

THE STAR OF ZION

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The Origin of Easter

Written by, Rev. Dr. Sheldon R. Shipman
Presented by, Rev. Dr. Sarah Fleming

To the believer, **Easter** is certainly more than bunnies, Lilies and children searching for “Easter Eggs!” Indeed, all of these “symbols” have become traditions that point to and celebrate the most significant event of ancient and modern history: **THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AND VICTORY OVER DEATH!**


EASTER is quite similar to other major holidays like Christmas and Halloween, all of which have evolved over the last fifteen centuries or so. In all of these holidays, Christian and non-Christians (indigenous) elements have continued to blend together. The truth of Easter’s origins is **not** helped by the de-contextualized way many Eurocentric researchers analyze history (i.e. often called “his”-story). Most people who write about Easter trace the name to a Mother Goddess whose name in various European traditions was: Asarte, Ishtar, Ashtoreth, Cybele, Demeter, Ceres, Aphrodite, and Venus. Most agree that the name “**Easter**” is derived from the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring **Eostre** or **Ostara**. While these are some of the many rivers that contributed to the origins of our Easter celebrations, we should stop ignoring the **African river** from which they flowed as well; so add to this previous list, **Hathor**, the patron Egyptian (Kemetian) goddess of joy and love. Several historians believe this “blending of elements began with the knowledge possessed by St. Augustine, Tertullian and Origen that the oldest concept of death and resurrection was the Kemetian (Egyptian) story of Osiris (Heru/Horus) and Isis (Auset/ Hathor). The contributions of our ancestors to the origins of Easter and Christianity are found in numerous books by authors such as: Yosef Ben-Jochannan, John Henrik Clarke, Gerald Massey, John G. Jackson, Charles S. Finch and Albert Churchward.

Most of us are aware that our major holidays have definite connections to the movement of the constellations and the changing of the seasons. This is certainly the case for the two highest

“holy-days” (holidays) of the Christian calendar – **Christmas** and **Easter**. Although the New Testament offers little information about what time of the year Jesus (Yahshua) was born, most scholars believe that the main reason for celebrating “**his birth**” on December 25th is due the celebrations surrounding the Winter Solstice. Since the days following the Winter Solstice gradually become longer and less dark, it was ideal symbolism for the birth of the “**Light of the world,**” (John 8:12) to coincide, and therefore, demonstrate the perpetual “**victory of light over darkness!**” Similar is the case with Easter, which always falls close in proximity to another key point in the solar year – the vernal equinox (around March 20th) – when there are equal periods of light and darkness. Spring is the season of new life, where plants, trees and animals that have been dormant or hibernating during the winter, “**come back to life!**” Given the symbolism of new life and rebirth, it was intentional to celebrate the “**resurrection of Jesus**” at this time of the year. Another interesting note is that the “**palms**” of our Palm Sunday celebration (Matt. 2:8) reflect this connection to the change of seasons, too. In ancient **Egypt** (Kemet), the “palm branch” was viewed as a ‘Time symbol’ and its bifurcated leaves represented the spring equinox with its equal separation of day and night.






The word “Easter” is found only once in the New Testament (Acts 12:4) and it is the translation of the Greek word “**pascha**” – a reference, indeed, to the Hebrew (Jewish) festival **Passover**. In our bible, **Passover** is a festival that commemorates the liberation of the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt, as detailed in the Book of Exodus. It was and continues to be the one most important Jewish seasonal festivals, which just so happens to be celebrated on the first full moon **after** the “**vernal (spring) equinox.**” During the life and ministry of Jesus, Passover had special significance, as the Jewish people were again under the dominance of foreign powers (namely, the Romans). Jewish pilgrims streamed into Jerusalem every year in the hope that god’s chosen people would soon be liberated once more.

On one Passover, Jesus traveled to Jerusalem with his disciples to



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celebrate this festival. He entered Jerusalem in a triumphal procession (Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29) and created a disturbance in the Jerusalem Temple. It seems that both of these actions attracted the attention of the Romans and religious leaders of Israel (Matt. 26:3-5), and that as a result Jesus was conspired against and executed around the year A.D. 30. Some of Jesus's followers, however, believed that they saw him alive after his death, experience that (Matthew 28:9-10; Luke 24:13-49; Mark 16:9-20; John 20:11-18), but whether it was during the Passover festival and his followers believed he was resurrected from the dead three days later, it was logical to commemorate these events in close proximity.



Some early Christians close to celebrate the resurrection of Christ on the same date as the Jewish Passover, which fell around day 14 of the month of **Nissan**, in March or April. These Christians were known as Quartodcimans, a name that means, "Fourteeners." By choosing this particular date, they put the focus on when Jesus died and also emphasized continuity with the Judaism out of which Christianity emerged. Some others instead preferred to hold the festival on a Sunday, since that was when Jesus' tomb was discovered by his followers. In A.D. 325, the Emperor Constantine, who favored Christianity, convened a meeting of Christian leaders to resolve a variety of important disputes at the Council of Nicaea. The most fateful of its decisions was about the status of Christ, whom the council recognized as being "fully human and fully divine." This council also resolves that Easter should be fixed on a Sunday, not on 14th Nisan. As a result, "Easter" is now celebrated on the first Sunday after the first moon of the vernal equinox.

As a final word to the faithful believer, the **Most High** is the ultimate "**origin**" and "**originator**" of everyone's journey of faith, from the "Ancient of Days," to these perilous times" (2Timothy 3:1-7) which we are experience today. "**How**" Christ arose, "**what**" were processes undergone, or in exactly "**what**" body He appeared, we cannot tell. We are assured by the Apostle that it resembled the one He had previously employed for His ministry (Matthew 28:9-10; Luke 24:13-49; Mark 16:9-20; John 20:11-18) , but whether it was the same body miraculously resurrected; whether it was His spiritual body, which appeared to be the same to the physical eyes of those who loved Him, or whether He had constructed an entirely new body on the same general lines as the previous one, it is not possible for us to say. In addition, it is not possible for us to be confident that the vision of the disciples was not "**supernormal**" or that, though the intensification and expression of His divinity, Christ had so stimulated their "**inner vision**" that they were able to see clairvoyantly or into another dimension. The important matter was and still is that **He DID Rise Again...**and hearts of His friends... and this **truth** is still uplifted, believed and declared by many some twenty centuries after His departure! **To God Be the Glory!** Hallelujah and Amen!

The Southwestern Delta Follows Jesus into the “Spiritual Wilderness”

Submitted by Rev. Gloria Steptoe
Louisiana Conference

Matthew 4:1-2 tells us that Jesus was led by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights he was hungry.



The Rt. Rev. Bishop Eric Leake and Missionary Supervisor Jean McMurray-Leake, have been led by the spirit of God to lead the Southwestern Delta into the “Spiritual Wilderness” of prayer and fasting for forty days and forty nights. The fasting and prayer began on Ash Wednesday and will continue throughout lent.

To jump start the prayer and fasting Lenten Season, Bishop and Mrs. Leake, held a Pre-Lenten, virtual prayer meeting via Zoom. Nearly 200 people were present on the line. The meeting was facilitated by the Southwestern Delta’s Prayer Coordinator, Rev. Bonnie Travis. Rev. Rick Lee was our technical person for the zoom.

Two times daily, 6:00am and 8:00pm, the Southwestern Delta prayer warriors will gather via the phone conference line to pray for a specific purpose. We will pray for strength, faith, forgiveness, our leaders, our bishop and missionary supervisor, healing, financial wisdom, our youth, following the will of God, a closer relationship with our God and each of our conferences, and bishops.

Upon completion of the forty days of fasting and prayer, just as Jesus

was ministered to by the angels, we too have expectations after completing our forty days fast. We are expecting a visitation from God, via the angels.



To be encouraged during our fast we must realize that, Jesus was fully human and fully God. We must remain aware that Jesus could have succumbed to his weaknesses as a human and called on the angels to feed him. But to do that, would have led him into temptation. So, he continued on the fast as we should. Hebrews 4:15-16 tells us: ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.



This fast allowed Jesus to become closer to the Father, get away from distraction of the flesh, which included food. Our fasting is a sign of humility before God and a way of standing in agreement with Jesus. This reiterates the part of the scripture that says: “man cannot live by bread alone”. As we fast and pray, our need for discernment, direction, and peace from the Lord will take place.

Already this fasting and prayer has been an anointed, spiritual, experience. This was demonstrated by our guest prayer intercessors, Rev. Cathy Henderson and Rev. Brandon McLaughlin who prayed with fire and power in our Pre-Lenten prayer meeting.

We are being led by the Holy Spirit into and out of this *spiritual wilderness*.

Perhaps the Holy Spirit will lead your Episcopal District into the “Spiritual Wilderness” of 40 days of prayer and fasting. I am a living witness that you too, will encounter a relationship renewal with our God!

Adapted from ‘Who is my brother?’ 2023 Shaw Temple A.M.E. Zion Church MLK Day Speech

Submitted by Br. Henri Ward

The theme “Who is my brother?” relates to two stories recorded in the Bible, the first being that of Cain and Able and the second simply known as the story of the Good Samaritan.

In the case of Cain and Able, it is the story of two brothers where Cain becomes jealous of his brother Able and in a heated rage kills him. God, having already known what has taken place questions Cain and ask him, “Where is Able your brother?”. Cain responds to God sarcastically, “I don’t know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”



As regards the Good Samaritan, Jesus tells a religious man to not only “Love the Lord your God with all your soul, all your heart, all your mind and all your strength” but also “love your neighbor as yourself”!! This prompts the man to ask “Who is my neighbor?” or for the purpose of today’s discussion, “Who is my brother?”

Instead of directly responding, Jesus tells him a parable now widely known as the story of Good Samaritan. At the end of the story, Jesus asked, “Who in this story was the neighbor to the man who fell in the hands of the robbers?” The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy”. Jesus replied, “Go and do likewise”.

It was February 1, 1968. The rain in Memphis, TN was torrential that day. The streets were flooded and all the sewers were backed up. Two Memphis sanitation workers, Echol Cole and Robert Walker, were forced to work in these unsafe conditions. It’s reported while the two men were riding in the back of the sanitation truck, an electrical switch malfunctioned and the trash compactor turned on, crushing both men to death. The city of Memphis refused to pay their families for what was clearly an on-the-job accident caused by faulty work equipment.

Some 11 days later, more than 1,300 Black sanitation workers walked off the job protesting awful work conditions, abuse, racism and discrimination. The phrase “**I am a Man**” was a simple yet profound statement printed on large poster signs and carried by these men as they marched through the streets.

Several weeks later, Dr. King and longtime friend Rev. James Lawson would lead a protest down the streets of Memphis in support of these Black sanitation workers. Unfortunately, this protest would end with a 16-year-old boy being fatally shot by police.

By the time Dr. King went to Memphis in support of those Black sanitation workers, he had already won the Nobel Peace Prize!! He was recognized around the world for his civil rights accomplishments. Yet, even with all of these accomplishments, he still was compelled to stop and support poor Black men proclaim to the city and to the rest of the world, “I am a Man” and I deserve to be respected just like any other man! An assassin’s bullet would kill Dr. King on April 4, 1968 at the Lorraine Motel. On April 16th, the City Council of Memphis voted to recognize the Black sanitation workers’ union, promising higher wages as a result of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s direct intervention.

So, the two questions at hand are “Am I my brother’s keeper?” and “Who is my brother?”. The answer to the first question is a resounding Yes, we are indeed our brother’s and sister’s keeper if being their keeper means providing help and support. As regards the second question, “Who is my brother?”, we should treat everyone with the same kindness and respect we would like in return. **And now in the words of Jesus, “Go and do likewise”!!**

So, the two questions at hand are “Am I my brother’s keeper?” and “Who is my brother?”. The answer to the first question is a resounding Yes, we are indeed our brother’s and sister’s keeper if being their keeper means providing help and support. As regards the second question, “Who is my brother?”, we should treat everyone with the same kindness and respect we would like in return. **And now in the words of Jesus, “Go and do likewise”!!**

CONGRATULATIONS CHRIS! “DISTINGUISHED COACH” BRO. CHRIS SCOTT

Submitted by Georgette Williams, St. Louis, MO.
Presented by Debra Chappelle-Polk
Zion Spotlight Editor, The Star of Zion
Email: ZionSpotlight@StarofZion.org

Chris Scott (*picd.*) has been a track coach for over 35 years and recently received the “Distinguished Coach” award from the Missouri Track Cross Country Coaches Association at its annual clinic in Columbia, MO. The annual award is presented to outstanding assistant coaches. Chris Scott is the assistant track and field coach Kirkwood High School and was nominated for the award by Roberta McWoods, the track and field head coach at Kirkwood H.S. Chris has mentored numerous athletes in the St. Louis area, both in and out of the school setting. He has coached at several high schools including John Burroughs, Kirkwood, Lafayette, Riverview Gardens and St. Louis University. With his assistance, the boys track and field team at Kirkwood H.S. finished third in state in 2018, and the boys 4x800 team won state championships in 2018 and 2019.

Chris and his wife Deirdre have

been members of Washington Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church, in St. Louis, MO., since 1994, where Rev. Dr. Anthony Witherspoon is pastor. They have been married for 35 years and have 2 daughters, Arionna, who lives in Seattle, WA and Cheridan, who lives in Tokyo, Japan.

Chris has a passion for music and has been a part of the music ministry since he joined the church. He sang in the Inspirational-Gospel Choir and is currently president



The Columbia-Camden District Hosts Praise in the Park

Submitted By Linda P. Jones
Palmetto Conference
Columbia Camden District Reporter

The Columbia-Camden District (CCD) boldly went where they had never gone before with an astounding “Praise in the Park” ministry in Camden, South Carolina. The CCD hosted its first Evangelism Outreach Festival Saturday March 11, 2023 at Boykin Park in Camden, SC. The mission of this major undertaking was to save souls and feed 150 families. The gospel in songs, tons of tracts, biblical literature, Bibles and the spoken word were just some of the tools used to share and spread the good news. After much prayer and several weeks of planning led by the Presiding Elder of the CC District, Reverend Dr. Alvin McLamb and First Lady, Rev. Vanessa McLamb, The District began the Evangelism Outreach at the Edwards Chapel AME Zion Church with the host Pastor, Reverend Vanessa Wilson leading the praise and devotion. The President of the CC District’s Lay Council, Mrs. Loranda M. Melton greeted the congregation and introduced the presenter of the morning’s mini-workshop, Mrs. Ashley Young, a Board-Certified Psychologist, who engaged the members of the packed congregation on how to reduce stress and cope with daily pressures of life, school and work. The session ended on a high note with the members all revved up, prayed up, armed and ready to go out into the community in an effort to win souls for Christ.



