

# THE STAR OF ZION

JUNE 2024 | VOL 148 NO. 6 | STAROFZION.ORG | THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

## The Galveston Daily News.

HOUSTON, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19, 1865.

DISTRICT OF TEXAS,  
TEXAS, JUNE 19, 1865.

### ZION

THE A.M.E. ZION CHURCH  
The Freedom Church

FILED FEB 12 1979

By *Al Edwards*

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

relating to a declaration of Emancipation Day in Texas as a legal holiday.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

4591, Revised Code of Texas,

to read as follows:

SECTION 1. The first section of the 19th

Monday


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first

# JUNE TEENTH

## BLESSED FATHER'S DAY





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

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



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★ The Star of Zion ★

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# 52 Weeks of Devotions and Prayers for Zion's Strong Future

By Mr. Darin Kent, CCO,  
The A.M.E. Zion Church

Hello and good day to those assembled from all walks of life. I, Darin Kent, greet you in the magnanimous name of Jesus The Christ.



Today, I want to share one of Paul's books with the church of Corinth. Let's begin reading 2 Corinthians 6 - 10. I'll be reading from the New International Version.

It begins like this:

*6 Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, seven or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times, I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

I've been weak before, and I'll be weak again. It's going to happen. It's inevitable. It's destined, and unlike how I may have looked at being weak when I was younger, over the years, being weak is not just destined but desired.

See, the Apostle Paul was the man. And he knew he was the man. And if this moment in his ministry had not happened, he may have let it get the best of him. He was receiving Revelations directly from God and was to relay the message to the people. He was one of Jesus' most important, most famous messengers, and if he allowed himself, he could easily get big-headed and puffed up on his exclusivity to Christ. He could have easily begun to say, "You ain't hearing like I'm hearing," or "You don't know God like I know him."

.....  
*Continued on page 13*

## CORRECTIONS

*In the May Issue, The article entitled:  
Missionary Legend*

*Gwendolyn S. Smith Honored was  
written by Carolyn M. Jacobs, not Debra Polk*



Mrs. Debra Chappelle-Polk  
Zion Spotlight Editor  
ZionSpotlight@StarOfZion.org

# REMEMBERING JUNETEENTH



By Debra Chappelle-Polk, Zion Spotlight Editor

**“When peace come they read the ’Mancipation law to the cul- lud people. [The freed slaves] spent that night singin’ and shou- tin’. They wasn’t slaves no more.”**

- Former slave Pierce Harper, 1937

June 2024, New York, NY..., Juneteenth is also known as “Freedom Day,” “Juneteenth National Independence Day,” or “Emancipation Day,” and will be celebrated on Wednesday, June 19<sup>th</sup> in the United States.

Juneteenth (short for “June Nineteenth”) marks the day, June 19, 1865, when General Order No. 3 was read aloud by Union Officer Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger in Galveston, TX., informed Texans that all enslaved people in the state were free.

## MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT JUNETEENTH

**FACT:** The real oldest celebration of the end of slavery takes place in Gallipolis, a town in Southern Ohio. That celebration began on September 22, 1863, a year after the signing of the preliminary draft of the Emancipation Proclamation.

**MYTH:** Watch Night Services did not begin on the eve of January 1, 1863.

**FACT:** Most slaves watched and prayed each year on December 31<sup>st</sup>, as they didn’t know who would be sold the following day based on the debt, etc., of the slave owner.

**MYTH:** Juneteenth marks the end of slavery in the United States.

**FACT:** Slavery remained in Kentucky and Delaware after June 19, 1865. Slavery ended in Kentucky on August 8, 1865, and Delaware on December 6, 1865, also listed as December 18, 1865, when the 13th Amendment was adopted. Contrary to the popular narrative, the Southern states were not alone in their adamant refusal to end slavery. New York also held on to that repressive institution until the free black community and the Manumission Society combined to persuade Governor Daniel D. Tompkins and the state legislature to end slavery within its boundaries, which became official on July 4, 1867.

**MYTH:** Former slaves took Juneteenth across the South.

**FACT:** Former Texans migrated to other states and carried this celebra- tion with them.

**FACT:** The Emancipation Proclamation was common knowledge by the time Granger arrived in Galveston (June 19, 1865) as the War Depart- ment’s telegram had been sent on January 1, 1863. The Proclamation

had been adopted in the Federal House of Representatives by a vote of 78-51. More than 100 Texas newspapers mentioned the Emancipation Proclamation between 1862 and 1864. The real reason people were still in bondage when the troops arrived was because of local leaders. The Texas Confederate Constitution prohibited manumission. Lincoln’s directive was enforced only when Federal soldiers arrived. Houston was emancipated June 20, 1865, and Austin was emancipated June 23, 1865.

**FACT:** African Americans have always celebrated Juneteenth, but the celebrations died out during Jim Crow Era. The Civil Rights Move- ment brought national recognition to it later. The Poor People’s Cam- paign’s focus, including a March on Washington and Construction of “Resurrection City” drew attention to economic inequality and poverty.

### Jill Freedman Resurrection City Exhibition

The final ceremonies included a Juneteenth Celebration. Activists took Juneteenth back home with them - a renewal of this celebration. In 2017, a special episode of ABC’s sitcom “Black-ish into Popular Cul- ture” helped bring this celebration back into focus.

### FACT: ON JUNE 17, 2021, JUNETEENTH OFFICIALLY BE-



**CAME A FEDERAL HOLIDAY.** In signing the legislation, President Biden said, “This is a day, in my view, of profound weight and profound power, a day in which we remember the moral stain, terrible toll that slavery took on the country and continues to take.»

Civil Rights activists, religious leaders, and politicians across the coun- try applauded the signing of the bill. Opal Lee, a/k/a the “grandmother of the movement” is credited for making Juneteenth a federal holiday and was present at the White House for the signing of the bill. She said she was “so happy I could have done a holy dance.” VP Kamala Harris remarked, “I see the advocates, the activists, the leaders, who have been calling for this day for so long, including the one and only Ms. Opal

.....  
Continued on page 4

Lee.” In 2016, at 89 years old, Opal Lee, a former teacher and lifelong activist, walked from her home in Fort Worth, Texas, to the nation’s capital in an effort to get Juneteenth named a national holiday.



**Opal Lee at WH as Biden signs bill making Juneteenth Federal Holiday; Jim Watson/AFP via Getty Images**

In an essay entitled *When Peace Come: Teaching the Significance of Juneteenth*, Shennette Garret-Scott wrote: “The holiday makes room for people of all backgrounds to celebrate what is unique about their culture and experiences while pushing America to make social justice a living reality for everyone. Juneteenth endures as an acknowledgment

of the failures and the promises of America.”

The physical chains of slavery have been removed; however, as Smithsonian Institution secretary Lonnie Bunch observed, “emancipation is a process that is still unfolding—not simply a day or a moment of jubilee.”

It is 2024, and the residual effects of slavery still exist. Our civil rights, voting rights, and women’s reproductive rights are being systemically stripped away, and we are still faced with discriminatory housing and hiring practices. Affirmative Action has been struck down, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs are being dismantled.

It is 2024, and according to the Pew Research Center, while every state has at some point recognized Juneteenth as a day of observance, 26 states have yet to adopt Juneteenth as a paid public holiday, including seven former Confederate states.

So, one might ask, aside from the ceremonial signing of a bill making Juneteenth a federal holiday, have things really changed for Black and brown people in America?

It is 2024 --- the struggle continues. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! - Amos 5:24 (NIV)

**Reference Sources:** *Myths About Juneteenth*, Madge Allen, April 1, 2021 (Google Search). *Association for the Study of African American History (ASLAAH)*; *The Washington Post* “Democracy Dies in Darkness. Reporter: Nicole Ellis; AFI – Odelia Scruggs June 18, 2020; Shennette Garret-Scott, Associate Professor of History and African American Studies at the University of Mississippi.

**IT'S A HEART THING!**

**JUNE 7-9**  
**CHILDREN'S DAY WEEKEND**

DOWNLOAD THE CHILDREN'S DAY  
RESOURCE GUIDE AT [CEDAMEZION.COM](http://CEDAMEZION.COM).



Varick's Children presents...  
**IT'S A HEART THING!**

Rev. Dr. William Leon Ward & Mrs. Ravelle L. King, Varick's Children Co-Directors  
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# Antioch A.M.E. Zion Church Celebrates 200 Years of Worship 1824-2024

By Linda P. Jones  
Columbia-Camden District Reporter



The Antioch A.M.E. Zion Church located in Eastover, South Carolina, known as the “Church That Gives Hope to All People” celebrated its 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary April 26-28, 2024. The three-day commemoration shepherded by the pastor, Reverend Dr. Robert T. Benton was dubbed as a “Legacy Weekend”, whose theme was “Standing on Faith, Sharing Our Hope and Serving in Love”. 1 Corinthians 13:13. Dr. Benton and his helpmeet, Reverend Melissa S. Benton have brought stellar leadership to this congregation for the past eighteen years. Having been in existence for 200 years, Antioch has evolved from a pre-civil war church, where both black and white people worshipped together. Since 1824 Antioch continues to stand as a beacon light of hope within the Lower Richland Community.

The Legacy Weekend started off on Friday evening with worship, praise and celebration, then concluded with a high and holy worship service on Sunday. The Friday night worship included a son of the church returning to bring the opening message, Reverend Sherman B. McBeth, who once pastored Antioch and now serves as pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Eastover, SC. After the singing of the combined choirs, Antioch and Mt. Zion, Rev. McBeth delivered a power-packed sermon by posing the question, “Neighbor How is Your Church?” The praise and celebrations continued at the Seawell’s Restaurant and Banquet Center in Columbia, SC. A festive Legacy Awards Luncheon was held to recognize some of the pillars of the church for their many years of dedicated and consistent services rendered to God and the Church. The awards were: Hope presented to Frank Billie, Faith presented to Dr. Robert L. Scott and Love was presented posthumously to the family of the late Frances Woodard. A special ‘Living Legacy Award’ was bestowed upon the most senior member of the congregation, Anna L. Wilson, who is 93 years old and a life-long member of Antioch.

Then on Sunday morning the culminating worship service brought confirmation that surely the Lord was in the place. The electrified congregation was blessed and elated to have two Episcopates in the service,



Bishop Hilliard Dogbe of the Western West Africa Episcopal District and Senior Bishop Kenneth Monroe of the South Atlantic Episcopal District and the Eastern North Carolina Episcopal District. Bishop Dogbe, who was presented by Reverend Dr. Alvin McLamb, Presiding Elder of the Columbia-Camden District, brought a warm and heartfelt introduction of Bishop Kenneth Monroe. Bishop Monroe commended the Pastor and the Antioch congregation on their steadfastness and the

church’s existence for 200 years. Some of the guests recognized during the service included Missionary Supervisor Shelia Monroe, Presiding Elder, Reverend Dr. Sandra K. Benton, (Retired), Reverend Vanessa McLamb, Nadine Green and Dr. Jermaine Johnson, SC House Representative of House District 70. Rep. Johnson read, then presented a resolution to the pastor of the church, Rev. Dr. Benton and the Antioch congregation.



Bishop Monroe’s very profound and fitting message came from Genesis 28:1-17 with the subject, “Finding God in Unexpected Places”. He expounded on these three points. (1) “The Presence of God is Manifested in Unlikely Places, (2) “The Presence of God Can Come at an Unlikely Time”, and (3) “The Presence of God Can Be Found in Unexpected Experiences”. Bishop Monroe eloquently reminded the congregation that we serve a God that is not limited to time and space, and that the presence of God should be felt not only in the Church, but in our homes, in congress in so many other unlikely places. He also said that, “God’s mighty presence must be evident in our lives”. Surely, the Lord has done great things for Antioch A.M.E. Zion Church.

## The Coppinville Experience

FROM POVERTY TO GOD’S WILL



The Autobiography of Frederick L. Hamilton

# Distinguished Alumnus Continues Breaking Glass Ceilings

By Star of Zion News

President Vergel Lattimore and our Hood Theological Seminary Family congratulate Presiding Elder Laticia Hill Godette on becoming the new Treasurer of the New Jersey Annual Conference of the A.M.E. Zion Church on May 1, 2024. This is the first time that a woman has served as the Treasurer of the New Jersey Annual Conference.

Presiding Elder Godette continues to break glass ceilings. She is also the first woman to serve as a Presiding Elder in the New Jersey Annual Conference. Presiding Elder Godette has made history six times in the A.M.E. Zion Church. Presiding Elder Godette graduated summa cum laude from Hood Theological Seminary in 2014 and received the highest award given by the seminary.

She is a distinguished alumnus who continues to give back to Hood Theological Seminary. This year, she has given \$20,000 to the seminary so far. Last year, she gave \$48,000.

Presiding Elder Godette is a Philanthropist with a heart to serve. This year she gave \$10,000 to the A.M.E.Z. Communications Department under the leadership of Mr. Darin Kent and \$30,000 to the Connectional Lay Council.

When asked about her giving she stated, "My husband and I are blessed by God to be a blessing! I grew up in extreme poverty. My mother was on drugs and my father was in prison. God took nothing and made something. To God I owe."

We are proud of Presiding Elder Laticia Hill Godette.



SUMMER BOOK TOUR

[www.revrjchandler.com](http://www.revrjchandler.com)

**Thursday, May 23 thru 26**  
Philadelphia Baltimore Annual Conference  
Bethesda North Marriott  
Rockville, MD

**Sunday, June 2**  
Book Launch  
Freedom Temple AME Zion Church  
Baltimore, MD

**Tuesday, June 4**  
Star of Zion Interview

**Friday, June 7**  
Commencement Speaker  
Lakeland Elementary/Middle School  
Baltimore, MD

**Sunday, June 9**  
Acolyte Graduation  
Simon Temple AME Zion Church  
Fayetteville, NC

**Thursday, June 13**  
Preaching  
CED Night  
East Tennessee Annual Conference

**Wednesday, June 19**  
Preaching  
Juneteenth Celebration  
Bridgeville, DE

**Friday, July 5**  
Western New York Conference  
Rochester, NY

**July 12 thru 14**  
Preaching  
Acolyte Graduation  
Laurinburg District  
North Carolina  
Christian Education

**July 23 thru 29**  
General Conference

**Thursday, July 11**  
AFRO NEWSPAPER  
Interview

**Sunday, August 25**  
Preaching  
Washington Metropolitan  
AME Zion Church  
St. Louis, MO

PURCHASE YOUR COPY TODAY

prayer & fasting will make a difference

# Distinguished Detroit Western Michigan District Conference Theme:

## Preparing for a Great Harvest

By Rev. Phyllis Mealing-Hightower  
Photos By Rev. Phyllis Mealing-Hightower

On April 26-27, 2024, the Distinguished Detroit Western Michigan District Conference, where the Presiding Elder is Rev. Dwight L. Guttridge and Lady Mia Guttridge, was hosted by Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church Pastor Rev. Michele Tucker and St. Peter A.M.E. Zion Church Rev. Kenya C. James Pastor. This was our Inaugural (very first) District Conference since the two districts were merged into one by our Bishop Rt. Rev. Michael A. Frencher Sr.



Friday night, our Holy Communion Service was a blessing with visiting Presiding Elder Rev. Anthony K.R. Gibson, President of the Presiding Elders' Council of the A.M.E. Zion Church and also the Presiding Elder of the Indianapolis District and Rev. Dr. William L. Johnson III of Southern Indiana District of the A.M.E. Zion Church, preached our souls happy from Matthew 9:35-38 subject "Help Is On The Way." He stated that to increase our harvest, we must: (a.) Call upon God first (b.) Pray, talk to God out loud about the harvest (leave social media), (c.) prepare for help, (d.) plan for help, and finally, PRAISE God for the help he's providing for the harvest. This was an enlightening, powerful, Holy Spirit-filled sermon.



Saturday, School of the Prophets was taught by Rev. Dr. William L. Johnson III. The topic was "Help for the Harvest." Dr. Johnson gave us clear, concise data on how to harvest and what to do in order to obtain harvest in our local churches. The main thing he stated was to make sure seeds sown will bring back a harvest. He also said, "The heart of God is to be a prophet to tell the people God is still in charge." We must prepare and end with prayer. Rev. Dr. Johnson's teaching was sincere and impactful.



At our First Distinguished Detroit Western District Conference, we had two local Preachers preach from the depths of their souls, sharing the good news. Sister Kailla Ogunnupe from Acts 9, topic "Ignorance is Bliss," and Brother Edward Heard preached from Matthew 5:16, "I Know Who Has The Lights On." God poured His anointing upon these two servants, and it flowed upon each of us. Our hearts burned with the Holy Spirit and joy as they brought to the waiting congregation the commanding Word of God. The delegates and committees gave their reports.

Our First Inaugural Charge was inspiring and persuasive. We are completely motivated to harvest for the building of God's kingdom for the edification of our Lord and Zion. The Distinguished Detroit Western Michigan District presented our Presiding Elder and Mrs. Guttridge with gifts to show our appreciation for the fantastic job they are doing. We love them deeply, and we are blessed to be a part of their vision. To God be the glory for the things he has done and will continue to do as we labor together to have a full harvest. View pictures from our Distinguished Detroit Western District Conference.

Presiding Elder Dwight L. Guttridge gave us the Charge from Matthew 9:37: "What Do you Do While We Wait?" He told us we all want to

# FATHER'S DAY – THE UNMANLY HOLIDAY??

By Debra Chappelle-Polk, Zion Spotlight Editor  
Photo by Artisticfull

June 2024, New York, NY... In the early 1900s, men associated Father's Day as a tribute akin to Mother's Day and found the idea too effeminate to their liking. In fact, one historian wrote, "They scoffed at the holiday's sentimental attempts to domesticate manliness with flowers and gift-giving, or they derided the proliferation of such holidays as a commercial gimmick to sell more products—often paid for by the father himself." Ironically, in 1943, Anna Maria Jarvis (founder of Mother's Day in the U.S.), after years of crusading to make Mother's Day a holiday, sought to have the holiday rescinded because of its commercialization.

Interestingly, it was two women, Grace Golden Clayton and Sonora Smart Dodd, who were responsible for making Father's Day a holiday. In 1908, following a catastrophic mining accident in Fairmont, W. Va., Grace Golden Clayton, the daughter of a dedicated minister, proposed a service to honor all fathers, especially those who had died in the accident. However, very few people outside of Fairmont, W. Va., knew about the observance, and it did not become an annual event.

