



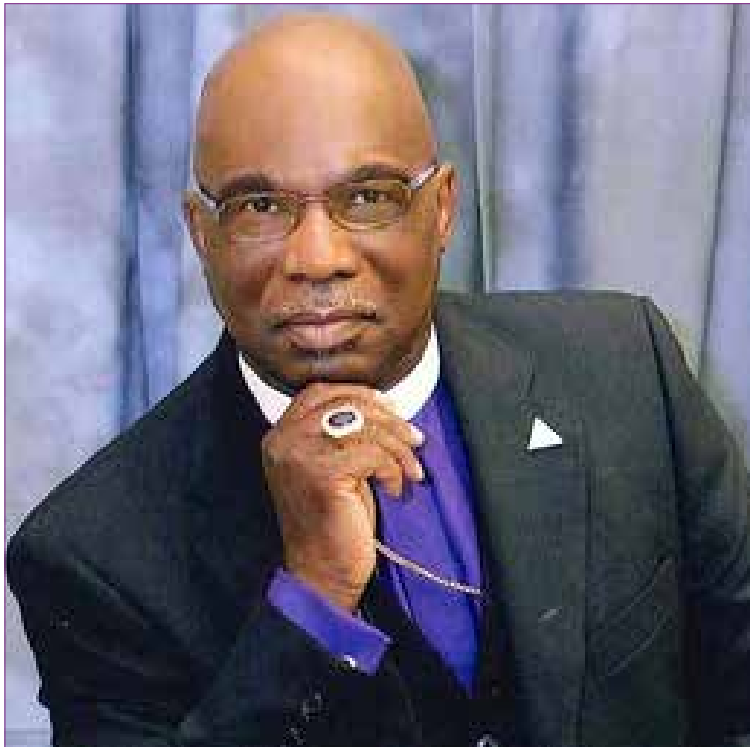
THE STAR OF ZION

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OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

OCTOBER 2021

VOLUME 145, NO. 10



A.M.E. Zion's Senior Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Kenneth Monroe

What Happens Next?

Thoughts from the Senior Bishop

The 51st Session of the A.M.E. Zion Church General Conference has ended. Without question, the General Conference was met with many challenges and it was concluded with even more challenges. There were periods of sadness and there were moments of success and moments of victory. Regardless of the experiences of this General Conference, the church is still faced with great challenges as we move forward through the present quadrennial. Of course, I have not known the church to not have challenges. Many of the challenges we have confronted found resolve while there have been challenges

that have continued to exist while we found new ones to overcome.

As I begin my final quadrennial as an active bishop and as I enter my 53rd year in ministry, the challenges of the church are more significant than they have ever been. It is my firm belief that God has called the church to do the miraculous. Please know that challenges are inconsequential when confronted with miraculous feats by the people of God. Moreover, miracles are not achieved for us to enjoy comfort or a life full of convenience. Miracles are granted to bring glory and recognition to God. Unfortunately, many persons have embraced the notion that mira-

cles are blessings from God regardless of our allegiance or faithfulness to God. We expect God to rescue us, provide for us, bless us, deliver us, save us and sustain us, while we do little or nothing for the glory of God and for the sake of the kingdom of God. Please know that our understanding of ministry is far beyond that of just being a humanitarian. We have yet to embrace the concept that God has called us to be Christian, not just humanitarians. There is no question about it, humanitarians are wonderful people who seek to do great and marvelous deeds for the good of society. Nevertheless, Christians are

See *What Happens...* pg. 8

Zion's New Bishops



Bishop Brian R. Thompson, Sr.

By Rev. L Samuel Brown
Managing Editor

One of the most anticipated moments of any general conference is the election and consecration of new leadership, particularly the election and consecration of bishops. The 51st Quadrennial Session of the A.M.E. Zion General Conference witnessed a dual manifestation of history being made and repeating itself. Aside from the surnames they share with bishops of sainted memory, the election and consecration of Bishop Brian R. Thompson, Sr., and Bishop

Eric L. Leake – to the 106th and 107th episcopal posts, respectively – was indeed a crowning moment of a very eventful yet expedient general conference.

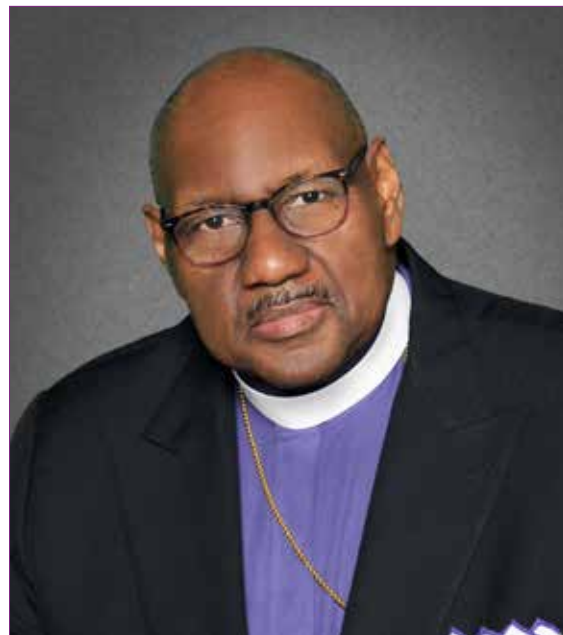
A native of Chapel Hill, NC, Bishop Brian Thompson earned a bachelor's degree in communications from Augustine College in Raleigh, NC. He went on to receive the Master of Divinity from United Theological Seminary in Trotwood, OH. In June 2020, he received his Doctor of Ministry degree, for which his dissertation was "Overcoming the Obstacles that

Hinder Substantial Church Growth." He is a Sadler-Marshall scholar of Transformational Leadership.

In July 2021, he was elected the 106th Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. He was assigned the Western Episcopal District, which includes Alaska, Oregon-Washington, Southwest Rocky Mountains, California, Arizona, and Colorado.

Bishop Thompson's service in the A.M.E. Zion Church began in 1994. His pastoral assignments included: Long's Memorial A.M.E.

See *New Bishops...* pg. 8



Bishop Eric L. Leake

The Dynamic Duo

The Great I AM blessed Bishop George E. Battle, Jr., and I, Dr. Shirley Welch, with a spirit of humility and commitment to love and serve His Church. A "duo" is a pair of two whose combined unique traits result in a win-win. That is us – a team of two, inextricably bound like Paul and Silas for the purpose of ensuring this old ship of Zion remains financially solvent.

His 29-year journey as a bishop in the Lord's church and my 24 years of service in the Connectional Budget Department (21 of those years as CFO) were all under his chairmanship. Our paths crossed

when he was the pastor of Foundation A.M.E. Zion Church, Rock Hill, SC, where four generations of my bloodline had worshipped. When the Reverend George Battle, Jr., was pastoring my grandparents, I was still in high school. He later became pastor of Gethsemane A.M.E. Zion Church, Charlotte, NC, and I was at Steele Creek A.M.E. Zion, also in



Bishop George E. Battle, Jr., Retired Bishop & Chairman, CBB; and Dr. Shirley Welch, Retired CFO

Charlotte. Our little girls' elementary school friendship continued into their adulthood. After the passing of Bishop Herman Anderson, Bishop Battle became chairman of the CBB. At that time, he and Dr. Madie Simpson were known as the "Dynamic Duo". He sanctioned Dr. Simpson's mission to search for me at the bank where I was the banker for the department's accounts. Then I was elected to carry the baton as the new half of the Dynamic Duo. The bishop and I have prayed, cried, and laughed our way through some turbulent times, especially when dealing with the banks trying to get what was best for this church. But

See *Dynamic Duo...* pg. 8



THE 51ST QUADRENNIAL SESSION

General Session of the A.M.E. Zion Church Recap

The 51st Quadrennial General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church met in Atlanta, Georgia July 27, 2021 – August 1, 2021. During this historic meeting delegates from all over the world assemble to pass resolutions that will eventually be codified to church law, elect and consecrate Bishops to give Episcopal leadership to the denomination, and handle any other administrative or judiciary matters.

The greatest highlight of this meeting is the election of two new Bishops: **Bishop Brian Thompson Sr.**, Presiding Prelate of the Western Episcopal District and 106th Bishop in the historic succession of the A.M.E. Zion Church and **Bishop Eric Leake**, Presiding Prelate of the Southwestern Delta Episcopal district and 107th consecrated Bishop in the A.M.E. Zion church.

LAY CONVENTION RECAP

The COVID-19 pandemic presented Zion with some unprecedented challenges. As a result, the Connectional Lay Council had their Quadrennial Convention on the heels of the General Conference and elected a slate of officers poised to give leadership to the Laity of Zion for the next Quadrennium.

NEWLY ELECTED GENERAL OFFICERS

Rev. Patrick Barrett, II

Secretary-Treasurer, Christian Education Department

Rev. Dr. Eleazar Merriweather

Director, Department of Church Growth & Development

Rev. Al Hamilton

Chief Financial Officer

Rev. Julius Walls, Jr.

Chief Operating Officer, Business Manager

Mr. Darin Kent

Chief Communications Officer, Editor, Star of Zion

INCUMBENTS REELECTED

Rev. Dr. Dwight B. Cannon

Executive Director of the Department of Global Missions, Editor of The Missionary Seer

Rev. Dr. J. Elvin Sadler

General Secretary-Auditor

Rev. Dr. George McKain

Director of Public Affairs & Social Concerns

Mr. David Aiken, Sr.

Executive Director, Zion Benefit Services

OTHER OFFICIALS ELECTED

Judicial Council **Incumbent*

- The Honorable Adelle Riley
- Mrs. Marsha Grayson, Esq.
- Rev. Dr. Lisa McDow
- Rev. Dr. Reid White

- Rev. Dr. Joseph Tolbert, Esq.
- Rev. Dr. Derrick Anderson
- Dr. William Stokes
- Dr. Yvonne Tracey

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Leondras Davis

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Jerry McCombs

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ZION SPOTLIGHT

Great Worship! Great Word! Great Times!

