

THE STAR OF ZION

OCTOBER | VOL 146 No. 10 | STAROFZION.ORG | THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

LIVINGSTONE COLLEGE'S 13TH PRESIDENT



Livingstone's Dr. Anthony Davis named 13th president of Livingstone College

By Kimberly Harrington, *Asst. Director of Public Relations, Livingstone College*

SALISBURY – The Livingstone College Board of Trustees voted unanimously to name Dr. Anthony J. Davis as the 13th president of Livingstone College.

The announcement was made Thursday, Sept. 22, during the Board of Trustees' annual fall meeting held on campus, following an executive session.

Davis, an alumnus of Livingstone College, currently serves as senior vice president of Institutional Advancement and chief operating officer.

"The Search Committee was very intentional on finding someone that would embrace students, understand the culture of the school and be familiar with the community," said Bishop Kenneth Monroe, chairman of the board. "We had good candidates. We had to look at the vision of the person and if that person was able to connect with

the ideals we were looking for."

In his current role, Davis led the college through the COVID-19 pandemic as chair of its task force and managed the day-to-day operations of the college, all while supervising and providing leadership for the entire fundraising enterprise at Livingstone College.

"I recognized Dr. Davis' talents and his willingness to roll up his sleeves and to work hard. That's why I appointed him chief operating officer," said Livingstone President Dr. Jimmy R. Jenkins, Sr. "In essence, he has been practicing to step into the seat of president."

"I'm happy, I'm humbled, and I'm honored to be selected to serve as the 13th president of Livingstone College," Davis said. "Twenty-one years ago, I started on this journey to become president. It is true

what poet Langston Hughes said, 'Dreams don't die, they are deferred.'"

Prior to Livingstone College, Davis served as the vice president for development with The Consortium for Graduate Study in Management, the nation's oldest diversity pipeline organization.

A 2001 graduate of Livingstone College, Davis earned his Master of Arts degree in philanthropy and development from St. Mary's University in Minnesota, one of the only advanced degrees offered in this field. He attended the Fundraising School of Indiana University – Bloomington's Center of Philanthropy (Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis) and completed his doctoral work at The United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, where he earned a Doctor of Ministry degree.

Official Voice of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

The Star of Zion is an award-winning newspaper and journalistic media organization, published by The A.M.E. Zion Church as its official organ since 1876.

Being guided by the core values of truth, faith, and love, the Star seeks to raise the consciousness of readers with news that is current, relevant, and dependable.

Accelerating Communication About The Freedom Church

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

The 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 5,000.
Member of the Associated Church Press.

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ADVERTISING RATES FOR THE STAR OF ZION	
Rate Space Times \$12.00 Per Col. Inch..... 1-3	
SUBSCRIPTION RATES	
One Year - \$38.00 Single Copy - \$4.00 Bundle (50 Copies) : \$100.00	

Notice to Star of Zion Reporters
Article/Ad Submission Deadline Dates

November 2022 Issue.....	October 15, 2022
December 2022 Issue	November 15, 2022
January 2023 Issue.....	December 15, 2022
February 2023 Issue	January 15, 2023
March 2023 Issue	February 15, 2023

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BE A BLESSING

Called to be bothered

By Reverend Leona Nicholas Welch

One of the reasons that we fail to do ministry or reach out to help someone in trouble is tied to the word, “bothered.” The ironic thing about the need not to be bothered is that the true call for a Christian is the willingness to be bothered, in order to give others our best.

THE QUESTIONS ARE:

Are we not saved to be bothered? Are we not born again to be bothered? Are we not baptized and sanctified to be bothered? Are we not filled with the Holy Spirit to be bothered? Are we not blessed to be bothered?

The ultimate reality is that Jesus Christ was bothered in the worst way for us. I believe it must have bothered Jesus to be dragged out of that garden that night and hauled into a kangaroo court to be judged for doing nothing wrong. Can you imagine how it must have bothered Jesus when that wad of spit went flying into the air and landed on His face. I’m sure it bothered Him when those two-inch thorns were pressed into His skull, and when He fell under the weight of that heavy cross beam of wood that He was carrying up a hill, toward an excruciating death. The truth is, Christ was bothered to death.

But Jesus bore it all because He knew that our salvation depended on Him. What about us, His followers? We are not asked to give up our physical lives for anyone; however, we are asked, at times, to make sacrifices to help save others from the pain and anguish of a crisis – from succumbing to a disaster.

We are asked, even commanded, to help carry one another’s burdens.

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Gal 6:2 (NKJV)

Yes, as disciples of Christ, we are asked to be bothered for someone else’s sake – to come out of our comfort zones to give a helping hand.

In order to be a blessing to others, we are often called to be bothered.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS NOT PART OF GOD'S PLAN

HOW SHOULD THE CHURCH ADDRESS DOMESTIC ABUSE?

Written by Rev. Denise L. Davenport
Presented by Debra Chappelle-Polk, *Zion Spotlight Editor*

The **Clergywomen in Zion** series began with “**And Yet She Persisted**”. The article, authored by Rev. Audrey Williamson, spotlighted Jerena Lee, Julia A.J Foote, Mary Smalls and Florence Randolph Spearing, early pioneers in female ministry in the A.M.E. Zion denomination, as well as Mildred “Bonnie” Hines, the denomination’s first female bishop. In upcoming editions, female clergy ranging in ages 30 to 60, from various regions of the country, will share their experiences as female “preachers”, while navigating the sexism, patriarchy and misogyny that continues to exist in the church, the academy and society at large.

Rev. Denise L. Davenport, Pastor of Caldwell Temple, (Bronx, New York) continues the series with “**Domestic Violence Is NOT Part Of God’s Plan.**”

To acknowledge the suffering of another is to acknowledge their humanity; but what does it say about us, as followers of Jesus, if we cannot do that for our most vulnerable members? Black women have suffered in silence for far too long, and it is time for us -- *as a church family* -- to do better by victims of domestic violence.

In 2017, The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence reported that over 45% of Black women have experienced physical violence, sexual violence, and/or stalking from an intimate partner at some point in their lives. (Note: these statistics are pre-pandemic, so these numbers are likely much higher now based on reports from local organizations). The NCADV defines domestic violence as “willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another.” It should be noted that while anyone can be abusive towards any intimate partner, Black women experience domestic violence at a rate higher than any other group by race and gender. I believe that the uniqueness of their experiences demands an equally unique response from the church community.

Black women are not a monolith; I cannot, nor will I, speak to all of their experiences. However, I speak on this issue based on my research and my own experience as a survivor of domestic abuse. Personally, the thought of being a Black single mother was reason enough to keep me stuck, and was reinforced by the older women in my life who urged me to “just stay” and accept the violence that was committed against me. The people who I looked to as role models and sources of guidance simply advised me, based on their life experiences and what had been tolerated for centuries, but I say that we must tolerate it no more.

I wound up working at a residential group home for teenage mothers and saw that many of the young women in the program came from violent backgrounds and ended up in abusive relationships. I saw the lasting impacts that this type of trauma can have, and realized that these women simply do not get enough help. They often get *trapped* back in their situations out of a perceived necessity and a very real lack of resources. Consider

this all too common scenario - if an overwhelmed shelter imposes a 60-day limit, where does a young woman go? These women end up in shelters because they do not have support systems with the physical, emotional, financial, or spiritual capacity to help them. Outside of large cities, there are not many options for women who want to escape their situations, and this disenfranchisement often leaves women right back where they started. Black women also cannot turn to law enforcement for safety for obvious reasons: We understand what is at stake if we call the police. Firstly, Black female survivors are more likely to be criminalized for defending themselves. Secondly, Black women understand the risks that come from any interaction with the police - let alone incarceration - and may be hesitant to bring that upon their abusive partners.

If Black women cannot go to the two most commonly recommended options for help, to whom do we turn? Survivors need support - physically, financially, mentally, and spiritually - and this means that survivors need community. The church, specifically Black churches, have always been a source of strength through community for those “abused” by white supremacy, however this same strength and empowerment has been denied to victims of domestic violence. Abuse within the Black community is often seen as “dirty laundry” not to be aired in public, but this silences women for the sake of maintaining the status quo and protecting abusers, which only allows the cycle to continue. I was not empowered by those around me to leave my abusive relationship, and it took so much away from me, including my relationship with God. I felt so hopeless, alone, and frustrated that I did not speak to God for years. Looking back, I can say that God did give me many signs to leave, but the voices of the people in my community overshadowed God’s voice and kept me trapped.

Abuse is about wielding power and control over another, which is in stark contrast to what we know from Genesis 1:26-28 - that we are all equally made under God’s image. More specifically, the Bible speaks on God’s plan for families, most notably in Ephesians chapter 5. Verse 21 urges husbands and wives to “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”, while vv. 25-28 calls upon husbands to love and sanctify their wives as Christ did the church. Even beyond the Biblical take on how human beings and intimate partners should treat each other, how can we, as members of the AME Zion Church, be bystanders when we know that abuse is happening in our church community? How can we claim to follow our mission to “*increase our love for God and to help meet the needs of humankind...*”, knowing that the needs of abused Sisters in the pews next to us go unacknowledged? Understand that the AME Zion Church has a long and beautiful history of activism based on the needs of the community, that dates back to its founding during slavery. Yet, we turn our backs on our members, our legacy, and the very core of our beliefs when we turn a blind eye to abuse within our churches.

What helped me the most was seeing other survivors who had the courage to escape and speak on their experiences. I saw what was possible for myself through working with others, and

began to seek out a community that would support me. Now, I see a future in which women like me can have supportive communities in their churches, so that they do not have to seek it out from sources that do not address the spirit. I envision a church that empowers Black women who are in danger, just as it has empowered Black men for centuries, by creating a faith-based safe space for survivors to heal.

We have the power to shift the culture within our churches to one that encourages women to come forward and seek help, and we also have the strength in community and Christ to provide them with the resources that they need. I call upon the members of our community who are able to work with local programs that provide shelter and support to survivors. I beseech the older members of our community to see that a better world is possible, one in which women do not have to accept abuse.

I implore our leaders to provide spiritual guidance to these women that reminds them of three things:

1. God's love for each one of us (1 John 4:7-8)
2. The inherent dignity they have as a part of His Creation (Genesis 1:27)
3. Scripture does not include abuse as a part of God's plan for matrimony (Colossians 3:19)

I entreat our leaders to remind men of three additional things:

1. Their role in their families according to the Bible (Ephesians 5).
2. To treat others the way you want to be treated (Matthew 7:12)
3. We are all equally made in God's image (Romans 3:23)

If you are currently in an abusive relationship, I beg you to consider the safest way for you to leave before it is too late. I promise that there are communities out there to support you, and you can lean on them while our church learns to do better.

If you believe that you may be an abuser, think about the way that God wants us to treat others, and ask yourself if you are walking on a righteous path.

I urge all of you to examine the way that you look at the women around you and consider what Jesus would do. Learn to recognize the signs of abuse, consider what your role is in perpetuating a culture that permits abuse, and focus on how we can help victims. Listen to women who say that they are being abused; do not dismiss them, do not advise them to stay, do not tell them to keep it quiet, do not blame them. Remember that abuse is never justified and that it is never the victim's fault. We are called upon to love one another as we love ourselves, therefore we must act.

In this age of information, we cannot use ignorance as an excuse, and informational links are provided below. Please look up local resources and share them with your communities, as these are likely to be most impactful for survivors.

DV in the Black community statistics: https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2497/dv_in_the_black_community.pdf

DV in the Black community: <https://coburnplace.org/stories/a-layered-look-at-domestic-violence-in-the-black-community/>

Biblical Perspective on DV: <https://www.gotquestions.org/domestic-violence.html>

DV in the Black Church: <https://dcadv.org/blog/domestic-violence-in-praise-and-rebuke-of-the-black-church.html>

Recognizing DV: <https://www.partnersforpeaceme.org/high-profile-abuse-cases>

Community intervention on DV: <http://stoprelationshipabuse.org/professionals/social-workers-and-therapists/community-intervention-with-an-abuser>

How to help victims: <https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-help-a-victim-of-domestic-violence-66533>

Helping abusers: <https://www.centerforpreventionofabuse.org/i-need-help-for-someone-else/helping-abusers>



Rev. Denise L. Davenport is the oldest daughter of Robert and Rev. Norma D. Joseph. She is a native New Yorker and has lived most of her life in the Bronx. Rev. Davenport is married to Bro. Charlton Davenport and has 3 adult children, China, Xellex and Chaz. She has been a nurse for over 25 years and currently is the Director of Education at ABC Training Center, an allied health vocational school which trains essential workers such as certified nursing assistants, EKG technicians and phlebotomists to name a few.

