

# THE STAR OF ZION

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# 2025 NEW YEAR!

HAPPY

**ZION**

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

NEW

# BEGINNINGS

Official Voice of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

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

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

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# Watch Night 2025

By Debra Chappelle-Polk, Zion Spotlight Editor

New York, NY –January 2025..., Watch Night Services are held in many Black churches nationwide on New Year’s Eve to commemorate the official end to slavery, reflect on faith, and celebrate community and strength. The first Watch Night Service (“Freedom’s Eve”) was held on December 31, 1862. Enslaved people, abolitionists, and others across the country awaited word via telegraph, newspaper, or word-of-mouth that President Abraham Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation, ending slavery.

Watch Night symbolized freedom and signified hope, and change; Frederick Douglass said,

“It is a day for poetry and song, a new song. These cloudless skies, this balmy air, this brilliant sunshine . . . are in harmony with the glorious morning of liberty about to dawn upon us.”

What would Frederick Douglass say today? His famous quote about “the glorious morning of liberty” takes on an ominous new meaning. On January 20, 2025, the 47th president of the United States will stand on the steps of the Capitol, place his hand on the Bible, and swear an oath to uphold the laws and the Constitution of the United States. It is no secret that the new president’s incoming administration is on a mission to dismantle the freedoms and civil rights our ancestors fought and died for. It is no secret that many of the policies outlined in Project 2025 and likely to be enacted offer little to nothing of benefit to marginalized communities.

Despite the tone and tenor of the new administration, we must remain hopeful. Jeremiah 29:11-12 reminds us: “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen.”

The late Dutch priest and writer Henri Louwen\* wrote, “Hope is the trust that God speaks about concrete changes in the future. The person of hope lives in the moment with the knowledge and trust that all of life is in good hands.”

THE NEW YEAR

A new year offers fresh beginnings and growth. A time to get right what didn’t go so right in the previous year – a “do-over.” A new year offers us a chance to incorporate healthier lifestyles and behaviors into our daily lives and make a difference in the lives of others. A new year is also a time to renew our faith in God and hope for the future.

RESOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR

Volunteer - Help our brothers and sisters in our backyard and globally. Volunteer at churches, soup kitchens

Continued on page 8

# CHURCH & COMMUNITY – MOTHER A.M.E. ZION CHURCH OPENS FREE MENTAL HEALTH FACILITY

By Debra Chappelle-Polk, Zion Spotlight Editor

January 2025, New York, NY..., On November 24, 2024, Mother Zion Cares Behavioral Mental Health Center officially opened at Mother A.M.E. Zion Church in Harlem, New York where the Rev. Dr. Malcolm J. Byrd is Senior Pastor. Mother Zion Cares is a fully funded faith-based behavioral mental health center. It is one of several community outreach initiatives Mother Zion Church has undertaken in partnership with Northwell Health. Rev. Byrd said, “Mother Zion will be one of the few churches in the country offering free mental health therapy and counseling.”



Rev. Audrey Williamson, Executive Minister at Mother Zion and instrumental in bringing the center to the Church, said she was excited about what God is doing in partnership with Northwell Health at Mother Zion. “Mother Zion Cares is taking the stigma off mental health issues and counseling. We’re going to talk about mental health until we get well.” Rev. Williamson introduced Ms. Debora Jones, MSW, LCSW, and Executive Director of Mother Zion Cares.

Ms. Jones (pictured) said she was honored to serve as Executive Director and looked forward to bringing a much-needed service to the Community.



Earlier in November, I spoke with Ms. Jones about Mother Zion Cares. Ms. Jones said Mother Zion Cares will offer in-person and virtual individual counseling and group therapy sessions to families, children, young adults, and seniors. Of significance is that Mother Zion Cares is free to members of the church and community residents. No insurance is necessary. Ms. Jones said her goal is to make an impact on the lives she touches by embodying the sincere spirit of faith-based Social Work.

I also asked what key mental issues are impacting marginalized communities. Ms. Jones said, “The key mental health issues in our community have not changed. If anything, they have increased, and they’ve intensified. There has always been an issue in the Black Community and minority communities around finances. If you are not making enough money to support yourself or your family, it is going to create tension in the household. It’s the number one cause of marital break-ups. If you’re unhappy in your place of employment, or if you’re underemployed, that’s going to create tension.”

Anxiety can also lead to mental health issues. The recent election and its results have been a contributing factor. Ms. Jones said, “Everyone’s anxiety level was really high.” Mindful that the results of the election would likely elevate anxiety levels, Ms. Jones held a Post-election Decompression Session at Mother Zion the day after the election. Church members and community residents shared their thoughts and feelings on how the results would impact their lives. Ms. Jones will be conducting Decompression Sessions once a month at Mother Zion.

Ms. Jones said that there is also a heightened level of anxiety because of the way that we live and opined that “social media is having a

tremendous effect on us, particularly on the children, young adults, the millennials.”

I asked her about the effects of COVID and its aftermath. Ms. Jones has worked with children for the last 24 years. “I did something called early intervention and worked with children from newborn to 3 years old.” Ms. Jones “had a bird’s eye-view” on COVID babies. She explained that babies born during COVID had regressed social skills, and now that they’re in school or starting daycare, they’re not doing as well as those previous groups before COVID, simply because these kids were sheltered. She added that many people “fear a reoccurrence; that another form of COVID or another virus is going to attack us in a way that COVID did.”

When asked about the senior population, Ms. Jones said, “There are a whole different set of issues when it comes to seniors. Many are living on fixed incomes and do not have the disposable income they had before they stopped working.” She said seniors primarily seek help when they are usually at the crisis stage and are spiraling downward.

After the service, Rev. Byrd invited everyone to join a panel discussion with Ms. Jones, Mitchell Cornet, Vice President of Public Health at Northwell Health, and other Northwell Health representatives. Lunch followed.

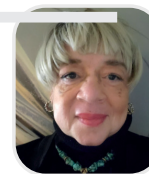


Debora Jones is a New York State Licensed Clinical Social Worker and has been a member of the Harlem Faith-based community for the past 17 years. Ms. Jones received her Bachelor of Arts Degree from Ramapo State University and earned her master’s degree in social work from Fordham University at Lincoln Center. Throughout her career, Ms. Jones has demonstrated exceptional aptitude in counseling and community outreach. One area of expertise is her ability to collaborate with organizations and governmental resources to develop and implement programs that address the challenges faced by diverse populations. Ms. Jones is proficient in the areas of mental health, child welfare, individual and group therapy, behavioral modification, and grief counseling. Ms. Jones’ culturally client-centered approach has enhanced her ability to establish liaisons with her client base, both children and adults. She is an advocate for self-care and mental health awareness and exemplifies the values of empathy, resilience, and dedication.

**For more information about Mother Zion Cares services and appointments, contact Debora Jones at 516.751.7917.**



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# THE FREEDOM TRIP 2024 BOARD OF BISHOPS AND TEAM VISITS GHANA



By Communications Directorate, WWAED  
Photos By Communications Directorate, WWAED

A distinguished delegation from The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (A.M.E. Zion Church) paid a historic visit to Ghana from Saturday, December 14, to Friday, December 20, 2024. The visit was hosted by the President of the Board of Bishops, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Hilliard K. Dela Dogbe.

The delegation's arrival on Saturday, December 14, was warmly welcomed with a dinner reception at Alisa Hotel. The visit featured several significant events, beginning with the dedication of a new chapel for the St. John Society in Keta, the mother church of The A.M.E. Zion Church in Ghana. This ceremony took place on Sunday, December 15, and was attended by persons from all the conferences in the Western West Africa Episcopal District (WWAED).



On Monday, December 16, a delegation of 6 bishops paid a courtesy call on the U.S. Ambassador to Ghana, while the rest of the team embarked on an Accra City tour. The following day, Tuesday, December 17, the team visited The A.M.E. Zion Girls Senior High School in Winneba, the Aggrey Memorial Senior High School in Cape Coast, and the historic Cape Coast Castle.





The visit concluded with the dedication of the Kenneth Monroe Community Worship Centre in Accra on Wednesday, December 18. On Thursday, December 19, the team visited the famous Kwame Nkrumah Museum in Accra, gaining valuable insights into Ghana's rich history, and a farewell service was held in the evening at Aggrey Memorial Society.

The trip was a resounding success, fostering deeper connections be-

tween The A.M.E. Zion Church and its Ghanaian constituents.

Rev. Derek Ben Kwofie Jr  
Communications Directorate,  
WWAED



# Greensboro District Holds Second Mass Meeting

By Mrs. Nina R. Ingram

The Greensboro District Women's Home and Overseas Missionary Society (WH&OMS) held its Second Mass Meeting of the 2024-2025 Conference Year on Saturday, November 9, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. at St. Phillip A.M.E. Zion Church, Greensboro, NC where the Reverend Dr. Lisa Caldwell is Pastor. The Young Adult Missionary Society (YAMS) and the Life Members Council were meeting participants. Ms. Robin N. Goins, Assistant Coordinator of YAMS, presided over the first part of the meeting.



The meeting began with devotion, with the YAMS providing beautiful leadership. The Call to Worship was followed by the Invocation by Ms. Goins and the hymn, Our Promise, Praise and Petition. The Scripture – Micah 6:8-16 was read by Ms. LaJuana Sellu. Reverend Krystal Issac delivered a moving and heartfelt prayer, and Mrs. Gale Gaines gave a lovely and gracious Welcome. Mrs. Michelle F. Bell led the Litany. And we were blessed with a beautiful liturgical dance of praise. Following devotion, Ms. Goins provided historical aspects of the Young Adult Missionary Society, including its mission, motto, colors, theme song, and membership.

A special presentation was made on St. Phillip's Community Garden of Peace. Director of Mission Education Mrs. Nina Ingram highlighted the wonderful work of St. Phillip A.M.E. Zion Church in relation to the 2023-2027 quadrennial theme— "Reaching the Masses in an Ever-changing World, The Journey Continues: Self-Care and Wellness, Equity and Justice, Leadership and Legacy, Empathy and Compassion," with emphasis on Equity and Justice for this Conference Year. Director Ingram stated that we don't have to look for large, profound ways to reach the masses. Access and opportunities to help eliminate barriers of inequity and injustice are right before us each day. She noted that St. Phillip has embraced equity and justice through its providing and building of a community garden to help those without access and opportunity for suitable land to be able to learn, grow, and harvest their own vegetables. Ms. Marissa Powell, Project Manager for the Community Garden of Peace, gave a beautiful and informative presentation on the history and work of the vegetable garden, noting the garden is a very successful endeavor. St. Phillip has teamed with Guilford Urban Farming Initiative to build a garden in the community. The community garden's work has included instructions on prepping the ground,



building high vegetable beds, building a greenhouse, and creating a children's vegetable area. Produce from the garden is provided for the congregation and the community.



The Life Members Council extended its educational arm at the Mass Meeting by providing teachable moments. Chair Coley provided historical aspects of the Life Members Council including its mission, motto, colors, theme song and membership. Additionally, a skit presentation on proper dress etiquette— written and directed by Life Members Council Chair Ms. Vernice M. Coley—was presented by Chair Coley along with several fellow Missionaries. The skit was enjoyed and well received by all. Following the skit, there was a Life Members Council Stolling Ceremony.

During the second part of the meeting – presided over by President Dr. Edna Adams-Fulton, the offering was received by Reverend Dr. Timothy Freeman; the Financial Report was given by

Mrs. Linda Goins. The attendance banner certificate recognition remains a highlight of our Mass Meetings. This report was made by Ms. Phyllis Marshall. The following churches received the honors: Trinity, Snow Hill, and Oak Grove.