This Evangelism Ministry spearheaded by the District’s Director of Evangelism, Reverend Monica Davis was intentional with training sessions for Pastors and the Laity of the District. Presiding Elder McLamb and Rev. Vanessa McLamb conducted nightly sessions to train members on how to share the gospel effectively. More specifically, sessions were

held on sharing the Gospel through the colors: gold, black, white, red, and green. An array of tables and tents as well as the members were dressed in these colors: gold representing Heaven, God and His love for us; Black- sin and separation from God; White-the invitation to believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins; Red- the blood of Jesus shed for us all; and Green- spiritual growth, growing in Christ.

The festive atmosphere in the Boykin Park was filled with colorful tents, tables, prayer tents “ask a Pastor” stations, live gospel singers, and old fashion quartets. Also present were several city officials including Camden’s Mayor, The Honorable Alfreda Mae Drakeford who warmly welcomed the congregants to the city. More than 300 people attended this well-planned event that was filled with fun, food, families, fellowship and most importantly favor, when five souls were saved during the timely testimonials from many of the District’s Pastors and lay leaders. It was truly a ‘high time’ in the Lord, an event that will probably be replicated throughout the Columbia Camden District.





JOINT GOOD FRIDAY SERVICES & FISH FRIES

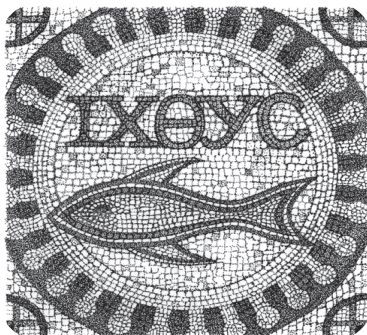
Submitted by Debra Chappelle-Polk
 Zion Spotlight Editor, The Star of Zion
 Email: ZionSpotlight@StarofZion.org

Many years ago, when Rev. George W. McMurray was the Senior Pastor of Mother A.M.E Zion Church, he proposed the idea of holding joint Good Friday Services to Rev. Calvin O. Butts, III, Senior Pastor Abyssinian Baptist Church. The idea was that Good Friday Services would alternate between their respective churches -- Abyssinian Baptist one year and Mother Zion the next year. The music ministries of both churches were also invited. Though I was a member of during Rev. McMurray's pastorate, I was not privy to the initial discussion and don't know how it was decided where the first service would be held; however, the first Joint Good Friday service was held at Abyssinian Baptist. Both churches are in Harlem: Abyssinian Baptist Church is located on 138th Street and Mother A.M.E. Zion Church is located around the corner on 137th Street. They are often affectionately referred to as "Sister Churches."

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, joint services were temporarily suspended in 2020, but were resumed in 2022. Rev. Dr. Malcolm J. Byrd, Pastor, Mother A.M.E. Zion, preached the Good Friday sermon at Abyssinian Baptist. This year, the joint service will be held at Mother Zion, and the pastor of Abyssinian will bring the Good Friday message. Rev. McMurray and Rev. Butts have both been called home, but Joint Good Friday Services live on and have become a "tradition."

What also has become "tradition" is the fish fry following the Good Friday service. This year, the WH&OM and Stewardess Board of Mother Zion will host the fish fry.

SO, WHY DO WE EAT FISH ON GOOD FRIDAY?



For centuries, Christians have abstained from eating meat on Good Friday. Meat was seen as a delicacy in ancient cultures, and was generally linked with celebrations and feasts. So instead, Christians choose to eat fish on Good Friday.

In ancient Greco-Roman times, ICHTHUS was the Greek word for "fish." Known colloquially as "the sign of the fish," it is reported that in early times

it was used by Christians as a secret symbol that all would recognize, whether scratched on walls, rocks, or sand. The simple symbol of the fish is made of two intersecting arcs; the ends extending beyond the meeting point so as to resemble the profile of a fish. It has been suggested that when a Christian met a stranger on the road, he/she sometimes drew one arc of the fish outline in the dirt. If the stranger drew the other arc, both believers knew they were in good company! (Reference source: The-HouseChurchBook)




As some of Jesus' disciples were also fishermen, fish is seen as a good substitute to meat on Good Friday.

Good Friday represents the Day of the Crucifixion of Jesus and His supreme sacrifice. Good Friday is the day on which, though exhausted by so much torment and ungratefulness, in terrible pain and without any consolation, He finds in Himself the power to give us one last gift before death, making us children of Heaven. Jesus was crucified on Good Friday, sacrificing his flesh for our sins.

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Make Way For Ms. Wood

Kyana Wood is a seventeen-year-old female from Concord, North Carolina and a senior at Cabarrus Charter Academy. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Wood Jr of Kannapolis. She is the granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. Buford Bost, members of Ebenezer AME Zion Church in Midland, North Carolina who resided in Concord, North Carolina. She is also the granddaughter of the late Betty Wood who attended Bethel AME Zion Church in Kannapolis, North Carolina where she resided.

Going to college has always been in Kyana's life plans. At the young age of 3 months old, Kyana received open heart surgery, ultimately putting restraints on her capabilities further down the line. Through all the adversity and hardships, she has faced, she continues to keep her head high, remains humble, and is determined to beat the odds. As the beginning of her senior year came near, she set the goals of being accepted into 35 colleges and having 1 million dollars in scholarships. With hard work, patience, faith, and effort she was able to achieve and exceed her goal. As of today, she has applied to 70 colleges and universities, has been accepted into 60 of them, and has been waitlisted for 3 including Howard University and Chapel Hill. She has been offered over 1.5 million dollars in scholarships from multiple schools.

The schools she have been accepted to included Western Carolina, Campbell University, East Carolina University, Meredith College, Norfolk State University, Johnson and Wales, Bowie State University, Johnson C Smith University, Winston Salem State University, North Carolina State, North Carolina Central University, North Carolina A&T, Morgan State University, Coppin State University, Xavier University, Arizona State University, Birmingham Southern, Temple University, West Virginia State University, Virginia Union, Xavier University of Louisiana, Elizabeth City State, St Augustine, University of South Carolina, Spelman College, Clark Atlanta University, Sweet Briar College, Gwynedd Mercy, Appalachian State, Roanoke College, Central State University, Salem College, Long Island University, Oklahoma State University, George Mason, Old Dominion, Hollins University, Greensboro College, Saint Leo University, UNCC, University of Pittsburgh, Shaw University, Fayetteville State, Wingate University, UNC Pembroke, UNCG, and many more.

Other than setting herself up for a success-

ful future, she is also very involved in her school and community. She participates in 3 varsity sports including Volleyball, Basketball, and Softball. She has received her silver award in Troop 1486 in Girl Scouts. She is a member of Grace Lutheran Church in Concord, North Carolina where she participated in youth group. She is a board member of the Cabarrus County 4-H. Lastly, she also has her own business named KK Jewels.

In school, she is the Valedictorian of her class with a grade point average of 4.4, and she is Student Body President and Homecoming Queen. Kyana has also started her own tutoring program at Cabarrus Charter where two days a week she tutors students in grades K-8.. Her childhood summer camp ran by Calvin Reid at Grace Lutheran is what sparked the idea and motivation to create her own program that leads to educational success for the youth. She also has done extravagant things outside of high school. She is also a student at Rowan Cabarrus Community College where she will be graduating in May with her associate in science.

Kyana says "The successes I have achieved in life can be attributed to the guidance of the Lord. Through prayer, mentorship, and faith, I have been able to move forward with confidence and conviction. I am very grateful for the blessings of the Lord and in all the ways He has led me to success. I pray that I can continue to honor Him and live a life that reflects His will and glory."



Venturing Forward Through the World of Communications: Digital Marketing—A Lifelong Career Goal

Submitted by Rev. Diane Commander

CHARLOTTE, NC—Deborah Walker graduated from Rocky River High School in 2018 and entered Livingstone College in Salisbury, NC where she majored in English. She earned her B.A. degree in English in May 2022 to further her communications quest. Livingstone College is also the alma mater of her grandfather, Bishop George W.C. Walker, Sr, her father, Rev. Dr. Dwayne A. Walker, her mother, Mrs. Geneva Walker and her three siblings, De Andra, Daivene and Dana Walker.

Deborah joined her family's legacy by joining the Alpha Xi chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. She became the ninth person in her family to cross at Livingstone College.

She shares, "thank you to the sorority for allowing me to grow tremendously, and for that, I will always be in debt. While on campus, she served as Chapter President and Social Media Chair.



After finishing her junior year, Deborah accepted an offer to work as a Communications Intern for the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). While in that position, she published the state's first June-teenthpost, worked on publication edits and learned more about website development. After graduating in 2022, she accepted an offer to work as a Fellow for the NCDOT's Office of HBCU Outreach. There she worked as a Special Projects Coordinator; helping to bridge the pipeline between high schoolers and college students, sharing the careers that transportation has to offer.



She is currently working as a Communications Specialist for the North Carolina Justice Center in Raleigh, NC and plans to remain in this position until she earns her master's degree in Digital Marketing.

"I am so excited to learn more about the department, create new and valuable connections and grow, not only personally, but professionally. Please keep me in your prayers as I embark on this new journey of life, said Deborah".

Outside of Deborah's professional life, she exhibits a love for God through Jesus Christ and a love for her church. Her family became members of Little Rock A.M.E. Zion Church in 2005 when her father, Dr. Dwayne A. Walker was appointed Pastor. She has been actively involved in all areas of the children's and youth departments (Women's Home and Overseas Missionary Society and Christian Education).

Deborah Walker, your family, church family and friends salute you for your many, many accomplishments. May your life continue to be filled with God's Richest Blessings!



HTS Hood Theological Seminary

Livingstone College Varick Auditorium

Save the Date

2023 Hood Theological Seminary Commencement

Saturday, May 20, 2023
10:30 a.m.

Speaker: Dr. Delores Flynn Brisbon

A Deeper Preparation for Holiness in the A.M.E. Zion Church

Submitted by Rev. Dr. William M. Jordan III
 Presiding Elder of the Wadesboro-Monroe District
 West Central North Carolina Conference
 Piedmont Episcopal District

There is a genuine need for the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church to insist that we be in pursuit of Holiness, especially during this present time and age. There is a spiritual awakening that is necessary for our denomination now more than ever, because this denomination cannot grow without the transformative power of the Holy Ghost. The pursuit of Holiness must be stronger than man's ambitions for political office, or societal stature and reputation. It must supersede today's church culture, which is being described as 'Post Pandemic because of the Concerns with COVID and other Airborne pathogens', the emphasis of the worship and church experience can no longer be tied to convenience, and maintaining social distance by way of virtual cameras and services. We must interact with our congregations, or else, how can Holiness be promoted in an environment where time with God is being encouraged to be reduced and not time increased?

The concern with today's churches is that they do not possess a powerful witness in these troubled times. According to the late AME Zion Bishop, Ruben Lee Speaks' in his book "The Prelude to Pentecost – A Theology of the Holy Spirit," he states, "If the church is to fulfill the expectation of Christ, its Founder and Head, it must possess the power to transform human nature. This can only be done through our Christian witness. Power to witness is more than a human achievement. It is a gift of Divine Grace. 'Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.' (Acts 1:8)"

The AME Zion Church is a great denomination. We have institutions of academic learning, theological training, conference leadership institutes which gives space for laity participation, as well as district and conference preparation for ministry. We have prolific writers who submit their work to our many publications, such as The Star Of Zion, The A.M.E. Zion Quarterly Review, The Missionary Seer, and The Church School Herald – Journal to name a few. We have great oratorically eloquent bishops, presiding elders, pastors, and ministers, who can preach the 'horns off a billy goat'. The clergy in this denomination also have homiletic skills that are excellent in exegesis of the biblical text. They can even move the hearts of some individuals to join the church and assist in facilitating the work of the church. We have well organized structures in our church such as the Missionary Society, Lay Council, Home Missions, Christian Education, and even a Department of Evangelism. However, where there is no office for the continuous development of 'Holy Ghost inspired' spiritual transformation for individuals' human character. Our churches and organizational structures are relegating themselves to, as Bishop Speaks would say, we are incorporating "pep pills of personal piety, laxatives of carnal tolerance and a surgical acceptance of untransformed members."

For clarity, let us examine what the AME Zion Church has in place for what is needed in the transformation of an individual. We acknowledge the organizational structures such as the Missionary Society programs, Sunday School, Bible study, functions for men and young people, worship services, music, good informative preaching, all of which creates a pleasant atmosphere that draw people to our churches, but what will transform them from a selfish sinner to a Christian who reflects the character and likeness of Christ?

Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Sr. has written a wonderful pamphlet called, "So Great a Salvation" which summarizes the Plan of Salvation from Scriptures, the Gospel of Salvation Explained in Detail, and the Essence of Salvation Simplified by Comparison & Contrast. This pamphlet also offers an understanding of what happens to an individual who is newly converted to Christ and the significance of Christian Discipleship. As spiritual leaders we need to personally take the hands of these new converts and usher them into the essence of a true transformative nature of spiritual character, like it says in Proverbs 27:17 (KJV) "Iron sharpeneth iron; So a man sharpeneth the countenance

of his friend". Therefore, we as Christians are obligated to teach new converts that their conversion must change their mindset from secular thoughts and behaviors. And they will have to follow the Bible's spiritual steps to reach their, albeit continuous, journey of salvation. In Philippians 4:9, it states, "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." as spiritual leaders, we must also show them by precept and example, how they should matriculate in Christendom. The lessons of transformation for these new converts should not be left solely to the pastor of the church, the whole church, which is inclusive of all members who have demonstrated spiritual Christ likeness, should take part in the life of the new converts.

