

CELEBRATING  
THE 4TH OF JULY

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# THE STAR OF ZION

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Official Voice of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

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# SITTING ON THE SOFA IN GOD’S PRESENCE

By Rev. Leona Nicholas Welch,

July 2025... We are busy, and then we are busy, and when we finish being busy, we are busy. When does it stop? And where is God in the midst of it all? When do we bring Him into this picture? How do we let Him know that there is a place in our life for Him?

Perhaps it is time to take another look at Mary, Martha’s sister – the same sister who left her in the kitchen cooking and preparing for their visitor, Jesus. This is the same Mary who decided that enough was enough – no intentions in bailing on Martha, but after all, Jesus was in the house.

Let us recall the story in Luke (10:38-42). Jesus comes to the door, and Martha, the owner of the house, lets him in. Martha then goes to work in the kitchen. Mary takes a seat at Jesus’ feet and listens intently to his teachings. Martha complains and asks Jesus to make Mary come help her. Jesus speaks a line that resonates deeply and has taken a permanent place in our very souls. Jesus says: *Martha, Martha...Mary has chosen what is better...* (42). Jesus knows that Martha does not mean to neglect Him, that she is just trying to take care of Him, but Jesus also knows what Martha would receive if she only took the time to sit with Him.

Twenty-First Century Martha, if you are reading this, know that you are in the company of many, this writer at the front of the line. And at this point, I need to make this my story.

Jesus told me clearly (personally) that He would knock at the door (remember Martha letting Him in), and if I opened it, He will come in and sup with me, and I with Him (Rev. 3:20). What a promise! I relish it! I take comfort in it! This is a standing invitation to peace, love, joy, understanding, and an abundance of blessings. But what’s wrong here? Why am I not at Jesus’ feet every minute that I can be there? Rather, for me, why am I not sitting on the sofa, in my living room, talking with Jesus more often and for longer periods of time?

Jesus usually gets to my house around 7:00 every morning. I open the door, let Him in, greet Him, and usher Him to the sofa. Jesus is ready to sup with me, no doubt. The question is, am I ready to sup with Him? I would be if the dishes did not need to be washed before I leave for the day. I could be if that phone call had not come just as I was about to speak. I might have been if that Zoom meeting had not been scheduled so early. True,





Mrs. Debra Chappelle-Polk  
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many times, I am there with my Blessed Visitor, and what a precious, healing time it is. We sup, \one with another, and I am refreshed and wiser than I was when He arrived.

About those other times, when I am caught up in what I will call the Martha Syndrome – doing *for* Him rather than being *with* Him. What about those times that I run out the door and leave Jesus sitting there on my sofa, waiting to answer a question for me, pour down a blessing, or sweetly whisper a word of healing just for me. Frankly and honestly, I miss out. I spend the day struggling with what I would not have had



to struggle, puzzling with what could have been solved, causing Jesus, the Lover of My Soul, to chase after me, throwing kisses at my back, when He would rather place them on my soul. What a sad testimony to my treatment of my Jesus.

He waits. He watches me doing, and doing, and doing, and He waits. At the end of it all, when I get home from a busy, hectic day, there is Jesus, still sitting on my sofa. There is no angry glare or accusing words. He simply says, “How was your day?” Tired and tearful, I sit, lay my head onto His Eternal Shoulder, take a deep breath, exhale, and say nothing. He says it all. I am revived. In my heart and spirit, I promise to treat myself to this blessed and fulfilling supper whenever Jesus pays a visit. I am choosing what is better.

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# 115th West Central NC Annual Conference

## Motto: Holiness Unto the Lord!!!

By Cynthia Brown

The 115th Session of the West Central NC Conference was held at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, NC, May 28 -31, 2025. The Opening Night Service could be seen as traditional in our Connectional Zion Way. But our leaders are Extraordinary, so are all of our services. Senior Bishop and Presiding Prelate Darryl B. Starnes, Sr., and Missionary Supervisor Mrs. Camille Cullom Starnes are prayer's and planners. Not just the first service of the conference, but before each day and service prayers are offered, with Prayer Coordinators from each of the four districts, comprised of the West Central NC Conference, covering it all. With each preacher or presenter that ministered this week, it's evident that our Episcopal Leaders are planners because we truly were ministered to. We were also graced to have Retired Bishop Michael A. Frencher and Retired Supervisor Gelenia Frencher join us for the week, as they reside in the area.

Wednesday night was the Annual Sermon, delivered by the Rev. Dr. Timothy Freeman, pastor of the Trinity A.M.E. Zion Church in Greensboro, NC. Using Isaiah 12:2-6, we were encouraged to know that "There Is Still Water In the Well". His message carried us through the week. Thursday being our first full day, the business of the conference took place, and we then heard The Episcopal Address from Bishop Starnes, "Committing to Our Mission - Serving This Present Age". The Lay Council sponsored the S. O. Jones Scholarship Luncheon with our very own, Mr. Bruce Stanback from the Rockingham District delivering the Lay Message. He does not disappoint and shared several points on "Securing Our Future", we are called to stand in the gap, teach and train the next generation, protect the mission of the church, and remain anchored in Christ. The Lay Hour followed and included a Stoling Ceremony. The Rev. Wanda Merriweather from the Western NC Conference joined us and presented the Sexual Misconduct Prevention Workshop. She emphasized the need for all persons who work with children to have a background check.

The Christian Education Service was held on Thursday Night, and we heard from the Rev. Dr. Reginald Boyd, Jr. He is the Conference Director, and we heard the activities of all the districts for the year. One highlight was the Youth Retreat held earlier this year at the Mar-



vin Church on the Wadesboro-Monroe District. It was for leadership development, public speaking, knowing your duties, and mental health wellness. Youth Officers were also elected for the 2025-27 period for the conference during the retreat. A Stoling Ceremony was also held for new Christian Educators, and we were pleased to have the General Secretary-Treasurer, Rev. Patrick Barrett, assist, and the Piedmont Episcopal Director, Rev. Dr. Raymon Hunt, also. It was then time for the word, and we received it. Thankful for Presiding Elder Rev. Dr. Laticia Hill Godette of the Wadesboro-Monroe District for her message to us, "I Trust In God" using Genesis 50:15-26. Speaking to us about Forgiveness, Faith, and Fulfillment.

Friday morning, following prayer, the Missionary Convocation was held, with a concentration on "Equity & Justice". Missionary Supervisor, Sis. Camille Starnes blessed us with a word and testimony as the Lord allowed her to share. We also heard from the district officers through a very special "SKIT", as they presented their labors for the year. Following the convocation was the Memorial Moment. The





report of the Necrology Committee was given with songs rendered by Ms. Cynthia Brown and Rev. Deanna Daniel.

The Annual Home Missions Luncheon was held next, and we were presented with all the queens from all of our churches across the conference. They gladly strutted their stuff and presented themselves in a queenly manner. But the Winners from the three-tier groups are.....