The Wadesboro-Monroe District 5th Sunday Fellowship

Special to the Star

MONROE, NC – The Wadesboro-Monroe District (WMD), under the leadership of Presiding Elder, Reverend Dr. William M. Jordan III, held its first 5th Sunday fellowship of the conference year on Sunday, August 29th, at 3:00 p.m. EST, at the Mt. Calvary A.M.E.Z. Church, Monroe, NC. The Rev. Melvin L. Tate is the pastor. The Mt. Calvary family, along with Pastor Tate, graciously hosted the event, which included



Supervisor of the Piedmont Episcopal District, Sister Camille Starnes. Sister Thomasina Spencer presented gifts to Mrs. Starnes on behalf of the District Missionary Society and the First Lady of the district. Sister

As a missionary supervisor who is also a local preacher, Mrs. Starnes was well received as she gave words to all the preachers. Elder Jordan introduced Bishop Daryll B. Starnes, newly assigned bishop of the Piedmont Episcopal District, to each of the pastors – one by one. Some of those pastors were also introduced as they participated in the worship service, such as Pastor Priscilla Ellis (Forestville), who led the prayer; and Pastor

(Marvin) introduced the newly elected Chief of Communications Officer of the A.M.E.Z. Church, Brother Darin Kent, a member of the Marvin A.M.E.Z. Church. Additionally, Dr. Anderson gave thankful expressions to Bishop Starnes, sharing the elder's glad anticipation to lead WMD in this new season and serve under the vision being outlined by the bishop.

The highlight of the worship was the Word of God, preached by Bishop Starnes, whose sermon was a blessing



Cabinet member. During the worship service, the praises of God went forth as the District Choir and musicians, under the directorship of Sister Demetra Marsh, led us in music and



JoAnn B. Jordan's gifts represented the ministers' spouses.

It was a joy to be greeted by the missionary supervisor, who kindly expressed her surprise, appreciation, and pleasure to worship with WMD.



Jacqueline Roper (Morning Star), who read the scripture and offered the invitation to Christian discipleship. Rev. Rodney Moore (Kesler Chapel) provided access to the service via Zoom for those who could not attend.

Reverend Dr. Haven O. Anderson

to all. It dealt with how to win souls for Christ. Several people responded to the call and received special prayer by the bishop, as well as pamphlets offering more information on salvation.

The worship service was well attended. All who were present enjoyed great music, great worship, great preaching, and a great time in the Lord. The Wadesboro-Monroe District continues to expect great things! ☆

We Did It Again!

Special to the Star

WAXHAW, NC – Ebenezer A.M.E.Z. Church, Waxhaw, NC, where the Reverend Tajuan Kyles serves as pastor, hosted its 2nd Annual Global Vacation Bible School from August 16 to August 20, 2021. For the second time, it was amazing, and for the second time, partnerships with pastors and churches (and sponsors from all over the world) made it possible. Although Ebenezer serves as host and partners must register, it would not be possible without such a tremendous team.

This team of Christian educators is led by Rev. Kyles who is the visionary, host pastor, and director. There's also an Assistant Director, Rev. Emerald Hall, and a Dean, Rev. Dr. Darius Benton, who make up the executive team. And, not only has Rev. Benton served as the Dean, he has also been a partner from its inception with registered members of the Dallas/Ft. Worth District where he serves as the presiding elder. Other members of the leadership team included a Creative Director, Sister Angela Marks of the Dunn-Lillington District, and Zoom Administrator, Pastor Matthew Morgan-Pegues, Martin Temple A.M.E.Z., Compton.

This year's theme was a declaration, "As for Me and My House, We Will Serve the Lord." Each year we have an opening and a closing program and three days of Bible study. This year participants were to explore strategic models and scriptures through the lens of a strategist. Their assignment was to use the teachings to develop Bible-based models for themselves and their families. Examples included: The R.A.H.A.B. Model (Joshua 2) and the Compassionate Leadership Model (Acts 16:25-34). The expectation was to execute these strategic plans resulting in "homes of faith" and families committed to one another and to worshipping and serving the Lord.


The breakout rooms included two children's classes led by Dr. Da'Tarvia Parrish of the Salisbury District, NC, and Sis. Angela Marks. The youth class was taught by Rev. Gilliam, First Church-Pasadena. Pastor Lawrence Ganzy, a new addition to the team, and Pastor Cathy Henderson (Day Spring) led a class for young adults. There were three adult classes, one of which was done as a conference call led by Sis. Bodrick (Ebenezer) for those who did not have Wi-Fi or the ability to join via video. The others were led by Rev. Kyles and Pastor David McClean (Grace).

A great enhancement this year was the multi-purposing of the website to include an online store, YouTube channel, and an Intergenerational Resource Guide. Several highlights included a Know Your Church Kahoot! game led by Rev. Dr. R.J. Chandler; greetings from the General Secretary of Christian Education, Rev. Barrett; and the Annual Outreach Project that honors all registered participants ages 80 and up with a financial gift.

Ebenezer is grateful to all its partners, including John Wesley A.M.E.Z. Church, which had the largest group. The total registration this year was nearly 200. For the teachers, it truly is a labor of love. Ebenezer looks forward to an even greater experience next year and new plans for the young people.

For more information on how you can become a sponsor, partner, or team member, email tajuankyles@christianeducation.online. ☆





THE STAR OF ZION
(ISSN 0038-9870)
PUBLICATION NUMBER
05 19-200

Official organ of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; Periodicals Postage Paid at Charlotte, North Carolina.
Founded in 1876 and published once monthly from the A.M.E. Zion Church Headquarters, 3225 W. Sugar Creek Rd., Charlotte, NC 28269.
POSTMASTER: Send Change of Address to: THE STAR OF ZION, Post Office Box 26770, Charlotte, NC 28221-6770.

THE STAR OF ZION
Published monthly from the A.M.E. Zion Church Headquarters, 3225 W. Sugar Creek Rd., Charlotte, NC 28269. Paid circulation 8,000. Member of the Associated Church Press.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

God's Plan



Mr. Darin "DK" Kent
Chief Communications Officer,
A.M.E. Zion Church
Editor, Star of Zion

God's timing is not our timing. As I take a moment to look back at where God has carried me from over the past two years, I am not surprised, yet I'm still amazed at His creative savviness. Please understand that the following testimony is not to suggest that I lack confidence in my new position as Chief Communications Officer (C.C.O.) and Editor of the Star of Zion (S.O.Z.), but rather to shed some light on my journey to this point, by which I hope someone can be inspired.

Years ago, a friend gave me some good advice by telling me never to be concerned with the accolades of any position, but rather to treat others as I would want to be treated and do good work. I pride myself in doing just that. God the Father showed us the perfect example of what good work looks like when He gave us His son. He was born in the humblest conditions, prepared for his purpose, and then performed at optimal performance level for three years before dying and resurrecting himself. I love thinking about Jesus' story and trying my best to emulate it by staying humble and preparing myself for God's next phase of ministry. This is why my tenures at Greater Centennial, Varick Memorial, and John Wesley A.M.E. Zion churches, and most recently the Mid-Atlantic Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Zion Church were never about showcasing any personal skills. It was all about identifying the message of the ministry, creating a way to best motivate people to join and follow that identified movement, and communicating it to the desired demographic in the most impactful way possible.

God blessed my business during the pandemic in that while many were struggling to make ends meet, I was able to take my ministry opportunities to another level. During Covid, my company continued to provide services for Clinton College and we served an array of churches, including Trinity A.M.E. Zion in Greensboro, NC; Rockwell A.M.E. Zion in Charlotte, NC; and Marvin A.M.E. Zion in Waxhaw, NC. We remained humble and kept doing God's good work.

The election process of the A.M.E. Zion Church, while mentally draining at the time, wound up being a most fulfilling and enlightening experience. I conversed with and continue to converse with people I already knew, but now in a different capacity, with a different lens; and the learning never stops. As C.C.O. and Editor of the S.O.Z., I've now made it my intention to reach out to the universal church body that is begging to be brought to light in Christendom. I've spoken to those whom I know support me and everything I do, as well as those I am still not so sure believe in our new efforts. I want to be a fair leader that will always be available to serve Christ and the Church regardless of personal connections or lack thereof. It is important to me to state that my predecessor has done an amazing work to get us to this point. Dr. Lisby has put her complete existence into the Star of Zion and the A.M.E. Zion Church, and we thank her immensely for her efforts in the past, present, and future.

I believe with God's provision we can accomplish God's plan for the A.M.E. Zion Church and the Star of Zion. Sure, DK might have been elected, but proclaiming the gospel to the world will be a collective effort. Small adjustments are being made now to tighten up our ministry brand, but soon we will be asking you to consider adhering to more of our ideas. We want to hear from you about your thoughts and ideas. We will be setting up an email address specifically for you to send your comments, concerns, or inquiries. But please feel free to message me on social media.

I believe that God is going to do a GREAT WORK in us and through us to reach his lost sheep. I actually believe it's even bigger than what we may be anticipating. That's always the case when I think of God's Plan for me. Now join me as we discover His plan for us.

I love you with the love of Christ,
Mr. Darin "DK" Kent
Chief Communications Officer, A.M.E. Zion Church
Editor, Star of Zion

★ The Star of Zion ★

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Article/Ad Submission Deadline Dates

- November 2021 Issue..... October 15, 2021
- December 2021 Issue..... November 15, 2021
- January 2022 Issue..... December 15, 2021
- February 2022 Issue..... January 15, 2022

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EDUCATION

Clinton College Announces Free Tuition to Qualifying Full-Time Students

Official Press Release

Clinton College is excited to announce free tuition for the 2021-2022 school year to all qualifying full-time students. This comes on the heels of a new award the college received through the American Recovery Act. Any student who is enrolled full-time is eligible to receive a tuition grant that covers the cost for both the fall and spring semesters.

“We are ecstatic to have the opportunity to provide this scholarship to our students. This scholarship assistance will provide access to education to many students who have been deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and who otherwise may have had to forgo pursuing their educational and career goals,” said Dr. Lester McCorn, President of Clinton College.

Clinton, like many other institutions, has been the beneficiary of federal funds to aid in any finan-

cial loss the school might have suffered due to the effects of Covid-19. As the administration looked at many scenarios to further assist the current and future student body, this was a no-brainer. “This is my second chance here at Clinton, and having free tuition lifted the bar even higher. I am now ready to begin this new track,” said junior, Elijah Rogers. Clinton was happy to be in a position to make such an offer to students, particularly during this time.