We as a church can take for granted that everyone in the church is saved, and when we discover they are not, sometimes we do little or nothing but tolerate these unsaved, carnal minded members ill behaviors. However, if there is an impediment, the members of the church should not talk about those individuals, but they should go to that person and immediately pray with them and admonish that person to understand their ill behavior is not reflecting a Christian's nature. In Galatians 6:1, Paul cautions every believer to attend to our brothers and sisters in Christ, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Another scripture that reminds us of our obligations is Romans 12:1 (NRSV), which reads "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." Here in this text, we find Paul admonishing the church in Rome to offer themselves as living martyrs. With the understanding of God's mercifulness toward them, they may sacrificially live in a context of holiness which will be acceptable to

God. We must teach the members of the church, it is their life in its totality, that they should present as an offering of service and worship to God, who saved them from their sins and worldliness. Members of the church must realize what their relationship with God really means in the context of scripture, along with what must be taught and demonstrated by each born again and baptized believer. Whatever part a member plays in the church: choir, usher, steward, trustee, missionary, deaconess, Christian education, class leader, lay council, or bench member, they should demonstrate a holy lifestyle and love for everyone in whom they encounter, in every factor of their life. Remembering Hebrews 12:14, which clearly states, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:" and that the pursuit of Holiness is a total surrendering of self to the Will of God.

Can the Church lay down its incessant need to be driven by its own clustered preferences and instead be directed by God's given purpose? What will a Connectional pursuit of Holiness mean to our time-honored attachment to our African American roots and origin of our church in our country? Will it change how we see ourselves or can Holiness become a part of that self-image? Or can we truly incorporate our Discipline to achieve the commands of God. We as an African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church have at our disposal the class leader structure, in which we can implement to teach our membership how to live a holy life by doing the following:

1. After the new convert has repented of their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their personal savior. This new salvation must be taught that this is only the beginning of their journey in the pursuit of a holy life. They must be taught living in this world means they are in the world, but they have transformed out of the mentality of worldly thoughts and actions. Romans 12:1-2 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."
2. To be sanctified is to be set apart or declare holy; consecrated for the sole purpose of living for God and the purpose of God's holy will. Leviticus 20:7 "Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy,



for I am the Lord your God. And you shall keep My statutes and perform them: I am the Lord who sanctifies you.” Members in the church must be taught their purpose in their walk with God and the character of Christ they must display in all they do and speak.

3. “An important verse in understanding the filling of the Holy Spirit is John 14:16, where Jesus promised the Spirit would indwell believers and that the indwelling would be permanent. It is important to distinguish the indwelling from the filling of the Spirit. The permanent indwelling of the Spirit is not for a select few believers, but for all believers. There are a number of references in Scripture that support this conclusion. First, the Holy Spirit is a gift given to all believers in Jesus without exception, and no conditions are placed upon this gift except faith in Christ (John 7:37-39). Second, the Holy Spirit is given at the moment of salvation (Ephesians 1:13). Galatians 3:2 emphasizes this same truth, saying that the sealing and indwelling of the Spirit took place at the time of believing. Third, the Holy Spirit indwells believers permanently. The Holy Spirit is given to believers as a down payment, or verification of their future glorification in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 4:30).

This is in contrast to the filling of the Spirit referred to in Ephesians 5:18. We should be so completely yielded to the Holy Spirit that He can possess us fully and, in that sense, fill us. Romans 8:9 and Ephesians 1:13-14 states that He dwells within every believer, but He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30), and His activity within us can be quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19). When we allow this to happen, we do not experience the fullness of the Spirit’s working and His power in and through us. To be filled with the Spirit implies freedom for Him to occupy every part of our lives, guiding and controlling us. Then His power can be exerted through us so that what we do is fruitful to God. The filling of the

Spirit does not apply to outward acts alone; it also applies to the innermost thoughts and motives of our actions. Psalm 19:14 says, “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

Sin is what hinders the filling of the Holy Spirit, and obedience to God is how the filling of the Spirit is maintained. Ephesians 5:18 commands that we be filled with the Spirit; however, it is not praying for the filling of the Holy Spirit that accomplishes the filling. Only our obedience to God’s commands allows the Spirit freedom to work within us. Because we are still infected with sin, it is impossible to be filled with the Spirit all the time. When we sin, we should immediately confess it to God and renew our commitment to being Spirit-filled and Spirit-led.” (Got Questions Ministries is the author of item 3. in which I found generally expressive to the context in which I was trying to convey.)

I pray and hope we as a church will be moved as John Wesley was so ‘warmly moved’ in his Aldersgate experience, in perfecting the will of God. We as a church with a determined desire can move in ‘A Stronger Preparation for Holiness in the AME Zion Church’. Once we are holy, there is a fire in our bones that will drive us to share this gospel of Jesus Christ with everyone we come into contact. Membership will grow, because each holy spiritual inflamed member will have the unction to spiritual influence others to come to their house of God. Yes, we as a denomination can restore our churches, however not with just programs and institutional structures, but we must teach the church to be and live holy.

May we catch on fire!

INTERNATIONAL MINISTERS AND LAY ASSOCIATION 45TH ANNUAL CAMERON W. JACKSON AWARDS & RECOGNITION BANQUET

Submitted by Debra Chappelle-Polk
Zion Spotlight Editor, The Star of Zion
Email: ZionSpotlight@StarofZion.org

New York, NY - On Tuesday, February 14, 2023 the International Ministers and Lay Association (IMLA) held its 45th Annual Cameron W. Jackson Awards and Recognition Banquet at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Los Angeles, CA.

Mrs. Sarah Kinard welcomed the Bishops, General Officers, clergy, family and friends to Banquet, and said “she considered it an honor to serve as Toast Mistress for another year.”

The following individuals were recognized by the IMLA and presented with awards:

The Reverend Dr. Lawton Nelson, Jr.- The Paul Robeson Award;

Dr. William and Mrs. Rose Stokes - The Samantha Wormley Lay Leadership Award;

Dr. Olivier Flewollen - The Sojourner Truth Award;

Rev. Dr. George Kent - The Frederick Douglass Award;

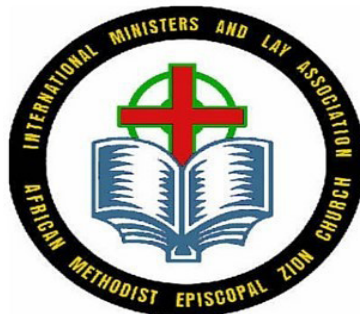
Rev. Mariam Williams Thomas - The Bishops Small & Lartey International Award;

Mr. Oscar Russell Williams - The Alfred G. Dunston Award;

Mrs. Margaree Coleman Carter - The Harriet Tubman Award;

Ms. Vincia Benjamin Miller & Rev. Austin Young - The Young, Gifted and Black Awards;

Ms. Rynette Ledbetter-Nixon - The Distinguished Community Service Leader Award; and



Mrs. Sandra B. Crowder - The President’s Award.

As dinner was being served, Mrs. Kinard introduced the honorees as their pictures and bios were displayed on a large screen. In pre-recorded videos, the honorees thanked the IMLA for the honor of being recognized.

Following the presentation of awards, remarks were brought by The Reverend Dr. Anthony N. Witherspoon, President of The International Ministers and Lay Association. Dr. Witherspoon thanked Mrs. Kinard for her abilities, talents and skills -- “she is first-class all the way.” He also thanked Mr. Darin Kent, Chief Communications Officer and Star of Zion Managing Editor, “for pulling all of this together.” He applauded Mr. Kent’s efforts “in taking the Star of Zion to even greater heights.” He asked the Regional Vice Presidents to stand and thanked them for the work they do in their episcopal areas and for helping the International Ministers and Lay Association to sell tickets. “What you see here tonight is the result of their hard work in bringing this event to fruition.” He also thanked those who were tuning in virtually. Dr. Witherspoon said he was happy tonight to present the President of the Board of Bishops, the Right Reverend Dennis V. Proctor, who has contributed sacrificially to the IMLA for a number of years. “Bishop Proctor “is tremendous asset to the IMLA, and his imprint on this organization and the things that we do.” Dr. Witherspoon also recognized past presidents, Rev. McGill and Rev. Walker both of whom were in attendance.

Bishop Proctor took podium. “This has been a marvelous evening, and I believe that all of us have felt like family to see persons honored who really deserve to be honored.” Bishop Proctor said the banquet first began when Cameron Jackson was president, when he was a young minister, coming into the ministry under Rev. Cameron Jackson. The Bishop acknowledged his long history with the organization, however, he said, “that is not be compared with our destiny.” He thanked Dr. Witherspoon “who is leading us in the right direction.” He then delivered the benediction to which all said “Amen.”

A Double Portion of God's Blessings



Written By Linda Sutton
Missionary Society Parent Body President
Goler Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church

Goler Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina recently experienced a double portion of God's blessings. The church, which is a part of the Winston-Salem District, Western North Carolina Conference, Piedmont Episcopal District, is one of the oldest African-American churches in Winston-Salem still in existence. Goler Memorial was founded in 1881 as Winston Tabernacle A.M.E. Zion Church and held its first worship service in the Forsyth County Court House.

On Sunday evening, February 26, 2023, surrounded by A.M.E. Zion church leaders, including Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Sr., Rev. Dr. Calvin L. Miller, Presiding Elder of the Winston-Salem District, Presiding Elders, Active, Retired, and Former General Officers, Ecumenical and Zion Pastors and Ministers, Lay Leaders, and Members of the congregation, the church celebrated burning the mortgage on all indebtedness and the dedication of a new church located at 3498 Northampton Drive, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27105. The new facility is a 15,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art church situated on 27 acres of land. By God's grace, the church was able to purchase the property debt-free! Yes, God did it!

The services begin with the dedication of the Bishop George E. Battle, Jr. and Mrs. Iris M. Battle Executive Board Room. Goler Memorial's Pastor and First Lady, the Rev. Dr. George C. Banks, and Mrs. Keisha Banks, noted in their written remarks that without the leadership of Bishop and Mrs. Battle, this amazing day would not have been possible. Bishop Battle assisted the church in negotiating a major indebtedness when he served as the Presiding Bishop of the Piedmont Episcopal District. After a spirited prayer service led by local ministers, the mortgage burning and dedication service began. The Goler Memorial Mass Choir, led by Music and Arts Director Brandy Hunter, and the Winston-Salem District Choir, led by Rev. Denise Scott, blessed those in attendance with soul-stirring selections. Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Sr. electrified the congregation with an inspiring message entitled, "Harvesting Souls for God." This message challenged Goler Memorial to continue to seek to win souls for Christ and make disciples in this new community. Goler Memorial has been blessed to witness 58 salvations

since June 1, 2022, so this was a timely message for this growing, vibrant congregation.

Many who attended noted that God has truly blessed this congregation in many ways! Goler Memorial continues to solicit the prayers of the entire A.M.E. Zion family as they venture into this new, exciting season, seeking to do the will of God.





WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Submitted by Debra Chappelle-Polk
Zion Spotlight Editor, The Star of Zion
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New York, NY - **THE AME ZION CHURCH – PRESENT DAY - WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?** Was a question Rev. David Gerald Elliott, Pastor of St. James A.M.E. Zion Church in Goldsboro, North Carolina asked at the International Ministers' Lay Association (IMLA) afternoon session of the Board of Bishops/IMLA Conference held in Los Angeles, CA, in February 2023. The Star of Zion recently reached out to Rev. David Gerald Elliott and asked about the impetus for his question, as well as his ministry and his church.

Rev. Elliott explained his presentation. He said his focus was on moving forward in a way that propels our witness as believers and our image as Zionites. He said, "we need an increase of our visibility in the community where our churches are. This visibility should be with both the local, state, and national governments as well as the poor, low income, and destitute." He mentioned the need to be intentional with all aspects of ministry. "What is the 'why' in everything that we do? What is the purpose behind every program, workshop, and sermon?" He explained the need to expand our resources. "We must investigate grant funding, endowments, and investments for our ministries". It was informative and enlightening session which drew a wide range of responses and comments. (The Board of Bishops/IMLA Conference can be viewed on You Tube and on the SOZ Facebook page).

Rev. David Gerald Elliott accepted his call to the preaching ministry at age 16, and preached his trial sermon on March 16, 2003 at Beth Shalom A.M.E. Zion Church in Washington, D.C. He was born and raised in Oxon Hill, MD on August 18, 1986. He received his formal education in the Prince Georges County public school system of Maryland. He attended Clinton Junior College, in Rock Hill S.C., where he earned an associates' degree. In 2012, he graduated from Coppin State University with a Bachelors' of Science degree in criminal justice. Rev. Elliott earned his Master of Divinity Degree at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University located in Richmond, VA., in May of 2015. He is currently pursuing his D. Min. from Hood Theological Seminary in Salisbury, N.C.



Rev. Elliott has served on many levels in the A.M.E Zion Church through the Christian Education Department. He has worked on the local, district, conference and connectional level with event implementation, logistical planning, and program coordination.

Currently, Rev. Elliott serves as Pastor of St. James A.M.E. Zion Church, in Goldsboro, N.C., having been appointed in February 2021. He is proud of his church, which has a membership of 106 dedicated souls that push the vision of being "The Corner Church with a Straight Message" forward. St. James has a very diverse congregation. "While we are an all African American congregation, there are members who have different backgrounds in social status, education, and career paths." The congregation consists of young professionals, established seniors and several loving families. Rev. Elliott said "St. James is a church where the congregation shares a common goal of being a community of believers who love God, each other and anyone that we meet in our daily lives."

Following up on his presentation at the Board of Bishops. Rev. Elliott shared his views on the role of the church in today's society which he said has changed drastically. "We must be clear that Jesus Christ is still the focal point in everything that we do. And as the focal point, His principles, teachings, actions, and commands should be reflected in the way that we live. The role of the church is to worship God almighty, to show people the love of God, to offer relationship to God through Jesus Christ, and to teach people to live a holistic God filled life. We cannot separate the spiritual from the emotional, economical, and emotional experiences of life. The church must be able to teach the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but also the faith of Martin Luther King Jr., Fannie Lou Hamer, and Frederick Douglass. The church must continue to promote generosity, benevolence and giving, while also promoting the need for good credit, investment and financial literacy. We must be holy and holistic."

Asked about the COVID-19 effect on membership, Rev. Elliott said "Covid-19 expedited needed changes in our church buildings as well as how we conducted worship. Covid-19 was devastating to the entire world. There were no exceptions to who was affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic. As devastating as the pandemic was, there were still signs of hope for the people of God. What we saw was a relative non-existent class meeting system turn into a network to



make sure all members were not lacking food, toiletries, or any other necessities. We saw much needed updates in our church to help those who would tune in virtually or by phone. We were able to save on spending which gave us the opportunity to give more to those who were in need. The losses that we faced as a church were at times unbearable, however we saw the church become the community of believers that God has called us to be."

