

THE BIBLICAL
SIGNIFICANCE
OF MONTHS.
ELECTIONS & VOTING



Changing of
the Guards:
London Midland
Conference



THE STAR OF ZION

OCTOBER 2024 | VOL 148 NO. 10 | STAROFZION.ORG | THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE A.M.E. ZION CHURCH


A complex background collage featuring a central image of a man in a white shirt holding a black lamb. Surrounding this are various portraits of political figures, including Kamala Harris and Donald Trump, and a globe of the Earth. The background is a mix of blue and red with star patterns.

STAND UP!

SPEAK UP!

MAKE HISTORY AT THE POLLS





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.

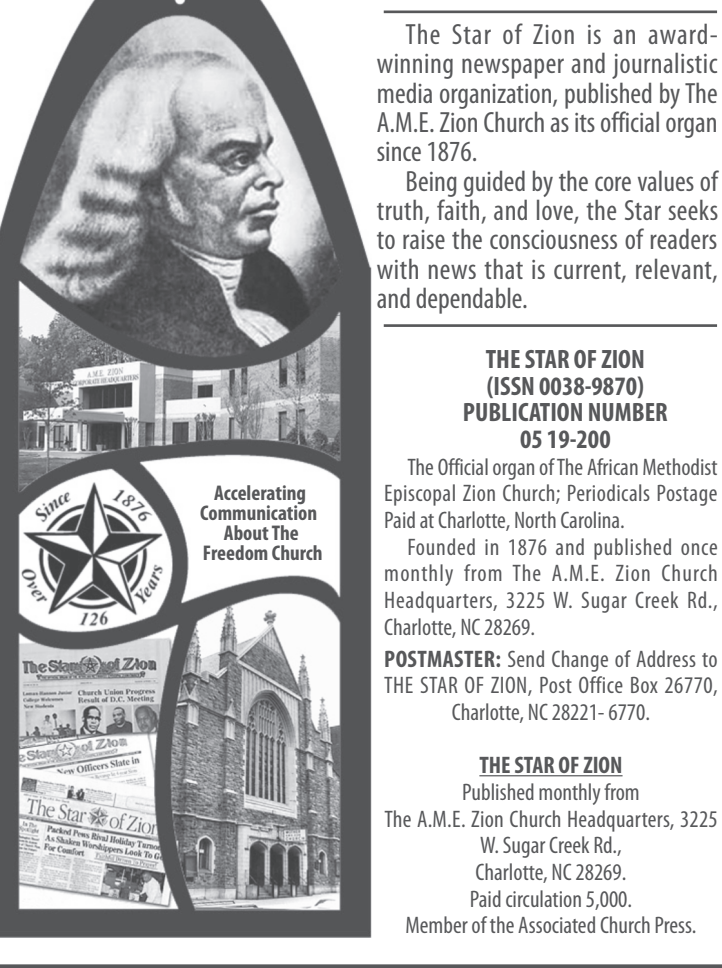

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Editor in Chief

Mr. Darin Kent
Editor@StarOfZion.org

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

Education Editor
Rev. Roderick J. Josey
Education@StarofZion.org

World Politics Editor
Rev. Ronald Nathan
WorldPolitics@StarOfZion.org

Health and Wellness Editor
Mr. Daman De Leon
Health_Wellness@StarOfZion.org

Social Justice Editor
Rev. Dr. Allison Lee
SocialJustice@StarOfZion.org

Entertainment & The Arts Editor
Rev. Dierdre' R. Parker
Entertainment_Arts@StarofZion.org

Financial Freedom Editor
Dr. Dana Stilley
FinancialFreedom@StarOfZion.org

Lifestyle Editor
Ms. Angel Eason
Lifestyle@StarOfZion.org

Sports Editor
Ms. Alexis Hutchinson
Sports@StarofZion.org

Star of Zion Office
704-688-2577
Office@StarofZion.org

Subscriptions Department
704-688-2561
Subscribe@StarOfZion.org

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The New A.M.E. Zion Website

Greetings Family,

First, let me start by saying a heartfelt THANK YOU!

For the past three years, I've had the distinct honor of serving as your Chief Communications Officer, and I am deeply grateful to have been re-elected for the next four years. Your unwavering trust in my vision for this department has fueled my commitment to serve Zion with an even greater purpose. It's this trust that inspires me to work towards delivering a more dynamic communications experience for our beloved church. I don't take this responsibility lightly and will continue striving to share the gospel of Christ with our living, loving global denomination.



With that commitment in mind, I'm overjoyed to announce the launch of our latest communications tool: the NEW A.M.E. Zion Website! That's right—on TODAY, October 1, 2024, we'll be transitioning from our old site (www.AMEZ.org) to our new online home at www.AMEZion.org. Now, before you wonder why we changed domain names, rest assured that this decision was made after thorough discussions among the Bishops, General Officers, and Department Heads. We believe this move is the best way to enhance our church's digital presence. So, please join us in celebrating this fresh look, share the page proudly with your communities, and be part of the ongoing development of the site.

Over the past year and a half, we've worked tirelessly to merge information from over ten different websites. After numerous revisions, prompted by Quadrennial meetings and the recent General Conference, the Board of Bishops has given the Communications Department approval to go live. We acknowledge that not everything will be perfect or entirely up-to-date at launch, but we're committed to making daily updates and improvements.

And this is where you come in.

<https://amezion.org/>



**Scan To
Experience**

If you come across information that needs updating, contact us. We'll review your request, verify the details, and make the necessary updates to the site. Submit this information via our Contact Page or Find Your Church and submit revisions via the Update This Location form.

Continued on page 16



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

BISHOP MELANIE MILLER IN HER OWN WORDS

By Debra Chappelle-Polk, Zion Spotlight Editor

On July 27, 2024, Rev. Dr. Melanie Rogers Miller (New England Episcopal District) became the 110th Bishop in the line of succession and will serve as the Presiding Prelate of the Western Episcopal District which includes the Alaska, California, Colorado, Oregon-Washington, and the Southwest Rocky Mountain conferences.



I asked Bishop to talk about her historic appointment. Here is what she said:

“The 52nd Session of the General Conference is a significant point in the history of The A.M.E. Zion Church because we can set new legislation to help us carry out our mission and elect episcopal leaders and general officers to lead the charge. The elected delegates have a great responsibility to study the resolutions and vote for their passage or decline based on the church’s needs and mission mandate. They also have the grave responsibility of getting to know the candidates and voting for those who will best lead this church with the rest of the Board of Bishops, General Officers, and Judicial Council into the Secure Future God intends for us to have.

Vice President Kamala Harris becoming the Democratic Party’s presumptive nominee further heightens the election process for the church and may invigorate our members, especially our young people, to get out and vote in the upcoming presidential election. This is the year of the woman, and I anticipate God’s move in our lives at this General Conference and the upcoming election.

My historic appointment:

Being elected the second woman bishop of The A.M.E. Zion Church in its 220-year history gives hope for changing the culture of our church. So many women leaders have gone on before me, and only one has had the opportunity to sit, stand, and walk in the path I was elected to on July 27, 2024. I am honored to step in the tracks left behind by the late Bishop Mildred “Bonnie” Hines and to be elevated by a mighty move of God that thrust me through the duck-taped stained-glass ceiling Bishop Hines shattered by women and men committed to the cause of Christ. I thank God they believed that He called me for a time like this. I pray we do not wait another 190 or 16 years to elect the next woman bishop or general officer. However, I thank God for this opportunity to serve and endeavor to do all I can as a Bishop with the authority granted to me to lead His people to Calvary and to do so with faith, integrity, and compassion. We celebrate my husband, Rev. Jimmie Miller, who will serve as the first man to be appointed as a missionary supervisor in our church alongside his co-supervisor, Mrs. Rosalyn “Terry” Holland.



Blessings,

Bishop Melanie Miller, Presiding Prelate
Western Episcopal District

“Alaska, California, Colorado, Oregon-Washington, Southwest Rocky Mountains”

The Department of Church Growth & Development
Reverend Dr. Eleazar Merriweather, Executive Director

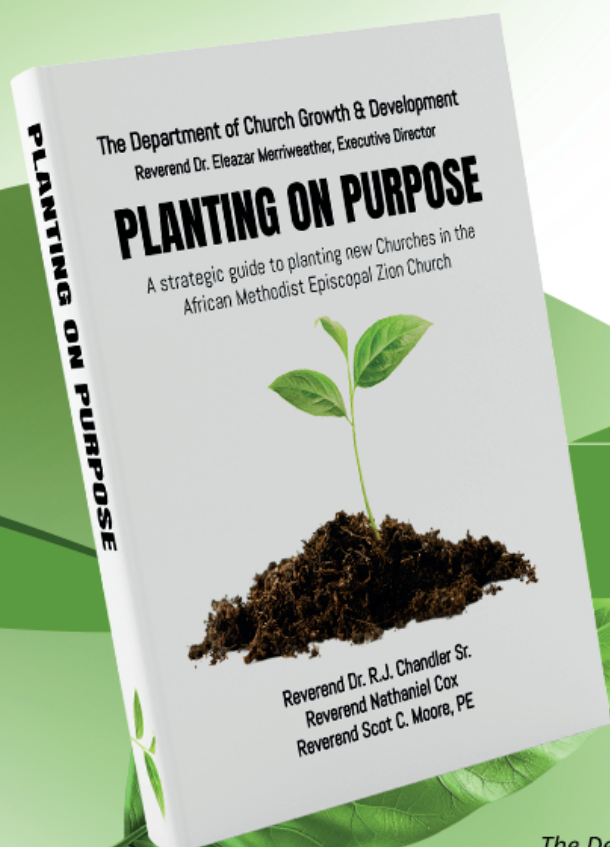
PLANTING ON PURPOSE

A strategic guide to planting new Churches
in the **African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church**

PRICE **\$25.00**

BY REV. DR. R.J. CHANDLER SR. (AUTHOR),
NATHANIEL B COX (AUTHOR),
SCOT C MOORE (AUTHOR)

ON SALE NOW



The Department of Church Growth & Development (CGD) has assembled an exceptional team of pastors with a wealth of experience and expertise. These leaders are dedicated to coaching and educating others in the principles and practices of planting new churches. Their insights and knowledge form the backbone of this manual, which we pray will provide a valuable resource for those called to the ministry of church planting.

THE BIBLICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MONTHS, ELECTIONS & VOTING

By Debra Chappelle-Polk, Zion Spotlight Editor

October 2024, New York, NY... We all have a favorite month or season of the year. What's yours? Mine is June. I like June because it is the beginning of summer and my birth month. I also like September because it still has remnants of summer-like warmth. I am not, however, a huge fan of the winter months. I've been told this is because I was born in the summer. I am unsure if this hypothesis has any scientific merit, but I don't reject it either.

October is the month of the changing colors of fall, symbolizing transformation and change. In our spiritual walk, October prompts us to embrace change and trust God's plan for our lives. It is a season to let go of fear and uncertainty, believing God is in control. Trusting God has always been vital to our religious walk.

Spiritually, November is the month of change and evolution. Elections are also about change and evolution. On November 5, 2024, millions of Americans will go to the polls and vote for the person who will hold the nation's highest office for the next four years. Candidates running for other offices will be on the ballot as well.

Webster's Dictionary defines voting as 1) a formal expression of opinion or choice made by an individual or body of individuals, especially in an election; and 2) the means by which such expression is made, as a ballot, ticket, or show of hands. Voting allows us to make significant changes about how government can and should work.

It has been said that elections have consequences, which bears repeating because it's true. A former President, who is running for president again, has promised to be a "dictator on day one." He has also promised "revenge" on his political enemies, because "sometimes revenge is warranted." In response to the most recent school shooting in Georgia, the former president said, "We need to get over it." His running mate said, "Unfortunately, school shootings are a fact of life," because schools are "soft targets." His solution? "Bolster school security" to prevent "some psycho" from entering schools. What's not part of the solution to prevent mass shootings in our schools, supermarkets, and houses of worship? Legislation to enact common-sense gun laws re-

stricting access to guns, background checks, and a ban on assault rifles. The Republican candidates for the presidency and vice presidency are deaf, dumb, and blind to the fact that gun shootings are the number one cause of death of our children.

Project 2025 is a 900+-page manifesto outlining the draconian and archaic policies to be enacted if the former president is elected the next president. Realizing that Project 2025 may not be a winning political strategy, the former president, known for obfuscating the truth (a/k/a lying), has disassociated himself from Project 2025. Instead, he and his advisers have developed Agenda 47, a thinly veiled rewrite of Project 2025.

"MAKING SOMETHING THAT COULD NEVER HAPPEN UNTIL IT DOES" (Nicolle Wallace, host of the MSNBC show Deadline)

There is an antidote to the former president and the proponents of Project 2025. Her name is Kamala Harris, the Democratic candidate for president. November is the month of change and evolution. Kamala Harris' candidacy stands for both.

Historical Note: On November 5, 1968 (the month of change and evolution), Shirley Chisholm was the first African American woman elected to Congress. Shirley Chisholm was born on November 30, 1924.

According to *Unlocking the Biblical Significance of Months*, the concept of time and seasons plays a significant role in understanding God's plan for humanity. Each month holds symbolic meaning and spiritual significance, offering insights into God's divine order and purpose.

We must all vote this November. Our very existence may depend upon it.

"No right is more precious in a free country than that of having a voice in the election of those who make the laws under which, as good citizens, we must live. Other rights, even the most basic, are

illusory if the right to vote is undermined. Our Constitution leaves no room for classification of people in a way that unnecessarily abridges this right."— Justice Black on the right to vote as the foundation of democracy in *Wesberry v. Sanders*, (1964)

Reference Sources: *Unlocking the Biblical Significance of Months*, Johnthebaptistchurch.org; Google Search; Wikipedia.



Baltimore District Holds Missionary Mass Meeting

#BeMore #MissionMatters



Theme: Equity and Justice
Lesson: ACTS OF KINDNESS

MICAH 6:8

By Emma Smith, Baltimore District WH&OMS, Secretary

members of society. The discussion that ensued was very informative and provided a necessary resource for Pastors and leaders who were present.

Rev. Donna Richardson, who serves on the Executive Board as the Mission Educator, presented a mission study lesson on equity and justice from a biblical perspective. To top things off, Mr. Charles “Chuck” Williams, the district’s voter registration coordinator, discussed voter registration and Project 100. He encouraged attendees to research Project 2025 and vote. Mr. Williams actively engaged those present to ensure their addresses were correct, and he had voter registration cards for first-time voters or those uncertain if their names were on the voter registration rolls where they resided.

The meeting concluded with final comments by the Baltimore District’s Missionary President, Ms. Sharon Hassan. Announcements were made, and the Presiding Elder closed with the Missionary Benediction. The host church prepared and served a wonderful meal as people departed.

The Baltimore District Women’s Home and Overseas Missionary Society held its first Mass meeting of the new conference year on Saturday, August 17, 2024, at Patterson Asbury A.M.E. Zion Church in Baltimore, Maryland, where the Rev. Beverly Jones serves as its Pastor and the Rev. Dr. Evalina Huggins, Presiding Elder. Under the stellar leadership of its Bureau of Supply Secretary, Mrs. Francine Jefferson, began the meeting with members of the Executive Board, Pastors, Ministers, Laity, and a cadre of young people from across the district participating in a brief devotional period led by the Supply Secretary and members of her team.



Following a brief devotional period, the host church welcomed all who gathered, followed by greetings from the Presiding Elder Huggins. Mrs. Francine Jefferson introduced the new WHOMS theme of equity and justice, which was more than befitting as the inner city of Baltimore faces these challenges daily. The supply department came ready and prepared to support the host church’s community outreach project by collecting water bottles, T-shirts, and socks given to the host church to continue its ministry in the community. The department eagerly shared with those in attendance their desire to assist the local churches in the district with supplies to further the work of the ministry.

The department, in keeping with its theme, invited Mr. Thomas Anderson, Executive Director of the Manumission House, to be the guest speaker. He shared his personal experiences of incarceration and the need now “not to take from the community but rather to reinvest in the community.” Mr. Anderson highlighted the root causes of mass incarceration, emphasizing the importance of education and economic opportunities in reducing incarceration rates, especially among black and brown men. He is now operating a transitional facility that helps to equip people to re-enter the community as productive, contributing

BIG MAC Celebrates 115th Session as part of the MEGA Conference!