Mrs. Loretta Woodle gave the courtesy report, expressing thanks and appreciation to everyone.

Missionary President Dr. Edna Adams-Fulton formally introduced to the Mass Meeting participants Reverend Dr. Timothy Freeman and Mrs. Kendra Young-Freeman, Trinity A.M.E. Zion Church Pastor and First Lady. Mrs. Kendra Young-Freeman will serve as the new YAMS Coordinator for the Greensboro District WH&OMS. Additionally, Dr. Adams-Fulton and Reverend Dr. Freeman extended heartwarming thanks to all for their presence and participation. Following announcements and other closing remarks, the Second Missionary Mass Meeting adjourned with the Missionary Benediction. Dr. Adams-Fulton invited the congregation to tour the vegetable garden— St. Phillip's Community Garden of Peace. Lunch was served from the Fellowship Hall.



# Leading with Empathy: A Framework for Pastoral Leadership

**By Rev. Cleages-Thompkin, Pastor, United A.M.E. Zion Church & Presiding Elder, Victorious Chattanooga District**

When it comes to effective pastoral leadership, it undeniably calls for empathy. Leading with empathy encourages a supportive, Christ-centered church community where people thrive in compassion, understanding, and care. To nurture a caring and supportive congregation, pastors will do well to combine emotional intelligence, openness to rethinking established beliefs, and a strong foundation in Scripture. By synthesizing Daniel Goleman's ideas on emotional intelligence, Adam Grant's principles from *Think Again*, and timeless Scriptural truths, pastors can develop a dynamic and holistic approach to leadership that reflects Christ's love and build genuine connections with their congregants.

## Emotional Intelligence in Ministry

In his groundbreaking work *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, Daniel Goleman outlines five critical components of emotional intelligence that are exceptionally vital for pastoral leadership: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These qualities provide a practical roadmap for leading with compassion and grace.

### 1. Self-Awareness: Seeking God's Guidance

Being self-aware starts with understanding your emotions, motivations, and limitations. Self-awareness also calls for recognizing how your emotions and motivations impact your behavior and decisions as a pastor. For pastors, this means being attuned to how your feelings shape your interactions with others. Leaders can cultivate authenticity and humility by seeking God's guidance and introspection, as encouraged in Psalm 139:23-24

("Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts..."). Such self-awareness builds trust and strengthens pastoral connections. As the pastor, it can help you approach your ministry with clarity and authenticity.

### 2. Self-Regulation: Responding with Grace

Ministry is often filled with challenges; hence, managing emotions, especially in challenging situations, can set a positive example for the congregation. Proverbs 15:1 reminds us, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Pastors who practice self-regulation create an atmosphere of peace and understanding and encourage thoughtful responses to over-reactive behavior.

### 3. Motivation: Serving with Purpose

Intrinsic motivation—the drive to serve others out of love for God—is essential in pastoral leadership. When pastors are fueled by a passion to glorify God and uplift the congregation, it inspires them to follow suit. In other words, when a pastor's passion is evident, it ignites a shared sense of purpose within the church. In Colossians 3:23, Paul calls us to "Work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men." This should help remind pastors our efforts should be a reflection of our devotion to the mission of God.

### 4. Empathy: Sharing in Joys and Sorrows

Truly, empathy is the heart of pastoral care. Empathy allows pastors to deeply connect with the emotions and experiences of their congregants. By understanding and sharing the experiences of others, pastors can build trust and deepen relationships. Romans 12:15 beautifully illustrates this principle: "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." By actively listening to the concerns of congregants and celebrating their victories, pastors embody the compassionate love of Christ.

### 5. Social Skills: Building Community

Strong interpersonal skills enable pastors to deal with conflict, encourage collaboration, and create a sense of unity in the church. Effective communication and relationship-building are crucial for building a sense of unity within the church. In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Paul encourages us to "Build each other up." This highlights the role of pastors in strengthening the body of Christ through encouragement and collaboration and the importance of relationship-building in the body of Christ.



### Transitioning to a New Perspective: *Think Again* by Adam Grant

While Goleman's emotional intelligence provides a solid foundation, Adam Grant's *Think Again* challenges leaders to go beyond emotional awareness and empathy by embracing intellectual humility and adaptability. Grant's principles encourage pastors to remain open to new ideas, question assumptions, and promote dialogue and growth, all essential for ministry in a rapidly changing world.

### Principles from *Think Again*: Rethinking for Growth

1. Embrace a Learning Mindset Ministry is not static, and so pastors must be willing to adapt to new challenges and opportunities. Proverbs 18:15 states, "The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, for the ears of the wise seek it out." By remaining curious and teachable, pastors model a spirit of learning that can inspire their congregants to grow in their faith and understanding.

2. Encourage Vulnerability Grant emphasizes the power of vulnerability in leadership. Although vulnerability is often perceived as a weakness, it can be a powerful tool in building genuine relationships and trust within a congregation. In 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Paul reminds us that God's power is made perfect in weakness. When pastors admit their struggles or uncertainties, they create a safe space for congregants to share their challenges to encourage deeper relationships and mutual trust.

3. Promote Open Dialogue Promoting open dialogue makes building a robust and dynamic church where differing perspectives are welcomed and valued possible. Cultivating a church culture where differ-

ing perspectives are valued aligns with the Biblical principle of iron sharpening iron (Proverbs 27:17). Encouraging open dialogue within the church allows pastors and congregants to engage in meaningful and constructive conversations. These conversations become platforms where individuals can wrestle with questions of faith, explore different viewpoints, and deepen their understanding of spiritual matters.

4. Focus on Collaboration Ministry thrives when it is a collaborative effort, demonstrating how the journey of faith is not meant to be traveled alone. Ministry is a team effort, and involving others in decision-making creates a sense of ownership and unity. This approach is beautifully illustrated in Ephesians 4:16, which reminds us, "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." Collaboration allows the church to function as the unified body of Christ, with each member contributing their unique gifts.

### Integrating Goleman and Grant: A Holistic Approach

By combining the emotional intelligence framework of Goleman with an emphasis on adaptability and open-mindedness, as expressed by Grant, pastors can develop an empathetic and forward-thinking leadership style. Here's how these principles work together in practice:

- Self-Awareness Meets Vulnerability: Recognizing your emotions and sharing your struggles makes leadership relatable and inspiring.
- Empathy Fuels Collaboration: Understanding the experiences of others encourages collective decision-making and shared ministry efforts.
- Social Skills Enhance Open Dialogue: Strong communication skills enable leaders to promote honest, respectful conversations within the church.

### Practical Applications for Empathetic Leadership

To lead with empathy and adaptability, pastors can practically implement the following practices:

1. Active Listening: Dedicate time to listen without judgment, validating the emotions and experiences of your congregants (James 1:9,

Proverbs 18:13).

2. Regular Reflection: Periodically evaluate your leadership approach, asking God for wisdom (James 1:5) and seeking feedback from trusted advisors.

3. Create Safe Spaces: Encourage small groups or forums where congregants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings (Galatians 6:2, Hebrews 10:24-25).

4. Model Humility: Be transparent about your journey of learning and growth, inspiring others to do the same (Philippians 2:3-4, 1 Peter 5:5-6).

5. Mentorship and Teamwork: Nurture emerging leaders and foster a collaborative culture that highlights the collective strength of the body of Christ (2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14).

### Conclusion: Leading with Christlike Empathy

In today's ever-evolving world, leading with Christlike empathy is more crucial than ever. Leading with empathy requires a balance of emotional intelligence, humility, and adaptability. When Pastors integrate Daniel Goleman's insights on self-awareness, empathy, and relationship-building with Adam Grant's principles of rethinking and collaboration, they can build a church community that reflects the love of Christ. As pastors model these qualities, they create an environment where individuals feel supported, valued, and encouraged to grow in their faith.

Empathetic leadership transforms the church and serves as a powerful witness to the world, demonstrating the grace and compassion of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In 2025, let us embrace the call to practice empathetic leadership, recognizing how our actions and attitudes can shape the spiritual journey of those we serve. When we lead with empathy, we honor the teachings of Jesus and can create a church community where everyone feels truly cared for and uplifted. Together, let us strive to be vessels of His love and compassion, bringing light and hope to a world in need.

## Continued from pg 2 .....

and other organizations. 1 Peter 4:10, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." Volunteering can be a great family activity, as well. It will help your children learn the importance of gratitude.

Health & Wellness - When we think of honoring God, we typically focus on our spiritual health. God, however, wants us to be better in all aspects of our lives, including our mental and physical health. Our bodies are made to honor Him. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 states: "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies." Taking care of our mental and physical health enables us to honor and serve God more fully.

Share your testimony with non-Christian friends, family members, and co-workers. Tell them about Jesus Christ and ask them to attend church with you. Talking about your faith journey may be the only time they ever learn about Jesus Christ, so it's important to make it special and offer helpful information as you are able.

Create a tithing plan - Christians are called to be generous. That means using some of your financial income to honor God at your local church. Churches need money to function. The new year is a great time to start tithing. For many, 10 percent of all income can be intimidating at first. However, look at what you can do. You'd be surprised by how your faith grows and your resolution blossoms. Talk to your pastor about other ways of tithing that are not financial (i.e., Sweat Equity.) There are plenty of things that need "fixin" in your church.

Random acts of kindness - Buy a sandwich or cup of coffee for a strang-

er. It might be his or her only meal for the day. A smile can brighten someone's day, too. Civility goes a long way. Hold the door open for someone. Add "please" and "thank you" to your daily vocabulary. It's good for the soul.

Get more active in your church - The church is an important part of the Christian lifestyle. Serving your church doesn't have to be boring or difficult. Look at your spiritual gifts and personal skill set and try to apply that to your church's needs.

Lean on God for support - Resolutions can be difficult to maintain, so it is incredibly important to lean on God and trust in Him more. We can become better versions of ourselves and glorify God when we ask for His help and guidance. Talk with God when you struggle to meet your new fitness goals or break a habit.

Hope should be added to the list. Hope gives us purpose and perseverance. Hope gives us strength. Hope is the difference between being knocked down and being knocked out.

Civility goes a long way and is good for the soul. Add "please" and "thank you" to your daily vocabulary.

Add prayer to the list. God hears and answers our prayers.

HAPPY NEW YEAR! \*Henri Jozef Machiel Nouwen (January 24, 1932 – September 21, 1996) was a Dutch Catholic priest, professor, writer and theologian. His interests were rooted primarily in psychology, pastoral ministry, spirituality, social justice, and community.

# The Connectional Lay Council's Thirteenth Quadrennial Lay Convention

By Mrs. Thomascena L. LeGrand

Dear Laity, greetings in the beloved name of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

The Connectional Lay Council is convening its Thirteenth Quadrennial Lay Convention in Winston-Salem, North Carolina July 26 – 31, 2025.

CLC ELECTED OFFICES ARE OPEN FOR THE 2025-2029. In accordance with the Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and Bylaws of the Connectional Lay Council (CLC), individuals who offer themselves as candidates for election to the position of International President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, Financial Secretary and Chaplain of the CLC must have been a member of the CLC for a minimum of four (4) consecutive years. Candidates must obtain letters of recommendation from their Pastors,



Presiding Elders, and Presiding Bishops.

Candidates who wish to be considered for an office in the CLC will need to send an email indicating their interest in the desired position to Mrs. Thomascena L. LeGrand, Chair, CLC Election Committee at [tlegrand@nc.rr.com](mailto:tlegrand@nc.rr.com), or send a letter by mail to the CLC Office - PO Box 26770, Charlotte, NC 28221-6770, Attn: Mrs. Thomascena L. LeGrand, Chair, Election Committee.