In addition to the tuition scholarships, on-campus learners returned to a campus that offered a single room living experience and upgrad-

ed room furniture. Because of funds from the CARES Act, Clinton has been able to make several upgrades to keep the campus safe by following the CDC guidelines.

All full-time students, both new and returning, will receive a free Microsoft Surface Go device to aid in their educational studies. For any additional information, please contact communications@clintoncollege.edu. ☆



Three Livingstone alumni, golf coach honored as HBCU Living Legends



HBCU Living Legends: (left to right) Romus Jefferies, Marjorie Kinard and Joseph White.

By Kimberly Harrington
Assistant Director of Public Relations
Livingstone College

SALISBURY, NC – What do two former NFL players and a community activist have in common? They were each recently honored as HBCU Living Legends.

Romus Jefferies, a former Buffalo Bills football player; Marjorie Kinard, speaker, community activist and fundraiser; and Joseph “Jo-Jo” White, who played for the Canadian Football League and the Tampa Bay Bandits of the U.S. Football League, all Livingstone alumni, received the distinction as HBCU Living Legends at the N.C. HBCU (Historically Black College or University) Living Legends Scholarship Gala on Sept. 4 in Charlotte.

The event, the vision of William

and Vanessa Hairston and other community volunteers, celebrates the significant legacies of North Carolina’s 11 historically black colleges and universities by honoring three alumni from each school every two years.

Livingstone Golf Coach Andre Springs was inducted as a Fayetteville State University alumnus.

Honorary co-chairs of the event were Livingstone President Dr. Jimmy R. Jenkins, Sr., who was inducted in 2019 as an HBCU Living Legend of Elizabeth City State University; See *Living Legends...* pg. 12



Coach Andre Springs

Hood Theological Seminary Receives \$10,000 Grant

Submitted Kelly Bryant
HTS Correspondent

Hood Theological Seminary was invited to apply and received the Climate Change and Theological Education seed grant of \$10,000 from the American Association for the Advancement of Science – Dialogue on Science, Ethics and Religion. (AAAS – DoSER). Hood is one of only two ATS seminaries to receive this type of grant, which

must revise one seminary-required course and offer a campus event to feature the global climate crisis. The grant deliverables will be performed by the International Center for Faith, Science and History (ICFSH) at Hood, and Dr. Sharon Grant will act as Project Director and Teaching Faculty.

Hood Theological Seminary, located at 1810 Lutheran Synod Drive in Salisbury, NC, is a graduate and professional school where

intellectual discourse and ministerial preparation occur in tandem within the framework of a community of faith. Sponsored by the A.M.E. Zion Church and approved by the University Senate of the United Methodist Church, its student body currently comprises persons from many different denominations. Hood’s mission is to prepare women and men for bold and creative leadership for the Christian church for a diverse world. ☆

Livingstone’s Accreditation Reaffirmed Through 2031




By Kimberly Harrington
Assistant Director of Public Relations
Livingstone College

SALISBURY, NC – The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) has reaffirmed Livingstone College’s accreditation through 2031. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees made the announcement at its June 17 meeting.

SACSCOC is the regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states. To maintain SACSCOC accreditation, an institution must comply with the standards

contained in the “Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement,” and with the policies and procedures of the Commission on Colleges. “Reaffirmation validates that Livingstone College has the resources, programs and services sufficient to accomplish and sustain our mission,” said Livingstone President Dr. Jimmy R. Jenkins, Sr. “We remain on task with setting clear educational objectives and successfully assessing and achieving them.”

“Livingstone’s Compliance Certification Report was submitted 15 months in advance of the College’s scheduled reaffirmation,” said Dr. See *Accreditation...* pg. 15



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Haiti: Our Misunderstood Neighbour

Submitted by Rev. Ronald A. Nathan

*“Haiti I am sorry we misunderstood you
One day we’ll turn our heads
And look inside you.”*

The above words come from a calypso piece sung by the Trinidadian singer/song-writer David Michael Rudder. They summarise the ignorance most of the world has when it comes to this first Black republic, Haiti.

Nowhere is this misunderstanding more evident than amongst Christian communities in the Western Hemisphere. Many are quick to make armchair predictions and so-called prophetic assertions about the Republic of Haiti and why it is victim to so many atrocities and disasters. Their perceptions, views, and analyses are based on a warped view of the Haitian people, their history, culture, and the influence of the African-derived Voudun religion that is present in Jamaica, Dominican Republic, and the United States.

The sensationalised aspects of Voudon, such as belief in zombies and animal sacrifices, have provided fodder for countless television shows and movies characterised as voodoo. Voodoo is a sensationalized pop-culture caricature of Voudon, an Afro-Caribbean religion.

The result of this publicity has given Voudon a largely undeserved reputation as a sinister religion that on one hand evokes great fear and prejudice, but on the other hand facilitates the raising of millions of missionary and development dollars.

Little Is Known or Said:

- About this the first modern state to abolish slavery. Haiti was the first state in the world to be formed from a successful revolt of the lower classes (in this case slaves), and the second republic in the Western Hemisphere, only 28 years behind the United States.
- About Haiti as part of the Underground Railroad (southern branch) that offered a refuge for enslaved African Americans.
- About the overwhelming Christian presence in the Haitian nation in which 86.9% of its population are followers of Christianity. Almost every Christian denomination in the world is present in Haiti and running some sort of social project. There are more than 1,700 missionaries in the nation today.
- Of the hundreds of western, non-governmental organizations that proliferate this small nation in the Northern Caribbean, using up most of the money donated to assist this impoverished nation.
- Of the interference and gerrymandering of the political processes in this nation by western countries in particular, France and the United States.
- About the historical reparations Haiti has had to pay to France for 122 years because it dared to reject slavery. In 1825 France had demanded 150m gold francs in compensation after Haiti gained its independence. That sum is equivalent to 17bn euros (£14bn) in today’s money. That has significantly contributed to Haiti’s debt burden and sentenced it to the status of the most under-developed country in the Americas.
- About the thousands of earthquakes that have taken place on the island of Hispaniola, not



Photo taken by Gabrielle Latorue

because of the religion of its populations, but because the nation sits on top of two tectonic plates, the North American and the Caribbean plates which make up the Earth’s crust. Earthquakes occur from the friction created when these plates move against each other.

- About the support to the U.S. economy of Haitian labour and investment by its 1.2 million Haitian Americans.

There is no doubt that the Caribbean is a disaster-prone region. It is most well-known for its annual hurricane season, but less known for its volcanic eruptions and earthquakes.

Corruption is undoubtedly present in the governmental administrations. What should persons who are knowledgeable about Haiti do? First, we should engage in praying for our neighbour, Haiti. Second, we should support efforts to address the challenges Haitians face through their own determinations. Third, continue to engage in the international support for Haiti’s capacity-building operations.

Haitians are a most resilient and creative people, who are proud of their heritage and independence. They repeatedly bounce back from all that is thrown at them, whether natural or man-made crises. Maybe we should take time to look inside this great nation and give God praise for its people. We certainly should give thanks for the momentum that its revolution created that brought social, spiritual, and political inspiration for those still faced with New World slavery in the Americas. ☆

Rev. Ronald A. Nathan, pastor of the Hoggard A.M.E. Zion Church and the Executive Director of the Commission on Relief and Development of the Evangelical Association of the Caribbean.

“...Open our hearts, open our hands...”



Photo: U.S. Marine Service

The Reverend Dr. D.B. Cannon, Executive Director of the Department of Global Missions and Editor-in-Chief for the Missionary Seer, possesses a special lens which qualifies him to give sound leadership to the A.M.E. Zion Church regarding our relief efforts in Haiti and our awareness of the crisis un-

folding in Afghanistan. Please take a moment to view the heartfelt appeal from Dr. Cannon himself.

Haiti is one of two Caribbean nations (the other nation being the Dominican Republic) on the western part of the island of Hispaniola. It is an independent nation about the size of the state of Maryland, with about

11 million populates. On August 14, 2021, Haiti experienced a 7.2 magnitude earthquake that left at least 2,200 people dead, more than 12,000 injured, some 300 still missing, and many displaced. Haiti is still trying to recover from the devastation of the 2010 earthquake (7.0 magnitude), the Coronavirus pandemic, this year’s earthquake with a residue of destroyed buildings and blocked roads, and the continued threats from tropical storms.

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, specifically the North Eastern Episcopal District—Bishop Dennis V. Proctor, presiding, Pastor Nicolle D. Harris (who has direct contact with relief agencies in Haiti), and the Department of Global Missions, Bishop Kenneth Monroe, chairman and Executive Director Dr. D.B. Cannon—has joined in the efforts to offer relief to those who are hurting, hungering, and hoping. All who wish to make contributions in support of this endeavor may do so by donating to the Global Missions Department of the A.M.E. Zion Church Givelify.

Afghanistan emerged as a significant U.S. foreign policy concern in 2001, when the United States, in response to the terrorist attacks of

September 11, 2001, led a military campaign against Al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban government that harbored and supported it. In the intervening 19 years, the United States has suffered over 22,000 military casualties (including around 2,400 fatalities) in Afghanistan, and congress has appropriated approximately \$144 billion for reconstruction and security forces there. In that time an elected Afghan government has replaced the Taliban; improvement in most measures of human development is limited; and prospects of gains remain mixed. [i] The Taliban is regaining control in Afghanistan following the U.S. military withdrawal. Families are in urgent and immediate danger. Attacks from the Taliban on Afghan nationals who supported the U.S. mission have increased. The U.S. government promised to protect them and are now working to bring them to safety by granting priority access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and providing Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs)—a visa category created and allocated by congress to ensure that no U.S. ally would be left in danger.

The A.M.E. Zion Church takes seriously its identity as The Freedom Church. To quote Dr. Cannon, it

“stands in solidarity with organizations all over the world” to help those adversely impacted by the escalating conflict in Afghanistan. The A.M.E. Zion Church is one of 37 faith communions that stands in solidarity with the advocating voice of Church World Service (CWS). Since 2009, CWS has relocated more than 7,000 Afghan SIV recipients and their families to safety in the United States. There are currently 18,000 Afghan SIV applicants (and their families) in desperate need of immediate resettlement to the United States.