By Lynda Byrd and Patricia Anderson

The 115th session of the Michigan Annual Conference convened at the Sheraton Indianapolis Hotel at Keystone Crossing Airport from June 21 – 24, 2024. Bishop Michael A. Frencher, Sr. presided and Bishops George W.C. Walker, Jr., (retired) and Eric Leake assisted. The conference also welcomed Mrs. Gelenia A. Frencher and Mrs. Geraldine J. Walker, (retired) Missionary Supervisors. Mrs. Jean MacMurray Leake arrived later at the conference. This meeting was held as part of the Midwest MEGA Conference during which the annual conferences of Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri and Tennessee met together. The planning Committee did an outstanding job!

This conference was “paper free.” The Planning Committee, chaired by Rev. Dr. Anthony KR Gibson, Host Presiding Elder of the Indianapolis District, determined that all hymns, rituals, and other materials be first posted on the Conference website and then forwarded to the Program Committee headed by Rev. Dr. Joel D. Miles, assisted by Rev. Barbara Haigler. Therefore, no paper was distributed during the conference! Materials were displayed on the two large screens in the meeting room handled by Crystal Bailey and her Shine Productions Team. Much time was saved, and fewer trees were lost. All proceeded smoothly!

Tuesday, May 28, 2024, the Conference began with Holy Communion. The worship Leader was Rev. Dr. Gibson. The speaker for the evening was Bishop George Walker, Sr. using as his subject: “Remembering Jesus- How to Remember Jesus.” Scripture reference was St. Luke 22:19. Some key points were: 1. We remember Jesus by reviewing our past. 2. We remember Jesus as we examine our present. 3. We remember Jesus as we explore our future. The music was supplied by the Midwest Mass Choir which included several members of the Michigan Conference. Rev. George Walker, Jr. served as Musical Director. Before service concluded candidates for the office of Bishop and other visitors were recognized.



The conference was officially opened on Wednesday. Prior to the opening of the morning sessions, Bishop Frencher scheduled meetings with each conference to complete business pertinent to the individual conference. On Wednesday he met with the Michigan Conference in which two churches will be closed: St. Peter in Hamtramck, MI and Clement Memorial in Kenosha, WI. Other business included information on retirements and the report of the conference studies committee. Rev. Merdis Hudson will retire, and three candidates were approved for elders' licenses: Rev. Duane Davis, Rev. Judith Stewart, Rev. LaKeasha Fitzpatrick. Rev. Edwin Walker from Caldwell Chapel in Kankakee was recommended to be received into the Michigan Conference and placed in third year study. The conference approved the following future dates: The 116th Annual Conference is scheduled for June 18-21-2025 and will be hosted by Martin Temple Chicago; the 117th Annual Conference for 2026 (June 24-27) will be hosted by John Wesley in Southfield, MI. Check Up meetings: October 5, 2024- Blackwell, Flint, MI; January 11, 2025- Virtual; April 12, 2025- John Wesley, Southfield,

Midwest Mega CONFERENCE
Evening Speakers

BISHOP MICHAEL A. & GELENIA A. FRENCHER
Presiding Bishop & Missionary Supervisor

MRS. SANDRA CROWDER
Missionary Night - May 31

MR. MARCUS D. HANDY
Youth/Young Adult - May 30

REV. MICHAEL A. FRENCHER, JR.
Annual Sermon - May 29

BISHOP GEORGE WALKER, SR.
Communion Service - May 28

Each Night At 7 p.m.
Sheraton Keystone Hotel | Indianapolis, Indiana

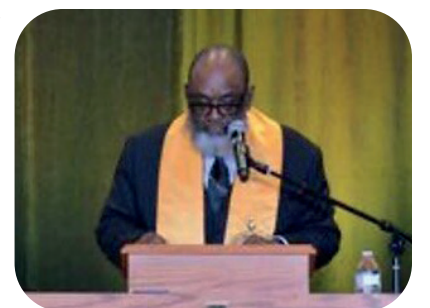


MI. After the meeting with the Michigan Conference the MEGA Conference was officially called to order by Bishop Frencher with the verifying of credentials and seating of the delegates. Bishops George Walker and Eric Leake offered greetings to the assembled body. Report of Committee on Rules was made by host Presiding Elder, Rev. Dr. Anthony Gibson and the nominating committee for each Conference was

confirmed.

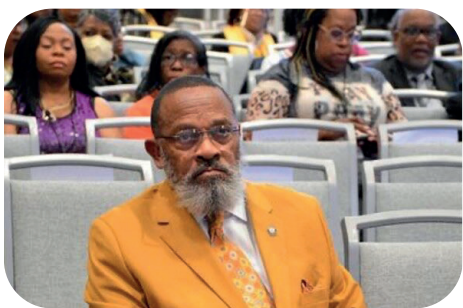
The Episcopal Address was delivered by Bishop Michael A. Frencher, Sr. The topic for the address was: “Planning for the Future”- Jeremiah 29:11. He stated goals for the new conference year: 1. Pay greater attention to the worship experience, 2. Place greater emphasis on evangelism, 3. Connect with the community, 4. Practice stewardship (time, talent, treasure), 5. Use technology to advance the work. It's here to stay. Use it to reach those who may never come to church. The address was received with a motion for acceptance made by Rev. Joel Miles. Lynda Byrd responded on behalf of the laity; Rev. Barbara Haigler- the clergy; The Presiding Elders- Rev. Joel Miles and the Episcopacy- Bishop Eric Leake. The business session was called to order with the Presiding Elders from all Conferences giving their reports. The Pastors and Delegates reports were acknowledged, but not read due to time restraints.

Thursday afternoon began with the Lay Convocation. Lynda Byrd, President of the Michigan Conference Lay Council served as worship leader. Before the presentation by the speaker, a slide presentation highlighting the activities of each conference Lay Council was shown. The speaker for the afternoon was Joseph King Davis, Jr., International President of the Connectional Lay Council. His topic: “Securing our Future”. Key points: Abandon performances of the past and welcome and embrace change of the future. 2. Traditions reflect the past while change embraces the future. 3. Change is a friend, not an enemy. Following the speaker the life members stoling and recommitment ceremony took place. The offering for the afternoon was to be donated to the George J. Leake Endowment Scholarship for Hood Theological Seminary in honor of Bishop Frencher. The Lay Councils also presented Bishop and Mrs. Frencher with a “Gift Card Tree” to help them in their retirement travels.



Following the Lay Academy Rev. Dwight Gutridge presented a workshop titled “The Rhythm of the Ministry.” He highlighted several areas of importance to ministers, pastors and leaders, concluding with the bottom line that leaders' health physical, mental and spiritual are key to a good foundation. After presentations, visitors were greeted, including episcopal candidates, Rev. Dr. Melanie Miller and Rev. Dr. Dwayne Walker.

The afternoon continued with the Welcome Program; Ms. Conni Davis served as Mistress of Ceremony, Ms. LaDonna Richardson brought



greetings and Mrs. Belinda Gibson and the spouses of the Presiding Elders presented the welcome. Presentations were given to Bishop and Mrs. Frencher, Bishop and Mrs. Walker and Bishop and Mrs. Leake. There were greetings from the Panhellenic Community, the Ecumenical community, the City of Indianapolis, and the Indiana State Legislature in the persons of Bro. Eric Johnson, Pastor John C. Russel, Councilman Bob Osilli and Rep. Cherrish Pryor respectively.

The evening service included the presentation of the Annual Sermon by Rev. Michael A. Frencher, Jr. Titled: "When the Church Prays" from Acts 4:31, he indicated that the greatest asset of the church is prayer. It is the lifeblood of the church. When the church prays, the presence of God is perceived, the power of God is received, and the purpose of God is achieved.

Thursday began with the business period and the reading of the evangelism reports from each conference. The State of the Church and the State of the Country reports were also included in this session. The Michigan Conference report was read in its entirety by Sis. Hattie Washington of Greater Walters. It was well received. Bishop Walker indicated that Christian nationalism is on the rise and Christian traditionalism is declining.

The School of the Prophets was led by Rev. Dr. Lester McCorn, President of Clinton College, Rock Hill, South Carolina. Dr. McCorn's topic was "Securing the Future of the Freedom Church." The best way to know the future is to understand the present. There are overlapping spheres: the Black church, the Black college, and the Black community. Strategies for securing the future are found in Ezekiel 37. 1. Review our settings (1-3), 2. Respond to the situation (4-8) and restate the solution (9-10).

The afternoon session included leadership workshops on Emergency Preparedness, Security, Cyber Security, and Risk Management. The next workshop "Securing our Future: Small Churches" was presented by Rev. Dr. Willa Estell. Using Matthew 28:16 – 20 she reminded us that we must be disciples to make disciples. After describing the "small church" she reminded us that the percentage of attendees each Sunday is declining and that ages 21 – 30 are missing. Many are unchurched and choose to "no longer be connected." Because our mission remains the same, "to make disciples," and that 80% of the work of the church is done by 20% of the people, Pastors should use that 20% that are true disciples to make other disciples.

Thursday evening brought Christian Education Night with YACM in charge. Workshop leader was Delali Gadzekpo and Marcus Handy brought the message. He titled his message, "Don't Quit on God." Using Psalms 27:13 – 14, he reminded us that we must have the audacity of hope and the best sermon is one from memory. Visitors included: Mrs. Sandra Crowder, International President of the WHOM Society



and Mrs. Jean Leake, Missionary Supervisor, Southwest Delta ED.

Friday May 31, 2024 the Missionary Convocation was held with Mrs. Gelenia A. Frencher, Presiding. She reminded the participants that 1: old methods must change 2. Enhance the power of one and 3. Reconsider how to reach the masses. Each Missionary department from the Conferences presented their departmental reports for the year in creative ways. After the reports a presentation from Adalynn E. Harris-Ketew, President and Founder of Equity Bridge LLC. Her topic was "What is self-care?" She stated that having health equity is the best

opportunity to have good health. Faith and health work together. Clinical trials are important, and we should not be hesitant to participate in them.

After the Convocation presentation on self-care, Rev. Dr. Anthony Gibson presented a session on "Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Reporting Training." He highlighted policies and procedures that should be followed by the church in regard to sexual misconduct and reporting.

Memorial Period: Rev. Michael Murray, Presiding. The Memorial message was presented by Rev. Yul Lee, Sr. Topic: "A Moment of Truth"; John 14:1-6. The roll call was presented by all Conferences. Rev. Anthony Johnson called the roll for the Michigan Conference.

Conference Business: Statistician Report: Rev. Edwin Harris was granted honorary withdrawal from the Michigan Conference. Rev. Merdis Hudson and Rev. Wash Perry (Martin Temple) submitted letters of retirement. All ministers from the Michigan Conference passed character assessments according to their Presiding Elders.

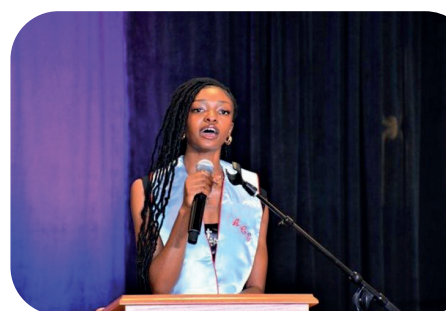
Candidates' Forum was next on the agenda. Candidates wishing to run for the office of Bishop were given an opportunity to explain why they wished to become Bishops. Rev. Eric Shumate presided over the session and Rev. Todd Jarrett and Rev. Dr. William Johnson served as moderators. Each candidate was given three questions to answer. Candidates participating were: Rev. Drs. Gary Adams, Dalton Little, Melanie Miller, M. Luther Hill, Keith Harris, Julian Pridgen, Anthony Witherspoon, Charlene Mapson, Evelina Huggins, Victor Wilson.

The Missionary Candlelight Worship Service- Mrs. Gelenia Frencher, Presiding The missionary message was brought by Mrs. Sandra Crowder, the International President of the WH&OM Society. Topic: "Equity and Justice-the Journey Continues"- Isaiah 40. Highlights: 1. We must be willing to teach the truth with power, 2. We must be willing to respond to advocacy with intentional purpose, 3. We must be



willing to follow a just and fair God.

Saturday, June 1, 2024, The Service of Ordination, Rev. Dr. James Davis (Martin Temple) served as Worship Leader. Bishop Eric Leake was the speaker for the service. His topic: "Preaching out of Season" from 2 Timothy 4:2-5. Some highlights: Preachers are to preach. Preaching out of season is uncomfortable and unpopular. Preachers must be alert and diligent and preach through the lens of a camera. Preaching out of



season is preaching with authority; preach with challenges and preach with purpose.

Ordination service: Rev. Drs. Lori Holmes and Joel D. Miles participated in the service. The following were ordained as Elders: Rev. Duane Davis, Rev. LaKeasha Fitzpatrick, Rev. Lena McHaney, Rev. Monee' Orr, and Rev. Judy Stewart.

Youth Council Service: Andre Washington (from Missouri) served as Worship Leader. Rev. Rhonda Hollins was the speaker. Topic: "Lord, Shake the Foundation", Acts 16:16 20.

After the Youth Service no activities were scheduled until the Black/Gold Banquet Rev. Dr. Joel D. Miles served as Master of Ceremony for this gala affair. Bishop and Mrs. Frencher were celebrated on this, their 39th wedding anniversary. Bishop Walker performed a renewal of vows for the couple. In attendance were their children, Bishop Frencher's siblings and other relatives. Departmental presentations from the WH&OM Society, Lay Council, Christian Education Department and



the Presiding Elders; also from the Conferences: Kentucky, Michigan, Tennessee, Missouri, Indiana and the Episcopal Area. The honorees spoke and offered their gratitude and thanks. Included in the activities was a special media presentation.

Sunday June 2, 2024, The Closing Program. Rev. Anthony Wither- spoon served as Worship Leader. Bishop Michael Frencher presented his final sermon as Presiding Prelate to the Midwest Episcopal District. His topic "Disturbers of the City"- Acts 16:20. To disturb is to intervene, interrupt and interject. After the sermon the Finance committee reported on finances for the week, and The Courtesy Committee presented their report. Bishop Frencher presented the charge before reading the appointments of the Lay and Pastors. All Pastors on the Chicago District returned to their respective pulpits and a new Pastor was appointed to Grace in South Bend. Pastor Miles remains as Presiding Elder of the Advancing Chicago District and Rev. Dwight Gutridge continues as Presiding Elder of the Detroit Western Michigan District.

This MEGA Conference was spirit-filled and Holy-ghost directed from beginning to end.

Detroit Western Michigan District

Presiding Elder – Rev. Dwight L. Gutridge
 St. Paul AME Zion Church – Rev. Todd Jarrett
 John Wesley, Southfield – Rev. Austin Young
 Lomax Temple, Detroit – Rev. Orea Peterson, Jr.
 St. Paul, Toledo – Rev. Darran Overton
 St. Luke, Grand Rapids – Rev/ Dwight L. Gutridge

Greater St. Peters, Detroit – Rev. Dr. Anthony D. Johnson
 Blackwell, Flint – Rev. David A. Williams
 Clinton Chapel, Detroit – Rev. Dr. Sandra James
 Metropolitan, Detroit – Rev. Michele Tucker
 Walls Memorial Chapel, Toledo – Rev. Shirley Sparks
 Calvary, Detroit – Rev. David Stevenson
 Leggett Chapel, Albion – Rev. April Sumrow
 Hilliard Chapel, Grand Rapids – Rev. Jasmine Brewster
 John Wesley, Muskegon – Rev. Laura Guyton

Chicago District

Presiding Elder – Rev. Dr. Joel D. Miles
 Greater Walters AME Zion Church – Rev. Dr. Joel D. Miles
 St. Mark, East Chicago – Rev. George Walker, Jr.
 Martin Temple – Rev. Dr. James David, III
 Daniel Chapel – Rev. Dr. Derrick T. Simmons
 Blackwell-Israel Samuel – Rev. Hensley Al Gooden
 Caldwell Chapel – Kankakee – Rev. Dr. Lori K. Holmes
 St. Matthew-Gordon – Rev. Dr. Lornce Applewhite
 Bethlehem – Rev. Johnny Johnson, Jr.
 St. Luke – Gary – Rev. Edna Cook
 First Church – South Bend – Rev. Emmanuel Smith, Jr.
 St. Mark – Chicago – Rev. Alesia Hillsman-Terrell
 Grace – South Bend – Rev. Edmond Walker
 St. Andrew – Gary – Rev. Rhonda Hollins
 Fisher Memorial – Evanston – Rev. Anthony Morris
 St. John – Hammond – Rev. Calva Sanders
 Unity – Merrillville – Rev. Dr. David Neville, Jr.