Tier #1 - Trinity (Greensboro District) Lillie Redfern

Tier #2 - Hood Chapel (Greensboro District) Wendy A. Clegg

Tier #3 - Cedar Grove (Stanly County) (Concord District) Tyana Bryant

Congratulations to all, and we are Grateful for their hard work.

At the Friday Night Missionary Service, we were blessed again as our messenger was Bishop Eric Leake, Presiding Prelate of the South Atlantic Episcopal District. Bishop Leake is a son of the West Central Conference and wanted to be there to see his mother receive her Life Patron Stole. But again, we were blessed that he came our way. His message from



Acts 8:26-39, "A Mission That Matters", challenged all in attendance. For we have got to be more intentional in leading the lost to Christ.

Saturday morning, the Christian Education Department coordinated the workshops for all age groups. With Bishop Starnes teaching the Clergy, Cynthia Brown the Adults, Marquise Scott the Young Adults, Dion Harris the Youth, and Robin Simmons-Blount the Children. The Lay classes concentrated on "Sharing Jesus, Without Freaking Out". We then moved from workshops to the Youth Service. With Miss Danyelle Marsh from the Wadesboro-Monroe District presiding, she led us through a wonderful worship experience. The new officers who were elected at the youth



retreat held earlier this year were installed. We then heard from the preacher. The Rev. Krystal Isaac from the Greensboro District spoke to all, young and old alike, "God Wants His Church Back"(This Is A Warning), Romans 13:11-14. It is time for All of Us to Walk Properly and put of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Following the lunch hour was our final service. Bishop Starnes instructed us through his message, "Becoming Dynamic Witnesses For Christ", using Acts 1:4-8. His message and all that we heard in our coming together compels us to evangelize all who come into contact with us, to save a dying world. Following the message, we had the Grand Ushers March.



It truly was a remarkable conference. There was much business that took place that's not listed above. Three people were admitted to the conference. Eight persons were ordained Elders, and The Rev. Betty Rushing and Rev. J. C. White retired from the conference. We are grateful to all the visitors who visited us this week. You may have come just to visit or to support one of our preachers, but your presence was appreciated. One special visitor was the Rev. Franklin Toddle, from the Central NC Conference. He just wanted to shake Bishop Starnes' hand. The Courtesy Committee gave their report and expressed the Great, Spirited Filled Conference that we had, and then the appointments were read. We cannot say enough how grateful we are for the Godly Leadership that we have in Bishop Darryl and Camille Starnes. And this is the result of beginning each day in prayer. All Glory to God!!!



# 204th ANNUAL SESSION OF THE NEW YORK CONFERENCE WELCOMES BISHOP GEORGE D. CRENSHAW & MISSIONARY SUPERVISOR LADY LAURENNA H. CRENSHAW

By Debra Chappelle-Polk, Zion Spotlight Editor

July 2025, Tarrytown, NY... The 204<sup>th</sup> Session of the New York Annual Conference was held on June 5<sup>th</sup> through June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at the Westchester Marriott Hotel in Tarrytown, New York. The host churches were St. Charles A.M.E. Zion, where Reverend Dr. Brandon D. McLauchlin is the Pastor, and Park Street A.M.E. Zion, where Reverend Robert Kilpatrick, II, is the Pastor.

The Conference Theme was Lifting a Standard: "Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people." *Isaiah 62:10*.

The 204<sup>th</sup> Session was also the first New York Annual Conference for Bishop George D. Crenshaw, who was appointed the Presiding Prelate of the Northeastern District (N.E.E.D) at the 2024 General Conference.

Bishop Crenshaw and his wife, Missionary Supervisor Mrs. Laureнна H. Crenshaw wrote in their Greetings to the New York Conference: "As your Episcopal Leadership, we are excited about the vision God has given us for the Northeastern Episcopal Area, and it is refreshing to see that New York is already Lifting the Standard in serving this present age. As your Bishop, I stand before you with a heart full of gratitude and joy as we gather to conduct the business of the 204<sup>th</sup> Session of the New York Annual Conference."

The Morning Worship Service on Thursday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, opened with the Service of Holy Communion, the Reverend Robert Kilpatrick, II, Presiding. Dr. A. Alfred Carson (Presiding Elder, NY City District) presented Bishop Crenshaw, the Chief Celebrant. The Communion Meditation was led by Reverend Dr. Marvin D. Hooks, Sr. (First A.M.E. Zion Church, Brooklyn, NY).

It was a full day of events for clergy, laity, and delegates. Bishop Crenshaw convened the Business Session with the Organization of the Annual Conference and heard reports from the various committees. The reports of the Presiding Elders, Pastors, and Delegates followed. The Lay Council Luncheon was held later that afternoon. Mrs. Nicole Griffiths from Greater Hood A.M.E. Zion (New York, NY) was the keynote speaker. Bishop Crenshaw gave his Episcopal Address during

the afternoon Worship Service and received additional committee reports.

The Christian Education Department led the Evening Worship Service. Conference President Ms. Terneisa Lynn Calhoun served as Worship Leader. The Christian Education Department and Lay Council Stoling Ceremonies were also held during the service. Bishop Crenshaw introduced the guest preacher, Reverend Elizabeth Morris (Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion, Yonkers, NY). The service closed with the Invitation to Christian Discipleship, Remarks, and Benediction.

The Missionary Convocation with Missionary Supervisor Laureнна Crenshaw, presiding was held on Friday, June 6<sup>th</sup>. Reports from the various committees were presented to Missionary Supervisor Crenshaw. Reverend Gregor Miles, the retiring Pastor at Westbury A.M.E. Zion (Westbury, NY), preached the sermon for the afternoon Worship Service.







#### MRS. ELSIE BYRD & VERDELLES CUNNINGHAM

Later that evening, over one hundred Missionaries were stoled during the Missionary Candlelight Service. Missionary Supervisor Crenshaw gave the Charge to the Candidates and the Prayer of Blessing. The Missionary Message was delivered by Reverend Dr. Stephen Pogue, Pastor of Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church (Mt. Vernon, NY).

The Christian Education Convocation began on Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup>. The theme was “Intergenerational Worship & Fellowship.” In keeping with its theme, there were activities for all age groups. Rev. Lawrence Alston, the Pastor at Saint Francis A.M.E. Zion Church (Port Chester, NY), was the preacher for the afternoon Worship Service.

As with most Annual Conferences, the closing Sunday Worship Service opened with a majestic and profoundly moving processional of clergy as the congregation joined the Conference Choir in singing “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name.” Rev. Dr. Brandon McLauchlin (St. Charles A.M.E. Zion, Sparkhill, NY) presided. Rev. Dr. Wallace Noble (St. Catherine A.M.E. Zion, New Rochelle, NY) led the Call to Worship. Presiding Elder Rev. Dr. A. Alfred Carson (NY District) read from Exodus 14. Bishop Crenshaw later remarked, “He [Carson] read it like he wrote it.” Presiding Elder Rev. Dr. Keith I. Harris (Long Island District) delivered the morning prayer.

Rev. Pogue introduced Bishop Crenshaw and recited many of his pastoral accomplishments from Alabama to New York. Rev. Pogue described the Bishop as “a visionary, with creativity, and a “sho nuff” preacher.” Rev. Pogue continued by saying, “And we are happy to have

him with us.”