Qualified Candidates will receive an application using the same method the request was received unless otherwise requested. Following the receipt of the applicant's letter:

1. The CLC Application and CLC Candidate's Package will be sent to the applicant and must be returned within 45 days to be eligible for the interview.
2. Following receipt of the applicant's CLC Application and CLC Candidate's Package, the applicant will be contacted to schedule an interview.
3. Following the applicant's interview, the applicant will be

notified within one week of their eligibility to campaign for the respective Elected Officer's position.

\*Candidates are NOT allowed to campaign until the Application process is complete.

\*The Interview process must be completed 90 days before the start of the CLC Convention, July 26, 2025.

In His Service,

Mrs. Thomascena L. LeGrand, Chair CLC Elections Committee

Mr. Joseph King Davis, Jr., International President

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# “A Community Engagement Paradigm After 206 Years!”

## VARICK MEMORIAL-NEW HAVEN, CT

By Varick Media Team

As Varick Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church in New Haven approaches its 206th anniversary, it stands as a beacon of community engagement and transformation. Under the leadership of Dr. Kelcy G.L. Steele, the 43rd pastor, Varick has continued to build upon its rich history of social justice and community service.



Founded in 1818 by a group of 35 enslaved African Americans, Varick has been at the forefront of social change for over two centuries. Today, it remains a cornerstone of the Dixwell community, adapting to meet the evolving needs of its congregation and the wider New Haven area.



Dr. Steele, appointed in 2016, has brought a fresh vision to Varick's community engagement efforts. His leadership extends beyond the church walls, serving as the Chair of the Booker T. Washington Academy Charter School, which started with an elementary school founded by his predecessor, Rev. Eldren Morrison. They have now expanded to a second location which houses their middle school, a testament to Varick's commitment to education.

This partnership exemplifies the church's dedication to nurturing young minds and preparing them for future success. The Booker T. Washington Academy, inspired by its namesake's credo of "Excellence is doing common things in uncommon ways," provides a rigorous educational environment for New Haven's youth. With an extended school day, low teacher-student ratios, and a focus on character development, the academy is shaping the next generation of community leaders.



Under Dr. Steele's guidance, Varick has expanded its outreach programs. He serves as the CEO of the Varick Center for Empowerment (VCE) and Varick's Warming Center, addressing critical needs in the community.

These initiatives demonstrate the church's commitment to holistic community care, from education to social services. Varick's influence extends into local governance and healthcare. Dr. Steele's appointments to the Board of Parole & Pardons by Governor Ned Lamont and his role as a Commissioner for the New Haven Fire Department showcase the church's involvement in civic matters.

His position on the board of Yale Clinical Research further emphasizes Varick's commitment to community health and well-being. As Varick celebrates 206 years of service, it faces new challenges and opportuni-





ties. The potential relocation of the church, while emotional, is being approached with careful consideration for the congregation's needs and the community's future.

This decision-making process reflects Varick's ongoing commitment to adapt and serve effectively. The church's legacy of community engagement is further exemplified by its involvement in the ConnCAT Place development. Dr. Steele's prayer at the groundbreaking ceremony highlighted the project's significance in addressing historical inequities in the Dixwell neighborhood.



As Varick Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church stands on the brink of 206 years, it continues to evolve its community engagement paradigm. Under Dr. Kelcy G.L. Steele's leadership, the church remains a vital force in New Haven,



blending its rich history with innovative approaches to education, social services, and civic involvement. The church's enduring commitment to "doing common things in uncommon ways" ensures that its impact will be felt for generations to come.

Dr. Kelcy G.L. Steele has made significant impacts on the New Haven community since becoming the 43rd pastor of Varick Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church in September 2016:

1. Community Leadership: As pastor of Varick, one of the oldest and largest churches in New Haven, Dr. Steele has become a prominent community leader.

2. Education Advocacy: He serves as Chair of the Booker T. Washington Academy Charter School, demonstrating his commitment to education in the community.

3. Social Services: Dr. Steele is CEO of the Varick Center for Empowerment (VCE) and Varick's Warming Center, addressing critical community needs. Varick Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church in New Haven has been actively addressing substance abuse issues in the community through the IMANI Breakthrough program, a faith-based opioid recovery program developed by Yale University professors Dr. Chyrell Bellamy and Dr. Ayana Jordan. It targets individuals struggling with addiction to heroin, opiates, and other drugs and alcohol.



4. Civic Engagement: He has been appointed to the Board of Parole & Pardons by Governor Ned Lamont and serves as a Commissioner for the New Haven Fire Department.

5. Health Initiatives: His role as a Board Member of Yale Clinical Research shows his involvement in community health efforts.

6. Social Justice Advocacy: Dr. Steele has been vocal about social issues, calling racism a "public health crisis" and advocating for societal change.

7. Interfaith Collaboration: He formed a broad interfaith and civic coalition to fight racism in New Haven.

8. Community Development: Dr. Steele has been involved in significant community projects, such as the ConnCAT Place development, which aims to revitalize the Dixwell neighborhood.



9. Food Insecurity: Under his leadership, Varick Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church has supported initiatives like Fridge Haven, combating food insecurity in the community.

10. Voter Engagement: Dr. Steele has used his platform to encourage civic participation and voting among community members.

Through these various roles and initiatives, Varick Memorial has demonstrated a commitment to addressing a wide range of community needs, from education and social services to civic engagement and social justice.



# Register Now for the Church Growth & Development Quadrennial Congress

To Our Fellow Zionite,

We invite you to the **Church Growth & Development Quadrennial Congress**, taking place **March 25-28, 2025**, at the **Kenneth Monroe Transformation Center in Rock Hill, SC**. This year's theme, "**Committing to Our Mission: From Surviving to Thriving**" (Acts 2:42-47), calls us to embrace bold strategies for church growth, evangelism, and revitalization.

This transformative gathering, led by Rev. **Dr. Eleazar Merriweather**, **Executive Director**, will feature inspiring worship, leadership development workshops, practical tools for church revitalization, and networking opportunities with ministry leaders.

## Registration Details:

- **In-Person:** Early registration is \$200, late registration is \$225
- **Virtual:** Early registration is \$100, late registration is \$125

- **Early Registration Deadline:** February 28, 2025
- **Late Registration:** March 1-15, 2025

Do not miss this opportunity to gain the tools and connections needed to strengthen your ministry. **Register today at 2025QC.AMEZION.ORG** and join us as we work together to build a thriving future for our churches and communities.

Blessings,

**Church Growth & Development Administrative Board**

**Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Sr., Chair**







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FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING  
ACTS 2:42 - 47

MARCH 25-28, 2025

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Register Now



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

# Christmas Wishes for International Students



By Star of Zion News

On Wednesday, December 18, international students at Livingstone College received Christmas treats from Zion's International Ministers' Spouses & Widow(ers) Fellowship of the Sensational Salisbury District. From delectable dishes to residence hall essentials, students were showered with an abundance of love and support from members who are framed in an organization missioned to create positive cultural, intellectual, and spiritual growth, a love of fellowship, and supportive inspiration to challenge persons to excel in their Christian walk.



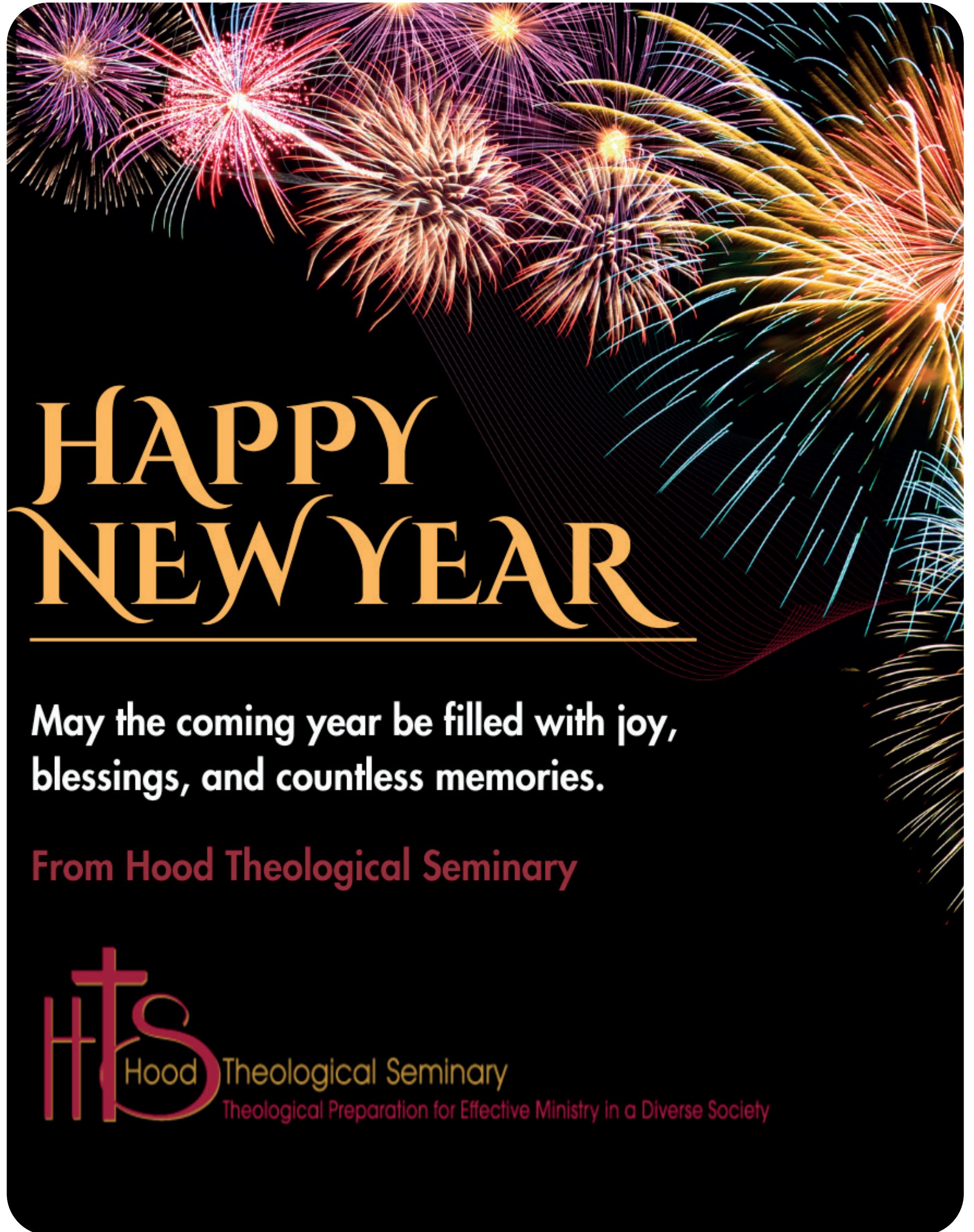
experience at Livingstone College, and Mrs. Judy Jordan discussed her late husband, Rev. Harold Jordan, who was also a Livingstonian.



As the students and members gathered in the Honors Blue Bear Coded Lounge, both began to engage in organic conversations of love and service. Rev. Margaret Anderson shared stories of her undergraduate

Erika Steven of Jamaica said, "I am overjoyed with the consistent support of The A.M.E. Zion churches in Salisbury. They always remember us in very important times, and it simply feels good." Overwhelmed with the generosity of the members, the international students individually thanked the organization for their thoughtfulness and sincere kindness. The afternoon convened with a collective prayer led by Rev. Margaret Anderson.