Willing donors can support refugees and asylum seekers by going to our app Givelify at Global Missions Department of The A.M.E. Zion Church. Select the amount you wish to donate, then select Afghan Support. These funds will be sent directly to Church World Service to assist in resettling displaced SIV recipients. ☆

To learn about sponsoring a family arriving in your community, email refugeewelcome@cwsglobal.org

[i] Afghanistan: Background & U.S. Policy Brief June 12, 2021, Congressional Research Service



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- Dr. David A. Aiken, Sr. Executive Director

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...What Happens Next

from page 1

called to serve for the betterment of society as well as for the salvation of all people and for the glory of God. We must confront challenges, serve faithfully and stand firm on the principles of our faith with the assistance of the Holy Spirit to save people and bring glory to God. We are called as Christians to confront challenges and overcome challenges, not for our comforts or our convenience, but that people may come to know God and bring glory and honor to Him. Our efforts of service is designed to attribute to God more than vocal appreciation, but also to honor Him and affirm our faith in Him with our deeds and our devotion.

It is my contention that the next few years are critical for the health and well-being of our church. Our church cannot move forward unless the spirit of the church is renewed. We cannot continue to do what we have always done or even be what we have always been and still be in the will of God. We must embrace and adhere to the will God as described in the teachings of the scriptures. As leaders and officers of the church, we must change our thinking, change our behavior and change our approach to ministry. Paul reminded the church at Philippi how to approach transformative change. He said, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is pure, whatever is right; whatever is lovely; whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you." (NIV) Make no mistake about it, God has called us to make transformative change, and transformative change is a miracle and it does not happen often! God has called us; God has equipped us and God expects us to do miracles, because He has empowered us through His Holy Spirit. Jesus states in John 14:12-14, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask Me for anything in my name, and I will do it." (NIV)

It is interesting to note that when God called us to ministry, He called us because He had confidence in us. When God called us, it was not because we were deserving of the responsibility. Yet, when He called us, He equipped us and trusted us to do transformative ministry. Without question, there were times that we failed God in our efforts to bring about transformative change, but He continued to trust us because He knew we had the potential and the capability to fulfill His call. It grieves God when we disappoint Him in our deeds of unrighteousness and our acts of disobedience. Moreover, the more we love God, trust God and please Him in our efforts to serve Him, the more responsibility we are given. It is always necessary to win the confi-

dence of God. Romans 5:8 records it best, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (NIV)

As the Senior Bishop and President of the Board of Bishops, it is imperative that I continue to seek the confidence of God as well as the confidence of God's people as we serve God and His people in the midst of uncertainty. While we rejoice in our growth and expansion in Africa, our church like many other churches, is experiencing a decline in membership in the United States as well as a decline in the confidence of her leaders. There is a need to give clear directions regarding social and civic issues as well as a more convincing demonstration of our faith in God.

The church was disappointed and injured by the actions of one of the bishops of the church. It really does not matter whether his actions were intentional or not. Our people were emotionally and spiritually setback and disturbed. The church was saddened even more during the proceedings and outcome of the trial of the bishop that had not occurred in more than (73) years. We found ourselves troubled, suspicious of the leadership as well as suspicious of one another and more uncertain of what would happen next in the life of our denomination. Our church finds herself in a state of mourning and loss as she struggles to find the means to get back on target. Unfortunately, it is very possible that we are more out of focus. Yet, we are attempting to move forward as if nothing has happened to us.

Perhaps we might be able to compare the events of the past few years to the experience of a person having a massive stroke. We survived but we have not recovered. Several of our congregations are still apprehensive about their place of worship or even why God would allow this to happen to them. There is a spirit of apprehension and mistrust that has to be transformed. We are not ready to continue business as usual. As we move forward, we must build trust, renew our relationships and restore our fellowships. More likely, there were symptoms ignored that would have prevented the malady we are encountering, if we had attended to

them earlier. Yet, the opportunity for proper exercise, proper nutrients and/or directions were not done. Unfortunately, when the COVID 19 Pandemic came upon us, we were already experiencing an epidemic. We were not healthy when the pandemic caused us to make adjustments. Of course, our conditions would have been minimal if we had not gotten out of focus. Please know that the Quadrennial Theme points us in the direction to obtain reconciliation and restoration. "The Freedom Church: Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Strengthened Our Fellowship, Serving Our Flock, Sharing Our Faith and Securing Our Future". We must intentionally employ the components of the theme to achieve its reality or may I say this miraculous feat. No doubt, prayer is the key, but it must be prayers that request God's anointing on the leadership of the church as well as all persons who are in search of the will of God. Let us pray!

*God of grace and God of glory
On Thy people pour Thy power
Crown Thine ancient church's story
Bring her bud to glorious flower
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
Lo
For the facing of this hour
For the facing of this hour
The hosts of evil 'round us
Scorn Thy Christ, assail His ways
From the fears that long
have bound us
Free our hearts to faith and praise
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
For the living of these days
For the living of these days
Cure Thy children's war-
ring madness
Bend our pride to Thy control
Shame our wanton selfish gladness
Rich in things and poor in soul
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
Lest we miss Thy kingdom's goal
Lest we miss Thy kingdom's goal
To the evils we deplore
Let the gift of Thy salvation
Be our glory evermore
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
Serving Thee Whom we adore
Serving Thee Whom we adore
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
For the living of these days
For the living of these days
(Fosdick)*

Sincerely,
Kenneth Monroe
August 23, 2021

...Zion's New Bishops

from page 1

Zion, Durham, NC; Mt. View A.M.E. Zion, Moncure, NC; and Union Grove A.M.E. Zion, Edenton, NC. It was in 2001 that he was appointed Senior Pastor of the Simon Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, Fayetteville, NC. As pastor, he allowed the Lord to lead him in growing the church from 300 to 3,000 members. He presently serves as the Presiding Elder of the St. Croix District of the U.S. Virgin Islands Annual Conference.

Bishop Eric Leake was born on August 11, 1963, in Troy, NC, and raised in Mount Gilead, NC. He is married to the lovely Jean McMurray Leake. They have four beautiful children: a daughter, Jessica (Catrell), and three sons, Joshua, Caleb, and Elijah. They also have two grandsons, Jeremiah and Cayden. Bishop Leake feels guided by the Holy Spirit to live a life of wisdom and obedience to God. He is a family man who enjoys cooking, walking, traveling, gardening, watching basketball games, and writing in his free time.

Bishop Leake's ministerial background dates back to preaching his first sermon at the age of 21 at the McAuley Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church, Mount Gilead, NC. Since then, he has served the church and community through several pastorate and administrative roles within the A.M.E. Zion denomination. He presently serves as the pastor of the Martin Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, Chicago, IL. He sits as the current President and CEO of

the Martin Temple Community Foundation in Chicago and the Prayer Coordinator and Director of Evangelism for the Midwest Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Zion Church. He also published a workbook on the "Seven Steps (components) to Church Renewal", which outlines the methods and means for revitalizing dying congregations, especially in mainstream denominations.

Bishop Leake boasts a very accomplished educational background. He received an associate's degree in applied science in 1985 from Montgomery Community College in Troy, NC, and a bachelor's degree from Shaw University in Raleigh, NC, in 1990. In 1995 he earned the Master of Divinity degree from Hood Theological Seminary in Salisbury, NC, and completed the requirements for the Doctor of Ministry degree in 2004 from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, OH. His dissertation project, "Spiritually Intentional Disciples: Praying and Growing in Phases in the Greater Warner Tabernacle A.M.E. Zion Church", has recently been turned into a book titled "Praying on Purpose: Intentional Growth Through Prayer" (Xulon Press, 2013). God continues to equip this servant's ministry to advance the Kingdom of God by "Launching Out into the Deep: Bringing People In, Growing People Up, and Sending People Out." ✨

...The Dynamic Duo

from page 1

we persevered! He would tell the story of the way we were treated at one bank in particular where we were sent to rescue a parcel of property. We were not treated very kindly, but we picked ourselves up from the bruising and proceeded on with negotiating better terms for this property.

Once we were able to move the debt to our bank/facility, the indebtedness was paid off two years early, before maturity. Look at God! This adventure was a time when we prayed, cried, and laughed. Make no mistake about it, we would sometime differ on issues, but we would stick with each issue until we came to agreement. We knew just how to settle each other down. After all, he was the bishop and most importantly, the chairman of the board—my boss. Throughout these times, my respect for Bishop Battle grew tremendously. Yes, we were a Dynamic Duo.

Bishop Battle began his ministry in 1966. When he celebrated his 50th year in ministry, I was asked to give my 50 cents worth. What an honor it was to speak about an extraordinary leader while he could still hear it himself. I took a quote from John Maxwell, "A Great Leader's Courage to Fulfill His Vision Comes From "Passion" "Not Position." These words speak volumes to this

giant of a leader. On July 25, 2020, when the 51st Quadrennial Session of the General Conference could not take place because of COVID 19, the bishop asked me to read our statement informing the church about the satisfying of the debt. I was to read the statement to the church on that Saturday morning, via Zoom. Now, even though he was recovering from an infirmity that had attempted to shut him down, yes, he still could have made the announcement himself. But he wanted me to do it. Fast forward one year later at the start of the General Conference held in Atlanta, GA. On the opening day, once again, Bishop Battle requested that I be on the program. Together this dynamic duo burned the mortgage. We are so grateful that our God never allowed our zeal for each other or our commitment to His church to waiver.

Honorably and respectfully
penned by Dr. Shirley Welch ✨



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SCENES FROM THE 51st QUADRENNIAL SESSION OF THE A.M.E. ZION GENERAL CONFERENCE



HEALTH & WELLNESS

Transition Your Traditions

By Alonzo Hill

Now is the time of the year when we all get together to feast on food and indulge ourselves in our holiday traditions. From recipes passed down from generation to generation, we enjoy mouthwatering meals,



ZOLINGO'S
SPICE FOR LIFE

cakes, pies, and every beverage imaginable. These are great times spent with friends and family laughing and joking about who passed out on the couch from a food coma or which aunt or uncle had a little too much holiday cheer. Yes, I remember when my mom would spend days and weeks preparing for the holidays. My dad would sit at the head of the table, strong but quiet. My brother Joe always had something stirring up that would give us a good laugh.