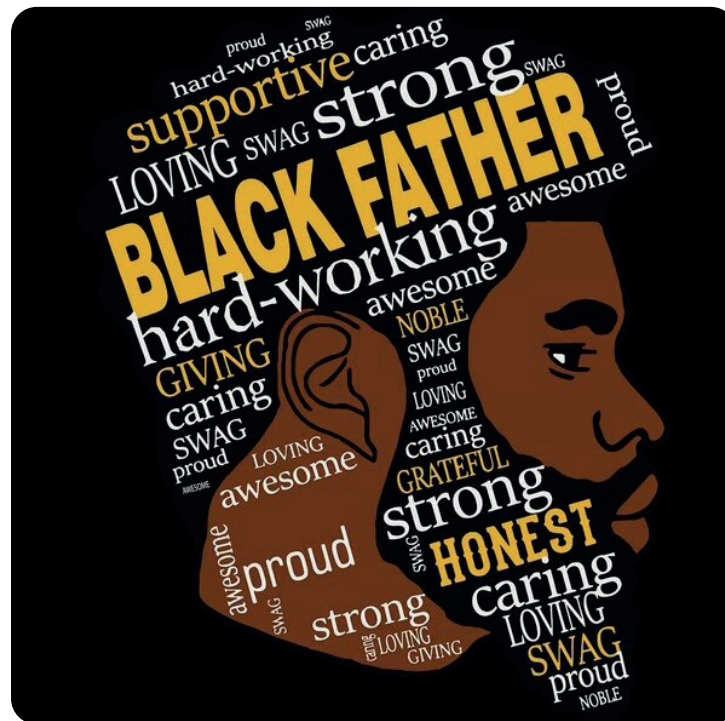
While attending a Mother's Day church service in 1909, Sonora Smart Dodd of Spokane, Washington, came up with the idea to honor fathers. Like Clayton, she, too, had been inspired by Anna Maris Jarvis. Sonora's father, William Jackson Smart, was a farmer, Civil War veteran, and a single parent who raised Sonora and her five brothers by himself after his wife Ellen died giving birth to their youngest child. Sonora convinced the Spokane Ministerial Association and the YMCA to set aside a Sunday in June to celebrate fathers. She proposed June 5, her father's birthday, but the ministers chose the third Sunday in June so that they would have more time after Mother's Day (the second Sunday in May) to prepare their sermons. Thus, on June 19, 1910, the first Father's Day events commenced. Sonora delivered presents to disabled fathers; boys from the YMCA decorated their lapels with fresh-cut roses (red for living fathers, white for the deceased), and the city's ministers devoted their homilies to fatherhood. The widely publicized events in Spokane struck a chord that reached all the way to Washington, D.C., and Sonora's celebration put the idea on the path to becoming a national holiday.

The holiday, however, did not catch on right away, perhaps due to the perceived parallels with Mother's Day, which was couched in terms of femininity. In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson called Mother's Day a way to recognize "that tender, gentle army—the mothers of America." Men viewed the idea of Father's Day similarly to Mother's Day, which was popular with florists and didn't have the same sentimental appeal. There were several failed attempts to make Father's Day a national holiday. It was not until 1972, under President Richard Nixon, that Congress passed an act officially making Father's Day a national holiday. (Six years later, Sonora died at age 96.)

The modern role of the father has changed so that mothers and fathers are partners, each taking more responsibility within family life.

Black fathers, however, continue to be perceived negatively. "The truth is Black fathers have received a tainted reputation, especially in the media, brought to the forefront by the social inequities the Black community continues to face. So many good, honest, hardworking, loving Black dads do not receive the recognition and positive attention they rightfully deserve. So many are stereotyped as being absent fathers who do not care about raising their children and being a part of the family unit," wrote Ahndrea L. Blue, Founder of Making a Difference Foundation in a 2020 essay. "We want to help break the myths of the absentee father in Black communities." She also listed the top five myths regarding Black fathers.

**Myth #1: Unmarried Black parents mean a child is fatherless:** Oftentimes, the statistics presented count single Black mothers and cor-



relate that to absent fathers. In many cases, this is not true. Just because the parents are not married does not mean the father is not in the picture and is not interacting with his child. According to the Centers for Disease & Prevention Control (CDC), "Most Black fathers live with their children. There are about 2.5 million who live with their children and 1.7 million who don't."

**Myth #2: Black fathers are less involved with parental duties or raising their children.** Black dads who live with their children are, on average, actually more involved

than their counterparts, according to a CDC study. In fact, according to a report by the National Center for Health Statistics, Black fathers are more involved with their younger children, feeding, bathing, and dressing, reading to, and playing with them daily. For older children, Black fathers are also more likely to help with homework and talk to their children about their day.

**Myth #3: Black fathers do not want to own up to and handle their parental responsibilities.** Unfortunately, what the data rarely shows is that many black fathers *cannot* live up to their responsibilities. Why? Because there is a larger number of black men than other races who are taken away from their families through death – whether by natural causes, accidents, or by violence. In addition, a disproportionate incarceration of black men than other races put fathers in jail only to leave children fatherless.

**Myth #4: Many Black fathers do not provide for their children:** Black dads want to provide for their children, not only with their time, but also with financial means. However, for so many, the system is set up against them. There is still an income gap for Black workers vs. their white counterparts. When Black men make lower incomes, this can affect their ability to support their children. If they miss child support payments, they risk many consequences that make it even harder to meet their obligations to their kids. Low pay, loss of a job, loss of their license due to lack of court-ordered payments, the system highlights the numerous inequities that still make it hard for Black fathers to be there for their children.

**Myth #5: The issue of father absenteeism is a cultural problem solely within the Black community.** Yes, there are problems with missing fathers within the Black community, but it isn't *just* their problem. Fatherlessness crosses over each race demographic and has been on the rise in white and Latino communities as well. And making it all about one race only pushes a false narrative that hurts that community by continuing the inequities and injustices they face.

Ahndrea L. Blue started the Making a Difference Foundation in 2003 "with the core value that everyone has the capacity to serve and make a difference in someone's life." The Foundation works closely with Black communities and communities of color and sees so many amazing fathers and father figures. These fathers work hard every single day doing what needs to be done, oftentimes despite the challenges they face in today's society. It is not unique but normal despite the lies and the derogatory myths that are being perpetuated.

"This Father's Day, let's break stereotypes and bust myths. Fatherhood does not have a skin color." - Ahndrea L. Blue

**Source References:** Ahndrea L. Blue | Making A Difference Foundation; Goggle; Wikipedia.



# Greensboro District's WH&OMS Fourth Mass Meeting Prayer Breakfast – Conference Year Ending 2023-2024

By Mrs. Nina R. Ingram  
Greensboro District WH&OMS Reporter

*“And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.... And he went up unto them into the ship, and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.” Mark 6:45-52 KJV*

The Greensboro District Women’s Home and Overseas Missionary Society held its fourth Mass Meeting of the Conference Year on Saturday, May 4, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. at St. Phillip A.M.E. Zion Church, where the Reverend Dr. Lisa Caldwell is Pastor. The St. Phillip Pastor and congregation served as hosts to the meeting. Mrs. Angela Hargrove gave ‘The Welcome’.

The Greensboro District Secretary of Supply Mrs. Janice Holt presided over the first part of the Mass Meeting with emphasis on the 2023-2024 Missionary theme, “Reaching the Masses in an Ever-Changing World: The Journey Continues”. Self-care and Wellness were the highlighted meeting focus. The devotion invocation was followed by the opening song – St. Phillip Choir, and Mrs. Georgia Jones read the Scripture, Mark 6:45-52.

The morning meditation speakers were Pastor Lisa Caldwell and the Reverend Charlie Caldwell. Following the introduction by Rev-



erend Dr. Daran H. Mitchell, and a song by St. Phillip Choir, Pastor Caldwell and Reverend Charlie Caldwell blessed the congregation with the morning meditation message that was presented in a very unique tag team meditation preaching style incorporating their theme ‘Are You There Yet’ emphasizing faith, self-care and wellness; after which the congregation was extended an invitation to Christian discipleship.



Prayers for Self-Care and Wellness were humbly lifted up to our Almighty God as follows: Ms. Deborah Snips, a prayer on Mental Clarity – Proverb 3:5-6; Mrs. Christine Murdock, a prayer on Honoring Personal Needs – 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; and Mrs. Cynthia Williams, a prayer on Rest and Relaxation – Philippians 4:6-7.



Our District President, Dr. Edna Adams-Fulton, presided over the second part of the Mass Meeting. The offering was received by Reverend Dr. Keitt. Mrs. Linda Goins gave the financial report, and Ms. Tamekia Lockhart provided the Banner Awards report. The following churches received recognition banners: Oak Grove (Lower level); Wesley Chapel-VA (Middle level); and Zion Grove (Upper level). The Courtesy Report was presented by Ms. Sarah Evans.

Our Missionary President Dr. Adams-Fulton extended a very cordial ‘thank you’ to all who helped make the fourth Missionary Mass Meeting Prayer Breakfast a success; moreover, she thanked everyone for their presence and participation. A special “Self Care” basket and gift card were presented to Mrs. Renee Ellis for her love and continuous support to the missionaries. Further, President Adams-Fulton thanked Secretary of Supply Holt for her leadership. Following announcements/remarks, the fourth Missionary Mass Meeting adjourned with the Missionary Benediction.



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# MOTHER'S DAY AT THE MET

By Georgette Williams  
Photos by: Georgette Williams

St. Louis, Mo. On Sunday May 12, 2024, the ladies at Washington Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church in St. Louis, Missouri, celebrated Mother's Day with a special treat. The Men's Ministry prepared and served "Mother's Day Breakfast" for the ladies.



The men started at 6 a.m. to prepare a delicious meal consisting of bacon (turkey and pork), sausage (turkey & pork), eggs, waffles, pancakes, southern style grits, and biscuits. The buffet was beautiful, and the service was outstanding. Of course, there was plenty of coffee, water, and juice. For dessert, the men walked around to each table and served fruit and spoke kind words to each and every person. It was a wonderful fellowship.

Following the breakfast, the ladies joined the Sunday School class led by Mrs. Sandra Davie.

The Men of Thunder provided the music for the morning worship service including "Let Go, Let God", "My Help" and "Lord Help Me to Hold Out."

The Word was preached by Rev. Dr. Anthony Witherspoon, pastor, from the subject, Give Us This Day: "The things we store for tomorrow

will be enjoyed by those we leave behind. This day reminds us that we can't add time to our lives."

At the end of the worship service, our oldest mother, Mrs. Claudia Rainey, was presented with flowers from the members. She will be 98 years young in August.

After the service, a group of mothers in the church got together to record "The Rewind" which airs at noon on the Wednesday after each morning service. This is a short recap of the service to help you get through the week. The discussion was led by Richie Williams (Audio Visual Ministry) and focused on motherhood and Rev. Witherspoon's message.

It was a blessed day indeed!

**Pictured: The men of the Men's Ministry and Mrs. Claudia Rainey escorted by Rev. Stanley Beecham. Rev. Dr. Anthony Witherspoon and Bro. John Davis.**



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# Greensboro District Conference

By Mrs. Nina R. Ingram, Reporter  
Photos By Ms. Vernice Coley

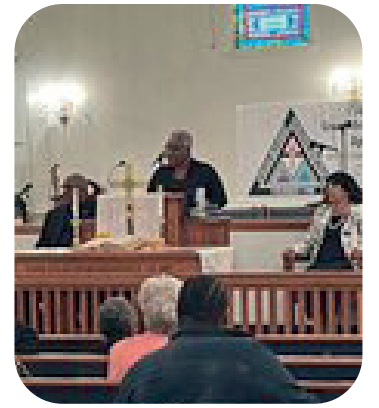
The 114<sup>th</sup> Session of the Greensboro District Conference convened on April 25, 2024, at Wesley Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, Asheboro, NC where Pastor Reverend Dr. Tracii Miller and congregation served as hosts. Dr. Michael E. Ellis is the Presiding Elder of the Greensboro District, West Central North Carolina Conference.



Following registration and a spirit-filled devotion, the Reverend Dr. Daran H. Mitchell, Pastor of Trinity A.M.E. Zion Church provided a very informative and thought-provoking presentation entitled, “Where Do We Go from Here?” He emphasized the importance of the Christian Church in America and its significance in meeting both moral and spiritual challenges, and the need for an “authentic Church that can reach and transform a culture by just ‘being’ the Church”. Dr. Mitchell’s presentation set the tone for the two-day sessions—April 25<sup>th</sup> and April 26<sup>th</sup> — that followed.

The Lay Council Hour, dinner, the welcome program and preaching filled the agenda for day one. Mr. Walton Jones and Ms. JoAnn Streater opened the Lay Council Hour with topical information on self-care and wellness. Mr. Jones provided spiritual nuggets from his presentation entitled, “What the Bible Teaches Us about the Future”, and Ms. Streater provided health education gems on high blood pressure. After dinner, the congregation was pleased to hear greetings from the City of Asheboro Mayor, Police Chief, and the Fire Department. Reverend Dr. Lisa Caldwell, Pastor of St. Phillip A.M.E. Zion Church, deliv-

ered the sermon for the evening. Her sermon subject was entitled, “The Cave Experience”, noting the cave teaches us to press and pray, the cave is a place of revelation, and cave time requires a response.



The District Conference—day two—session continued with the inclusion of Conference business. The roll call, reports of church delegates and pastors, district officers, the School of the Prophets, local Preachers Hour and worship service filled the morning, afternoon and evening agendas. First, second and third year District Studies students—Conrad Jordan, Wesley Chapel NC (First Year); Corey Casterlow, Mt. Olivet (second year); and Tony Little, Mt. Zion (second year) — were presented to the Conference. Dr. Reginald Broadnax led the School of the Prophets session. His subject was “Does Methodism Have a Future?” as he highlighted the Christian mission, adaptability, and order.



Reverend Dr. Anthony J. Davis, President, Livingstone College, Salisbury, NC delivered the evening message for the April 26<sup>th</sup> closing session. He spoke from Job 42:10-15 using as his subject, “The Other Side of Through”. He pointed out that three (3) things should happen when one is ‘going through’ — one should be shouting, another is having a song in your heart, and last knowing that it is Yahweh who causes IT to become!

Thanks and appreciations are extended from Presiding Elder Dr. Michael E. Ellis to the host church—Pastor Reverend Dr. Tracii Miller—and her congregation for extending their fine hospitality and expertise in making the 114<sup>th</sup> Session of the Greensboro District Conference a Huge success for all in attendance.

# THE GREATER ST. LOUIS HONOR FLIGHT TO WASHINGTON, DC

By Georgette Williams  
SOZ Contributor  
Photos By Georgette Williams

St. Louis, Mo., May, 2024.... Mr. Johnny L. Gross is a member of Washington Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church in St. Louis, MO, where The Reverend Dr. Anthony Witherspoon is Pastor. He has been a member since 2004 and sings bass in the Voices of Zion. He was previously in the Inspirational-Gospel Choir.

Mr. Gross was selected for “The Greater St. Louis Honor Flight” to Washington, D.C. held on April 9, 2024, which gave him the opportunity to experience what other World War I, World War II, and Korean veterans were given on their return home. After serving his country in the Vietnam War, he was overjoyed to return to his family in St. Louis, MO, however, he never received a “Welcome Home” from America.

Mr. Johnny L. Gross entered the United States Air Force after attending Jackson State University in 1963. His basic training was at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, TX. Afterward, he attended Telecommunications School at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas. In 1972, he was assigned to Udorn AFB in Bangkok, Thailand, in support of the Vietnam War. He retired from the Air Force in 1981, serving at Scott AFB, Illinois, as the personal Superintendent of Communication for the General. He achieved the rank of Master Sergeant.

Honor Flight is an all-expense paid trip for veterans to visit the nation’s capital and memorials honoring our veterans. His goal was to



locate the names of his comrades Willie Fullilove, Willie J Croom, Jimmie L Forrest. and Carter L. Williams. He was able to see the names of the four soldiers who were killed in Vietnam and enjoy a day of fellowship with other veterans.

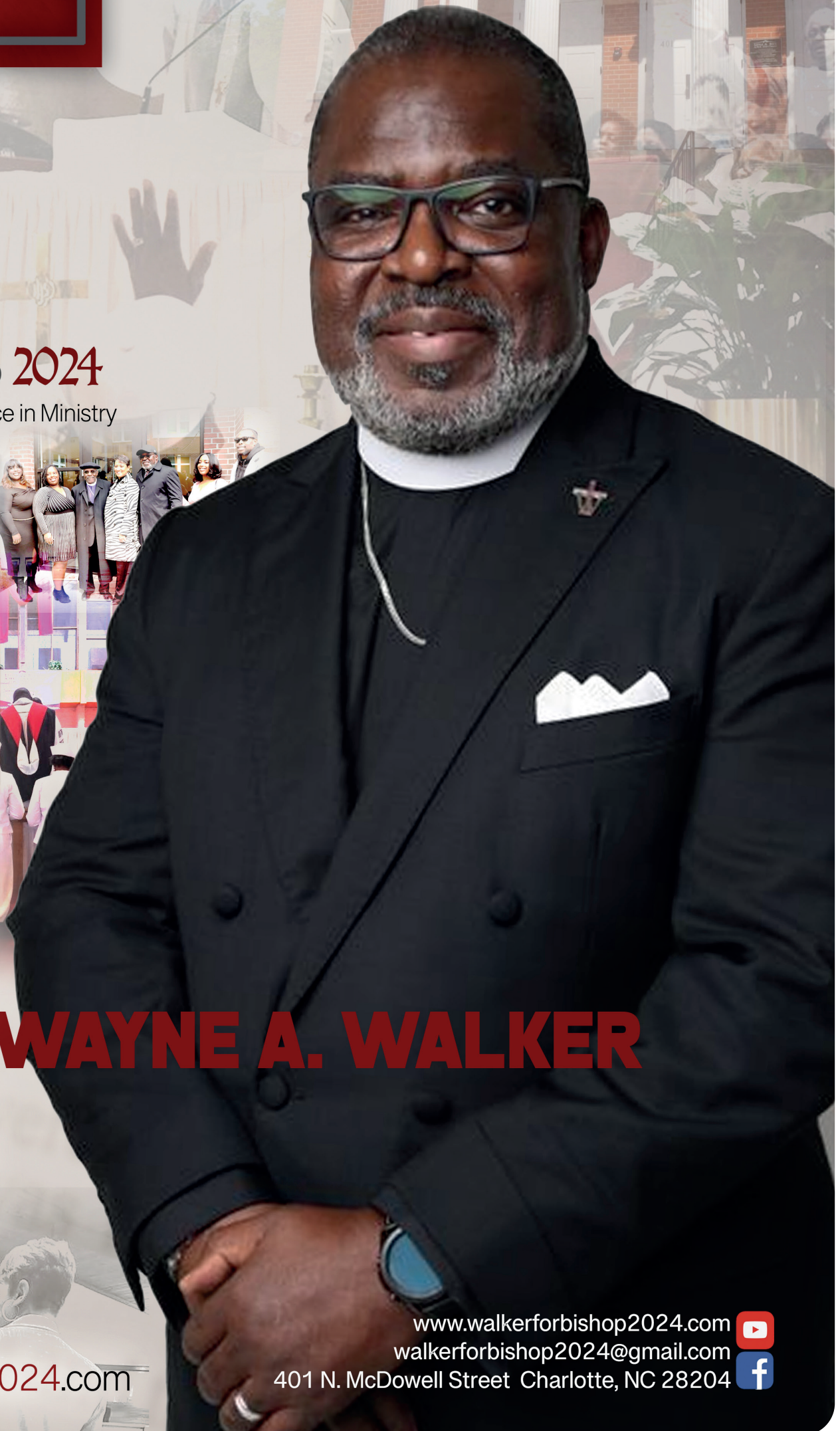
Mr. Gross was accompanied by his son Derral of St. Louis, MO. The day was bittersweet as it was the birthday of his late wife, Dorothy. Johnny L. Gross and his son, Derral, are pictured at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. He is pictured alone in front of “Missouri.” Which was at the World War II Memorial.

