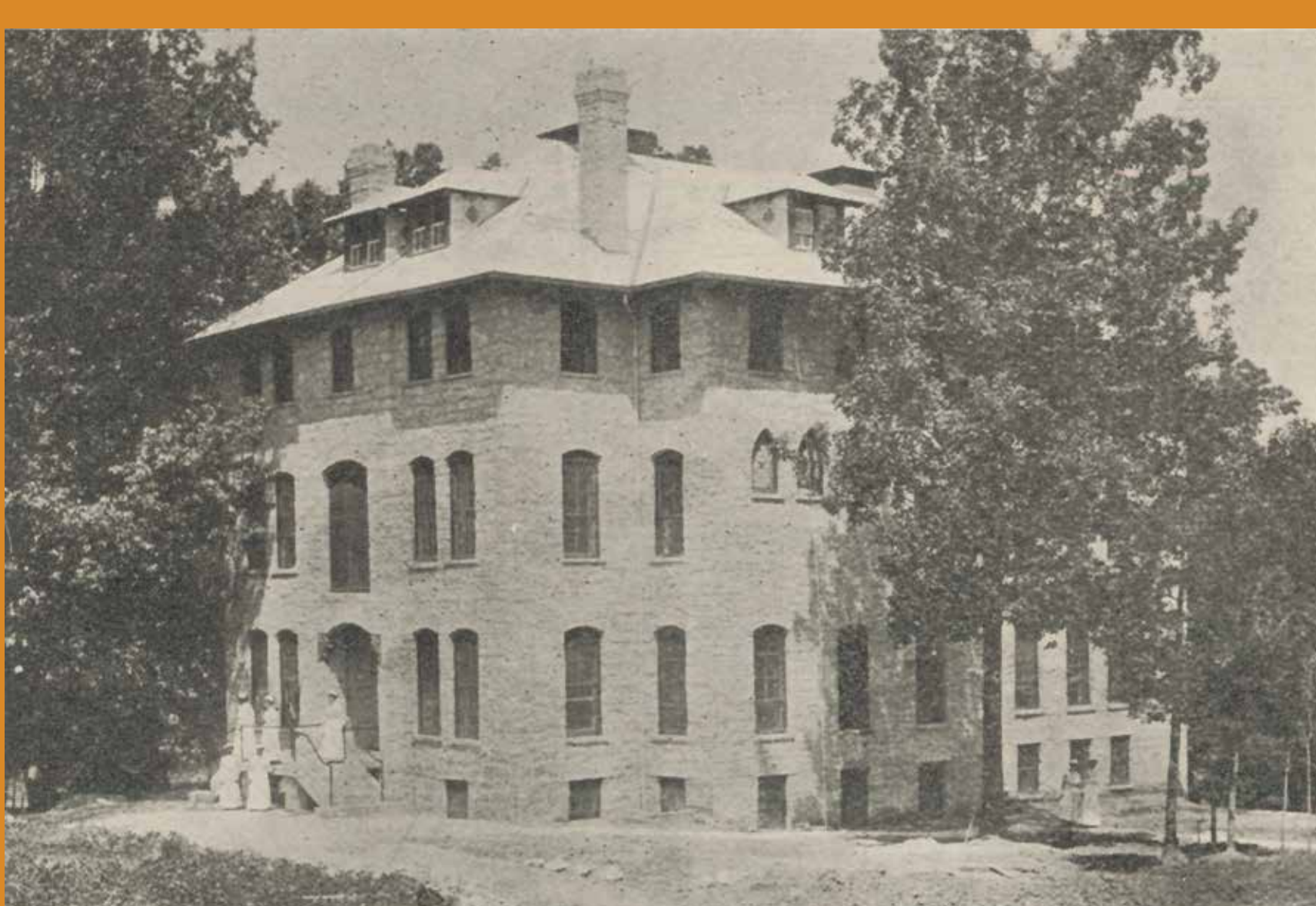
The Rev. Joe Green



The Rev. Arthur Calloway

Hospital Closures

Opening white hospitals to Black patients and doctors led to the closing in the early 1960s of two church-sponsored Black hospitals: St. Agnes Hospital in Raleigh and Good Samaritan Hospital in Charlotte.