Well, I lost my mother to cancer

in 1998. My father became depressed because of his diabetic illnesses and ultimately committed suicide in 2005. My brother Joe died from complications of diabetes in 2014. All their lives were cut short by the same diseases that affect a large portion of our family members' health to this day.

Although I appreciate those holiday traditions and all the love, care, and preparation that went into them, I now know a lot of these traditions are contributing to the deterioration of our families way too soon. Not all ingredients are designed for the human body to process. Too much of anything can lead to various diseases and the destruction of our bodies. Some of us treat ourselves to these traditional recipes year-round, on a weekly, sometimes daily basis. The

good news is there is a solution.

Every incident is an opportunity to learn. Experiencing the loss of my family members has opened my mind to a new way of thinking. I look at the world from a slightly different view, and as I move forward, I see my perceptions being confirmed by scientific data and investigative factual reports. The path to a healthier life relies heavily on what we consume. I pray that we all learn from the sacrifices of our ancestors.

So, in this current holiday season – and all those to come – start a new tradition of adding healthy recipes to your holiday menu.

- Replace harmful ingredients with healing ingredients
- Replace bad habits with good habits
- Replace fear with knowledge and understanding
- Replace anger with forgiveness and joy
- Replace grief with fond memo-

- ries of life and legacy
- Replace pre-existing conditions with prevent any condition

Live, love, and enjoy your family and friends. Give them the gift of a higher quality of life. Reach out for assistance in preparing and planning for your family's new, healthier lifestyle. I am available to speak to your family or organization. Schedule your consultation today.

Zolingo's Beautifully Sweet Butternut Squash

- 2 butternut squashes
- 1 tbsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp pink Himalayan Sea salt
- 1 tsp thyme
- 2 tbsp olive oil

Preheat the oven at 400 degrees. Peel squash, slice down the middle, and take out the seeds*. Dice squash and place in a large bowl. Add garlic powder, sea salt, thyme, and olive oil. Toss until squash is evenly covered. Line a cookie sheet with foil and roast for 45 minutes for a sweet and tasty complement to any meal.

*You can separate the seeds, toss

them in a little sea salt and garlic, and roast them, and enjoy them as a tasty snack.

Go to www.zolingospiceforlife.com and turn any meal into a tasty, mouthwatering delight!

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How Can You Help End the HIV/AIDS Crisis?

Submitted by Da'Tarvia Parrish

We are all too aware that the HIV/AIDS epidemic remains a looming threat to Black communities. Decades of silence, stigma, and structural barriers to treatment and testing have allowed the epidemic to spread and claim the lives of our African American friends and family members.

Despite significant advancements in medical research and expanded access to life-saving drugs, African Americans, who account for only 13% of the U.S. population, make up 42% of new HIV diagnoses. Of those, Black trans women and men who engage intimately with other men disproportionately bear the burden of contracting the virus. Without a renewed commitment to mounting an effective response against HIV/AIDS, the spread will continue to manifest it-

self the hardest in African American communities.

Black faith leaders are an indispensable part of a viable response to this crisis. Historically, Black, faith-based institutions have acted as beacons of hope, offering lifesaving and soul-saving resources to those who needed it most. As the Black Church leverages decades of hard-earned spiritual wisdom/resilience and earned trust in the community, it has often marshalled its sacred treasure of resources to meet the fierce urgency of 'NOW'. We need to look no further than the Black Church's role in challenging chattel slavery, advocating for civil rights, and speaking prophetically against police brutality to understand the impact of its labor. The current HIV/AIDS epidemic requires a similar response. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Black Church to take an all-hands-on deck approach to tackling this crisis.

First, we must acknowledge *See HIV/AIDS... pg. 11*

Adding Carboplatin to Chemotherapy Before Surgery Improves Early-Stage Triple-Negative Breast Cancer Outcomes



Written by Jamie DePolo
Reprinted from breastcancer.org

Adding carboplatin (brand name: Paraplatin) to the standard neoadjuvant chemotherapy regimen for early-stage triple-negative breast cancer improved event-free survival, according to a study.

The study also found that adding veliparib to standard neoadjuvant chemotherapy had no effect on outcomes.

The research was presented on Sept. 17, 2021, at the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) Congress 2021.

Doctors call treatments given before surgery neoadjuvant treatments. So doctors call chemotherapy given

before surgery neoadjuvant chemotherapy.

For this study, event-free survival means the length of time a person lived without:

- the cancer growing
- the cancer coming back in the same breast or anywhere else in the body
- receiving a second primary cancer diagnosis

About triple-negative breast cancer

- Triple-negative breast cancer is:
- estrogen-receptor-negative
- progesterone-receptor-negative
- HER2-negative

Triple-negative breast cancers are usually more aggressive, harder to treat, and more likely to come back

(recur) than cancers that are hormone-receptor-positive or HER2-positive. Triple-negative breast cancers don't usually respond to hormonal therapy medicines or medicines that target the HER2 protein.

About Carboplatin

Carboplatin is the only platinum-based chemotherapy medicine approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to treat breast cancer. Platinum-based chemotherapy weakens or destroys breast cancer cells by damaging the genetic material in the cells and making it hard for cells to repair any genetic damage.

Other studies have shown that *See Breast Cancer... pg. 15*

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Living Beyond Loss: Reflections from The Right Rev. Kenneth Monroe, Senior Bishop, A.M.E.Z. Church

The events of 9/11, which occurred twenty years ago, will never be forgotten by the citizens of this country. The pain, the suffering, the frustration, the anger and sadness as well as the death of thousands of innocent people continues to live in the hearts and minds of so many families. Yet, life has continued for some people as if nothing happened. Moreover, for another group of people, void spaces continue to be empty. Scores of people died, other people were hurt, property was damaged, other possessions and property was completely destroyed. No doubt, nearly every person who remembers that day understands the magnitude of loss experienced by this nation (20) twenty years ago.

Conversely, life continues to bring episodes of joy and sadness to our lives. Nevertheless, we survive and we can recover. Even the various catastrophic hurricanes, floods, wild fires, the COVID 19 Pandemic and other tragic deaths brought on by senseless killings have knocked us down, but if we survived the impact, we continue to live with an opportunity to recover.

Psalm 46:1 reminds us that “God



is our Refuge and Strength, a very present help in the times of trouble.” While we have experienced great loss, we have also been given the grace and mercy of God to sustain us and allow us to continue to live. As we reflect on the events of 9/11, it is imperative that we also consider the various experiences of life that have stopped us in our tracks; that have brought tears to our eyes and ushered pain and suffering to our existence. In all that we have experienced, God has been in our midst to keep us,

enlighten us, protect us, strengthen us and lead us as we prepare for what will happen next in our lives.

Continue to stay focused, serve faithfully and stand firm on the principles of our faith as we are given opportunity to recover and live beyond loss.

Kenneth Monroe, Senior Bishop
*African Methodist
Episcopal Zion Church
September 11, 2021*

...HIV/AIDS

from page 10

the Black churches' contributions to the stigma connected to HIV/AIDS. Many of us can vividly recall instances in the 1980s, during the height of the epidemic, when some Black Christian churches would ignore the pain and suffering of those afflicted. Many Black Muslim leaders followed this same unfortunate path. Far too many children of the Black Church died in isolation, without their faith community because of the disgrace associated with the virus. Messages laced with homophobia and theologies rooted in the “othering” of those with HIV/AIDS are still commonplace today in our sacred spaces. In some cases, faith leaders have led the charge of advancing misnomers, miseducation, and misinformation about the virus, thereby silencing the experiences of those who have to live with this sickness and forcing them to the margins of the sanctuary.

Zionites, we can choose to act differently. We can choose to see the ongoing epidemic of HIV/AIDS in our community as the public health crisis it is. We can act in ways that serve those most impacted by offering access to resources, testing, and spiritual counseling. Our faith traditions call us to embody radical compassion, and our history demands we combat stigma targeted at the most vulnerable among us. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King,

Jr., “Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.” As people of faith, we are summoned to pursue a more equal and just system for all, regardless of one's health status.

“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”

As Black faith leaders, we must see the lives of those with HIV/AIDS as being equally as sacred and valuable as those who are virus free. Anything less goes against the universal values of various faith traditions: love, hospitality, and service.

In an effort to help alleviate the HIV/AIDS crisis; the Interfaith Youth Core and Gilead Compass Initiative at Wake Forest Divinity School will collaborate as a cohort with faith-based organizations and institutions of higher learning to engage under-represented communities and minimize the stigmatization of HIV/AIDS. In this pursuit, Livingstone College has been granted \$4,000 and will partner with the Women's Homes and Overseas Missionary Society of the Salisbury District to become part of the solution to break down the barriers of stigma and shame, connect through robust creative partnerships with agencies, and ensure strategic support necessary to secure long-term

engagement. Furthermore, under the theme Sexuality, Healing, and the Black Church, the Gilead Compass Initiative Faith Coordinating Center at Wake Forest School of Divinity is hosting a virtual training series to better acquaint and equip faith-based institutions on how to address issues confronting HIV/AIDS. Interested parties may register at <https://web.event.com/event/51a43890-f4e1-4dd6-8faf-abf1bdfb6c53/summary>. Please select Livingstone College as a grantee partner.

Lastly, you are invited to join Livingstone College and the Salisbury District's WHOMS on Sunday, October 31, 2021, for the Salisbury District's Fifth Sunday Fellowship themed, Healing from the Pulpit, a message from Reverend Harold Jordan of Third Creek A.M.E. Zion Church. This will be followed by HIV/AIDS testing at Moore's Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church. 500 Partee Street, Salisbury, NC.

