



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 20, 2019

CONTACT: Estella Espinosa

Work: (832) 395-7022

Cell: (832) 465-4782

Bethel Church to be Rededicated as a Historic Site With Scheduled Hours of Operation and Educational Tours

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department together with Mayor Pro Tem Ellen Cohen and Keith Wade, Senior Advisor to the Mayor will welcome Jackie Bostic, Great Granddaughter to Reverend Jack Yates, the Freedman's Town Conservancy, and the Gregory School Library for the **re-opening and designation of Bethel Church as a Historic Site**. The event will take place at **10:00 am on Saturday, March 23, 2019 at Bethel Church Historic Site, 801 Andrews Street**.

In the 1890s, the Reverend Jack Yates founded Bethel Church locating the sanctuary in Fourth Ward, southwest of downtown Houston. Bethel Church served worshipers through the "Great Storm" of 1900 and two fires. In 1953, following the second fire, James M. Thomas, a prominent architect of African American churches, designed what would be the final Bethel Church sanctuary. This edifice would be gutted by fire in 2005.

Following the fire and due to the cost of rebuilding, the site stood empty until 2009 when the City of Houston purchased the property. The City had a goal of creating a site that would pay tribute to Bethel's history in Houston, the Fourth Ward and Freedman's Town, and its historic architectural design. Project funding from the Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone No. 14/Fourth Ward Redevelopment Authority, in partnership with the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, made this goal a reality. The present structure opened in December 2012.

"Bethel Church has deep roots in Houston's African American community and Historic Fourth Ward history," said Steve Wright, Director Houston Parks and Recreation Department. "The history behind this site is one that the Parks Department is dedicated to protecting and preserving. After reviewing the site following six years of operation we determined that we needed to take additional steps to protect the site and insure that its place in Houston's history would be honored."

On April 2, 2019, following its official Historic Site designation, Bethel Church will operate on scheduled hours with an attendant to monitor the site. The Parks Department will also offer guided tours to educate and bring awareness to the historic significance of the site and the impact its founders had on the City of Houston.

Bethel Church operating hours will be Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Additional information regarding operating hours and guided tours will be posted to the department's website www.houstonparks.org in the near future.

Park users interested in visiting a City of Houston site with dog park/runs are asked to consider the West Webster Dog Park, 1501 West Webster; Johnny Steele Park, Buffalo Bayou Park at Allen Parkway and Montrose Boulevard/Studewood; the Holly Anawaty Dog Park at Market Square, 301 Milam Street; Elizabeth Glover Park, 3104 Austin Street, Ervan Chew Park, 4502 Dunlavy; Levy Park, 3801 Eastside Street; Maxey Park, 601 Maxey Road; Tanglewood Park, 5801 Woodway; or T.C. Jester Park, 4201 West T.C. Jester Blvd. Please follow all Dog Park Rules while enjoying these off-leash areas with your pets.

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.) stewards and manages over 37,851 acres of parkland and greenspace for the City of Houston and develops and implements recreational programming for citizens of all abilities. For more information on the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (832) 395-7022 or visit www.houstonparks.org.