St. James held a special "Celebration of Life" Service to honor the memories of members who passed away during the Covid-19 pandemic." Rev. Elliot added, "As we focused on being a community of believers, knowing that our eternal hope is in God, it did not

take away the pain that many of us felt with being forced to have graveyard services, limited capacity funerals, or having to watch virtual services of loved ones. There is an emotional and psychological pain that many people felt."



With regard to community outreach programs, Rev. Elliott believes that the church cannot be the church if they are not engaged in the community surrounding the church. "The church must be involved in the decision making process that affects the community. It is the responsibility of the church to understand the pulse of the community. By doing this, the church is able to show the love of God through meeting the needs of the community. The church is able to speak on the justice, truth, and righteousness of God." He is a firm believer that "the church must respond to the needs of the community" and endorses programs that address those needs. St. James established a mental health awareness program in response to the increase in suicides as well as those still wrestling with the results that Covid-19 has had on their families. There is also a food pantry at St. James, "where anyone who is hungry can receive groceries." The church is also a site partner to feed K-12 students over the summer. "If the church wants to be like Jesus then we must be concerned about the least of these".

St. James boast a well-organized church, with many thriving ministries. Rev. Elliott said "on Sunday morning, you will encounter our greeters' ministry at the 8am worship service followed by our ushers who will take your temperature and information." St. James has a "dynamic praise team that fills the house with melodic songs during worship, followed by a powerful word." Following the morning service, congregants have breakfast prepared by the Feed My Sheep Ministry. "After our food and fellowship," Rev. Elliott said "we go back to the sanctuary where we have a diverse team of Christian Educators to teach Sunday School. As we prepare for the 11am worship, our choir mounts the pulpit, we dismiss the children for children's church and we go into worship."



The evangelism ministry ministers greatly in the Goldsboro community through paying for laundry at the laundry mat, providing groceries to those in need, partnering with the local middle school and high school. The Worship and Arts ministry which includes the Praise team, Children's Choir, Voices of Zion, and Ministry in Motion Dance Ministry, are often pulled upon to minister throughout the conference, district, and community. Rev. Elliott proudly proclaims: "The ministries of St. James continue to bless God in all that we do!"

Rev. Elliott was asked about the impact of asylum seekers/migrants and the church's response to same. "Jesus was an immigrant! Jesus found refuge when His earthly father moved their family from Judea to Egypt in response to an unjust executive order. If it was not for Egyptian Asylum, there is no telling what could have happened. I believe that it is the responsibility for the church to provide refuge and aid to immigrants. We are to use our voice and resources to advocate for those who are not in a position to advocate for themselves. I do not believe that it is a simple issue to be addressed, nevertheless, I am certain that ignoring or disregarding those seeking asylum is being complicit to their struggles. Moreover, as The Freedom Church, it should be our yoke to carry when it comes to advocating for the oppressed."

Rev. Elliott is a man of God, focused on changing the world by showing the love of Christ. Rev Elliott preaches liberation and teaches that all people must live on purpose in God, believing that this is the desire of God. Following the rule of our good teacher, Jesus Christ, to love God with all our hearts, minds and soul and loving our neighbors as ourselves. He has a 3-year old daughter, Mackenzie Noelle Elliott who is the greatest gift he has received from God besides salvation!

Livingstone College hosting national reparations debate with actress, director Erika Alexander

‘Living Single’ star directed film, ‘The Big Payback’

Ben and Jerry’s to serve up special flavor of ice cream for event

Submitted by Kimberly Harrington
Director of Public Relations
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March 14, 2023

SALISBURY – Erika Alexander, who played attorney Maxine Shaw on the hit TV show, “Living Single,” will be on the campus of Livingstone College on March 20 to debate national reparations.

Alexander co-directed her first film, “The Big Payback,” a documentary that follows Alderman Robin Rue Simmons and her pursuit to pass the first government-funded reparations program in Evanston, Ill. Meanwhile, U.S. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee faces a 30-year uphill battle to pass HR40, a national bill to study reparations and make recommendations. Both women are met with racism and historical resistance, as well as assistance from allies and abolitionists within.

Alexander and Whitney Dow, co-founders of Color Farm Media, are the team behind the documentary and are partnering with historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to hold a series of National Reparations Debates, inspired by the 1965 James Baldwin-William Buckley debate.

The first phase of the initiative incorporates 10 HBCUs in North Carolina with Livingstone College being the second occurrence. The program will be held from 6-8 p.m. in the Tubman Little Theater, located on the campus at 701 W. Monroe St., Salisbury.

“Students will use spoken word and rap battles to debate for and/or against reparations,” said Nailah McDowell, LC Connect Coordinator and sociology instructor at Livingstone College.

In preparation for the Monday program, the documentary will be shown twice this week on campus. The film debuted at the Tribeca Film Festival in front of a packed house at the Apollo Theater in Harlem on Juneteenth. It premiered nationwide on PBS on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day in January.

Color Farm Media is partnering with Ben & Jerry’s, who will be serving up a special flavor called “Reparations Now! Root Beer Floats,” in honor of “The Big Payback”

“Reparations is the making of amends for a wrong one has done by paying money to, [therefore] helping, those who have been wronged. Or compensation paid by a defeated state. That’s really what it is,” Alexander said in one interview. “In this sense, it’s reparations for the descendants of the enslaved Africans and their descendants by the U.S. government for harm, not only from slavery, but from Jim Crow policies, legislation, [and] all these things that have been interred in the American fabric.”



Said Dow, who is a white man, “It’s repairing the relationship between Black and

White Americans. It also means repairing White people. As a white person, I believe you’re living in a state of cognitive dissonance where you are trying to manage this story that you’ve told about yourself, which has some holes in it. It’s really hard to keep holding that in play, so I think that part of the repair is also for the white community to repair.”

Click link to watch trailer of “The Big Payback”: [\(86\) The Big Payback \(Official Trailer\) - YouTube](#)

LC HCASC Team WINS

Submitted by The Star of Zion

The varsity scholars of Livingstone College’s Honda Campus All-Star Challenge team placed second in a national qualifying tournament hosted at Winston-Salem State University (WSSU). The team is led by captain, and senior, business administration major Juliet Makena of Nairobi, Kenya, whereas senior, business administration major Emile Dogbe-Gakpetor of Accra, Ghana, senior and sociology major Cameran Manns of Detroit, Michigan, and sophomore, business administration major Jacob Adkins of Dunn, North Carolina rounds out the team. The team’s alternate player is a junior business administration major from Pensacola, Florida, Christian Bussey, and the team is coached by English faculty, Dr. Da’Tarvia Parrish.

The HBCUs registered for WSSU’s Invitational included; Bennett College, Morris College, Allen University, Fayetteville State University, St. Augustine University, Livingstone College, and the tournament’s first place winners, Winston-Salem State University.

As an entity, the Honda Campus All-Star Challenge is a team quiz bowl academic competition for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) created by Richard Reid, president and owner of the College Bowl Company; and sponsored by the American Honda Motor Company. Season 34 of the ‘Friends for Life’ competition returned to in-person trivia game play, whereas six sites: Bowie State University in Baltimore, Maryland; Norfolk State University in Norfolk, Virginia; Prairie View A&M University in Prairie View, Texas; Spelman

and Morehouse colleges) in Atlanta, Georgia; Alabama A&M University in Huntsville, Alabama; and of course, Winston-Salem State University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, opened their facilities to the 91 institutions in the HCASC pool. Led by HCASC employees and volunteers, teams competed for a final position Top 32 seating in the National Tournament hosted at American Honda headquarters April 15-19, 2023 in Los Angeles, California.



Livingstone College to host first in-person Open House since pandemic

Kimberly Harrington
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March 13, 2023

SALISBURY – Livingstone College will host its first in-person Open House since the pandemic on Monday, March 20 from 9:30 to 1:30 p.m.

Open House is an opportunity for prospective students to experience Livingstone College in action i.e., its classrooms, cafeteria, student body, student activities and the like.

The theme for this year's in-person event is "Field Trip." Since it will be held during a school day, students will be bused to the college campus. But the event is still open and walk-ins will be accepted as well.

The program will begin at 8:30 a.m. with check-in, followed by a kick-off featuring the Livingstone College Blue Thunder Marching Band and cheerleaders at 9:30 a.m.

At 9:45 a.m., the admissions team will be introduced, followed by an introduction of Livingstone College's 13th President Dr. Anthony J. Davis.

Also on the program are the gospel choir, athletics, student affairs and the Royal Court, which includes the queens and kings of Livingstone.

There will be department overviews for academic affairs, student affairs, financial aid, registrar, retention and student accounts.

Lunch and tours will be held from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

"The Livingstone College experience is like no other. You truly will have the opportunity to take full advantage of your college experience here at the 'Stone," said Dr. Wilbur Lucas, associate vice president of Enrollment Management. "With the hard work of our faculty and staff, we work diligently to connect with the students to assure their path here at Livingstone College is tailored for their success on campus and post-graduation."

During Open House, Admissions will be conducting on-site admissions and awarding scholarships for GPAs ranging from 2.5 to 4.0.

This will also be the first open house under the administration of Davis and under the leadership of the new Vice President of Enrollment, Anthony Books. Brooks returned to Livingstone College after 17 years, when he served as assistant vice president for enrollment management and strategic planning from 2001-2005.

"Livingstone College is spiraling upward and becoming a premier higher education institution," Brooks said. "Our new admission team is full of energy and enthusiasm that will definitely be tied to our actions and recruitment on and off campus," Brooks said.

Want to come?

To register for open house, click this link: [Livingstone College Open House • RSVPify](#)

Livingstone professor to debut stage play at Knight Theater

'Background Check' to feature R&B artists Tony Terry, Sunshine Anderson

Kimberly Harrington
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Feb. 28, 2023

SALISBURY – Livingstone College's own, Dr. Curtis Dean, will debut a stage play he scripted at the Knight Theater in uptown Charlotte in March featuring some of R&B's iconic voices.

The new stage play, "Background Check," will be presented for one day only, Sunday, March 26, at 3 p.m., starring Tony Terry, dubbed the Prince of R&B; Grammy-award nominated Sunshine Anderson; and *BET's* *Sunday Best* winner Y'Anna Crawley.

The play also stars former member of R&B's Blackstreet, J-Stylz, and producers "KQ" and Ryan Davis.

"Background Check," presented by Kenny Quiller and Cole Dean Productions, dives into the popularity of social media and its effect on the dating scene today as high school friends reunite to plan and celebrate their 20-year class reunion. It will explore the questions: Can friends be lovers? And how well do you know your roommate, co-worker, friend, lover, family or partner?

Dean and producer and director Jermaine "J Cole" Coleman Sr. combine comedy, drama, music and pop culture all into one power-packed stage play.

Dean said it took about three months to write the script. The cast has been rehearsing since October of last year.

"We're proud of Dr. Dean, his artistic craft, and his debut production at such an esteemed venue in uptown Charlotte," said Livingstone President Dr. Anthony J. Davis. "Dr. Dean is a reflection of the caliber of talent that we have on our campus among our faculty, staff and students. His success demonstrates our multi-dimensional levels of excellency and relevancy collectively as an institution and individually."



Dean has served at Livingstone College for 20 years. He is currently director of the Evening and Weekend College, which is the program in which he earned his bachelor's degree from Livingstone. He is also coordinator of the U.S. Army and Air Force ROTC Program at the college and serves as an assistant professor in the Division of Business.

He earned his master's degree in business administration from the University of Phoenix, and his doctorate degree from Walden University.

Dean is no stranger to the music and entertainment industry. He is a veteran of the United States Army, where he served in the band and in the 7th Army Soldiers Show, where he traveled extensively abroad to perform for world dignitaries and for politicians including President Ronald Reagan and Queen Elizabeth.

After leaving the Army, he joined Payton Production and served as one of the producers of "A Good Man is Hard to Find," which became a Paramount motion picture. He later joined SPP Entertainment, where he was vice president, writer and producer of "Just be a Man About it," which premiered on Broadway.

He is known for his talent as a musical director and scoring for many off Broadway gospel stage plays such as "Lord, Why Do I Keep Choosing the Wrong Man," "My Grandmother Prayed for Me," "It's Your Time to Cry" and "Karma" to name a few.

A portion of the proceeds will benefit the West Charlotte High School National Alumni Association.

Want to go?

Tickets are available at the Blumenthal Performing Arts Box Office, located in the Belk Theater lobby at 130 North Tryon St., Charlotte. Phone: (704) 372-1000. Website: www.blumenthalarts.org. Or click this link:

"Background Check" The Stage Play | Blumenthal Performing Arts (blumenthalarts.org). Doors open at 2 p.m.

Livingstone College to host famed attorney Ben Crump, Equal Justice Now for bail & police reform panel discussion

Eric Kowalczyk and Bakari Sellers to moderate program

Submitted by Kimberly Harrington
Director of Public Relations
kharrington@livingstone.edu

March 3, 2023

SALISBURY – Famed civil rights attorney and recent NAACP Image Award recipient Ben Crump is coming to the campus of Livingstone College for a panel discussion on national bail reform and over policing.

Crump is the national spokesperson for Equal Justice Now, which is hosting the one-day event, the first of its kind to be held in the state of North Carolina, and only the third one in the country.

Equal Justice Now (EJN) is a nonprofit social welfare organization that advocates against false arrest, unreasonable detention, and wrongful conviction and incarceration. Its mission is to eradicate suppression, to address over policing, police reform and criminal reform, and to end systemic racism.

The panel discussion will be held from 1-5 p.m. on Thursday, March 23, in Varick Auditorium, located on the campus of Livingstone College at 701 W. Monroe Street, Salisbury. The first 90 minutes will be dedicated to bail reform and the second half to police reform.



Bakari Sellers

Moderators for the event will be Eric Kowalczyk, a veteran of the Baltimore Police Department, crisis communications specialist, author and minister; and Bakari Sellers, an attorney, former S.C. state representative and political commentator.



Eric Kowalczyk

Confirmed panelists to date include:

- Mecklenburg County Sheriff Gary McFadden;
- Mecklenburg County District Attorney Spencer Merriweather;
- James Buie, retired Gaston County police chief and author of

“From the Ground Up: How to Refine American Policing Now”;

- Gemale Black, Salisbury-Rowan NAACP president;
- Dr. Latarcia Barnes, chair, Livingstone College, Department of Criminal Justice and Sociology;
- JaPharil Jones, president of Black Lives Matter 757 (Virginia);
- Melanie Reid, associate dean of faculty and professor of law at Lincoln Memorial University in Knoxville, Tenn.;
- Rep. Joe Towns of Nashville, Tenn.;
- Attorney Dominique Calhoun of Houston, Texas; and
- Carleena Deonanan a defense attorney of Raleigh.