Rev. Davenport was ordained a deacon on October 1, 2011 and then Elder in June 2013. She has served as pastor of Bell A.M.E. Zion Church, Center Moriches, New York and St. Mary A.M.E. Zion Church, Medford, New York. She also served as the Long Island District Director of Christian Education. In June 2021, Rev. Davenport was appointed pastor of the Caldwell Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, Bronx, New York. She is currently enrolled in Hood Theological Seminary, Salisbury, North Carolina pursuing her Masters in Divinity.

Who Rev. Davenport is can be summed up in three points.....

- She Loves God!
- She Leans on, who she calls her big brother, Jesus! And
- She's Led by the Holy Spirit!

REV. DAVENPORT IS A SURVIVOR.

NYC DISTRICT BACKYARD BAR-B-QUE IN THE BRONX

by Debra Chappelle-Polk, *Zion Spotlight Editor*

When one thinks of church backyard barbeques, thoughts of “firing up the grill” in the Bronx don’t usually come to mind. Well, think again! As God would have it, Woods Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church is located on Edson Avenue, in Bronx, New York and hosted a good ole fashioned church backyard barbeque on Saturday, August 20th. After almost three years of social distancing and isolation, Rev. Denise Davenport, Pastor at Caldwell Temple A.M.E. (*picd.*) decided it was time for Zionites to have some fun and invited churches from the New York City District to enjoy a backyard barbeque with friends and family. A “Food List” was circulated and the response was overwhelming. Members brought everything: ribs, chicken, hot dogs and burgers (with all the fixins), as well as specialty dishes of their choosing.

Presiding Elder A. Alfred Carson opened the festivities saying he was happy to see so many familiar faces and thanked everyone for their participation. Rev. Ruby Bell (Mother Walls) blessed the food and thanked God for allowing everyone to fellowship together after the pandemic-imposed shutdown.

Clergy, members, kids and young people from Rush Temple; Greater Hood Memorial; Woods Memorial, Caldwell Temple, St. Matthew, Varick Memorial, Mother A.M.E. Zion, along with Sis. Rhandi Stich, North Eastern Regional Director Connectional Lay Council all turned out to enjoy an afternoon of good food and good conversation.

Bros. Carlton Davenport (Caldwell Temple) and Marvin Mayfield, Jr. (Woods Memorial) fired up the grills and showed off their Grill Master skills. Rev. Chris Brown, Pastor of St. Matthew A.M.E. Zion, provided beverages from PepsiCo. There was an assortment of fruits, watermelon slices, veggies, salads. There was a cotton candy machine and a popcorn-making machine, along with bags of chips. And what’s a church barbeque without “deviled” eggs, pound cake, coconut cake, cookies and sweet potato pie?

A Black Card Revoked (church edition) trivia game was organized by Mrs. Dorian Carson and the Christian Education Department. The questions ranged from biblical facts: i.e. Which prophet was *not* imprisoned: a) Daniel; b) Paul c) Elijah. (Answer: Elijah) to questions (fact or fiction) associated with Black church custom and practices: “What do well-dressed, Black women always wear to church? a) pearls; b) hats; c) high heels. Many shouted out “all of the above” which was an appropriate answer, however it did not count as the “right” answer. After a recount, hats were deemed correct answer.

Church Music Question: Which hymn was *not* written by a Black songwriter? a) Go Tell It On the Mountain; b) Amazing Grace; c) He’s Got the Whole World In His Hands.

Answer: “Amazing Grace”. Ironically, this soul-stirring song was written by former enslaver John Newton, who called out to God for mercy during a horrific storm at sea. While the moment marked his spiritual conversion, he nonetheless continued to engage in slave trading until 1754 or 1755. He later studied Christian theology, became an abolitionist and wrote “Amazing Grace” in 1772.

Best Preacher Question: Who preaches the best sermons? a) Joel Olsten; b) c) Jamal Harrison Bryant; c) T.D. Jakes. **Answer: T.D. Jakes**

There was music and there was dancing. Rev. Malcolm J. Byrd, Sr. Pastor, Mother Zion Church joined the electric slide line (versions 1 thru 3) and showed off his “moves”. And, he wasn’t the only one. Rev. Norma Joseph (mother of Rev. Davenport, Dorian Carson and P.E. Carson’s mother-in-law) also



showed off her “moves” electric sliding on her walker. The backyard barbeque fulfilled its mission: Fun, Family & Fellowship. Like many cities across the country this summer, New York has had its share of oppressive heatwaves, however, the weather on August 20th was sunny and dry – perfect for a backyard barbeque. And, a testament to the power of God, the ultimate meteorologist.

Celebrating the Lay Persons of the Year of the Cape Fear Conference

Eastern North Carolina Episcopal District, Bishop Kenneth Monroe, Presiding Prelate

By LaVerna Hargrove, Cape Fear Conference Reporter



The Lay Person of the Year Award is presented by the local Lay Council to persons from each church who are elected by their respective lay councils to have shown outstanding stewardship during the year. The Lay Person of the Year from each church is submitted to the district and one of those persons is selected to be the District Lay Person of the Year. The District Lay Persons of the Year goes to the Conference for selection as the Cape Fear Conference Lay Person of the Year. The Lay Person of the Year for the Wilmington District is Lavonia Lewis of St. Paul, Bolton, NC; Jacqueline Roseboro of St. Luke, Bladenboro, NC is the Lay Person of the Year from the Lumberton District; Ned Highsmith is the Lay Person of the Year representing the Goldsboro District; and the Wilson District is represented by Annie Ward. Readers will find their experiences motivating and uplifting as they answered the call of God.

Meet these dynamic, gifted, dedicated servants of God who answer again and again, 'Lord, here am I send me' as they apply their experiences, talents, and time to get others to come with us to Christ. Their witness of *Service* for Christ strengthens our fellowships by encouraging and inspiring others to do more to get others to come with us to Christ.



Lay Persons of the Year Jacqueline D. Roseboro, Lumberton District

Jacqueline D. Roseboro is a member of St. James AME Zion Church, Bladenboro, NC. Her pastor is Reverend Viola Freeman. Her district is led by Rev. Dr. Florence S Brown.

Jacqueline's personal guiding scripture is found in Luke 12: 47-49. 47 "The servant who knows the master's will and does not get ready or

does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. 48 But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

Jacqueline is characterized as being committed, patient, detailed and organized, having integrity, a great willingness to serve and having a giving spirit. She is also self directed when on task for the Master. She has proven leadership as church treasurer for the past 24 years; Quarterly Conference Secretary for the past 13 years; Co organizer of Pink Sunday; Family and Friends Day, organizer and presenter of the Black History Program, teaches Bible Study and is the Co chair of Women of Zion Rock. She serves as the unofficial photographer for events on the local, district, and conference level.

Jacqueline has served as alternate delegate to the Cape Fear Annual Conference and served on the Church Reopening Committee of her church.

Jacqueline is a creative and gifted crafter and artist. She designed the Church Anniversary Commemorative Plaque, designed and crafted the door decorations for the church; researched, wrote and edited the Pictorial History of St. James Church AME Zion Church, Bladenboro, NC

Her community involvement covers many fields of study — from medical to agricultural to educational. She serves as the American Red Cross Volunteer instructor; West Columbus High School Band Boosters Treasurer and Secretary; member of the Whiteville Harvest Festival Youth Committee; the Columbus County Agricultural Fair Jr. Fair Board Advisor; the Columbus County Healthy Carolinians Task Force; the Columbus County Partnership for Children Board of Directors Treasurer and Finance Chair; the Columbus County Committee of 100 Board of Directors; the Habitat for Humanity of Columbus County past president for 5 years; the Columbus County Alcohol and Drug Prevention past vice president; a member of the Chadborn Elementary School Advisory Board.

Jacqueline is very well known in her community and throughout Bladen and Columbus County for her volunteerism and caring ways. She has been inducted into the Columbus County Cooperative Extension Hall of Fame; she was awarded the Jewel of the Year Award from the Whiteville Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.. As a founding member of the Columbus County Partnership for Children, she have served in almost every leadership position with distinction and was awarded their Longevity Award. The Cape Fear YWCA recognized her with the YWCA Women of Achievement Award. Of all of her prized awards and honorariums, she holds dear her Certificate of Appreciation as Treasurer of her church and the honor of being the 2022 Lumberton District

Continues... next page

Lay Person of the Year.

Jacqueline Roseboro is the loving wife of Thurman Roseboro and the very proud mother of four, grandmother of 6 and foster parent of 8. Two of the eight became their children by adoption.

Jacqueline counts all of her experiences as blessings multiplied mashed together and running over.



**Lay Person of the Year
Lavonia D. Lewis,
Wilmington District**

Lavonia D. Lewis is a member of St. Paul AME Zion Church, Bolton, NC. Her pastor is Reverend Thomas E. Williams. Her district, the Wilmington District, is led by Reverend Alexander Jones.

LaVonia's guiding scripture is Isaiah 40:4-5. Every valley shall be exalted; and every mountain and hill brought low, the crooked places

shall be made straight and the rough places made smooth: The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Lavonia became a member of St. Paul AME Zion Church, Bolton, NC in 2015 though she had been visiting, worshipping and volunteering there for more than 15 years prior to becoming a member. She has a go-getter, boots-on-the-ground mentality applied to the glory of God for the welfare of His people. She believes in being prepared, knowledgeable of the Word of God and of how key education is in carrying out those tasks to which our hands have been assigned. She is characterized as having a high degree of professionalism, continually working toward self improvement, caring, supportive and having a vibrant spirit of volun-

teerism. In December 2021 she graduated from the 3 month leadership training program, Rural Economic Development Institute in Raleigh, NC. She has joined ACE to learn Christian Education from the roots up.

Lavonia is a dedicated member, leader, mentor, servant and resource for her church, community, district and conference.

Lavonia serves as Youth Sunday School Leader, preparing snack bags for Sunday School students of all ages, so they would not have to miss breakfast and could be ready to receive the Word of God. She is President of the Usher Board, member of the Steward Board, Finance Secretary, President of the WHOMS, Youth Missionary Secretary, Vice Secretary of the BUDS, and Secretary of the Bureau of Supply. She is also 2nd Vice President of the Lay Council, and Leader of Class #2. Though St. Paul has a small membership a will-do spirit permeates the church especially when it involves the church food pantry ministry as exemplified by Lavonia. She served as the Intake and Reporting Secretary of St. Paul's weekly food pantry ministry which served 2244 families so far this year. Lavonia is a member of the choir, creates and prints the weekly worship bulletins, as well as helps in the preparation of district and conference reports.

During the Covid 19 Pandemic she supplied St. Paul, some of the churches on the Wilmington District and some of the churches on the Lumberton District, as well as the clients of the food pantry ministry with hand sanitizers.

Lavonia has used her skills as a grant writer to obtain grants for the food pantry ministry, church repairs, and to eliminate other contributors of food insecurities. Her work as a grant writer extends across the Wilmington District and the Cape Fear Conference.

Lavonia serves the community as Farmers Market Volunteer for Columbus, Bladen, and New Hanover County; Grants

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Committee Chairperson of the Elizabethtown Rotary Club; member of the Columbus County Disaster Recovery Unmet Needs Committee; Bladen County Long-term Recovery Group and Unmet Needs Committee; Pender County Unmet Needs Committee; the NC Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster Committee; the NC Long Term Recovery Group, the NC Inclusive Disaster Recovery Network Committee, the Statewide Food Insecurity Advocacy Work with the NC Food Security Advocacy Coalition; Women of the Land Program Lead for female farmers, and Statewide Civic Engagement for Voter Registration, Voter Education, and Jurisdiction Policy Work; S.O.L.V.E.; Blueprint NC, and the NC League of Conservation Voters.

As she involves herself in the church and community she encourages, instructs, and gives her two young daughters, Gabrielle and Bethany, opportunities to do as she does.



**Lay Person of the Year,
Ned Davis Highsmith,
Goldsboro District.**

Ned Davis Highsmith has been a lifelong member of the AME Zion Church. His home church is Union Chapel AME Zion Church, Clinton, NC pastored by Reverend Johnnie Murphy. His district, the Goldsboro District is led by Rev. Dr. A. D. Brown.