Bishop Crenshaw began his address by thanking the New York Conference for the warm reception extended to him and his wife, “the morning star of my life.” He said, “It’s been a long road from Alabama.”

The Bishop’s sermon, entitled “A rock and a hard place,” was lifted from Exodus 14:13-14: “*Moses answered the people, ‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today, you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.’*”

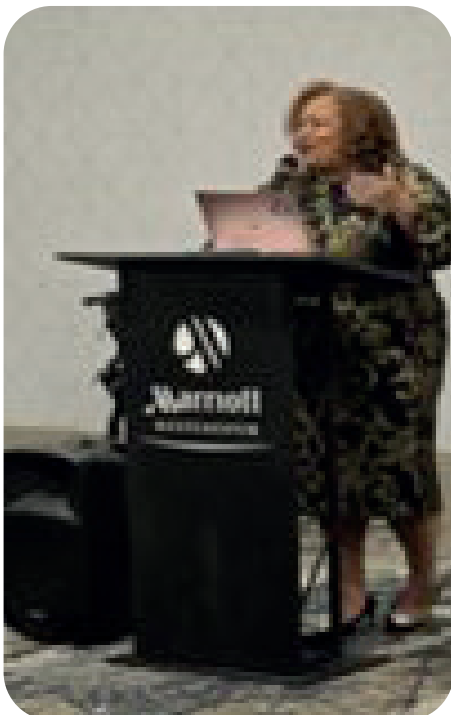
Bishop Crenshaw began by asking, “If anyone had ever been disappointed or mad at God?” He said, “It’s natural if you lose your job; the bills are mounting; that trifling Negro in your life has let you down again.” God told Moses and the Israelites, “not to fear and stand still.” Bishop Crenshaw told the congregation we must do what Moses and the Israelites did. “We must stand firm. Now is not the time for crying; it’s time for marching. Now is the time to stand firm and see the salvation of God. Without God, we can’t; without us, God won’t.” Bishop Crenshaw ended his sermon with a message of hope, “When you’re between a rock and a hard place, let God handle it. God is fighting for you.”

Before reading the pastoral appointments, Bishop Crenshaw said the Church cannot endorse political candidates, but “we can offer a space for them to speak.” He invited anyone running for an office in the upcoming 2025 mayoral race to the podium. Rev. David Aiken (Shaw A.M.E. Zion Church, Corona, NY), candidate for the New York City Council, District 21, addressed the congregation and asked for support.

Pastoral appointments were read. Bishop Crenshaw delivered the benediction ending the 204<sup>th</sup> Session of the New York Annual Conference.

Rev. Malcolm J. Byrd, Senior Pastor at Mother A.M.E. Zion Church, commended Bishop Crenshaw for his leadership. “A lot of important business was conducted efficiently and with due diligence.”

Kudos to the Conference and Church Choirs – “They brought it!”





# Good Friday Service

By Sibyl Caldwell

On Friday, April 19, 2025, the Liberty Hill A.M.E. Zion Church hosted the Tuskegee District Annual Good Friday Service. The Presiding Prelate for the Alabama Conference is Bishop Dwayne A. Walker, and the Presiding Elder for the Tuskegee District is Rev. Dr Larry Robinson, Sr.

The service was spiritually uplifting with a combination of children, youth, and adults. Service began with Praise and



Worship from New Zion A.M.E. Zion Church, Rev. Gwendolyn Tellis-Smith is the pastor. We were welcomed graciously by Liberty Hill, the host church. We're favored with several praise dances by the Solomon Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church praise team, where Rev. E. O. Major is the pastor. The praise dance team was very awe-inspiring in their dances.

The presenters varied from Lay, Exhorters, Ministers' wives, as well as Ministers. Each presentation was well delivered and awesome, with great depth given to their assignments. We had a wonderful time in Zion. Every year, the Good Friday Service exceeds the previous, getting better and better. We are in expectation for the year 2026!

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# Little Rock's First Lady Receives Doctoral Degree

By G. Joyner Johnson

In a ceremony steeped in tradition at Boise State University, the esteemed ordained elder and first lady of Little Rock A.M.E. Zion Church, Rev. Paula Bryant Blue, was conferred with an Ed. D. This not only marks a significant milestone in her illustrious career but also stands as a testament to her unwavering dedication to God, family, education, and community.

Having received her Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics with a Physics minor from Fayetteville State University, (NC), a Master's in Instruction and Curriculum Leadership from the University of Memphis and a Master's in Theology from Southern Nazarene University, Dr. Blue received the call to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ after having enrolled in graduate school. She had previously studied the Bible, writing detailed notes which turned into sermons. She preached her trial sermon in 2011 on her birthday.

When asked how she managed to achieve this goal while her husband, Dr. Derrill A. Blue served as a Methodist pastor, being the mother of two elementary school-age children, and following her career path as the Chief Operating Officer and Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, Dr. Blue states that she tries to be intentional in planning by "putting every single thing on my calendar." When unexpected events happen, she "slows down, takes her time, and prays for clarity of thought."



Her dissertation was titled "Exploring Communication, Connection, and Culture during Technology Implementation: An Autoethnography." Having always been intrigued by technology, having trained and supported higher education faculty on the effective use of technology for teaching and learning, Dr. Blue believes that advances in technology will make learning more accessible and exciting for students, making their classroom experience more successful.

The use of technology was catapulted into our churches during the pandemic. It was both daunting and frustrating when it did not work as expected. However, Dr. Blue wants us to be reminded that "technology is just a tool to be used to achieve something that is important to us," and we must not forget why we use it. When it does not work, stay focused on the goal and reach out for support. This will result in a "successful, positive, impactful experience with the integration of technology for ministry or anything else."

Rev. Dr. Paula Blue's journey is one of faith, perseverance, and the transformative power of education. Her achievements serve as an inspiration to many, illustrating that the pursuit of knowledge and the practice of faith are not mutually exclusive but are interconnected. Moving forward, she remains a guiding light, illuminating the path for others to follow with the integration of devotion to God and scholarship.



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Rev. Dr. Dominique A. Robinson  
Guest Preacher & Presenter



Rev. Keith I. Harris  
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# CELEBRATING THE 4TH OF JULY

By Debra Chappelle-Polk, Zion Spotlight Editor

**July 2025 (Harlem, NY) ...** On the Fourth of July, millions of Americans will enjoy grilled burgers, hot dogs, corn-on-the-cob, and apple pie at backyard cookouts. Later in the evening, celebratory fireworks will light up the skies across the nation. America is commemorating the day the Declaration of Independence was signed. The British boot had finally been taken off the necks of the American colonists. They were celebrating freedom from British rule, tyranny, and oppression.

## WHAT TO THE SLAVE...

On July 5, 1852, Frederick Douglass delivered his Independence Day address before the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society in Rochester, New York. In what was to become one of his most famous speeches, Douglass asked the assembly, **"What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?"** He lamented that Independence Day wasn't a day of celebration for enslaved people. The major theme of his speech was how America was not living up to its proclaimed beliefs. Douglass noted "how Americans are proud of their country and their religion and how they rejoice in the name of freedom and liberty, and yet, they do not offer those things to millions of their country's residents."

