

Fathers of Freedom:  
Honoring Legacy.  
Love & Liberation  
on Juneteenth

Pg  
4

T.D. Jakes  
Extends  
Footprint.  
Impact With  
Media Projects

Pg  
18

# THE STAR OF ZION

JUNE 2025 | VOL 149 NO. 6 | STAROFZION.ORG | THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

## *Celebrating* FATHER'S DAY



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

# JUNETEENTH

FREEDOM DAY



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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IN THIS ISSUE

LOOK INSIDE

PAGES

3-10

ZION SPOTLIGHT

11

ACOLYTES

12-17

EDUCATION

17-19

ENTERTAINMENT & THE ARTS

20-22

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

23

FINANCIAL FREEDOM

24-27

WORLD POLITICS

# CELEBRATING JUNE!

By Debra Chappelle-Polk, Zion Spotlight Editor

June 2025, New York, NY... June holds deep biblical significance, symbolizing growth, love, and community connections. The month encourages exploration of personal faith and relationships, aligning with the themes found in the Bible. It also features several biblical events, chief among them being Pentecost, 50 days after Easter, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles, empowering them for ministry. This year, Pentecost Sunday falls on June 8<sup>th</sup>.



June is also the beginning of summer and signifies new beginnings, mirroring themes of growth and renewal found in scriptures like Isaiah 43:19. Couples like to marry in June, reflecting the biblical principles of love, commitment, and family unity, as highlighted in Ephesians 5:25-33.

Juneteenth and Father's Day are also celebrated during the third week in June. Juneteenth (short for "June Nineteenth") marks the day when General Order No. 3 was read aloud by Union Officer, Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger in Galveston, TX., informing Texans that all enslaved people in the state were free. Juneteenth became an official holiday in 2021. Civil Rights activists, religious leaders, and politicians across the country applauded the bill's signing.

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

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





Mrs. Debra Chappelle-Polk  
Zion Spotlight Editor  
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The physical chains of slavery have been removed, however, as Smithsonian Institution Secretary Lonnie Bunch observed, “emancipation is a process that is still unfolding—not simply a day or a moment of jubilee.” And the residual effects of slavery still exist. Our civil rights, voting rights, and women’s reproductive rights are being systematically stripped away. Discriminatory housing and hiring practices still exist. Affirmative Action has been struck down, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs are being dismantled.

President Lyndon B. Johnson issued a proclamation recognizing Father’s Day in 1966, and in 1972, President Richard Nixon signed legislation designating the third Sunday of June as Father’s Day. Father’s Day celebrates fatherhood. Black fatherhood, however, continues to be perceived negatively. “The truth is Black fathers have received a tainted reputation, especially in the media, brought to the forefront by the social inequities the Black community continues to face. So many good, honest, hard-working, loving Black dads do not receive the recognition and positive attention they rightfully deserve. So many are stereotyped as being absent fathers who do not care about raising their children and being a part of the family unit,” wrote Ahndrea L. Blue, Founder of Making a Difference Foundation, in a 2020 essay. “We want to help break the myths of the absentee father in Black communities.” She also listed the top five myths regarding Black fathers.

**Myth #1: Unmarried Black parents mean a child is fatherless:** Oftentimes, the statistics presented count single Black mothers and correlate that to absent fathers. In many cases, this is not true. Just because the parents are not married does not mean the father is not in the picture and is not interacting with his child. According to The Center for Disease & Prevention Control (CDC), “Most Black fathers live with their children. There are about 2.5 million who live with their children, and 1.7 million who don’t.”

**Myth #2: Black fathers are less involved with parental duties or raising their children.** Black dads who live with their children are, on average, actually more involved than their counterparts, according to a CDC study. In fact, according to a report by the National Center for Health Statistics, Black fathers are more involved with their younger children, feeding, bathing, dressing, reading to, and playing with them daily. For older children, Black fathers are also more likely to help with homework and talk to their children about their day.

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

**Myth #4: Many Black fathers do not provide for their children.** Black dads want to provide for their children, not only with their time, but also with financial means. However, for so many, the system is set up against



them. There is still an income gap for Black workers vs. their white counterparts. When Black men make lower incomes, this can affect their ability to support their children. If they miss child support payments, they risk many consequences that make it even harder to meet their obligations to their kids. Low pay, loss of a job, loss of their license due to lack of court-ordered payments, the system highlights the numerous inequities that still make it hard for Black fathers to be there for their children.