His anchoring scripture is “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalms 27:1)

Ned Highsmith has a stellar reputation throughout Zion as an able and willing servant of God. He serves the local church as Pastor’s Stewart, Class leader, Financial Secretary, Lay Council President, and Annual Conference Delegate. He is the past Chairman of the Trustee Board. He has served as Pastor’s Stewart for over 40 years, Class Leader for 40 years, and Financial Secretary for 40 years.

He has served the Goldsboro District as Past Vice President of the Lay Council, Past District President of the Lay Council, and member of the Goldsboro District Trustee Board. He served as treasurer of the Goldsboro District Development Corporation that invested funds to finance an after school program for students for more than 15 years and to serve as a financial resource for the ministries of churches on the district.

Ned Highsmith served the Cape Fear Conference as 2nd Vice President, Alternate Delegate to the General Conference, and member of the Cape Fear Development Board.

He is presently serving a second term as the Connectional Lay Council Financial Secretary and served as a member of the CLC Legislative Board which reviews the resolutions submitted by CLC members to be presented to be voted upon to become our laws.

He keeps abreast of the heart beat of Zion by attending Zion’s conventions, convocations, evangelistic retreats and by reading the periodicals of the AME Zion Church.

Ned Highsmith is dedicated to improving his community by serving on the North Carolina A and T University Agriculture Strategic Planning Board for 3 years, a member of the Sampson County Farm Bureau Insurance Company, and by

making volunteering a watch word for various organizations. He is a past member of the Sampson County Corporate Extension, the Union School District of Sampson County, and having served a total of 15 terms as Commander of the Henry J Fowler American Legion. He was re elected 5 years and then re elected for 10 years.

He is a Master Mason of the True Seekers Masonic Lodge, Number 222 of Garland, NC; Past Commander in Chief of the Cape Fear Consistory No. 263 of Clinton, NC and Treasurer of that organization for more than 35 years. He is a Patron of Rebecca Chapter Order of Eastern Star, Garland, NC.

He was honored by his church as Man of the Year in 2010. He received a commendation from the North Carolina American Legion for giving over 50 years of service to that organization.

Ned Highsmith has served God and country. He is veteran of the United States Marine Corp where he served a tour of duty in Vietnam.

He is the proud husband of Elaine Harper, father of two and grandfather of 6. He continues to answer the calling of God on his life.



**Lay Person of the Year,
Annie Ruth Ward,
Wilson District.**

Annie Ruth Ward is a member of St. John AME Zion Church, Wilson, NC. Reverend Dr. Michael Bell is the Presiding Elder of the Wilson District.

Mrs. Annie Ruth Ward is a member of St. John A.M.E. Zion Church. She gave her life to Jesus at a tender age. Her ministry is one of service to community. She is an active Deaconess, missionary and life member of the Lay Council. Currently, Deaconess Ward, serves as the Treasurer and Admin. Assistant for the Wilson District and Budget Chair for her local church. She also, served as the Missionary President for the Wilson District. In her secular vocation she served for over 45 years with the Wilson County Department of Social Services and retired after serving many years as the Deputy Director. She is innovative, creative, and have a compassionate caring spirit. Her willingness to help hurting people find hope is what distinguished her from others.

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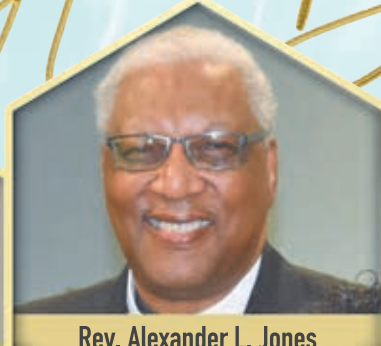
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IN APPRECIATION OF THE PASTORS OF THE WILMINGTON DISTRICT



The twenty-two congregations of the Wilmington District, Cape Fear Conference, Eastern North Carolina Episcopal District of the AME Zion Church District gratefully acknowledge the many acts of Christian discipleship of the pastors and Presiding Elder Alexander Jones of the Wilmington District to get others to come with us to Christ.

Please know you have made a positive difference in the lives of each worshipper who has had the privilege of hearing you bring a message from God and of seeing you demonstrate Christ like character.

We celebrate each of you this October 2022, Pastor Appreciation Month, with prayers of thankfulness and for your continued success in the work to which you have been called by Christ Jesus.

The Laity of the Wilmington District



Blazing New Trails

By Sam Brown, Managing Editor, *The Star of Zion*

CONCORD, NC – The Connectional Council of the A.M.E, Zion Church convened Tuesday, July 26, 2022 until Thursday, July 28, 2022 at the Concord Convention Center/Embassy Suites Golf Resort & Spa. This was the first connectional in-person gathering since the 2021 General Conference held in Atlanta, GA.

The Piedmont Episcopal District, under the leadership of Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Sr. and Missionary Supervisor Mrs. Camille C. Starnes hosted the meeting of over 500 registrants and 1000+ attendees. This was especially significant for the host, as Bishop Starnes was outgoing President of the Board of Bishops. In a tradition as old and as sacred as the church itself, the Board of Bishops elected Bishop Dennis V. Proctor to be president for the next 6-month term. Bishop Starnes was the preacher for the opening morning service on Tuesday; his sermon title was “Fully embracing spiritual renewal”, taken from Ezekiel 36:25-27. Other preachers during the week included Bishop Brian Thompson, Presiding Prelate of the Western Episcopal District and Rev. Dr Daran Mitchell pastor of the Trinity A.M.E. Zion church in Greensboro, NC

The afternoon business session began with the council receiving reports from General Officers, Administrative Boards, Connectional Departments, Institutions of higher learning, and Ecumenical Affiliates. These reports are given over a period of two days with breaks in between to allow meals and worship.

This Connectional Council was the first time the newest General Officers were able to report on their labors and the advancement of their respective departments.

Rev. Al Hamilton reassured members of his commitment to manage “Zion’s Purse” with the upmost integrity and ethical standards as our Chief Financial Officer. Rev. Julius Walls, Chief Operations Officer updated members of his plans of developing an employee handbook for headquarters’ staff. Rev. Dr. Eleazar Merriweather, the new Executive Director for Church Growth & Development will take his firsthand knowledge as a pastor to create models that will ultimately enable local congregations to remain relevant and foster sustainable growth. Reverend Patrick Barrett, Zion’s chief educator informed attendees of the recent changes in staff within the Christian Education Department and

with excitement reminded everyone of the approaching virtual Quadrennial Christian Education Convention.

Mr. Darin Kent, the Chief Communications Officer of the A.M.E. Zion Church and 18th editor of *The Star of Zion*, Zion’s chief publication is really blazing new trails and taking the A.M.E. Zion Church into places it has never gone before. At this past Connectional Council, he presented to the church the vision of AMEZ TV, a 100% digital platform that will serve as the repository for all A.M.E. Zion Media content. Mr. Kent, with the leadership of his board chair Bishop George D Crenshaw chair of the Board of Communications and presiding prelate of the Alabama-Florida Episcopal district spoke to the benefits of having such a platform and the resources that could be leveraged there from. The connectional council unanimously voted to adopt AMEZ TV. It should be noted that under the leadership of Mr. Kent the communications department for the first time in the history of our conventional gatherings was able to handle all multimedia needs by employing talent from within the A.M.E. Zion Church

One could argue the Council’s unanimous decision possibly had something to do with the Department of Communications and *The Star of Zion* displaying these abilities since the beginning of Mr. Kent’s tenure. During this Connectional Council the *Star of Zion* was on location with the *Star Cast*, a live in-depth commentary of connectional meetings and gatherings in Zion. This *Star Cast* for the Connectional Council aired live Tuesday the 26th and Wednesday the 27th. It was hosted by Miss Ashley Charles of the Virginia conference and Episcopal Director for Christian Education for the Mid-Atlantic Episcopal district. Her esteemed co-host was Rev. Dr. Brandon Fisher, pastor of the Kyles Temple A.M.E. Zion Church in Vallejo CA. Miss Charles and Rev. Fisher were able to sit down and talk with some of Zion’s greatest personalities; many of whom announced on the *Star Cast* their intentions to offer themselves for Bishop at the upcoming General Conference those people included the Rev. Dr Evalina Huggins, Rev. Dr. Anthony Witherspoon, Rev. Dr. Dr Dwayne Walker, Rev. Eldren Morrison, and Rev. Dr. Daran Mitchell. The next gathering of the Connectional Council will be Summer 2023 in New Orleans, LA



EVANGELISM TRAINING CURRICULUM



Department of Church Growth & Development
A.M.E. Zion church

About the Department

The Department of Church Growth and Development oversees the evangelistic efforts of the A.M.E. Zion denomination. It seeks to promote revivals of religion in and beyond our environs and works toward the goal of revitalization, restoration and expansion throughout our great Zion. The Department houses two vital ministries of our denomination: Evangelism and Home Mission.

As per the Book of Discipline: 'In order that the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church may conform more closely to the spirit and mission of the ministry of our Lord and employ the most effective means for the accomplishment of the chief end of the Gospel - the salvation of souls; and that the Church may more vigorously promote and apply the moral and spiritual agencies by which men are rescued from sin and trained for heaven; and that a more inviting opportunity may be given our ministers to use their evangelistic talent more frequently in conducting revivals; and to systematize the work of evangelism among the ministry, the General Conference directs that there shall be an organization in our Church known as the Bureau of Church Growth and Development...' (p. 280);

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Through the ministry of evangelism, we offer Christ to all, facilitate and sponsor a quadrennial evangelism congress, produce training materials, and provide structured classes and learning opportunities for effective evangelistic efforts.

Zoom Information for All Sessions

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Rev. Dr. Eleazar Merriweather
Executive Director



OCT 25 7PM EST
The Department of Church Growth and Development
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CHURCH PLANTING
COMMITTEE INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Rev. Nathaniel B. Cox
Church Planting Committee Chair

Rev. Hanna Broome
Assistant Executive Director of Church Growth and Development

Rev. Dr. Eleazar Merriweather
Executive Director of Church Growth and Development

Bishop Darryl B. Starnes
Board Chairman

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8753307081>
Meeting ID: 875 330 7081

MID-WEST EPISCOPAL DISTRICT AND THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF
THE INTERNATIONAL PRAYER MINISTRY OF THE A.M. E ZION CHURCH
Presents
A call to Prayer
PRE-MID WINTER PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Bishop Michael Pritchard & Mrs. Gelewa Pritchard

Rev. Dr. Richard M. Gadzisko
Int. prayer Coordinator

Rev. Angela Boyd

Rev. Marcia Cole-Martin

THEME: RECEIVING MERCY & GRACE
HEBREWS 4:16

OCTOBER 11, NOVEMBER 8 AND DECEMBER 13, 2022.
TIME: 7:30 EST (6:30PM CST, 4:30PM PST, 11:30PM GMT)

Zoom Meeting ID: 826 8417 3917 Passcode: 605292
SPONSORED BY THE A.M.E ZION CHURCH DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS .

Livingstone's West End Classic Saturday To honor three with the Fannie T. Butler Award

by Kimberly Harrington, Asst. Director of Public Relations, Livingstone College



West End Pride

Janine Evans

Jason Walser

SALISBURY – Two individuals and one community organization will be honored this weekend for the work they do to support the West End community during Livingstone College's first home game.

Janine Evans, Jason Walser and West End Pride will each receive the Fannie T. Butler Community Impact Award during a pre-game ceremony at 4:30 p.m. at Alumni Memorial Stadium.

The West End Classic is a partnership between Livingstone College, the City of Salisbury and members of the West End Coalition (West End Pride and West End Community Organization) that pays homage to the community in which Livingstone resides. This year marks the ninth annual classic game.

Pre-pandemic, Livingstone College and the West End Coalition met for breakfast meetings throughout the year to discuss improvement issues related to the community and to vote on West End residents who qualify for Community Spirit Awards during the West End Classic game. On last year, Livingstone College decided to rename the award after Fannie Tillery Butler, a member of the West End Coalition, who passed away on Feb. 11, 2021, at the age of 92.

Butler, a 1949 graduate of Livingstone College and local educator, was a founding member of the West End Community Organization and served as president for more than 25 years. She was the first director of Miller Recreation Center.