Frederick Douglass was born into slavery in Maryland on February 18, 1818, and suffered all the indignities of an enslaved person before escaping in 1838. His speeches were a testament to the evils of slavery and the redemptive power of freedom. The Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery Face-to-Face Blog states, "Douglass became a powerful witness for abolitionism, speaking, writing, and organizing on behalf of the movement. Douglass's charisma derived from his ability to present himself as the author of his own destiny at a time when white America could barely conceive of the black man as a thinking and feeling human being."

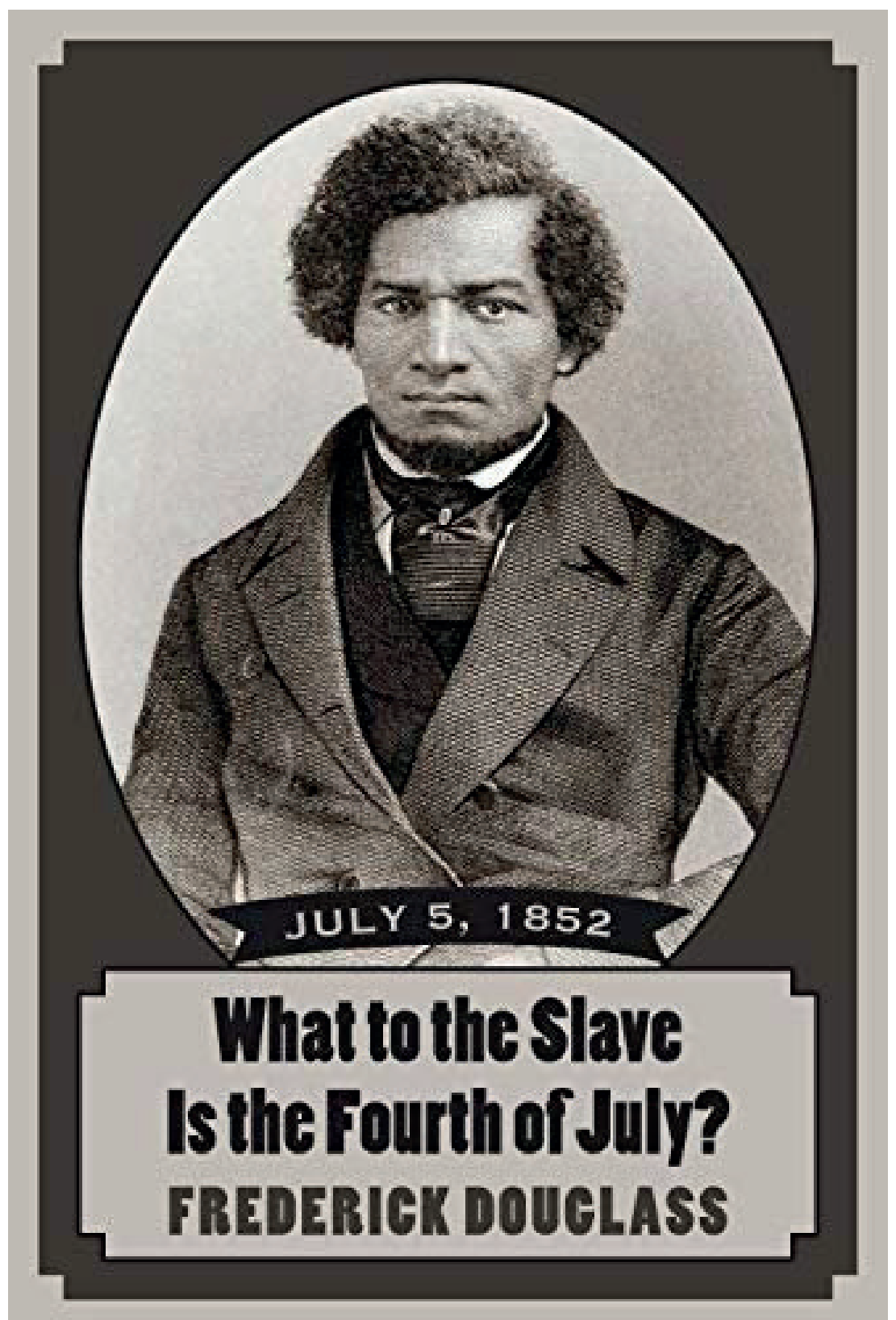
**Right is of no Sex—Truth is of no Color—God is the Father of us all, and all we are Brethren.**

In 1847, Frederick Douglass and abolitionist Martin Delany founded *The North Star*, a nineteenth-century anti-slavery newspaper. First published on December 3, 1847, using funds Douglass earned during a speaking tour in Great Britain and Ireland, *The North Star* soon developed into one of the most influential African American antislavery publications of the pre-Civil War era. The name of the newspaper paid homage to the fact that escaping slaves used the North Star in the night sky to guide them to freedom. It was published in Rochester, New York, a city known for its opposition to slavery. The motto of the newspaper was, "Right is of no sex—Truth is of no color—God is the Father of us all, and we are brethren."

While the institution of slavery has "legally" been abolished and the physical chains have been removed, one might ask the same question in 2025 that Frederick Douglass asked in 1852: "What, to the American