# HAPPY NEW YEAR

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**May the coming year be filled with joy,  
blessings, and countless memories.**

**From Hood Theological Seminary**



# Hood Theological Seminary to Host 2025 Virtual Heritage Lecture Series

By Kelly Bryant

Hood Theological Seminary to Host 2025 Virtual Heritage Lecture Series.

The 2025 Bishop Alfred E. and Mrs. Mamie White Endowed Heritage Lecture Series will take place on Friday, February 7, 2025, at 7:00 pm EST, and Saturday, February 8, 2025, at 10:00 am EST. The lectures will take place virtually via zoom. Zoom links are forthcoming and will be posted on the Hood website here: <https://www.hoodseminary.edu/news/2025-heritage-lecture-series>. Please note that there will be two Zoom links, one for Friday and one for Saturday.

The speaker will be Bishop Michael A. Frencher. Bishop Michael A. Frencher (retired) is The A.M.E. Zion Bishop-in-Residence at Hood Theological Seminary. As the A.M.E. Zion Bishop-in-Residence, he will teach, preach, advocate for the Seminary, and work with students as required. Bishop Frencher is the 101st Bishop in Succession of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and was elected at the 49th Quadrennial Session of the General Conference of The A.M.E. Zion Church in July 2012. He is originally from Detroit, Michigan, and has pastored churches across South Carolina, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. Bishop Frencher also taught at Hood Theological Seminary for 17 years. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Detroit, a Master of Divinity degree from Hood Theological Seminary, and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. In 2013, he was awarded the Doctor of Divinity degree from Hood-Speaks-Theological Seminary in Nigeria. He was the recipient of the 2023 Distinguished Trustee Service Award, which honors distinguished Alumni and Trustee Emeritus – Bishop George E. Battle, Jr.

The Heritage Lectureship Series, established in 1999, is held each February. Dr. Albert Aymer established the lecture series to celebrate the heritage of Hood Theological Seminary and to help create a broader academic environment for seminary students and faculty. The public is cordially invited to attend all lecture series sponsored by the seminary. In 2012, the Seminary renamed the lecture series the Bishop Alfred E. and Mamie White Heritage Lectureship Series.


Bishop Alfred E. White was recognized as a compassionate and innovative pastor, building character and churches. His tenure as pastor culminated at Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church in Hartford, Connecticut, where he served for 22 years and gained notable recognition as a powerful preacher and spiritual leader. The key to his success as a pastor stemmed from the fact that his work was produced by faith, his labors were prompted by love, and his endurance was inspired by faith and hope in Jesus Christ. His denominational involvements spanned years of dedicated service to The A.M.E. Zion Church. His ability to motivate

and his sensitive and caring leadership in the capacity as Presiding Elder of the Hartford District earned Alfred E. White the reputation of being a “Pastor’s pastor.” His thirst for knowledge and his considerable pastoral experiences made Bishop White an exceptional and respected instructor at Hartford Theological Seminary and Livingstone College.

He was described as “a staunch advocate of ecumenicalism and for social justice among people of diverse faiths.” The A.M.E. Zion Church recognized the extraordinary gifts of Alfred E. White when, in August 1984, the denomination’s General Conference elected him as the 80th bishop in succession in the A.M.E. Zion Church. Bishop White’s leadership extended to the wider community, where he served on numerous Boards and Commissions, including 13 years as chairman of the Human Relations Commission of the City of Hartford. He also had a great love for music and was an accomplished violinist who played with the Hartford Civic Orchestra and often accompanied the Chancel Choir of Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church.

Hood Theological Seminary 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 in a diverse world.

**2025 BISHOP ALFRED E. AND MRS. MAMIE WHITE ENDOWED HERITAGE LECTURE SERIES**



**Virtual via Zoom**

**Feb. 7, 7:00pm EST**

**Feb. 8, 10:00am EST**


Speaker:


Bishop Michael A. Frencher

Retired AME Zion Bishop and

Bishop in Residence at Hood

Theological Seminary





Hood Theological Seminary  
Theological Preparation for Effective Ministry in a Diverse Society

# THE HEADMISTRESS' SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT OF THE BOARDS OF BISH- OPS TO ZION COLLEGE ON SUNDAY, 15TH DECEMBER 2024

By HEADMISTRESS ZION COLLEGE

The Rt. Rev. Dr Hilliard Dela K. Dogbe, who doubled as the President of the Board of Bishops of The A.M.E. Zion Church and the Bishop of the Western West Africa Episcopal District, members of the Board of Bishops of The A.M.E. Zion Church, Mrs. Cynthia Dogbe, the Missionary Supervisor, Rev. Sylvester Donkor, the General Manager of The A.M.E. Zion Education Unit, the Presiding Elders and Pastors, Distinguished Guests, Staff and students, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I welcome you all to the occasion of a historic visit of the Board of Bishops of The A.M.E. Zion Church to Zion College. We are highly privileged to have the President of the Board of Bishops and his entourage in our noble school. This marks the Second official visit of the Bishop during my tenure as the Head of the School.

My Lord Bishop, I wish to give a brief background of the school to the benefit of our special Guests.

Zion College is the oldest secondary educational institution in the Volta Region of Ghana, an institution that has trained prominent citizens and contributed to human resource development in the sub-region of West Africa.

The school, formerly known as the New University College, was founded by the Rev. Dr Ferdinard Fiawoo, of blessed memory, in 1937, with a few students. The school was founded in response to the acute need for a post-elementary education facility in the West Africa region. It provided both secondary and tertiary education for the citizens of West Africa. Learners, therefore, had experience in vocational, professional and literary educational programmes. The founder's hopes and aspirations are represented in the crest designed for the school: a Bible and a scale. He believed in nurturing and training the youth in religious and moral uprightness to become responsible citizens who would give devoted services to the nation, hence the motto: Character Prudence and Equality, reflects his aspirations.

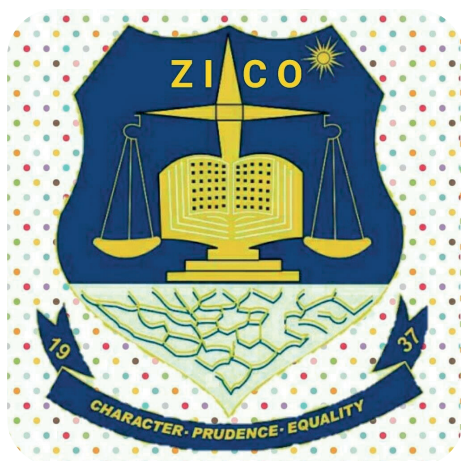
In 1948, The A.M.E. Zion Church offered significant financial assistance to the founder, upon his request, to promote the development of the college. Subsequently, the name was changed to Zion College of West Africa.

The school was later absorbed into the Public Education System by the Government of Ghana in 1952.

Currently, the school implements the Senior High School educational policy of Ghana and has seven learning areas: Agricultural Science, Business, General Arts, General Science, Home Economics, Visual Arts and Languages. Learners progress to the tertiary level of education in Ghana and other countries.

We have a population comprising 2026 students, 113 teachers, and 39 nonteaching staff. Currently, female students have outnumbered males due to the imbalance in accommodation facilities. Regarding boarding status, out of the 1,639 boarders, 1095 are girls, while 544 are boys.

The recent School Improvement Programme (SIP) implemented across the country required all SHS/SHTS /TVET to revise their Vision, Mission, and Core Values. Consequently, Zion College has reviewed its vision statement to envisage *"A preferred school for secondary*



*education in Ghana to benefit all learners through excellence in the culture of teaching, learning and character formation."*

This Vision shall be accomplished upon realizing its mission statement alongside strategies the school has outlined to improve upon its educational outcomes. Our revised mission statement is, *"To ensure that every student develops their full potential and contributes positively to society through the provision of relevant educational programmes in a safe teaching and learning environment".*

The revised core values of the school are captured in the acronym **"PRICE"**:

*P- Prudence, R- Responsibility, I- Integrity, C- Character, E- Equality*

Indeed, we must pay the prize for transforming the school and making it a hub for academic excellence and a preferred choice for all parents and learners throughout the sub-region. Earnestly, teachers are participating in the capacity-building workshop that aims to prepare them to implement the new Standard-Based Curriculum. They have benefited from the weekly PLC and DPLC sessions and are currently undertaking the SSPLC as well as online courses on Sexual Harassment and Digital literacy.

Apart from the eight (8) hours of vigorous teaching and learning daily, the learners also have a period allotted for a seminar that guides students on health / hygiene/ sanitation, career guidance, socialization, edutainment, and other challenges pertaining to their studies. Besides, an hour is also dedicated for intervention classes. The school has conducted the initial intervention assessment (aptitude test) for the Four Hundred and Eighty-Two (482) Fresh Students who enrolled in November 2024. The Intervention classes shall be held in English and Mathematics to support improvement in the respective learning areas. Devotion and Sunday services are held regularly to build the faith of our learners through messages from the Bible and on morality.

It is pride to know that Zion College, from its inception, has trained over 1.2 million students who have excelled in various fields of work and enterprises.

With regards to our achievements, the school regularly participates in the prestigious National Science and Maths Quiz competition and reached the one-eighth level of the competition in 2017, 2021 and 2024 respectively. The STEM club is also active and participates in STEM Fair competitions held in the Zone.

A maiden Academic Excellence Award event was held in March, 2023. Different categories of awards were presented to learners who have distinguished themselves in the various subject areas. The event also recognized some outstanding performance such as the overall best WASSCE performance, boy and girl, the overall best SHS 2 student, and the overall best SHS 1 student.

Furthermore, Zion College emerged as the champion in the 67th Independence Inter-District Debate Competition and Hogbetsotso Quiz Competition in 2023.

The school also performs creditably in the academic work. Performance in the West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination 2023 registered some improvement upon the 2022 (the previous) results. The overall pass rate was 99.5% in 2023 while 97.6% in 2022. The best aggregate, therefore, is aggregate 8. Out of the 739 candidates, 425 (58%)

qualified to progress into the tertiary institution. About 20% improvement has been recorded in core Mathematics, English language, and General Science.

(Results obtained in 2023 were: Social Studies - 63%, English Language - 55%, Mathematics - 45%, and General Science - 38%, as compared with the 2022 results, thus Social Studies - 61.85%, English Language - 42.62%, Mathematics - 23.73%, and Integrated Science - 32.25%.)

The overall best-performing students in SHS 1 and 2 have distinguished themselves with an average raw score of 836.5 and 833.5, respectively, during the 2022/2023 academic year.

Despite the several challenges, the school management is enthused with creating a safe and conducive environment worth promoting academic excellence, an ambience that would ensure educational excellence. With the effort of the school management and the tenacity of the Headmistress, many of these challenges are gradually being resolved, one after the other. Again, through the benevolence of the alumni, parents, individuals and philanthropists, some major maintenance and refurbishment of the school facilities and logistics have been done to uplift the school's image. Some of them were:

- Renovation of the old 4 - unit classroom block
- The renovation of the Charity Zormelo's Block by the 1981 alumni
- The refurbishment of the ICT lab by the 1981 alumni
- The renovation of the Sri Girls Long Dormitory by Rev Avudzivi
- Repair and maintenance of Three girls' houses (Kotoka, Sri and Nkrumah) Mr. Christian Agbezudor of Cell Construction Limited
- Repainting of the School Main Gate Mr. Jonathan Azasoo & 1982 alumni
- New bath house for the boys by 1973 alumni
- Renovation of the boys' water-closet toilet facility
- 24 ceiling fans and a New Gate for Sri House donated by 2006 alumni
- The illumination of the dining hall and provision of 30 benches and

21 dining tables by Mr. Christian Agbezudor (Cell Construction Limited)

One of the significant challenges is the deteriorated nature of the only dormitory block for the boys. Through the efforts of the PTA and 1981 alumni, we hope to reroof the dormitory block by the end of January 2025.