“The chance to bring collaborative dialogue to challenging social issues is the hallmark of Equal Justice Now’s work,” said Tony Smith co-founder of EJN. “Bail reform and over policing are two issues that strike at the heart of issues faced by disadvantaged communities. Our hope is these panels will unite people towards a solution that benefits all communities, particularly those represented on the campus of Livingstone College.”

Livingstone President Dr. Anthony J. Davis said he is ecstatic that Ben Crump and Equal Justice Now selected Livingstone College to host this crucial discussion on topics that are threatening our social justice system.

“As President 13, I am committed to elevating the profile of Livingstone College and hosting this program is a part of our engagement and empowerment strategy to propel Livingstone forward,” Davis said. “This event will expose our students to a national platform on issues that affect their demographic disproportionately, and hopefully will empower them as the next generation of leaders to change the system from within.”

It was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who said injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere and whatever affects one directly, affects us all indirectly, Davis said. “We should all be concerned with improving processes, eradicating obstacles to social equality and coming together to have a civil conversation about solutions with experts in their respective fields.”

Those interested in attending the free event are encouraged to register at Eventbrite at :<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-national-over-policing-bail-reform-panel-discussion-tickets-521221366137>

President 13 names new VP of public safety, police chief

Submitted by Kimberly Harrington
Director of Public Relations
kharrington@livingstone.edu

Feb. 28, 2023

SALISBURY – Dr. Anthony J. Davis, the 13th president of Livingstone College, has named Renarde D. Earl as vice president of public safety and chief of police for the college.

Earl, a criminal justice major and graduate of N.C. Central University in Durham, has an extensive career in law enforcement, particularly at the higher education level.

He most recently retired from Fayetteville State University as associate vice chancellor for police/public safety and chief of police, where he served for four years.

Prior to that, Earl was chief/director of campus police and public safety at Forsyth Technical Community College in Winston-Salem for nearly 15 years.

He has also served as a police sergeant at Wake Forest University Police Department in Winston-Salem and



as a police officer for the City of Winston-Salem.

Among his education and leadership training, he has completed the civilian response to active shooter events instructor course; the valor executive leadership matchbook virtual training; leadership for the law enforcement executive; and is a graduate of Leadership Winston-Salem and the West Point Leadership Program.

Earl is a member of the American Society for Industrial Security; a former member of the N.C. Association of Chiefs of Police; and a former member of the National Association of Campus Safety Administrators; among a slew of other credentials.

“I am excited about joining Livingstone College as the new VP of Public Safety and Chief of Police,” Earl said. “I look forward to working with the entire campus community to create an environment where all students, faculty, staff and visitors are and feel safe.”

A safe campus requires everyone’s participation, he said.

“As I begin, I will be reviewing staffing, policies and procedures, technology, training and development, and internal and external relationship building. I look forward to the opportunity and the challenges,” he said.

Social Media Engagement for Youth

Submitted by Alexis Carson
VICYC Director of Public Relations

Greetings from the 2022-2026 Executive Varick International Christian Youth Council! We are excited to serve as youth leaders throughout our Church, with the goal to, "...provide representation for the youth of this denomination," according to our Constitution. We are also thankful to be part of The AME Zion Church, which played an important role in the abolitionist movement, and continues to be a prominent voice for social justice and civil rights.



This piece will focus on: information about VICYC, social media accounts and updates and how are we using technology to attract and intrigue younger people to come to church.

How VICYC is using Social Media to engage with Youth?

Recently, we have created a new page on Instagram called @vicyc_amezion! This page is in addition to our Facebook platform and will be used to notify people about upcoming programs, Initiatives, Scholarships, Conferences and to spread the word of God! We, as a Cabinet, feel this that page will help to expand our ministry in the AME Zion Church and will help us engage youth once again. It is our hope that youth throughout our denomination can feel and experience the same love and happiness from God generally, and also through the kindness and love displayed through others in the Church.

Using Social Media to Attract Youth & Young Adults to Come to Church

Using social media to attract younger people to church can be an effective way to reach out to a demographic that is increasingly reliant on digital platforms for information and communication. Here are some things we will do on our social media platforms to promote church events and attract younger audiences:

1. **Create engaging content:** Younger people are more likely to engage with content that is visually appealing and interactive. We plan to use images, videos, and infographics to make our social media posts more engaging.
2. **Use relevant hashtags:** Using hashtags that are relevant to a specific church or event that is being promoted to reach a wider audience on social media is a way to get others involved. For example, We would use hashtags like #youthgroup, #RealTalk, #studentministry, or #VictoryNight2023 to help promote a youth group events and conversation going on.
3. **Make it easy to find information:** We will make sure our social media profiles are up-to-date with accurate information about the church, including the location, service times, and contact information. This makes it easier to find and attend our church or seek information about exciting things happening.
4. **Dialogue with the audience:** We will make every effort to respond to comments and messages from youth on social media in order to build relationship and show that our church is accessible and welcoming.

Thank you for taking the time to read – we look forward to continuing to write for the Star of Zion about youth ministry initiatives!

A Reflection on Time

Submitted By Allison N. Lee
Social Justice Editor, The Star of Zion
Email: SocialJustice@StarOfZion.org

It is difficult to believe and simultaneously makes complete and total sense to now be present in the fourth month of 2023 – almost a full third of the way through a year that still feels like it just crossed the threshold. I have been thinking quite a bit about how time is present and accounted for one day, and seemingly the next it has slipped through one's fingers like sand on a windy day at the beach. Time is an invaluable asset in relation to spending it where and with whom we desire to. Time is the thing that we devote between 62 and 67 years of our lives striving to gain after having hopefully worked as a "contributing member of society." Time is precious because when you have it to freely use and just be, prayerfully every minute of it is enjoyed, basked in, and appreciated. When time is lacking and we desire it, however, we spend the moments that we do have wishing to gain time back or thinking about how things could be different if only there were more...time.



As I have journeyed through the hospital halls over the last few months in my role as a chaplain – praying with patients who would never again rise from their beds of affliction in this life, embracing family members overcome with the thickest and most demanding grief, holding space for people who ask, "why bad things happen to good people," and asking God to guide my footsteps, actions, and articulation of speech while momentarily dwelling on islands...pods of...holy ground - I have taken time to ponder the conundrum of time.

Time is a complex duality that demands we both be present in the here and now while making preparations for the future. It asks us to actively work through healing from past harm and hurt while making space for the newness that comes with relationship and love today. It begs that we make time for what we want to do and spend time on what

we need to do. It makes plain in the form of regret that even for those who have lived out full and meaningful lives from day to day, week to week, and year to year, there is almost never enough time, no matter how we divide it up and fill it with purpose, love, and care.

Is there any Good News to be found in this reflection? The more I write, the more dire the situation seems. Is time on our side? Am I using my time wisely? Am I building a life that I'll be able to look back on in 60 years and rest knowing that I gave it my all? In the words of C.S. Lewis, "...day by day nothing changes, but when you look back, everything is different." Maybe this is the turning of the tide, because different isn't always bad, but perhaps different is, in the words of the late John Lewis, both a "good and necessary trouble." Time – for all that she is not – is most certainly a granter of ability to assess. An encourager of action, reflection, action. Time cannot be undone, but it does allow a sort of course correction in the face of desire, behind the wheel of hardship, and before the mountain of uncertainty.

By the time that April concludes, we will have spent 120 days inside of 2023. For some, those days will have been full of good times – upward mobility, love, and light. For others, it will have been difficult – grief, lack of clarity, and unsteady. For many, time in 2023 will have brought both to the front stoop – good *and* difficult times, a mixture of loss *and* love, sorrow and rejoicing. Time has been good in its constant reminder of both the fragility and joy of life. Time has taught me that you can always begin again. Time is a reminder that it is always proper to get lost in the moment, to advocate for those in need, and to help others feel seen. Time has shown up and made it clear that there are things worth stopping the clock for in order to stand still and hold space with. Time – for all of its constant forward movement – has suspended me in the grip of doing good *right now*, practicing forgiveness *right now*, loving my neighbor *right now*, lifting causes *right now*, and showing up for self and others *right now*. May we remain aware of the reliably precarious concept of *time*. May we use *time* in a way that benefits God's will, the work of our hands, and desire of heart. May we be reminded that it is actually not the length of time that matters, but what we do with our *time* that makes the difference.

Autism Awareness Month 2023

Submitted By Allison N. Lee
Social Justice Editor, The Star of Zion
Email: SocialJustice@StarOfZion.org

What It Is

Autism Awareness/Acceptance Month takes place annually in April. It is a month long celebration that, according to the US Department of Health and Human Services' Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee, "...honors the contribution of people on the autism spectrum and the autism community to our nation and the world." This month is sometimes referred to as World Autism Month, and has a special day set aside – April 2nd. April 2nd is World Autism Awareness Day, and is sanctioned by the United Nations as a time where people are encouraged to



wear blue (official color) internationally, celebrate neurodiversity, and take part in undergirding and advocating for autism awareness.

Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is defined by Autism Speaks as, "...a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication." The Centers for Disease Control posits that 1 in 44 children are on the spectrum in the United States.

Something to be mindful of when talking about autism is that the knowledge and terming of a "spectrum" being used signifies that every person with autism is uniquely different as far as strengths and challenges. This means that there is a range pertaining to amount of support needed on a regular basis from little and being totally independent to requiring a more significant presence from others who are able to assist. Dr. Stephen Shore states, "If you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism."

Early Intervention and Signs

Research shows that early awareness of the signs, proper diagnosis of autism by a medical professional, and intervention at a younger age can improve, "...learning, communication and social skills, as well as, underlying brain development," in both the short and long terms. It is important to know the signs, while being aware that some children do not exhibit as many signs, and other children may have some indicators, but not autism. *Autism Speaks* shares some of the signs of autism as:

By 6 months

- Few or no big smiles or other warm, joyful and engaging expressions
- Limited or no eye contact

By 9 months

- Little or no back-and-forth sharing of sounds, smiles or other facial expressions

By 12 months

- Little or no babbling
- Little or no back-and-forth gestures such as pointing, showing, reaching or waving
- Little or no response to name

By 16 months

- Very few or no words

By 24 months

- Very few or no meaningful, two-word phrases (not including imitating or repeating)

At any age

- Loss of previously acquired speech, babbling or social skills
- Avoidance of eye contact
- Persistent preference for solitude
- Difficulty understanding other people's feelings
- Delayed language development
- Persistent repetition of words or phrases (echolalia)
- Resistance to minor changes in routine or surroundings
- Restricted interests
- Repetitive behaviors (flapping, rocking, spinning, etc.)
- Unusual and intense reactions to sounds, smells, tastes, textures, lights and/or colors

What We Can Do Generally

As people desiring to support and celebrate neurodiversity both during Autism Awareness Month and year round, we can:

- Wear blue (especially on World Autism Day on April 2nd) to raise awareness,
- Educate ourselves and others on what autism is and the history of autism,
- Support businesses and individuals who are autism conscious and inclusive,
- Intentionally read or watch something authored/directed/created by a person with autism, and
- Spread Kindness.

Our Role in the Church/Moral Responsibility

Relating to the matters of autism awareness and celebrating neurodiversity, I believe that it is important to strategically co-create inclusive spaces within the body of Christ to ensure the equitable treatment of all – in this case, those with autism. From my observations, although we may (if we do) make an effort to include individuals with autism in activities and experiences pertaining to the Church, we as a community often struggle to include in a way that is fair. As leaders of and members

within the Church, we must work to apply pressure when it comes to the ways that we acknowledge and advocate for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Spiritual care and community are inclusive of intentionality for the groups and communities that we serve and partner with.

As we think about the role of the Church regarding spiritual care relating to autism awareness, ethics comes to mind. Ethics is known as the, "...moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity." Philosopher Immanuel Kant connects ethics with his theory of Deontology which propounds that humans have the ability to comprehend and abide by a universal set of laws that are generally morally acceptable and can be applied to most situations. The four most commonly used principles of ethics (and they are Kantian in nature) are: autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, and justice.

The aforementioned principles are often thought of within the medical setting, but I also believe that they can also be applied to the setting of the Church, specifically when I think of care for others. I understand *autonomy* to generally be the ownership that an individual has over self to make their own decisions. The second principle of ethics is *non-maleficence*, which hinges on the "Hippocratic maxim *primum non nocere*" ("first, do no harm"). The third principle is beneficence which simply means, "...to help other persons." The final component of ethics is *justice* – "the fair sharing of the benefits and burdens of a society among its members."

We can enact ethical principles within the Church regarding

those with autism by:

- Educating and equipping staff and the congregation (especially children and youth leaders),
- Providing sensory activities/toys/space,
- Adjusting expectation if and when needed while not assuming that expectation needs to be adjusted,
- Diversifying teaching methods,
- Speaking to and not around (or ignoring) children, teenagers, adults, or families of individuals with autism,
- Openly holding conversation around equitable treatment with policy and procedure matching conversation,
- Increase visual communication, and
- Extend massive grace and love.

May we be intentional about Jesus' commandment in John 13:34-35:

I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, so you too are to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love and unselfish concern for one another.

During Autism Awareness Month 2023 and always, let us celebrate the beauty in diversity & everybody not being the same, and that being completely and totally okay. Let us be aware of our need to advocate for and connect with members of our respective communities. Let us love in a manner that spurs action and strive to make a difference.

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Ant-Man & The Wasp: Quantummania

Submitted by Anthony G. Marshall

March 8, 2023

Atlanta, GA- The next Marvel spectacle has finally hit theaters and while the last phase of the MCU films haven't been as consistently brilliant compared to the films of the earlier phases, Marvel has still proven to be able to produce hits and possess the ability to draw interest from comic fans and the general populace alike. The new Ant-Man and the Wasp film starts this next chapter, an interesting choice as historically these films haven't driven larger storylines but this third installment is a must see for fans that are interested in the overall arc. Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantummania is a visually stunning film unashamed to display its affinity for the classic Star Wars trilogy. The film stars Paul Rudd, Evangeline Lily, and Michael Douglas returning to their previous roles as the lighthearted Scott Lang, the introspective Hope van Dyne, and the elder statesman Hank Pym respectively. Joining the trio in larger roles in this adventure is Michelle Pfeiffer reprising her role as Janet van Dyne, Hope's mother and Hank's wife who was rescued in the last Ant-Man and the Wasp film from an interdimensional purgatory as well as Kathryn Newton who plays a grown-up Cassie, Scott's daughter who



has taken up quantum physics and helping people sometimes to the detriment of herself.