"Our selections this year exemplify community service initiatives that supported relationship building and improved visibility of the West End community," said Dee Dee Wright, who leads the West End Coalition. "These three will be the first to receive the award named after Butler."

Evans, the daughter of Raemi Evans, registered numerous senior citizens for COVID vaccinations who did not have internet access or had difficulty making arrangements via phone, Wright said. She arranged for transportation for many of them to get to the designated vaccination locations.

She was also responsible for the repair and replacement of more than 65 city lights in the West End area; and for raising more than \$4,000 to support swim lessons and free admission to the Fred M. Evans Pool each summer, Wright said.

Year round, Evans plans and supports youth literacy by supplying free books for students in grades K-12 at the Raemi Evans Little Library at the Fred M. Evans Pool.

Walser, who became the executive director of the Blanche and Julian Robertson Family Foundation in 2017, has overseen investments in community nonprofits and community improve-

ments in the Historic West End, Wright said. He was deeply involved in the creation of the Bell Tower Green Park downtown.

Walser grew up in Statesville and attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he majored in business. He then went on to earn a degree from the UNC School of Law. He practiced law in Hendersonville, before joining The Land Trust for Central North Carolina in Salisbury in 1999. He worked for The Land Trust for nearly 16 years, serving as its executive director.

He and wife Tracy of 25 years have two children: Ian, 21, a senior at East Carolina University, and Autumn, 18, a freshman at NC State.

West End Pride began when local residents were invited to meet with Livingstone President Dr. Jimmy Jenkins, Sr. During the initial meeting, Jenkins explained that he wanted the College to partner with the community

to improve the appearance and beautify the area. After several months of meetings with Dr. Jenkins, the West End Pride organization materialized.

Since then, the organization has accomplished the following: held street cleanups; distributed Thanksgiving baskets for needy families; held meet-the-candidates forums; worked with the city to demolish condemned houses, extend sidewalks on Monroe Street and Brenner Avenue, and for new landscaping at Miller Recreation Center; beautified the entrance of the West End with a brick wall on Brenner Avenue; and secured a permanent sculpture from the Salisbury Sculpture Show on Monroe and Brenner entitled, "Community."

"The West End Classic kicks off our football season by honoring members of this community who help make a difference through their respective contributions," Jenkins said. "Janine Evans, Jason Walser and West End Pride are great examples of humanitarian deeds, community service and collaboration that serves the greater good of this community. We look forward to saluting these individuals and West End Pride on Saturday."

The college provided 150 complimentary tickets to the West End Coalition to distribute to members of the community to attend the game, which will be the debut of its newly-remodeled stadium that features blue artificial turf.

The game begins at 5 p.m. A ribbon cutting for the new stadium begins at 4:20 p.m. and the West End Classic presentations will begin at 4:30 p.m. on the track at centerfield. There will be fireworks after the game.

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Livingstone College

2022 Fall Convocation

Written by Dr. Da'Tarvia Parrish

Fall Convocation officially launched an academic year that Livingstone College leaders hope will forge a way forward with progressive grace and reformist strides. With leadership transitions, and extensive health and safety measures shifting campus activity in modified forms, all who are familiar with the institution, recognizes the strength of Livingstone College lies within her history, values, and traditions. These traits and more, were introduced to the newest members of the Livingstone College family on Friday, September 23, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. in Bishop James Varick Auditorium during the college's official opening ceremony.

Board of Trustee members, administrative staff, and faculty processed in academic regalia to Felix Mendelssohn's "War March of Priests" tuned by campus organist Dr. Lawrence Quinnett. The Student Government Association officers, Senior Class, and members of the freshman class followed; as 12th President, Dr. Jimmy R. Jenkins, Sr., opened officially declaring Fall Convocation as a ritual as old and as sacred as the institution. In efforts of a goodbye, the president recognized this would be his final event as an active college president and stated, "May the work I've done, speak for me."

The audience collectively sang "The Star Spangled Banner" and "Lift E'vry Voice," following the scripture reading of 1 Peter 2:1-10 by Rev. Dr. Dwayne Walker, member of the Board of Trustees and pastor of Little Rock AME Zion Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. Bishop Hilliard Dogbe, Presiding Prelate of the Western West Africa Episcopal District rendered a prayer of grace and thanks for guiding strength and leadership. Directed by Pastor Christopher Gray, with solo artist Virginia Rush, the Livingstone College choir sang Donnie McClurkin's "I Call You Faithful."

Greetings were extended to the audience by Senior Bishop and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Kenneth Monroe, Faculty Assembly President, Rev. Dr. Johnnie P. Henderson, and Student Government Association President, Michael Gilyard. In absentia of Miss and Mr. Livingstone College, Miss Oak Denayih Coleman and Mr. Maple Darion Graham, offered greetings on behalf of the Royal Court of Livingstone College. Following greetings, Executive Assistant to the President, Dr. State Alexander recognized distinguished guests, and President Jenkins followed with the speaker's introduction.

Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III proclaimed to the Class of 2026, "You have nothing to lose. You are your ancestors wildest dreams, and the nation's greatest hope and fear." With great eloquence, undegirded with faith, and guided by historical research and analytical design, Moss illustrated inspiration and challenged students to take off the chains, celebrate, and "live up to who God calls you to be." He continued, "This is a freedom institution . . . Black man was made by God's grace . . . Black people have swagger and extra flavor . . . There would be no America without you, even though you are on stolen land . . . There's power being a part of an HBCU."

At the conclusion of the presentation by Moss, all in the atmosphere were inspired and lauded with a standing ovation and thunderous applause; and President Jenkins presented Moss with the President's Award. The Livingstone College Choir followed Moss, and under the leadership of Teresa Moore-Mitchell, sang

Jennie Wilson and Franklin Eiland's "Hold to God's Unchanging Hand" with freshman soloist, Kaiyon Courtney leading.

The Freshman Class engaged in a candlelight ceremony, pledging to include; wisdom, love, compassion, tenacity, truth, justice, art, beauty, character, equality, knowledge, faith, hope, and scholarship, as tenants of their thoughts and living practices as growing young men and women.

Incoming 13th President Rev. Dr. Anthony J. Davis, and current President Jenkins, recognized the achievements of alumnus Dr. James R. Gavin III, Board of Trustee member and President and CEO of Healing Our Village, Inc., in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Gavin was nationally recognized for his work with Partnerships for A Healthier America (PHA) that expands twelve years of service with former First Lady, Michelle Obama. Gavin, a foremost expert in diabetes, led the leading non-profit organization impacting the overall health of over seven (7) million Americans. In an effort to acknowledge his achievements, PHA wanted to place a dedication bench at Emory University; however, Dr. Gavin insisted the bench be placed at Livingstone College. Dr. Gavin recognized his wife Dr. Annie Gavin of 57 years, who he met at Livingstone College. President Jenkins affirmed, "This is the type of leaders Livingstone College produces."

Senior Bishop Kenneth Monroe continued to thank Dr. Jenkins for 16 outstanding years of leadership and acknowledging the president's words, "I'm not looking for a job. I'm looking for a mission." Monroe introduced the 13th President of Livingstone College, Rev. Dr. Anthony J. Davis who graced the stage with poem "Hold Fast to Dreams" by Langston Hughes. Davis too acknowledged President Jenkins stating, "Mission accomplished." Davis continued stating he is happy to serve, honored he was selected, and humble to be in position. "To God be the glory for the people who pushed me and the prayed for me," stated Davis. Davis continued extending thanks to his family present, his wife of 34 years, Jacqueline Davis and his children. Moreover, he expressed his eagerness to get started and engage in work that unites the community and church so all can be, "resilient, relevant, and ready."

Bishop Kenneth Monroe shared President Jimmy R. Jenkins, Sr., will be formally recognized as President Emeritus and that Livingstone College was ready for "a quantum leap in the future as we make a transition."

The ceremony concluded with The Alma Mater "O' Livingstone" followed by the Benediction administered by Bishop Dennis V. Proctor, Presiding Prelate of the North Eastern Episcopal District; who prayed the students of the college would not wild out, but be the ancestors' wildest dream. "Give them the anointing for the assignment," he beseeched.

Participants recessed to Jeremiah Clarke's "Trumpet Tune," and gathered at Dodge Hall for the bench dedication in honor of Dr. James Gavin III. All present prayed for the new edifice whereas President Jenkins stated a statue of Gavin would soon be added to the bench. The recognition concluded with a \$50,000 donation from CEO of Ottendorf Labs, Rev. Dr. Laticia Hill Godette, Presiding Elder of the Camden District New Jersey Conference in the North Eastern Episcopal District of the AME Zion Church.

The AME Zion Church at the World Council of Churches General Assembly

By Rev. Ronald A. Nathan, *World Politics Editor*



The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church has despatched a high level delegation to the 11th General Assembly, of the World Council of Churches, being held in Karlsruhe, Germany, from the 31 August to the 8 September 2022. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church's Delegation consists of: Bishop Hilliard Dogbe, Bishop Brian Thompson, Rev. Felica Thompson, Rev. Austin Young, the youth delegate and two observers in Rev. Nicholas Irion and Rev. Xavier Daniels.

The stated purpose of the World Council of Churches is 'inspiring the worldwide fellowship of churches to work together for unity, justice and peace'. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church has been a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) from its inception in 1948. The AME Zion Church is deeply committed to the 'evangel', the good news of the gospel and to ecumenical fellowship. It has been unwavering in its procla-

mation of the gospel message and faithful to the call for social justice in the world. The theme for this the 11th general assembly is "Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity."

With more than 4,500 participants in Karlsruhe, Germany the assembly will certainly have a physical impact on this city of some 310,000 persons in the German state of Baden-Wurtemberg.

The assembly will focus on the current issues, perplexities, anxieties, and fundamental questions about the way we inhabit the earth, make sense of our lives, live in society, and accept responsibility for future generations.

From the global COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences, the climate emergency, and manifestations of racism worldwide, which have further revealed structural economic inequality, gender discrimination, and other forms of injustice in our societies and in our world.

There is no doubt that this premier ecumenical organization made up of 345 member churches representing an estimated 500 million Christians around the world, will have its work cut out for it. To bring about reconciliation and unity among its members would be extraordinary. To 'move the world towards reconciliation and unity' is to believe God for the miraculous.

African Union solidifies its courtship with the Caribbean Community

By Rev. Ronald A. Nathan, *World Politics Editor*



Prime Minister Mottley third from the left, Professor Benedict Oramah, President and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Afreximbank

One year after the first African Union - Caribbean Community Summit which took place virtually on September, 21 2022, the African Union (AU) has moved swiftly to further consolidate its' relationship with the Caribbean. These actions follow on from the African Union's declaration that Persons of African descent constitutes the African Union's sixth region.

The African Export Import Bank (Afreximbank), an instrument of the African Union (AU) the Government of Barbados, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat, the Africa Business Council, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat and the Caribbean Export Development Agency held the inaugural AfriCaribbean Trade and Investment Forum (ACTIF2022), from September 1 - 3, 2022 in Bridgetown, Barbados.

The forum's theme 'One People. One Destiny: Uniting and Reimagining Our Future' excited the 1,200 delegates from 41 African countries, 16 Caribbean countries and 6 other nations.

The programme was filled with presentations and panels on several topics, including: accelerating industrialization and manufacturing; developing special economic zones (SEZs) and industrial parks; improving infrastructure, financing and trade logistics, including regional integration; creating the conditions to accelerate private sector investment; promoting trade and tourism; and improving agricultural productivity and expanding agribusiness opportunities and food security.

The ATIF2022 delivered on its promise with the signing of an agreement to work with the governments of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to set up a Caribbean Exim Bank. It is envisaged that an investment of US\$700 million would be placed in a Caribbean, subsidiary or affiliate of the Afreximbank. That amount is in addition to the US\$250 million the Bank has already made available to support African-Caribbean trade and investment.

The Forum was also informed that Afreximbank had begun an internship programmes whereby Caribbean students can pursue attachment programmes in the Bank,"

At the opening the forum Prime Minister, Mia Amor Mottley, emphasised the importance of collaborating at various levels to facilitate development, insisting that political cooperation, even though essential, was not sufficient to reverse the underdevelopment of Africa and the Caribbean. She went on to say that "We, children of independence, have determined that we shall not allow another generation to pass without bringing together that which should have never been torn asunder".

