

Rev. Jonathan Edwards Reed

"May you remember him in such a way that the messages he preached are still being lived in your lives - he succeeded in living up to his namesake, the great theologian and philosopher, Jonathan Edwards."

- Reverend A. Roger Williams

Jonathan Edwards Reed was born in Waterbury on July 10, 1906, the son of Reverend Dr. and Mrs. Isaac W. Reed. The family lived on Highland Avenue.

He graduated from Russell Elementary School and from Crosby High, both with high honors. Continuing his education, he graduated from Amherst College and Yale Divinity School with honors.

Reed taught physics and mathematics at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, the Agricultural and Technical College in North Carolina and South Carolina State College. His teaching career began and ended in the South due to the lack of opportunities for African Americans in the North.

In his youth, he served Grace Baptist Church in many capacities and was Assistant Pastor to his father from 1938 to 1943. The church was founded in 1899 in a hall on Canal Street. A wooden church was built on Kingsbury Street and was later replaced with the current gothic edifice in 1933. Both father and son were known for their cooperative relationships with all ethnic groups of the Waterbury community. This collaboration elicited the financial assistance needed to complete the church.

Upon the demise of his father in 1943, Jonathan Reed began his pastorate at Grace Baptist Church and continued for forty years. Rev. Isaac Reed, who was known as a "leader among the colored communities in New England", had been head of the church for forty-three years.

Jonathan Reed spoke with the intellect of a scientist, once reassuring his congregation that man would ultimately land on the moon. He talked with detailed knowledge of world events and Christian principles. He often articulated his admiration of Bertrand Russell, his love of the Classics and the sixteenth-century Italian poet Tasso.

He mingled with the notables of his time: George Washington Carver, W.E.B. Dubois, Langston Hughes and Mary McLeod Bethune. He counted among his friends Dr. Charles R. Drew, the educator and surgeon. Identifying these African Americans and extolling their achievements was a regular part of his sermons. Educating both the body and the mind was one of his favorite themes.

Ever mindful of the community, he served on numerous City Boards. While on the Board of Education, he was involved with the issues of a teachers strike, a federal lawsuit concerning segregation and the be-



ginning of three secondary school complexes. He served on the Boards of The Boys Club, Red Cross, United Way and the Greater Waterbury Chamber of Commerce. He was a Chaplain for the nurses of Waterbury Hospital and the Waterbury Police Department during the administration of five mayors.

He had a passion for learning and education. He took pride in guiding the proceedings that led to the inclusion of the Follow Through Program in the local education system and he tutored many children in math and science. The consummate student, he never ceased to study and teach. He spoke four languages fluently and conversed in three others. He was teaching himself Japanese and Russian at the time of his death on August 6, 1983.

He was recognized by his peers as "a man for all seasons."