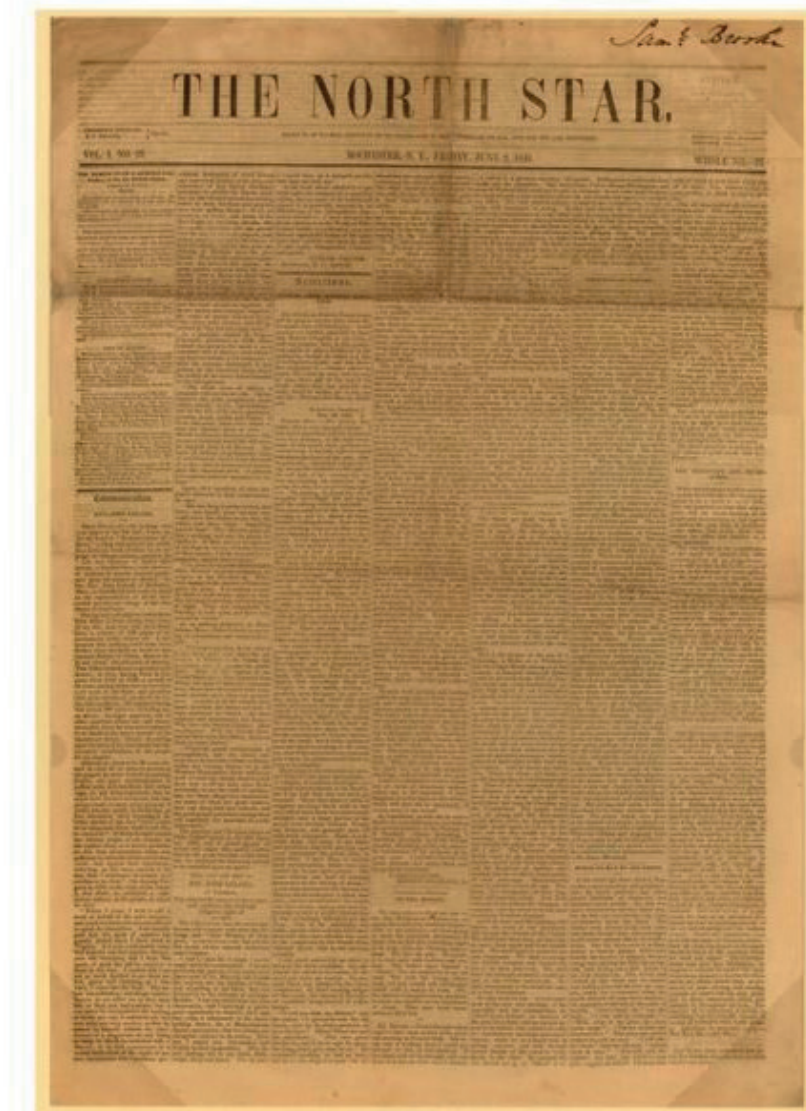
slave, is your 4th of July?" Black and Brown people (and other marginalized populations) are still being oppressed and subjected to second-class citizenship status. Sadly, there is a large segment of the population that *still* cannot "conceive of the black man as a thinking and feeling human being." The Civil Rights Movement aimed to abolish legalized racial segregation, discrimination, and disenfranchisement in the United States, particularly for African Americans. The movement achieved many of its legislative goals in the 1960s, during which it secured new protections in federal law for the civil rights of all Americans.

The struggle, however, continues. Project 2025, the brainchild of The Heritage Foundation, \* has had a major influence on the present administration and is largely responsible for the culture war that has been dividing the country. Project 2025 calls for, *inter alia*, abolishing the teaching of critical race theory, gender ideology in public schools, and "deleting" terms such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), gender equity, and reproductive health from every federal rule, agency reg-





# “Right is of no Sex – Truth is of no Color – God is the father of us all, and we are all Brethren”



ulation, contract, grant, and piece of legislation that exists. Many of Project 2025’s policies now serve as a guideline for corporate America, especially concerning hiring practices.

Adding insult to injury, CBS News recently reported that U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth is looking into changing the names of naval ships named after prominent civil rights leaders and icons, including Thurgood Marshall, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Harriet Tubman, Cesar Chavez, and Medgar Evers.

The Fourth of July is a reminder that the freedom America won by the signing of the Declaration of Independence did not extend to the enslaved population. It is a reminder that the forefathers of this country did not offer, as Douglass said in his 1852 speech, “freedom and liberty” to the millions of enslaved people in the country. We know, however, that our Heavenly Father watches over us and continues to provide. We have made progress, but we still have a long way to go. God made us strong, resilient, and resourceful. To use the lyrics from James Cleveland’s song, *I Don’t Feel No Ways Tired*, “I don’t believe He brought me this far to leave me.”

So, let’s enjoy the cookouts with family and friends on the 4<sup>th</sup>. FYI – Before the tariffs kick in, savvy consumers can save on everything

from home appliances to summer clothing to automobiles during Fourth of July door-busting sales.

**Side Note:** Read Frederick Douglass’ 1852 speech in its entirety.

**Historical Note:** By remarkable coincidence, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, the only two signatories of the Declaration of Independence later to serve as presidents of the United States, both died on the same day: July 4, 1826, which was the 50th anniversary of the Declaration.

**\*The Heritage Foundation, founded in 1973 by Joseph Coors (Coors Brewery), is an American conservative think tank based in Washington, D.C. The foundation took a leading role in the conservative movement during the presidency of Ronald Reagan, whose policies were informed by Heritage’s policy study, “Mandate for Leadership.” Heritage has since continued to influence U.S. public policymaking significantly and is considered one of the most influential conservative research organizations in the United States.**

**Reference Sources:** Google, Wikipedia, Britannica, Smithsonian National Gallery Portrait of Frederick Douglass; “What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?”



# African Methodist Episcopal Zion Churches Selected for 2025 Equipping the Local Church Grants

By Barby Bowser

The Foundation for Evangelism has chosen 53\* churches and organizations to receive an Equipping the Local Church grant. Of those selected for the 2025 grant cycle, four are African Methodist Episcopal Zion

*The* FOUNDATION *for*  
EVANGELISM



**Restoration A.M.E. Zion Church in Baltimore, Maryland**



Churches:

Rev. Dr. Heather Lear, Vice President for Grant Administration shared, "This year, our Equipping the Local Church grants will be received across 25 states and 8 Wesleyan-tradition\*\* denominations. In four years, we've awarded over 1 million dollars to help small and medium churches launch evangelism experiments."

The selected proposals reflect an array of initiatives, each uniquely tailored to a holistic vision for evangelism that invites people to engage in a transformative relationship with Jesus Christ and addresses specific community needs. These applicants aim to foster sustainable change that enriches individuals, congregations, and local communities by providing practical solutions to physical needs while offering Christian guidance and belonging.

The Equipping the Local Church Grant builds upon The Foundation for Evangelism's 76-year history as a catalyst to equip disciples to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. The goal of the grant is to empower

pastors, laity, and churches with under 250 participants to dream, take risks, and partner with God in the transformation of lives and communities.

A total of \$375,000 will be distributed through \$5,000 and \$10,000 micro-grants to small and medium sized Wesleyan-tradition churches and church-based organizations that launch an experiment or initiative to share the Gospel, tell their faith stories, and invite others into a relationship with Jesus.

We congratulate the 2025 recipients of the Equipping the Local Church Grant and can't wait to share stories from their initiatives.





### Redeemer's A.M.E. Zion Church in Plainville, Connecticut

#### *About The Foundation for Evangelism:*

The Foundation for Evangelism is a globally recognized Wesleyan-tradition grant-making organization chartered in 1949 to “diffuse the blessing of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Today, we carry out that vision by providing grants as the catalyst to equip disciples to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Our approach empowers teams of pastors and laity working together to spark a movement inviting all

people to join the Christian journey. Our grant-making is focused in three specific areas:

*Raising Up Gospel Leaders*  
*Engaging the Ministry of the Laity*  
*Equipping the Local Church*

To learn more visit [www.FoundationForEvangelism.org](http://www.FoundationForEvangelism.org)



### Galilee A.M.E. Zion Church in Morven, North Carolina



### Moore's Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church in Morrilton, Arkansas





Rev. Roderick J. Josey  
Education Editor  
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# Clinton College Celebrates the Class of 2025 with Uplifting Commencement Ceremony

By Rev. Roderick J. Josey,  
Education Editor

Rock Hill, SC — On Friday, May 2, 2025, Clinton College proudly honored its graduating Class of 2025 during a spirited commencement ceremony held at the Kenneth Monroe Transformation Center. The event marked a significant milestone for the institution, celebrating the achievements of its students and the college's enduring commitment to academic excellence and community uplift.