Grief and Justice in World Politics

By Rev. Ronald A. Nathan, *World Politics Editor*



PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

The death of Queen Elizabeth II, the 96 year-old British monarch of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth realms on the 8th September 2022 was indeed a sad occasion. She was Queen regnant of 32 sovereign nations during her life time and 15 nations when she passed. Leaders from across the world have expressed their grief to the British government and the British people. Some have accused leaders of African and Caribbean countries of duplicity and even hypocrisy for declaring periods of mourning and or attending the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II on the 19th September, 2022.

The pivotal question here is, does the expression of grief of the death a foreign head of state absolve the historical injustices executed in the name of that state? The answer is an emphatic

no! What is unique in this case is that the late British monarch represented the state for over 70 years when many of these alleged injustices were being perpetuated and the fruits of those unjust actions brought untold benefits to the British nation and to the British crown.

The state funeral Of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is an international diplomatic occasion and therefore as a part of the global diplomatic family African and Caribbean nations have a right to be present. Their presence at Westminster Abbey, London, England for the funeral does not negate their moral, ethical or judicial rights. In life as in the world of geo-politics there is a time for everything, a time to be mourn and a time for justice.



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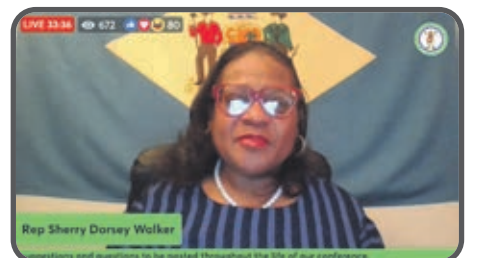
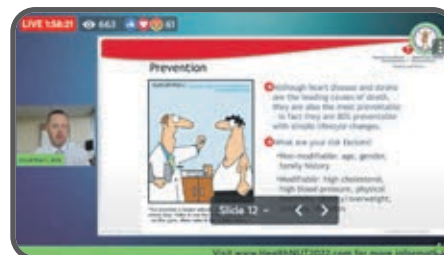
Written by The Star Of Zion

The Feeding Families Food Relief Program of Transformation African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church held its **2nd Annual Virtual HealthNUT Conference that occurred on Thursday, September 22, 2022, and Friday, September 23, 2022, from 9am-12pm.** Produced by the Star of Zion, the conference boasted 700 viewers, a reach of 16,619, 350 likes, comments and shares and registered 140 people from the United States of America, Liberia, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana and Greece. The event was broadcast on multiple social media platforms.

The Rev. Dr. R.J. Chandler Sr., founder and pastor of the Transformation (Dover, DE) and the historic Scott African Methodist Episcopal Zion Churches (Wilmington, DE) said, "I am proud of the visionary leadership of Mr. Adrian Howard who gave birth to the HealthNUT idea." Pastor Chandler believes that the church has an obligation to minister to the needs of the whole person that includes spiritual, emotional, mental and physical as defined in Matthew 25:34-46.

The presenters of the HealthNUT, "Health & Nutrition" Conference came from diverse backgrounds that included nutritionists, nurses, medical doctors, Delaware State University faculty, its students and wellness advocates. Proudly, the Rt. Rev. W. Darin Moore (Mid-Atlantic Episcopal District) and the Rt. Rev. Brian R. Thompson (Western Episcopal District) provided encouragement as they greeted the conference. The Rev. Dr. Anthony Witherspoon, Pastor of the Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church gave an insightful lesson on race, religion and health disparities in black and brown communities. Ms. Ashia Bello and Rev. Tyquan Alston. Pastor of the St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church ministered in song.

Through the efforts of the HealthNUT Conference, Transformation African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is not only raising awareness of nutrition, wellness and health disparities in black and brown communities, but also raising funds to support its food pantry. The Feeding Families Food Relief Program provides complete meals to families in the vicinity of the local church. Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the program has fed over 8,000 Delawareans. If you would like to partner with this ministry, please give a tax deductible donation through CashApp \$transformationamezc. Please attend the HealthNUT Conference next year at Delaware State University on Thursday, September 21, 2023 and Friday, September 22, 2023.



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Photo Credit: Eric J. Shelton, Mississippi Today/Report For America

Love Shouldn't Hurt:

Domestic Violence within the Church & Black Community

By Mr. Daman De Leon, Health and Wellness Editor

Sometimes it's exhausting being a Black woman," says Indiana State Rep. Vanessa Summers. "It's exhausting being a woman, but it's really exhausting being a Black woman." Before serving in the Indiana House of Representatives, Summers worked at The Julian Center.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, more than 40% of Black women have experienced intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner sexual violence and/or intimate partner stalking in their lifetimes. And more than half of Black adult female homicides are related to intimate partner violence.

At Coburn Place, 65% of our clients in 2020 identified as Black and female, and that is true at many domestic violence service organizations nationwide. Black women and Black men experience intimate partner abuse at a disproportionately high rate. But why?

"First of all, a lack of opportunities along with financial barriers leads to domestic violence," says Coburn Place Intake and Well-Being Services Coordinator Jacqueline Willett, MSW.

Cecily Johnson, director of strategic initiatives at the Domestic Violence Network, agrees it's a systemic issue. "Because of the history, because of the 400-year gap and 400 years of being left at the starting line while other groups have moved forward with ease, that holds us back," she says. "That's the root cause. It's a combination of things we're not given. We're just not given opportunities in education that generally would be made available to other populations, specifically white populations. And it's socioeconomics. Typically, the higher you are in that socioeconomic strata, the greater access you have to education and resources where you can get some of this information, where you can receive services."

"By intentionally denying Black people access to economic opportunities, the ability to build intergenerational wealth, healthcare, education, and a sense of safety from governmental systems, racist policies increase the prevalence of risk factors for domestic violence."
– NCADV

"Working at The Julian Center when I did, I really realized how very serious it is," says Summers. "It's easy to understand the physical part of domestic violence, but the financial and emotional side can be harder to identify if that's what you're used to. We're not talking about it."

Systems work against the Black community, and the community has lost – or more like never had – faith in those systems, leading to a reluctance to report.

"There's a lack of trust due to all the things we're seeing right now and what we've seen over the years," says Willett. "They are often treated differently than a white survivor reaching out for support. Survivors think they won't be believed, and they're also scared they're going to be attacked. Is this going to be flipped on them and turned into something else? I've worked with minority survivors over the years who ended up getting criminal cases due to trying to protect themselves when it's more than apparent that's what it was. So people of color suffer in silence because of that – not being believed, being arrested, being looked at as the aggressor."

Black women also don't necessarily want to turn an abusive partner into law enforcement. "I have been told personally [by a survivor] they can't get help because they don't want their partner to become a statistic," says Johnson. "There's a genuine and legitimate fear that if they call the police, their partner could be killed or they, as the survivor, could be killed."

"We know that African American men are more apt to go the criminal justice system, and we don't want to send them – even if they shot us in the head," says Summers. "We don't trust the police because we don't want to get our man in trouble but there has to be a way to break that cycle."

"These systems create numerous barriers for survivors seeking safety. Law enforcement officials often arrest Black survivors, and police, jurors and judges are less likely to believe Black survivors than white survivors. Racist systems put Black people at greater risk of experiencing intimate partner violence." – NCADV

But the community has its own cultural reasons for not reporting as well. One is religion.

"We take things to God," says Willett. "And sometimes in Black culture, it's looked down upon when you ask for help. You lean on your support systems. You don't let others know what's going on inside of your home. That's what your church family is for, that's what God is there for. That also leads to why a lot of minorities don't seek counseling or therapy or don't address mental health issues. They would go to a pastor."

Summers believes the Black church could play a bigger role in talking about what domestic violence is and how it happens and in sharing the resources available to women in abusive relationships.

"Speaking personally, from women I know and have worked with, yes, you're told by leadership in the church that you don't air your dirty laundry," says Johnson. "That's not to say there aren't some wonderful church leaders and members who are there day one to drive someone to a shelter or fill out a protective order, but historically, there have been churches where you pray about it, you don't talk about it, and you stay no matter what, which is dangerous. And that's just not the Black church – it's churches across the board no matter the demographic."

"On our part, it's our ride or die mentality to be in a relationship, to make it work, to give it 100% – even though we're giving 100% to an asshole," says Summers. Of course, Black women are not a monolith, says Johnson, "but I have heard things from survivors like 'You should be grateful to have a Black man especially if he is educated and has a job.'"

Staying no matter what also plays into the "Strong Black Woman" stereotype, which is empowering on one side of the coin, but dangerous on the other.

"We could be bleeding from the mouth, one arm off, but we're still going to put that dinner on the table," says Summers. "And it's

Continues... next page



Know The Signs BREAST CANCER

AWARENESS MONTH

*By Mr. Daman De Leon,
Health and Wellness Editor,
The Star Of Zion*

Every October, the nation observes National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Breast cancer is a disease that affects both men and women and is among the most common cancers. According to the National Breast Cancer Foundation, 1 in 8 women will develop invasive breast cancer in her lifetime. Next year, new breast cancer diagnoses are expected to number more than 200,000 for women and more than 2,000 for men.

This month, Benefits.gov is raising awareness of preventative measures and helpful resources that may help you and your loved ones beat the odds.

National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program

Early detection is key. The National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), helps low-income, uninsured, and under-served women gain access to lifesaving screening services for early detection of breast and cervical cancers. This program provides clinical breast examinations, mammograms, and Pap tests for participants as well as diagnostic testing for women whose screening outcome is abnormal. Women age 40 and above should talk to their doctors about when and how often to get a mammogram. To find free and low-cost screenings near you, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to use their interactive map. https://nccd.cdc.gov/dcpc_Programs/index.aspx#/1

What can I do to improve my chances of staying breast cancer free?

There are many steps you and your loved ones can take

to improve your chances of staying healthy:

- Conduct monthly self-exams. In addition to medical screenings, the National Breast Cancer Foundation and many medical professionals recommend a monthly self-exam. To learn how to do a breast self-exam, check out this self-exam guide offered by NationalBreastCancer.org. <https://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/breast-self-exam>

- Quit smoking. According to the National Cancer Institute (NCI), smoking is a significant risk factor for breast and many other types of cancer. Non-smokers are at lower risk than smokers regardless of your age or how long you have been a smoker.

- Exercise more. Regular exercise and a healthy diet can also lower your risk factors.

Need additional information?

Curious about signs and symptoms, diagnosis and treatment? You can learn more at Cancer.gov. Also be sure to check out our article October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month for more resources and information on breast cancer, early detection and prevention.

Breast cancer is a life-threatening illness, but it can also be treatable with early detection and other preventative measures. Benefits.gov hopes these resources will help you stay informed and take steps to lower risk factors or get treatment for yourself or a loved one. If you are looking for additional resources, we encourage you to take the Benefit Finder questionnaire to see what benefits you may be eligible to receive.

not necessarily the right thing to do. It's just what we are in tune to do instead of taking care of ourselves first."

"There's nothing wrong with being a strong woman, but not at the point of wreaking havoc on mental and physical health," says Johnson. "Sure, Black women can handle pain. Sure, Black women can handle what's thrown at them, but they should not have to. Not at the expense of our health and safety."

The solution, says all three women, is outreach and education.

DVN created the Black and African American Women's Coalition – which includes four Black advocates from Coburn Place, including Willett – to bring awareness to domestic violence in the community. "It's not just 'Hey, it's happening,'" says Johnson. "We want to educate and inform in an impactful way."

DVN is currently focusing on domestic violence in two communities – in the Black and African American community and in the LGBTQ+ community – and the intersections between the two because Black trans women experience violence at a rate higher than any group. Johnson says they are going into places of worship, schools, places

of business and anywhere where people will listen.

While the task force is a domestic violence-focused organization, it wants to also address many issues that overlap with it.

"Economics is often a factor in domestic violence so how do we get these Black women rising up in the ranks so they can leave a violent relationship potentially, understand their worth and support their family without having to be in an abusive situation?" asks Johnson. "It all connects to help keep someone out of the cycle of violence. That education, the financial literacy, all of that, if we're going to be a true prevention effort, if we can get ahead of it in as many ways as possible, then hopefully we can prevent a future survivor and a future perpetrator." DVN is also reaching Black youth with their healthy relationship programming.

"They go through so, so much," Summers says of Black women. "I think a lot of it is that we need more self-care and self-love and then we wouldn't go through those things any longer."

Daman "3D" De Leon is an educator who works in self-protective services and self-defense instruction.



