

Film Documentary

"Lightning in a Bottle"

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Film Documentary Synopsis

Calling all Harvest Choir members of the Mother Church of God in Christ in Wilmington, Delaware. It was the early 70's in Wilmington, Delaware and much like the rest of the nation, urban unrest was at an all-time high. America had already seen the assassination of a president and the death of a King. The National Guard had been stationed there to quell the unrest of Black folks, but it had been a white man who ran down and murdered young Shelia Ferrell for picking a peach from a tree.

There was another man by the name of Ross B. Rainey who had answered God's call to ministry. A quiet, reserved, and studious man, Rainey became the pastor of Delaware's first Church of God in Christ, a charismatic Pentecostal movement started by Rev. C. H. Mason, the son of former slaves and sharecroppers.

Mason had attended the holiness revival at Azuza Street in San Francisco. He'd gone back to his Baptist Church a changed man. His fiery preaching and a demand that Christians become sanctified for God's use, resulted in him being kicked out of his church. Mason's dismissal became the beginning of the largest Black church denomination in the world. Rev. Ross B. Rainey would hear Mason's clarion call to sanctification while in Coffeyville, Kansas where he grew up.

He attended Crozier Theological Seminary where other great alumni like Judge Warren Davis, Samuel Dewitt Jones, William Augustus Jones, and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King also attended. There, Rainey met his wife Thelma, who had been admitted with a group of the first women who would be allowed to attend. Rainey and his wife began to serve in Wilmington, Delaware at a time when God needed them most.

The inner city was hotter than July and young people were looking for ways to be proud of who they were when society saw them as less. When many young Blacks were rejecting what they saw as a white God, Rev. Rainey, or Pop-Pop as he was called, taught these teens that they were loved by God and if they would acknowledge God, God would direct their paths.

As a result of his Rainey's enthusiastic evangelism, Mother Church of God in Christ became a haven to hundreds of black teens in search of something. There, under the direction of Cheryl Smith and Harrison LeMon, the Mother COGIC choir became the pride of Delaware. With a soulful sound and a message of God's good News, the choir managed to be ahead of its time and right on time. At a time when the nation was on fire, their sound was like capturing lightening in a bottle.

Rainey died in 1999, but today, those Harvest Choir Members live all over the world sharing messages of God's love, promise and hope. They have become teachers, preachers, scientists, and poets. They are musicians and artists, engineers, and doctors. Because they are so scattered, most only come together for funerals, but this time, they are being called to recreate that lightening for a world that lives in division and strife. Calling all members of the Mother Church of God in Christ Choir.

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