

Poetry Porch: Poetry

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.