The film is a "sins of the father" tale, or in this case the mother as after Cassie performs an experiment that ends up teleporting all five into an alternate universe known as the Quantum Realm, the group must survive this strange world void

of space and time as well as the consequences of Janet's previous exploits after being held in the Quantum Realm for thirty years. They run afoul of the "big baddie" for the foreseeable MCU films, Kang the Conqueror played exceptionally by Jonathan Majors who forces the group to help him escape the bizarre land or perish. The acting is phenomenal with strong showings from Rudd and Pfeiffer, but Quantummania is the "Kang Show" with Majors turning in a portrayal that mixes the conniving nature of a Hans Gruber from Die Hard, the cool of an Alonzo Harris from Training Day, and the indifference to his heinous acts drawing strong resemblance to a Darth Vader of the Star Wars series. The film is an enjoyably wild ride that's not without a few flaws. While the payoff of the revealing of Janet's dark secrets are worth the wait, the approach is clumsy. There are numerous pacing issues especially in the first part of the feature and some of the character development is a bit shaky, especially with Cassie's "white knight" routine treading into laughably foolhardy territory. The usually effective comedic timing of this film seems a bit disjointed at times compared to the rest of the Ant-Man series which could possibly be blamed on the genre shift from humorous superhero heist flick to sci-fi epic. Overall, Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantummania is a decent kick-off to the next round of MCU flicks and an awesome maiden voyage for the next major Marvel big screen villain.



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The Freedom Church

Streaming Ministry

Submitted by Rev. Dierdre' Parker - Rowson
Entertainment & Arts Editor, The Star of Zion
Email: Entertainment_Arts@StarofZion.org

Social media is often used as a place of escape. Many of us spend countless hours scrolling through post after post, mindlessly consuming content that adds nothing of value to our lives. But hey, isn't that what social media is? Mindless scrolling, funny videos (usually of cantankerous cats), pseudo-intellectual, religio-political commentary that really amounts to nothing more than *uninformed* opinions.

Social media has many layers. There are some who are using social media to launch ministries and even save souls. There are many motivational social media *encouragers*, like Paula Fontana. She come to us for less than two minutes, with fly, color-coordinated outfits, bomb lighting, and probably a stylist. Her messages are captioned and punctuated with a well-articulated cadence that is made to go viral. Her messages are *always* on point.

"After all the fighting and conspiring they did against you...look at you. Still Blessed!"

And that is encouraging because most of us have had those types of experiences, so we can relate to that.

There are two Zionites, that I have found, who are using their social media platform to meet people right where they are. They don't do it for like or for views. They do it from a heart that is devoted to God. Rev. Dr. Haven O. Anderson is, husband, father of young children, and pastor of Marvin AME Zion Church in Waxhaw, NC. In 2022 during the Lenten Season, Rev. Anderson started a 6:00am Daily Devotional *Live*

of fasting. When he stated that as you are tempted by the thing you are sacrificing, remember Jesus' sacrifice. Nothing we give up can equate to His giving His life and God sacrificing his Son. It resonates differently for me this time and had a huge impact on how I view fasting. I'm grateful." Mona Wesley

One year later, Anderson is still doing the daily 6:00am devotion on



on Facebook. As a person who uses daily devotionals himself, Anderson sought ways to share the comfort and encouragement of devotionals with others. "What is my *reasonable* service?" he asked himself. "Fifteen minutes is not too much to ask. It is my reasonable service." Anderson does not see getting up at 4:00am to prepare himself to lead a 6:00am daily devotional as *unreasonable*. He is devoted to the things of God. His consistency along with the sincerity of his delivery prompted requests that he continue the daily devotional after the Lenten Season of 2022.

"Having the joint devotion in the morning has been a needed start to my day. The consistency and depth of explanation and application have helped me personalize the lessons in a more intimate way. Recently Pastor Haven reminded us of the importance

of Facebook, and has added a Lenten Devotional for mid-day I, and many others, know that if you need a *good* word, from a *devoted* servant of God, to get your day started, you can scroll right to Dr. Anderson's page and he will be there with a word in due season, and a reminder that "the best is yet to come".

Portia Jacobs is an educator. Her job is as a Lead School Counselor in Durham public schools. She is also Episcopal Director of Christian Education for ENCED. She uses her social media platform to help educate those of us who are navigating grief. In the aftermath of Covid-19, many of us have lost loved ones. As we struggle to master our emotions and the myriad ways in which they can derail us during times of grief, Jacobs comes through with Facebook posts that always seem to understand the grieving process. When asked about her work with grief she says very simply, "It was helping me, so I shared it. I started getting inbox messages from people telling me that it helped them and to keep it coming."

I have shared many posts from Ms. Jacobs with my family's Facebook group. Last year we suffered two major losses; my sister and my father within three months of each other. We are all looking for hope. Something to get us through the day. I am grateful for the Social Media ministries of Anderson and Jacobs. Their consistency and devotion to the things of God and God's people, continues to help those of us who need a little reminder that we are not in this thing alone to help us make it through the day. You can follow each of them on Facebook under their names. You can thank me later.

There are other Zionites with social ministries that are making a difference in the lives of so many. In order to make a difference in the digital space it is not necessary to have fancy lighting or designer clothing. It simply requires a heart for the people of God and Devotion to the things of God.



The Power of Poetry

Submitted by Rev. Dierdre' Parker - Rowson
 Entertainment & Arts Editor, The Star of Zion
 Email: Entertainment_Arts@StarofZion.org

April 1, 2023

Charlotte, NC- Words are containers of power. Don't believe me? And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. Genesis 1:3. The bible tells us that death and life are in the *power* of the tongue. We can speak things into existence. Since April is National Poetry Month, we at Star of Zion, wanted to highlight the Power of Poetry and some of the powerful poets using their words to shape the world around them. I was heavily influenced by a book that my parents kept on the bottom of the bookshelf. It was poetry, collected by Arna Bontemps "*Golden Slippers: An Anthology of Negro Poetry for Young Readers (1941)*". It contained the poetry of Countee Cullen, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Langston Hughes, Phyllis Wheatley. I was obsessed with that book. I wrote my first poem at about eight years old. It was more like a nursery rhyme, and I don't even remember what it was about. Everybody started treating me like I was Maya Angelou. I loved it.

Over the years, along with writing and performing my own poetry, I performed some of the works of Paul Laurence Dunbar. In 1981, I performed Dunbar's *An Antebellum Sermon* at the NAACP National ACT-SO competition in Denver Colorado (I didn't win).

In the late 1990s I made my first foray into the world of *spoken word* poetry. Just as Hip-Hop has its own culture and language, so does spoken word. The poets that you see all look differently. There may be piercings and rainbow-colored hair, or someone in a houndstooth blazer and turtle neck. But if you expect it to be a boring offshoot of some academic classroom gathering, you will be pleasantly surprised. The cadence and rhythm of the speakers, on any subject you can think of, takes you on a journey that can *literally* free your mind. It is in this environment that I first encountered Lea'Vee Jordan-(Patterson). Her poetry spoke life and peace and confidence to me at a time when they were lacking. She carried herself with a grace and confidence that I longed to know. Catching up with her for this article was like a gift that we both didn't realize we needed.

"I am so happy to be talking to you! I Just want you to know how much you impacted me back then. You were so confident. You embodied everything I wanted to be."

Patterson was having lunch with a friend at the time of our talk. She told me that she was not as confident as she may have appeared back then.

The friend that she was having lunch with is the person who helped her to take herself more seriously.

"When you look at the *man in the mirror*, talking about change, expansion, you realize that we are more than our flesh dictates. Our voice

travels. Our eyes see further than our flesh. We're bigger than what we see around us. It's important to be around people who are part of that expansion. People who can see you as you are, but also allow you the space to grow. I had that help."

"Well, I just want you to know that your poetry helped me. So, I want to ask you this. What has poetry meant to you?"

Her face lit up. "Oh my God. Poetry saved my life. I've been writing poetry and painting since I was a kid. It offered me an escape from my day to day. The frustrations of being a latch-key kid, my

parents separating, divorcing...all of that. My mom was working two or three jobs, and I wouldn't see her, you know. She would be home but I wouldn't see her, because I would be sleep when she got home. I left to go to school before she got up. I was able to use painting and writing to heal myself. They became my companions. I had friends but I didn't go out into the street. Having that outlet of writing, it brought me a sense of peace."

Roscoe Burnems, CEO the Writer's Den RVA, and Poet Laureate of Richmond, Va. (2021-2023) says, "Poetry saved my life. This art form became a vehicle for expressing my feelings. I was able to articulate my emotions in a way that I hadn't done before. I found a community that affirmed and validated me as a person and an artist."

Among the poets that I have been privileged to know, this is the common sentiment. Poetry and the writing of it has saved so many lives. Poetry does it with a vibrantly interwoven cacophony of sound where beauty and truth are laid bare in places that are sometimes truly beautiful, and sometimes beautifully untrue. In honor of National Poetry Month, read a poem, write a poem, or go to a poetry event. Who Knows? It might save your life.



CREED III: A Review

Submitted by Anthony Marshall

March 12, 2023

Atlanta, GA- The bell has finally sounded for round three in the Creed series and pardon the pun, but the film packs a punch. The Creed series based in the same universe of the classic Rocky films follows the illegitimate child of Rocky nemesis turned friend, Adonis Creed. Adonis adopts Rocky as his coach on his quest to achieve the same glory in the boxing ring that the father he never knew, Apollo Creed obtained. This entry is actually Rocky-less legendary tough-man Sylvester Stallone opting out of this film. Instead, the film shows how strong the series has become relying on its own lore created from the last two films. We're privy to this in the first minutes of the film as we revisit Adonis after the events of 2018's Creed II. We see a more polished Adonis nearing the tail-end of his career in a rematch with his first Creed opponent, "Pretty" Ricky Conlan being portrayed by former Boxer Tony Bellew. Finally getting his win back, we're given an inside look into the Creed household as Tessa Thompson reprising her role as Adonis' wife and musician, Bianca has transitioned into producing and songwriting and we're re-introduced to a now older Amara Creed, Adonis and Bianca's daughter who is hearing impaired. She's portrayed by a debuting Mila Davis-Kent and is wonderful in the



role driving the secondary narrative of the film. The main story is more personally charged than arguably any of Creed or Balboa's former bouts as we delve more into the backstory of a younger troubled Adonis and his connection with his estranged friend and boxing hopeful "Diamond" Dame Anderson. Anderson portrayed by the talented Jonathan Majors is gripping as the former prisoner bent to recoup what he believes he lost in his incarceration by dastardly means. Anderson keeps Creed pondering if he really is his brother's keeper, displaying both an internal and external struggle that threatens everything the determined fighter has built as well as questioning Creed's own worth. The movie is well done including some of the best boxing sequences ever captured. While the movie is very reminiscent of the third Rocky movie it still does a great job distinguishing itself from its predecessor and looks less like a rehash or remake. The cast does a magnificent job of hashing out a plot that could have easily been ham-fisted in its message, pulpy in its presentation, or unoriginal in its story development but manages to avoid all the pitfalls that most film sequels tend to suffer from these days. While traditional Rocky fans may scoff at the absence of some of the common themes more prevalent in some of the older films as well as the first two Creeds, I found some these subtle changes more refreshing including a bit of an artistic twist on the customary mid fight montage that gave the "by the numbers" trope a heavier gravitas. Complaints are minimal as the pacing, writing, cinematography, and overall feel of the film make Creed III a true contender for not only one of the best films in the Rocky/Creed series, but one of the best boxing films in history.

ANTHONY G. MARSHALL is a contributing freelancer and professional actor. When he is not claiming to be an encyclopedia of movie facts, he is often screenwriting or cooking.

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imposes harsher sentences on perpetrators.

2. There are over 1,100 “RCCs” (Rape Crisis Centers)

There are over 1,100 RAINN-affiliated rape crisis centers in the U.S., and many other organizations provide services and support to survivors, allies, and advocates.

3. Rape frequently happens between partners

In more than half of rape cases involving female victims, the



perpetrator was an intimate partner.

4. Men experience rape at one tenth the rate of women

In the U.S., 21% of women and 2.6% of men have experienced rape. However, this still amounts to a significant figure, with over 3 million men reporting a rape during their lifetime.

5. Sexual assault has financial costs too

The estimated lifetime financial loss due to rape is \$122,461

per victim. This includes medical costs, the loss of productivity, criminal justice costs, and other associated losses.

Some measures to take to better prepare (and protect) oneself may include, but are not limited to:

1. Educate yourself

To learn more about how to prevent sexual assault and domestic violence and support survivors, take a look at the resources compiled by the Sexual Violence Resource Center on its website or contact your local Rape Crisis Center.

2. Volunteer or donate

Many wonderful organizations do the vital work of advocating for better laws, counseling survivors, and developing educational campaigns. You can donate your time or money to a worthy organization to help them keep their operations going.

3. Attend an event or function

Find a local “Take Back the Night Rally” or other public event honoring Sexual Assault Awareness Month and show your solidarity with the cause.

4. Learn to protect yourself in a given situation

Invest in a Self-Defense Class to learn techniques to survive in a threatening situation. Devote time to learning the laws in your respective state regarding when to use lethal force if needed.



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Theological Preparation for Effective Leadership in a Diverse Society

HELP - I'M FALLING BEHIND

Submitted by Rev. Harriet McElvaney
Kentucky Conference
MidWest Episcopal District

All during school, I was considered somewhat of a nerd because I was always studying and reading. English was my favorite subject. But because I didn't want to be considered a nerd, I would hide my knowledge so as to fit in with the others who were popular.

As I grew up and attended college after having babies and starting a vocation, I found out it didn't matter what others thought – that what I stored up in my brain was for me. My time was divided between working, taking care of my children, church, and going to school. Although I didn't finish college, I found the college atmosphere to be satisfying and challenging.