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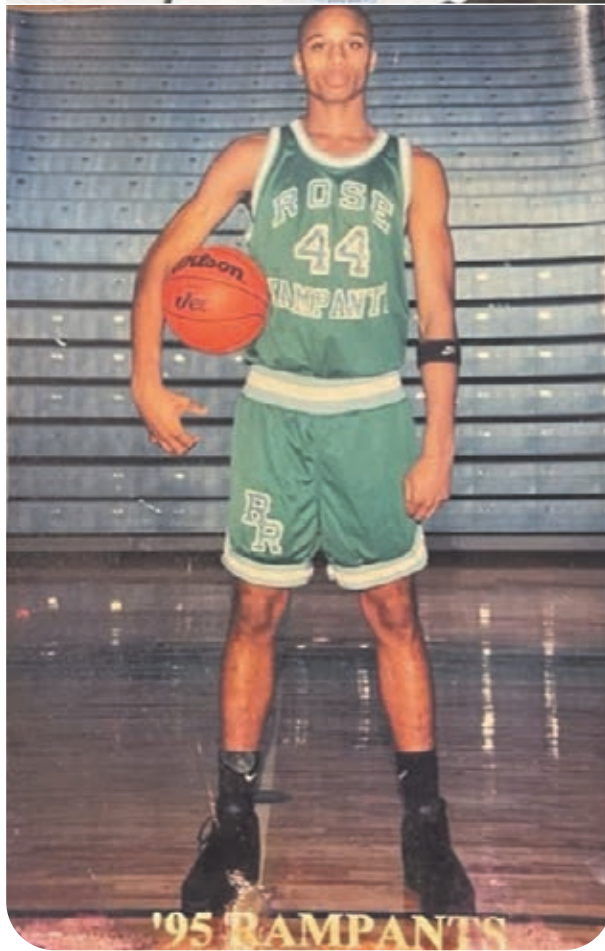
by Rev. Demond Hairston

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” This statement by the late Episcopate, Bishop Desmond Tutu, resonates vehemently with the concerns of many, and yet not enough, of the citizens of Greenville, NC who have knowledge of the details surrounding the horrible miscarriage of justice being imposed upon Mr. James Richardson. Richardson is a 45-year-old native of the Kearny Park community of Greenville, Slippery Rock University alum, former collegiate and professional basketball player, father of three, and mentor to youth in his community. He has exhibited upstanding character throughout his life, but unfortunately his character nor his positive community impact were enough to shield him from the police, prosecutorial, and trial-court misconduct, perjured testimony, racial animus as well as a catalog of other injustices, which led to Richardson’s arrest and conviction of two counts of first degree murder in 2009. Consequently, Richardson has spent the last 13 years incarcerated for crimes that he did not commit while elected officials with the authority to right the wrongs of a flawed system have stood idly by.

The details of the crimes for which Richardson remains wrongfully convicted are as follows:

- Landon Blackley and Andrew Kirby were shot and killed as they left The Other Place night club at 2:07 a.m., on June 30th, 2009, in Greenville, NC.
- Just before the shooting, club bouncers escorted Richardson and others out of the club due to a verbal dispute that occurred near the bar. About fifty bouncers and patrons jumped Richardson once he exited the club; and at least three or four of James’ friends jumped in to help James.
- Minutes later, a white BMW drove past the club, and an occupant opened fire into the crowd, senselessly killing Andrew Kirby and Landon Blackley.

The State rested on the theory that there was one person (the shooter) in a “white” vehicle and while in the driver’s seat, the shooter extended their arm 6-8 inches out of the passenger’s side window and shot the two innocent bystanders. The state fabricated the motive, presenting Richardson as the shooter as retaliation against club bouncers and patrons involved in the fight. Additionally, since Richardson’s wrongful conviction, compelling evidence has surfaced which shows that the Greenville Police Department and Pitt County District Attorney, withheld evidence, ignored and disregarded critical eyewitnesses, and spoiled key exculpatory evidence that would have led to the real suspects and exonerated Richardson. Specifically, surveillance footage of the white BMW fleeing the scene, and



audio recorded suspect and witness interviews.

The state also tendered false testimony and manipulated digital evidence to convince the jury that the accused was the shooter and the lone occupant and driver of the BMW. They presented tainted video footage that was enhanced to specifically highlight the driver and, unbeknownst to trial counsel, the other passengers became nearly imperceptible. Post-conviction counsel located original photos taken at the same time as the spoiled video, and upon enhancement, discovered, none of the individuals in the vehicle resemble Richardson. There was no physical or eyewitness evidence linking Richardson to the crime. Additionally, eyewitness descriptions and photo line ups given to witnesses immediately after the shooting, pointed to others – not Richardson. Not a single eyewitness identified Richardson as the shooter or passenger of the White BMW. The evidence presented to the jury left many convinced of Richardson’s innocence. But, due to fear of retaliation by fellow jurors, two jurors stated they wanted to acquit Richardson, but were racially intimidated, pressured, and bullied to vote guilty.

While this is only a portion of the details which work to expose the exorbitant level of prosecutorial malfeasance impacting Richardson’s case, this narrative is strikingly similar to the countless number of cases involving men and women who have been wrongfully convicted by this country’s justice system. Moreover, Richardson’s case is just one of a list of others who were wrongfully convicted in Pitt County during the tenure of the former District Attorney Clark Everett. That list includes Mr. Dontae Sharpe, who was recently pardoned by Governor Roy Cooper after serving 25 years in prison for crimes he did not commit, Ms. Leslie Lincoln, who was acquitted after being wrongfully incarcerated for 5 years and, Pastor Darron Carmon who was exonerated in August 2022, after serving 8 years for a crime he did not commit.

It is imperative that the residents of Pitt County and whosoever will commit themselves to the cause of raising awareness about Richardson’s case and supporting the efforts to have him exonerated take the necessary action to ensure that District Attorney Faris Dixon uses his authority and embraces the opportunity to do what is right. That is to review this wrongful conviction and afford Richardson the right to a fair trial and his freedom. If you would like to join the effort to Free James Richardson please contact his fiancé, Ms. Hibah Elawad via email at FreeJamesRichardsonNC@gmail.com. Though we recognize that Richardson’s justice has been delayed, please help us to ensure that his justice is not denied.

Religiosity Tailored to the Antebellum South

By Rev. Joshua Corbin

The Christian experience of African Americans on American soil exposes further the social evil that has captured the cognitive flow of religious activity and interpretation. The unique particularity of social climate of black religiosity historically has emerged as the central component for both white supremacy and black consciousness. Albert Raboteau displays this through his historical chronological interoperation of the paralleling rivers of slavery, colonization, and Christianity as contributing variables of the black religious landscape. The running theme that has captured the cognitive flow of western colonizers, Christianity was the apparatus which justified inhuman practices. Like that of human nature, one is always inclined to theological principle even in justification of one wrong towards another. Judeo-Christianity stained through a sense of extreme religious interpretation became the primary apparatus of social control. Raboteau has extrapolated the trio-participant experience, “planters, missionaries and slaves,” colonization infused with a stained nous of Christianity that has held the Negro as a religious prisoner.¹

Though the term of nationalism does not appear in Raboteau’s narrative, its characteristics are ever present. The American religious climate was birthed in the macro climate of expressed nationalism, oppressive to African slaves. As the

Atlantic slave trade proven to be the most effective to low-cost labor and profitable for the building of colonized land, Christianity became the *soul* apparatus by which slavery gained justification. Africans taken from their homeland and transported through the Atlantic waters to an unknown land were stripped of their *being* and forced to religious assimilation. A sense of falsified concern for the African and Indian souls, the global urgency of Christianity was the conversion of the salvage Africans and native Indian. With the commission of Charles II to the Council of Foreign Plantations entreaty Protestant propagation asserting, “all persons in any of our Dominions should be taught the Knowledge of God, and be made acquainted with the ministries of Salvation”, as its primary action. In spite of that declaration, over the water, the brutal treatment of Africans who had been forced into slavery with lack of concern for their bodies sought no connection to religious commonality. The primary concern for the colonization of was not conversion, rather trade; commerce which was gained on the backs of African slaves. It’s the investment of a growing sense of nationalism, which was birthed through American colonization.²

The actuality of this Christianization of the populace, brought to the forefront the co-existence of the “Christian Mission” and “Economic Interest”³ on colonization. The narrative *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South*, through the lens of emerging nationalism from American colonialization Christianized, wrestles with defining the African slave’s inclusion of religiosity while amidst seeds of American white-supremacy. Christianity offered to the African slave differed from Christianity experienced by the missionaries and colonizers. While to the col-

onizers Christianity denoted a sense of freedom temporal and spiritual, Christianity to those enslaved was freedom of the soul, which was measured by total subjection of those over them. The Christianization of the enslaved had to succumb to the secular social distinction; “black as inferior and white as superior”⁴. Though Raboteau exposes the reality of the missionary conquest primary from England, the thought of religious inclusion defined Africans as inhuman, “but for the Negroes imported hither, the gross bestiality and rudeness of their manner, the variety and strangeness of their languages, and the weakness and shallowness of their minds render it in a manner impossible to make any progress in their conversion.”⁵

Secular distinctions of humanity infused in American religion legitimized the condition of the subjection as baptismal profession to exclaim, “you declare in the presence of God and before this Congregation that you do not ask for the holy baptism out of any design to free yourself from the Duty and Obedience that you owe to your Master while you live...”⁶ This religion to the enslaved only offered an other-worldly, eschatological conception asserting to this worldly subjection in hope of other-worldly freedoms. Through the religious activity of American colonizers as depicted by Raboteau, the slave was offered an oppressed Christianity. Its gospel spoken from “planter approved preachers,”⁷ only justified the social climate of societal separation by which slavery was divine sanction. As the gospel’s intent is to transform systems, American Christianity succumbed to the societal evil, the subjugation of the Negro. Though the Negro was able to overcome the subjection of white-controlled religious milieu through the distortion of personhood, and the promulgation of cognitive inferiority, one circumstance as an ethnic group is what birthed the black Church. Though the gospel presented to the African appeared to keep one captive, the radical prophets merged from its ashes.

The gospel to the slaves produced radical prophetic activity, which caused great alarm to the social construction. While the “mistresses were urged to take an active part in catechizing their slaves, by reading sermons to them, including them in family prayers, and teaching them in Sabbath school,” still, a sense of theocentric concern was ignited. With the birth of the AME, AME Zion, black

operated Baptist, and other black influence, Christianity is rooted in the concern of God towards the whole individual. Through Raboteau’s narrative, one could question the biblical narrative interpretation of Pharaoh and Israelite to the planters. Liberation was not the concern of the gospel message, rather conversion, with the only hope of freedom in the other world. Black religiosity offers a sense of identity that aspires to the actualization of the greater self, rooted in God beyond the skies. The black church is the black heaven on earth, where freedom is the right now reality.

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The Art of Chaplaincy

by *Sis. Deanca Crouch*



My walk as a hospital chaplain is a FULL circle experience! Six years ago, I went through my own traumatic accident. I never knew it would lead me on this path, and I thank God! Though I was a peer volunteer at the time, this is what I said I would do all day if I could, and I believe that I am getting to experience what I prayed for.

As a chaplain, the experience is above all humbling. Patients and families are al-

lowing me into some of the lowest moment of their lives, and trusting me to be a non-anxious, brave space for sharing, crying, and for silence – and sometimes it’s a lot of silence! The kind of silence where you can’t “do” or “say” something to make things better; however, I get to learn to just be in that moment and in that space with them.

Chaplaincy is also a walk of connecting with people – all colors, shapes, gender identities, religious backgrounds, and more. It’s a decision to see the patients and families who are in

my units, and providing consistent care and compassion for each patient and family. Connecting with patients and families also reconnects me with myself and my own story, and creates a space for vulnerability and sharing.

Because chaplaincy is based on making connections with a range of patients and families, it intersects with social justice through the importance of equity – ensuring that no matter the patient’s color, shape, gender identity or religious background, they know that they are seen, safe, soothed, and secure in the presence of chaplains. Equity is the awareness that each patient and family’s needs are unique to them and their condition; therefore, as a chaplain, I am doing my best to read the room, inquire, and show up in a way that is supportive of the patient and their family.

Within the hospital, I experience God every morning during huddle, as we are all asking for God’s grace, guidance, and direction for the day ahead of us all. Also, when patients are eager to speak of their religious or spiritual upbringing and how their faith impacts their current situation, whether they identify as Christians or are of another faith tradition. I experience God when I remind myself that this is what I get to do every day, and am filled with gratitude!