The two will host virtual programming in recognition of World AIDS Day on Wednesday, December 1, 2021, at 8:00 p.m. on Livingstone College's YouTube Channel. A public health forum for the community is planned for February 4, 2022, and there will be a National HIV/AIDS Week of Prayer, March 7-11, 2022. For more details regarding events and programming, please contact Da'Tarvia Parrish at (704) 216.6058 or dparrish@livingstone.edu. ☆

Prophetic Pastoral Ministry to the Vaccinated and the Unvaccinated: A Caribbean Perspective



Submitted by
**Rev. Ronald A.
Nathan**

As a pastor in the Caribbean where over 85% of the population is of African heritage, I have to be mindful of our historical experience and contemporary experiences. Slavery, colonialism, neo-colonial and imperial practices have had an indelibly negative impact on the region's population of 43 million.

Many of the Caribbean's small island states economies have been badly struck by the near halt in tourism. The Caribbean economy contracted by 8.6% in 2020 and 12.6% in 2021. Here in Barbados, 25% of the workforce was sent home one month after the first case of COVID-19 was discovered on the island.

With the creation of COVID-19 vaccine options, our people in other regions of the world have been reluctant to be vaccinated. Local governments have been threatening to enforce vaccination mandates. Given the division and vitriolic comments and accusations thrown between the vaccinated and the non-vaccinated, I have had to remind myself that I must be pastor to both camps. I must protect the lives of both groups with prayer, preachments, pastoral care, and prophetic action.

There is a desperate need for us to continue to pray that the body of Christ remains united. Within the limits of the pandemic's protocols, we must still call the body of Christ to fervent prayer. Pray for each other regardless of vaccination status, and pray for our communities that there be peace in our homes, in the streets, and in our legislature.

In our preachments, we must not avoid the subject of the pandemic because it is considered controversial. We have to offer our denomination's stance concerning vaccination while at the same time encouraging the love of Christ to be spread abroad in our hearts. We must push our congregants to get involved in acts of kindness toward both groups without prejudice.

Not all of us came to faith at the same time, nor did we all develop Christian maturity at the same pace. We must be patient with one another, whatever our political affiliation or theological undergirding. As people of colour, we must remain mindful of the impact racism has had on drugs and accessibility to medical care. Vaccination hesitancy will always be among us. We must not marginalise, ostracise, or ridicule those who are

hesitant to be vaccinated. We cannot and should not be surprised by their reluctance.

It is in perilous times like these that we should remind ourselves to let brotherly love continue. We as pastors must be willing to address openly without sarcasm the questions some people have about the vaccines. We should be honest in recognising that there are some persons who have become seriously ill and a few who have died because of vaccination. However, we must support good governance that has to do right by most of the population. We have got to show our commitment to the human rights of those who are getting vaccinated as well as those who are not.

Out of this Christian love ethic should also come a level of local and national activism that seeks to gain justice for health inequalities experienced by people of colour in communities in western countries, such as the United States of America, Canada, Europe, and the Caribbean. On the other hand, there has to be action taken by the Black Church to increase its role in providing health education and services for our membership and the wider African American and Caribbean communities. Part of our advocacy for the poor and the vulnerable is to speak up against the inhumane treatment of Africa and Asia with America and Europe's 'vaccination apartheid'. Together they have stockpiled more vaccines than twice their populations, while to date, only 3% of Africa's population has been vaccinated.

The radical nature of the teachings of Jesus Christ does not allow us the luxury of burying our heads in the sand when difficult decisions have to be made about ethical and moral issues. Matthew 25:36 in the Amplified version of the bible tells us: “I was naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me [with help and ministering care]; I was in prison, and you came to Me [ignoring personal danger].”

The COVID-19 pandemic is a clarion call to the Black Church to stand up on behalf of the vaccinated and the unvaccinated. Members of both camps are made in the image and likeness of God and need the same pastoral service and prophetic courage.

Rev. Ronald A. Nathan is the Executive Director of the Commission on Relief and Development for the Evangelical Association of the Caribbean and is the Senior Minister of the Hoggard A.M.E. Zion Church, Jackson, St. Michael, Barbados. ☆

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Lift Every Voice

Submitted by **Jennifer Copeland**,
Executive Director
North Carolina Council of Churches

T. Anthony Spearman, President
North Carolina, NAACP

Some have said the seeds of democracy were planted in the first book of the Bible, specifically with the announcement that humans are made in the Image of God. Indeed, God announced to the heavenly host on the 6th day after five previous days of extravagant creation, "Let us make humankind in our image..." So God created humankind in God's image, in the image of God, God created them..." (Genesis 1:26-27). If each human is so valuable as to bear the image of God, clearly each human is valuable enough to be fairly represented in a democratic government.

Now that the 2020 census results have been tallied, representation is being realigned across local communities, states, and at the federal level. The good news is, North Carolina will gain a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, giving us 14 congressional districts. The bad news is, the process for drawing congressional district lines is being shrouded by the N.C. General Assembly.

The decisions made in the redistricting process will affect us for the next decade. Think of all the laws that have passed or failed to pass in the past decade because we've languished in districts at the state and federal level that do not represent the majority of North Carolinians. The many are ruled by the few, which is far cry from authentic democracy and a mockery of the One in whose image we are each created.

It's worth noting that the creation story found in the first chapter of Genesis was likely written and recited for the People of God during the Babylonian exile, over 500 years before the birth of Jesus. Like all exiles and wars then and since, people were confronted with massive life disruption, destruction of home and property, and forced relocation. Chaos like that calls for structure from another source. The prophets and priests of those exiled from Judah offered such structure by reminding God's people of our place in the order of creation and reminding us of our worth by emphasizing our Godly images.

We still rely on that reminder today when confronted by chaos, even chaos that comes in the form

of legislative agendas that do not privilege the worth of each person. We can produce a long list of legislative machinations that devalue many in North Carolina, such as the failure to expand Medicaid or to fund adequately the Department of Environmental Quality so they can protect residents from industrial pollution.

Now we are being confronted by a process that condenses the locations for public comment about our congressional districts. Hearings are scheduled in only 10 counties out of 100. Not surprisingly, many of our rural counties in northeastern N.C. and western N.C. will be omitted. Surprisingly, no public hearings are scheduled for critical population centers like Wake, Guilford, Buncombe, Gaston, and Union counties. Even more troubling, there are currently no plans for community input after the district maps are drafted. All of which means, if we want a voice in how our voices are represented in Congress, we need to speak up early and often.

Now we are being confronted by a process that condenses the locations for public comment about our congressional districts.

The maps matter. When the lines are drawn they should fairly represent the diversity of North Carolina. Partisan districts devalue the vote and, by extension, the voter, the one created in the Image of God. Packing people into congressional districts and cracking districts to dilute voices creates the kind of chaos we've had in N.C. for the past decade. This is our once in a decade opportunity to speak boldly for the right to be represented fairly.

People of faith regularly pray, read scripture, and worship together. These are the means through which we cultivate the strength to face the chaos around us. Now is the time to take our faith to the public square and speak against impending chaos. The record in the Bible includes many examples of people speaking truth to power—think of Jeremiah before King Zedekiah and Paul before the Areopagus). Now it's our turn. We take with us the truth found in Genesis. We are created in the Image of God. We matter. ✨



On Saturday, August 28, 2021, 58 years after an estimated 250,000 people converged on Washington, DC for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom; a march that was pivotal to the enacting of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 a commemorative march may suggest that not much progress has been made to advance the cause or plight of the African American community to which I strongly disagree. Hence, it was particularly rewarding to hear the Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, Pastor of the Grace Baptist Church in Mount Vernon, NY as he shared with the Reverend Sam Brown on assignment with our beloved Star of Zion in a recent interview viewed on When Freedom Speaks, that voting rights is a "battle that must be fought in each generation."

It is that understanding that keeps me on the frontline of the battles we

fight today. As but a 12-year-old on August 28, 1963 residing in Port Chester, NY my parents would not allow me to travel to Washington DC therefore I sat glued to the television as movement heroes like the late A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, Congressman John Lewis and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. took the podium on the 8th anniversary of the death of 14-year-old Emmett Till who had been brutally murdered in Money, Mississippi. The image of Emmett in that open casket remains strong inspiration. Not only did I grow up in the movement, but the movement also grew up in me.

When Freedom Speaks, it does so from the historical perspective framed by realities formed by a nation anchored in racism that will continually fight fights that have already been fought. Ours is a perpetual struggle whose stubborn persistence will prevail until racism is finally conquered.

Yet, When Freedom Speaks it relies on just courts to administer the law impartially as witnessed the week of August 23, 2021 where a three panel Superior Court gave a ruling resulting in the largest expansion of voting rights in North Carolina since the Voting Rights Act of 1965. They courageously dealt with an outdated statute that disenfranchised more than 56,000 citizens returning to society from prisons.

When Freedom Speaks it embraces the ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who in the Gospel of Luke 4:18 says "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind to set the captives free.

The focus of the marches on August 28, 2021, in Washington, DC., Atlanta, Miami, Phoenix and other cities across this nation was primarily to call for the advancing of HR1, the For the People Act – a transformational anti-corruption and clean elections reform package – in the 117th Congress. It is this generation's battle when freedom must speak. ✨

Submitted by the **Rev. Dr. T. Anthony Spearman**
President of the NC NAACP;
Assistant to the Pastor, Trinity
African Methodist Episcopal
Zion Church, Greensboro, NC

...Living Legends

from page 5

Congresswoman Alma Adams; and N.C. Senator Toby Fitch.

The purpose of the event is to provide scholarships to currently enrolled students of the state's HBCUs. The funds are generated through the gala and an HBCU Living Legends calendar.

Students can apply for an HBCU Living Legend Scholarship by visiting www.hbculivinglegends.com

Romus Jefferies

Jefferies, a graduate of Dunbar High School in East Spencer, became a four-year letterman at Livingstone College. He was named Coca-Cola Golden Helmet and Most Valuable Player, and was selected to the all-CIAA team three times out of his four years as a Blue Bear.

After graduation in 1971, he continued his football career with the Buffalo Bills. He was inducted into the Livingstone College Hall of Fame, the Livingstone College Commemorative Classic Hall of Fame and Rowan County Hall of Fame.

He is the owner and operator of Hardees Food System, and a member of the Grand Lodge Athletic Department, where he serves as soft-ball director.

Majorie Kinard

Kinard is a sought-after speaker whose career includes serving as an educator with the District of Columbia public schools; director of alumni affairs, director of enrollment man-

agement and dean of student affairs at her alma mater; and director of public relations for Barber-Scotia College in Concord.