Greensboro District Holds its First Mass Meeting of the 2024-2025 Conference Year

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

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah 6:6-8 (KJV)



The Greensboro District Women's Home and Overseas Missionary Society (WH&OMS) held its first Mass Meeting of the 2024-2025 Conference Year on Saturday, August 24, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. at Wesley Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, Asheboro, NC where Pastor Reverend Dr. Tracii Miller and her congregation served as hosts to the meeting.

The Mass Meeting, as always, was truly a blessing. Dr. Edna Y. Adams-Fulton, our Missionary District President, presided over the meeting.



The Call to Worship and Invocation preceded the morning hymn "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less," which was followed by the Scripture reading, Micah 6:6-8 (KJV), by Ms. Beverly Wallace, and a loving prayer by Ms. Blondine Rudisell. Words of Welcome were extended by Mrs. Loretta Woodle on behalf of the Wesley Chapel Church family. Following the words of welcome, Mr. Louis Gaines provided a musical selection, 'A Change Is Coming'. The morning meditation speaker, Reverend Dr. Margo Gaddy, Pastor of Zion Grove A.M.E. Zion Church, was introduced by Reverend Dr. Reginald Keitt, Pastor of St. Stephen A.M.E. Zion Church. Pastor Gaddy blessed us with a highly thought-provoking message. Her text was taken from Micah 6:6-8 and her subject was – "What the Lord Requires". Pastor Gaddy reminded us of the fruit of the spirit and to always let the Lord be in control. Following the meditation message, Pastor Miller extended an invitation to Christian discipleship.

Ms. Cynthia Marshall provided the financial report, after which an election of officers was held—administered by Reverend Dr. Keitt—during the meeting. It was concluded that the Greensboro District Women’s Home & Overseas Missionary Society officers will remain the same for the 2024-2025 Conference Year. Elections were held for the following positions: Treasurer, recording secretary, corresponding secretary, and recorder. It was moved and properly seconded that Mrs. Linda Goins, Ms. Dwan Wall, Ms. Phyllis Marshall, and Mrs. Nina Ingram be retained in these positions, respectively.



A banner presentation representing attendance support was presented by Ms. Phyllis C. Marshall to the following churches: Zion Grove, Snow Hill and McCauley, and Mt.

Airy.

Mrs. Gale Gaines provided the courtesy report expressing gratitude and thanks to all as she lifted up highlights from the meeting.



The Mass Meeting was blessed with the presence of the Greensboro District’s Women’s Home and Overseas Missionary Society Coordinator of YAMS, Reverend L. Lynn Mitchell, who will serve as the Missionary Supervisor for the Midwest Episcopal Region of The A.M.E. Zion Church. Missionary Supervisor Mitchell was gifted with a presentation—filled with love—for the many years of devotion and service to the Greensboro District’s WH&OMS by Dr. Adams-Fulton, including a gifted presentation from the YAMS. Missionary Supervisor Mitchell delivered a heartfelt ‘thank you’ to Dr. Adams-Fulton and the congregation.

President Adams-Fulton thanked everyone for their participation and presence at the **First Greensboro District Mass Meeting of the 2024-2025 Conference Year**. Following announcements, remarks, and grace, the meeting adjourned with the Missionary Benediction. Lunch was served from the Fellowship Hall.

Mabry Lyles, Is Recognized by The State of South Carolina

Spartanburg District, of the Palmetto Conference, A.M.E. Zion Church (LayChild Slave), Mabry Lyles, is recognized by the State of South Carolina/as his only surviving grandchild, Dr. Vera Jeter-Jones, Carries his legacy throughout Zion

By Patricia Martin

Mabry Lyles, Who is he? Well, we are going to tell the story of Mabry Lyles and his legacy as it travels down through generations until it reaches one who is with us today, Dr. Vera Jeter-Jones, Mabry’s only surviving grandchild, who is one of Zion’s most Christian and Knowledgeable women in Zion.



I will begin by telling Zionites how Mr. Mabry Lytes was brought to our attention, which some of the people in the area knew. The State of South Carolina launched a program in the state to find people in the state who had been slaves and had grown up and become outstanding citizens in their communities, and in the end, they were lynched. So, the name of Dr. Vera Jeter-Jones’s grandfather was found in the state archives. The state workers contacted Union County President of the NAACP, Mr. James Russell Rice, who is a member of New Hope A.M.E. Zion Church located in Union County, The place where Mabry was lynched. Mr. Rice Mr. Rice knew about the situation of the life and death of Dr. Jeter-Jones’ grandfather. The

state workers set a date to meet with the granddaughter In Spartanburg, SC, of which she resides, for an interview. Mr. Rice attended the interview. Let us understand that the state of South Carolina pursued Dr. Jeter-Jones and used state archives to gather the information, and she concurred with their findings.

We, the people of the Spartanburg District, are happy to share with our sisters and brothers of Zion the legacy of a man named Mr. Mabry Lyles of Union County (Tucker Town), South Carolina. His beginnings started in Ethiopia; from Ethiopia to Angola, which is near Senegal River; from there, his parents, who were not family at that time, boarded a slave ship and sailed to the new world, that docked in Virginia; from there to South Carolina. His parents, Caroline and Aaron Lyles grew up and were married, and in 1858, they became parents of a bouncing baby boy named Mabry Lyles. Based on his birth year, readers can understand why he is called a “CHILD SLAVE.” He lived as a slave from his birth, 1858, until Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. This made Mabry around 5 years of age when he became free. Even though Mabry was just a baby, he had a job. His job was to fan the flies away from the table as his master and family ate their meals. According to what he told his daughter, he did not like his first job.

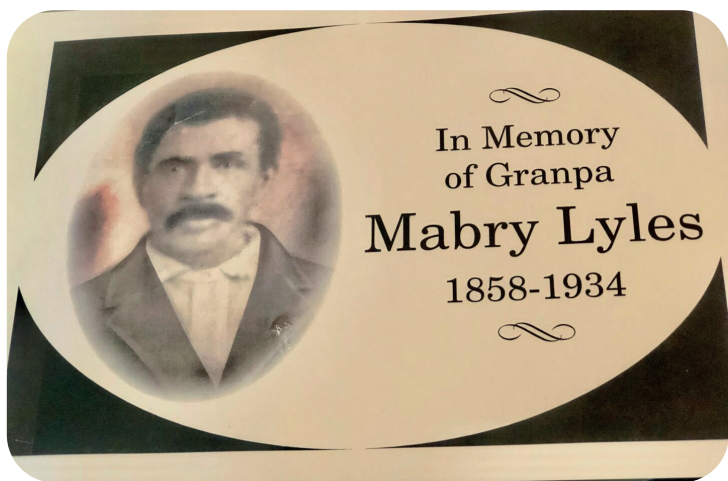
As time went on, even though slavery had lifted, he and his family worked on a farm and were treated like slaves. Mabry grew up to be a young leader in his community. “Tucker Town”. He did not have a formal education, yet the people looked upon him as a brilliant young man who could help them and help them with their day-to-day business. He was known as the *Whiz” Mathematician. His math skills were passed down to one of his grandsons and one of his great-grandsons. He and his grandson and great-grandson need paper or pencil to give you a mathematical answer.

Mabry was a young man who served his community well with what he had to offer them. There were several things that he wished for his community to have. However, being a young adult, he had not given

much thought to his priority. Then God showed His power in 1887 by sending one of the largest earthquakes in the United States throughout the eastern part of the country. This earthquake frightened all of the people, especially the young men who lived in Tucker Town Community. The Archives in Columbia, SC, which is the Capital of South Carolina, shows the exact words that were spoken about building a church for the community. Mabry, as his brother Eison joined him, stated, "De earthquake shuck and shuck all night and we prayed and prayed all night, and de next morning us thanked the Lord for keeping us safe." The next day, Mabry called the boys around him and said, "Us going to build us a church, and us going to name it St. Luke." St. Luke Church became a reality. How did this happen without land? A Caucasian man in the community gave them land and allowed them to cut timber from his property to build the structure. Logs were used for pews. The church was completed around 1889.

They had no preacher, but they had their church name: St. Luke Church. Finally, a minister to the community who happened to be an A.M.E. Zion minister. Mabry got busy working on this minister, trying to convince him to become the Pastor at St. Luke Church. The minister decided to become their Pastor, and the name of St. Luke Church was changed to St. Luke A.M.E. ZION. Because Mabry Lyles found an A.M.E. Zion Pastor for the church that he and his siblings and cousins had built, it became an A.M.E. Zion Church. "ST. LUKE A.M.E. ZION CHURCH, CARLISLE, SC. Now, for those of you who don't understand why Mabry Lyles is called the founder of St. Luke A.M.E. Zion Church, I hope that you will comprehend the reason why.

Mabry became a strong member of the A.M.E. Zion Church. He was married to Agnes Thompson-Lyles. They were blessed with six children.



Mabry and Agnes were devout Christians. Mabry instilled in his children 3 points. They were to love and serve God, love everybody, and get good. Even though times were hard for his children,

they lived by his principles as much as possible. They were givers and workers for God. His oldest daughter, Cleora, was a hard-working woman in Zion. She placed the first electric lights in St. Luke A.M.E. Zion Church. She also purchased a beautiful Pulpit set, which is used today and is still beautiful. His youngest daughter, Mahala, who is Dr. Jeter-Jones' mother, purchased the first piano for St. Luke, and it is still in use. It is the only piano the church has owned. Mabry's daughter Mahala and her husband, Mr. Charner Jeter, also were good givers to Clinton College during Dr. Moreland's tenure there. She and her husband would carry truckloads of food from their farm to Clinton College to help feed the students.

She served as Secretary of Y's during her youth at St. Luke and as Missionary President in her senior years at Arch St. A.M.E. Zion Church. She was a Zionite who knew the A.M.E. Zion Church Discipline from cover to cover. She was loved by most people. Her Bishop, Bishop Richard L Fisher, came all the way from St. Louis, MI, to attend her funeral in 1989.

Mabry's legacy moves on down to his grandchildren. God gave him and Agnes nine wonderful grandchildren. They all were and are church-goers, Christians, hard workers in the church, showed love toward others, and certainly did not forget about education. This is a reminder that he is the grandfather of nine, and out of the nine, eight graduated from college, and one grandson enlisted in the Army. God has really blessed this family throughout the years.

Mr. Mabry has hopefully met his six children and eight of his nine grandchildren in Heaven. We believe that God has left his only surviving grandchild, who is the youngest here with us, to carry on his legacy for a while longer. She is an anointed lady and is very much alive and

on fire for the Master. It would take a month to tell how she has and is carrying on her duties for the Master. She tells us that she is keeping her and Grandpa's legacy alive. Dr. Jeter-Jones has been blessed with multiple God Sent talents that she shares with her fellow man. I remember my Missionary Supervisor, the late Joan Fisher, giving compliments to her; she said, "I have never met a person who has as many different talents as you and does them well. God has really blessed you". Do you know her around Zion? Her name is Dr. Vera Jeter-Jones, who is the youngest and the only surviving grandchild of the late Mabry and Agnes Thompson-Lyles and is the youngest and only surviving child of the late Chamer and Mahala Lyles-Jeter.

Let us talk about this Baby Girl, Dr. Jeter-Jones. She started on her journey for the Master in Zion as an 11-year-old Bud. After taking music lessons at an early age, she became a musician for Williams Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church. Her musical training continued throughout her college days at Livingstone College, even though she was not a music major. She was a member of the Concert Choir at Livingstone. After graduating from Livingstone, Dr. Jeter-Jones took Graduate *music* classes at Converse University in Spartanburg, SC. Her musical talents include Clarinetist, Organist, Pianist, Keyboard Player, Sacred Music Writer, loves to write Children's Musical, loves to present Easter Cantatas, Minister of Music, Choir Director, Voice Instructor, and Soprano Soloist. She has been a member of the Concert and marching band at Sims High School in Union, SC, and Germantown High School in Philadelphia, PA.

I am changing her title and calling her Miss Vera because I have known her since I was an older Bud and she was a young adult. Miss Vera Came to Spartanburg after graduating from Livingstone College. She was hired as a teacher and joined Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church. It was all over then. She began working in the church, bringing community **children** to church, working with children in the city, organized a girl's teenage softball team with girls from Zion as well as girls from the city. This organization was run by the city, but each team would have its own sponsor. Metropolitan was the sponsor of her team. Miss Vera was her team's coach. She was a tough coach. The first year that her team entered the city play-off, her team won the play-off. She coached them to Victory (City Champs). The trophy that her team won is at her home as I write this story. Mabry was working through his Baby Girl, Vera.

She has served in many capacities in her local Churches; to name a few, she has served as Chair of the Trustee Board, Minister of Music, Financial Secretary, Church Secretary, President of Stewardess Board, Deaconess, Served as Administrator of The Happy Home Medical Adult Daycare Center, of which she initiated, Event Planner/Decorator, Coordinator of YAMS, Advisor to all Missionary Departments, Girl Scout Leader, and Directress of Christian Education. As you can see, she is a well-rounded lady in Zion. Miss Vera is well-known and is liked by the people in Spartanburg because she shows her love and helping hands to people of all denominations and races.

Over the years, Dr. Jeter-Jones and her family have worked hard with labor and financially helped to bring the Spartanburg District to a higher plane. Let us keep the higher plane going. Dr. Jeter-Jones served as Director of Children. It was Dr. Jeter-Jones who organized the first YAMS Missionary group in the Spartanburg District and became the first Coordinator of YAMS; served as Lay Council President, Founder of The John Posey Memorial Lay Council Banquet, Organized the first YAMS and Lay Council Choirs and served as Minister of Music, served as District Secretary and Financial Secretary, treasurer of District missionary and District Event Planner/Decorator.

Mabry Lyles' Legacy moves through his granddaughter at the Palmetto Conference level as she organized the first Palmetto Conference Choir and served as Minister of Music, organized a South Atlantic Episcopal Choir, and Presented a concert in Myrtle Beach, SC, at a Lay Council Convocation, served as Conference Auditor, and also serves on the Conference Trustee Board.

Let's move to the International level of the A.M.E. Zion Church. She has served on the Connectional Budget Board for 8 years, served as a member of the Education Committee, and served on the Board of Trustees at Clinton College.

We can't forget that she is a giving person and is able to motivate others to give. When she served as our Coordinator of YAMS, our district was on fire. The YAMS raised funds to send to Africa to help build schools, gave funds to the Prison System to help build a chapel, gave funds to Clinton College to help build the small library, sent funds



to Livingstone for special needs students, presented a concert at USC, Union, to help build an uninsured A.M.E. Zion Church that had been burned, Sponsored Senior Citizen Banquets every other year, Sponsored Teen Sleep-IN at the YMCA for Zion teens and teens from the city, (Mrs. Mary Patterson Helped) with Sleep In. Carried senior citizens on trips to the Smokey Mountains (Mrs. Teresa Howell) helped with the trips, sponsored a yearly Clothe Give-Away in low-income developments, Arch Street A.M.E. Zion Church YAMS, which was Dr. Jeter-Jones' church raised enough funds to send 17 girls in Africa to school for 1 year. We should be proud of how Mabry's teaching moves in the heart of his granddaughter.

We will never forget how Miss Vera's heart was touched when she served as District Lay Council President. The first thing that she detected was that there was a need to teach the people. She consulted with the Presiding Elder and Bishop during that time. They were elated over her zeal. She began presenting outstanding workshops in Spartanburg District as well as at the Arthur Marshall Faith and Order Meeting in Rock Hill, SC. Her team also had a heart for giving. Miss Vera and her Vice President, Miss Josephine Gilliam, worked hard to see that people who were in need, regardless of their denomination, would get help. They would go out and find furniture for the needy and carry it to them on Jeter-Jones' brother's truck. Again, they were using Mabry's grandson's truck. Mrs. Eleanor Williams and Miss Vera's daughter, Trina, Miss Gilliam, and Miss Vera would carry the furniture into the needy person's home. Who is working now? Mabry's great-granddaughter Trina, his granddaughter Vera, a descendent (cousin), Miss Josephine, and a friend, Mrs Williams. Under Miss Vera's leadership, the Lay Council gathered food, essentials, and money for the people in North Carolina when Hurricane Floyd hit that state. Our President, Miss Vera, sent out an SOS to the city of Spartanburg. Our people, as well as the city of Spartanburg, responded very well. This area was where Bishop Battle's mother lived. Arch St A.M.E. Zion Church was the drop-off site. Men from Trinity-Woodruff and Arch St. A.M.E. Zion Churches came to load the large U-Haul Truck. Mr. Howell, husband of Mrs. Teresa Howell, who was a member of Stephen Grove A.M.E. Zion Church, drove the truckload of goods near Virginia with some members, including the Lay President, trailing behind him in their cars to help unload the goods. See how God works in Miss Vera. God and memories of her grandpa, whom she has never seen, help to keep her fired up to do God's will.