Besides working, as a single mother, my interests turned to Christian Education, and I was always reading and studying the Bible. The history intrigued me; the principles penetrated me; the love of Jesus overwhelmed me. I knew this was where I wanted to be – surrounded by God's people and basking in the aura of the Holy Spirit. Many vacations were spent going to the Conferences, Mid-Winter Meetings and Quadrennial Meetings. Many days were spent in pursuit of ministry opportunities as well as musical pursuits to teach choir parts and learn from some of the best musicians in the city. While I recognized the gift of some musicians, I recognized my own limitations and my own gifts as well. My gift was not in the playing of the hymns or popular gospel music, my gift was in choosing the right music for the appropriate time to enhance the worship service. Even now, if someone asks me to play for a funeral or another service, I let them know that I am a "Methodist" piano player!


The late Bishop J. Clinton Hoggard gave me my first appointment as Director of Christian Education for Children, and I also recognized I had the gift of administration – paying attention to details and organizing events with the greatest of order so persons would get the most out of the classes and sessions they attended. I wanted everyone to come away from a session or class with understanding and a great-

er knowledge of the Kingdom of God. Each Bishop, in turn, gave me greater and greater responsibilities and I served under some of the most prolific Christian Educators anywhere for over 40 years.

Along came computers, cell phones, laptops, Facebook, Twitter, etc. Although they initially were a challenge, I soon embraced their technology and used to be quite proficient at using them. Then the pandemic hit and there was Conference Calls, Zoom and Google Meet and NTL learning. But I soon caught up with that.

Then one day, it seems I woke up in a place where I was completely in the dark: Streaming services, QR codes, podcasts, crypto currency, chatbot, Spotify, CRT, AI, WOKE, etc. And it seems as if something new is popping up every day. I'm now in my mid-70's and somewhere along the line, I got left behind. When my great-granddaughters can find information and games on their cell phones that I take all day to find; when something comes on the TV that I want to see, but it's streaming on another channel; when a podcast sounds interesting, but I don't know where to find it – I feel like I fell behind. I'm in a place surrounded by things that are foreign to me and that I want to know more about, but don't want to ask without feeling totally ignorant for asking. For example: My sons gave me a surprise birthday party and sent me the pictures on a link. I saved the link and got a Groupon for Shutterfly to make a booklet for me. The problem? I couldn't figure out how to move the link I had saved of the pictures of my birthday party to the Shutterfly app. I felt dumber than a rock! Somewhere along the way, I fell behind.

I hope that one day I'll be able to figure all this stuff out with the help of AARP's technology class for seniors. But for now, all I need is Jesus to envelope me in the love He has for me. All I need is to pray that in my relationship with Him, He'll reveal the things He wants me to do for Him. All I need is for the Scriptures to continue to convict me of my sins and reassure me of the promise of everlasting life with Him because I am saved, sanctified and filled with His Holy Spirit. I may have fallen behind in the technology used in the world today, but I am never behind in the service I do for Him and the love I have for Him! HE IS ALL THAT I NEED!

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LAUGHING IT UP, AT BRIGHTON ROCK

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Tonya Pass,
 Pastor, Brighton Rock A.M.E. Zion Church
 Edited by Angel Eason
 Lifestyle Editor, The Star of Zion

Brighton Rock A.M.E. Zion Church decided to shake things up a bit with some clean fun and laughter. After a three-year stretch of withholding from gatherings due to the never-ending pandemic, the church was faced with how to celebrate their Annual Men's and Women's Day events differently from years past.

As the Pastor, I am always looking for innovative ways to do ministry, challenging leaders to think outside the box and dream about what could be done differently.

At the helm of Men and Women's Day, this year, we had a dynamic intergenerational team, who brought new and fresh ideas that were embraced wholeheartedly. Mario and Kelli Marin, Yvette Perry, and Michael Wilkerson brought forward a well-known local comedian, "Cletus", whose fan base was excited for him to come to The Rock. Although I was unfamiliar with the comedian, I was open to the suggestion and eager to learn more about bringing the comedy show to fruition. I trusted the team's judgment as they were more connected with this type of activity.

I was all in and wanted to ensure everything was a success, and indeed it was. Church members were excited about doing something

different and eagerly invited people within their circle of influence. The event was at 5:00 pm, and most guests arrived by 4:45 on a rainy Saturday night. People viewed it as a "night out" for couples, family, and friends. Brighton Rock's fellowship hall, referred to as the "Rock Café," was set up like a lounge with VIP seating, round tables, and high-top tables decorated and positioned to give the ambiance of being in an actual comedy lounge, with a virtual fireplace. Heavy hors d'oeuvres were served, and the laughter was on! Cletus had us in stitches for over one hour with a clean fun night together.



Brighton Rock A.M.E. Zion Church
 Rev. Dr. T. Pass, Pastor

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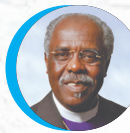
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HEALTH IS WEALTH: SPRING INTO ACTION

Submitted by Dana G. Stille
Financial Freedom Editor, The Star of Zion
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Many people are aware of the adage – Health is Wealth. Over the past several weeks that phrase tossed around in my mind countless times. Without warning I found myself watching several families grapple with a swift decline in the health of an elderly loved one. Added to the despair of those families was anxiety fueled by the mounting costs of the medical care that was required to heal their beloved relative or provide comfort to them during their remaining days. The struggle of trying to balance the need for healthcare services and the unexpected financial impact of doing so seemed unbearable. How could this be happening to people in the wealthiest country in the world? People who had worked their entire lives, paid into social security, and built a nest egg for their golden years? Two important factors are at play.

First, on average, people in the US work until their early 60s. Throughout the working years, people are saving, investing, and building their assets to ensure their financial freedom and security with the understanding that typically, retirement income is lower than the annual income while fully employed. With the average life expectancy

above 75 years, retirees find themselves having to stretch their nest egg over a longer period of time. This task is further exacerbated when unpredictable economic conditions such as stock market declines and inflation directly impact the value of your assets and the costs of goods and services.

Second, increased life expectancy results in an increase in diseases, disabilities, and dementia. Accompanying the increase in diseases, disabilities, and dementia is an increase in the cost of care. Long term care, nursing home facilities, and home health care can erode a nest egg quickly, destroying financial freedom and creating financial turmoil.

Spring and Resurrection

Sunday remind us of the importance of new light, new beginnings, and revitalization. While one cannot always prohibit the onset of health challenges, during this Spring season consider a new path to a healthier you. Take advantage of the increased daylight and spend time outside, walk around the block, or start a garden and grow your own produce. Adjust your lifestyle to benefit your health.



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Submitted by Zion Shoulders
Sports Editor, The Star of Zion
Email: Sports@StarofZion.org

March 15, 2023

In a mostly white-dominated sport, there is one school that has helped change the way people look at swimming. Howard University has always been a prominent name in the HBCU community, but now they are making their name more distinguished in the college swim world.

In 2013, Howard University swim coach, Nicholas Askew, called to cut the entire swim program for because of the constant underachievement and lack of support the swim team received as a whole. He felt it was an injustice to the current swimmers to have them competing at a high level and not even having the little things, like a consistent head coach.

This is when Askew, a former athlete who also swam for the University, took over the swimming coaching duties in 2014, and the rest would be history.

Who would've thought in just 9 years, a program that was on track to be completely cut as a whole, would be the 2023 Men Northeast Conference Champions?



Howard is not only putting on for their school, but they are also representing all HBCUs as a whole. They are the only program to have a swim team out of all Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and recently made history for being the only All Black College swim program in the Nation. It is disappointing that Howard is the only HBCU with a swim team, but it is such an amazing accomplishment to finally see something that was built from the ground up turn into a success story.

When looking at coaching opportunities, very rarely does a coach want to go to a school that is failing in every category in the program's development, but Nicholas Askew took on the challenge. And it served him well, helping bring home the first championship in 34 years.

During the Conference championship, The Men's swim team abso-

lutely dominated, scoring a team total of 928 points. For clarity, the runner-up, Long Island University, scored 728. The Bison were led by senior, Miles Simon, who was named the NEC Outstanding swimmer. The Atlanta native not only won the Outstanding Swimmer Award, but also claimed gold in a variety of different events in the Championship.



When speaking about swimming at HBCUs, Coach Askew knows Howard can't be the only school that has a swim program. Having the only collegiate swim team out of all HBCUs can be



a blessing and a curse. Coach Askew has great opportunities to land some great black swimmers, but the downside is he has to turn down a lot more than he can bring in. In an interview with CNN, coach Askew said "Howard can't be the only place, the only option because we only have so many roster spots. There are so many people we, unfortunately, can't have at Howard to be able to swim"

HBCUs have been rocking the sports world this year and most recently the illustrious Howard University has been adding on to the accolades. As their men's swim team just won a Conference Championship, the Bison men's Basketball team also just won a conference championship and punched themselves a ticket to the Big Dance. The last time the men's team made the NCAA tournament was in 1992!

Alista Cozetta

Alista Cozetta “Cozzie” Watkins was born on November 15, 1951 at Wilkes General Hospital in North Wilkesboro, North Carolina. She was the only child of Mae Katheryn Watkins.

Cozzie passed away on March 2, 2023, at 71 years old. She was educated in the Wilkes County, North Carolina Public Schools system where many teachers, Beulah Presbyterian and Pleasant Hill Baptist church families and her contemporaries helped mold her character. She was a graduate of Wilkes Central High School Class of 1969.

Cozzie held a number of graduate and post graduate degrees, and she was a Registered Nurse for over 48 years. She started climbing her higher education ladder at Wilkes Community College in Wilkesboro, North Carolina in the late 1960's and Campbell College in Buies Creek, North Carolina where she earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing. She was one of the first Black students to enroll at Campbell College. She held a Master of Business Administration Degree that she earned from the University of Phoenix. At the time of her passing, she was pursuing her Doctorate Degree in Leadership and Management from the University of Phoenix.

As her nursing career advanced, she became a Certified Transplant Procurement Coordinator for Life Share of the Carolinas and a lead instructor of a Health Occupational Program at Magnet Schools and universities in Charlotte, North Carolina. Cozzie was a Certified Nursing Aide and Licensed Practical Nurse instructor and the Nursing Director of a home health agency.



Cozzie was passionate about and believed in giving back to the community and served on several boards and agencies. This included serving Little Rock AME Zion in the arena of Health and Social Concern programs. She held multiple district positions including legislative affairs and Voter Advocacy. Gaston Community College School of Nursing is where she mentored instructors, residents, and students regarding their career paths and their responsibility to serve the community.

Cozzie served as Chair of the North Carolina Democratic Party's 12th Congressional District which is represented by Congresswoman Alma Adams. She also served on the Charlotte Planning Commission, 2016 Delegate to the Democratic National Convention, and President of the Democratic Women of Mecklenburg County. She was often sought out by local and national news outlets regarding her insight on a wide range of political topics.

Cozzie had numerous hobbies. One of those was riding motorcycles which she started doing the 1970's. She was described by other riders as a “Hard Rider.” She was a martial artist having studied Tae Kwon Do, at Black Belt USA, under Dr. Ursi King. Cozzie was an avid cook and a competitive card player, in the game of Spades. Cozzie will always be remembered as someone who sought the best in people, loved to laugh and lived life to the fullest.

She achieved her life-long dream of becoming an esteemed member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, Omega Iota Omega Chapter.

Cozetta is survived by her beloved son, Adjon-Alber Jerrod “A-Jay” Watkins, who serves our country in the United States Navy, Jacksonville, North Carolina.

Alma T. Jefferson

With profound sorrow, we announce that my dear, sweet mother, Alma T. Jefferson, passed on to be with her Heavenly Father and the ancestors. Last Wednesday evening, she died peacefully at her nursing home after a short time in hospice care, and she is now free from the bondage of dementia to remain in our memory forever. She was a mother, sister, aunt, cousin, deaconess, class leader, Sunday school teacher, soror, administrator, prayer warrior, and friend. All of our stories will forever be changed by this dynamic, lovely woman who generously gave to so many and upon whose strength so many of us depended. We praise God for her!

We will celebrate her life on **Saturday, April 1st** at the Chapel at Greenspring Senior Living Community in Springfield, VA. There will be a viewing at 10am, followed by a hybrid service at 11am (Zoom streaming link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83592186949>). If you are planning to attend *in-person*, please email justiceminister@hopeucc.org. Interment will take place at Lincoln Cemetery in Suitland, MD. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Hope United Church of Christ Capital Campaign.

IN LOVING MEMORY



Alma Teresa Jefferson

February 8, 1944 - March 8, 2023

The U.S. 2023 Farm Bill

Submitted by Rev. Ronald Nathan
World Politics Editor, The Star Of Zion
Email: WorldPolitics@StarOfZion.org

“There is more fruit in a rich man’s shampoo than in a poor man’s plate.” The reality of this statement got to me on a recent visit to the United States of America when I attempted to purchase some fruits in an underserved community in Atlanta.

Currently, 6 in 10 U.S. adults have a chronic condition, many of which are nutrition-related, and 4 in 10 have more than one, including heart disease, some cancers, stroke, or diabetes.

The above makes the US. 2023 Farm Bill, a critical piece of legislation before the Congress. Its importance is compounded by the fact that families are still experiencing food and nutrition security challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic and food price inflation.



The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) one of the chapters of the 2023 Farm Bill, has grave repercussions for people of colour in the United States of America. The SNAP chapter enables tens of millions of people across the country to put food on the table.

Furthermore, the 2023 Farm Bill is estimated to cost \$1.295 trillion over 10 years and will contribute significantly to the US government’s commitment to ending global hunger and malnutrition. Through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) its current international food assistance is distributed to over 70 countries. In fiscal year 2018, USAID provided over \$3.7 billion in emergency and development food assistance to the poorest corners of the world.

Churches all across the United States of America that run food pantries and food banks are to be saluted for their acts of charity to needy communities. However, they need to go a step further and encourage their members and local communities to write to their representatives in support of this bill. The 2023 Farm Bill is the most far-reaching piece of US legislation that addresses the biblical mandate ‘to feed the hungry’.



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- District Coordinator of YAMS for Bay Cities District, California Conference, Western Episcopal District
- Mother & Wife
- Public Health Social Worker
- Doctoral Student in Clinical Psychology

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My God Is Able

A Tribute To Jimmy Carter

The 39th President Of The United States of America

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Dwayne L. Tutt

As I type this article, President Jimmy Carter is living and has hospice care. After I heard, he had decided to enter hospice care, I began to think about his journey to the highest political position in this country and arguably the world. I began to reflect on how a man of strong Christian Faith and values could make such a journey. Furthermore, he made the journey less than 10 years after all the turmoil of the 1960s. Given his difficult journey, I think he became a political model for others to follow. When we consider the decade of the 1960s, and how a white southerner rose above the politics of segregation and racism to become the President of the United States of America is a testimony to the power of God. In this article, I want people to see what God can do with faithful people during turmoil in their lives and in the world.