After graduation, she went on to earn a master's degree from the University of DC.

She is a member of the National Council of Negro Women; the Livingstone College National Alumni Association; the National Association of the Education of Young Children; the Washington Association of Child Care Centers; and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., where she served on its national board.

An active member of John Wesley AME Zion Church, she is president of the AME Zion Ministers Spouses and Widow(ers) Fellowship of the Philadelphia Conference and the Washington District.

Joseph White

White is a 1983 summa cum laude graduate of Livingstone College, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in physical education and a Bachelor of Arts degree in early childhood education. He started his football career at Livingstone as a walk on, but earned a four-year scholarship and became the first running back in CIAA history to rush for more than 4,000 yards.

His professional football career ended due to a knee injury. He is a K-8 physical education/health teacher, athletic trainer, and athletic director and coach with Brunswick County Schools.

He was inducted into the Livingstone College Commemorative Classic Hall of Fame; was Blue Bears Most Outstanding Offensive Back; a two-time CIAA Athlete of the Year; and is a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

Andre Springs

Spring is Livingstone's head golf coach and former athletic director. He has led the men's golf team to eight CIAA golf championships, three National Minority golf championships and four NCAA appearances during his 20-year tenure.

In 1987, he launched a minority golf clinic to help young players develop golf skills in preparation for local and national competitions. He won CIAA Golf Coach of the Year in 1986, 1987 and 2015.

As athletic director, the Livingstone men's basketball team won back-to-back CIAA championships, the first time in school history.

As a student at Fayetteville State University, he was the first freshman to win the CIAA Golf Championship and was named FSU's Most Outstanding Freshman. He was MVP for three consecutive years and assisted his team to four CIAA golf championships.

Spring has been inducted into the Fayetteville State University and Livingstone College Hall of Fame; the CIAA Hall of Fame; the African-American Golfers Hall of Fame; and the Mecklenburg County Sports Wall of Fame.

He is a member of the United States Golf Teachers Federation; the National Negro Golf Association; and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. ✨



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OBITUARIES

Homegoing Services held for Rev. William R.W. Douglas, Jr.

William Raydon Wilberforce Douglas, Jr., affectionately known as "Ray", was born to the late Rev. William R. W. Douglas, Sr., and late Delores Andre' Polk Douglas on November 19, 1974, in Roanoke, VA. In addition to his parents, he is preceded in death by paternal grandparents, Abel Carroll and Venus Christina Douglas, maternal grandparents, Raymond E. Polk, Sr. and Lessie Jones Polk.

Educated in the public schools of Bristol, VA, and Kingsport, TN, Ray was academically, athletically, and musically gifted. He began to play the violin at age five. Ray also played the cello and sang in numerous choral groups. A graduate of Dobyns-Bennett High School in Kingsport, TN, Ray went on to the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and graduated in 1996. While attending UT-Chattanooga, Ray was active on the Student Conduct and Appeals Board, Student Government Association (SGA), and the Student Alumni Council. Ray was blessed to receive a music (voice and orchestra) scholarship from the legendary Dr. Roland M. Carter, Chair, Department of Music at the institution. There, he joined the Chattanooga Singers and Singing Mocs Show Choir. Among the many highlights for Ray was having the opportunity to sing at the Crystal Cathedral and traveling with the choir to New Zealand, Australia, Scotland, England, Hawaii, and locations throughout the United States. He also sang in the First Presbyterian Church Choir for Changed Lives, which aired on Sunday nights nationwide.

Interested in public service, Ray served as a legislative intern in the Tennessee General Assembly in Nashville, working for State Senator David Fowler of Chattanooga. While completing his undergraduate degree, Ray attended the Thompkins Chapel Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church. After graduation, Ray ran for Tennessee House of Representatives in Hawkins and Hancock counties and was narrowly defeated in the primary. Dedicated to a life of service, Ray was employed as a program director at Rascals Teen Center and an instructional assistant at John Sevier Middle School.

Ray accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior at the East TN/VA Conference that convened at the Jones Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church in Greeneville, TN, in June 1993. Answering the call to preach, he delivered his initial sermon in July 1997 at the Lyons Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church in New Canton, TN, where his father was the pastor. He subsequently enrolled in the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary (LPTS) in Louisville, KY, on a scholarship. There Ray served on the Seminary Council. His field education study was done at the Broadway Temple A.M.E. Zion Church where Rev. Douglas served as Minister of Youth and founding director of Saving Americas Youth (SAY Yes!) Center, writing grants to fund programs for at-risk youth, and he



Reverend William R.W. Douglas, Jr. (Ray)

briefly played for the children's choir. In May 2000, he earned the Master of Divinity degree from LPTS.

A proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Ray was a life-long member of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. He was ordained a deacon in 1999 and an elder in 2000 by the late Bishop Milton A. Williams, Sr. Bishop Williams assigned him to the Price Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church of Roanoke, VA, where he became an integral part of the community. Pastor Douglas shared with Faith Works, the Loudon Melrose, and Melrose Rugby neighborhood associations and was the chair of the Legal Redress and Political Action committees of the Roanoke Branch NAACP. He also served on the Board of Directors of the Jefferson Center Performing Arts Center, YMCA Family Branch Center, and was Chair of the local United Way Emergency Food and Shelter Board. The Breakfast Ministry that Rev. Douglas established remains active today. Rev. Douglas was a chaplain at Lewis Gale Hospital in Salem, VA, and a flex/on call chaplain for Carillion Health system (now Carilion Clinic) at Roanoke Memorial and Community hospitals from 2004 to 2007. He also worked as the Vice President of Marketing and Recruitment for Big Brother Big Sisters of Southwestern Virginia.

After serving at Price Memorial for five years, Rev. Douglas joined the John Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church in Washington, DC, in October 2007. Under the pastoral leadership of Rev. Dr. Vernon A. Shannon, he became minister of youth, sang with the Cathedral Choir, Fellowship Gospel Choir, Male Chorus, and was a member of the November Birthday Club. He also sang with the Salone Clary Chorale. In May 2012, Bishop Warren M. Brown assigned Rev. Douglas as the organizing pastor of Deliverance Temple, a vision God gave him while in Roanoke. After 20 years of friendship, Ray married the former Rev. Dr. Nicole A. Johnson on June 24, 2012. The Lord blessed them with two amazing children, Rayah and Rayghan. He loved traveling and spending time with his family. A dynamic ministry team, the Douglas' developed a plan for the new congregation and later merged it successfully with Victory Worship

A.M.E. Zion Church. Pastor Douglas immersed himself in community and was especially active with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE), serving on their PLE Board for Ward 5.

Ray is survived by his loving and queenly wife, Rev. Dr. Nicole Johnson-Douglas; daughter, Rayah McKinzie Leigh and son, Rayghan Neeko Elijah; siblings, Warren R.E. Douglas (Tracy) of Georgetown, Guyana, Joyanne Douglas-John (Sam) of Boston, MA, Andre' L. Douglas of Greensboro, NC, and Kristen N. Douglas of Phoenix, AZ; godchildren, Infiniti Bristol of Kingsport, TN, Jacque and Aniya Johnson, Tyrell Holcomb, A'Zora Peterson, London and Sage Williams, and Mason Caleb Saxon, all of Washington, DC; an uncle, Ralph N. Polk (Cynthia) of Danville, VA; a godmother and aunt, Grace Douglas of Central Islip Long Island, NY; an aunt, Gloria Polk Manns of Roanoke, VA; nephews, Chaz Douglas of Brooklyn, NY, and Michael John of Boston, MA; a niece, Allison John of Boston, MA; his mother-in law, Mary Johnson-Rambert of Fort Washington, MD; father-in-law, Daniel Walters of Washington, DC; and a brother-in-law, Da'twan Marable (Amy) of Washington, DC. Also left to cherish Ray's memory are special brothers, Major Bristol (Cassie), Rashik Wilkes (Danaeka), Brian Whelchel, Rev. Michael King (Ravelle); special cousins, Sean Polk and Troy Manns; spiritual parents, Rev. Adolphus Young (Justina); and a host of cousins, in-laws, co-laborers in the Gospel, and friends.

Ray was remembered and celebrated with an Alpha Phi Alpha Omega Service, Visitation and Service of Triumph on Saturday, June 5, 2021, at NotAboutMe Ministries, 3106 Branch Avenue, Temple Hills, MD. Bishop W. Darin Moore, Eulogist. Internment at Rock Creek Cemetery, Washington, DC. Services entrusted to Ronald Taylor II Funeral Home. Services may be viewed, and donations may be given to The W. Ray W. Douglas Ray of Hope Memorial Foundation at <https://my.gather.app/remember/william-r-w-douglas-jr>. ✪

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Funeral Services held for Rev. Dr. Medis W. Cheek

The Reverend Dr. Medis Warren Cheek was born in Norfolk, VA, on July 6, 1939. She was the eldest of two children born to Reverends Herbert R. Warren, Sr., and Medis G. Warren. She was preceded in death by her husband, Mr. Boyd Cheek, her parents, and a brother, Rev. Herbert R. Warren, Jr.

Dr. Cheek was educated in the Portsmouth Virginia Public School System, having graduated from I.C. Norcom High School. She matriculated at Virginia State College graduating with a bachelor's degree in Sociology. She earned a Master of Social Work degree from Norfolk State University, as well as a Master of Divinity degree from the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology. She received an honorary Doctor of Ministry degree from Livingstone College.

Dr. Cheek worked as a social worker in New York City and Portsmouth, VA, for several years. She also taught as a collegiate professor of social work for many years at Hampton University and Virginia Commonwealth University. Other positions include telemarketing supervisor, lecturer, and workshop presenter, which took her all over the country.

Dr. Cheek accepted God's call into the preaching ministry. Upon her ordinations as a deacon and elder in the A.M.E. Zion Church she was given her first and only pastoral appointment to the Gilmerton Star A.M.E. Zion Church in the Norfolk District of the Virginia Conference. She gave stellar pastoral leadership at Gilmerton, which included a profound, soul-saving Outreach Ministry. After a few years of pastoral service at Gilmerton Star, the late Bishop Milton A. Williams, Sr., elevated her to the position of Presiding Elder of the Newport News District. She encouraged, inspired, supported, and during the Christmas holidays gifted the pastors under her charge. She always made herself available and accessible to anyone who needed advice, prayer, uplifting, and when necessary, correction. However, this was never to tear down but always to build up.