The ceremony commenced at 3:00 PM, drawing faculty, staff, family, and friends together to celebrate the graduates' accomplishments. The atmosphere was filled with joy and anticipation as attendees gathered to witness the culmination of years of hard work and dedication.

A highlight of the afternoon was the commencement



address delivered by renowned comedian and radio personality Rickey Smiley. Known for his engaging storytelling and heartfelt messages, Smiley inspired graduates with reflections on perseverance, faith, and the importance of giving back to one's community. His words resonated deeply, leaving a lasting impression on all in attendance.

The ceremony also featured the conferral of degrees across various disciplines, including Biology, Business Administration, Cybersecurity, Healthcare Administration, Music (Voice), Nursing, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Religious Studies. These programs reflect Clinton College's dedication to providing diverse and comprehensive educational opportunities that prepare students for meaningful careers and service.

In keeping with tradition, the commencement was preceded by a Baccalaureate Service on Thursday, May 1, 2025, offering a moment of



spiritual reflection and gratitude for the graduating class.

As the ceremony concluded, graduates turned their tassels and embraced the next chapter of their lives, carrying forward the values and education instilled by Clinton College. The institution extends its heartfelt congratulations to the Class of 2025 and looks forward to the positive impact they will make in their communities and beyond.

For those who wish to experience the commencement ceremony, a recording is available on Clinton College's official YouTube channel.



# Dr. Jamal Bryant Inspires Clinton College Graduates at 2025 Baccalaureate Service

By Rev. Roderick J. Josey, Education Editor

**ROCK HILL, SC** — On May 1, 2025, Clinton College hosted its annual Baccalaureate Service at the Kenneth Monroe Transformation Center, marking a meaningful milestone for the graduating class. The highlight of the event was a stirring keynote address by Dr. Jamal Harrison Bryant, senior pastor of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Georgia. Known for his dynamic preaching and advocacy for social justice, Dr. Bryant delivered a powerful message that stirred both hearts and minds.



In his address, Dr. Bryant emphasized the importance of courage and making steady progress. He urged graduates to embrace their unique paths, reminding them that true success is often born through trials, faith, and perseverance. Drawing from both scripture and current-day challenges, Dr. Bryant encouraged students to remain rooted in their values and to transform



obstacles into opportunities for growth.

The Baccalaureate Service was part of Clinton College's broader Commencement Weekend festivities, which also featured popular comedian and radio host Rickey Smiley. The blend of spiritual empowerment and celebratory energy captured the essence of Clinton College's mission to cultivate both academic excellence and personal integrity.



Dr. Bryant's message left a lasting impression on the graduating class, offering motivation and clarity as they prepare to step into their next chapter. His words underscored the profound impact that resilience, purpose, and community can have in shaping the future.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/gXRzogedspM?si=OTMA-P7I-R0p8gbWn>



# Livingstone College Celebrates the Class of 2025 in a Spirit-Filled Commencement Ceremony

By Rev. Roderick J. Josey, Education Editor  
Photos By Livingstone College

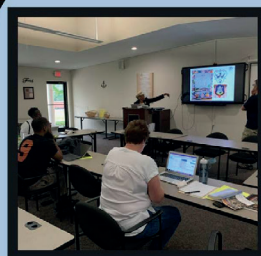
SALISBURY, N.C. — Under clear skies and with hearts full of pride, Livingstone College held its 143rd Commencement Ceremony on Saturday, May 3, 2025, at the historic Varick Auditorium. The event marked a significant milestone for the institution and its graduates, reflecting the college's enduring commitment to academic excellence and spiritual growth.

This year's ceremony honored the accomplishments of 71 graduates, including five associate's degrees, 60 bachelor's degrees, and six master's degrees. Among the bachelor's degree recipients, 10 students graduated summa cum laude (GPA 3.7–4.0), three magna cum laude (GPA 3.5–3.69), and 10 cum laude (GPA 3.5–3.49), highlighting the academic rigor and dedication of the Class of 2025.

Rev. Dr. Frederick Haynes, a renowned social justice leader and former CEO of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, delivered



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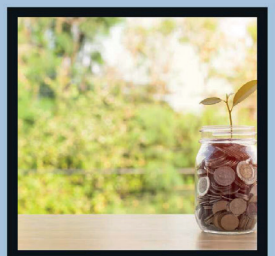
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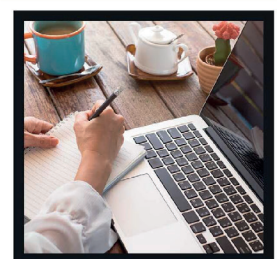
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the keynote address. Drawing from his extensive experience as the pastor of Friendship-West Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, Dr. Haynes encouraged graduates to pursue justice and equity in their future endeavors. His message resonated deeply with attendees, emphasizing the importance of faith, resilience, and community engagement.

In recognition of their contributions to faith and service, Livingstone College awarded honorary doctorate degrees to three esteemed individ-

uals: Rev. Dr. Frederick D. Haynes, Rev. Julian Charles Pridgen, and Rev. Dr. Steven W. Pogue. Rev. Pridgen, a United States Marine Corps veteran and pastor of Saint Mark A.M.E. Zion Church in Durham, North Carolina, and Rev. Dr. Pogue, Senior Pastor of Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church in Mount Vernon, New York, were honored for their unwavering commitment to ministry and community leadership.

Livingstone College, founded in 1879 and affiliated with the Afri-

can Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, continues to uphold its mission of providing a holistic education rooted in Christian values. The 2025 Commencement Ceremony not only celebrated the academic achievements of its graduates but also reaffirmed the college's dedication to nurturing leaders who will make meaningful contributions to society.

As the graduates embark on their next chapters, they carry the lessons, experiences, and spiritual grounding fostered at Livingstone College. The ceremony served as a testament to the enduring impact of faith-based education and the transformative power of community.





# Livingstone College Women Impacted by National Conference

By Star of Zion News

Two Livingstone College students were selected to attend the 2025 National Collegiate Conference of Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL) at the University of Maryland at College Park, May 28-30, 2025. Freshman Biology majors Nancy Oppong of Ghana and TyAnna Robinson of Chicago earned scholarships from AAUW Salisbury, AAUW North Carolina, and Strada Education Foundation to engage in an event framed in uniting college women from across the nation for a transformative experience in leadership development, networking, and inspiration.

Under the new leadership of NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, the conference welcomed college students who identify as womxn or outside the gender binary, in an effort to provide a welcoming and empowering space. Through engaging workshops and hands-on activities, NCCWSL aims to challenge attendees to make meaningful impacts on their campuses and communities long after the conference ends.

“I did not anticipate I’d meet so many like-minded women in one space. The speakers were amazing. The content was penetrating. The people had high energy, drive, and purpose. This is an experience I will never forget,” said TyAnna Robinson.

The students were chaperoned by AAUW Salisbury Branch President Da’Tarvia Parrish, who also serves as faculty at Livingstone College and Director of the Honors Program. This year, Dr. Parrish was among the conference workshop presenters, who was highly regarded for her presentation, *From Prison Bars to PhD: Challenging and Changing the Carceral Space*.

