

---

# New Dollars/New Partners Success Story

Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Chicago, Illinois

---



Quinn Chapel AME Church, a *New Dollars/New Partners* participant, kicks off their fundraising efforts with a walk-a-thon.

Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church stands on Wabash Avenue in Chicago, bridging the past and the future. “This isn’t only African-American history, we are a significant piece of *American* history,” explains The Reverend James Moody. Pastor Moody’s church is an 1891 Romanesque and Victorian Gothic building, partially designed by an African-American architect and commissioned by an African-American congregation. Since then, it has played a critical role in the city’s history. Frederick Douglass,

Susan B. Anthony, Booker T. Washington, and Martin Luther King, Jr. are among the legends who have spoken from its pulpit. Quinn was not only a stop on the Underground Railroad, but also instituted a distribution center within the Underground Railroad, gathering food, money and clothing for the men, women and children on their journey north. Now, this historic church has begun an ambitious fundraising campaign to restore its facilities.

The oldest African-American congregation (c. 1844) in the City of Chicago recently turned to Partners for Sacred Places for assistance in raising the money to save the church. In 2006, Partners joined with Landmarks Illinois to offer the *New Dollars/New Partners for Your Sacred Place* training to an inter-faith group of congregations in Chicago, just as Pastor Moody was learning about *New Dollars/New Partners* from two other sources. He quickly signed on.

Moody explains that *New Dollars/New Partners* interested him because it stresses two important principles. The first is being able to articulate a religious building’s value to the community. “It is important as a pastor to tell folks it’s more than the building, it’s the services we provide. It’s important not only to people we’re trying to get money from, but other organizations. The accountants appreciate that as well.” Using Partners’ public value software, Moody learned his congregation contributed over half a million dollars of value to the ministries it housed.

The second value of the program is in helping a congregation understand how to successfully broaden and deepen its funding. “*New Dollars/New Partners* is about being able to ‘make the ask,’” Moody shares, “and at the beginning a \$7.5 million dollar project, that’s important.”

Moody found the training excellent and relevant to his church’s needs for building maintenance and assessment and for organizing restoration efforts. Additionally, he enjoyed the learning environment; a setting which involves congregations from other faith traditions, and provides all attendees with opportunities to share from their experiences. “The training helped us to develop our relation-

ship with them. You start to realize not only do you have old buildings in common, you find out you have other interests.”

Moody drew upon the influence of the other congregations in the months that followed. When Quinn Chapel needed a new boiler, trustees visited the church’s *New Dollars/New Partners* counterparts at First Congregational Baptist Church in Chicago, who had recently purchased a new boiler. Additionally, Reverend Moody and his wife, who also attended the *New Dollars/New Partners* training, attended services at KAM Isaiah Israel’s Yom Kippur service. “We met with the rabbi, had a tour, and spent time with those we trained with. These are the things that come out of this program. The relationships.”

Before the *New Dollars/New Partners* training, Quinn Chapel had begun fundraising efforts, and while successful, the congregation desired to bring its endeavors to the next level. “We had received over \$130,000 in grants, but to get the big bucks and play on that kind of playing field, you need the skills that come out of the *New Dollars/New Partners* program. You get a better understanding of how to do things when we’re talking about half a million or \$700,000.

“In the training, we did an exercise where I had to meet the ‘mayor’ of Chicago, and talk to him about Quinn Chapel. It was great, because that [later] happened. Now, you talk about

preparation! Now I’m working with [Mayor Richard Daley] on the preservation front.”

Moody is now engaged in efforts with the Mayor’s Office of Chicago to establish a fund for the preservation and restoration of historic houses of worship. After a massive fire destroyed the historic Pilgrim Baptist Church in 2006, the mayor’s office approached Quinn Chapel to develop a prevention and response strategy to protect the city’s historic religious buildings. The office conducted a meeting with representation from over 200 churches and synagogues, sharing how they can work with city resources. Mayor Daley’s office described how the planning department can explain the codes and help congregations define requirements for restoring old buildings, and how the libraries can archive the building and congregation histories. “The *New Dollars/New Partners* training made us more prepared to say ‘Here’s what we want, and how we want to do it.’”

Quinn Chapel’s congregation is enthusiastic about the *New Dollars/New Partners* program as well. “We’re in stage one of a five-stage restoration process. We’re at 90% completion of the roof, rafters, beams, and dormer windows, but we were caught by the cold weather, so we need to manage people’s expectations. We still have the sanctuary to restore. People are happy, it’s encouraging, and the giving has reflected that.” In fiscal year 2006, Quinn’s congregation of 250 gave \$570,000. According to Reverend Moody, \$130,000 of that \$570,000 came from grants and gifts, leaving the remaining \$440,000 as congregational donations. He measures congregational response since *New Dollars/New Partners* through increased per capita giving and service attendance, and through anecdotal evidence.

Reverend Moody sees short-term and some long-range changes to his fundraising efforts, the building, congregation, and community as a result of the *New Dollars/New Partners* training. “I see us landing some big fish, playing on a bigger ball field... I see us moving the congregation back into the sanctuary. I see a boost in the numbers of the congregation. Long term, I see it not only completed, but the area around us taking on new residents because we’re seeing a growth in the area. I see this building becoming an anchor, creating a bridge between what is coming and what is here already.”

If you have questions about the *New Dollars/New Partners* program of interest in bringing it to your community, please contact Elizabeth Terry, Director of Training, at 215-567-3234, ext. 19 or [eterry@sacredplaces.org](mailto:eterry@sacredplaces.org).