Rev. Witherspoon and Washington Memorial A.M.E. Zion members are thankful for his service.



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*Continued from Page 2*

Now, I ain't gonna front this is where I begin to have this story resonate with my own story on a deeper level. I absolutely can relate to Paul in some ways. I have now worked in a unique field of communications, video and media, that doesn't do a lot much for African Americans in leadership. Early on in my ministry, I distinctly remember being so arrogant as to think that the way God was speaking to me through visuals was the best, correct, dare I say, the ONLY way to receive God. So, I struggled with leadership on the way to share their messages with the accentuation of audio and video at every turn. I even built myself a reputation of being gifted but hard to deal with.

But thank God for another chance at the ministry. Like Paul, I was humbled on numerous occasions, sometimes by my own internal battles and other times by outside forces. In the Bible, it says, "God gave Paul a thorn in his flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet or trouble him." That thorn and my "thorns" were sent for the same purpose. To check our pride. So, we don't do any boasting unless it's to boast about our weaknesses.

You see, I began to listen more and talk less. I stopped being so combative. I stopped thinking my way was the only way and instead came from the mindset that the way God revealed to me may only be a PART of the way. It took some time, and trust me, I still relapse from time to time, but I can proudly say that I have conquered that lesson from Christ. God has given me a vision to share with others, not to force it down people's throats.

I encourage you today, Brothers and Sisters, to do what Paul, Darin,

and countless other ministers and leaders of the gospel now do....and that is to DELIGHT in your shortcomings because that lets you know that God is still working in you and through you. Enjoy the moments when you are feeling "less than" or "indecisive" or simply lost, and when you do, Call on HIS NAME. That's when God does his THING. He needs to be used just like that. Call on him when you can't figure it out, and he'll step in and work it out BETTER than you could have ever done yourself. If you want better, shout BETTER.

When we are anxious, he is our calm.

When we are defeated, he is our victor.

When we are confused, he is our clarity.

When we are weak, HE is our strength.

So, let the age-old oxymoron still stand true to this day.

Say it with me:


When I am weak, then I am strong.

In Jesus Name, AMEN.

God bless you, my sisters and brothers.



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# REVEREND RENEÈ BENNETT BETHEA APPOINTED TO SMART START BOARD OF DIRECTORS

By Debra Chappelle-Polk , Zion Spotlight Editor

June 2024 - Reverend Reneè Bennett Bethea is a busy woman and wears many hats. She has been Pastor of Pleasant Hill A.M.E. Zion Church in Rockingham N.C., which is in the Piedmont Episcopal District for two years. She has also pastored churches in Concord, Lincolnton, Rockingham, and Greensboro Districts; served on the Finance Committee for Concord, Lincolnton, and Rockingham Districts and has served as the Secretary of the Rockingham District Conference.



In August 2023, Tim Moore, Speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives, appointed Rev. Bethea to the Board of Directors of the North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (NCPC). The North Carolina Partnership for Children in collaboration with Smart Start provides a foundation for a sound, basic education for each child in every community of North Carolina.


Smart Start was created in 1993 as an innovative solution to a problem: Children were coming to school unprepared to learn. Serving children birth to 5, Smart Start works across the state to raise the quality of childcare, strengthen families, advance child health and development, and improve early literacy. The network implements other state, federal, local, and private programs, and services, such as NC Pre-K, childcare subsidy, and Head Start, serving as North Carolina's system

for early childhood health, development, and learning. NCPC develops policy for Smart Start programs and services and ensures accountability.

One of the many hats Rev. Bethea wears is that of Pastor at Pleasant Hill A.M.E. Zion Church, which she says has been a blessing. "I have learned about grace from many different perspectives in these past two years. As itinerant ministers, we often think that we will not love another congregation as much as the present one, but each congregation captures your heart. It does not matter whether one is received or rejected in one's appointment. The heart of a shepherd loves regardless of where we are sent. Pleasant Hill is a small family church that abounds with many gifts and talents among its 30 or so members. It is set quaintly in the Gale's town community of Richmond County on a hill surrounded by dogwood trees and tall pines at 105 Lake Road. The treasures of my time at Pleasant Hill are to have experienced time with the mother of the church, the late Ms. Minnie Pemberton whose rendition of, "Slow Down Chariot," is known throughout Zion in West Central N.C. I count it a bonus learning from and being the pastor of Mrs. Hazel Smith, the widow of the late Rev. James Smith. She is an inspiration who exemplifies grace and holiness. There are other bonuses in pastoring this church, like sitting on the porch of Sandra and Willie Moore, watching the red birds' nest, eating berries, and discussing the complexities of life. The melodious music of Lynn Everette and my "Amen" corner led by Joyce Everette and morning announcements with Mrs. Shirley Davis are treasures in my heart. The church has a strong women's and men's ministry that is known for being among the best bowlers in Richmond County.

**FEMALE PASTORS ARE PART OF THE HOPE OF THE BLACK CHURCH ---WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN, AND WE ALWAYS WILL BE.**

Rev. Renee Bennett Bethea states unequivocally that female pastors

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face many challenges in the Black Church and are often the survivors of many obstacles ranging from family, church, health, and theological concourse in ministry. She says, "I found my voice, my place, and my strength when I was introduced to "Sisters in the Wilderness; The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk" by Delores S. Williams. On page 205 she writes, 'I believe the black church is the heart of hope in the black community's experience of oppression, survival struggle and its historic efforts toward complete liberation.'"

Rev. Bethea added that today society is filled with daily traumatic events and believes that Black female pastors must become well trained in trauma care and crisis. "We must be eclectic in our ministry and practice shepherding and caring because sometimes what we are facing in our congregations are past hurts from traumatic past events. In truth, there are some things that only God can heal, but we as servants can be prepared to be used in times of crisis. Female pastors are part of the hope of the black church, we have always been, and we always will be."

Much of Rev. Bethea's work has been community-based as a chaplain at First Health and a volunteer at the Local Partnership for Children. "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness." My commitment to ministry and work with children has been supported by a strong foundation of family and spousal support and a strong sisterhood of friends and mentors who help guide my work and career. I have been blessed to have strong women in my life like my mom,

Daisy Cole, Dr. Mary Love, Rev. Dr. Peggy Owens, Lebyy Legion, Dr. Katrina Chance, and numerous others who have witnessed my disappointments and celebrated my successes."

Rev. Bethea's resume is long and impressive. She served two terms on the South Carolina Education Association Board of Directors and as the State's Budget Chair in the mid-90s. Rev. Bethea has worked as an Adjunct Professor for Gardner Webb University's Psychology Department. Presently she works as a Mental Health Specialist for Hoke County Schools.

Rev. Bethea has a BS in Business Administration from Gardner Webb University and was selected as one of Gardner-Webb's Distinguished Alumni in 2003 for her work with children. She has a master's in counseling from Webster University and attended Hood Theological Seminary. She did her graduate internship as a chaplain at Womack Army Medical Center and is presently a volunteer Chaplain for First Health Hospital. She is a member of the World Methodist Order of The Flame and the NC State Resilience Community Advisory Group.

Rev. Bethea is married to James Bethea, who is her gentle giant, her protector, and critic. They have two children and nine amazing grandchildren. "I am blessed, retired but I continue to soar."

Her favorite scripture is Psalm 1: 1-3.

## WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN A.M.E. ZION'S AWESOME NINE!

By Georgette Williams  
Washington Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion  
Photo By Richie Williams

June 2024, St. Louis, MO...., On Sunday, April 28, 2024, Washington Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church in St. Louis, Missouri, celebrated the lives of our nine members who are part of the "Nineties Club". We call them the Awesome Nine!



The program was organized by the Women's Ministry (Rev. Helen French, Director) and the Senior Ministry (Ms. Shirley Hamilton, Director).

The Mistress of Ceremonies was Ms. Shirley Hamilton. We were led in prayer by Rev. Niesha Thomas-Walker, and the scripture was read by Rev. Kimberly Reed. The Women's Choir of Washington Metropolitan sang, "Oh, Oh, Give Thanks."

We were then blessed with "Pearls of Wisdom" by four of the nine honorees who were present at the program.

**Mrs. Janice Anderson** was born July 31, 1933, and has been a member of Washington Metropolitan for 43 years. She recited her favorite poem, "The Black Man's Plea for Justice," by an unknown author. She learned the poem in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. She wanted us to notice the difference in the issues at the time the poem was written compared to what we're dealing with today. We've accomplished a lot but still have a long way to go.

**Mrs. Claudia Rainey** was born on August 18, 1926, and has been a member of Washington Metropolitan for 64 years. Her mom was a music teacher and passed away when she was a child. She inherited that love for music. Her father was Rev. Dr. Ossie R. Ellis, Sr. and, at one time, the pastor of Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church in Kansas City, MO. He was appointed Presiding Elder of the St. Louis District in 1945. In her life's work in the church, she has honored both her mother's and father's legacies. She played a piano solo, "Yes, God is Real".

**Mrs. Ollie Tucker-Ward** was born in 1930. She has been a member of Washington Metropolitan for 27 years. She says we should love God, treat others the way we want to be treated, have no other gods before us, be cautious in our speech, and live in the moment.

**Mrs. Beatrice Young** was born on December 15, 1933. She says that because of God's strength, mercy, and grace, she has been here for 91 years. She has been a member of Washington Metropolitan for over 50 years. The children in her neighborhood were allowed to sing at Ellis Funeral Home. She visited Calvary Baptist Church with one of her friends, where she met Ollie Stewart (Tucker-Ward). She was invited by her to Washington Metropolitan, where she has been a member ever since. She has been a part of the Missionary Department, Lay Council, Cathedral Choir, and The Gospel Chorus. She invited us to read Proverbs 3:5.

**Mrs. Stella Mosby Bouie** was born on April 28, 1928. She has been a member of Washington Metropolitan for 70+ years and celebrated her 96<sup>th</sup> birthday today. She was the keynote speaker. She is the eldest of 15 children. She was like a mother to her siblings and would drive them everywhere. Her message was about "Blessings". Her dad and her husband were her mentors. They taught her how to take care of herself. She says you should share your time with the young and the old. One day, you may be that person who is lonely and needs someone to "share" with them. Let people know who you are and where you come from. A lot of times, there is a blessing from someone you touched base with, and you have gifts you can share with the world. Others can receive blessings from you. God loves you because you are His creation.

The Women's Choir sang "So You Would Know" with Ms. Annessa McCaskill, soloist. The musician played "Getting to Know You," which is Mrs. Bouie's favorite song. The program closed with remarks by the Pastor, Rev. Dr. Anthony Witherspoon.

We were then blessed with a wonderful luncheon prepared by our own resident caterer, Mrs. Cynthia Davis. It was a great afternoon.

*Members of the Nineties Club who were unable to attend were as follows.*

*Mrs. Geneva Ogletree – born December 31, 1931 (member for 70+ years)*

*Mrs. Dorothy Lewis was born April 20, 1929 (length of membership is unknown)*

*Mrs. Anna Jean Bowen has been a member for over 50 years.*

*Mr. Charles Hawkins has been a member for over 50 years.*

# WHEN ONE DOOR CLOSES, ANOTHER ONE OPENS

## COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY BLACK GRAD 24K GOLDEN CLASS COMMENCEMENT AT MOTHER ZION

By Debra Chappelle-Polk, Zion Spotlight Editor

New York, NY... On Tuesday, May 14, 2024, Mother African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, a/k/a "The Freedom Church," lived up to its name and opened its doors to the Black Grad 24K Golden Class of Columbia University\* for their commencement service. Over the last several weeks, students at Columbia University (and across the nation) have been "taking it to the streets" in protest of the Israeli-Hamas War in Gaza. As a result, and due to safety concerns, administrators at Columbia University canceled on-campus commencement services. The Black Alumni Council (BAC) at Columbia University reached out to Rev. Dr. Malcolm J. Byrd, Senior Pastor at Mother A.M.E. Zion Church and asked if the Black Grad 24K Golden Class could hold its graduation at the church. Rev. Byrd enthusiastically agreed.



Over 1100 family members, friends, and guests clapped and cheered as the 150 students of Black Grad 24k Golden Class marched through golden archways and filled the first five pews on each side of the church. The Black Alumni Council inducted the grads who had earned degrees in law, medicine, political science, and computer science, as they walked across the front of the sanctuary and proudly announced their names. Many of the students graduated high school during the COVID pandemic and their graduation services were canceled. So, it was particularly meaningful that they were able to "walk the stage" at their college commencement service.

Opening remarks were made by Melinda Aquino, Associate Dean of Multicultural Affairs. Nadia Sharpe, Senior Chair, Class of '24 welcomed the grads and guests. The Black National Anthem was sung by Joshua Black (CC '25). Obinna Okoli (CC '24) and Malik Fountain (SEAS '24) followed with tribute performances and a vocal composition by Nkozi Jones (CC '24).

The Keynote Address was given by Edwidge Danticat\*, (BC '90) Win Tsun Mellon Professor of African American and African Diaspora Studies. "How fitting it is that we are here celebrating you in this historic place where so many enslaved people found passage through the Underground Railroad, including Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Frederick Douglass. It is in their lineage, among others, that we are here today, celebrating this huge milestone in your lives." Her remarks were poignant and addressed many of today's social and political issues: "Fear not, Golden Class of 2024; you are prepared for whatever lies ahead. Embrace your roles as agents of change; however, that might manifest itself in your lives. There's a well of history, beauty, poetry, and sweet company inside you. We, along with all your ancestors, stand with you." In closing, she said, "I want to leave you with this verse from another beloved sister, June Jordan, from a poem called 'Poem for South African Women' that she presented at the United Nations in commemoration of 40,000 women and children who stood against apartheid in South Africa in the 1950s.

*And who will join this standing up*

*and the ones who stood without sweet company*

*will sing and sing back into the mountains and*

*if necessary, even under the sea*

*We are the ones we have been waiting for.*

Golden Class of 2024, you are the ones we have been waiting *and* praying for. Congratulations!"

Dr. Byrd welcomed the grads and their families to Mother Zion "in the spirit of their ancestors." He said Mother Zion has always stood for justice and equality. "You are graduating from this historic building because of a bequest made by Madame C.K. Walker, who was a member of this Church and the first self-made Black female millionaire." He told the grads that the late world-renowned Paul Robeson, who graduated from Columbia Law School in 1923, had also been a member of Mother Zion Church. "When doors were closed to Paul Robeson because of his social and political activism, the doors to Mother A.M.E. Zion Church always remained open." Dr. Byrd asked the grads "to stand on your feet and salute your ancestors, who made it possible for you to graduate today."

Xaelah Dionne Jarrett, Associate Director, Multicultural Affairs and Student of Color Outreach at Columbia University, and Ben Clark, Secretary of Columbia University's Black Alumni Council along with members of the Council organized the commencement service. In her opening remarks, Ms. Jarrett thanked Rev. Byrd and Mother Zion for providing space for the service and noted that Mother Zion was the oldest Black Church in the State of New York.

In keeping with the theme, the sanctuary was decorated with gold archways and gold runners lined the aisles. A giant 24K lighted fixture was placed in the front of the sanctuary and was the perfect centerpiece. The grads were also given gold-rimmed champagne flutes inscribed with the Black Grad 24K Golden Class insignia as mementos. The 24K grads wanted to enjoy their day and declined to be interviewed. In an expression of their POV, some grads wrapped a keffiyeh scarf, the symbol of Palestinian identity and resistance, over their gowns.



Farah Jasmine Griffin, the William B. Ransford Professor of English and Comparative Literature and African American Studies at Columbia University, and other faculty members were on hand to salute the 24K Golden Class.

It was a beautiful occasion not only for the graduates but for Mother Zion as well. "When people ask what the Black Church is doing, I always respond, 'it depends on where you are looking.' Columbia University canceled its public commencement ceremony, citing security concerns. When I learned that the Black Students Association had nowhere to hold their Black graduation, the answer was very clear to me, Mother Zion!" Rev. Byrd's Facebook post.

When one door closes, another one opens.

**\*Columbia University, officially Columbia University in the City of New York, located in the Morningside Heights section in upper Manhattan, is a private, Ivy League, research university in New York City, New York, United States. Established in 1754 as King's College on the grounds of Trinity Church in Manhattan, it is the oldest institution of higher education in New York and the fifth oldest in the United States and is considered one of the most prestigious universities in the world.**

**\* Professor Danticat is a renowned Haitian American novelist and the recipient of many awards and honors.**





# Clinton College Celebrates 2024 Commencement Ceremony



Rev. Roderick J. Josey  
Education Editor  
education@starofzion.org

By Rev. Roderick J. Josey, Education Editor



Rock Hill, SC - On Friday, May 3rd, 2024, Clinton College held its highly anticipated 2024 Commencement Ceremony at the Bishop Kenneth Monroe Transformation Center in Rock Hill, South Carolina. The event was a vibrant celebration of culture, achievement, and the promise of a bright future.