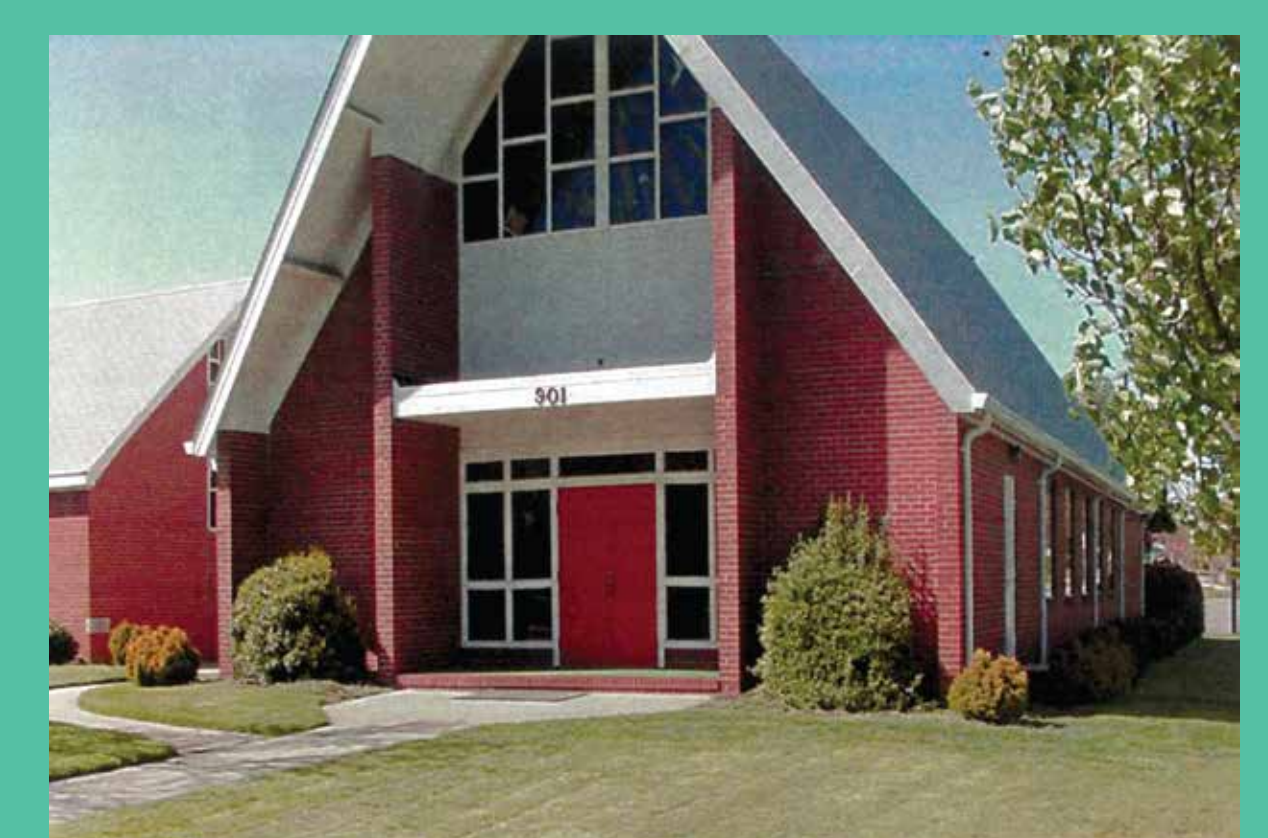
St. Agnes Hospital, circa 1912



Good Samaritan Hospital

Improved Facilities

Efforts to improve the condition of Black congregations were also in evidence. By the early 1970s, St. Cyprian’s, Oxford; Redeemer, Greensboro; St. Titus’, Durham; St. Stephen’s, Winston-Salem; and St. Ambrose, Raleigh, had all moved into larger, more modern facilities.



(Clockwise from top left) St. Cyprian’s, Oxford; Redeemer, Greensboro; St. Titus’, Durham; St. Stephen’s, Winston-Salem; St. Ambrose, Raleigh