Nancy Oppong stated, “Dr. P is an all-star on our campus at Livingstone, and although I am familiar with her, I was in awe when I saw how the other young women in her session gravitated towards her, requesting photos and contact information. This did not happen in the

other sessions. It was emotionally thrilling.”

For 40 years, NCCWSL has motivated thousands of young women to pursue their goals. This year’s conference hosted over 500 women from hundreds of colleges and universities, inspiring them to fuel their passions, find their purpose, and drive meaningful change through their NCCWSL experience. To learn more about NCCWSL, visit <https://www.naspa.org/events/nccwsl>





# Let's Talk About It: The Complex Case of Karmelo Anthony

By Rev. Roderick J. Josey, Education Editor

In the heart of Frisco, Texas, a high school senior named Karmelo Anthony found himself at the center of a tragic and complex incident that has sparked widespread discussion about youth, justice, and education.



moved to North Texas with his family in search of better opportunities. At Centennial, Anthony excelled academically, maintaining a 3.7 GPA, and was the captain of both the football and track teams. He also held two part-time jobs and was actively preparing for college.

On April 2, 2025, during a University Interscholastic League track meet at Kuykendall Stadium, an altercation occurred between Anthony and Austin Metcalf, a 17-year-old student from Memorial High School. Witnesses reported that Anthony was sitting in the Memorial High School team's tent when Metcalf asked him to leave. An argument ensued, during which Anthony allegedly stabbed Metcalf once in the chest. Metcalf was transported to a hospital but was pronounced dead shortly after arrival.

Anthony was arrested at the scene and charged with first-degree murder. He claimed self-defense, stating that Metcalf initiated



physical contact.

Initially held on a \$1 million bond, Anthony's bail was later reduced to \$250,000, and he was placed under house arrest with electronic monitoring. Despite missing over a month of school, Anthony was allowed to graduate based on his academic performance and completion of graduation requirements. However, **he was barred from participating in graduation ceremonies due to district policies concerning students involved in serious criminal offenses.**



Karmelo Anthony, 17 at the time of the incident, was a standout student at Centennial High School. Born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, he

The decision to allow Anthony to graduate sparked debate within the community. The Next Generation Action Network supported the decision, emphasizing the importance of adhering to educational policies and recognizing academic achievements.

The incident has led to a broader conversation about school safety, student behavior, and the role of educational institutions in addressing such tragedies. Both families have faced public scrutiny and have called for privacy and understanding as the legal process unfolds.

As the community grapples with the aftermath of this incident, it serves as a poignant reminder of the complexities surrounding youth behavior, justice, and education. It underscores the need for comprehensive discussions and policies that address the multifaceted challenges faced by students today.





# STAY LIT!

Miss Samia Richardson, President  
Simon Temple AME Zion Church  
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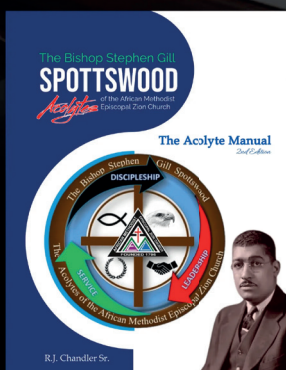
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# Black Viewers Turning to Streaming For their TV Viewing



By R. Thomas Umstead, Entertainment and Arts Editor

Black viewers are subscribing to cable, satellite, and streaming services at higher percentages than the general population, with streaming services dominating overall subscription trends, according to a recent report from Horowitz Research.

Nearly half (46%) of Black consumers subscribe to a traditional cable or satellite service, compared to 44% of the total population, according to the FOCUS Black Volume 1: Subscriptions 2025 Horowitz Research survey in February of 587 Black consumers 18+ who are decision makers about subscription services in their home.

At the same time, 86% of Black consumers subscribe to or have access to a subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) streaming service like Netflix, Peacock, or Max, compared to 81% of the general population, according to the survey.

Streaming services overall have become the leading platform of choice for Black viewers, with 47% of Black consumers relying on streaming services as their only source for TV viewing, up from just 5% a decade ago, according to the survey. Another 5% of consumers subscribe only to a virtual multichannel video programming distribution service such as Hulu TV and YouTube TV.

Adriana Waterston, Horowitz Executive Vice President of Insights and Strategy Lead, said services that offer diverse content are better positioned to attract more subscribers in a crowded TV marketplace.

“A commitment to diversity and inclusion in content offerings underscores why focusing on the needs and wants of Black, Latinx, and other diverse audiences remains a business imperative for companies across any industry that wants to grow in today’s marketplace,” she said. “Rather than shy away from these kinds of investments in today’s socio-political environment, companies should really be leaning in.”

Black viewers prefer Netflix more than any other streaming service, with 63% subscribing to or having access to the streaming service compared to 60% for general market viewers, according to the survey. Prime Video finished second with 60% of Black consumers subscribing to or accessing the service, and Disney+ was third with 35%, according to the report.

Waterston said that Netflix’s programming lineup strongly resonates with Black audiences seeking authentic representation and storytelling. In 2025 alone, Netflix has released or announced several high-profile and popular shows featuring Black lead characters, including “The Residence” and the upcoming drama “R&B,” a modern-day retelling of the Biblical love story of Ruth and Boaz.

“Netflix has made substantial investments in content by and for Black audiences, as well as global, international content that showcases a wide diversity of cultures, communities, and perspectives,” she said. “This kind of content is in strong demand among consumers overall, and especially among Black viewers.”





Mr. Daman De Leon  
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# June is Alzheimer's Disease and Brain Health Awareness Month

By Mary S. Crenshaw, Episcopal Area Health Coordinator for the Alabama Florida Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Zion Church

Memory Sunday focuses on Alzheimer's Disease and African Americans. It mobilizes congregations to provide education and resource materials on Alzheimer's prevention, treatment, research, and caregiver support. Memory Sunday is an annual campaign on the second Sunday in June.

The Brain Health Center for African Americans initiated Memory Sunday, a program of Balm In Gilead, INC. These flyers are resources that can be used to empower communities in the fight against Alzheimer's Disease. This year's theme, "Empowering Minds by Advancing" highlights the urgent need to close health disparities that support cognitive well-being in our families.



For further information, visit [balmingilead.org/memorysunday/#memorysunday](http://balmingilead.org/memorysunday/#memorysunday).

**The Symptoms of Alzheimer's**

**KNOW THE SIGNS**

Recognizing the early signs of Alzheimer's and dementia is important. Early detection can help find the best care options and maintain independence longer.