In the words of James Sonda, “Chaplaincy is an art, not a science!”



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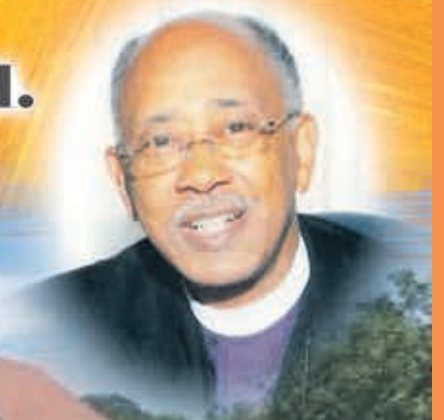
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In These Streets:

Night Life with Rev. Kenneth McKoy



By Rev. Dierdre R. Parker - Rowson, *Entertainment & The Arts Editor*

Everybody says they want to be like Jesus. That is the correct aspirational posture for Christians. There is only one problem. Everybody wants to know what Jesus would do but doesn't want to do what Jesus did. Let's be honest. While Jesus certainly preached from the pulpit, He mostly made a difference in the streets. If Jesus is walking among us now, that is where we would surely find Him. He would be hanging out with the strippers and the pimps and the drug dealers. The gang bangers, the homeless, the broken down, and the disadvantaged. I believe you could find Jesus in the same place that He hung out on his first trip to Earth. In these streets.

Not everyone is called to minister on the highways and hedges. That is fine because ministry is as varied as the needs of the people we serve. There is one AME Zion preacher who has been doing street ministry in St. Louis, Missouri for seven years. I learned about Rev. Kenneth McKoy, pastor of Progressive AME Zion Church, and his street ministry, *Night Life*, and the documentary of the same name from our Managing Editor.

What makes someone decide that it is their calling to go out into the most dangerous streets in St. Louis during the most dangerous hours of the night (according to FBI statistics) and hand out sandwiches and pray with people?

SOZ "What was the thing that made you say, I have to do something?"

KM "Bishop Carr appointed me to Blackwell Chapel in Webster Grove, Missouri. It was a good church as churches go. But it was in the suburbs of ST. Louis. I didn't feel...I'm an urban preacher in terms of how I see ministry. Urban ministries just suit my gifts and graces. I was like, why did he send me here?"

A young man came to the church. His name was Antonio. He was a handsome young man. Fourteen years old. He came faithfully every Sunday, and the little girls followed him. He filled my Sunday School up. He really did.

I looked around and the parents started coming. Then his brother, Patrick, started coming. His brother started bringing their grand-

mother. The grandmother became a member of the church and became an officer. The best Preacher's steward I've ever had. So, God is moving but while all of this was going on, I was not aware because I was still upset over being in the suburbs.

There is somewhat of a custody battle for Antonio and Patrick between the mother and the grandmother. The mother won and the kids were moved back from Webster Grove, to the south side of St. Louis. Antonio started hustling. You know, selling drugs. Things that almost all teenagers do in St. Louis city it seems like. If you live on a street in St. Louis and on that street is a part of a Crip set, you wore blue and you became a Crip whether you were initiated or not. Or you just couldn't live there. I think he got caught up in something like that. They talked him into robbing a drug dealer. I think they just wanted to use him. So, he robbed the drug dealer, and then they told the drug dealer who did it. Remember he was a county boy, not from the city. He worked at a fast-food restaurant. He called me that night and left me a message. "Pastor Mckoy, I need a job". I remember being at my desk and writing it down. I would make a list of the things I had to do and he was at the bottom of the list written on that paper. To this day I still see it. His name is written there at the bottom. I said, 'Okay, Antonio, I got you.' I had other things on my list that I convinced myself were more important than Antonio. That's just a confession. I wasn't gonna ignore it, but I was going to do these other churchy things first.

I guess it was a couple of days after he called that they picked him up from his job at a fast-food restaurant. They picked him up like they were going somewhere. They took him to a garage on the Southside and took pipes and bats and beat him unconscious. Then they rolled his body up in a tarp. And they doused it with bleach. They threw him, still living, in a ravine. That's where he died.

When no one had heard from him in about 48 hours, I went to see his grandmother. I stayed there all day. She kept saying to me,

Continues... next page

'Rev. McKoy, he's gone. I feel it.' Within twenty minutes she got a call from a detective, telling her that he was found and the condition of his body. She was devastated. I was devastated. I felt like a total failure as a pastor. I felt like I needed to repent. I thought about resigning from the ministry because I had let this child down. Even today I struggle with this at times.

They decided to have him cremated. There is a little crematorium on the south side. I bet there were about seven hundred people there. Mostly young people. I eulogized him. I remember watching his aunt, just collapse at the casket. They were just overwhelmed with the pain and the grief. I gave the benediction, and I said to myself, 'Man you have dismissed these hurting people into a world that you have not done enough to change.' That day... that day, I decided I have to do more."

Rev. McKoy wasn't sure where to begin but he was certain that he had to do something. He met with some of the pastors in the city. He told him that he wanted to go out into the streets. They were in agreement until he said "I mean at night." Rev. McKoy quoted to them the FBI statistical information. He was derided. "Laughed to scorn," he said. Rev. McKoy was not dissuaded.

MCKOY: I went out by myself. I went out in regular street clothes. I don't know what I was thinking about. I just knew I had to go out on the streets. I picked a rough neighborhood. Basically, I got run out of there at gunpoint because they thought I was an undercover cop or something. During this process, my son who was a Crip, was in a gang. He was shot. There was beef between his set and another set. That's when I decided, (well really it was the Holy Spirit leading me), that I had to go out on the streets. These little gangsters are organized. I better get organized too. I started studying what other people were doing in their street ministry. Most people would do it like an event. They would do it for about a month or so and then they would stop it. I knew this was something that had to go on. It needed to be consistent in order to have an impact. Rev. Kevin Cox, United Methodist minister, had been doing street ministry in DC with some success. He said, "If you're going to do this Rev, you have to let people know you're out there." He was referring to city officials, the police chief, and people like that. So, I contacted them to let them know what I was doing. I prayed for the name of the ministry. There were a few other pastors that were still with me from some of the smaller churches in the area. The big church people came after the first newspaper article. But the guys were very loyal. Rev. Frederick McCullough said instead of creatures of the night, Preachers of the Night. I wasn't too sure about it. I prayed and God said, 'you're out at night, and you are concerned about the lives of the people. So, we called it Night Life, and it stuck.'

The first organized night we went out we went to the most dangerous neighborhood in St Louis. Near Hodiament Tracks. That's a rough place here. What we encountered changed my life. There was a light mist that night, like fog. All of these... addicts came walking through the fog. Like zombies. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know if I should turn and run away. Then, I heard the Holy Spirit speak to me. You came out here for them!

So, I just approached them. Asked them how I could pray for them and just love on them. They were a little suspicious of course. Everybody out there is pretty desperate. They are very careful and sensitive about who's out there. At the time we didn't have food or water or Narcan or anything. So, they just assumed that we were snitches. That's when I got my first round of death threats."

Rev. McKoy told the rest of the team about the death threats. He



believed that he had to keep going even if he had to go it alone. They all agreed to continue. They started taking sandwiches, fruit, and water out with them.

MCKOY: You talk about something that had an impact on their attitudes. Then they understood that these guys are church folks. Rev. is cool. I never asked any questions not even their names. People began to volunteer information about their lives. We appealed to their humanity. I was the point person. Not because I was seeking fame or anything. I wanted the streets to know, if they wanted to kill somebody for being a snitch it should be me. Not one of the people who were kind enough to come out and help with this ministry.

Over the years Rev. McKoy's Night Life ministry has gotten attention from around the world. A quick Google search of his name will result in articles from the likes of USA Today, CNN, and NPR, just to name a few. Rev. McKoy's work also caught the eye of Seth Ferranti. Seth Ferranti is a writer, filmmaker, and felon.

He spent 21 years in prison for marijuana and LSD conviction at age 22, after first faking his death and landing on the US Marshall's top 15 most wanted list. When he was incarcerated, he experienced first-hand how the war on drugs disproportionately targets people of color, even though he got caught in that net. Ferranti used his time in prison to educate himself and obtained several degrees. He began to write for online magazines while still in prison. Upon his release, he began to tell the true crime stories of others through his writing. He is also a filmmaker. If you have seen the movie White Boy on Netflix, then you are familiar with his work. Ferranti has a unique ability to shift between cultures. His work as a filmmaker and perhaps his time spent in prison taught him how to acknowledge the humanity of others. When people know you see them, they let you in. When people know you see them, they are willing to see you. That's where it starts. Ferranti learned of Rev. McKoy's work while he was looking for leads for urban stories.

FERRANTI : People are just people. I can talk to anybody. I don't care if it's a hardcore gang banger or a Mexican cartel dude. I can talk to anybody because if you treat a person like a person, they respond like a person. I'm not saying I don't see color. I'm saying I don't judge people by what color they are but by how they treat me or how they respond to me. Every race has its gangsters. People who are willing to do whatever for money.

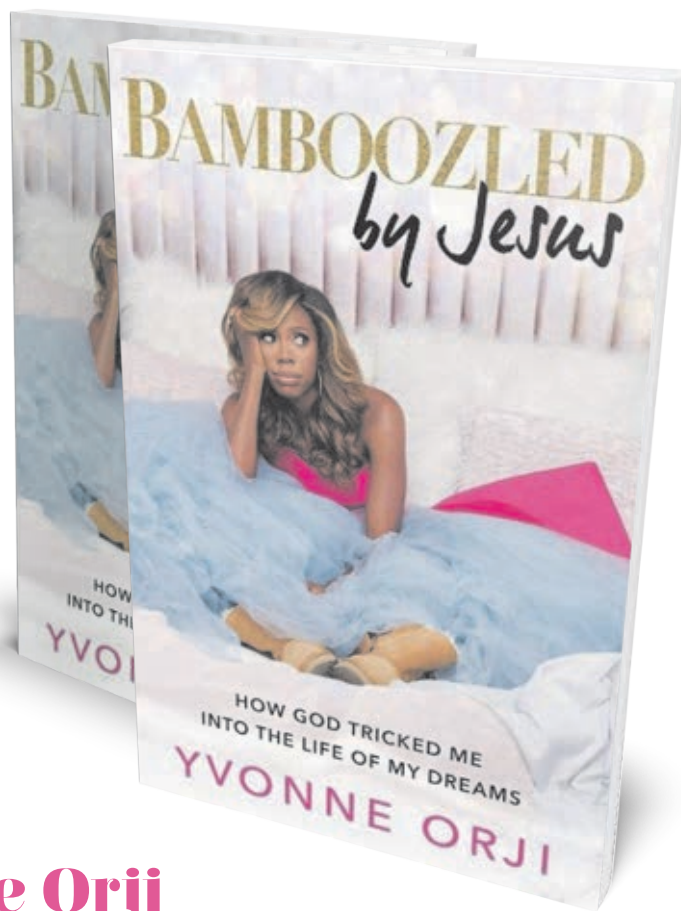
Despite his beginnings in middle-class privilege, his time in prison opened a world to him that his middle-class life would probably not recognize. Ferranti's work as a filmmaker allows him to tell the stories of those who have been oppressed by the systems that run our country in and real and raw way. He can blend in with the culture of the story that he is telling. Of Ferranti Rev. McKoy says, "One thing about Seth He was not afraid."

There is so much more to the story of this preacher, whom some call "Black Jesus" and others call "Eli" (from the movie Book of Eli). His passion for street ministry has made him a sought-after mentor for those wishing to make an impact for the cause of Christ in the streets of their cities.

"This work is more about will than skill. If you don't have the will, don't do it."

May God continue to use Reverend Kenneth McKoy and Night Life to continue reaching those that others can't. May the documentary Night Life, send a message to the world that God still sends hope, help, and healing in these streets.

Bamboozled by Jesus



A Book by Yvonne Orji

By Rev. Dierdre R. Parker -
Rowson, *Entertainment
& The Arts Editor*

I asked Rev. Tonya Jackson, Pastor of Shekinah Glory AME Zion Church in Spartanburg, SC my favorite question: Do you believe that the good news is still being written?