The accommodation facilities for teachers who supervise, especially in the boarding house, are woefully inadequate.

Another significant infrastructure deficit is the Assembly Hall complex. It is worth noting that the Office of the Bishop envisaged constructing such an edifice in ZICO. We are optimistic that this project will become a reality. At the last Board meeting, the former General Manager of Zion Education Unit exhibited a blueprint of a Chapel/Assembly Hall complex. Similarly, a letter from Zion Education Unit requested to partner with the PTA to metamorphose the stalled project into such a multipurpose function.

To highlight, the school deserves one beautiful chapel to signify the status of a mission school. I wish to inform our Bishop that the PTA has agreed to partner with the church so that the stalled project can be metamorphosed into a multipurpose hall to solve that specific challenge.

It is, therefore, our humble appeal to the President of the Board of Bishops to support us in building this significant facility.

On this note, I welcome our beloved Bishop, the President, all the members of the Board of Bishops of the A.M.E. Church, and the entourage to have a safe stay in and around Zion College, the Beautiful City of God. We love you all.

**AFRICAN!!!**

**ARISE and SHINE!!!**

**ZICANS!!!!**

**ARISE and SHINE !!!**

Thank you.



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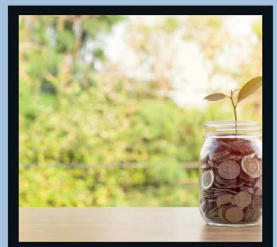
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## Join the Journey

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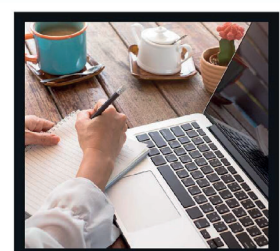
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Entertainment & The Arts Editor  
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# A.M.E. Zion

## International Music

### Ministry Receives \$3,000

### Scholarship to Soar Higher

By Crystal M. Burns

The A.M.E. Zion International Music Ministry recently received a significant boost with a \$3,000 scholarship from the Mabel Lee Farrow Hill Scholarship Foundation. The Foundation is affectionately named after Presiding Elder Laticia Hill Godette's grandmother. This generous gift, the 16th of 25 "Christmas Blessings" awarded by the foundation,



will fuel the ministry's aspirations for greatness.

"Music is a Ministry!" declared Presiding Elder Dr. Laticia Hill Godette in her Facebook announcement. "Our Board loved it! Not one person, but an entire Ministry!" This enthusiastic endorsement reflects the profound impact of the ministry's work within The A.M.E. Zion Church.

Under the visionary leadership of Dr. Lisa Moore, a gifted educator, school principal, and accomplished musician, the ministry has flourished. Dr. Moore, who accepted the Music Director position with no initial budget, has tirelessly nurtured the choir's growth. She has traveled extensively throughout the connection, fostering a sense of community and cultivating the musical talents of the choir members.

The scholarship, a wonderful Christmas Blessing, will empower the international music ministry to achieve its ambitious goals. One noteworthy goal is to record a studio album, and another notable goal is to record a live album. Dr. Moore expressed several lofty goals that can be achieved with the support of the Zionites. The two goals being highlighted at this time are as follows:

**1st Music Studio Recording:** This foundational studio project will feature music specifically for The A.M.E. Zion Church. Dr. Moore has meticulously arranged the Apostles' Creed, our Affirmation of Faith, and she has composed a new anthem, "Zion, The Freedom Church," to serve as the official Zion Theme Song. The remaining selections the ministry plans to record on their first studio album will

have a broader appeal, reaching beyond denominational boundaries and sharing the message of hope and faith with the world.

**A Full Live Recording:** This ambitious project will showcase a diverse range of musical genres, featuring contributions from prolific songwriters, guest artists, and talented musicians from within The A.M.E. Zion Church. Its guidance will include the gifts and expertise of the faithful musicians of our beloved Zion. This collaborative effort will highlight the rich musical heritage of our denomination.

Presiding Elder Godette lauded Dr. Moore's exceptional leadership and her invaluable contributions to the ministry. "She is a rare, valuable jewel," she stated. Godette also expressed sincere gratitude to the foundation's financial partners and the 7 A.M. prayer line Family for their unwavering support of the ministry's mission.

With this generous scholarship and the continued guidance of Dr. Moore, the A.M.E. Zion International Music Ministry is poised for significant growth and success. Dr. Moore is currently assembling an executive team to further expand the ministry's reach, with plans for music workshops, concerts, and clinics in all Episcopal Districts.

To donate to the Music Ministry:  
CashApp: \$AMEZIONMUSIC

For checks and additional donation options, contact Dr. Moore at [Ameziondrmoore@gmail.com](mailto:Ameziondrmoore@gmail.com).

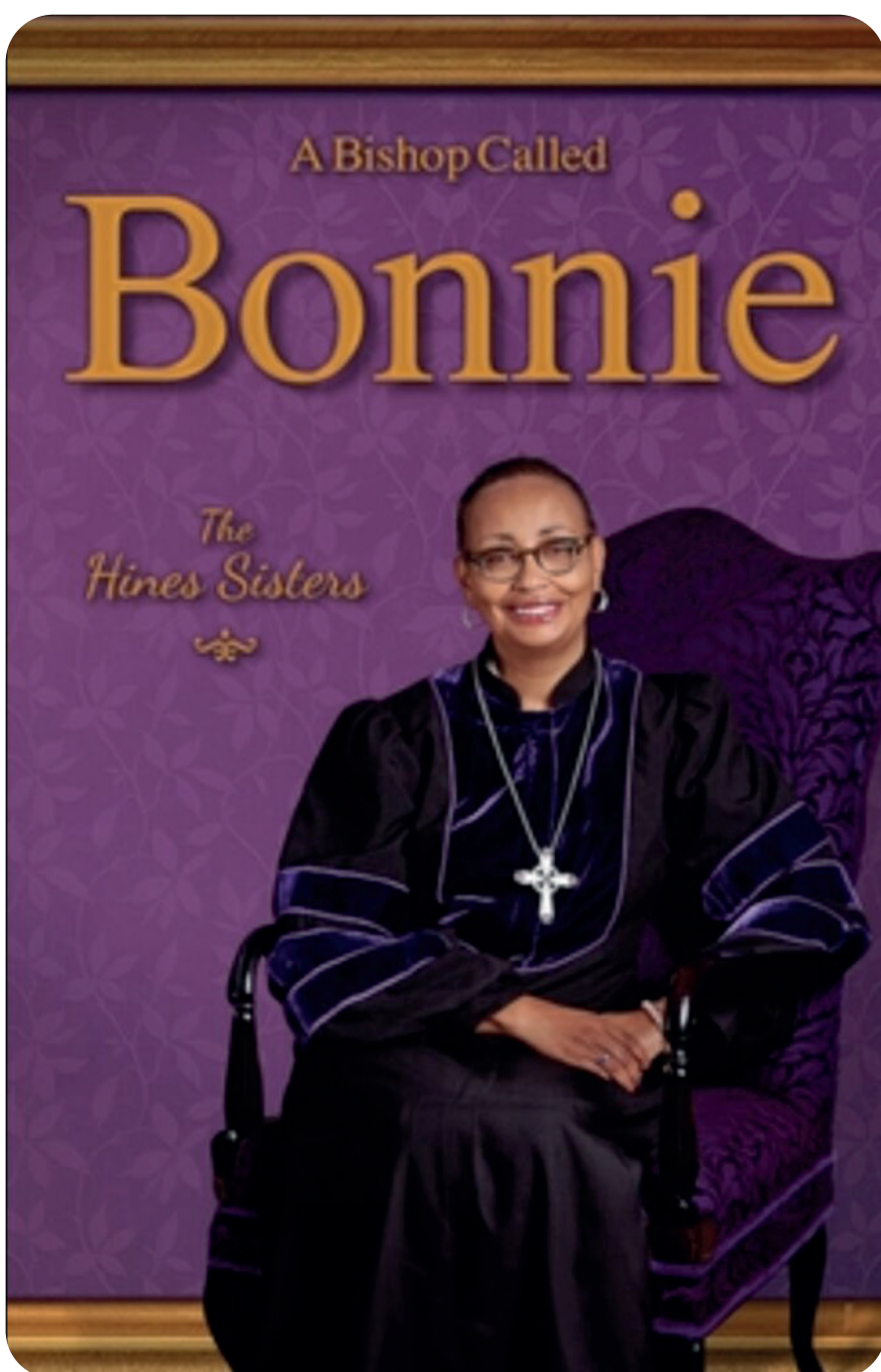
The choir's anointed voices are a powerful testament to the transformative power of music and a beacon of hope within the church community.



# The Sisters 3

By Dierdre R. Parker, Entertainment & The Arts Editor

When I received the book, the first thing I noticed was that it came with signatures from all three sisters. Each pen stroke is as unique as each sister. Wispy, narrow, neat and symmetrical, small and squarish. I noticed that they were close together, just like the sisters. I first met the three Hines sisters at the 52nd Quadrennial General Conference. They were pre-selling copies of the book *A Bishop Called Bonnie*. As you may recall, this was my first experience at a general conference, so I was excited and bopped around from place to place, making notes, asking questions, and taking pictures of shoes (IYKYK).



Maybe I picked up on their excitement, or they picked up on mine, but I found myself drawn to their table. As they offered me a York Peppermint Patty, they told me the story of how Bishop Bonnie would take one, just one patty, and put it in her pocket for an energy boost when she preached. It was a very endearing story. What immediately became apparent to me was that they love their sister. What was even more evident to me when we met via Zoom for an interview is that love is a golden thread that binds the sisters together.

Two sisters were together when we met, while one was in a different



location. As I asked them questions, they supported each other and reminded each other of their favorite family stories' little details and embellishments. The Hines Sisters are a safe space. I felt it the minute they locked into their shared connection. It is like stepping under a shelter when it rains cats and dogs. The noise that comes from the deluge is quieted. The distortion that comes from squinting your eyes is cleared. The love that the three Hines sisters have for each other is palpable. Because they allowed me into their connection, I, too, was safe. I wanted to stay there and listen to their stories of love, support, and protection. I made myself an honorary Hines Sister. Like the Hines sisters, I grew up in a house with five girls. Like the Hines sisters, there are only 3 of us girls left. Unlike the Hines sisters, we were not very close. The closeness of the Hines sisters is something that I have always longed for. The best way to have that is not to become an interloper in their connective tissue but to create better connective tissue with my own sisters. I'll be working on that this year.

Although I had never met Bishop Bonnie, I now feel like I know her because of how her sisters presented Bishop Bonnie they know and love in the pages of this book. I cannot tell the story of her life as they and others who knew her can, but what I can tell you is that if you read this book, you may want to be a Hines sister, too. I urge you to support this beautiful work if you have not yet done so. It is a beautiful tribute to the humble history maker Bishop Mildred Bernadetta "Bonnie" Hines, the first woman Bishop of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

*A Bishop Called Bonnie* is available at [www.wisdomhousebooks.com](http://www.wisdomhousebooks.com). For more information, contact [thehinessisters3@yahoo.com](mailto:thehinessisters3@yahoo.com)



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

# 2025 - The Year Ahead



By Dana G. Stilley, Financial Freedom Editor

For many, the start of a new year includes reflecting on the past and a renewed hope for the future. We are thankful for the joys and lessons of the past 365 days and look forward with new hope for a bright future. We make plans and design pathways to achieve our goals. Common New Year goals, sometimes called resolutions, include losing weight, saving more money, exercising more, creating a better work/life balance, and engaging in more self-care.