As the African drums reverberated through the air, faculty, staff, and graduates processed down the aisles, embodying the decadent spirit of the occasion. The Clinton College Choir stirred hearts with their rendition of "Lift Every Voice and Sing," a powerful anthem of resilience and unity.



The ceremony began with scripture shared by Reverend Dr. Jeffrey Hayes, a distinguished member of the Clinton College Board of Trustees, followed by a heartfelt prayer led by Reverend Lakisha Gaston, an esteemed alumna of Clinton College. Reverend Dr. Hayes, in his address, emphasized that while graduation marked the end of one chapter, the journey ahead held countless unwritten pages. Drawing from Colossians chapter 3, his words inspired reflection and determination among the graduating class.



Ms. Miyaunna Cason, the salutatorian of the Class of 2024, extended a warm welcome to all attendees, setting the tone for a day of celebration and gratitude. Reverend Sadie Berry, the Class of 2024 Valedictorian, shared reflections that resonated deeply with her fellow graduates, encapsulating the collective experiences

and aspirations of the cohort.

The ceremony's highlight was the commencement address delivered by Congressman Emanuel Cleaver, whose words of wisdom and encouragement left a lasting impression on all in attendance. Additionally, the Vice President of the United States of America conveyed a special message of congratulations to the Class of 2024 through a video address, recognizing their remarkable achievements and wishing them success in their future endeavors.

In a poignant moment, Clinton College conferred honorary Doctorate Degrees upon two distinguished individuals: Bishop Kenneth Monroe, the Senior Bishop of the A.M.E. Zion Church, and George Clinton, the great-great-grandson of Bishop Ism Clinton, the founder of Clinton College. Their exemplary contributions to society and unwavering educational commitment were honored and celebrated.



Dr. Lester A. McCorn, the 13th President of Clinton College, thanked Dr. George Clinton for his remarks and announced an exciting collaboration—Dr. Clinton's upcoming line of shoes, with half of the proceeds benefiting Clinton College, further strengthens the institution's mission of empowerment and education.

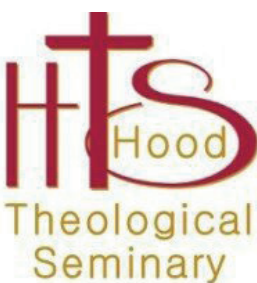
As the ceremony drew to a close, amidst cheers and applause, the Class of 2024 stepped into the next chapter of their lives, equipped with knowledge, resilience, and a profound sense of purpose. Clinton College's 2024 Commencement Ceremony was a milestone and a testament to the enduring spirit of excellence and determination



that defines the Clinton community.

# FAITHLEARNTHRIVE's Stronger Churches Conference at Hood Theological Seminary

By Dr. Rona M. Williams  
J.D, M.Div., Program Director  
Photo By FaithLearnThrive



FAITHLEARNTHRIVE is excited to announce the upcoming Stronger Churches Conference, set to take place on August 24th at Hood Theological Seminary. This one-day event is designed to train and equip



congregations with practical skills and insights to foster growth and resilience within their communities.

The highlight of the conference will be the Leadership Luncheon featuring Bishop Randy Borders of Faith Harvest Church in Shelby, NC. Bishop Borders, a prolific author and renowned leadership coach, will deliver a keynote address that promises to inspire and empower church leaders. More information about Bishop Borders and his impactful work can be found at randy-borders.com.

Continued on next page



In addition to the keynote address, the conference will offer a variety of mini labs and

ChurchTalk sessions. These sessions will follow the dynamic and engaging TED-style talk format, providing attendees with concise and powerful presentations from various church leaders and experts. Each session is designed to offer practical tools and strategies that participants can immediately implement in their own congregations.

To encourage early registration, FAITHLEARNTHRIVE is offering early bird rates until June 30th. Don't miss this opportunity to gain valuable insights and connect with other church leaders dedicated to building stronger, more vibrant congregations.

Register now at <https://bit.ly/FLTSCC2024> to secure your spot at the Stronger Churches Conference. Join us for a day of learning, inspiration, and community building as we work together to strengthen

our churches and our faith.

#### Event Details

**Date:** August 24th

**Location:** Hood Theological Seminary | Aymer Center

**Keynote Speaker:** Bishop Randy Borders

**Early Bird Registration Deadline:** June 30th



**Registration Link:** <https://bit.ly/FLTSCC2024>

We look forward to seeing you there!

## Five Livingstone College Women Received Full Scholarships to Attend National Conference

By Star of Zion News

Livingstone College has five students who will attend the American Association of University Women's (AAUW) leadership signature program, the National Collegiate Conference of Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL), at the University of Maryland College Park from May 30 to June 1, 2024.



Natasha Campbell, Gianna Brown, Mia Mason, Da'Niyah Shelby, and Kenniya Wilson received full scholarships from the national body after submitting applications, and Natasha Campbell received a travel stipend from the local AAUW Branch. Natasha said, "I am so excited to engage in this leadership opportunity. I'm appreciative of AAUW on both the national and local level for this opportunity to develop myself as a growing professional with leadership potential."

The mission of AAUW's conference is to foster a moment that ignites a powerful movement. Livingstone College is an institutional member, whereas Dr. Da'Tarvia Parrish and Prof. Bessie Hutchins serve as

the institutional representatives. Dr. Parrish stated, "As our goal is to break barriers and bias as it relates to women in leadership, we're so proud these young women are taking advantage of this opportunity to explore their personal passions and grow in a professional way to live out their purpose."



Year after year, the conference brings together hundreds of college women from across the nation for an immersive multi-day experience of workshops, leadership training, inspiration, and networking. The event strives to cultivate an inclusive and equitable space where attendees can enter as passionate leaders and depart with the skills, confidence, and perspective necessary to pursue their goals and drive meaningful change.

For more information about NCCWSL, visit <https://www.aauw.org/resources/programs/nccwsl/agenda/>

## Livingstone College offers free Biomanufacturing training, a pathway to a rewarding Career

By Dr. Jo-Sette Wilkes

Are you interested in a career with high growth potential and above-average starting salaries? Livingstone College is thrilled to announce the launch of its Biomanufacturing Training program. This program offers an exclusive opportunity for residents of the Rowan-Salisbury community and beyond to enter the booming world of biomanufacturing—and

it's completely free! Thanks to funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

No experience? No problem. To qualify, you'll need only a high school diploma or GED.

Through a blend of online modules and hands-on training sessions, you'll acquire the essential skills needed to thrive in this dynamic field. Upon finishing the program, participants will earn both a certificate of

achievement and an Advanced Biomanufacturing Certificate.

Please mark your calendars for our inaugural in-person course, scheduled from July 15th to July 26th, 2024. The sessions will run daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and take place on the campus of Livingstone College, located at 701 W Monroe St, Salisbury, NC.

If you are ready to jumpstart your career in biomanufacturing, secure your spot on the summer registration list now: Biomanufacturing Training Registration. For further information, reach out to Dr. Jo-

Sette Wilkes at [biotraining@livingstone.edu](mailto:biotraining@livingstone.edu).

There are only 12 slots available, so act fast! Priority will be given to North Carolina residents. Once registration is full, you will automatically be added to the waitlist.

Please visit <https://www.ncbiotech.org/accelerateNC> for more information about the HBCU/HAIU coalition led by North Carolina Central University's Biomanufacturing Research Institute and Technology Enterprise (BRITE).

## Livingstone College Receives Its 4th \$1 Million Donation from Its Anonymous Donor

By Garette Hunter

Salisbury, NC | Livingstone College is proud to announce that it has received an additional \$1 million donation from an anonymous donor who has been a consistent and dedicated supporter of the college's mission and vision. This is the fourth consecutive donation at the \$1 million level given by an anonymous donor to Livingstone College, a clear demonstration of their ongoing commitment to our institution.

Dr. Davis made the announcement during the College's Fridays at the Stone Networking event held the morning of April 19<sup>th</sup> to Salisbury-Rowan community members and several of the college's faculty and staff in attendance. Proceeds



from this donation will be used to support the campus residence hall refurbishment project. This announcement comes less than three weeks before Livingstone College's May Graduation, which will feature its first cohort of graduates through the college's MBA program.

This donation follows the College's award of an Innovation Lounge Grant during the 2024 Retool Your School Celebration, hosted by Home Depot on Thursday, April 11th, at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, GA. This grant allows Livingstone College to enhance existing spaces on the campus where our students can gather, ideate, and collaborate.

## The One Hundred Forty-Second Baccalaureate Service of Livingstone College

By Star of Zion News

As the chief cornerstone institution of higher learning founded by the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, students who matriculate beneath thy maples and thy oaks, are invited to begin their weekend of commencement events, in worship.

The 142nd Baccalaureate Service of Livingstone College was held Friday, May 3, at 7:00 p.m. in Bishop James Varick Auditorium. Presiding Dr. Anthony J. Davis, the thirteenth president, affirmed, "The purpose is to put God before the pomp and circumstance. We must give God time before your big day tomorrow." Board of Trustees, senior administration, faculty, graduating seniors, and Golden and Silver graduates processed to "Pomp and Circumstance" in their colorful academic regalia, whereas Bishop Darryl B. Starnes Sr., Presiding Prelate of the Piedmont Episcopal District and Vice-Chair of the Board of Trustees, provided the Invocation followed by the congregational hymn, "God of Our Fathers." Rev. Dr. Dwayne A. Walker, Chaplain of the Board of Trustees, read Isaiah 40: 28-31 as the Old Testament scripture.

Board member Dr. Monica Posey conveyed Philippians 3:13-16 as the New Testament reading. Celebrating and thanking God for grace, Livingstone College's campus minister, Rev. Lloyd Nivens IV, offered a prayer of thanks for saving, rescuing, and protecting the leadership, church, and students at Livingstone College. He implored, "Celebrate what God has allowed us to achieve."

President Anthony J. Davis introduced the speaker of the hour, Bish-

op Michael A. Frencher, Presiding Prelate of the Mid-West Episcopal District. President Davis acknowledged Bishop Frencher as "A leader and preacher of the gospel who has demonstrated an invested interest in Livingstone College and the A.M.E. Zion Church." After the Livingstone College Concert Choir's selection, "Poor Man Laz'rus," under the direction of Dr. Kody Wallace, those present were able to attest to the words of President Davis. Explicating Philippians 3:14, Bishop Frencher's sermon titled, "Pressing Towards the Prize: The Power of the Press," encouraged graduates to continue to pursue and reach higher goals. Frencher said, "Life is always worthwhile to those busy trying to reach goals.



To reach goals, you must be able to press." Frencher continued: be positive in your pressing, be persistent in your pressing, and be prayerful in your pressing. The Concert Choir's second selection was Stacey Gibbs' arrangement of "Way Over in Beulah Land." In contrast, President Davis closed with remarks stating to graduates, "Remember who are and whose you are. Livingstone has prepared you to compete and contribute to a global context with competence and confidence. Always put Christ first."

Closing, Bishop Michael Frencher pronounced the Benediction while those in attendance recessed to Henry Purcell's "Trumpet Tune."

# Livingstone College 142nd Commencement Ceremony

By Star of Zion News

The academic year of 2023-2024 culminated Saturday, May 5th, when 70 odd recipients of the Associate of Science, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Social Work, and first time in the history of the institution, Master of Business Administration degrees joined the ranks of approximately 7,000 Livingstone College alumni.



The 142nd Commencement Ceremony of Livingstone bid adieu to the class of 2024 in Bishop James Varick Auditorium. Presiding the thirteenth president of Livingstone College, Dr. Anthony J. Davis, stated, “We are gathered today because you made up your mind; no one and nothing would hold you back. We are here because you did it . . . Somehow, some way, you navigated a Covid-19 pandemic. You represent a group that endured, emerged, and escaped. Somehow, you made it . . . This is a day of celebration. This is a day of elevation. This is the day the Lord hath made, and we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

As the crowd collectively sang “The Star-Spangled Banner” and “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing,” Bishop Dennis V. Proctor, Presiding Prelate of the Northeastern Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, led the Invocation, asking God to bless the assembly and the graduates for insight, hindsight, and foresight while acknowledging the raining weather as a metaphor of dewdrops of mercy that fall on believers each day. Board of Trustee Bishop Hilliard B. Dogbe, Presiding Prelate of the Western West Africa Episcopal District, followed with a New Testament reading referencing Philippians 4: 4-9.



Attendees were greeted by the senior bishop of the A.M.E. Zion Church and chairman of the Board of Trustees Presiding Prelate of the Eastern North Carolina Episcopal District, Kenneth Monroe, who welcomed attendees to the commencement of the greatest institution in the world. “Livingstone College is a place that makes leaders, and I trust as these new graduates embrace their call to service, they will lead this country.”

Faculty Assembly President, Dr. Da’Tarvia A. Parrish challenged graduates to embrace their new beginning and move on to issues of the mosaic world. Lastly, Student Government Association President, Mr. Matthew G. Clinton, challenged his class to “Take pride in how far you’ve come and have faith in how far you can go.”



Under the direction of Christopher Gray, the Livingstone College Gospel Choir warmed the audience with two selections, as the commencement speaker (Dr.) Maurice L. Coleman declared, “We are here today because we have decided to go far together.” Coleman referenced the 60th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as an example of strides made in American history when unity and equity were the goals. “We must keep pushing,” said Coleman.

The Tax Credit Syndication and Investment Executive at Bank of America’s message to graduates paralleled his passion and work within the corporate sector. His address reflected his work in the field as he provided an illustration of his personal background,



stating, “Make your passion your paycheck and live your purpose.” He informed graduates, “Need is the mother of creativity. We need new school innovation with old school spirit.” Additionally, Coleman challenged each graduate to work hard at their passion and purpose. Coleman avidly left the graduates with resounding advice “Life is 20% of what happens and 80% of how you respond. Hard work beats talent when talent decides not to work hard. The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is one word. Go the extra mile.” Class Valedictorian Collin Dewitt Goodloe addressed the body, reminding the Class of 2024, “We are resilient, we are relevant, we are ready for the world.”



vill.

After conferring degrees and recognizing Golden and Silver Graduates, President Davis told the Class of 2024, “You don’t have next. You have now. Why be good when great is possible?”



It is worth to note, that 2024 is a historic moment at Livingstone College. Since the beginning of the Master of Business Administration program in 2022, the institution hooded its first cohort of graduates during the commencement ceremony. Sha’Keiyra Morgan is amongst the eleven graduates of the college’s first MBA degree. She said, “This is a surreal moment for me. I am proud of my institution, knowing graduate and undergraduate students gain real-life experiences and enhance their future opportunities. I feel good today and about the future of my company, considering I am now an experienced entrepreneur with mastered academic credentials.”



Service concluded with attendees in collective song to the college’s alma mater, My Livingstone, and Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Presiding Prelate of the Piedmont Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, closed with the Benediction. Silver graduate Keisha Gatling said, “It feels great to be back at my alma mater to witness the progress and pride. From new graduate programs to building renovations, Livingstone College was in 1999, and is now, a great place to be.” Attendees recessed to “Trumpet Voluntary D Major” tuned by the college’s organist, Dr. Lawrence Quinnett.



Honorary degrees were awarded to Maurice L. Coleman, the Right Reverend Kenneth Monroe, Alumnus Dr. Willie J. Tabor 71’, Presiding Elder of the Asheville, North Carolina District in the A.M.E. Zion Church, Reverend Herbert Grant, and Presiding Elder of the Hartford District of the New England Conference in the Northeastern Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Zion Church, Reverend Moses Har-

# Morehouse College Students Express Concerns Over President Biden as 2024 Commencement Speaker

By Rev. Roderick J. Josey, Education Editor

As the academic year nears its end, students at Morehouse College, a historically black men's college in Atlanta, grapple with a complex issue: the selection of President Joe Biden as the commencement speaker for the class of 2024. While the prospect of a sitting U.S. president addressing their graduating class is undoubtedly significant, concerns have been raised among the student body regarding President Biden's stance on the Israel-Gaza conflict and its implications for their graduation ceremony.



universities in engaging with political leaders and the responsibilities that come with such engagements. While commencement speakers are often chosen for their achievements and contributions to society, some students argue that honoring President Biden sends a message of tacit approval for his administration's policies, including those related to the Israel-Gaza conflict.

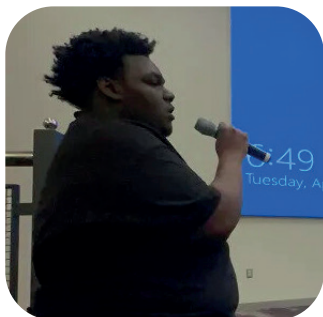
In response to these concerns, student organizations at Morehouse College have organized town hall meetings and open forums to facilitate dialogue and debate. These discussions have provided students with a platform to voice their opinions, share their perspectives, and engage in meaningful conversations about the intersection of politics, social justice, and education.

Despite the divisions within the student body, Morehouse students have a prevailing sense of unity and solidarity as they navigate these challenging discussions. Many are committed to ensuring that their voices are heard and that their concerns are taken seriously by college administrators.

As the commencement ceremony approaches, the question of President Biden's suitability as the keynote speaker remains unresolved. While some students are calling for his invitation to be rescinded, others are advocating for his address to be an opportunity for dialogue and reflection on the complexities of leadership and social justice.

Ultimately, the controversy surrounding President Biden's invitation highlights the importance of open and respectful dialogue within academic communities. It serves as a reminder that the pursuit of knowledge and the quest for justice are inherently intertwined and that universities have a crucial role to play in fostering critical thinking and civic engagement among their students.

The decision to invite President Biden has sparked a spirited debate on campus, with students expressing a range of opinions and emotions. At the heart of the matter is the recent escalation of violence between Israel and Gaza, which has resulted in civilian casualties and widespread destruction. President Biden's response to the conflict, characterized by some as insufficient condemnation of Israeli actions and a perceived lack of support for Palestinian rights, has left many students feeling uneasy about his role as their commencement speaker.