GOD is still moving in Miss Vera's life outside of Zion. She presently serves as a Pole Manager and Prescient President in Spartanburg County. She is the Minister of Music of the Spartanburg Sympathy Ministry Choir, which is an elected position. She organized a Spartanburg City Children's Choir. Dr. Jeter-Jones is the founder of The Spartanburg City and County Ecumenical Missionary Society.

She is also the first and only A.M.E. Zion Church woman in South Carolina to be elected to serve as the South Carolina State President of Church Women United. Dr. Jeter-Jones is also the first and only A.M.E. Zion woman to be elected to serve as The Spartanburg City Unit of Church Women United. She is the first and only A.M.E. Zion Church

woman in the state of South Carolina to receive The Regional Humanitarian Award from the South Eastern Region of Church Women United. We are proud of her service in this organization. She was up against women from states that make up the South Eastern Region, which are Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, and Porto Rica. We thank God for her leadership in all areas of her work.

Upon visiting her home, as I entered her den, I saw more awards, plaques, degrees, and diplomas on the walls than I had ever seen. You name them; they were there. I do remember seeing 2 from the International A.M.E. Zion Church and a recent Humanitarian Award from the city of Spartanburg. I also saw an award from one of the Baptist churches in town.

Dr. Jeter-Jones is an educator and is certified to teach in several areas. She began her college education at Livingstone College and graduated with a BA Degree. Seemingly, she has never stopped going to school since graduating from Livingstone College. A few years after she started teaching, she was chosen by the University of South Carolina as a Master Teacher of Science and was given a scholarship to work on her Master's Degree at the University. Science was not her major, yet she moved out of her comfort zone and did well. She has matriculated at most of the universities in South Carolina, including Clemson University, Furman University, University of South Carolina, and Converse University. Dr. Jeter-Jones has also studied at other types of schools, which prepared her to choose a different career if she desired to do so.

Her main career has been teaching in the classroom... however, she is equipped to have several other careers. She is a Certified Dementia Specialist, Certified Crisis Responder, Certified Hospice & Palliative Caregiver, Certified Prison Ministry Church Organizer, Realtor/ Diversified Cash flow Specialist, Financial Broker, Licensed Cosmetologist & Hair Designer/Barber, and Professional Event Planner/Decorator. I am sure that Miss Vera's Grandpa Mabry is looking down on his baby granddaughter, which he has never seen on this earth, saying, "Thank God for my baby girl; she is everything that I wanted her to be." The members of the Spartanburg District thank God for The anointing that He has placed on Dr. Jeter-Jones' life. She has excelled through God's power.

I pray that each person who reads this story about the legacy of Mabry Lyles as it moved down to his only surviving grandchild will understand that I lived through much of Miss Vera's work here in the Spartanburg District. This is not fiction. I worked under her leadership as her YAMS Assistant when she served as District Coordinator and was appointed to that position when she resigned.

At the close of my interview with Dr. Jeter-Jones, I asked her why did she have so many different fields of study. She looked at me with a slight smile and said, "I have several reasons." I said, "Tell me about them." She began to tell her reasons. She said that she was a Miracle Child because she was born very late in her parents' life. She continued by saying that as she began to grow up from a very young child, she realized that God brought her here for a divine purpose. As she grew older and began to understand what happened to her grandpa and learned about the 3 principles that he had left for them to live their lives by, she decided to please him. Dr. Jeter Jones stated that as she looks back in time, she realizes how her mother pushed her into reading and writing before she was old enough and even sent her to school before she had reached the correct age. However, she was able to keep up with her class. She laughed and said that the joke was on the rest of her family because she believed that her family thought that she might be a (Special Needs Child) because of her late birth. That didn't happen. God gave her more different talents than He gave to her 5 siblings. To God be the Glory. Mabry Lyles' grandchild was Born and Called for a divine purpose.

Dr. Vera Jeter-Jones is a member of Chestnut Ridge A.M.E. Zion Church, Spartanburg, SC; the Pastor is The Reverend Tammy Wheeler, The Reverend Dr. Victor C. Wilson, Presiding Elder, and The Reverend Dr. Eric L. Leake, Presiding Prelate.

Mabry Lyles, who was a child slave, has been recently recognized by the state of South Carolina for his courageous work for the people in his community and for giving his life in the form of lynching while giving help to his family. The state placed a Historic Marker at Rose Hill State Park in Union, SC. The marker has a picture of Mabry Lyles and their wife, Agnes Thompson-Lyles, engraved on it.

Lynched: 1934

Stronger Churches Conference Held at Hood

By Rev. Dierdre' R. Parker, Entertainment & The Arts Editor

On August 24th, I attended the Stronger Churches Conference held at Hood Theological Seminary in Salisbury, NC. I participated in the conference for two reasons to cover it. For the Star of Zion (secure the bag), And because it was within walking distance (If you know, you know). Like many of you who are Hood alums, I have seen emails informing us of the great work of the Faith Learn Thrive Initiative spearheaded by Doctor Rona Williams.

The weather was perfect, and attendees arrived early enough to have breakfast and get comfortable with each other. Doctor Rona Williams and President Lattimore formally greeted and welcomed us as we enjoyed a delicious breakfast.

The Conference was kicked off with a *Church Talk* panel on strategic ministry. The panelists were also the presenters for the breakout sessions. Reverend Elizabeth Howze, Ormond Academy, spoke from the perspective of *Innovating for Impact*. On strategies for impact, she says that “it involves cultivating faith-inspired imagination that leads to impactful ministry. Cultivate curiosity: ask the right questions to become a part of an ecosystem that will eliminate the need”.

“Churches have processed themselves to be *needed* and to be *served*. Instead of being *servants*,” says Pastor and author Dartanyan Jamerson. Pastor Jamerson presented during the breakout sessions on multigenerational ministry.

This conference culminated the work going on all year. The Faith Learn, Thrive Initiative is holding the Stronger Churches Conference and partnering with churches in cohorts and individually to help them become stronger churches. The Faith Learned Thrive Initiative is not just telling churches where the resources are; it is helping church churches access the resources and learn how to become the resources themselves.



During the breakout sessions, I intended to pop in and out of each one to gain insight into the article. I started with *Innovating for Impact* with Reverend Elizabeth Howze. I knew Reverend Howze because we are both members of the Durham District of the Central North Carolina Conference. I ended up stinging. In her session for the entire time, because it was so interesting, she gave us little pieces of black fabric and crayons on the fabric. We were to draw a thriving community. Then, we exchanged the fabric with another participant. And they would add what they thought the community needed to thrive. At the end of the class, we gave them back and discussed them. For me, this

highlighted that everyone doesn't see everything needed in this work. You cannot do it alone. I also attended the conflict resolution session. I mean, have you seen this country lately?

Attorney Shannon Felder led this session. Attorney Felder kept it a book.

She talked to us about trauma and triggers. Many of us don't realize that people are causing external conflict because they want to avoid dealing with their inner conflict. Conversely, people are dealing with inner conflict because they choose to avoid external conflict. Attorney Felder let us know that trauma produces triggers that activate our autonomic nervous system, producing a traumatic response that is designed to save our lives. Your automatic nervous system reacts to the fear from the previous trauma. Knowing your triggers helps reduce the negative impact that the trigger-induced fear causes. She reminded us that when you are triggered, your behavior can have an impact that wasn't intended. Attorney Felder reminded us to take accountability instead of looking for reasons to blame. Accept feedback without regard for the outcome. She emphasized the importance of building a culture of accountability. Into an organization so that when people are called to the carpet, it will not produce anxiety. The conference culminated with a powerful word from Bishop Randy Borders of Faith Harvest Church. He talked about moving *in* purpose. Purpose is not picked, it is discovered. It is always the answer to a problem. Bishop Borders revealed that you can know the art of pastoring but not have a heart for ministry. When moving in purpose, it is necessary to see the vision clearly. It is only revealed in full to the visionary. To see the vision clearly, you must stay close to the visionary.

Dr. Rona Williams is certainly a visionary. I had the opportunity to ask her about her inspiration for this vision.

SOZ: What inspired you to work on equipping churches so that they are in a position to thrive?

My own journey as a second chair leader in ministry inspired me. After avidly attending conferences, I desired to go back to my local church and implement the strategies introduced. I quickly realized that conferences inspire but don't equip leaders with the step-by-step action needed to make progress at their local churches. I began adapting strategies, right-sizing them to my church & demographic to help manifest the vision of our church. As a growing leader, I leaned more into finding strategies, experimenting, and tweaking the approach until





we found strategies that worked well for us.

SOZ; What would you say to struggling churches about the resources available to them through the Faith, Learn, Thrive Initiative?

RW: You don't have to do ministry alone. **FaithLearnThrive** provides access to

Make an investment in your church and watch God create the increase needed to take your church from struggling to thriving.

SOZ: What would you like to see regarding the Initiative in the next 3 to 5 years?

RW: I'm looking forward to church leaders advocating for training and equipping lay leaders and becoming invested in sharing the resources and promoting participation among the congregations they serve. We love conducting workshops, seminars, and keynote speaking to help connect with the message of thriving and identify ways to help their churches.

The Stronger Churches Conference feels like the beginning of something, like the movement of tectonic plates. This faith learned Thrive, with its desire for stronger churches, feels like a shift in our culture. I came to this conference not necessarily fully invested in the vision. I see it now, though, and I pray that all of Zion will catch the vision and become active participants in making all of our churches stronger.

amazing resources, and we are also part of a nationwide network of resourceful organizations with programs/initiatives to help your church.

Stronger Churches Conference Held at Hood



ICFSH 2024 Fall Conference

"Soil and Souls in Dialogue"

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Stephanie Boddie
Associate Professor of Church and Community Ministries
Baylor University, Waco, Texas

Workshop Facilitator: RevDele, Founder, *Soil and Souls*




Attend Virtually!

Streamed on Facebook Live

Zoom Room

<https://zoom.us/j/96275329912>

Meeting ID: 962 7532 9912

Friday, October 11, 2024

By Kelly Bryant

The International Center of Faith, Science, and History (ICFSH) at Hood Theological Seminary will host its Fall 2024 Conference, "Soil and Souls in Dialogue," on **Friday, October 11, 2024, from 9:00am-1:00pm ET**. This event will be virtual and streamed on Facebook Live through Zoom. For more information and to register, please go here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1009434725437?aff=od-dtdtcreator>

The **Keynote Speaker** will be **Dr. Stephanie Boddie**, Associate Professor of Church and Community Ministries, Baylor University, Waco, Texas. The **Worship Facilitator** will be **RevDele**, Founder, *Soil and Souls*. For further questions, please contact Dr. Sharon Grant at sgrant@tlu.edu.

Hood Theological Seminary Announces New Degree



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

By Kelly Bryant



Hood Theological Seminary announces

its newest degree, the Master of Arts in Christian Ministry (MACM). The Master of Arts in Christian Ministry degree program is designed for students preparing for ministry in Christian denominations that do not require the Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree for ordination. With this degree, students acquire a basic knowledge of how the discipline of theology functions in relationship to Christian living and ministry; they develop a theology of pastoral works that sees, listens to, and engages the full global witness of the Christian faith, students learn about theology of both liturgy and preaching that not only coheres with but also illuminates the Christian tradition to which each adheres, and they also evaluate and apply theories of leadership and interpersonal dynamics that foster the health and well-being of a local church or other Christian organizations.

For more information about this degree, including curriculum and admissions, please go to Hood's website: <https://www.hoodseminary.edu/future-students/graduate-programs/master-of-arts-in-christian-ministry>

For questions about the Master of Arts in Christian Ministry (MACM) degree program, please contact Dr. Trevor Eppheimer, Academic

Dean, Messenger-Williams Family Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics at 704-636-6743, teppheimer@hoodseminary.edu or Dr. Clay Barrow, Director, Center for Chaplaincy, Adjunct Professor of Pastoral Theology and Supervised Ministry at 704-636-7611 or cbarrow@hoodseminary.edu.



Hood Theological Seminary, located at 1810 Lutheran Synod Drive in Salisbury, NC, is a graduate and professional school sponsored by the A.M.E. Zion Church and approved by the University Senate of The United Methodist Church. Its student body, faculty and staff currently comprise persons from many different denominations. Hood's mission is to prepare women and men for bold and creative leadership for the Christian church for a diverse world.

Hood to Offer Fall 2024 Messenger-Williams Community Education Initiative

By Kelly Bryant

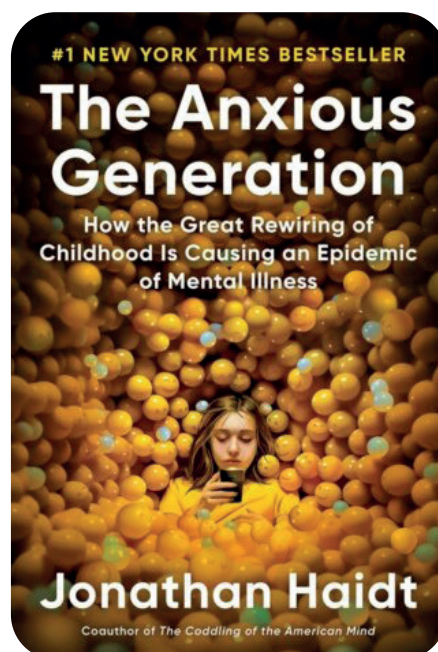
The Messenger-Williams Community Education Initiative is an extension of the Hood Theological Seminary's Messenger and Williams Family Chair in Theology and Ethics. Courses are offered at various times throughout the year. Course topics vary but will consistently deal with issues of faith, ethics, and community. The courses are free and open to the public.

The Fall 2024 Messenger-Williams Community Education Initiative will look at the reading *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* (Penguin Press, 2024) by Jonathan Haidt.

After more than a decade of stability or improvement, the mental health of adolescents plunged in the early 2010s. Rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm, and suicide rose sharply, more than doubling on many measures. Why?

Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt believes the answer has to do with what he calls "the great rewiring of childhood," which took place right under our noses when we placed smartphones in the hands of our children and left them to navigate the online world on their own, without guidance or guardrails.

In his latest book *The Anxious Generation* (Penguin Press, 2024),



Haidt examines how this "great rewiring" has interfered with children's social and neurological development, covering everything from sleep deprivation to attention fragmentation, addiction, loneliness, social contagion, social comparison, and perfectionism. He explains why social media damages girls more than boys and why boys have been withdrawing from the real world into the virtual world, with disastrous consequences for themselves, their families, and their societies.

The Fall 2024 Messenger-Williams Community Education Initiative will be devoted to a six-week study of *The Anxious Generation* starting October 6 – November 14, 2024.

Facilitator: Trevor Eppheimer, Ph.D. Messenger-Williams Family Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics at Hood Theological Seminary (Salisbury, NC). Please contact Dr. Eppheimer for any questions at teppheimer@hoodseminary.edu.

The Messenger-Williams Community Education Initiative at Hood Theological Seminary is an extension of the Hood Theological Seminary's Messenger and Williams Family Chair in Theology and Ethics. Its mission is to facilitate explorations of topics related to ethics, community, faith, and meaning-in-life for the general public. Courses are free and open to all.

For more information including participation options, schedule, and registration, please go here: <https://www.hoodseminary.edu/Initiatives/community-education-initiative/current-course-offering>

Livingstone College Receives an Additional \$1.2 Million to Elevate Student Services and Campus Facilities

By Garette Hunter

Salisbury, NC | Livingstone College in Salisbury, NC, has recently received an additional \$1.2 million in grants and donations from various sources, fortifying its commitment to enhancing student services and campus facilities.

The college received a significant anonymous \$8 million donation last month and has since secured various grants and donations to bolster its infrastructure and capital investments. President Dr. Anthony J. Davis expressed gratitude, stating, "If Livingstone College can be better, then better we will be."

Notably, the National Science Foundation awarded the college a \$448,000 grant to support the STEM Innovation Ecosystem, benefiting students pursuing STEM-related programs. Additionally, Livingstone College received a \$300,000 grant from the Cannon Foundation, Inc. for campus infrastructure improvements and a \$200,000 grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation for the HOPE Emancipation Project, supporting students who have aged out of foster care.



The college also received a \$120,000 donation from Greg Alcorn, founder of Global Contact Services (GCS) and ApSeed, and a \$109,000 grant from the Darelle Revis Foundation for the football program, led by former NFL player Sean Gilbert.

