



# Wray Gunn

Sheffield, MA

“I’ve always been involved in things of significance,” Gunn said. That includes regular tennis games, golf outings, and more, belying his 80 years. His energy flows from his lifelong response to seemingly impossible challenges. “You’ve got to give it a shot,” he said.

A 1952 UMass graduate with a bachelor’s of science degree, Gunn went to work at Nelco Metals in Canaan, Connecticut, a division of Pfizer, rising to Quality Control Director. He retired after 40 years.

Always a force in his community, Gunn has served as a member of the Sheffield Planning Board and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. He is a long-time member of the NAACP, a charter member of CONSTRUCT, a local low-income housing non-profit, and the Great Barrington Lions Club. Through all of this activity, Gunn has developed a wide circle of friends.

But his special commitment is concentrated on the restoration of his family church, the Clinton AME Zion Church in Great Barrington. The group undertaking this project is a non-profit organization, the Clinton Church Restoration (CCR), which Gunn chairs. The CCR bought the dilapidated and decommissioned church in 2016. It had been heavily damaged from severe weather conditions, but the church is now on its way to full restoration. Completion is targeted for 2021.

“What makes this church special,” he said, “is that it is the oldest black church in Berkshire County still standing.” Its historic importance also comes from its relationship with the writer, activist and scholar, W.E.B. Du Bois, who, as a south Berkshire County native, attended meetings there. Perhaps most important, Clinton AME Zion Church was, for years, a welcoming beacon to African Americans newly arrived in the Berkshires from the south.

These “things of significance” give meaning to Wray Gunn’s active and creative life.

**Photography:** Peter Levine

**Words:** Chris Guidette