For some students, the prospect of President Biden addressing their graduating class is a source of pride and excitement. They view his presence as a symbol of progress and hope, representing the highest office in the country and a beacon of leadership for marginalized communities. However, others are troubled by what they see as a disconnect between President Biden's rhetoric on social justice issues and his administration's policies toward the Israel-Gaza conflict.



One Morehouse College student, '24, articulated the concerns shared by many of his peers: "As a black man attending Morehouse, I have always been taught to stand up for justice and speak out against oppression. It's disheartening to see President Biden's administration not taking a stronger stance on the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza. How can we celebrate our graduation with someone who doesn't fully support the values we hold dear?"

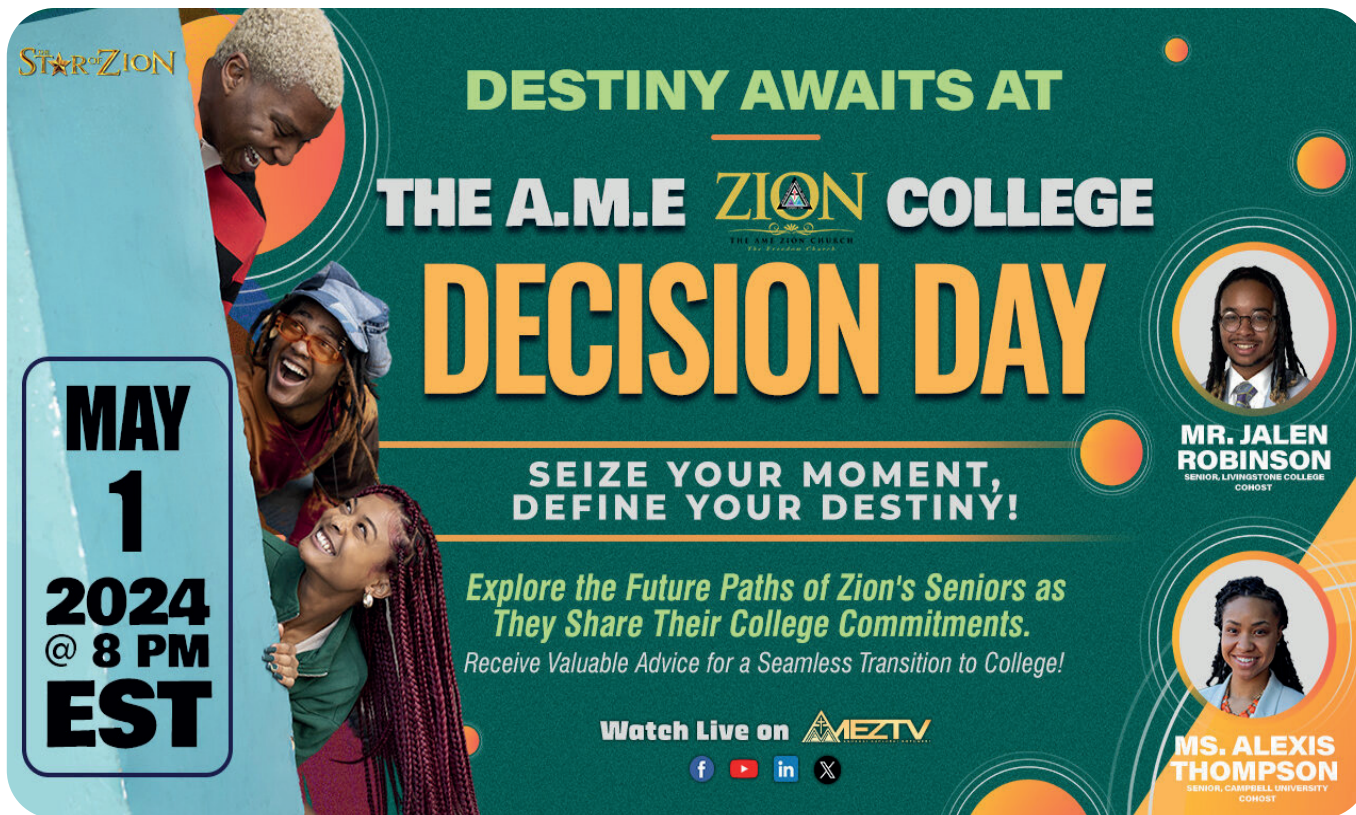


The debate over President Biden's commencement address has also reignited discussions about the role of

Protests over the Israel-Gaza conflict have rippled beyond Morehouse College, resonating with students at institutions across the United States. Xavier University of Louisiana recently made headlines by canceling their 2024 commencement speaker, United Nations Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, amid concerns over her stance on the issue. Similarly, at Duke University and Virginia Commonwealth University, students have expressed dissent by walking out of commencement ceremonies as a symbolic act of protest. These actions reflect a broader sentiment among students demanding accountability and solidarity with oppressed communities, underscoring the interconnectedness of global politics and campus activism.



# The A.M.E. Zion Church Celebrates College Decision Day



tivities. Their diverse perspectives provided invaluable guidance to high school seniors navigating their own paths.

The climax of the evening came with the announcement of college decisions by A.M.E. Zion seniors. Xavier Carter, who will be attending the University of Maryland Eastern Shore; Gloria Mitchell,

By Rev. Roderick J. Josey, Education Editor

On a night filled with celebration and anticipation, The A.M.E. Zion College Decision Day broadcast, hosted by Jalen Robinson and Alexis Thompson, offered a platform for high school seniors to announce their future plans amidst the embrace of their Zion family. The event was a testament to the support and pride within the community for its graduating members.



The broadcast started with warm introductions from Jalen Robinson, the 19th Mr. Livingstone College, and Alexis Thompson, a senior at Campbell University and Student Body Vice President. Their infectious enthusiasm set the tone for the evening, encouraging seniors to share their decisions and dreams.

One of the most inspiring moments of the evening was the engaging discussions and interviews with college students who generously shared their experiences and advice. Noah Waters, a freshman at Morehouse College, shared his journey from the Alabama-Florida Episcopal area to Morehouse, his words filled with excitement and hope. He stated, "Morehouse's rich history and commitment to nurturing black excellence drew me in, inspiring me to strive for greatness."

Bria Dionne, a sophomore at Hampton University, revealed her decision-making process: "Hampton's strong sense of community and academic rigor were key factors for me." Gianna Brown, a freshman at Livingstone College, reflected on her transition, her voice filled with pride and optimism. She expressed, "Livingstone's familial atmosphere and growth opportunities have not just met but exceeded my expectations, filling me with a sense of pride and optimism for the future." Rachel Means, a graduate student of Duquesne University from the Mid-Atlantic area, shared insights into overcoming challenges, stating, "Resilience and support from mentors have been instrumental in navigating setbacks."

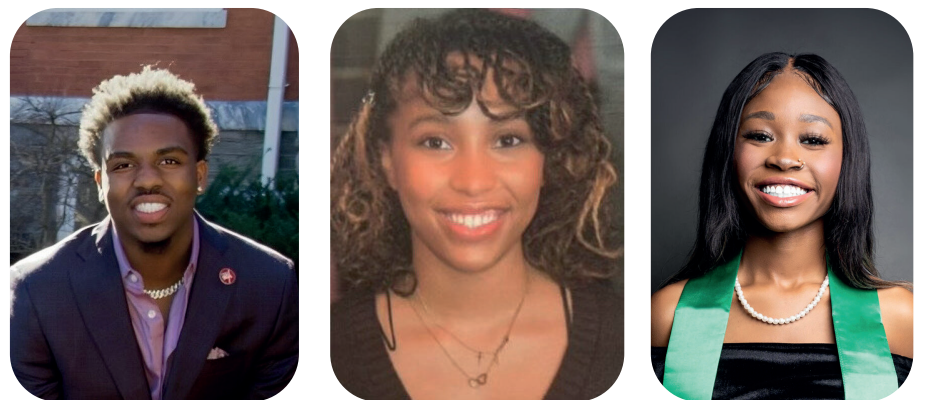


The panelists addressed questions ranging from the factors influencing their college choices to balancing academics and extracurricular ac-

who will be attending the University of Albany and would like to major in chemistry; Yamani Pearson, who will be attending our chief institution, Livingstone College, majoring in business administration with a psychology minor, and Kennedy Freeman who will be attending North Carolina A&T University majoring in architectural engineering each shared their plans, eliciting cheers and applause from viewers.



In a closing message, Jalen Robinson and Alexis Thompson encouraged the graduating seniors. "The finish line is within reach, and we believe in your ability to succeed," they affirmed, echoing the sentiments of the entire Zion family. As the inaugural A.M.E. Zion College Decision Day broadcast concluded, it left a lasting impression of unity, support, and boundless possibilities for the future.



The Star of Zion extends its gratitude to all participants and looks forward to continuing the tradition of celebrating academic achievement within The A.M.E. Zion Church denomination.

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# Socioeconomic Status and the Achievement Gap

**Rev. Dr. Garrett M. Thomas**  
**Supernumerary Minister**  
**Wallace Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, Bayonne**  
**Jersey City District**  
**New Jersey Annual Conference**  
**North Eastern Episcopal District**

According to the New York Times, December 2023, new research on the American Educational Institution indicates a direct correlation between student standardized test scores and parental income and how disparity and inequity often determines high scores and low scores long before the children even hear about an SAT. Simply said, the higher the family income, the higher the children's score, and the lower the family income, the lower the children's score. The achievement gap in education is rooted in poverty, more particularly in impoverished inner cities that are becoming drastically segregated by income, and where school districts struggle to retain the best qualified teachers, and the children report home to parents who were also miseducated by a system designed to track them into lower paying home economics and industrial arts vocations.

White flight changed the complexion of the school population in many urban neighborhoods around the same time standardized testing became a major issue as the Coleman Report (1966) concluded that schools have a limited effect on a child's level of academic achievement apart from the socioeconomic and educational status of the child's family background. The lack of influence on the part of the school dictates that the social inequity into which a child is born shall continue to haunt the child into adulthood after their educational experience expires.

Government sanctioned policy ensured that Black children would continue to be haunted by institutional racism and segregation for generations as The Kerner Commission, in 1968, determined that America was dividing into two distinct nations, one white and one Black, one privileged and one underprivileged, that would be separate and unequal in a democracy that has failed to educate "children of the ghetto" (Kerner, 1968, p. 21) and has provided an educational experience that has left them ill equipped to rise above the negative effects of racial discrimination and social and economic deprivation leading to the resentment, grief, and hostility of Black parents towards the public school system (Kerner, 1968).

Regarding the role of schools in the reproduction of social inequality, schools are agents of the state, and as such, they perpetuate the agenda that is idealized and sanctioned by the state. White privilege and white supremacy have been the sanctioned policy of the United States since its inception and is the primary cause of educational inequity and all instances of disparate treatment of non-white American citizens and residents. Many social and political conservatives often bemoan governmental efforts at affirmative action when the truth is that white people have had affirmative action benefits bestowed upon them since the founding of this nation. The U.S. Government is complicit in sponsoring affirmative action programs for white people through housing decisions that led directly to further disparities in education that have widened the achievement gap.

The 1954 Decision in *Brown vs. the Board of Education* "that reversed legal segregation in schools and other accommodations" (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 3) led to busing and other futile attempts to establish equity and rid the nation of the "separate but equal" policies. It is my position that the problem was not segregated schools but segregated communities. The answer is not to bus white middle-class students to poor neighborhood schools or to bus Black and Latinx children to white suburban schools. The answer is to desegregate neighborhoods and communities (Rothstein, 2014) and to provide the same privilege of accessible education to all Americans.

The government, however, took the opposite approach when an opportunity to establish national equity was presented during the close of World War II and the commencement of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. The Federal Housing Association was established, and suburban homes and neighborhoods were built for Caucasians in the 1940's and 50's. The white middle class depended on their own

brand of welfare provided by the New Deal and the GI Bill that led to the building of the suburbs and the new schools that were subsidized and built exclusively for them because of the privilege their whiteness afforded (Kendi, 2019). Millions of white Americans were able to afford to buy homes for the first time and home ownership became the bedrock for economic safety and economic and cultural capital for the newly created white middle-class suburbia which would surround every sizable city (Katznelson, 2005). The Levittown community in Long Island, N.Y. served as the paradigm for American suburbia, (Pounder et al., 2003) and nationwide housing projects and ghettos were built for underprivileged Black and Latinx families in the 50's and 60's.

This government sponsored segregation is tantamount to affirmative action for whites. It was an action intended to affirm white supremacy and white privilege, and confirm poverty and second class citizenship on non-white citizens, leading directly to an income gap and a net-worth gap, and creating an achievement gap in education, as brand new schools were built through a very "impressive expansion of education benefits" (Katznelson, 2005, p. 116) for white people including the resources to better prepare white students to inherit the privilege bestowed upon them by their government, while people of color were red-lined and confined to ghettos, systematically disenfranchised, and denied the resources and opportunities to gain social equity and the accumulation of wealth that emanates from the right to own property by the oppressive U.S. Government.

Further racial segregation as a result of the legislation mentioned in the previous paragraph enables the school system to contribute to the reproduction of social inequality by bestowing the humanity of privilege on one class of children and dehumanizing and demoralizing an underprivileged class of children. Since the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* 1954 decision, racial segregation in American schools has continued to exist (Katznelson, 2005). In nearly every socioeconomic aspect, Blacks and European Americans are a world apart as the circumstances of concentrated poverty, unemployment, substandard housing conditions, disproportionate rates of mass incarceration, inequity in education, and in net-worth, continue to be defined by race and racism in America (Katznelson, 2005).

The impact of socioeconomic status on learning is being addressed by efforts to exacerbate racial disparities and affirm white supremacy. Collins (2009) concluded that more research is required to determine the mechanisms that allow for such inequity to exist and persist. Nevertheless, he readily acknowledges that "social inequality results from the interplay of classrooms, schools, and the wider society" (Collins, 2009, p. 44) and that there is a class and gender bias in school curriculum that reinforces "ethnoracial antagonism, gender oppression, and educational failure" (Collins, 2009, p. 36) for marginalized participants. The reproduction of social, cultural, and socioeconomic status, privilege and underprivilege, is maintained by the educational system which then, in turn, perpetuates the achievement gap between Black and white students. When the educated recognize that this is the outcome of educational efforts and fail to remediate, education becomes a purposeful tool for social and cultural oppression.

The American educational institution is guilty of reproducing social inequality. It stands to reason that poorly educated parents would naturally raise poorly educated children and continue the cycle. According to Lareau (2011), research indicated that children of well-educated parents have a superior lexicon and greater knowledge than children of uneducated parents; she says, "By the time young people take the SAT examinations for admission to college" children of parents holding graduate degrees average one hundred fifty more points than "children of parents who are high school dropouts" (Lareau, 2011, p. 29). It makes sense that educated people would produce educated offspring. However, systemic racism empowers racist individuals to actualize their inherent belief in white supremacy and weaponize their imminent conviction in white privilege by ensuring that people of color remain poorly educated and severely underprivileged.

It is the responsibility of the schools to educate the children and keep them on their respective reading and grade levels. Carter and Warikoo (2009) stated that earlier theoretical viewpoints on cultural and educational classification posited that the educational sys-



tem provided privilege and deprived privilege, reproducing social and cultural inequity (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). The notion of personal responsibility, which is a euphemism for blaming the victim is a barrier, a hindrance for addressing how the educational process is adversely affected by socioeconomic status. In response to this position, later research in educational practices explained how the underprivileged responded and resisted dominance by the privileged class, to their own detriment, impeding their own academic performance (Carter & Warikoo, 2009). Such theories were critical of fundamentalists who claim that disadvantages in minoritized schools are a consequence of limited resources like educated parents, qualified teachers, and a systematic education that privileges some students by preparing them to be leaders and decision makers and underprivileges others by training them to be factory workers and order takers in a capitalistic society (Carter & Warikoo, 2009) where privilege, and particularly white privilege, are forms of capital.

Stating the problem of the achievement gap as an issue of privilege and underprivilege, or as a matter of opportunity and the lack thereof, directs our focus towards what goes into creating the problem and turns our attention away from what comes out of the problem as we are forced to consider the elemental components of our school systems and social systems that create drastic differences in academic achievement and economic attainment because merely viewing the issue as an achievement gap places the emphasis on the symptom; but addressing the issue in terms of inequitable opportunities, in the form of privilege and underprivilege, clarifies the underlying causes of (Welner & Carter, 2013) racism. The achievement gap is not an issue of Blackness and whiteness; it is an issue of to whom privilege is provided and to whom privilege is denied.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King once said, "Education is one of the vital tools" Black people need "to advance. And yet it has been denied . . . by devices of segregation and manipulations with quality." Malcolm X would have concurred and stated that because of the denial of privilege and the manipulation of the quality of education delivered to Black children, "efforts to integrate schools have been a miserable failure;" and anytime the sheep send their little lambs to be educated, unchecked, by the wolf, those sheep are sick. The sickness we suffer at the hands of systemic racism in education can be mitigated when we vow to educate our own. Integration has caused many of our children to neglect Historically Black Colleges and Universities, particularly the ones owned and operated by our beloved Zion, namely Livingstone, Hood, and Clinton College. We must reverse this trend. Each year, hundreds of Zion churches see children and grandchildren graduate high school. Each Local Sunday School class, each Local Christian Education Department, each Pastor, each Class Leader, and each adult should ensure that every high school graduate submits an application to our own institutions before choosing where they will seek higher education. We must educate our own and we must teach our own.

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**REV. DR. GARRETT M. THOMAS**

In April 2021, Rev. Dr. Garrett Maurice Thomas became the founder and pastor of Douglass Memorial Methodist Church in Jersey City following a seven year pastorate at St. Michael Methodist Church and after fifteen years of dedicated ministerial service in the N.J. Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church where he served as pastor of Antioch in Linden, New St. Mark in Westwood, and St. Thomas Church in Somerville. Rev. Dr. Thomas is originally from Paterson, where he answered the call to preach and served at First A.M.E. Zion Church under the tutelage of Rev. Dr. Douglas L. Maven.

Currently a supernumerary minister at Wallace Temple A.M.E. Zion in Bayonne, pastored by Rev. Dorothy A. Patterson, Rev. Thomas earned a Doctorate in Education from Rutgers University in 2023, an

M.Div. from Drew University in 2012, and a B.S., Summa cum laude, in Organizational Management and Pastoral Ministry from Nyack College, 2009. In 2008, Dr. Thomas retired after twenty-five years of service with Verizon, Inc. where he worked as a supervisor. In 2014 he began a new career as a Teacher of English Language Arts in Paterson Public Schools. His past community activities have included coaching little league softball and pee-wee football.

