A 15-member committee at Antioch has been screening candidates for McMickle's successor. Initially, the committee received 246 applications from all across the United States
. By the second week of December, they reduced them to 50.

By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

Rev. Marvin A. McMickle preached his last sermon as pastor of the Antioch Baptist Church this past Sunday. Christmas did not keep friends, members, and guests from hearing him for the last time.

McMickle and his wife, Peggy, will begin their new journey as he assumes his new position as the President of Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in Rochester, New York.

McMickle has led Antioch for 24 years and proclaimed many times as being a man from the Motown era.

Antioch is located on Cedar Avenue, surrounded by the Cleveland Clinic, and is one of the city's largest and most prestigious Black churches. Several times, Martin Luther King Jr. preached ar Antioch. Presidential candidates as well as presidents have campaigned there.

The service was emotional. Many of the presentations to the Rev. McMickle and his wife included a portrait he received during a service on December 4th. In a written statement, it said, "Presenting this portrait as a way of holding on to a quarter century of spiritual leadership, teaching, love, and friendship as one chapter closes and another begins," written by the Pastoral Gift Committee.

McMickle, 63, advised the church to find a preacher from the Jay Z era to help the church grow with the times. Since 1987, McMickle has led the church in establishing a ministry for people infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

This ministry was the first of its kind in the entire country.

The church also offers ministries in the areas of job training, a hunger center, three AA units, a credit union with over $2 million in assets and a tithing program in which the congregation tithes out to the community 10 percent of its annual income every year. The church also sponsors one of eight marriage enrichment programs sponsored by the state of Ohio.

A civil rights and religious force in Northeast Ohio for decades, McMickle told the congregation, "Don't look for a man like me or call him my replacement. He or she should be my successor."

He also shared a story about the Rev. Otis Moss III, who went to pastor Tabernacle Baptist Church in Augusta, Georgia where there was a pastor by the name of Rev. Charles T. Walker, who had passed on.

He told the church how Rev. Moss III tried implanting new plans and activities through his generation that was met with great resistance from the board. Finally, a member told Rev. Moss III the reason why they were not voting to implement his new activities was because Rev. Walker who had been dead won't like it.

He encouraged Antioch to be all they could be and not fight the new pastor and stated it should not take longer then 6 months for them to be in place.

"If your love one is sick, don't call me, call your pastor," McMickle said.

He admitted that he will miss Cleveland. Just recently McMickle and his wife, Peggy, had decided to spend the rest of their lives here. "We have loved living in Cleveland. Our plan was to be here for the duration."

"I know Rochester is a great town, an educationally dominant town, lots of colleges and seminaries," McMickle said.

McMickle has also served as president of both the NAACP and the Urban League in Cleveland in addition to serving as president of the Shaker Heights Board of Education and as president of the Karamu House Performing Arts Center.

He has also authored dozens of articles that regularly appear in professional journals and magazines. He is a member of the Martin Luther King, Jr. International Board of Preachers at Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA. In the winter semester of 2009, he served as a Visiting Professor of Preaching at Yale University Divinity School.

"Antioch will be ok. I am leaving, not God," said McMickle.

A 15-member committee at Antioch has been screening candidates for McMickle's successor. Initially, the committee received 246 applications from all across the United States. By the second week of December, they reduced them to 50.

McMickle and his wife will live in a house on the seminary's campus. They have yet to sell their home in Shaker Heights. McMickle begins his new job as president of Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School Jan. 2.