Lying beneath most of the common goals is a financial consideration that must be factored into the equation. For example, to achieve weight loss goals, is it necessary to join a gym and eat healthier food? And what will it cost to create a better work/life balance? Work less, earn less income, and vacation more often? How is it possible to reach these

goals if the projected income may not be increasing? All of these options will have financial consequences.



The cost of healthy eating varies from state to state, and providing a healthy diet for one's family can cause great concern for many. However, it is important to remember that long-term unhealthy eating may lead to health conditions that lead to loss of work and increased medical care expenses. So, too, could excess work and too much stress. Managing your wealth includes managing your health.

As you prepare for the year ahead, remember that planning will be key to help you achieve your goals and maintain your financial stability. Instead of going to the gym during the spring and summer months, consider outdoor exercise to save some funds. Shop wisely, and begin to shop with coupons for added savings.

Wishing you all a Healthy & Happy New Year!

# Jordan Kermit Wilson, Sr.

## March 20, 1938 – November 19, 2024

By Janene Hawkins

Educator and civic leader Jordan Kermit Wilson, Sr. (“Kermit”) died on November 19th at age 86 at St. Joseph Hospital in Bethpage, New York. Kermit was born on March 20, 1938, in Carthage, North Carolina, the third of ten children of the late Claude Patrick Wilson and Sophia Ritter Wilson. After his mother died when he was 13, Kermit went to live with his grandparents, Papa Jordan and Mama Nora, on a hundred-acre farm in the rural town of Robbins, North Carolina. It was an incredibly difficult time for Kermit and his nine siblings as they went from living together under one roof to being scattered across different households. Yet, in the midst of that hardship, there was a silver lining - - a blessing amidst the darkness - - as Kermit entered a loving and supportive household with many cousins, uncles, and aunts.

After attending Pinckney High School in his hometown, Kermit graduated from Livingstone College in 1958 with a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics. This was an extraordinary achievement by any measure, but especially for a Black man in the 1950’s, a time when racial barriers in education and society were formidable. Following graduation, Kermit began teaching math in Lumberton, North Carolina. It was here that he met the love of his life, the late Dorothy (“Dot”) Lee Green of Wilmington, North Carolina.

Kermit and Dot were married on August 20, 1960, and together, they had three beautiful children: Jordan, Jeffrey, and Janene. Seeking greater opportunities, Kermit and Dot accepted teaching positions and relocated to Long Island, New York, where they bought a home in North Babylon, a place Kermit would call home for the next 55 years.

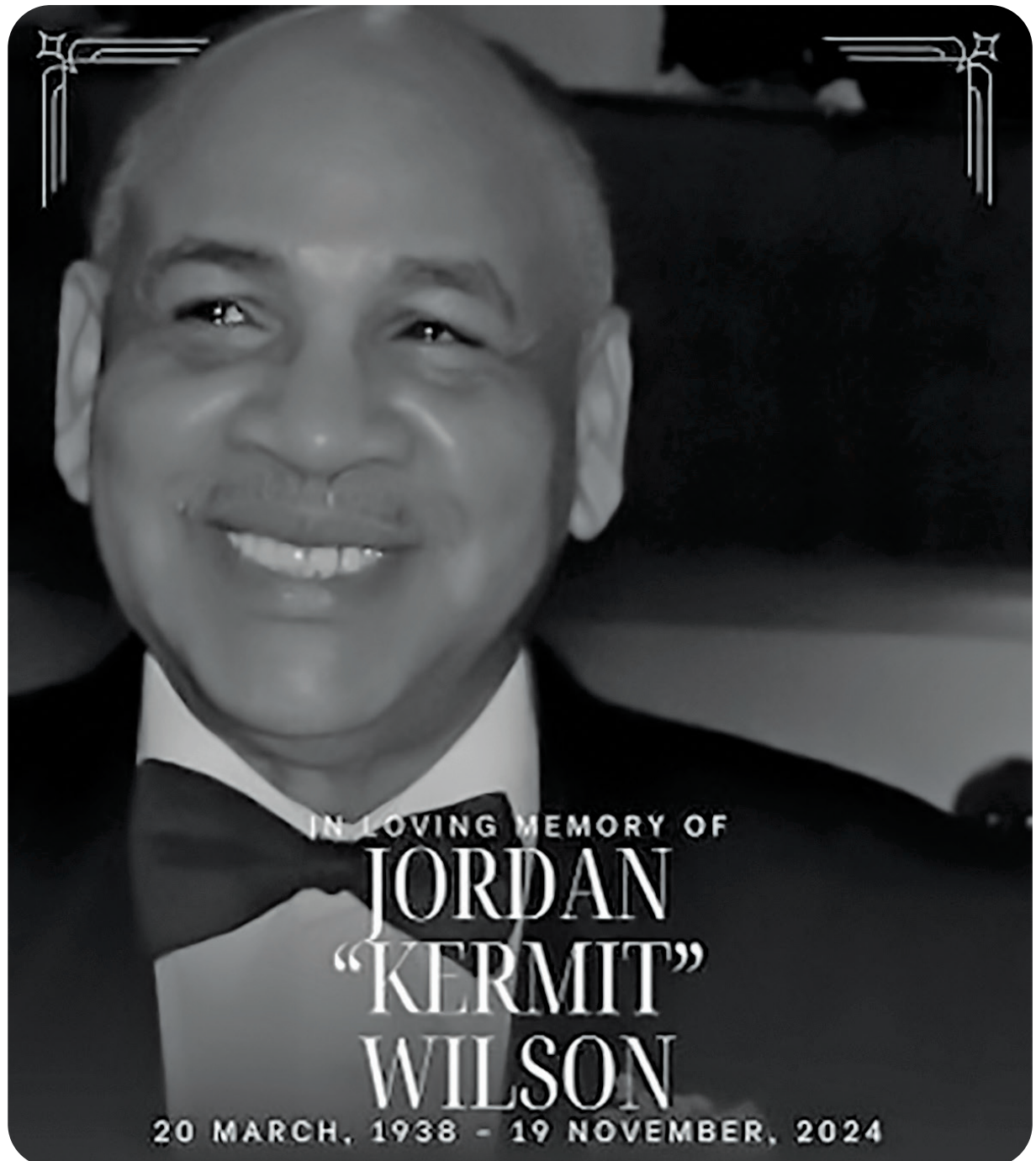
Kermit enjoyed his tenure as a mathematics teacher at Plainview-Old Bethpage John F. Kennedy High School, eventually taking on the role of contract negotiator with the Plainview-Old Bethpage Congress of Teachers before his retirement.

Until his death, Kermit kept one hand in the spiritual realm and the other in the earthly - - he was president of the Central Long Island branch of the NAACP and his local Kiwanis, co-founder of the Suffolk County Caucus of Black Democrats, member of the Belmont Civic Association, and two-time candidate in the 1980’s for what was then the 13th District of the Suffolk County Legislature.

One of his most significant contributions was his run for the Suffolk County Legislature in 1983, where he became the first Black candidate to win a democratic primary. His campaign highlighted his leadership, resilience, and vision, showcasing the brilliance and determination of the Town of Babylon community to all of Suffolk County. His campaign also left a lasting mark, as there are now Black elected officials at most levels of government in Suffolk County.

Kermit was a devoted member of Shaw Temple A.M.E. Zion Church for over fifty years. He cherished his church and its members, who became his extended family. Throughout his 50-plus year tenure, Kermit

served in various roles, including active participation in the Christian Education Department, Trustee Board, Steward Board, Treasurer of the Church, Vacation Bible School teacher and Sunday School Superintendent, where he taught children computer skills.



In addition to his church and political efforts, Kermit coached Little League Baseball and youth basketball. A portion of Centerwood Street in North Babylon, near his home, will be renamed for him.

As Kermit’s health declined, he was cared for by his eldest son, Jordan, a constant companion and caregiver. A celebration of life was held on November 26th. The Reverend Elder D. Morrison preached the eulogy.

Kermit is survived by his three children Jordan Kermit Wilson, Jr. of North Babylon, NY; Jeffrey Kendrick Wilson (Leslie) of Wheatley Heights, NY and Reverend Janene Wilson Hawkins (David) of Trumbull, CT; grandchildren, Joi Kristina Wilson, Jeffrey Kendrick Wilson, Jr., Shelby Alexis Helene Hawkins, and Kendal Allyse Dorothy Hawkins; one sister, Joan Haskins and one brother, Lawrence Wilson; two aunts, Marjorie Brown of Bridgeport, CT and Frankie Peace of Durham, NC, goddaughter Cassandra Williams Metz (Lloyd) and a host of his many nephews, nieces, cousins, and friends. All of these he loved and touched deeply.



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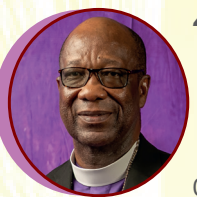
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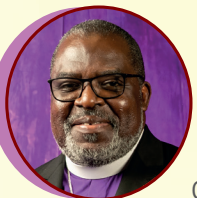
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# A Heartwarming Journey to Ghana: Hospitality, Celebration, and Service!



By Rev Dr. Tajuan Kyles

From the moment we arrived at Kotoka International Airport in Accra to our departure back to the States, our group was enveloped in warmth—not just from the climate but from the gracious hospitality extended to us by Bishop Hilliard Dogbe, his family and his dedicated team. Bishop Dogbe personally greeted us at the airport, setting the tone for an unforgettable experience, and the seamless transportation to our hotel was just the beginning of what would be a truly remarkable journey.

Upon arrival at our hotel, we were promptly checked into our rooms, each featuring a welcome package filled with thoughtful gifts. These included customized clothing and jewelry, delicious local snacks, and more, all reflecting the care and attention to detail that marked the trip. We found printed itineraries in our rooms that highlighted the well-organized schedule of activities ahead, showing the careful planning that had gone into every aspect of our visit.

The schedule featured a warm welcome dinner and a heart-felt farewell celebration, both of which included thoughtful



gifts that expressed gratitude and appreciation for our presence. The hotel itself, located in the capital city—Accra, was complete with a restaurant, pool, fitness center, massage parlor, lounge, and gift shop. Throughout the trip, we were accompanied by knowledgeable local tour guides who ensured we were well-informed and engaged at every stop. Bottled water was always on hand, and we were encouraged to ask questions and learn about the rich history and culture of Ghana.

One of the moving parts of the trip was the time spent with our fellow



clergy, including Bishops, General Officers, Presiding Elders, Pastors, and Lay leaders. The joy of hearing our Bishops preach, sharing in prayer, and bonding with each other was truly a blessing. We were deeply inspired by the spirit of dedication and service that permeated every aspect of our visit.

A highlight of the trip was our visits to local schools such as The A.M.E. Zion Girls School and Aggrey Memorial A.M.E. Zion School, where we were greeted warmly by staff and students, many holding welcome signs with big smiles. During the administrators' remarks,

we learned about the schools' rich history, ongoing progress, and the pressing needs they face. What we saw and heard moved us to contribute, making generous donations and pledging continued support to the Global Missions Department to help meet these needs.

We were also blessed to visit the St. John Society Church, the Mother Church, and the upgraded Episcopal Office to include the dedication of the Bishop Kenneth Monroe Community Worship Center. The ceremony was nothing short of awe-inspiring, showcasing Bishop Dogbe's visionary leadership and his unwavering commitment to the community. His compassion and dedication left a lasting impact on all of us, and we departed feeling both proud and deeply inspired.