Furthermore, Livingstone College's recruitment cycle has surged by 90% in just 1 1/2 years, largely attributed to the instrumental efforts of Vice President of Enrollment Management, Mr. Anthony Brooks.

For the latest updates and insights into Livingstone College, be sure to visit our website at www.livingstone.edu, connect with us on Instagram at @LivingstoneCollege, and subscribe to our YouTube channel at @Livingstone-College.

About Livingstone College:

Livingstone College, founded in 1879, is a private, historically black college in Salisbury, North Carolina. The College offers a wide range of undergraduate programs and provides a transformative educational experience to its diverse student body. With a focus on academic excellence, leadership development, and community service, Livingstone College prepares students to become global leaders in their chosen fields.

Livingstone College to Hold Fall Convocation, Highlighting Largest New Student Enrollment

By Ms. Garette Hunter

Salisbury, NC | Livingstone College will hold its Fall Convocation on Thursday, September 19, at 3:00 pm in Varick Auditorium. The ceremony will feature Reverend Dr. Malcolm Byrd, Pastor of Mother African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Harlem, New York, who will deliver the keynote address and install new members to the Student Government Association (SGA). This is the college's first official ceremony, which is held at the start of the academic year, to welcome its newest students.



Under the leadership of Dr. Anthony J. Davis and the tireless work of the Office of Enrollment Management, this year's incoming class of 441 scholars is the second-largest new student enrollment in recent years. This incoming cohort boasts scholars who have an average GPA of 3.26, with 108 scholars receiving presidential scholarships

for achieving a GPA higher than 3.7. With the arrival of this incoming class, Livingstone College is solidifying its position as one of the top-choice HBCUs for the nation's best and brightest students. At the end of the convocation, a pinning ceremony will be held at Blue Bear Plaza, presenting each student with a class of 2028 pin to commemorate the occasion.

Also, during the convocation, the ceremony will feature an installation service for the newly elected President, Vice President, and the executive council of the SGA, welcoming them to their new positions for the 2024-25 academic year.

For the latest updates about Livingstone College, please visit www.livingstone.edu, follow us on our official Instagram page @LivingstoneCollege, or subscribe to our YouTube channel @Livingstone-College.

About Us

Livingstone College is a private historically black college that is secured by a strong commitment to quality instruction, academic excellence, and student success. Through a Christian-based environment suitable for holistic learning, Livingstone provides excellent business, liberal arts, STEAM, teacher education, and workforce development programs for students from all ethnic backgrounds designed to promote lifelong learning, and to develop student potential for leadership and service to a global community.

Livingstone College to host 2024 ICRABIF International Business Conference

By Ms. Garette Hunter

SALISBURY, NC | Livingstone College’s George E. Battle School of Business is proud to announce that it will host the 2024 ICRABIF International Business Conference on September 27-28 at its Event Center on the campus. In collaboration with fellow HBCU Howard University and two Indian institutions, Brainware University and Invertis University, this conference marks a significant milestone for the college’s business school.



esteemed participants, organizers, and partners for their invaluable contributions to the success of this conference.”

The 2024 conference is sponsored by Bank of America, the North Carolina Bankers Association, and Livingstone College. This collaboration reflects their commitment to advancing global business dialogue and knowledge.

For the latest updates about Livingstone College, please visit www.livinstone.edu, follow us on our official Instagram page @LivingstoneCollege, or subscribe to our YouTube channel @Livingstone-College.

The 2024 conference will emphasize recent advancements in business, information systems, and finance. Attendees can expect engaging discussions on new business development, marketing, and management strategy. As the host of this year’s conference, Livingstone College is committed to fostering global partnerships and creating platforms for critical dialogue on key business and economic issues.

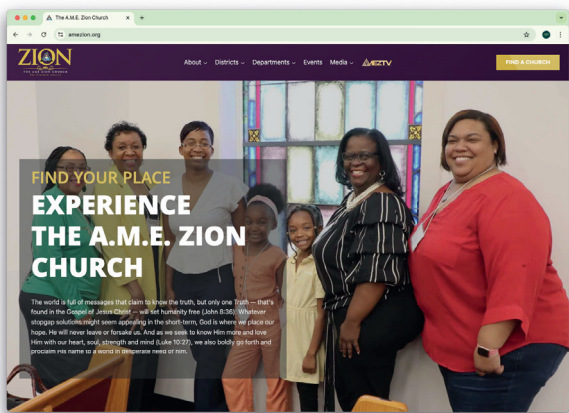
Dr. Anthony J. Davis, president of Livingstone College, expressed his gratitude, stating, “We are honored to host this year’s international gathering on our campus. I extend my deepest gratitude to all the

About Us

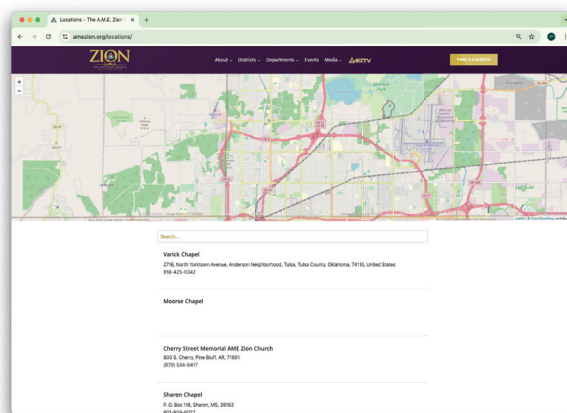
Livingstone College is a private, historically black college that is secured by a strong commitment to quality instruction, academic excellence, and student success. Through a Christian-based environment suitable for holistic learning, Livingstone provides excellent business, liberal arts, STEAM, teacher education, and workforce development programs for students from all ethnic backgrounds designed to promote lifelong learning, and to develop student potential for leadership and service to a global community.

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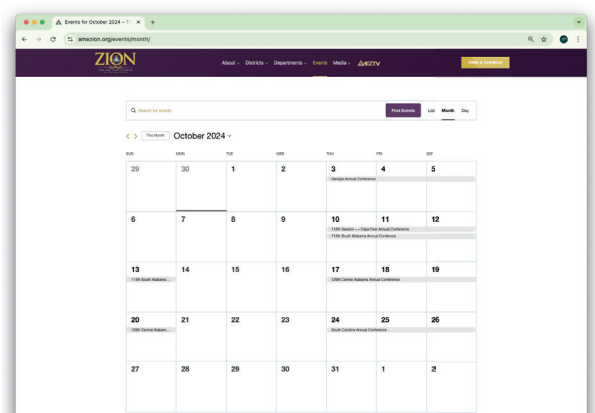
Now, let’s talk about a few of the highlights:



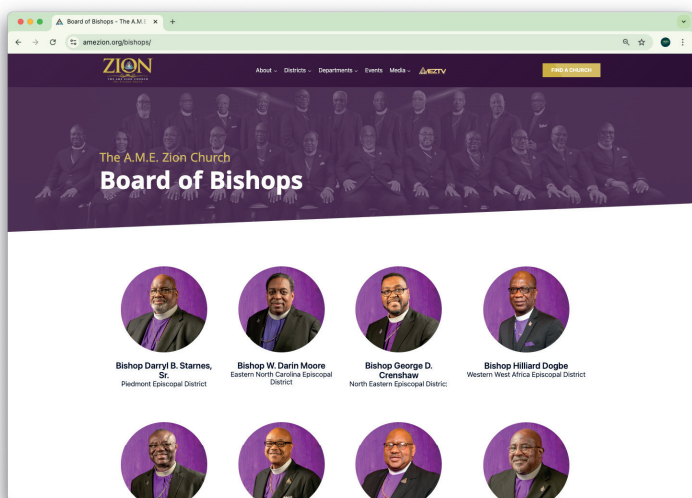
- A vibrant new homepage: Whether you’re new to Zion or a long-time member, the homepage offers an inviting entry point into the church and serves as a valuable resource for those seeking information.



- The Find A Church feature: This will be one of our church’s most powerful tools. Search for your church and, if needed, submit verified updates using the form provided.



- The Events Tab: Easily populate your episcopal calendars or events throughout the year by submitting them through your episcopal office.



This new website is a powerful reflection of who we are as The Freedom Church—a global connective body that will only grow stronger over time. Every church is invited to be a part of this platform, showcasing our unity and mission. Like, love, and share our church with the world. Send your feedback and concerns with love, and we’ll take them into consideration. Together, we can fulfill Jesus’ mandate to make disciples, following the Great Commission.

Your servant leader,

Mr. Darin Kent

**Chief Communications Officer,
The A.M.E. Zion Church**



Rev. Dr. Allison Lee
Social Justice Editor
SocialJustice@StarOfZion.org

“Synergizing Strength: There’s Power In The Pews!”

By Angelia J. Poole

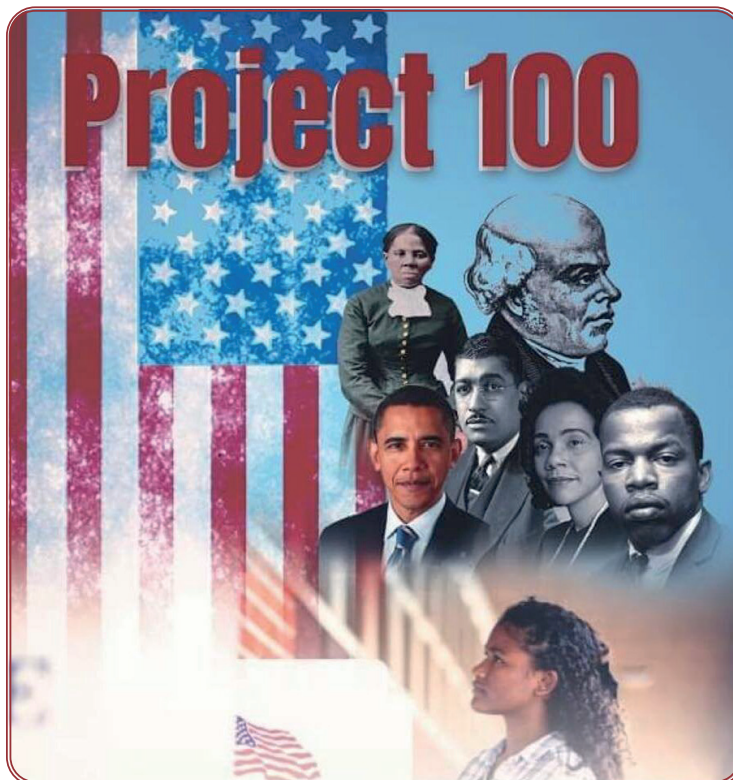
Historically, The A.M.E. Zion Church has mobilized impactful movements fostering equity and initiating change. Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth worshipped at ‘*The Freedom Church*.’ Improving the posture of our people passionately drove these dedicated abolitionists to tirelessly toil, to teach, and to tell, overturning tides of inequality.

Racial inequality (imbalances in the distribution of power, economic resources, and opportunities) causes disparities in wealth, poverty rates, incarceration rates, bankruptcy, housing, education, and employment. Discrimination can be cultural, economic, physical, legal, and/or political. Today’s disparities, reminiscent of the 19th-century anti-slavery struggle, should provoke us to action like those who strove before us.

Although yesterday’s abolitionists did not have the resources we have today, they were consistently consistent with making their voices heard. Today, Zion calls to every eligible voter: **“Make Your Voice Heard!”**

Mr. Bobby Clawson (*Charlotte District Chair, Voter Registration/Education*) shares, “There are far too many reasons to cast your ballot than not to vote. It took a vote to give each one of us the right to vote. We cannot let a few take that vote, **OUR VOTE**, away. Voting is like drinking water: We need it to survive.”

The A.M.E. Zion Church launched ‘*Project 100*’. This unified effort promotes engaging, educating, and empowering voters across Zion. Bishop George Crenshaw declared, “‘*Project 100*’ is committed to ensuring the voice of every member of The A.M.E. Zion Church is heard and respected!” Rev. Dr. Anthony Gibson agrees. “This is the



most consequential election in US history. ‘*Project 100*’ is the catalyst that empowers every voter to exercise their divine right to participate in selecting leaders that serve God’s people.” Rev. Dr. Hanna Broome concurs, affirming, “Through ‘*Project 100*,’ The A.M.E. Zion Church stands firm in our commitment to equity and justice, helping to ensure that all communities, where our churches are anchor institutions, are informed and engaged in the democratic process of voting. **YOUR VOTE MATTERS!**”

“Voting is a right!” shared Connie Bell-Wright, Charlotte District Lay Council President. “We must stand up for this afforded privilege with a clear understanding and purpose in mind. **VOTE-VOTE-VOTE!**” Linda Sutton (*Conference Voter Registration/Education Chair*) warns, “When we fail to vote, we fail as a

people to make lives better for future generations.”

“This is probably the most consequential election of our times, and it’s not just about the presidency. It’s about the senators, states and their representatives, governors – it’s about everyone up and down the ballot! I encourage all pastors and laity to reach out to everyone of voting age, encouraging all to **register to vote** and to **vote early**.” Bishop Darryl Starnes.

Genesis 11:6 (NIV) details God’s view of unification. “The Lord said, ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.’” God declared nothing is impossible for a unified us! Our voices are vital: Register to vote; be an educated voter; go to the polls; cast your vote! There IS power in the pews!

Sensational Salisbury District Supports Livingstone International Students

By Star of Zion News

Livingstone College has welcomed a record number of international students as members of the 2028 cohort of learners, and the burst has warranted the Sensational Salisbury District of the Western North Carolina Conference to reaffirm its commitment to global mission efforts. Ardis Chapel, Cedar Grove, Marable Memorial, Moore’s Chapel, New Hope, Soldiers Memorial, and Southern City A.M.E. Zion churches committed support to the everyday life and residential needs of students in efforts to enhance their transcontinental journey and undergraduate



collegiate experience. From room-sized refrigerators to room bedding and decor, the congregations cheerfully gave their resources, granting a transition of comfort, necessity, and dignity.

Freshman Computer Information Science major Hasana Maltiti of Ghana said, “I am so grateful for the hearts of The A.M.E. Zion churches. I thank God each night for the people I am meeting here, and I know God has sent me to the right place.”

As President Anthony J. Davis has been intentional in his commitment to diversity and inclusion, Livingstone has welcomed approximately 40 new international students, of whom more than half are Presidential Scholars.



Rev. Dierdre R. Parker
Entertainment & The Arts Editor
Entertainment_Arts@StarofZion.org

Line of Sight Film “Follow-Up”

By Dierdre R. Parker, Entertainment and Arts Editor

As promised in an article in last October’s issue entitled “The 48-Hour Film Project” (page 20), we are not going to leave you hanging. Here is the follow-up to the article about A.M.E. Zion filmmakers Marvin Askew II and his wife, Johnette Warren-Askew, from St. Paul’s in Buffalo, NY, and their film *Line of Sight*. The vision has grown, and you can still be a part of this amazing story.

First, a quick recap. This couple entered a film competition where they had to write, film, and edit a seven-minute short film in 48 hours. They would be competing with teams of filmmakers around the city for a chance to compete with filmmakers from around the world. Johnette and her writing team, which included Rev. Craig Douglass and YPC president Jonathan Douglass, wrote the short film *Line of Sight*. Then, digital cinematographer Marvin and the team filmed and edited. Johnette was also the film’s director.

So what happened? Well, do you believe in blessings in disguise? The team felt like they had a strong production entering the competition. They had to use a specific line of dialogue, prop, character, and the genre provided at the beginning of the 48 hours. The premier went great, and they received many compliments. However, at the next event that revealed the top ten films and nominations for individual awards, the team felt snuffed. Until they found out they were disqualified. Turns out the actress who said the line of dialogue added a word to the line and caused the film to be taken out of contention for the top awards. However, the judges loved the film so much and felt bad for having to disqualify it that they gave the film an honorable mention in all of the categories in which it would have been nominated. Those awards included cinematography, editing, graphics, leading performance, supporting performance, and audience award, and the team won the best movie poster. So, although they didn’t win, they had a phenomenal short film on their hands. It worked to their benefit because it fired up their team and made the film one of the more talked about entries. They then rode that momentum and excitement into the pre-production of the feature-length version.

There was so much excitement surrounding the production that the cast and crew wanted to continue to work on it to create a feature-length version. People from other teams also asked to be a part of it.