The youngest child born to Rev. Ernest Thomas & Mrs. Maggie Thomas of Paterson, Dr. Thomas has been married to his high school sweetheart for over thirty-seven years. Sis. Dawn R. Thomas, Esq. is an accomplished attorney and a faithful helpmeet to her husband. The couple has four children: Nikima Thomas-Stewart, Maurisa Thomas-Gainer, Garrett Thomas Jr., and John Thomas, two sons-in-law, Shaun Stewart and Jason Gainer; and they are the proud grandparents of Shaun Stewart, Jr., Layla Stewart, and Liyanna Stewart.

The Good Rev. Dr. Garrett M. Thomas is a powerful preacher, compassionate pastor, and a constant scholar who energetically and tirelessly has devoted his life to serving the Lord. He declares that his life shall be a testament to the goodness and graciousness of Christ Jesus. One of his favorite scriptures is Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." TO GOD BE THE GLORY FOR THE GREAT THINGS HE HAS DONE!

# THE HARTFORD DISTRICT WH&OMS HOLDS 4TH QUARTER MASS MEETING

By Mrs. Vanessa Clayton  
Hartford District President, WHOMS



The fourth and final Missionary Mass Meeting for the Hartford District, New England Conference, North Eastern Episcopal District this Conference Year was action-packed with “Self-Care & Wellness” information and activity. The Host Church was Spottswood, New Britain. Although we closed out this study component, we promised to maintain the principles and practices for the rest of our lives.

As this meeting always begins with the Youth Round-up we opened with the Hymn: “Take My Life and Let It Be.”

The song reminds the Youth and all of us that we are the instruments and tools that the Lord uses to pour out His love to His people and to those who are not yet His people.



The extraordinary Youth of the Hartford District, under the leadership of Sis. Shelby Adams, District Youth Secretary, opened with Worship, followed by an impactful role play on the issues of mental health, developed by the Connectional Youth Secretary, Sis. Melva Polk-Wright, “It’s Cool to Refuel.” Youth from all 15 churches participated either virtually or in person. A panel of professionals provided important feedback to help the young people and the rest of us understand how to deal with these extremely sensitive issues. They were: Rev. Frances O. Campbell, LMSW; Salena Willis, Retired Clinical Case Manager State of CT, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services; Tim Feeney, Certified Recovery Coach through Advocacy Unlimited; and Ernestine Nobou, Social Worker in the Hartford Connecticut Public School System.

We were also inspired by a solo sung passionately by Ciera Johnson of Walters Memorial and received our Youth Delegate report from the Quadrennial Convention via video from Amanda Greaves of Metropolitan. She is a student at Clark Atlanta University. She reported on her personal experience as a delegate and the unveiling of the theme, Self-care and Wellness. Her personal take-away from the Convention was to connect, give, and lead with Christ.



After greetings from the host Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Counts, Sis. Vanessa Clayton, District President, facilitated the remainder of the meeting beginning with fun movement, then deep breathing exercises. We sang “I’m a Mountain Mover, Get Out of My Way” with vigorous swaying and stretching. It’s important to move daily, whether it’s aerobics, walking, chair exercises, or dance. We practiced deep breathing and were challenged to do it for five minutes

every day. Inhaling and exhaling calms the body and relaxes your spirit. Being physically active and implementing all the tenets of self-care and wellness will remain at the forefront of our meetings and personal lives as “The Journey Continues.” By doing so we will be better equipped to “Reach the Masses in [this] Ever-changing World.”



Who better to wrap things up for us than our special guest preacher, Rev. Edith Mayfield, of the New York City District? Not only is she a former District Youth Secretary, but she is currently an Ambassador for Heart Smarts, a program designed to empower people to live heart-healthy lifestyles.

Rev. Mayfield brought a powerful message that included all the elements necessary to be healthy, wealthy, and wise. Not only did she preach with power, but she also demonstrated an active lifestyle by pumping a portable stair stepper without missing a word in her sermon. It was an incredible show of strength that we will always remember. No more excuses! We must put into practice these life-altering principles.



Her Scripture was 3 John:1-13 (Emphasis on verse 2), “Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with



you, even as your soul is getting along well.” Her topic was “Self-Care (Soul Care) & Wellness”. She told us that “health is wealth [and] self-care is soul care”. If our health is intact, we should thank

God. Regarding mental health, when going through crises, we must keep asking God for strength because He will never leave or forsake us. When we do not maintain a healthy diet, we are showing a lack of self-control and poor stewardship. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, therefore, to honor God with a nutrient-rich diet is not only our duty, but it will energize us.

Move your body. Exercise regularly. As she spoke, she was using a step exerciser to make her point. This movement is a low-impact cardiovascular exercise that reduces heart attacks, improves blood pressure, boosts fitness, and engages multiple muscles. Remove the things that destroy your health, such as alcohol and tobacco, get proper rest, stay hydrated, unplug from technology, and spend quality time with loved ones. Whatever we do, do it for the glory of God. Be sober-minded and watchful because the devil prowls around seeking someone to devour. Be determined not to let it be you!

The Hartford District is ever grateful to Rev. Mayfield for bringing a Word that not only sounded good but will inevitably DO good in the lives of the pastors, preachers, and missionaries assembled in person and participating virtually. To God be the glory!



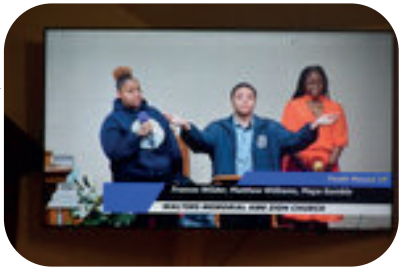
As everyone walked briskly to the offering table singing, “I’ve Got Joy Down in My Heart”, they were handed a self-assessment to rate their implementation of the self-care elements we have been studying. All were advised to keep improving at their own pace until they reached a perfect “10” in each area.

Next on the agenda was the presentation of the annual “Offering of Letters by the Local Presidents for Bread for the World. Each local church had written letters to our Senators and their Con-



gresspersons, urging them to pass the Farm Bill which is up for passage again this year. One hundred ninety-two letters were presented with more on the way. The farm bill is legislation that is critical to ending hunger in the U.S. and internationally. It doesn't just affect farmers. It also impacts every person in the U.S. who eats and buys food, as well as those facing hunger internationally. The letters were prayed over before being sent to each legislator.

To close out the year each church and District Officer submits a written report with pictures of their activities for the year. A video display was shown depicting local missionaries in action. In addition, the District Officers gave brief oral reports. A highlight of Mrs. Clayton's report was her visiting each church, to bring a set of literature, introduce the theme, determine the status of the local society, offer support where needed, and applaud the positive efforts underway in the new quadrennium. Each church is unique; however, the Constitution and By-laws require certain things to be carried out to the best of their ability. To date, nine churches have been visited with the remaining six to be scheduled before Annual Conference.



Sis. Sally Cunningham, a local liaison to Church Women United, asked each church to get involved. There are good things happening and we need to be represented. We are committed to increasing our participation in not only this organization but all of our ecumenical affiliates.

Next, two missionaries were stoled, Sis. Yvonne McIlwain, presiding,



and all were encouraged, to fulfill our motto: "Each one makes one", before Annual Conference, recognizing that this will be the last time Mrs. D. Diane Proctor will be stoling us as our Missionary Supervisor.



The outreach for this meeting was undergarments for women and children to be given to the Prudence Crandall Center, a support and shelter for victims of domestic abuse. One Thousand one hundred six items were collected.



As this all-encompassing meeting came to an end with the final business of minutes and financial reports, the roll call indicated there were 113 in attendance with the awards going to Walters Memorial, Bridgeport and Archer Memorial, Windsor.

Closing remarks were given by Presiding Elder Moses Harvill who commended all for their dedicated work and participation. A special shout-out to the musicians and tech team for another job well done.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

# Oikos Institute Awarded 175k from Trinity Church Wall St.



Rev. Dr. Allison Lee  
Social Justice Editor  
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By Athena Piryliis-Johnson  
Director of Marketing and Client Relations

The Oikos Institute for Social Impact is proud to announce being awarded a \$175K grant from Trinity Church Wall Street to develop two case studies, building on the case study done on Bethel A.M.E. Church-Morristown. Bethel, pastored by Oikos co-founder and author of "Fishing Differently: Ministry Formation in the Marketplace" Rev. Dr. Sidney Williams is the flagship anchor institution of the Fishing Differently™ Model. The Fishing Differently™ Case Study program by the Oikos Institute for Social Impact will feature two congregations in under-resourced communities effectively leveraging their assets, including Faith/Financial Capital, Intellectual Capital, Social Capital, Human Capital (F.I.S.H.), and real estate, to create social impact. These case studies will serve as practical examples for learning, offering participants insights into applying concepts in their own contexts, navigating challenges, and identifying opportunities. Selected congregations in cities with Oikos-managed learning cohorts will not only enrich Oikos' training program but also engage church audiences. Beyond education, the case studies find relevance in seminaries, public administration, philanthropy, business, and professional development programs, aiming to bridge understanding gaps between churches and potential funders/partners across sectors, fostering cross-sector collaboration.



Support, and Investments teams employ the tools of philanthropy, leveraging their convening power and voice to advance the mission goals of building neighborhoods, leadership, and capacity. Guided by the Philanthropies team, their grantmaking is strategically focused on four initiatives: Housing and Homelessness, Racial Justice, Mission Real Estate Development, and Leadership Development. Their collective efforts across these initiatives reflect a steadfast dedication to fostering an equitable society, where the distribution of resources, opportunities, and challenges transcends racial determinants.

"We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Trinity Church Wall Street for entrusting us to unveil the transformative stories of two more congregations. Beyond education, these case studies

will bridge understanding gaps, fostering collaboration between churches and potential financing for social impact projects." Rev. Dr. Sidney Williams, Co-founder of the Oikos Institute for Social Impact

"At the Oikos Institute, we are deeply appreciative of Trinity Church Wall Street, a vital catalyst for our mission in building equitable and thriving communities. We are excited about the possibilities these case studies hold in catalyzing change and grateful for Trinity Church Wall Street's partnership. The insights will not only enhance our training programs but also illuminate paths of possibility for others navigating the intersection of faith, finance, and community development." Rev. Dr. Reginald Blount, Co-founder of the Oikos Institute for Social Impact.

In pursuit of their faith-driven commitment to promoting equity and justice, Trinity Church Wall Street's Philanthropies, Neighborhood

# Wayfarer Foundation Grants Oikos Institute \$282k Grant

By Athena Piryliis-Johnson  
Director of Marketing and Client Relations  
Oikos Institute for Social Impact

The Oikos Institute for Social Impact (Oikos) is proud to announce its receipt of a \$282,000 three-year capacity general operations grant from the Wayfarer Foundation! The Wayfarer Foundation was established in 2021 by Steve Sarowitz, Philanthropist, Founder, and Chairman of Paylocity (Nasdaq: PCTY), Director of Payscale, and partner in Wayfarer Studios. It operates as a Baha'i-inspired organization with a mission to "advance humankind spiritually towards a future peaceful world civilization." Operating under the leadership of Steve Sarowitz, the foundation funds support spiritually rooted and justice-oriented nonprofits, emphasizing universal participation to foster a more hopeful, joyful, and just world. The organization collaborates with other groups and institutions to advance racial justice, economic prosperity, gender equality, unity in diversity, religious harmony, the arts, universal education, and youth empowerment.

With grant support and program service contracts such as this, Oikos will expand its work significantly and will continue to reach congregations throughout the United States. In addition to continuing or completing its work with six previously established Cohorts, by the end of 2024, Oikos is planning new Cohorts in New Orleans, Detroit, and Philadelphia, and a second Cohort in Chicago with 12-15 congregations



THE OIKOS INSTITUTE  
FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

each. Under Oikos' Discover and Dream Program, the congregations will learn to effectively leverage their assets, including Faith/Finance Capital, Intellectual Capital, Social Capital, Human Capital, and real estate, for communal transformation and economic mobility. The funding from the Wayfarer Foundation provides firm support in helping Oikos aid congregations to fish differently for social impact.

"We are truly grateful for the generous grant from the Wayfarer Foundation. This support is instrumental in propelling Oikos' mission forward, enabling us to expand our reach and impact. This funding not only sustains our ongoing work in es-

tablished Cohorts but also enables us to venture into new communities. As we continue to empower congregations in under-resourced communities through the Fishing Differently™ Model, we see this grant as a testament to the shared commitment towards fostering economic prosperity and racial justice," Rev. Dr. Sidney Williams, Co-founder and CEO of the Oikos Institute for Social Impact

"This grant will allow us to deepen our impact and continue our mission of empowering congregations for social impact. We are profoundly honored to receive their support, which not only acknowledges the significance of our work but also strengthens our resolve to create meaningful change. Together, we look forward to advancing the cause of justice and social impact in under-resourced communities," Rev. Dr. Reginald Blount, Co-founder and Executive Director of the Oikos Institute for Social Impact.

## ENTERTAINMENT & THE ARTS

# Living the Dream



Rev. Dierdre R. Parker  
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By Rev. Dierdre R. Parker, Entertainment & The Arts Editor  
Photos By Waltrina White Barnett

What do soccer, graphic design, and hip-hop have in common? I'll tell you that in a minute.

June is Black Music Month. As we head into the summer with many of our favorite artists releasing new music, this writer is curious to see which song will go down in history as the sound of Summer 2024. The recent barrage of music that resulted from the Kendrick Lamar/Drake beef has "Not Like Us" looking like a contender for the summer bop. Now, back to the question at hand: What do soccer, graphic design, and Hip-Hop have in common? Walter Barnett.

Who is Walter Barnett? Walter Barnett is the second son of Waltrina and Clifford Barnett Sr. He is a graduate of Methodist University, where he played soccer. He is Married to the beautiful and equally formidable Phavadee "Nook" Phasavath. Walter Barnett is a dreamer who is living the dream. Walter is currently a graphic designer for Dreamer by J. Cole. Yes, that J. Cole. So, how did a preacher's kid



end up working for J. Cole? Determination.

"Walter has always been a fighter," his mother, Waltrina, says. When he was born, he had some health challenges. He was diagnosed with rickets, also called Osteoma Acia, which softens and weakens bones in children. Treatment may involve adding vitamin D or calcium to the diet, medicines, or surgery. "We started putting the vitamins in his food, and he showed improvement within two weeks."

As the middle child, he looked up to his older brother. His older brother liked to draw, so Walter copied after his big brother and began to draw. While in church, his mother also made sure to have crayons and markers in her purse so that she would give him something to draw with when he was about to cry or get restless. It would calm him down. He began to use drawing to help manage his emotions.

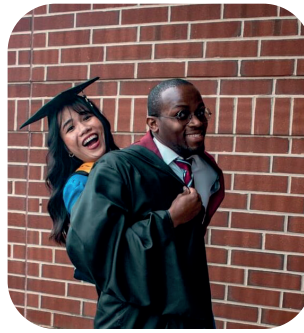
Not only is Walter a fighter, but he is also competitive. This landed him on the varsity soccer team in the 8th grade, and he played soccer all through high school and college. However, Walter is not just a competitor; he is also a motivator. "I used to prepare motivational speeches to hype up the team before games."

"Walter loves hard. He loves soccer; he plays hard. He loves his family, and he loves his wife. He is fiercely protective of what and who he loves," says Waltrina.

Walter graduated from Methodist University in 2017 and returned to his parents' home but wasn't content to stay there. He told me of something that his mentor told him. When you put a fish in a bowl, it will only grow to the size of the bowl. If you increase the size of the container,



the fish has more room to grow. Walter was already doing graphic design work but wanted to see his work in a bigger tank. He wanted to see his work in New York. Walter had a cousin in New York, Daniel Watts. He encouraged Walter to move to New York.



professional athletes. Walter has created event advertisements, posters, and social motion graphics and campaigns for The Jam, a live Spoken Word production by Daniel J. Watts. Walter also designed the logo and branding for J. Cole's signature Puma shoe, Dreamer.

Walter spoke of having lunch with his cousin, Daniel, and Felton Brown from J. Coles's team. While at lunch, Felton mentioned that J. Cole needed a design real quick. Daniel said, "Oh,

Walter can have you 10 of those by in the morning." It was something that Walter had never done before, so he went to YOUTUBE and found out how to make it. The rest is history.

On October 22, Walter was recognized by Methodist University as a Distinguished Young Alumni. Of this honor, Walter Says, "My success so far is only a reflection of the family and friends I have in my corner cheering, fighting, praying, and crying for me. Thank you to the family and friends who have and continue to keep me up. Aim high. Remember to celebrate the wins. And Love."

Walter Barnett is literally living the dream and working for the DREAMER. Let his life be an example to you. Trust God and the process, and never give up.

You can find more information @ [www.waltercbarnett.com](http://www.waltercbarnett.com)

Waltrina recalls, "He had been talking to Daniel. One night, he came into the room and said, 'Hey, y'all, I want you to know I booked a flight to New York. I'm going to hang out with Daniel and spend some time with Kristin (another cousin). We said, Okay, when are you coming back? He said. "It's a one-way flight." The rest is history.

Once he moved, he would go into the city every day. He would dress professionally and hand out business cards to "anybody who looked like they might need a graphic designer. He would watch as some of the cards were thrown in the trash, but he didn't give up. He knew what he wanted and was determined to put in the work to make it happen.

Walter did freelance graphic design work for different companies before he landed a job at 14th Street Y. He has worked for ESPN as the lead designer and creator of on-air graphics for the GetUp morning show. He has created branding and logos for Broadway entities and

## HEALTH & Wellness

# The Link between Juneteenth and Black Mental Health



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By Mr. Daman De Leon, Health and Wellness Editor

It is important to understand that there is a vital connection between the understanding and celebration of our emancipation, and our psyche.



The Emancipation Proclamation was signed and put into effect in 1863. However, it was not fully implemented across the nation, especially in those areas that remained under Confederate control, until much later. As a result, enslaved people residing in the State of Texas would not be freed until June 19, 1865. On this date, approximately 2,000 Union troops arrived in Galveston Bay, Texas and announced that the more

than 250,000 enslaved black people in the state were free by executive decree. This day came to be known as "Juneteenth" by the newly freed people. Juneteenth marks our country's second Independence Day and has been long celebrated in the African American community. However, not until recently has this monumental event become known and celebrated nationally.

