

# FRIENDS OF THE AFRICAN UNION CHURCH OF SOUTH COVENTRY

## Backgrounder and Mission Statement

Friends of the African Union Church of South Coventry (FAUCSC) is a 501 ( c ) ( 3 ) nonprofit public charity established in April 2010 to preserve the site of a church and graveyard located in South Coventry Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania.

The half-acre site originally was owned by George Chrisman, Ironmaster of Coventry Forge. It was purchased from Chrisman in 1834 for \$15 by 5 church trustees: John Williams, John Thomas, George Brown, and William Hinson, all believed to be residents of what was then known as Coventry Township; and Joseph Smith, believed to be a resident of Montgomery County.



*1873 map of Pottstown and environs with "Union Meeting House" indicated on what is now Coventryville Road in South Coventry township.*

The church and graveyard have been unattended for decades. The site is largely overgrown, hidden in a small patch of woods off Coventryville Road. Several gravestones and parts of a building foundation remain. FAUCSC seeks to rehabilitate and maintain this site.

Specifically, the goals of FAUCSC are to

- Establish the location of graves and mark grave sites
- Clear brush and trees, and establish walkways
- Install fencing where required or desirable
- Post signs and information boards
- Maintain a Web site featuring historical information about the church and graveyard, and updates about preservation and upkeep activities
- Continue research into the history of this site

A timeline for accomplishing these tasks has not been established, but it is expected that tracing the history of the site will be an ongoing project.

One possible story about the site that FAUCSC will investigate is that the church congregation originally was comprised largely of free Africans, some of whom had been rescued from illegal slave-smuggling ships and relocated with families in the Pottstown area. Reports indicate that some congregation members walked the 7 or 8 miles from Pottstown on Sunday mornings to attend services at the Union Meeting House on “Chestnut Hill” near Coventryville Village.

The church was incorporated as the Union American Methodist Church of South Coventry in 1870, and there is evidence of burials during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

FAUCSC is a nonprofit corporation that has been granted Recognition of Exemption from the IRS. FAUCSC is a volunteer public charity with no employees and with no compensation being paid to any member, board member, or officer.

Further information is available on the FAUCSC Web site, <http://www.faucsc.org>. Inquiries and tax-deductible contributions can be mailed to FAUCSC Treasurer, 101 Chestnut Lane, Pottstown, PA 19465.

September 9, 2010