Johnette quickly gathered the other writers back to the table. They would meet on Sunday afternoons, and then she would write for the week, bringing it back the following Sunday for feedback and ideas on moving forward with the script. They set a shoot date and began crowdfunding for their second feature film, though it would be their first with a hired crew, this large of a cast, and this many cast members, locations, and the need to ask for help from strangers to bring the dream to fruition. They have produced several short films and feature *The Glass*



Floor; however, this is different. This would be the largest project that they’ve taken on. Ever.

Line of Sight is about a young mother whose son is kidnapped at the tender age of six. After ten years of struggling with that trauma and to get the police to do right by her son’s case, she moved to another city to try to get a fresh start. However, she runs into a sixteen-year-old who looks like he could be her son, according to an AI-generated photo. Pitting two mothers against each other. “This is an opportunity to highlight local black-owned businesses and indie music artists, plus bring on two of our high school students to learn on set. Most importantly, it sheds some light on a serious problem facing our city and the world. That is missing and exploited children. Not to mention some other mental-health issues we were able to touch on.” Their passion is making films that matter. The new feature film brought together more than 60 cast and crew members, with additional extras.

“This was hard and honestly sometimes scary. Part of me was worried if my body would hold up to filming for 12 hours several days in a row for a month straight. But I had to trust and believe God would sustain me. I don’t believe he gave us these talents without the ability to use

them. Plus, we were blessed to have some wonderful people working with us. I don’t know if we would have gotten this far without them. God’s favor is amazing.” Johnette has Systemic Lupus and developed Lupus Nephritis, which sent her into acute renal failure in 2006. She would end up on dialysis a few years later and spend seven years on dialysis. She received the gift of life and a second chance by way of a kidney transplant in 2018. That is another story for another day. But physically,

this film would be a challenge as she deals with chronic pain and fatigue. But like many things before, she says God sustained her through it. The couple leaned on each other and God and pushed through.

The film is currently ninety-five percent filmed, and the couple is currently crowdfunding the rest of the finances to finish the project. “I have faith that God didn’t bring us this far to take us back again.” There is an IndieGoGo page set up for people to help complete this film. Funds will pay for cast and crew payment, set building materials for the last scene, post-production editing, sound design, music licensing, promotion, and distribution. The couple says any amount will help them reach their goal.

Embed: Untitled

You can view trailers from the footage that they have already filmed to see the quality of production Marvin, Johnette, and the Expressed Entertainment team are doing on the film’s website at www.lineofsightfilm.com. You can also follow them on Facebook and Instagram @lineofsight24. Along with learning more about the project, see articles and news clips with the couple and learn how you can support them.



Shoe Stories

By Dierdre R. Parker, Entertainment and Arts Editor

There is a saying that you should not judge someone until you walk a mile in their shoes. Every person has a story, and so do the shoes they wear. If you've seen me at any Zion gathering, then you know that I will chase somebody down to take a picture of their shoes. Yes. I have a shoe story. It started when I was in High School. I bought my first pair of heels. Candies. Now, if you don't know, Candies were revolutionary. You didn't even have to wear pantyhose with them. They even said it in the commercial. I have never liked pantyhose, so this was an invitation to freedom! Of course, Candies went out of style, but I experimented with other types of high-heel shoes in the ensuing years. I was diagnosed with arthritis in my freshman year of high school.



I would be remiss if I did not give [Missionary Supervisor Rev. Felica Thompson](#) a special shout-out. Not only was she generous about slowing down long enough to let me take a pic of her shoes, but she could seriously be a shoe model because she knew how to pose those feet, you hear me!!!

As the pictures will attest, she is not the only one to wear beautiful shoes. I saw some fly shoes on some fly Supervisors, first ladies, missionaries, and lay folks alike.



My favorite shoes are sparkly. If you know anything about me, you know I don't look like what I've been through. The enemy of our souls tried to extinguish my shine before I knew I had it...but God! I wear sparkly shoes to remind myself that God has a purpose for my life that requires me to shine, but when I shine, I never forget that I am not the source of the shine. The Source of the Shine is the Light of the World.

In 1983, I joined the [US Army](#). I didn't know it at the time, but running on concrete, along with weight gain (which caused me to double in size) and arthritis, left me with very little cartilage in my knees and the need for a replacement of both. I haven't had the replacement, but I have lost weight. I still can't wear heels, so I take pictures of other women's shoes. I celebrate their creativity of choice and pairing.



That's my shoe story. What's yours? Share your shoe stories with me. I'd love to hear them.

Entertainment_arts@starofzion.org



Mr. Daman De Leon
Health and Wellness Editor
Health_Wellness@StarOfZion.org

Health Literacy: *More Than Just Knowing*

By Damon De Leon, Health and Wellness Editor

Every October, we celebrate Health Literacy Month — a time to recognize the importance of making health information easy to understand and the health care system easier to navigate. A team of experts recently split the definition into two parts:

- **Personal health literacy:** The degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.
- **Organizational health literacy:** The degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

Health literacy goes beyond the ability to read and comprehend medical pamphlets or follow prescription instructions. It also includes one's understanding of preventive measures, ability to navigate the complex healthcare system, and make informed decisions about one's health. Health literacy is a fluid state that doesn't depend on a person's education level or reading aptitude. Often, when people encounter a medical emergency, their health literacy is lowered due to the shock, emotion, and stress of their situation. In the digital era, where telemedicine and virtual consultations are becoming the norm, the gap is widening between those who are proficient in health literacy and those who are not. Healthcare executives can play a pivotal role in bridging this divide and are increasingly being called upon to do so. While personal health literacy estimates are varied, all research underscores the need for improved healthcare communication to ensure understanding. This work is a core component of person-centered cultural competency training. Health literacy describes a person's ability to obtain and understand the medical information needed to make informed healthcare decisions. This includes the ability to understand medical explanations of symptoms and illnesses, follow directions for medications, tests, and procedures, and ask relevant questions.



USDA Science

The consequences of low health literacy can be far-reaching, affecting patient outcomes, healthcare system efficiency, and healthcare costs. We can define health literacy as the capability of an individual to obtain, interpret, and comprehend necessary medical information to make sound healthcare decisions. This encompasses:

- Understanding medical descriptions of symptoms and diseases
- Following instructions for medications, tests, and medical procedures

- Completing health-related forms
- Efficiently navigating healthcare services
- Assessing risks and benefits
- Managing chronic diseases



Unfortunately, about 90 million American adults don't possess adequate health literacy skills to use the healthcare system to its fullest potential effectively. Low health literacy disproportionately affects marginalized groups, including minorities, older people, and those with chronic ailments. Often, these individuals turn to friends and family for health advice. While this might offer some help and comfort, it exposes them to misinformation and potentially harmful beliefs that might conflict with expert medical advice. Several studies highlight that those with lower health literacy frequently experience miscommunication with healthcare professionals. Some might hide their confusion due to embarrassment, while others might not even realize they've misunderstood crucial information. Consequently, this group often harbors feelings of skepticism, mistrust, and dissatisfaction with healthcare services. The ramifications of poor health literacy are undeniable. Individuals with low health literacy often face the following:

- Higher chances of non-compliance with treatment plans
- Increased risk of preventable hospital admissions

From an economic standpoint, the cost of these misunderstandings can be staggering. Estimates suggest that the financial toll on the healthcare system due to inadequate health literacy ranges from \$106 billion to \$238 billion annually. Considering the grave repercussions, healthcare professionals must adopt strategies to communicate effectively with those with limited health literacy. Here are some best practices:

- Speak at a moderate pace, ensuring clarity
- Use plain language, sidestepping medical jargon and complex terms
- Share information in manageable chunks, reiterating key points
- Encourage patients to paraphrase what they've understood to confirm comprehension
- Foster an open, non-judgmental environment that prompts questions and discussion

While only 12% of American adults are considered to have very high health literacy skills, it's vital to understand that health literacy isn't solely determined by one's general literacy, education, or age. High-stress situations, like a medical emergency, can impede anyone's processing of complex health information. Therefore, healthcare professionals should begin every medical conversation with the presumption that there might be gaps in the patient's health literacy.

Health literacy is integral to ensuring patients actively participate in their healthcare journey. It's essential to define health literacy and understand the widespread impact of low health literacy. By recognizing the significance and tailoring communication strategies, healthcare professionals can bridge the knowledge gap, leading to better patient outcomes and a more efficient healthcare system. As we observe Health Literacy Awareness Month, let's commit to prioritizing health literacy and cultural competency in healthcare. Together, we can ensure a healthcare system that is inclusive, equitable, and delivers the highest standard of care to all.



Ms. Angel Eason
Lifestyle Editor
Lifestyle@StarOfZion.org

Black Love Personified: Celebrating 50 Years of Marriage

By Angel Eason, Lifestyle Editor
Photos By Orah Pierce Photography

In the March edition of the Star of Zion, I had the opportunity to share the relationship journeys of two couples in the article “Relationship Goals.” One of those couples, Presiding Elder Vincent Jones and Dr. Montina Jones (Newport News District, Virginia Conference), recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on July 6, 2024.



I had the opportunity to attend the epic celebration of marriage and ministry. The celebration was held at the Newport News Marriott City Center, and Bishop W. Darin Moore presided over it. Many pastors, ministers, and laity across Zion and family and friends were present to celebrate the beautiful couple.

As part of the celebration, the couple shared a touching video that beautifully encapsulated the journey of their love over the past decades. During the video, the couple shared that they met while Dr. Montina Jones was riding her bicycle on her paper route as a teenager. Dr. Vincent Jones shared that Dr. Montina Jones's ponytails captured him. Dr. Vincent Jones asked Dr. Montina Jones why she would not talk to boys, and she shared that my dad said you must talk to him first.



Dr. Montina Jones shared her initial thoughts as Dr. Vincent Jones kept showing up. “Why does this guy keep showing up? Does he have a problem?” – the couple erupts with laughter. Dr. Vincent Jones shared, “I made up my mind to go to your house to ask your dad if I could talk to you.” Dr. Montina Jones shared, “I know the power of following my father's instructions, even my Heavenly Father's instructions.” That is when the journey began for the high schoolers. “I love Vincent because he is kind and thoughtful, a man of integrity and vision, and a thoughtful heart. I enjoy and love being his wife. A good wife and helpmate, I love being the mother of our children and being the grandmother of 6 beautiful grandchildren. I thank God for our youth and marriage; you are my best friend.”

The video was a heartfelt testament to the enduring connection they have cultivated, the milestones they have achieved, and how they have kept God as the center of their marriage. It was a moment that touched everyone in the room, a reminder that true love exists.

Orah Pierce Photography captured the celebration.





A GLOBAL LEADERSHIP VIEW OF THE A.M.E. ZION CHURCH



1. Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Sr.

PIEDMONT EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

Office Address: West Sugar Creek Road, Charlotte, NC 28269

Office Ph: (919) 554-8994; Fax: (919) 556-6049

Email: BishopDBStarnes@amezion.org

District includes: Blue Ridge, West Central North Carolina, Western North Carolina, Jamaica (all divisions)

Mrs. Camille C. Starnes, Missionary Supervisor



2. Bishop W. Darin Moore

EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

Office Address: P.O. Box 97395, Raleigh, NC 27624

Office Ph: (910) 773-6491; Fax: (919) 556-6049

Email: BishopWDarinMoore@amezion.org

District includes: Albemarle, Cape Fear, Central North Carolina, North Carolina, Virgin Islands

Mrs. Devieta C. Moore, Missionary Supervisor



3. Bishop George Dwayne Crenshaw

NORTH EASTERN EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

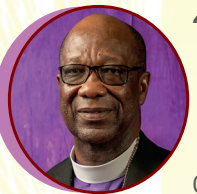
Office Address: 3605 Sandy Planes Rd. 240-238 Marietta, GA 30066

Office Ph: TBA

Email: BishopGDCrenshaw@amezion.org

District includes: New England, New Jersey, New York, Western New York, Bahamas and London-Midland

Mrs. Laurenna H. Crenshaw, Missionary Supervisor



4. Bishop Hilliard K. Dogbe

WESTERN WEST AFRICA EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

Office Address: A.M.E. Zion Church Episcopal Residence/Office; P.O. Box GP 22220, Accra, Ghana

Office Ph: 233-30-703-0241

Email: BishopHKDogbe@amezion.org

District includes: North Ghana, West Ghana, Mid-Ghana, Liberia, East Ghana, Cote D'voire, Togo and Rwanda

Mrs. Cynthia Dogbe, Missionary Supervisor



5. Bishop U. U. Effiong

EASTERN WEST AFRICA EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

Office Address: Anderson Memorial A.M.E Zion Church, Diamond Hill, Calabar Annex/Postal:

57 School Road, Satellite Town, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria

Office Ph: +234 803 6765 479 Email: BishopUUEffiong@amezion.org

District includes: Nigeria, Central Nigeria, Rivers Nigeria, Lagos-West Nigeria, Mainland Nigeria, Northern Nigeria, Cross River Nigeria, South-Eastern Nigeria, Southern and Akwa Nigeria, Port Harcourt, Uganda, Burundi

Mrs. Promise Effiong, Missionary Supervisor



6. Bishop Brian R. Thompson, Sr.

MID-ATLANTIC EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

Office Address: 9701 Apollo Drive - Suite 245, Largo, MD 20774

Office Ph: (301) 322-3866; Fax: (301) 322-3862

Email: BishopThompson106@amezion.org

District includes: Allegheny, East Tennessee-Virginia, Ohio, Philadelphia-Baltimore, Virginia, Barbados, Guyana-Suriname, St. Vincent

Rev. Felica Thompson, Missionary Supervisor



7. Bishop Eric L. Leake

SOUTH ATLANTIC EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

Office Address: 745 Saluda Street, Rock Hill, SC 29730

Office Ph: (803) 980-2462

Email: BishopEricLeake@amezion.org

District includes: Georgia, India, Palmetto, Pee Dee, South Carolina
Mrs. H. Jean McMurray-Leake, Missionary Supervisor



8. Bishop Daran H. Mitchell

MIDWEST EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

Office Address: P.O. Box 79035, Greensboro, NC 27417

Office Ph: TBA

Email: BishopDMitchell108@amezion.org

District includes: Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Tennessee, Trinidad-Tobago

Rev. L. Lynn Mitchell, Missionary Supervisor



9. Bishop Anthony Witherspoon

SOUTHWESTERN DELTA EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

Office Address: 3225W. Sugar Creek Rd. Charlotte, NC 28269

Office Ph: (314)-435-0480

Email: BishopWitherspoon109@amezion.org

District includes: Arkansas, India, Oklahoma, Louisiana, South Mississippi, Texas, and West Tennessee-Mississippi

Rev. Dr. Kay M. Gabriel, Missionary Supervisor



10. Bishop Melanie Rogers-Miller

WESTERN EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

Office Address: TBA

Office Ph: TBA Fax: (215)-689-0865;

Email: BishopMelanieMiller110@amezion.org

District includes: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Oregon-Washington, and Southwest Rocky Mountains

Mr. Jimmie Lewis Miller Sr. & Mrs. Rosalyn "Terry" Holland



11. Bishop Dwayne A. Walker

ALABAMA-FLORIDA EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

Office Address: 808 South Lawrence, Montgomery AL, 36104-5055

Office Ph: (334)-269-6365; Fax: (334)-269-6369

Email: BishopDwayneAWalker111@amezion.org

District includes: Alabama, North Alabama, South Alabama, Central Alabama, West Alabama, Cahaba, Florida, S. Florida, South Korea

Mrs. Donna Smith-Walker, Missionary Supervisor



12. Bishop Bernardo J. Ngunza

CENTRAL SOUTHERN AFRICA EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

Office Address: TBA

Office Ph: TBA

Email: BishopBNgunza112@amezion.org

District Includes: East Angola, West Angola, North Angola, South Angola-Namibia, North Kivu, South Kivu, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique

Ms. Isabel António Ngunza, Missionary Supervisor



13. Bishop Seth O. Lartey

LOCATED

Office Address: 2361 Olivet Church Rd, Winston-Salem, NC 27106

Office Ph: (336) 529-8496



Bishop George W. Walker Sr. (Retired)

Ph: (708) 799-5599 Fax: (708) 799-5584

Email: BishopGeorgeWWalkerSr@amezion.org



Bishop S. Chuka Ekemam Sr. (Retired)

Tel: +234-803-213-3767(Nigeria) or
+19802426935 (US)

Email: BishopSChukaEkemamSr@amezion.org



Bishop George E. Battle Jr. (Retired)

Ph: (704)-895-2236 (H) (704)-332-7600

Email: BishopGeorgeEBattleJr@amezion.org



Bishop Joseph Johnson (Retired)

Ph: (704) 877-9646

Email: BishopJJohnson@amezion.org



Bishop Marshall H. Strickland (Retired)

Ph: (410) 744-7330 Fax: (410) 788-5510

Email: BishopMHStrickland@amezion.org



Bishop Nathaniel Jarrett (Retired)

PH: (708) 802-9873

Email: BishopNJarrett@amezion.org



Bishop Warren M. Brown (Retired)

Ph: (678) 574-2725

Email: BishopWMBrown@amezion.org



Bishop Kenneth Monroe (Retired)

Ph: (910) 843-8274

Email: BishopKMonroe@amezion.org



Bishop Dennis V. Proctor (Retired)

Ph: (410)-215-8741

Email: BishopProctor@amezion.org



Bishop Michael A. Frencher Sr. (Retired)

Ph: (336)-312-8245

Email: BishopMAFrencher@amezion.org



Official Statement

Of The Board of Bishops
Of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
Extending Sympathy & Solidarity with The Saint Mark A.M.E. Zion Church
(Athens, Tennessee) & The Family of Linda Buchanan

*“A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’”
(Isaiah 40:3 NRSVUE)*

It was the late, renowned, and distinguished lawyer, diplomat, and Executive Secretary of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) James Weldon Johnson, and his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, who put pen to paper and notes to music as they gifted the nation with what would be known as the “The Black National Anthem: Life Every Voice and Sing,” in 1900, during the rise of post-war racial violence and reconstruction. The words of this hymn gave voice to the grief and gratitude felt by so many who struggled to be free and sought to honor the journey of faith traveled by those whose names should never be forgotten.

"Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chast'ning rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers (and mothers) sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered.
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the
slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast".
(James Weldon Johnson)

Our legacy of faith and practice as a Church has always been consistent with the biblical mandate to be a voice that cries amidst the confusion and to stand in solidarity with those impacted by violence. Hence, your Board of Bishops offers this statement to express our collective grief regarding the recent tragedy that has fallen upon the Saint Mark African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Athens, Tennessee, and the family of our faithful, dedicated, and beloved member, Ms. Linda Buchanan.

Because our Church regards life as a gift from God and all members of our Communion as persons made in the “Imago Dei” (image of God) and worthy of love and belonging, we are deeply saddened by the murder of Linda Buchanan, a devout member of the Saint Mark Church.

Ms. Buchanan was a faithful servant of God, loved by her community, and warmly regarded as an educator and activist. Our prayers are extended to Ms. Buchanan’s family and all those who mark and mourn her passing. We join you in seeking justice for her and supporting the authorities’ ongoing efforts to bring clarity and resolution to this severe matter. We are comforted by the salient truth that the God who always chooses the side of those whose martyred lives bear witness to the grace accompanying our grief will be our light amid this darkness.

Having been apprised of the details regarding this occurrence, we also offer a priestly word of comfort to those who mourn and a prophetic word of solidarity with the Saint Mark Church and the Athens community. This church has stood as a bastion of hope and justice for over 150 years and was a living reminder of the sacrifices made by men and women to live and worship in freedom under the banner of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Therefore, we see such a tragedy as an affront to our mission and witness as a Connectional Church.

The tragedy at Saint Mark affects us all, and as The Freedom Church, we are on high alert. We are confident that the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation is giving its full attention to this matter and will responsibly and diligently handle this case in the interest of justice for all involved. Our commitment to justice remains unwavering.

We are thankful to the Athens community and all who have come alongside our brothers and sisters of Saint Mark and the Buchanan Family. We especially thank Pastor Tiki Dixon and Presiding Elder Richard Gadzekpo for their leadership and pastoral care for Saint Mark and the Athens community and hold them in prayer for the days to come. In this season of challenge and choices, we choose love over hate, light over darkness, and courage over fear. As The Freedom Church around the globe, we stand in solidarity with Bishop Daran and Reverend Lynn Mitchell, the Midwest Episcopal District, and the Tennessee Annual Conference. We Hurt Together, We Heal Together, and We Will Rebuild Together. We are One Zion, and we are Zion Strong!

Sincerely,

The Board of Bishops of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church - The Freedom Church:

Bishop Hilliard K.D. Dogbe, President
Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Sr., Senior Bishop
Bishop W. Darin Moore
Bishop George D. Crenshaw
Bishop Uduak U. Effiong
Bishop Brian R. Thompson

Bishop Eric L. Leake
Bishop Daran H. Mitchell
Bishop Anthony N. Witherspoon
Bishop Melanie R. Miller
Bishop Dwayne A. Walker
Bishop Bernardo J. Ngunza
Bishop Seth O. Lartey, Located

Bishop George W.C. Walker, Sr., Retired
Bishop Samuel Chuka Ekemam, Sr., Retired
Bishop Joseph Johnson, Retired
Bishop Marshall H. Strickland, Retired
Bishop Nathaniel Jarrett, Jr., Retired
Bishop Warren M. Brown, Retired
Bishop George E. Battle, Jr., Retired
Bishop Kenneth Monroe, Retired
Bishop Dennis V. Proctor, Retired
Bishop Michael A. Frencher, Sr., Retired

DONE THIS THE 24TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2024



Official Statement

Of The Board of Bishops Of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church In Response To The Injustice In Springfield, Ohio

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly”
– Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Since our founding, The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church has stood on the right side of justice for those disenfranchised and marginalized by laws, cultural shifts, and political stances. Over the last few weeks, the Haitian community of Springfield, Ohio, has been mercilessly attacked and persecuted by a sweeping political agenda that seeks to attack, dismantle, and devalue cultural differences and human decency.

We as a Church, do not support or mindlessly sit on the sidelines of injustice anywhere that touches and impacts God’s people. Our Church is not just a building but a sanctuary, a safe space that celebrates our world's diversity and protects and safeguards all that inhabit it.

To our brothers and sisters in Springfield, we stand in solidarity with you. We pray for your safety and peace and that God’s hands of protection continue to cover you. Our Church is a sanctuary, and you are safe within its walls.

As we all journey into the trenches of our upcoming political election cycle, we must be reminded of the values and beliefs that protect and undergird our communities. We should all continue to be mindful and resolute in standing for justice and not allowing the rhetoric of hatred and disrespect to govern our hearts and minds. Remember, our Church stands firmly against injustice, and together, we can make a difference. Our commitment to justice and unity is unwavering, and we stand with you in this fight.

In Christian Love and Solidarity

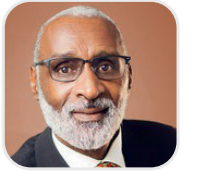
The Board of Bishops of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church - The Freedom Church:

Bishop Hilliard K.D. Dogbe, President
Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Sr., Senior Bishop
Bishop W. Darin Moore
Bishop George D. Crenshaw
Bishop Uduak U. Effiong
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Bishop Nathaniel Jarrett, Retired
Bishop Warren M. Brown, Retired
Bishop George E. Battle, Jr., Retired
Bishop Kenneth Monroe, Retired
Bishop Dennis V. Proctor, Retired
Bishop Michael A. Frencher, Sr., Retired

DONE THIS THE 28TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2024



Rev. Ronald Nathan
World Politics Editor
WorldPolitics@StarOfZion.org

ABUBAKARI, COLUMBUS, AND TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE; EXPLORATION, COLONIZATION, AND LIBERATION

By Rev. Dr. Garrett M. Thomas

It is important when studying Black History, that we are cognizant of the fact that the history of people of African descent did not begin with slavery, and most definitely did not begin in America. Africans had already crossed the Atlantic and arrived in future America at least two hundred years before Christopher Columbus, and they established colonies and settlements here long before Europeans ever did. Mansa Qu, AKA Abubakari, the ruler of the Mali Empire, and untold thousands of men and women sailed to modern-day America aboard two thousand ships in the year 1311 CE. They settled with the Aztecs and with the Olmecs in modern-day Mexico, uniting cultures and becoming one family. Vestiges of the African presence in North America are still evident today (Van Sertima, 1976).

When Abubakari crossed the ocean blue, he left his nephew, Mansa Musa in charge of the empire. Considered the richest man to have ever lived, Mansa Musa ruled Mali in West Africa from 1312 to 1337 CE (Baxter, 2020; Cartwright, 2019). Mali was rich in gold and copper and controlled all the trade between North Africa and the interior of the continent. Under his leadership, Islamic mosques were built, which are still standing today, and libraries and universities of international fame were built in the city of Timbuktu where many elite Europeans came to study and learn from Africans who created the cradle of civilization and the epicenter of wisdom and knowledge (Cartwright, 2019; Van Sertima, 1976). According to a West African Proverb, "Salt comes from the north, gold from the south, and silver from the country of the white men, but the Word of God and the treasures of wisdom are only found in Timbuktu" (Baxter, 2020; Cartwright, 2019).

At the time, Italy was not a country of white men but was a multi-ethnic, racially diverse state with many so-called mixed-race citizens. Amerigo Vespucci was named after his paternal grandfather. He was born in Florence, Italy, and was Italian by nationality and Black by Ethnicity (Ober, 1997). In the late 1400s and early 1500s, he was the Chief Navigator for Spain and was there to greet Christopher Columbus when he returned from his first voyage. In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue and the disease of colonialism, racism, colorism, and slavery began to spread throughout the continent of North America and throughout the world. For nearly a decade, everybody thought Columbus had been to India because that's what he said and the indigenous people were called Indians.

Then, Amerigo Vespucci crossed the Atlantic, commanding his own ship. He mapped out the land that he saw on the way and demonstrated that it was quite different than what they had known about India. So, Vespucci determined that new land had been found that Europeans had



never heard of. He called it the New World (Formisano, 1992; Ober, 1997). Soon, many of the reporters decided that the New World should be named after him and they started calling it America. In Welsh, the prefix "A" means "son." Merik comes from the word Moor which is the name used to describe the Blacks who lived in the Northwest African state of Morocco. So the name Amerigo means, "Son of a Moor" or "Son of Blacks." When the suffix "A" is added, it becomes America which means "The Land of the Blacks." America is named after a Black man and it literally means "The Land of the Blacks" (Kershagama, 2003).

The personal writings of Columbus reveal that he had hoped to spread Christianity with his journeys (Columbus, 1492). History is filled with racists who have spread curses and diseases under the guise of Evangelism and Christian Education. Nowhere are these dreaded curses more evident than on the island of Haiti, known as the land of mountains. Modernity has led many to believe that disharmony and separation was always the law of the land where The Dominican Republic is on one side and Haiti is on the other. No lie can live forever. The entire island was once called Haiti (Ayiti), the west side was called Bohio, which means home, and the east side was called Quisqueya, which means mother of the earth (Nguyen, 2015). The indigenous people were known as Taino and were one people who had been living in peace and harmony until the advent of colonialism which forced them to live under oppression.

The slave rebellion, which began on August 22, 1791, in San Domingo was not an anomaly. Many revolts would sporadically take place all over the world; however, they would usually be put down in a short

period of time. In San Domingo, from plantation to plantation, Africans enthusiastically joined the fray, optimistically believing that they could shake off the shackles of oppression and fight to achieve freedom. By their masters, the Africans had been raped, tortured, and degraded for sport. Such atrocities were now required in kind. Yet the allegations of bestiality on the part of the Black freedom fighters never reached the level of which they had suffered for over two hundred years at the hands of the white oppressors. James says, "The cruelties of property and privilege are always more ferocious than the revenge of poverty and oppression" (James, 1938, p. 88-89). For the former is devoted to conquering and imposing subjugation upon the landless whereas the latter is simply a temporary passion that is soon dissipated.

The rebellion had taken a significant turn and it was all out war. The conflict began with a grievance of poor underprivileged whites against wealthy whites and Mulattoes who enjoyed certain privileges that the impoverished did not, like the right to vote and the right to own real property. When the enslaved joined in the fighting, it became a revolutionary war to rid the island of slavery, white privilege, and light-skinned privilege. Many whites were apathetic towards the adversities faced by the dark-skinned Blacks who were mostly slaves. But now, the balance of power was shifting, whites were on the run, and the Blacks had the upper hand. The French sent reinforcements; and though some mulattoes fought with the whites, many, along with the free Blacks and the Maroons, joined the side of the slaves (James, 1938). All that was needed was a strong, intelligent leader to emerge and rally the troops to defeat the oppressor.

Toussaint L'Ouverture, a freed Black man who was a great-grandson of an African king, epitomized leadership. He was a cowboy before the term became popular and had authority over the care of livestock. Because of his ingenuity, some Blacks were assigned to remain on the plantations to perform farm work because he knew that a strong, efficient economy depended on the produce of an agrarian society. He trained Black men to be soldiers and to fight. And he negotiated with the Spanish against the French and with the French against the Spanish (James, 1938.).

Many Blacks knew that Spain was closely allied with England, who having recently lost control of the thirteen colonies in America, was still very pro-slavery. Therefore, many Blacks were quite pessimistic about the possibility of freedom tied to an association with Spain and England. In the summer of 1793, to assuage their fears and reiterate his commitment to liberty, Toussaint wrote, "Brothers and friends. I am Toussaint L'Ouverture, my name is perhaps known to you. I have undertaken vengeance. I want Liberty and Equality to reign in San Domingo. I work to bring them into existence. Unite yourselves to us, brothers, and fight with us for the same cause, etc. Your very humble and very obedient servant, Toussaint L'Ouverture, General of the Armies for the King, for the Public Good" (James, 1938, p. 125). All Blacks and most Mulattoes joined with Toussaint because not doing so often led to instant death because racist poor whites and the influx of bigoted soldiers forced them into Toussaint's band. Even those who were peacefully content and had fearfully resolved to live as slaves were forced to choose between the daunting probability of death by lynching and the faithful possibility of freedom gained by the taking up of arms in the cause of liberty and justice.

It was inevitable that England would throw her hat in the ring because Hispaniola was one of the most lucrative colonies in the entire world; there was so much money to be made, that such a superpower could not simply watch the fight from a ringside seat. During the ensuing winter, England united with Spain in the war. France then promised Toussaint that if he would switch sides, they would abolish slavery. Toussaint and his army switched sides and joined the ranks of their former masters and oppressors. Toussaint now had white French soldiers under his command, fighting alongside Black soldiers, many of whom had most recently been held in bondage, against the English/Spanish coalition (James, 1938).

In 1798 England withdrew when Toussaint agreed not to sail to Jamaica and free the slaves there; and Spain ceded the western third of Hispaniola to Toussaint. St. Domingue (Bohio) became known as Haiti and San Domingo (Quisqueya) eventually became known as the Dominican Republic.

Then in 1802, Toussaint, the African Prince, and now founder and First President of the Democratic Republic of Haiti, was summoned to meet

with one of the French generals. He was arrested and deported to France where he spent the rest of his life in prison. Having time to self-reflect and offer an introspection of the situation, Toussaint knew that the cause for freedom was bigger than himself and would not die with him. From the cell of his death, he wrote these words, "In overthrowing me you have cut down in Saint Domingue only the trunk of the tree of liberty; it will spring up again from the roots, for they are numerous and they are deep" (James, 1938, p. 334). Those deep roots, cultivated by Dessalines, gave Napoleon Bonaparte the worst defeat of his career; they sprang up and choked the fight of out of the French army who gave up and left the Island (James, 1938).

France was then forced to give up all its interests in America and sold, for a nominal fee, more than a third of the territory there, land that would eventually become thirteen new states. It was a transaction known as the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 that would have a direct impact on the American Civil War which was already brewing in America. Everyone there had heard of the success of Toussaint and Dessalines in Haiti. Men like Denmark Vesey, Gabriel Prosser, and Nat Turner would lead revolts of their own that were all suppressed and extirpated unlike in Haiti where independence was declared on the First of January 1804, becoming the first free, Black republic in the world. The Haitian Revolution is the only truly successful slave rebellion in world history. Toussaint L'Ouverture is responsible for freeing the slaves in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. He is the father of the Nation of Haiti who led a revolutionary war for independence just as George Washington had done for America a couple of decades earlier.

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Changing of the Guards: London Midland Conference

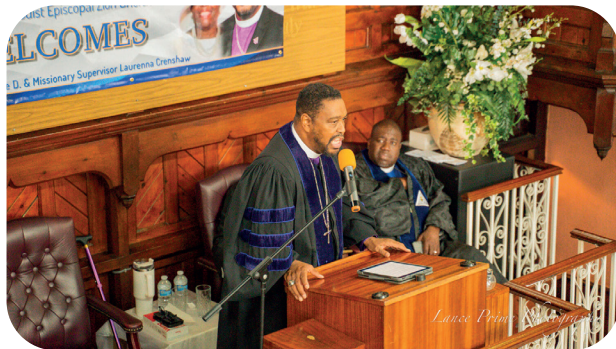


By Ronald A. Nathan, World Politics Editor

Tens of thousands of visitors come to London annually to see the historical precision-driven 'Changing of the Guard' ceremonies. This ceremony first began during the reign of King Henry VII (1485-1509) and marks the moment when the soldiers currently on duty, the Old Guard, exchanged places with the New Guard. It currently occurs at three sites in London: Buckingham Palace, St James's Palace, and Wellington Barracks.