The historical legacy of Juneteenth shows the value of never giving up or losing hope during challenging or "tough" times. Hope is an essential part of good mental health and vital to one's perseverance during trying times. As stated by researcher Niv Halevy, "Hope is a future-oriented, positive emotion that often emerges in challenging and difficult circumstances." Furthermore, research has shown that hope or hopefulness enhances coping and improves the quality of life in people with chronic or incurable illnesses.

Thus, the observance of Juneteenth can foster healing, promote hope, and contribute to the overall well-being of individuals and communities by:

**Honoring Collective Trauma:** Juneteenth represents more than just the ending of slavery. It symbolizes the triumph over oppression and the celebration of freedom. However, the legacy of slavery and systemic racism continues to impact the mental health of Black individuals and communities today. Acknowledging and discussing this collective trauma during Juneteenth allows for a healing space where people can reflect on their history, share experiences, and work towards resilience.

**Validation and Empowerment:** For many Black individuals, Juneteenth serves as a validation of their lived experiences. Recognizing the struggles endured by previous generations validates the challenges faced today. This validation can contribute to a sense of empowerment, resilience, and increased self-worth, which are vital aspects of mental well-being.

**Cultural Identity and Pride:** Juneteenth highlights the rich cultural heritage of African Americans, emphasizing the importance of cultural identity and pride. Celebrating this day fosters a positive sense of self, strengthens connections within the community, and boosts overall mental health. By embracing cultural traditions, stories, and achievements, individuals can enhance their self-esteem, develop a sense of belonging, and find strength in their identity.

**Healing and Emotional Well-being:** Engaging in Juneteenth activities such as community gatherings, educational events, and artistic expressions can provide healing and emotional well-being spaces. Through shared experiences and conversations, individuals can process emotions, find support, and build resilience. These activities can also serve as platforms for storytelling, art therapy, and communal catharsis, offering outlets for expressing emotions, healing generational wounds, and fostering mental wellness.

**Education and Awareness:** Juneteenth is an opportunity to educate oneself and others about African Americans' history, achievements,

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Continued on next page

and contributions. Education and awareness are crucial for dismantling systemic racism and promoting mental health equity. By learning about the struggles and triumphs of the past, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of the social determinants that influence mental health disparities and become advocates for change.

Juneteenth is a celebration of freedom and a day that holds significant relevance to mental health and well-being. By honoring the historical significance of this day, individuals and communities can engage in healing, validation, empowerment, and cultural pride. Juneteenth serves as a reminder of the resilience of the Black community while fostering education, awareness, and collective action toward promoting mental health equity. Let us embrace Juneteenth as a time for reflection, growth, and unity as we continue the journey toward healing and social justice.

As we commemorate and rejoice in Juneteenth, paying tribute to those who paved the way before us, let us remain steadfast in our commitment to advancing the well-being of our children, families, and culture, thus bringing us closer to a future of equity.



## Men's Health: It's less about Men and more about Health

By Mr. Daman De Leon, Health and Wellness Editor

The above title sums up the overall health themes for the month of June: Alzheimer's Disease Awareness, Sickle-Cell Awareness, and National HIV Testing & Prevention. As men, many of us take our health for granted. However, if we really want to be honest, we should just come out and say it: men are notorious for ignoring or not being proactive about their health. We are only provided one physical body in this lifetime, and Scripture calls us to be good stewards (Luke 16: 1-13; Eph. 5)

Instead of making an annual health appointment with a trusted health-



care provider, men tend to hang back—and worry. In particular, men might say, “If it isn’t broken, why fix it.” Yet they’ll diligently check the tire pressure on their car while failing to check their own blood pressure.

Reluctance about health and illness prevention is part of the reason behind the creation of National Men’s Health Month (June). Men often need a series of subtle and not-so-subtle reminders—along with some well-timed encouragement—to think about and prioritize their health. That’s what Men’s Health Month is really all about.

Unfortunately, due to the media, people often think of men’s health just in terms of men’s sexual health, with issues like erectile dysfunction and prostate problems topping the list of concerns. In truth, men’s health is so much more than that. Prior to the age of 60, men are more likely to develop hypertension and stroke than women. Heart attacks are twice as likely in men (regardless of cholesterol levels), and men are more than 3 times as likely to commit suicide.

That’s why a good place for all men to start is with a routine annual health checkup. This gives men and their trusted healthcare providers a chance to touch base and keep tabs on important health-related issues such as weight, blood pressure, exercise tolerance, and cholesterol levels. Illness prevention is like checking the air in your tires; it’s safer to be proactive AND it saves money!

Countless advertising dollars are spent on promoting treatments for erectile dysfunction. Yet we aren’t reaching out successfully to catch heart disease, the leading killer of American men, particularly men who smoke.

Keeping your heart strong and healthy should be a top priority for all of us, particularly men. Yes, it requires weekly exercise and some strength training—but not as much as you’d think. Just thirty minutes of aerobic exercise five days per week coupled with two sessions of muscle-strengthening activities (weight lifting or yoga, for example) is great for both your physical and mental health. Even the Apostle Paul says in his letter to Timothy that physical training is of some value. He says godliness is of value for all things, but physical training still of some value

Weight and diet are essential to men’s health and illness prevention. Know your waist size? Most men with a waist size of 40 or more are at higher risk for problems such as type 2 diabetes, stroke, and heart disease. Your healthcare provider will be thrilled to work with you on developing a diet and creative exercise plan that’s safe and effective.

When it comes to cancer, heart disease, and lung disease, we know that smoking—including exposure to second hand tobacco smoke—is disastrous for your health, doubling the risk for heart attack and stroke. So is excessive use of alcohol and other drugs.

Fortunately, your healthcare provider can help you develop a plan to quit or cut down on your use of unhealthy substances with treatments and strategies including medication, therapy, self-help, or (most effectively) a combination of the three.

Ultimately, we’re all at some risk for the same diseases regardless of gender: heart disease, stroke, cancer, depression, etc. That said, concerns specific to men such as prostate health should be discussed with a provider who can outline the timing, options, and the pros and cons of screenings and treatment.

Lastly, men are less likely to discuss their emotional health than women. Yet more than 6 million American men suffer from depression and

**SICKLE CELL DISEASE**

A life-threatening disorder where red blood cells are deformed & clog small blood vessels. It is caused by a genetic misspelling that was basically understood 60 years ago, yet can only be cured by a bone marrow transplant from an unaffected donor. That can work well for some patients but not all.

NIH

suicidal thoughts each year. In spite of advances in our understanding and treatment of clinical depression, suicide is one of the top nine causes of death among men. Healthcare professionals now accept the fact that emotional health and physical health are equally important. We know that intense emotional stressors are linked to flare ups of



numerous conditions including irritable bowel syndrome and chronic low back pain.

Most providers now understand the need and value in treating physical and emotional health with equal care and concern. A first step is learning how to talk about health and emotions in the same way men and boys talk readily about maintaining their favorite machines. Please allow the opportunity and initiative of National Men's Health Month to help the men in your lives get on board with regular checkups, open discussions with their health team, and healthier lifestyle choices.

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## Nurturing our Emotional Health

**By Dr. Samantha R. Jordan, Psy.D.**  
Licensed Psychologist

According to [mentalhealth.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.gov), "Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices." We've had so many obstacles thrown at us since the beginning of 2020 that have stressed our capacities to respond in healthy ways, such as COVID-19, racial traumas, political frustrations, and financial pressures, to name a few.

#### According to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

- *The suicide rate among Black youth has been found to be increasing faster than any other racial/ethnic group.*

- *Black adults living below the poverty line are more than twice as likely to report serious psychological distress than those with more financial security.*

- *Additionally, members of the Black community face structural racism, leading to barriers to accessing the care and treatment they need. Only one in three Black adults who need mental health care receive it.*

#### According to the CDC:

- *Only one in three African Americans who need mental health care receives it.*

- *Compared with non-Hispanic whites, African Americans with any mental illness have lower rates of any mental health service use, including prescription medications and outpatient services, but higher use of inpatient services.*

- *Black people with mental health conditions, particularly schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and other thought disorders, are more likely to be incarcerated than people of other races.*

- *Compared with the general population, African Americans are less likely to be offered either evidence-based medication therapy or talk therapy.*

#### Early warning signs of a mental health problem could include:

Eating or sleeping too much or too little, pulling away from people and usual activities, feeling emotionally numb or like nothing matters, having unexplained aches and pains, feeling hopeless or helpless, having thoughts of suicide or self-harm, yelling or fighting with others, smoking/drinking/drug use, experiencing severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships, having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head, and having flashbacks of events that were life-threatening or extremely fear-producing.

#### Helpful strategies to nurture good mental health include:

Keeping a regular sleep schedule and stopping all use of electronics

at least 30 minutes before bedtime, eating a balanced diet with less processed food and more healthy homecooked meals, getting regular exercise or physical movement at least 30 minutes each day, connecting with others through organizations/community outreach efforts/support groups, engaging in enjoyable hobbies, learning to calm inner thoughts with meditation and relaxation strategies, and taking a break from social media and excessive news consumption. You can find additional resources for Black mental health at <https://988lifeline.org/help-yourself/black-mental-health/>

#### If you or someone you know is in a mental health crisis:

- *Text 988 to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline if you or someone you know is in crisis*

- *If you call 911, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) suggests the following: Share all the information you can with your 911 operator. Tell the dispatcher that your loved one is having a mental health crisis and explain their mental health history and/or diagnosis. Many communities have crisis intervention team (CIT) programs that train police officers to handle and respond safely to psychiatric crisis calls. You should ask for a CIT officer if possible.*

#### About the author:

Dr. Samantha Jordan is a licensed psychologist. She is a graduate of the Clinical Psychology program at the Georgia School of Professional Psychology at Argosy University, where her academic concentration was in Clinical Neuropsychology. She has extensive experience in psychological assessment and therapy with children, adolescents, and adults with a variety of presenting circumstances. These include ADHD, learning disabilities, mood and anxiety disorders, traumatic brain injury, and bereavement. Her clinical interests include psychological and neuropsychological assessment, psychoeducational assessment, increasing compliance with mental health/physical health treatment regimens, improving self-esteem, and decreasing anxiety. She is an active member of Shaw Temple A.M.E. Zion Church.



The article is submitted as a part of the Prescribing Positivity Series, Office of Health Ministry of The A.M.E. Zion Church.

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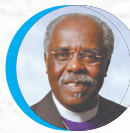
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# Capsule Summer Wardrobe



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By Ms. Angel Eason, Lifestyle Editor  
Photos By Freepik.com

Have you thought about what your style will be this summer? Try building a capsule summer wardrobe. A capsule wardrobe is multiple clothing items that can mix and match to create numerous outfits. A few of my favorite summer clothing items are maxi dresses for the ladies and linen shirts for the gentlemen. Of course, pair the maxi dresses with



sandals and the linen shirts with a pair of chino shorts or linen pants. Breathable and lightweight clothing is important for the hot summer months.



capsule wardrobe. You can add neutrals to your closet without abandoning your style. Neutrals will pair well with bright colors and give you endless outfit options.



To help curate your summer wardrobe, I have included ten essential items for you to mix and match, to be worn to church, summer cookouts, the beach, and other fun places. You do not have to break the bank to add these items. You can find them at your local thrift store, consignment shop, discount store, and online. You can even do a clothing swap with your friends to enhance your wardrobe with items they no longer use. I am all about saving the environment and a coin.

**Women:**

1. Maxi dress
2. White button-up shirt
3. Neutral sandals
4. Linen pants
5. Low or kitten heels
6. Denim shorts
7. Sunglasses - Brown or Black
8. Straw tote bag or cross-body

9. Wide-brim hat or a cap
10. Light jacket or cardigan

**Men:**

1. Linen shirt
2. Linen pants
3. Denim shorts
4. Graphic tee
5. Linen blazer
6. Sunglasses
7. Hat
8. White sneakers
9. White tee
10. Hoodie

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# Short Story of Episcopal Candidate Reverend Dr. Bernardo Ngunza

By Paula Ngunza

A very dedicated minister of the kingdom of God and to The A.M.E. Zion Church with over 33 years of experience, he has served as a Pastor, Presiding Elder, and Bishop's assistant under the leadership of Bishop Warren, Battle, Crenshaw, Lartey, and Dogbe.



missionary school, he was appointed the same year to serve as a pastor at Kizanga da Barraca Church. Married to Rosa Ngunza, they have five daughters and three grandchildren. He enjoys spending time reading history books.



He is passionate about astrology and shares it during his sermons sometimes. He has faced many trials during his years in ministry but still believes ministry is all about Jesus.

Mention the word faith; it reflects Reverend Ngunza's life. He never imagined being a minister, but by God's will and divine appointment, he is one. The calling to ministry started when the chief of the government secret force at his birthplace, Malanje, Angola, asked him to join the secret force in exchange for never reading the Bible and praying. His mother received the notice and, as a prayerful woman, decided to pray based on Daniel's prayer.

Having a personal relationship with Jesus does make one a Christian. Additionally, you must pray, fast, and read the word of God (Bible). He advocates for evangelism and church growth as he runs to be the next Bishop of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

On the following Sunday, the board of trustees at Reverend Ngunza's Church was notified and made the decision to send Reverend Ngunza to Quessua Missionary School, which belongs to the United Methodist Church. After completing



*With God's Help + Yours = I will succeed in becoming the next Bishop in the life of The A.M.E. Zion Church.*



# REV. DR. ALDON ALFRED CARSON SEEKS EPISCOPACY

By Mrs. Kathryn Finch Warren  
Photos submitted by: Mrs. Dorian Carson

Yonkers, NY- June 2024 ... The trajectory of the presiding elders' spiritual journey in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church began when he was a child. He faithfully and dutifully adhered to the path which was set before him.



*"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" Proverbs 22:6*

The love for the A.M.E. Zion Church stems from the care and support he experienced at Smyre's Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church in Catawba, NC. He is the progeny of Aldon L., and Clara T. Carson who raised him and his older siblings in a Christian environment. His mother ensured that he was actively involved in age-appropriate children's ministries at Smyre's Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, the Statesville District and the Western North Carolina Conference. This is where he began to develop and hone his leadership skills.

As a youth, he attended District Conferences, Sunday School Conventions, Annual Conferences and Quadrennial Christian Education Meetings. Also, he faithfully attended the Christian Education Mid-Winter Meetings. In his local church he served in the following positions: Acolyte, Choir Member, Trustee, Class Leader, and Budget Committee Chairperson.

On the District level he served as the Statesville District Youth Council President, Director of Youth of the Christian Education Department, and served as chairman of the Finance Committee for the Statesville District. On the Annual Conference level, he served as the Co-Conference Youth Director for Christian Education for the Western North Carolina Conference.

As a connectional leader he served on the Revisions Committee, Restructuring Commission, and served as the North Eastern Episcopal District Representative for the Connectional Presiding Elders Council.

*"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" II Timothy 2:15*

His educational background is anchored in the AME Zion Churches chief institutions. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Livingstone College, graduating Cum Laude, majoring in Social Studies. His Master of Divinity degree was obtained from Hood Theological Seminary. Rev. Dr. Carson received an earned Doctor of Ministry degree from Hood Theological Seminary. The thesis focus was "Discovery of Healthy Living for Pastors." As shepherd of the pastors in the New York City District, it is essential that pastors are healthy in order to lead healthy congregations.

*"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said, I, here am I, send me" Isaiah 6:8*

His trial sermon was preached at Smyre's Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church in December 1991. The Reverend A.C. Winfield is his father in the ministry. Bishop Reuben Lee Speaks ordained him as a Deacon in 1993 and an Elder in 1995. The charges to which Rev. Carson was assigned by The Right Rev. Reuben L. Speakers and The Right Rev. Cecil Bishop in the Western North Carolina Conference was Mount Vernon A.M.E. Zion Church, Statesville, NC (1993), Grace A.M.E. Zion Church, Charlotte, NC (1995), and Popular Springs A.M.E. Zion Church, Lincolnton, NC (1996). The Right Rev. George W.C. Walker assigned him to the Institutional A.M.E. Zion Church, Yonkers, NY (1997), and Rush Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, Jamaica, NY (2002) bringing him to the New York Conference. In 2006, under the Episcopal Leader of the Right

Reverend George E. Battle, Jr. he was appointed Presiding Elder of the New York City District. During his tenure as Presiding Elder he served as Supply Pastor to multiple congregations. In all of them, he attempted to be a preacher of righteousness.

In 2015, Bishop Dennis V. Proctor appointed him as Presiding Elder of the London District in addition to continuing to serve as the Presiding Elder of the New York City District. While serving in London two new congregations were established. One being an international congregation spanning multiple countries in Europe and Africa.

The Presiding Elder serves on the Board of Directors of the Harriet Tubman Home and the New York Conference Board of Trustees. He also serves as the Chair of the Presiding Elders Council of the North Eastern Episcopal District. He was inducted in the United Negro College Fund, Livingstone College, Leaders Hall of Fame in 2011.

**“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 5:6**

Other affiliations to which he belongs are the N.A.A.C.P., life member, and a member of the National Action Network (NAN) Harlem, NY. He has held membership in Zion Masonic Lodge in Catawba, NC. His ecumenical affiliations are with the Ministers’ Alliances in Long Island and in New York City. He served as president of the Ministerial Alliance for the New York Annual Conference.

**“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” Hosea 4:6A**

Being proactive, Presiding Elder Carson initiated the partnership with Clinton Jr. College for the aspiring ministers in the New York City District. This program is the first district studies accredited program in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

**“He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtaineth favor with the Lord.” Proverbs 18:22**

He met Dorian Marie Joseph when he was pastoring Institutional A.M.E. Zion Church in Yonkers, NY. At the time she was Chairperson of Y.A.C.M for the Long Island District. Unbeknownst to her, God was preparing her to be a helpmate for a minister of the gospel as stated in Genesis 2:18.

Dorian was laboring in the vineyard of Christendom at the Woods Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church, Bronx, NY where she held membership. At Woods, she was Preacher Steward, Director of Christian Education and Superintendent of Sunday School. Dorian was also a member of the Junior Usher Board, Junior Choir, and a member of Y.A.M.S. She also served as local Girl Scout troop leader. Dorian also served as the Assistant Director of Children in the New York City District.