Dr. Cheek was elected a ministerial delegate to the General Conference of the A.M.E. Zion Church for six consecutive quadrenniums. She served on and chaired the Resolutions Committee for two quadrenniums. She also served on the Connectional Budget



Reverend Dr. Medis W. Cheek

Boards, Christian Education, and Compilation and Discipline Codification. She was also elected a member of the Judicial Council of the A.M.E. Zion Church for a quadrennium. She was a Life Matron of the Life Members Council of the WHOM Society of the A.M.E. Zion Church, Life Member of the Ministerial and Lay Association of the A.M.E. Zion Church, and Association of Christian Educators of the A.M.E. Zion Church. She was a member of the Presiding Elders Council of the A.M.E. Zion Church, Church Women United, and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.

Dr. Cheek entered into eternal rest on August 20, 2021, at the home of her son and daughter-in-love, Jarrod and Lakisha Cheek. Those left to celebrate her life in love and to cherish her memories are her loving sons, Rev. Dr. Heath L. Cheek (Rev. Sharon S. Cheek, daughter-in-love) of Woodbridge, VA, and Mr. Jarrod W. Cheek (Lakisha Cheek, daughter-in-love), of Stone Mountain, GA; her grandchildren, Tia, Nakia, Akilah, Sarai, and Zahir; great-grandchildren, Demetrius, Lincorey, Nasir, Naeem, and Nasya Tone'; half daughters whom she cherished dearly, Mrs. Vanessa Cheek-Harris, Mrs. Bonita Cheek-Johnson, and Ms. Delsene Cheek; a special loving daughter, Mrs. Velina Glenn; sister in love, Mrs. Carrie Warren; nieces, Rev. LaDorsa Warren-Willis (Kinard Willis), Yolanda Warren; along with a host of loving grand nephews, nieces, cousins, and cousins-in-love of the Warren and Cheek families; and her beloved Zion family, especially the members of the Virginia Conference and her church family of Solid Rock A.M.E. Zion Church. ✪

NEWS
from ALL OF ZION
THE STAR OF ZION

a GLOBAL LEADERSHIP VIEW of the A.M.E. Zion Church



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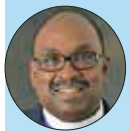


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9. Bishop Hilliard Dogbe
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Mrs. Cynthia Dogbe, Missionary Supervisor



10. Bishop U. U. Effiong
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Mrs. Promise Effiong, Missionary Supervisor



11. Bishop Brian R. Thompson
WESTERN EPISCOPAL DISTRICT
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Rev. Felica Thompson, Missionary Supervisor



12. Bishop Eric L. Leake
SOUTHWESTERN DELTA EPISCOPAL DISTRICT
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See Global Leadership... next page

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...Accreditation Reaffirmed

from page 5

Kelli V. Randall, Livingstone's vice president for Academic Affairs and SACSCOC accreditation liaison. The report demonstrated the institution's judgment of the extent of its compliance with each of the SACSCOC core requirements and standards. Following the Compliance Certification Report, Livingstone completed a Focused Report in advance of the virtual On-Site Reaffirmation Committee visit, which was conducted October 19-22, 2020.

The next step included completion of the Response Report of the Reaffirmation Committee and final Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) document, which were submitted for the highest level of review by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees at its June 17 meeting, Randall said. Livingstone's QEP is "Write for Life: Improving Student Writing through Writing in the Disciplines" with a focus on clarity, coherence and context.

The Committees on Compliance and Reports (C&R), standing committees of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, review reports prepared by evaluation committees and the institutional responses to those reports. A C&R Committee's recommendation regarding Livingstone's reaffirmation of accreditation was forwarded to the Executive Council for review. The Executive Council recommended action to the full Board of Trustees, which made the final decision to reaffirm

Livingstone College's accreditation with SACSCOC, Randall explained.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has forever changed the landscape of higher education, and HBCUs in particular, have faced major challenges in the wake of a global pandemic," Randall said. "Therefore, I am super excited about the fact that Livingstone College has come through a clean and flawless reaffirmation process. Livingstone College's reaffirmation of accreditation gives the institution the green light to expand the purview of its curriculum offerings, degree programs, and formats of teaching, delivery and instruction."

Robert McInnis, Director of Institutional Effectiveness & Research, and Laverne Macon-Jamison,

Assistant Director of Institutional Effectiveness & Research, assisted Randall on the reaffirmation process, along with the college's Senior Leadership Team.

"Livingstone's reaffirmation of accreditation is the culmination of the faculty and staff who participated in preparing the compliance report, response report, and virtual on-site visit led by Dr. Kelli Randall, who demonstrated ardent leadership to the team," Jenkins said.

The SACSCOC philosophy for accreditation is that an institution will engage in ongoing improvement of its programs and services for its students.

"This is a great time to come to Livingstone College," Jenkins said. "In addition to several incentives the College is offering, reaffirmation of accreditation shows we are committed to quality, integrity and continuous improvements of our programs." ☆



Glaucoma often has no warning signs but can cause vision loss and blindness if left untreated.

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NIH National Eye Institute NEHEP A program of the National Institutes of Health

...Breast Cancer Outcomes

from page 10

adding carboplatin to the standard neoadjuvant chemotherapy regimen of Taxol (chemical name: paclitaxel) — followed by Adriamycin (chemical name: doxorubicin) and Cytoxan (chemical name: cyclophosphamide) — for early-stage triple-negative breast cancer improves pathologic complete response (pCR).

One way doctors judge the effectiveness of neoadjuvant treatments is by looking for any actively growing cancer cells in tissue removed during surgery. If there aren't any active cancer cells in the tissue, doctors call it a "pathologic complete response" or pCR.

Still, the earlier studies weren't designed to see if adding carboplatin improved long-term outcomes. And since carboplatin can increase the risk for certain blood cancers — such as myelodysplastic syndrome and leukemia — it hasn't been clear if the benefits of adding carboplatin outweigh any risks.

About Veliparib

Experimental veliparib is a type of medicine called a PARP inhibitor. The PARP enzyme fixes DNA damage in both healthy cells and cancer cells. PARP inhibitors have been shown to work against breast cancer with a BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation by making it very difficult for these cancer cells to fix DNA damage.

Right now, two PARP inhibitors have FDA approval to treat metastatic HER2-negative breast cancer with a BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation:

- Lynparza (chemical name: olaparib)
 - Talzenna (chemical name: talazoparib)
- The FDA has not approved veliparib to treat breast cancer.

About the Study

Called BrightNess, this study wanted to see if adding carboplatin and veliparib, or carboplatin alone, to standard chemotherapy before surgery for early-stage triple-negative breast cancer would improve outcomes, including pCR, event-free survival, and overall survival.

Overall survival is how long people live, whether or not the cancer grows or comes back.

Between April 4, 2014 and March 18, 2016, researchers randomly assigned 634 women diagnosed with stage II or stage III triple-negative breast cancer to one of three neoadjuvant treatment regimens:

- 316 women received Taxol, carboplatin, and veliparib
- 160 women received Taxol and carboplatin
- 158 received Taxol alone

All the women then received four cycles of Adriamycin and Cytoxan.

After neoadjuvant chemotherapy was complete, the women had surgery to remove the breast cancer.

The BrightNess study's 2018 results showed that adding carboplatin to neoadjuvant chemotherapy improved pCR, but adding veliparib had no effect.

This latest analysis looked at

survival rates and second cancer diagnoses after about 4.5 years of follow-up.

The results showed that adding carboplatin to the standard chemotherapy regimen improved event-free survival by about 11%. Event-free survival rates were:

- 78.2% for women treated with Taxol, carboplatin, and veliparib
- 79.3% for women treated with Taxol and carboplatin
- 68.5% for women treated with Taxol alone

This difference was statistically significant, which means that it was likely due to the difference in treatment and not just because of chance.

The researchers noted that women with pCR after surgery had better event-free survival than women without pCR after surgery.

Again, the results showed that adding veliparib had no effect on outcomes.

While women in the Taxol and carboplatin treatment group had better overall survival than women in the other two treatment groups, this difference was not statistically significant, which means that it could have been due to chance and not because of the difference in treatment.

The researchers found that adding carboplatin to the chemotherapy regimen caused more blood-related side effects, including:

- anemia, or low red blood cell counts
- neutropenia, or low white blood cell counts
- pancytopenia, or low levels of red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets

Still, the researchers reported

these side effects didn't affect the survival results and that carboplatin didn't increase the risk of other cancers, such as myelodysplastic syndrome and leukemia.

"These findings support the inclusion of carboplatin in neoadjuvant chemotherapy for stage II to III triple-negative breast cancer," said Sibylle Loibl, M.D., Ph.D., chair of the German Breast Group and professor of medicine at the University of Frankfurt, who presented the results.

What This Means For You

If you've been diagnosed with early-stage triple-negative breast cancer, these results are very encouraging. Doctors have been looking for more clarity on whether the benefits of adding carboplatin to the standard neoadjuvant chemotherapy regimen for early-stage triple-negative breast cancer outweigh the risks. This study's results strongly suggest carboplatin offers more benefits than risks.

No matter which treatments your doctors recommends for you, you may want to ask about:

- the reasons each treatment is recommended (including any combinations)
- the treatment timing and sequence
- the expected benefits, risks, and side effects of each treatment

If your doctor recommends neoadjuvant chemotherapy for you and carboplatin isn't part of the regimen, you may want to bring up this study. You also may want to ask your doctor to recommend clinical trials with carboplatin that make sense for your

unique situation. ☆

Jamie DePolo, senior editor, researches and writes our Research News articles and is the voice of the Breastcancer.org Podcast. She has more than 20 years of experience crafting science stories for non-scientists. "I'm very proud to be a part of Breastcancer.org," Jamie says. "It's extremely gratifying to hear from women who tell me I've helped them understand something about this disease or their treatment."



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