Four and a half miles away, in a 'church on the hill' in Battersea, London, there was another changing of the guards from 22 August to 25 August 2024. Bishop George C. Crenshaw and his Missionary Supervisor, Mrs. Laurenna Y. Crenshaw, landed in the United Kingdom. They were there to hold the first annual conference of the North-Eastern Episcopal District since the 52nd general conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Greensboro, North Carolina.

They flew into the British Isles to hold the London-Midland's 54th annual conference in the aftermath of race riots across a dozen British cities and during Storm Lilian. These 73 mph winds brought with it 16 hours of torrential rain. Despite these factors,



the Ransom Pentecostal A.M.E. Zion Church was crowded with members wishing to get their first glimpse of their new episcopal leaders.

Bishop Crenshaw lit up the house with a sterling call for strategic actions to grow the conference and to use his teaching as an inspirational springboard for church growth across Europe. The bishop painstakingly spent

two hours teaching the five-fold ministry of Evangelism, Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship, and Service. He peppered his lecture with anecdotes from his ministry as a pastor of both rural and urban congregations in Alabama.

Bishop Crenshaw was supported in the annual conference by presiding elders Rev. Dr. A. Alfred Carson, London District; Rev. Daren Jaime, Midland District; and overseas clergy, Rev. Keith I. Harris and Mrs. Tawanda Harris, Presiding Elder Long Island; Rev. Dr. Derrill Blue, Presiding Elder Rochester-Syracuse; Rev. Kevin D. Coakley, Presiding Elder Buffalo NY; Rev. Milton Stubbs and Mrs. Stubbs, Pastors Newburgh; Rev. Marvin Hooks, Pastor First A.M.E. Zion Church, Brooklyn, NY; The conference integrated ministry from the local conference and the overseas delegation.

The business sessions of the conference were expedited, the word of God was preached powerfully and uplifting, the worship was indeed heavenly, and the fellowship most unifying. Presiding Elders were challenged to develop strategies for establishing new societies in the United Kingdom; pastors to innovate new ways of engaging with their disparate communities; members were entreated to be more welcoming and loving towards newcomers; and departments were urged to be intentional and focussed with their programmes.

Sinners were called to repentance and believers to a greater commitment to Jesus Christ and his Church. As the conferees spilled out of the 'church on the hill in Battersea' and began to make their way back to the diverse boroughs of London and the cities of Birmingham, Coventry, Manchester, Wiltshire, and Wolverhampton, they left with the stirring words of the Sunday morning sermon that there was 'Unfinished Business' to do across the nation of the United Kingdom and the continent of Europe.

Joint Church Collaboration Brings Relief to Barbados Students

By Rev. Deborah Grant and Rev. Ronald A. Nathan
Photos By Hoggard A.M.E. Zion Church, Rev. Donna Richardson, and Rev. Deborah Grant

Two churches, one in the United States of America and the other in the Caribbean collaborated to assist students in need in Barbados.

The Restoration African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Windsor

Mill, Baltimore, Maryland, USA, and the Hoggard African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Tyrol Cot, Codrington Hill, St. Michael, Barbados, joined forces to address deprivation on the island.

The two congregations sought to deepen their growing relationship, which was initiated at the Barbados annual conference in March 2024. They came together in this mission initiative to bring relief to the Wildey/ Pine communities of St. Michael, Barbados.

Citizens across Barbados have expressed their deep concern that there



The students came out to the Meadow Road Playing field, in Wildey, St. Michael where they were given backpacks, bibles, pencil cases, water bottles, snacks, gym bags, and other items.



This joint mission venture was led by Rev. Donna Richardson and Rev. Deborah Grant, who hail from the Mid-West Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church under the episcopal leadership of Bishop Brian Thompson Sr. Rev. Donna Richardson, a Barbadian by birth, who migrated to the United States of America, is the senior pastor of the Restoration A.M.E. Zion Church. She serves under the direction of Rev. Dr. Evalina Huggins, the Presiding Elder of the Baltimore District in the Philadelphia and Baltimore Conference.



exist several communities whose children suffer several hardships when it comes to returning to school after their long summer holiday. Through the creative intervention of Restoration and Hoggard, 300 children were supplied with school resources just before the reopening on the 16th of September 2024.

Rev. Deborah Grant, the senior pastor of the Hoggard A. M.E.

Zion Church, Tyrol Cot St Michael, shared that “following our fellowship at the annual conference, we were overjoyed that our two churches were able to come together to reach out to this local community.” The Barbados District’s Presiding Elder, Rev. Scot C. Moore is the founder and Senior Pastor of Judah Temple A.M.E. Zion Church in Mitchellville, Maryland.



Britain's First Black Church Bank

By Ronald A. Nathan, World Politics Editor
Photos By Ronald A. Nathan and The Guardian



On September 19, 2024, the Pentecostal Credit Union (PCU) became the Pentecostal Community Bank at an elegant function held at the Royal Society, Central London, England. In the presence of 120 leading Church personalities from right across the Black Church denominational spectrum, stories were told of its humble beginnings and the struggles the late Rev. Carmel Jones and his wife, Iveline Jones, the founders of the PCU faced.



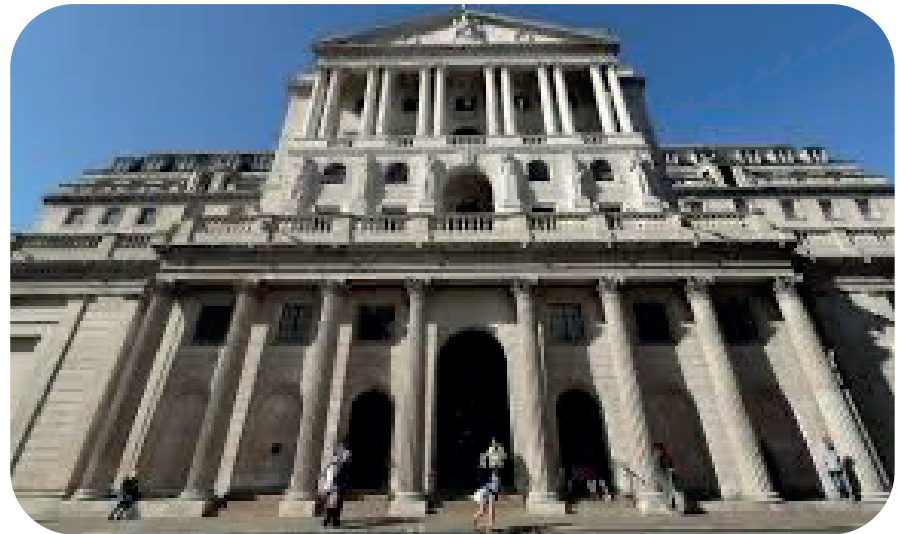
Rev. Jones, an ordained minister with the Church of God in Christ, with early links to the historic Ransom Pentecostal Church of God, which would later become the Ransom Pentecostal A.M.E. Zion Church, was part of what is called the 'Windrush generation', the migration of 500,000 persons from the Caribbean to the United Kingdom after World War II. He, along with many of his ministerial colleagues in the 1950s through to the 1970s, experienced racial discrimination as they sought to access loans for housing and church buildings from the British High Street financial institutions.

Rev. Jones, a tenacious man of vision and integrity, refused to accept rejection as a final answer. With a vision for the spiritual and economic growth of the Black community in the United Kingdom, he founded the Pentecostal Credit Union (PCU). In 1980, in a small front room in Balham, South London, Rev. Jones, with a dozen other church leaders, started the credit union with an initial £1 deposit (US\$15 equivalent today).

The Pentecostal Credit Union grew from strength to strength and became one of the largest credit unions in the UK with an asset base of £13.5 million, £10 million deposit, and a loan portfolio of £8.4 million and has 2,700 credit union members. Over the past 45 years, the Pentecostal Credit Union financed the purchase of 23 church buildings, hundreds of homes, and scores of entrepreneurial ventures.

This graduation to community bank status will now allow the Black Christian community greater access to ethical banking, financial literacy, mutual saving services, mortgages, and loans. It comes at

a critical time for the Black Christian Community, which experienced a 40% growth in its numbers even as wider Church attendance has declined from 11.8% to 5.0% of the population between 1980 and 2022. It is estimated that there are nearly 4000 black-majority churches in Britain, with a million adherents around the country. The black Pentecostal churches have about 300,000 members.



As the United Kingdom's urban religious landscape changes, the Pentecostal Community Bank will need to understand the growth and priorities of the Black Christian community and be part of the strategic future of the Black community's access to the higher echelons of the British financial sector.

At its launch, one speaker stated, 'To whom much is given, much is required,' and this is certainly true of the Pentecostal Community Bank. It is now the leading Black Financial institution in the UK's Financial Sector. A recent report, Reboot: Race to Equality on the Financial Services Sector in the United Kingdom, showed that "Privilege within the financial services sector is firmly in the hands of white leaders and employees"... It further revealed that "The current lack of diversity has a clear impact on ethnic minority ambition, creating a de-motivated workforce that is far from ideal for any financial services organization looking for growth in an otherwise competitive industry."



If we look at the venture capital market, for instance, the Diversity Beyond Gender report has shown that between 2009 and 2019, only 38 black entrepreneurs received venture capital funding. Alongside their teams, they received just 0.24% of the total sum invested. 0.02% of total venture capital invested went to black women entrepreneurs.

The 2,485,724, Black persons in the United Kingdom which is 3.7% of the total British population have repeatedly asked for much more from the Black Church. Commentators have highlighted the critical role of the Black Church in Black economic empowerment. The Pentecostal Community Bank is now in the right place for such a time as to rise to the expectations of its communities.

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Looking Back to Move Forward

Youth's Responsibility to the Future

By Rev. Dr. Sarah Fleming

Black History Month is always a good time to develop a greater appreciation for the African contribution to world culture and civilization. It offers an excellent opportunity to relish and glorify the accomplishments of our ancestors, but time should definitely be set aside to make a careful assessment of the status of our youth. After all, Black History Month is specifically designed to provide positive information for black children.

As personal observations, along with published research articles, have disclosed a serious deficiency in our young and their assessment of their history.

1. While lecturing at a junior high school, I was quite disturbed to see a minimum of 12 students ejected for disorderly conduct within a 30-minute period.
2. A survey at Boston University showed that 35 percent of the students thought the Late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was either a former entertainer or a basketball player.
3. A black history speaker in New York was approached by a student and asked "Just who is this Malcolm X, and what happened to the other nine?"

These three examples represent just the tip of the iceberg. They reflect a frightening trend that is currently sweeping the nation. Maybe Black History Month has become so trivialized that it just isn't taken seriously anymore.

Personally, I think the problem is complacency. Many parents and adults are not fulfilling the obligations of their heritage by seeing to it that our history is preserved and passed on to the next generation.

The disciplinary problems that currently exist within our school systems are not the fault of the teachers but the parents. I remember, as a grade school student, a student wouldn't dare talk back to the teacher, let alone get out of line. Today, this type of student is the exception, not the rule.

A child's behavior reflects his or her upbringing in the home, in the schools or in the streets. The fact so many of our youth disrespect authority figures indicate that they disrespect themselves. Self-respect is a trait which must be initiated and reinforced at home.

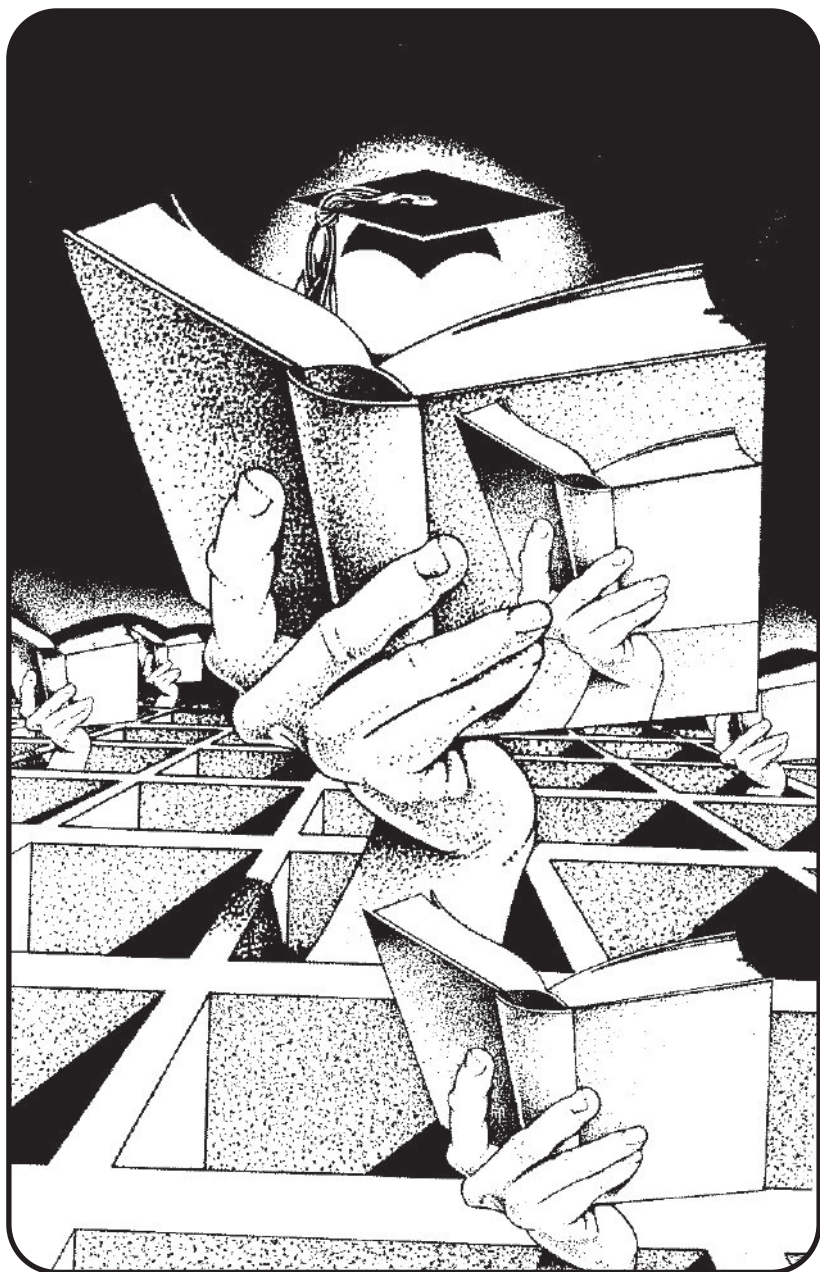
For whatever reason, many parents have forfeited their obligations to raise their children along specific guidelines.

While watching a recent segment of *Eyes on the Prize* concerning Dr. King's use of children at the forefront of the demonstrations, I learned that as many as 2,000 youth filled the jails within one week. Parents were willing not only to put their lives on the line but also the lives of their children.

This was 30 years ago, but we still find the same strategy being used in South African protests today.

I wonder how many parents in America today would be willing to put their necks on the line for the human rights struggle. I also wonder how many youth would be willing to sacrifice their gold chains, designer clothes, and stereos for the same struggle.

Our youth today are not living up to their potential. It is our responsibility as adults to see to it that they get back on the right track. Our youth have the responsibility to see to it that our legacy is carried on. Every generation has the privilege of standing on the shoulders of the generation that preceded it—but it has no right to pick their pockets.





GHANA TRIP



PAYMENT PLAN

**FOR THOSE TRAVELING WITH THE BOARD OF BISHOPS
TO GHANA FROM DECEMBER 13-21, 2024,
THESE ARE THE DETAILS FOR PAYMENT:**

- 1. A \$700 (NON-REFUNDABLE) DEPOSIT IS DUE ON
OCTOBER 11, 2024**
- 2. THE BALANCE IS DUE ON NOVEMBER 11, 2024!**
- 3. THERE WILL BE NO PARTIAL REFUND AFTER
NOVEMBER 11, 2024!**

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**MAIL CHECKS
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3225 WEST SUGAR CREEK RD.
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