

# Poetry Porch: Poetry

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## **Mother Archie's Church**

**By Joyce Wilson**

She bought the building when it was a school  
and made it a church, with pews in two rows, their backs  
to the entrance, yet facing the pulpit, its cushion of purple  
velvet, the Bible, and jovial pot-bellied stove.

The lantern in the window lit up the night  
and beckoned those who often hurried by  
to enter the house that Mother Archie built  
where they could be free and make themselves at home.

Plantation owners had discouraged slaves'  
expression of religious ecstasies.  
At last they found the church they'd been denied  
with Black preacher, determined and ordained.

Three decades after Mother Archie's death,  
the roof and walls collapsed around the stones  
but not the passion she had nourished there  
that saved the church, its people, and their names.