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**PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 14, 2010

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**Descendants of Freed Slaves Defend Lawsuit Against the United Methodist Church to Retain Property Purchased by Ancestors**

On April 14, 2010 at 9:00 a.m., in the Circuit Court of Maryland for Frederick County, the thirty (30) members of Sunnyside Church in Frederick, Maryland, will continue to defend their title to land their forefathers purchased for their benefit, against the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church (“UMC”). A Press Conference will follow the hearing at the Church at 11:00 a.m. The Church is located at 4521B Mountville Road, Frederick, Maryland 21703.

The property in dispute consists of a one-acre tract of land, assessed by the Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation at about \$150,000. The property was purchased by freed slaves in 1887, who are the forefathers of the Defendants in this lawsuit. The UMC did not purchase the property, and have never put any money into maintaining the property. Not to mention that the members of Sunnyside Church are the owners on record of the property. “Our families were baptized in this church, married in this church, and are buried here,” says Roxanne Weedon Thrasher, who traces here lineage to the purchasers of the property. “We can’t believe that they would do this to us.”

Located on the Property is a school house, erected in 1888 by the direct ancestors of certain Defendants, intended for the education of “colored pupils” as expressly stated in the Deed. The current Defendants can trace their familial lineage to persons who helped establish the community known as Sunnyside, and visit the large burial site of many of their ancestors, which is adjacent to the church building.

In or around November 2008, the current members of Sunnyside Church seceded from the UMC, to whom they were required to pay annual apportionments of thousands of dollars. The members of Sunnyside Church simply want to continue to worship on the land that their ancestors purchased. The UMC rely upon a 1976 statute that the Maryland Senate voted on Saturday, April 10, 2010 to repeal. The bill did not pass the House.

Sunnyside Church is represented by The Law Offices of Erika E. Cole, LLC, a law firm that provides full legal services to churches and ministries in Maryland and the District of Columbia.