“I Believe the good news *IS* still being written. The first book I find it in is the B-I-B-L-E. It’s amazing and leaves me in awe of how, though stories in the bible were written centuries ago, it finds itself in the now of our lives and enables me to be strengthened, guided or corrected. I also find the good news in books like *Do it Afraid* by Joyce Meyer or *Divine Distractions* by Tony Evans.”

Since I am always searching for books, I took the recommendation of a friend and read *Bamboozled by Jesus: How God Tricked Me Into the Life of My Dreams* by Yvonne Orji. If her name sounds familiar to you, it may be because you’ve seen her in the HBO series *INSECURE* with Issa Rae. Since I am always looking for the good news, this book seemed like it ought to have some, based on the title, so I decided to go for it. I had seen Orji’s HBO comedy special and she was kind of funny.

I was not prepared for the lighthearted and creative way in which this young lady flexed her knowledge of scripture. Her metaphors were fresh and funny. Her analogies were her own special

combination of pop culture meets woke hip hop African princess black girl magic! If you have struggled to find yourself in the pages of DGB (“Da Good Book”) as Orji calls it, some of her retellings of some bible classics like Joseph and his dreams, may help to open up the possibilities of how to put yourself in the picture. We all look for some sore o relief for our specific situations That is what we are supposed to do with the Word isn’t it? Apply it to our lives.

“Take Peter for instance. He was your average fisherman. Not exactly the most remarkable or obvious choice to kick it with the Son of Man, but Peter actually had a few qualities that made him a legit candidate to be Jesus’ right-hand man.”

This is the kind of fresh writing that will help us to hear these time-honored stories of our faith in a way that is current, relevant, and relatable. Some may see this as a watering down version of the gospel and believe that it takes away from the sanctity of the *word*. I believe it is when people hear the stories of our faith in a language that *they* understand, that it becomes foundational. Orji is obviously writing from a place of a strong foundational faith in the word. How else would she have been able to be *Bamboozled* into the life of her dreams?

“In our own lives, we have to do our part and show up, so God can do His part and show off.”



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LOOKING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

Written by, Dr. Asa G. Hilliard, III • Presented by, Rev. Dr. Sarah Fleming

Halloween Unmasked: Christian Perspective

It behooves everyone to be sure that the customs, and yes, even some “holidays” of this world’s culture are truly understood. Why, you may ask? Every holiday may not be in your best spiritual interest. In addition, we all need to recognize the truth about what we are collectively “celebrating.” Did the master not say, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 9:32)?

Let’s investigate “the truth” about October’s major holiday. Halloween! The word “holiday” originally meant “holy day,” where a special feast, festival or ceremony commemorating a specific event was celebrated. Halloween is one such holiday that many of us acknowledge and even allow our children to participate in without truly knowing its “holy” origin and unknown history.

Where did this holiday begin? In 607 A.D., Pope Boniface IV was given the Roman pantheon after defeating Emperor Phocas and his barbaric/pagan tribes. Three years later, the pagan temple was rededicated to “The Virgin Mary and All the Saints of the “Early Church.”

An annual festival was instituted to commemorate the event, and the date of May 13 was chosen. This day became known as All Saints’ Day. It was a time when prayers and petitions were offered on behalf of the souls of every deceased saint. In 834 A.D. The date was altered to Nov. 1, and the name was changed to “All Hallow,” from which we get the name Halloween. All hallow merely means all holy, and the “een” is a contraction of evening.

So, there you have it! On the eve of All Hallow Day (All Saint’ Day), originally a truly holy day, became the contraction we know today as “Halloween”! But that’s not where the story ends!

During the first centuries of the first centuries of the Christian church, Christianity was the new religion in competition with numerous other traditions. One of the earliest. On the British Isles, the Druids (of Celtic origin) had their own holy day on Nov. 1, in honor of Samhain, Lord of the Dead. It was Druid belief that on that night all sorts of spirits, ghosts and souls of the evil dead roamed freely, often returning to their original homes, there to be entertained with food.

It was believed that if food and “goodies” were not provided these evil spirits would cast spells and cause havoc toward those failing to fulfill their requests. It was teat, or be tricked sometimes even out of one’s life! Tricked by the dead to join the dead!

Remember the warning of the Apostle Paul: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: “Awake, you who sleep. Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.” (Eph 5:11-14).

Instead of its original sanctity, the eve of Nov. 1 is now a time when children (and adults) dressed up as witches, goblins and ghosts ramble through neighborhoods, knocking on doors and announcing, “Trick or Treat.”

Do you remember your trick or treating days? I remember the 1960s, when this annual ritual of costumes had lighter overtones due to the environment that prevailed. During this era a child, I certainly felt more secure and safe. Thirty years later in the 1990s, juvenile vandalism becomes the order of the night, and our children’s treats need to be X-rayed to be sure they are not harmful, even deadly. Some “goblins” tear down mailboxes, paint cars, throw eggs, destroy lawns and flowers---strange customs for a civilized society.

So how can we remain “in the world but not of the world” when it comes to Halloween? Perhaps these suggestions maybe helpful:

- Provide an evening at church with activities and games where costumes can be worn, and the focus is on education with entertainment.
- Have the church youth make surprise visits to shut-ins or local rest homes, with the children bringing the treats.

I challenge you to investigate the Word of God as it relates to worldly customs and holidays. I challenge you to uncover the truths about each holiday we observe throughout the calendar year, and may your discoveries lead you to discern how to “live in the world but not of the world!”

1. Matthew 6, Jesus provides a formula for prayer which we call the Lord’s Prayer, he says, “Hallowed be thy name.” Determine from your study what “hallowed” means to you, then investigate his names for example.

Jehovah-Rohl ---“God is my shepherd.” Jehovah Rophe --- “God heals.”
Jehovah-Jireh ---v“God provides.” Jehovah-Shalom ---“god is peace.”

2. Who, what and where is the Holy Ghost? Locate these scriptural references for your personal study and edification:

- The Spirit of God ---I Thes. 4:8
- The Spirit of Truth ---John 14:17; 15:26
- The Comforter ---John 14:16,26, 16:7
- Here always ---Matthew 28:20, Luke 11:13
- Available to all believers ---Acts 2:38
- Now ---Joel 2:28-29, Palms 90:4; 2Peter 3: 8



Supporting Domestic Violence Survivors

By Angel Eason, *Lifestyle Editor*

An average of 24 people per minute are victims of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in the United States; more than 12 million women and men over the course of a single year. On a typical day, there are more than 20,000 phone calls placed to domestic violence hotlines nationwide (Black et al., 2011).

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM), an opportunity to bring light to the issue of domestic violence and its effects on victims, survivors, families, and communities. I had the opportunity to learn about Dr. Laticia Hill Godette's, Presiding Elder of the Camden District, testimony, and how she uses her story to empower and encourage others.

"You see the Glory, but you do not know my story!!" – Dr. Laticia Hill Godette

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and emotional abuse (Campbell et al., 2003).

The Signs

The signs of domestic violence include but are not limited to covering up bruises, making excuses, anxiety, jumpy, having trust issues, sleeping in school, tiredness, fatigue, and/or depression.

Safe Houses

Dr. Laticia Hill Godette and her husband, Mr. Dante Godette, stepped out on faith and in purpose to establish two Safe Houses, to provide safe transitional housing in an undisclosed location for domestic violence survivors and their children. The Safe House in New Jersey is named after Dr. Laticia's mother, Ms. Darlene Hill. The Safe House in North Carolina is named after Mr. Dante's mother, Ms. Elaine Godette. Their mothers are both survivors of domestic violence. The establishment of the Safe

Houses is personal for the Godettes. Dr. Godette recalls her childhood memories including seeing her mother being abused by several boyfriends.

"Born in Asbury Park, New Jersey, my mother was a teenage mother, pregnant at 15. My father was selling drugs and my mother started using drugs. My father went to prison, and my mother moved to North Carolina. When we moved my mother was still on drugs and had a violent boyfriend. I grew up fighting grown men off of my mother, my sisters, and me. I would sleep with my clothes on and weapons to be prepared to fight. I suffer from PTSD and have experienced a lot of trauma. The most traumatic experience was seeing my little sister's father put a gun to my mother's head."

"My husband received a call about his mother's boyfriend beating on her. My husband jumped up and drove to his mother's house. He jumped on his mother's boyfriend, and I had to stop my husband from killing him by reminding him he can't take care of our daughter if he is in prison. Domestic Violence impacts the people they love."

At the Safe Houses, women can find a safe place to live along with food, clothing, shoes, and whatever needs that they have. Workers are also available to provide therapy and case management to help survivors to get back on their feet.

Advice on Assisting Survivors

"Exercise the ministry of presence and let survivors tell you how to serve them. Sometimes people need money, a listening ear, and/or encouragement."

"Domestic Violence Survivors need encouragement and to know that someone is there (non-judgmental zone). You might not be able to provide a safe house, but you can provide a safe space. Maybe you can open up your house on a temporary basis. Give what you can. My husband and I allowed survivors to live with us in our home before we could afford to buy Safe Houses."

Continues... next page

The importance of the Biden Loan Forgiveness plan



PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

By Dr. Dana Stilley, *Financial Freedom Editor*

On August 24, President Joe Biden fulfilled a campaign promise when he announced a student loan forgiveness plan designed to reduce the college debt for over 40 million borrowers. Borrowers who earn under \$ 125,000/year (or \$250,00 for a couple or heads of households) are eligible to have up to \$10,000 in federal student debt forgiven. Pell grant recipients who met the same qualifications may have up to \$ 20,000 cancelled. What seems to be a win-win for most students has ignited another political divide and caused many to question the validity of Biden's attempt to move the middle class a little closer to financial freedom.

I would argue that some of the discontent is directly correlated to the knowledge that students of color stand to gain the most from this forgiveness plan. Student loan debt statistics indicate a stark difference in financial health among racial and ethnic groups. While 54% of all student loan debt is held by White students, Black and African American college graduates owe an average of \$25,000 more in student loan debt than White college graduates. Additionally, because Black and African American

student borrowers are most likely to struggle with making payments on their loans, 48% of Black students owe approximately 12.5% more than they borrowed four years after graduation (Hanson, 2022).

Some Republicans suggest that this plan will harm low-income families. Most recently several republicans penned a letter affirming their opposition to the plan which will "force American taxpayers to pay off the student loan debt of an elite few." Estimates indicate, however, that

the portion of the plan that forgives \$10,000 will shift over half a million Black and African Americans from a negative to a positive net worth. This shift sets the stage for future home ownership, savings, investments, and financial freedom.

I applaud President Biden for his boldness and commitment to addressing the financial concerns of those who continue to strive for equitable access and affordability regarding the pursuit of higher education.

*Hanson, M. (2022) Student loan debt by race.
<https://educationdata.org/student-loan-debt-by-race>*

Continued ... Supporting Domestic Violence Survivors

"Other ways to support are through the donation of clothes to a local safe house, food, supplies, host international prayer, make sure the pulpits are safe spaces, and be intentional about preaching about domestic violence."

How to Support the Safe Houses?

You can provide financial support. Visit Dr. Laticia Hill Godette's Ministries at www.lhgfoundation.org to learn more information.

Resources for victims and survivors of domestic violence national crisis organizations and assistance:

The National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-7233 (SAFE)
www.ndvh.org

National Child Abuse Hotline/Childhelp
1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)
www.childhelp.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-8255 (TALK)
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

National Center for Victims of Crime
1-202-467-8700
www.victimsofcrime.org

National Sexual Assault Hotline
1-800-656-4673 (HOPE) • www.rainn.org

National Human Trafficking Resource Center/Polaris Project
Call: 1-888-373-7888
Text: HELP to BeFree (233733)
www.polarisproject.org

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
1-510-465-1984 • www.nnirr.org

National Coalition for the Homeless
1-202-737-6444
www.nationalhomeless.org

National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
1-800-537-2238
www.nrcdv.org and www.vawnet.org

Futures Without Violence: The National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence
1-888-792-2873
www.futureswithoutviolence.org

National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health
1-312-726-7020 ext. 2011
www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org

National Runaway Safeline
1-800-RUNAWAY or 1-800-786-2929
www.1800runaway.org

National Dating Abuse Helpline
1-866-331-9474
www.loveisrespect.org



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REV. NATHANIEL COX & SIS. MAGGIE COX
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Please join us in celebrating the newly elected officers for the 2022-2026 Christian Education Quadrennium.
We send prayers for a successful term of service to God!

Congratulations to all!



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