President Jimmy Carter (James Earl Carter, Jr.) was born October 1, 1924, in Plains Georgia. He is the son of James Earl Carter, Sr., and Bessie Lillian Gordy. His father was a politician representing Sumter County Georgia in the Georgia House of Representatives. His dad was also a businessman and farmer in Plains, Georgia. The town of Plains, GA is in South Georgia and historically was an area with a sizable population of African American people.

His mom Bessie was a nurse. She believed in treating all her patients equally. It was reported that regardless of if a person was black or white, she treated all her patients equally. It also recorded she would allow blacks to enter the front door of her home ... blacks didn't have to go to her back door. She would allow blacks to sit in her living room and hold conversations with her. She was affectionally called Mrs. Lillian by those in the community. During the period of segregation and racism in the South, Mrs. Lillian was able to see and accept that all human beings are God's children.

When Mrs. Lillian was asked about why she treated blacks the way she did, she went back to how she saw her dad treat blacks at the post office in Richmond, Georgia. Her father (James Jackson Gordy) managed the post office. During the post office lunchtime, her dad would sit down and eat with black people. This impacted Mrs. Lillian as she was able to see her white dad eating at the same table with blacks during segregation.

It must also be remembered that Mrs. Lillian's maiden name is Gordy. Mrs. Lillian is the niece of Berry Gordy I, who was the paternal half-brother of her dad and grandfather of Berry Gordy. The founder of Motown Records is Berry Gordy, Jr. Berry Gordy Jr.'s family homeplace is Milledgeville, Georgia. President Jimmy Carter and Berry Gordy Jr. are distant cousins. I cannot overstate the influence of President Jimmy Carter's parents and specifically his mom on his belief of all human beings are equal.

Before Jimmy Carter (Carter) was elected to the office as the President of the United States, he began his political career as a Georgia State Senator. He served the State of Georgia between 1963 to 1967. During this period, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States was in full swing. However, there was another Georgian serving as the catalyst of the movement. The other Georgian was Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK).

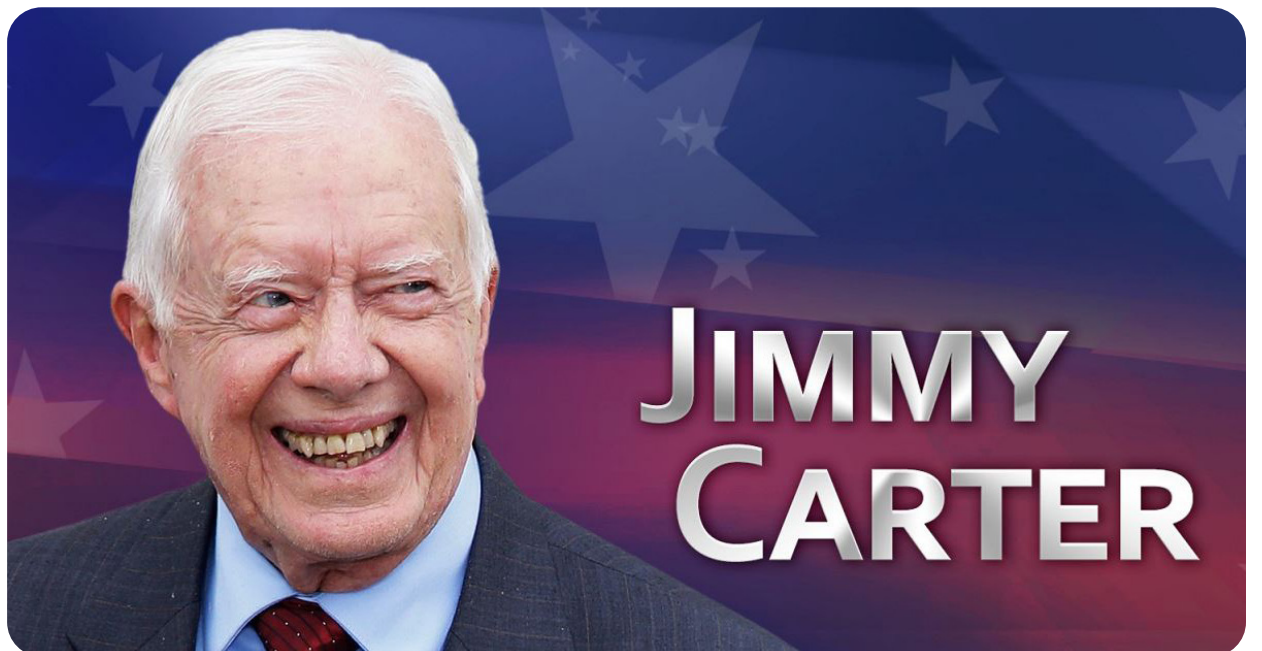
Carter knew that civil rights and equality were going to be difficult for many in his hometown and county. Civil Rights and equality were extremely divisive issues in Georgia and the South in the 1960s. Therefore, initially Carter remained quiet for a time to keep the peace. Furthermore, I must add there was a period which Carter appeared to support racism. However, if he did so, it was because he knew he had to if he wanted to be elected to political office. He clearly struggled with the balance of his



faith in Christian Principles (love thy neighbor) and the toxic environment of racial segregation in the South. Overtime his faith in Christian Principles and his growth as a politician, led him to speak out against Jim Crow and laws which discriminated against blacks. This can be clearly seen after he won the office of Governor of Georgia. During his inaugural speech he said, "the time of racial discrimination is over." This caused a great deal of blowback from the white segregationist who had helped him get elected. The white segregationist of Georgia didn't like hearing Carter make such a declaration. Carter clearly decided to treat all human beings equally **and to make it publicly known**. In my opinion, seeing his fellow Georgian MLK struggle and assassinated over segregation and voting rights strengthened his resolve against discrimination. With that in mind, I go back to voting rights in the south and MLK's famous victory called the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

Rights Act in 1965.

About one to two years after the Voting Right Act (VRA) of 1965 MLK stated, "there has been a white backlash". He said the backlash caused a rise of "**political clowns**" being elected to offices in the South. He con-

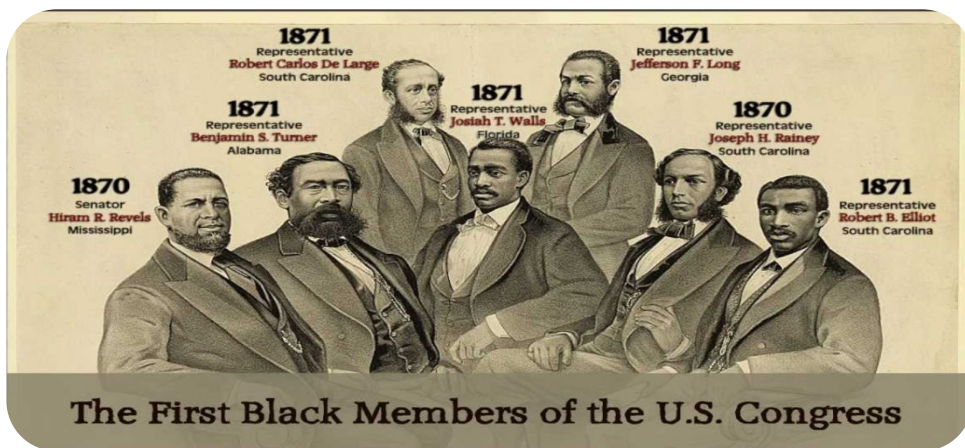


tinued, "these political clowns used a witches brew of bigotry, prejudice, half-lies and whole lies." It was then MLK began to speak on the death of democracy.

After the VRA of 1965, MLK knew state and local governments in the south could not be counted on to keep black people safe and voting ... because some people didn't want blacks to vote. He took note of some white people afraid of people yelling "Black Power". MLK was afraid that this kind of Black Power rhetoric would bother many white people and their support for equality would dissipate. Again, he was back to his thoughts on "white backlash". He began to understand why some white people reacted negatively to black progress. **Yet, he genuinely believed white and black people could become a Beloved Community. He believed Americans could make America what it should be for all people.** I want you to see that MLK preached love and there were white people like the Carter Family who wanted the same.

MLK wrote and spoke at great length about his idea of a Beloved Community. But there were forces working against MLK and the unity of blacks and whites to become a Beloved Community. There were Americans who had to keep blacks and whites divided against each other because they needed votes. Did I say there were people who needed whites and blacks divided? Now to make my point. I remind you that President Jimmy Carter was a Democrat. **Most of the white voters in the south were Democrats. Did I say before MLK, white southerners were mostly ALL DEMOCRATS?** Many southern white people were Dixiecrats ... Democrats. Democrats didn't like Republicans before the 1970s!

It is not often talked about, but many MLK scholars believe MLK was a Republican. We believe that because Abraham Lincoln was a Republican. As a matter of fact, many African Americans in the south, voted Republican from the Emancipation Proclamation well into the 1960s. Furthermore, the first elected African Americans to the United States Congress were all Republicans. The picture below shows seven of the first 29 blacks who were first elected to the United States Congress. Notice they were from the south and Republicans! What this means is freed black people elected people who they thought would help them. After the American Civil War, all throughout the south, many state and local governments had elected black people in positions of power. It was not long after this the white backlash started. That backlash were laws to keep blacks from voting!!! The laws were called Jim Crow. Jim Crow legalized racial segregation. The laws used policies, law enforcement and even preachers to promote the ideas that white people were superior to black people. Jim Crow was used to take back the south and to remove blacks who were elected to local, state, and federal positions of power. Again, during this period white southerners were Democrats and African Americans were Republicans. **The men in the picture blow were Republicans.** Before Jim Crow, the white southern was being led by African American people because blacks could vote!!!



I am sure many are asking what happened in the South to flip it from Democrat to Republican? Why did most African Americans stop voting for Republicans? Well, I am glad you asked.

During the 1964 presidential election, there was a Democrat named Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ). LBJ was from Texas ... the South. He ran against a guy from Arizona named Senator Barry Goldwater. Goldwater was the Republican Candidate. Goldwater and his campaign devised a strategy which used "coded words" to unite white southerners to vote for him even though he was a Republican.

So, the campaign used words like "big government", "welfare", "liberals", "state laws over federal laws", and other divisive terminology which he hoped would gain him votes in the south. He basically used words which would cause some white people to fear black progress. **The strategy was built on the fear of some whites feeling nobody cared about them.**



While Goldwater lost the presidential election to President LBJ, **HE WON FIVE STATES IN THE SOUTH.** The strategy worked! Goldwater turned Democrats to Republicans in the South. He did so by exploiting the fear of black progress in the South. From this point forward, the Southern Strategy used divisive messages to segments of America to gain votes. Those messages being "they" are harming "us" with "their" policies.

The Southern Strategy was about finding ways to make some white voters to vote for certain candidates. For instance, President LBJ once said, "If you can convince the lowest white man he's better than the best colored man, he won't notice you picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he'll empty his pockets for you." Also, after LBJ signed the Civil Rights Act in 1964, he said, "I think we just delivered the South to the Republican Party for a long time to come."

While I don't have time in this article to talk in detail about the Southern Strategy, you can Google or YouTube the subject. Whatever your source, much has been written about the Southern Strategy. The political clowns

don't want some white voters knowing they are using them for votes. Some of the media will not talk about the Southern Strategy because they are making great profit from the politics of division. Some of the Evangelical / Southern Baptist leadership will not speak to the toxicity of the Southern Strategy because they fear a loss of church membership. So, many in America keep pushing messages of we versus them!!!!

In closing this article, I remind you that the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is known as the Freedom Church. The Star of Zion is the newspaper and a voice for the AME Zion Church. The Star of Zion began in 1876 to speak as a voice to America about social justice and to empower black people. Historically the AME Zion Church has focused on social justice. As a denomination, the AME Zion Church has always served as a prophet to speak against the oppression of human beings. The fact is, one of the main reasons I decided to maintain my membership in the AME Zion Church is because the church has a history of speaking for the marginalized and the oppressed in society. The AME Zion Church needs to be the Freedom Church and the Star of Zion must always be supported by the AME Zion Church. The Star of Zion is our communications link to the world!

To make my point on the importance of being the Freedom Church and having a media outlet like the Star of Zion. Late last year, I wrote an op-ed (article) to a major national newspaper about the Southern Strategy. Much of the same content used in that op-ed is included in this article. The newspaper responded they couldn't publish my op-ed because I targeted a certain politician. I resubmitted the article after I removed the name. The newspaper still didn't publish my op-ed. If you are reading this article, the Star of Zion published my article, which included the same Southern Strategy content which I included in my op-ed.

I contend the Southern Strategy is alive and well in politics in 2023. Think about this, was there not a white backlash after the country elected a black man named Barack Hussein Obama as President of the United States of America? Didn't you see signs, ball caps, and all kinds messages and media talking about The Tea Party, Make America Great Again, Obama ruined the economy, change the voting laws, build a wall, Pelosi, Socialist, Democrats, Liberals, WOKE, and sentences starting with "they" are destroying "OUR" country? When I hear politicians use words like those, I think they are political clowns, and they want to divide Americans. They do so because they need certain voting blocks of people to vote for them. Then there are people and families like President Jimmy Carter who don't want division, they want all people to sit down at the same table and share a meal.

Well next year the AME Zion Church will have the General Conference of 2024. Next year the country will elect a United States President and many other state and local government officials. Some of the candidates will be political clowns. My prayer is most of the wining candidates will be like President Jimmy Carter. Therefore, I do want to see the church focus more on social justice and equality. I want the AME Zion Church to stand for the oppressed. I recall the late Bishop Richard Keith Thompson saying, "we are the Freedom Church ... it is in our DNA."

To all who read this article, I ask you to forward it to your local newspapers, churches, and people

who want to see elected government officials in the spirit of President Jimmy Carter. Please share this article with people who seek MLK's idea of a Beloved Community. Please share this article with people who need to know that government is not about blue versus red states. Please share this article with those who really believe that evangelicals have some special relationship with God than other non-evangelicals (Southern Strategy). Please share this article with white southern Republicans that after the Civil War blacks were Republicans and held powerful positions in local, state, and federal governments. My hope is that this article will somehow help somebody to see we need to elect governmental officials like President Jimmy Carter who taught Sunday School and believe we are all God's Children.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Star of Zion.

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