They were joined in Holy Matrimony in June 2003 by Bishop George W.C. Walker, Sr. during Rev. Carson’s tenure as pastor of Rush Temple A.M.E. Zion Church in Jamaica, NY. Dorian currently serves as the Superintendent of the Buds of Promise of the New York City District. Dorian obtained her Master of Business Administration degree in December 2023 from American University’s Kogod School of Business and serves as a consecrated Deaconess.

**“You shall know them by their fruits.” Matthew 7:16**

They are the proud parents of two lovely daughters, Alexandria, and Alexis. They too, were brought up under the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Alexandria served as the New York Conference Youth Council President. Alexandria is the Youth delegate to the United Nations under the auspices of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women. She serves as the Eastern Region Vice President, representing V.I.C.Y.C. of the A.M.E. Zion Church. Alexandria is a junior at American University in Washington, D.C. where she is majoring in Biology. Currently, Alexandria is completing her final semester as a junior as an exchange student at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

Alexis is the Youth Council President of the New York Conference Youth Council. She serves as the V.I.C.Y.C Public Relations Officer of the A.M.E. Zion Church. Alexis serves as the technology technician of Calvary A.M.E. Zion Church. Alexis is a freshman at Morgan State University in Baltimore, MD, where she is majoring in Multiplatform Production.

Both young ladies began their liturgical dance ministry at Calvary A.M.E. Zion Church. They continued in this ministry with the inter-generational liturgical dance ministry of the New York City District, where they were among the principal dancers. The Presiding Elder holds this edict to be true: As for me and my house, we will serve the

Lord as stated in Joshua 24:15B.

**“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.” Colossians 3:23**

Presiding Elder Carson serves faithfully in two Presiding Elder districts, on two continents. For the past 8 years he has served them concurrently.

**“Write the vision and make it plain.” Habakkuk 2:2-3**

#### Episcopal Action Plan:

- 1. Evangelism and Missions:** Presiding Elder will strengthen the local church by encouraging infrastructure development. This will include planting churches in local communities that lack the AME Zion Church presence. He will promote the development of day-care centers, after school centers, senior care centers, and health-care facilities in existing churches. This will increase and enhance the membership of the local churches. Presiding Elder Carson will work with local agencies to research and provide needed services such as housing development in areas where an AME Zion presence will grow, thrive, and support the community.
- 2. Fostering Unity:** He will strive to bridge gaps and foster unity among local churches, congregants, promoting an atmosphere of inclusivity, transparency, mutual respect, and understanding across diverse backgrounds within the church.
- 3. Spiritual Guidance and Mentorship:** As a Bishop, Presiding Elder will offer spiritual guidance and mentorship to pastors and church leaders, nurturing their growth and helping them navigate challenges while ensuring alignment with the values and mission of the A.M.E. Zion Church.
- 4. Empowering the Community:** Building on his ministerial journey of being a resource, Presiding Elder will work to lead initiatives that empower the community, focusing on education, social justice, and support to marginalized groups. Thereby, extending the church’s positive impact beyond the walls of the local churches.
- 5. Strengthening Global Connections:** With an international perspective, the Presiding Elder will work on strengthening relationships with our international churches and global partnerships, inclusive of ecumenical relationships, fostering collaboration and mutual support among different branches of the AME Zion Church worldwide.
- 6. Promoting Youth Engagement:** Recognizing the decline and the importance of younger generations, Presiding Elder will work to develop programs and initiatives that actively involve and empower youth within the church, ensuring their active participation and leadership development.

By employing these strategies and leveraging his passion, experience, and dedication to the AME Zion Church, Presiding Elder Carson will lead the church towards a path of continued growth, community impact, spiritual depth, and relevance in an evolving diverse society.

All of these initiatives found in his episcopal action plan speaks to his platform that:

**CARSON C.A.R.E.S.  
COMPASSIONATE  
ANOINTED  
RELEVANT  
ETHICAL  
SERVANT Leader**



As Rev. Dr. Aldon Alfred Carson seeks the esteemed position of Bishop within the AME Zion Church, his journey is marked by an unwavering commitment to the mission and vision. He has an undeniable love for the church. His leadership thus far can be a testament to how he will be a beacon guiding the AME Zion Church toward greater inclusivity, international collaboration, and a future where the church not only endures but thrives in its mission to uplift souls and foster a profound connection with the Lord.

He solicits your prayers and your votes as he continues on the trajectory journey that he has been traveling for Zion since his youth as a servant leader with a goal of building a stronger Zion. As the hymn writer states “To serve the present age, my calling to fulfill, O May it all my pow’rs engage to do my Master’s will!

# It's Time to Travel



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By Dana G. Stilley, Financial Freedom Editor

As the weather begins to warm up, thoughts of spending leisure time away from home frolicking with loved ones quickly begin to flood our minds and worry our spirits. Especially if we failed to begin our vacation planning months ago. Most people start planning their dream summer vacation during the winter months when demand for the best hotel and cheapest flights is lower, and there are many options to choose from. For those who didn't plan early but still need a getaway - don't despair. There is still hope for a great vacation without breaking the bank. Keep these tips in mind.

Even if discretionary income is not a concern for you, first and foremost, a vacation budget should be established. Determining what you can afford and want to spend is the necessary foundation for all the other decisions that must be made regarding your vacation. Next, determine the destination and dates. Determining the destination will heavily influence your mode of transportation. Travel arrangements

that require a departure within a short number of days generally have low availability and are more costly. It is very important to be flexible and patient as you work to secure these arrangements. Make a list of several ideal locations and dates, and patiently re-search your options. If you are flying to your destination, remember that departing a day earlier or later or from a nearby airport may be a cheaper option.



Whether your travels take you near or far this summer, I hope you enjoy some quality time away from the rat race, resting, relaxing, and rejuvenating.

## SPORTS

# The Playmakers Corner presents Faith, Family, and Football: An Exclusive Interview with Coach Steve Wilks



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By Alexis D. Hutchinson, Sports Editor

In a compelling dialogue that transcends the boundaries of sports, The Playmakers Corner had the privilege of engaging in a candid conversation with Coach Steve Wilks, a revered figure in the realm of football and former defensive coordinator for San Francisco 49ers. From his deep-rooted faith to his unwavering commitment to family and community, Wilks's journey offers a multifaceted perspective on the intersection of faith, family, and football.

### FAMILY AND FAITH

Wilks's journey traces back to his formative years spent at East Stonewall AME Zion Church, where the seeds of faith and community were sown. Reflecting on his upbringing, Wilks fondly reminisces about his involvement in the church choir and his mother, Reba Wilks, serving as the church secretary and how she is still very much active with the Lay Council. He stated the profound influence of current Pastor, Rev. Dr. Amy S. Ciceron. "East Stonewall is more than a church to me; it's a cornerstone of my identity," Wilks shares. "It's where I learned the values of integrity, service, and compassion that continue to guide me to this day." Wilks went on to say, "Everything starts with my faith, how I live my life, how I conduct my day-to-day operations, I have to have that spiritual background. It's what gets me through the day and my family allows me to do what I love doing, I often call them Team Wilks, they are always behind me 100%."

The theme of family resonates deeply with Wilks, who credits his wife, Marcia, and their three children as pillars of support throughout his career. Marcia is my rock, my confidante, and my biggest supporter," he shares with a smile. "She's the General Manager of 'Team Wilks' - handling day-to-day operations, personnel matters, and ensuring our family operates like a well-oiled machine."

### COACHING CAREER AND NFL JOURNEY

Wilks's coaching odyssey is a testament to his resilience and determination to make a difference on and off the field. Beginning his career at Johnson C. Smith University, Wilks honed his craft while imparting invaluable lessons to his players. "Coaching at JCSU was a transforma-

tive experience," Wilks recalls. "It taught me the importance of perseverance, resourcefulness, and making the most of every opportunity." JCSU is where he patented the saying, "Be Big Time Where You Are!" Wilks went on to say, "As I moved throughout the ranks and became a head coach in the National Football League, I never left those humble beginnings. A lot of young coaches and people in general want to move up quickly and fast and I remind them to "Be Time Where You Are." In other words, take care of what God has giving you, be worthy of that and show thy self-approved and now he will order your steps. And that's always been my thing and never get caught up exactly where I am and just try to stay in the moment."

Transitioning to the NFL, Wilks's impact as a defensive guru was felt across the league, as he mentored standout players and orchestrated formidable defensive units. Drawing from his experiences coaching standout athletes like Josh Norman, he underscores the significance of mentorship and personal development in nurturing success both on and off the field. "Building relationships is paramount," Wilks emphasizes. "Whether on the field or off it, establishing trust and rapport with players is essential to unlocking their full potential." He noted, the transition of the type of player Josh Norman was with him in Carolina versus in Washington with the Commanders. Wilks had a relationship that allowed him to showcase the best in Norman both on and off the field.

As an interim coach for the Carolina Panthers, Wilks's leadership prowess shone brightly, guiding the team to a commendable .500 coaching record amidst adversity. "It's about fostering a culture of accountability, commitment, and trust," Wilks explains. ACT as a Champion - A-Accountability, C-Commitment, T-Trust. "I try to ask my coaches and players to ACT as a Champion!" When players buy into the team's vision and support one another, remarkable things can happen. "We must surrender our individual me for a bigger we! "There was an analogy I created with a green tomato or ripe tomato. We always want to be green because once you become ripe you become rotten. And so, there's always a development and yearn to want to grow and get better for the team as well as myself," said Wilks.

### COMMUNITY SERVICE/PHILANTHROPIC EFFORTS

Beyond the gridiron, Wilks's commitment to service and philanthropy is evident through initiatives like the 3T Foundation, which aims to em-

power youth through education and mentorship. “The 3T Foundation is a labor of love,” Wilks shares. “It’s about equipping young people with the tools they need to succeed in life, both on and off the field.” 3T Foundation stands for Teach, Train, Task – Teach for knowledge. Train for excellence. So, the youth can be prepared for the Task they will be faced with daily. “I have always had a passion for the city of Charlotte and this community especially the West Side, where I grew up, and going to West Charlotte High School.” The foundation works with Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Schools each academic year and this year they will be providing six (6) \$5,000 scholarships to deserving high school seniors. Learn more about his foundation at: <https://www.3tfoundation.info/>

Wilks’s dedication to education extends to his alma mater, Appalachian State University, where he established a scholarship to support student-athletes from underrepresented backgrounds. “Education is the great equalizer,” Wilks asserts. “I’m passionate about creating opportunities for deserving students to pursue their dreams and make a positive impact in their communities.” He went on to say, “I had a conversation with my wife [Marcia], The General Manager, and I told her this has been on my heart, and we worked with Director of Athletics, and we partnered together to come up with this scholarship, the Steve and Marcia Wilks Post-Graduate Diversity and Inclusion Scholarship.” This yearly scholarship will be provided to one Mountaineer student-athlete from an underrepresented population who is pursuing a graduate degree at Appalachian State University. Each year’s recipient will also be provided an internship within the athletics department that will focus on developing transferable skills, networking, mentorship, and professional development. The internship also includes assisting with the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina

#### FUN/GET TO KNOW YOU

Amidst the rigors of coaching, Wilks finds solace in simple pleasures like enjoying pizza, Doritos, and Reese’s Peanut Butter Cups. “Some-

times, it’s the little things that bring the most joy,” Wilks quips with a smile. “Whether it’s game day or film night, indulging in my favorite snacks is a small but meaningful ritual.”

If not for football, Wilks envisions himself as a life coach or motivational speaker, channeling his passion for leadership and mentorship into empowering others. “Serving others is my calling,” Wilks affirms. “Whether on the sidelines or in the community, I’m committed to making a difference and inspiring others to reach their full potential.”

#### WORDS OF WISDOM

In parting, Wilks offers sage advice to aspiring coaches and leaders, urging them to embrace hard work, dedication, and patience on their journey to success. “Stay focused, stay disciplined, and stay true to yourself,” Wilks advises. “Success is not just about wins and losses; it’s about making a positive impact and leaving a lasting legacy.”

As the interview draws to a close, Wilks expresses gratitude to East Stonewall AME Zion Church and his supporters, acknowledging their role in shaping his journey. “I am who I am because of the faith, family, and community that have supported me,” Wilks concludes. “It’s nothing more important to me than my faith and family and the brand that I represent and just know you guys, The A.M.E. Zion Church, are a part of that brand. You guys have helped me, particularly this actual church helped developing me and giving the skills and fortitude to do things that I am doing, thank you again A.M.E. Zion!

In a world often defined by competition and adversity, his story serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration, reminding us of the transformative power of faith, family, and football. To watch the full interview and exclusive footage of Coach Wilks, visit AMEZTV for an inside look at his journey.

## WORLD POLITICS

# Black Church, Israel and Palestine



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By Rev. Ronald A. Nathan, World Politics Editor

The dramatic, loud and visible protest of our university students concerning the contemporary Israel-Palestine issue makes the official pronouncements of the institutional Black Church in the United States of America and the United Kingdom seem like total silence.

Student protests on university campuses have crossed the Atlantic Ocean from the United States of America to the United Kingdom and Europe. At the London School of Economics and the Queen Mary University of London students have set up encampments within the premises of their university campuses. Furthermore, reports are coming in of growing student protests in the Netherlands and Belgium. All of these conjoined to illustrate the latest signs of a growing level of public discontent with the current impasse regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict.

In the United Kingdom young Black Christians are asking questions in private chat rooms for there is little appetite by their church leaders for openly addressing their concerns. The Star of Zion in its commitment to bringing relevant and informed perspectives to our diverse readership on both sides of the Atlantic, acknowledge that to attempt to deconstruct the diametrically opposed and passionately held views of those who call themselves Pro-Israel and Pro-Palestinian is fraught with danger. We recognise that using social media platforms and traditional media outlets open, constructive debate and discussion of the subject matter and its nuanced issues that have brought us to this place in history are ostracised, curtailed or certainly discouraged.

It is quite clear that there are those who will not allow certain facts to be stated and analysed for it would bring greater clarity to the century old Israel-Palestine discussions. It would seem here, that on one hand, the aim by some is to garner greater sympathy for the Israeli victims of the 7 October 2023 massacre and to deflect from any focus on the on-going destruction of the state of Palestine and its peoples. On the other hand, there are those who do not wish us to question Palestinian political methods and or Arab nationalism and the State of Israel.

Many Black Church leaders and Black Christians hold to an interpretation of the ancient biblical people called Israel and conflate their evolution, aspirations, histories, literature, and lived experiences as one and the same as the modern state of Israel.

Such a theological stance makes it difficult or near nigh impossible to define a Black prophetic position or positions on the Israel-Palestine question, that honours our legacy as the Freedom Church and at the same time call for public righteousness and justice by declaring truth to power. A great start would be to be define the terms ‘Judaism’ and ‘Zionism’. These two terms are not the same and should not be used interchangeably.

Judaism is the practices and beliefs of the Jewish religion. Expressed according to Rabbi Milton Steinberg as being made up of no less than seven strands: doctrine, ethics, rites and customs, laws, a sacred literature, institutions, and the people Israel. Followers



of Judaism are multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-national.

Zionism is an ideology formulated in the mid-nineteenth century. Zionism is a movement that seeks to create and maintain a Jewish majority state and is committed to Jewish dominion in historic Palestine. This

ideology was nurtured in the breast of the Western European colonial imagination and facilitated by the British Settler-Colonial experiment.

In the throes of World War One the British received a trusteeship mandate from the League of Nations to govern Palestine. In 1917, in order to win Jewish support, the British Balfour Declaration promised the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Ottoman-controlled Palestine. British control over Palestine then was a strategic move to keep Egypt and the Suez Canal within British sphere of influence.

So, as we, the Black Church, seek to regain our moral and ethical compass and to take prophetic action around the Israel-Palestine issues let us be aware that part of the British trusteeship mandate was to prepare the country to be a “national home for the Jews,” without impairing the civil and religious rights of the indigenous Arab people”.

How successful the British were and what happened to the oversight and responsibility of the United Nations (successors of the League of Nations)? The consequences of the answer to those questions are found in the shambles which produce the 7 October 2023 massacre by the Palestinian Sunni group Hamas and to all intent and purposes the present destruction of the State of Palestine.

## OPINION

# Considering Writing a Book? Publish your Story

By Asia Briana Brown



May 17, 2024 - Recently, I had a conversation with a couple of leaders from my church. At one point, we discussed our hobbies, and I shared that I was a writer who had published a couple of poetry collections. When asked about my publishing process, I shared my Amazon self-publishing journey, acknowledging how a good friend from college, Qualia Hendrickson, Esq., “Q,” guided me through the

process as she was in the process of building her own book publishing consultation company, Q Writes a Book. Responding to that question about my book publishing journey made me wonder whether most people perceive self-publishing as a complex process. While it can be difficult at times, publishing your first book can be fun if you have the determination and the support to bring your story to fruition.

As a creative, my book process began in 2017 while I was completing my master’s degree at UNC Greensboro. While taking a break from class assignments, I began organizing digital files around my future goals: publish a book. I knew that *Bring Me Back Home New Orleans*, the title poem from my first published poetry collection, would be the first book that I published. This part was easy because I leaned into what poems felt the most natural for me to release to the world. So, before you publish your first book, lean into what subject matter or parts of your story (if publishing an autobiographical work) stand out to you.

Three years later, in 2020, as I—like the rest of the world—navigated the uncertain and often stressful life circumstances perpetuated by COVID-19, Q and I spoke about publishing *Bring Me Back Home, New Orleans*. After a failed attempt to be published by a university press through their submission contest, Q invited me to be her first client, gratis, for Q Writes a Book, offering to guide me through the self-publishing route as my book publishing consultant. I immediately said “Yes!” because having known Q for nearly ten years at this point—her grit and expertise at setting deadlines—I knew she was the best person to motivate me to see this book project to completion.

On that note, I encourage you to seek help from a trusted person to guide you through your first book publishing project. Q and I were both working full-time, but we each made the time to carry *Bring Me Back Home* to fruition. Apart from giving me editing advice—including advice on where to add more content—Q connected me to another creative who edited the dimensions of my book cover to fit Amazon’s publication standards. The editing process takes the longest, so if you have a hard deadline to publish your book, plan accordingly.

The self-publishing journey can be a very rewarding experience. Remember to choose the content your soul feels best represents you, select a trusted person or team to guide you and be patient with the process. The world will patiently wait for you.



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