In addition to our spiritual and service-oriented activities, we enjoyed some memorable cultural experiences. These included a beachside lunch, shopping at the buzzing local market, and touring historical landmarks such as the W.E.B. Du Bois Center, Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park, and Cape Coast. Two couples in our group, including Rev. Dr. Tajuan Kyles and Brother Kyles, also had the chance to celebrate wedding anniversaries during our stay, adding a personal touch to the festivities.



As we toured the city, we witnessed ongoing construction and development and learned of the over 600 A.M.E. Zion schools, reflecting the vibrant growth and hopeful future. Ghana's youth, combined with the dedication of its leaders and educators, left us with a sense of optimism and a renewed commitment to support their work.

With each visit to Ghana, new experiences unfold, and we are already making plans for our next trip to the Motherland. It is clear that the warmth of the people, the richness of the culture, and the depth of the connections made during this trip will continue to inspire us for years to come.

## Zion to Ghana: A Breathtaking Experience in the Motherland

By Rev. Roderick J. Josey, Education Editor

### Zion to Ghana: A Breathtaking Experience in the Motherland

December 13- 20th 2024, members of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church embarked on a life-changing journey to Ghana, West Africa, reconnecting with the rich heritage and spiritual legacy of the Motherland. This pilgrimage was not only a cultural exploration but also a deeply spiritual experience that resonated with our shared history as people of African descent in The A.M.E. Zion Church.



### Day One: The Journey Begins

On December 13th, the journey began with great anticipation. Traveling from various locations, participants gathered in New York City to board an Airbus for the nine-hour flight to Ghana. Upon landing at Kotoka International Airport in Accra at 9 a.m. (4 a.m. EST), the warm Ghanaian heat greeted travelers, a stark contrast to the cold winter weather left behind.

Bishop Hilliard Dogbe, President of the Board of Bishops and Bishop of the Western West Africa Episcopal District, along with ministers and



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Continued next page



presiding elders, warmly welcomed the group at the airport and assisted guests with their bags. The vibrant energy of Accra, a city bustling with over 2 million people, was immediately evident. A short drive through lively traffic due to police escort brought the group to the Alisa Hotel, where they settled in before attending a welcome banquet. The evening was filled with cultural dishes, vibrant music, and the opportunity to meet political dignitaries, including the first Ghanaian Bishop of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Bishop Lawson. It was a joyous start to the Ghanaian adventure.

**Day Two:** Sunday morning began with a two-hour journey to Keta to worship at the newly constructed sanctuary of St. John A.M.E. Zion Church. The service was a lively celebration of music, dance, and faith, punctuated by a powerful sermon from Bishop Crenshaw. Following worship, the group visited the Zion College Senior High School, home to 1,639 students. The warm welcome included a military-style ROTC presentation, music, and heartfelt hospitality.



**Day Three:** On Monday, the group started the week touring the home of civil rights leader W.E.B. Du Bois, learning about his connection to Ghana's first president and legacy. This visit culminated in a moment of reflection at the site where Du Bois and his wife are buried. Meanwhile, some Bishops had the opportunity to meet with the U.S. Ambassador at the U.S. Embassy. The day concluded with an exhilarating visit to the local market, an intense and memorable shopping experience filled with beautifully handcrafted accessories and paintings, sculptures, and African garments.



**Day Four:** The journey continued with a three-hour trip to Cape Coast Castle, a historic site where enslaved Africans were held before being transported across the Atlantic. Walking through the infamous "Door of No Return," the delegation felt a profound connection to ancestors who endured unimaginable hardship. Tears were shed, prayers were offered, and songs of hope were sung as the group reflected on the enduring spirit of those who came before.



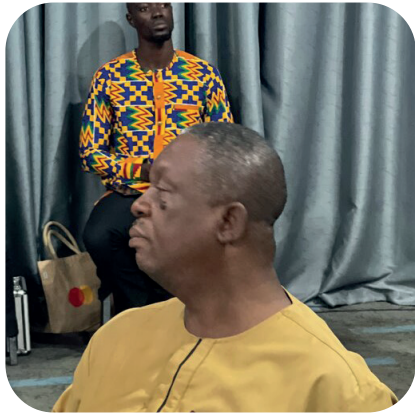
En route to Cape Coast, the group visited Zion Girls School in Winneba and Aggrey Memorial A.M.E. Zion Senior High School. At Zion Girls School, the group was welcomed with music and learned about renovations supported by the Christian Education Department. At Aggrey Memorial, the welcome was overwhelming, with the first years of 4,600 students filling the assembly hall (auditorium) in a joyous cele-



bration of song and dance.

**Day Five:** Wednesday brought the group to the Western West Africa Episcopal District headquarters. Bishop Dogbe showcased renovations and shared plans for a new episcopal residence. The Kenneth Monroe Worship Center, a beautiful chapel on the headquarters' campus, was dedicated in a service led by Bishop Moore, who preached a stirring sermon titled "A Consecrated Church." Over \$30,000 was raised during the service toward the remaining \$55,000 needed to complete the worship center.

**Day Six:** The final day included visiting the Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum, a monument built to honour Ghana's president. The group learned about the nation's first president and his enduring legacy. A return trip to the market showcased the group's improved negotiation skills. The journey concluded with a farewell service at Aggrey Memorial Society (A.M.E. Zion Church) in Mamprobi, where Senior Bishop Daryl B. Starnes delivered a heartfelt sermon. The service overflowed with worship,



music, and dance, leaving the A.M.E. Zion Delegation deeply moved.

As the Delegation departed Ghana, their hearts were filled with gratitude

and bittersweet emotions. This journey deepened their connection to the Motherland and strengthened their bond with the Zion family. Special thanks were extended to Bishop Hilliard Dogbe for envisioning and facilitating this unforgettable experience.

The trip to Ghana served as more than a cultural or spiritual journey—it was a bridge connecting the past to the present, a call to honor our heritage, and an invitation to walk boldly into the future. Worship services throughout the trip reflected the unifying power of faith, blending African rhythms with Zion's hymns to create a symphony of worship that transcended borders.



From the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park to Cape Coast Castle and the vibrant culture, the A.M.E. Zion Delegation were immersed in Ghana's rich history and enduring resilience. The experience reminded them of their place in a global family bound by faith, history, and a shared destiny.

Returning home with full hearts and renewed spirits, travelers carry forward the lessons learned and memories made, inspired to continue building a legacy of hope, justice, and unity within The A.M.E. Zion Church and beyond. The breathtaking experience in the Motherland will remain a cherished chapter in their lives.



# At the Heart of Christmas Story is a Refugee Problem



By Ronald A. Nathan, World Politics Editor

Photos By © Sumit Sanyal and United Nations, Photo By © Times of Israel, © Nightcafe Studios

The Christmas season is upon us with its religious observances, festive atmosphere, and commercial enterprise. This composite of stories is drawn from the Christian Bible and aligned and framed over millennia within ancient Western and Eastern cultural traditions.

Such has been the effective marketing of Christmas that it is becoming exceedingly difficult to extract the Christian story and centre the Christ

situation.

Joseph, Mary, and Jesus fled from Bethlehem to Egypt to avoid the murderous intent of the political dictator called Herod the Great. Matthew 2:13-15:

*“Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”*

Africa was not only at the centre of the Nativity story but also an example of the historical need to accommodate the forced migration of families. “The majority of African migrants move within Africa, and while much of this movement of people is normal and regular, negative root causes remain the major drivers of irregular migration across the continent,” said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore.

Having been called Grinch or party-pooper by scores of family members, friends, and colleagues, I place the birth of Jesus, the Child, in the centre of human need and crisis. The good news (the gospel) necessitates a context of bad happenings; sin and evil are symbiotic in the human condition.

While we should not deny the human psychological and cultural need to celebrate, we should also take time to participate in the relief of others who are less fortunate than we are. As of the end of 2023, 47.2 million children had been displaced due to conflict and violence. There is ample opportunity for us to do good as we celebrate the birth of the Christ child and the advent of our Saviour and Lord, who was and is good news to the poor.



child from the glitz, overconsumption, and commercialisation.

Take, for example, lost amongst the tinsel, ham, and office Christmas parties is the fact that the first family of the Christian Church were refugees. They, like millions of families today, were forced to flee their home country because of a negative root cause, a life-threatening

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# Ability for Christ

By Tia Cheek

My name is Tia Cheek, and I want you to learn about my story about all of my accomplishments over the years. It shows that God has an impact on my life. I was born on January 1st, 1997, New Year's Baby, and God impacted my life when I was two years old. When I was two, I was diagnosed with autism, and I couldn't talk that well. When my grandma and mom took me to the doctor said now I wouldn't be able to talk like other kids, so I was in special classes to help with my speech and I turned out to be a good speaker, and one of the things the teacher showed my mother is that Tia got autism because since I was born early the doctor said I would have delays.



From preschool to middle school, I would have challenges like making friends and sometimes processing some things like if people were talking to me I would have a hard time processing what they were saying and not holding long conversations, but I'm improving as I get older. But at the same time, what my strengths I was an AB honor roll student from elementary school to the 12th grade and it shows that autistic kids are smart too. Also when I was in middle school I started playing the clarinet which is one of my favorite instruments in the world and you see what the clarinet helps me understand music which I was in the band from 7th grade to senior year. Afterwards, after I graduated from high school; I had a few challenges picking the right college but then after praying about it in 2019, I went on to Grand Canyon University online.



Autism or autism spectrum can be a unique approach when it comes to interacting with the congregation and the church, especially if they have like a mood disorder behind it; for example, if a kid is non-



verbal, then it will make it harder for him or her to understand what the church is doing and what they are saying. It makes it difficult to communicate with a church body.

Also, I have a mood disorder, which it comes with the autism. In detail, what it is is a mood disorder that causes irritability and depression, but I wasn't diagnosed until I was 19. Mood disorders affects people who are autistic or people that have like irritability general, and sometimes they take medication or self-medicate themselves. After all of this, I still kept fighting for God's truth and became a 2023 graduate. I do it all with God's help... I managed to maintain stability and continue with my life to be a graduate of Grand Canyon University. Soon, I'll be going to school to get my master's in chaplaincy so I can be a chaplain, because God called me to be a chaplain so I can help people in crisis. With my experience, this helps strengthens my calling to bring advocacy about disabilities to not only the church but to communities as well.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the Pastors in my life who helped me through from when I was in preschool to college. First, I would like to thank Reverend Lorinzer Johnson, who has grown up had helped me through my life including praying for me and motivating me to be successful. Reverend Charles Howard was very encouraging to me as I was growing up under his leadership at Thompson Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church. Also, Rev. Alonzo Burnett under his leadership at Thompson Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church; he has always helped me through and let me do a lot of things in the church to motivate me. I love speaking, you know, a lot of speaking in front of the public and activities in the church that not only helped me stretch out to the community, but it helps me connect with the community. I want to thank Reverend Ronald Thomas for helping me through school, especially with the schoolwork and essays that I couldn't understand during my freshman year at GCU. He helped me understand not only the Bible but he helps me how to apply it to a Christian life. I also want to thank you, Pastor Doctor Keith Tillett even though I only met him for a short time, he always encouraged me to be myself and to be successful regardless of the obstacles that I face.

But last but not least, I want to thank Bishop Kenneth Monroe because before he retired, he encouraged me to keep pushing on and he was praying for me that my life would be successful. I also want to thank your new Bishop W. Darin Moore for not only praying for me but also encouraging me as well to know that I can reach higher heights regardless of what I go through... disability or not you can always reach God's people.

To God be the glory I want to thank the Lord for everything he's done in my life because without him I don't know where I would be. He will always be the light of my life.