<b>MEMORY</b> Memory loss that disrupts daily life	<b>PLANNING</b> Trouble problem solving and planning and doing familiar tasks like tracking monthly bills
<b>DAILY TASKS</b> Difficulty completing familiar everyday tasks at home, work, or for fun.	<b>TIME</b> Confusion with time or place; Losing track of dates or seasons
<b>VISION</b> Difficulty seeing, reading, or avoiding obstacles, trouble coping in bright and/or low light.	<b>LANGUAGE</b> Trouble following conversations or finding the word; calling things the wrong name
<b>SOCIAL</b> Withdrawal from social and work activities	<b>MOOD</b> Beyond confused, depressed, or anxious, easily upset or lashing out at others

**BRAIN HEALTH CENTER FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS**  
A Program of Balm In Gilead



**"A Salute to Caregivers" Support List**

Caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease can be challenging and has the capacity to cause stress for caregivers. Whether it is a family member, church member, neighbor, friend, co-worker or a stranger you noticed caring for a person with Alzheimer's disease, take the time to see how you can help or provide stress relief.

 <b>Family &amp; Food</b> Have groceries or prepared meals delivered for the caregiver's family to enjoy	 <b>Uplift &amp; Encourage</b> Create a care package and send a card or gift of encouragement to uplift a caregiver's spirits	 <b>Show Appreciation</b> Gift a monthly subscription to a movie streaming service like Netflix or a Roku stick for your caregiver to enjoy
 <b>A Day Off</b> Provide a day of respite to allow the caregiver to go out for a day, knowing their loved one is in good hands	 <b>A Spa Day</b> Give the caregiver a gift card to a local spa or wellness center for a day of pampering and relaxation	 <b>Sounds of Music</b> Gift the caregiver and their loved one with a music player or purchase a music streaming service

[balmingilead.org/memorysunday](http://balmingilead.org/memorysunday) | #memorysunday





Dr. Dana Stilley  
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# Everyone Has a Side Hustle; Should You?



By Dana G. Stilley, Financial Editor

As we continue to navigate the current economic climate and the financial uncertainty that comes with it, some may wonder if it would be beneficial to increase their income by getting a side hustle. A side hustle is an additional job or business outside of one's main or primary job. It might be something related to a passion, or another type of gig that works because it fits the parameters of your life and meets your needs. In some cases, a side hustle can serve to relieve stress and anxiety associated with having a low income.

Recent data indicates that more than 50% of American people are living paycheck to paycheck. The loss of a single payday can result in the inability to pay bills or afford necessities. Those living paycheck to paycheck have great difficulty saving for the future or building an emergency fund. In addition to alleviating worry about the affordability of basic needs, a side hustle can help you build a nest egg, provide job security, and may help you achieve financial goals quicker, such

as paying off credit card debt, investing for retirement, or purchasing a home or car.

One concern that is often raised by those considering a side hustle is whether there is time to commit to something else. After 40 hours of work, time spent cooking and taking care of other household chores, and attending to the additional needs of your children and family, it often feels like there is not enough time left. If that is you, consider the time you spend watching television or scrolling on social media. Is it possible to carve out just an hour or two a day or every 2 days to devote to a side hustle?

One in two Americans (51%) have worked a side hustle in the past year. For Gen Zers the rate is 72%. If you decide to take the leap and get a side hustle, be sure to consider your skill set and interests. Using knowledge and experience that you already possess will make this endeavor a little easier.





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



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# OMEGA PSI PHI PREPS FOR ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT



Alexis Hutchinson  
Sports Editor  
Sports@StarofZion.org

By Richard L. Williams

*WINSTON-SALEM, NC* — The Psi Phi chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. is inviting everyone to sign up for the Psi Phi Chapter 8<sup>th</sup> Annual College Scholarship Golf Tournament. The tournament will be held August 9 at the Reynolds Park Golf Course, 2391 Reynolds Park Road in Winston-Salem.

“Whether you’re a seasoned pro or a novice golfer, this event is perfect for everyone,” said tournament co-chair Rodney Taylor. “It’s an opportunity to make a difference in the community while enjoying a round of golf with friends.”

The two-person, captain-choice format has a shotgun start at 8 a.m. Teams can sign up to play on a first-come, first-served basis for \$160. The fee for an individual player is \$80. Proceeds from the golf tournament assist Psi Phi chapter in providing scholarships to deserving students in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools as well as other community service initiatives in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County.

Psi Phi Basileus Richard Watkins is excited about the upcoming tournament and plans to participate. “A day on the greens is always a good day,” Watkins said. “We invite the community to get ready to tee off for a good cause and help support scholarships for deserving high school students.”

Psi Phi chapter not only talks the talk – it also walks the walk when it comes to supporting educational initiatives in the community. Just recently, the chapter provided \$11,000 in scholarships to 11 students from six high schools in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. In addition, the chapter donated \$2,000 to Cook Literacy Model School – formerly Cook Elementary School – to enhance the school’s literacy

initiatives.

The chapter is intentional about its support of educational initiatives. Since the founding of Omega Psi Phi 114 years ago, the fraternity has stood on the pillars of its founding principles of manhood, scholarship, perseverance and uplift.

Teams and players must sign up by June 30 to participate in this year’s tournament. Sponsorship opportunities are available. All queries should be directed to Taylor at (336) 705-0332 or co-chair Rodney Hatton at (336) 830-4267.





# Redemption, Psychology, and the Power of Context

By Ronald A. Nathan, World Politics Editor

Photo By © Getty Images

Our understanding of wellness—whether emotional, mental, or spiritual—is never formed in isolation. It is deeply shaped by the context we live in. For Black communities and Black Christians in particular, wellness must be viewed not only through individual experiences but also through the lens of cultural history, spiritual traditions, and the call for redemption.

sion, social and economic hardship: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest... for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Such scripture invites us to a deeper, more liberating view of healing—one rooted not only in spiritual truth but also in social reality. It is this blend of divine redemption and contextual understanding that must guide our approach to psychological wellness.

Today, calls to develop African-centred psychology are rising. Decolonising psychology means challenging Eurocentric theories and lifting



Psychology, as a discipline, studies human thought, behaviour, and emotion. Traditionally, it is divided into clinical, cognitive, behavioural, and biopsychology. However, these branches have often been shaped by Western worldviews, emerging from German structuralism, French functionalism, and Austrian behaviourism. These schools of thought evolved alongside [Trans-Atlantic enslavement](#), colonialism, patriarchy, and industrialisation, emphasising European dominance, individualism, and rationalism while often excluding the cultural and communal values vital to African and African-descended peoples.

In contrast, African spiritual traditions, like those found in ancient Egypt (Kemet), recognized wellness as holistic. The [priest-physician Imhotep](#) (circa 2667 BCE) treated illness by addressing the spiritual, emotional, and physical realms. This echoes the redemptive words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30, spoken during a time of Roman oppres-

cultural knowledge that reflects the lived experiences of people of African descent. It is a movement toward freedom—freedom from mental constructs that do not serve us.

This is especially relevant during a second [Trump](#) presidency, where we would have to deepen the need for **contextual, spiritual, and collective responses** to wellbeing in Black communities. Resilience wouldn't just be survival—it would be sacred, strategic, and grounded in faith.

In the words of [Marcus Garvey](#), “None but ourselves can free the mind.” True wellness is more than self-help—it is soul restoration, justice, and liberation. And in Christ, it is also redemption: a holistic return to wholeness in a broken world.





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