# The Dred Scott Decision: An American Injustice

By Rev. Dr. Garrett M. Thomas

Dred Scott, an enslaved African-American, sued for his freedom in a case that reached the United States Supreme Court in 1857 and concluded with a decision that outraged abolitionists and social justice advocates all throughout the nation. Scott was enslaved by Dr. John Emerson, a military professional who was often required to change residences to perform his duties. He relocated with Scott to the free state of Illinois and then to the Wisconsin Territory, which had also banned slavery. This formed the basis of Scott's claim, believing he had found sanctuary in free land. His hopes for freedom were quickly dashed when he was forced to return to slavery with his master (Missouri State Archives, 2024).

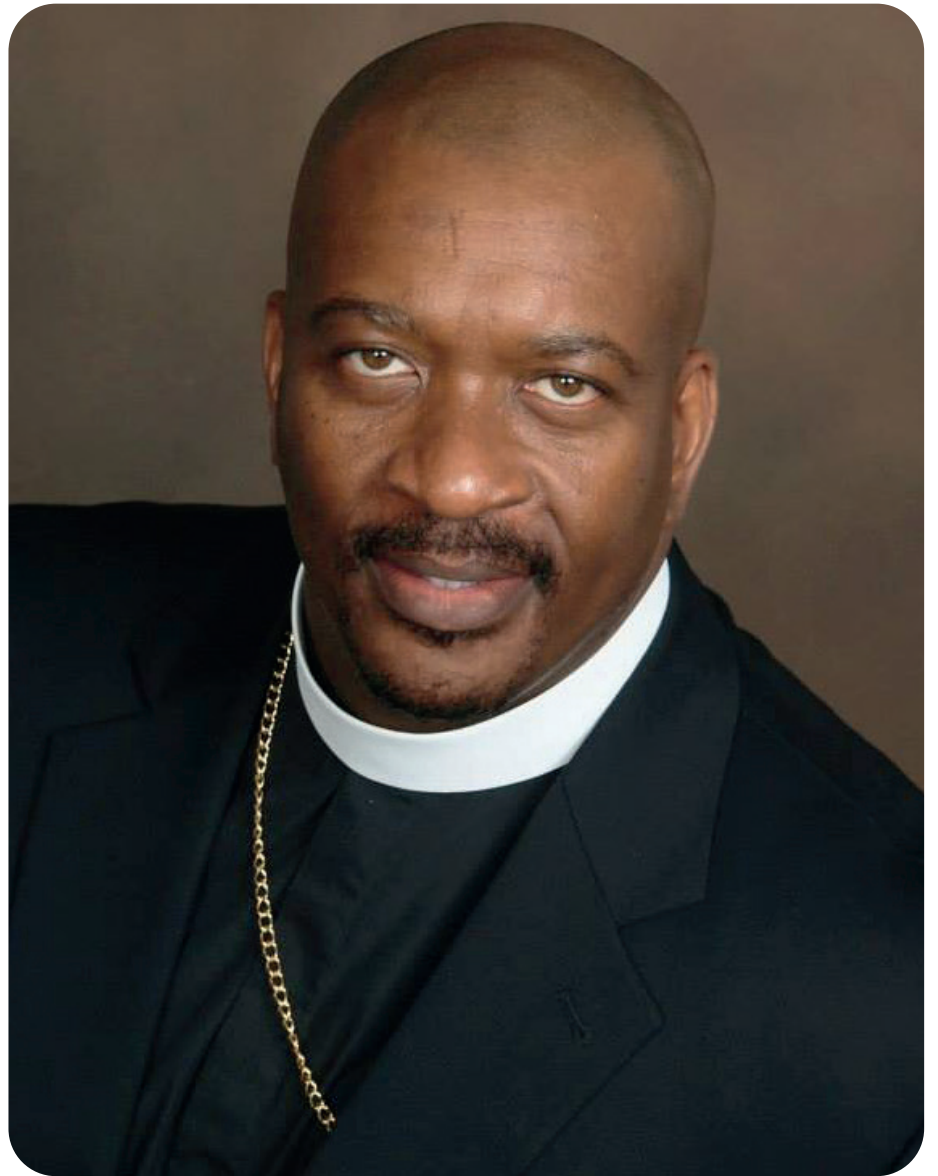
After Emerson returned to Missouri with Scott, the latter sued, claiming the former had violated his rights and the law which stated that any human being taken from a slave state to a free state or free territory was automatically emancipated because no one could be enslaved on free land. Furthermore, there was a longstanding doctrine known as, once free, always free -- once a person had been set free, they would remain free. On the basis of these laws, the Missouri State Court found in Scott's favor and he was declared free (Missouri State Archives, 2024).

Again, his hopes for freedom were obliterated. Emerson appealed to the Missouri State Supreme Court, which ruled against Scott, returning him to slavery. Scott then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. His attorneys, Francis Murdoch and Charles Drake, supported his decision to continue fighting the case in court (Missouri State Archives, 2024). Scott could have chosen to simply escape and run away while in free territory; but he thought it best to choose the legal route to obtain liberty not just for himself, but for other enslaved people who were burdened by bondage and transported out west into the new frontier, where the Native Americans had been violently forced due to white aggression and genocide. White citizens encroached out west chasing the promised riches of the fur trade and the California Gold Rush which had begun in 1849 (Strange, 2021).

In what is considered the worst Supreme Court decision ever rendered, Chief Justice Roger Taney declared that Blacks were never and could never be citizens of the United States. He relented that they could be citizens of individual states but could not acquire federal citizenship. Furthermore, Taney upheld the unconstitutionality of the Missouri Compromise, positing that the Federal Government could not determine which states could have slavery and which states could not. On the matter of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which voided the Missouri Compromise, Taney said there could be no such thing as a free state in America (Taney, 1857). According to his interpretation of the law, white people, irrespective of where they lived, had a right to own Black people as slaves.

Consequently, abolitionists across America realized their fight to end slavery via legal means was futile. Taney's perspective affirmed the ostensible belief that Black people were inferior beings who were ordained to be bought and sold. Thus, they had no rights that white men were obligated to respect. They had no right to life, no right to liberty, no right to own property, no right to pursue happiness, and definitely no right to sue white people in a court of law. Taney's decision stated that no matter where Blacks went in America, they were destined to be enslaved. (National Archives, 2024). This outrageous Supreme Court decision cemented in the minds of many freedom fighters that the battle for liberty would not be won in a court of law but on a field of blood.

John Brown, a white preacher and abolitionist who was a disciple of Nat Turner resolved to wage war and drown slaveholders in their own blood to win the freedom of his Black brothers and sisters in Christ. Born in Connecticut and raised in Ohio, John Brown's parents used their home as a station on the Underground Railroad. It was not unusual for a large congregation of Blacks to hide out in the Brown home when he was a child. He learned early in life that all people are Chil-



dren of God. Therefore it was important to fight for what was right; and he would dedicate his life to fighting for justice for his Black brothers and sisters in Christ (History.com, 2009).

After learning of Nat Turner's Rebellion in 1831 and the death of Elijah P. Lovejoy, a white abolitionist who owned a newspaper, in 1837, Brown vowed to follow in Turner's footsteps and said, "Here, before God, in the presence of these witnesses, from this time, I consecrate my life to the destruction of slavery!" (History.com). He fought several armed battles with pro-slavery militia and bounty hunters who had been searching for runaway slaves, wounding some and killing some. One of his sons was killed in such a battle. While in Kansas, Brown mentored Charles R. Jennison the leader of the Jayhawks, a notorious band of vicious vigilantes committed to abolition who were victorious when Kansas voted to enter the Union as a non-slave state in 1858 (History.com, 2009; Finkleman, 2011; Phillips, 2024).

The next year, Brown began planning an attack on the army fort known as Harper's Ferry. He solicited the aid of his friends, Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman. Douglass, a Local Preacher at the New Bedford A.M.E. Zion Church, and a gifted author, informed Brown that he strongly held to the philosophy that the pen is mightier than the sword; and that the best way to achieve the desired result was to apply social and political pressure on the Federal Government with writings and speeches (Douglass, 1892). In a gesture of support, he offered Brown his prayers and sincerest wishes for victory. Tubman, however, desired to join Brown herself but was unable to accompany him because of her previously scheduled engagements as the Chief Conductor of the Underground Railroad. Nevertheless, she recruited soldiers for John Brown's army and most of the men who joined him did so because of Tubman. Brown once said that Tubman was the most courageous person he knew and he called her "General Tubman" (History.com, 2009; Finkleman, 2011).



On October 16, 1859, John Brown, along with his sons, some white protégés, runaway slaves, and free Black freedom fighters raided Harper's Ferry. They had also kidnapped one of George Washington's descendants and several other pro-slavery white men. The mayor resisted and was slain. The fort was captured and the guns and canons were commandeered; but their escape route was blocked by a posse of white citizens who had gathered arms to defend the territory. After a nearly twenty-four hour gun battle, General Robert E. Lee led the army into the fort and captured or killed all of John Brown's men (History.com, 2009; Finkleman, 2011).

Brown himself was captured. In his jacket pocket was the letter of support written by Frederick Douglass. A warrant was made out for Douglass' arrest. When he received word he was in New York City and needed to go home to New Bedford, Massachusetts to pack before fleeing the country (Douglass, 1892). Knowing that the authorities would be waiting for him at the train station connecting New York with Massachusetts, Douglass first boarded a train that took him to Paterson, N.J. (Douglass, 1892) where his pastor, Rev. William Serrington in New Bedford, had previously founded First African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church on Godwin Street in Paterson in 1834 (Paterson, 2023).

First A.M.E. Zion was a major stop on the Underground Railroad, where members like John and Harriet Kline, and William Van Rensalier partnered with a white abolitionist named Josiah Huntoon to help runaway enslaved people find new life in freedom. There is a monument on Broadway near Bridge St. in Paterson that pays homage to Huntoon and VanRensalier (Paterson, 2023). Descendants of the latter continue to play a prominent role in the life of the city and in First Church. Dale "Skip" Van Rensalier currently serves as the Preacher's Steward, Class Leader, and Minister of Music. His children continue the legacy as artists and advocates for social justice.

Douglass got off the train on Market Street and walked the Paterson streets among friends. After a couple of nights, he made his way home to New Bedford, Massachusetts before sailing to Europe. When his wife took ill, he came back to find the Civil War was in full effect, the authorities were no longer seeking to arrest him (Douglass, 1892), and

justice was on the way.

Brown gave his life for the cause of justice and was hanged on 2 December 1859. His wife received his body and buried it near the family home (History.com, 2009; Finkleman, 2011). Unlike Turner, there was a body left to bury, a mortician to be put to work, an arrangement of flowers to be presented, and a eulogy to be preached. There was never a public word murmured to speak well of Turner after his demise because to do so meant certain death for the one who dared to utter any such salutation because Turner was hated and assailed as the devil incarnate by white pro-slavery radicals who had taken Turner's body and torn it apart. They peeled the skin off his corpse and used it to make wallets, purses, and lampshades. They boiled his remains and sold the bones for mementos, and they used the fat to make soap and axle grease, proving who the true devils were (Cromwell, 1920).

In a providential, ironic, twist of fate, Veteran's Day would come to be observed on the day of Turner's execution, November 11th. The holiday is celebrated to pay homage to all of the brave soldiers who fought to make freedom and democracy a reality in America. Truly, Nat Turner and John Brown, brothers in arms, in their cause for freedom and their fight for social justice saved this nation by beginning the armed struggle that liberated from slavery Africans in America. Truly it is the Black soldiers, and white soldiers of goodwill, who freed the slaves; it is not, as popular opinion would suggest, Abraham Lincoln.

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