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

Anhdreda L. Blue started the Making a Difference Foundation in 2003. The Foundation works closely with Black communities and communities of color and sees so many amazing fathers and father figures. These fathers work hard every single day doing what needs to be done, oftentimes despite the challenges they face in today’s society. It is not unique but normal despite the lies and the derogatory myths that are being perpetuated. “This Father’s Day let’s break stereotypes and bust myths. Fatherhood does not have a skin color.”

“What it meant to be a newly freed Black man and a father in 1865 mirrors what it means to be a Black man and a father today: providing for and protecting your family, nurturing your children’s sense of self-worth and identity, defying stereotypes, resisting oppression, keeping the faith, and reckoning with the understanding, as Smithsonian Institution secretary Lonnie Bunch observed, that emancipation is ‘process that is still unfolding—not simply a day or a moment of jubilee.’” -- Johnathon Briggs, National Urban League.

**Reference Sources:** Google Search - Myths About Juneteenth, Madge Allen, April 1, 2021; Association for the Study of African American History (ASLAH); Bible Chronology.



# Fathers of Freedom: Honoring Legacy, Love & Liberation on Juneteenth

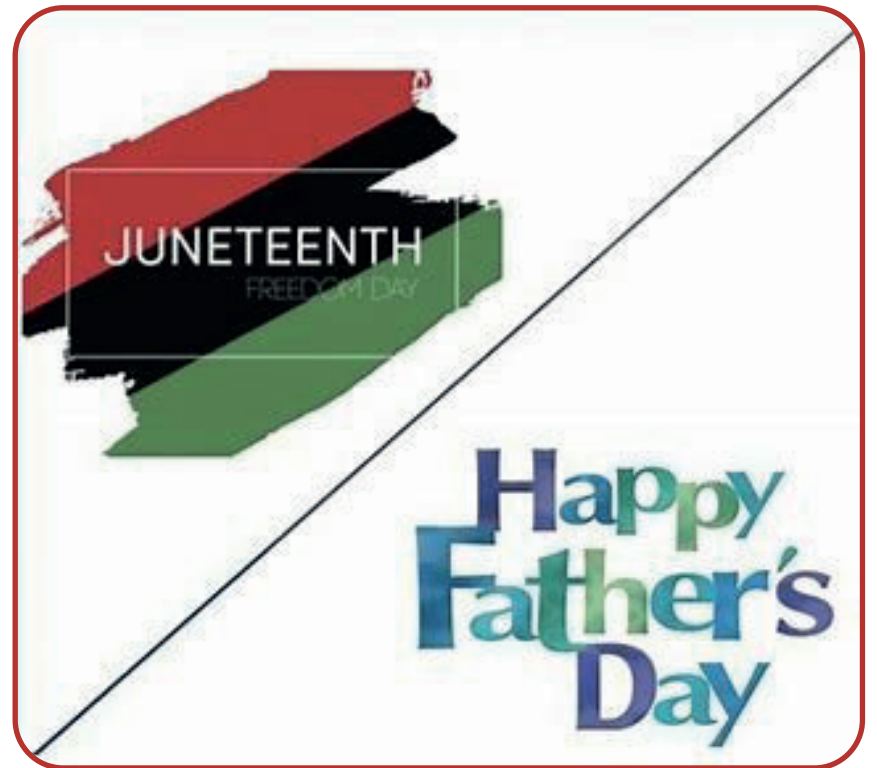
By Rev. Dr. Demetrius Lawrence Sr.

June 2025, New York, NY..., Juneteenth, which is celebrated every year on June 19<sup>th</sup>, marks a pivotal moment in American History – the day in 1865 when enslaved African Americans in Galveston, Texas, finally received word of their emancipation, over two years after the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed. It is a celebration of freedom, resilience, and the enduring pursuit of justice. Coinciding closely with Father's Day, Juneteenth offers a powerful opportunity to reflect not only on liberation but also on the legacy of fatherhood in the Black communities.

Historically, the institution of slavery systematically dismantled Black families, stripping fathers from their children and denying them the ability to lead, protect, and provide for their loved ones. The trauma of those centuries still echoes today, yet so does the triumph. In the face of systemic oppression, Black fathers have long served as pillars of strength, wisdom, and cultural pride, keepers of a legacy shaped by struggle, perseverance, and deep love.

**Juneteenth is not just a commemoration of the past – it is recognition of the journey and the people who carried the dream of freedom forward.** Among them are fathers who have fought, both quietly and boldly, to reclaim their rightful role in their families and communities. They are mentors, leaders, and storytellers, teaching younger generations the importance of identity, resilience, and purpose.

As we honor Juneteenth, we must also elevate the importance of fatherhood, not as a singular role, but as a cornerstone of strong, thriving communities. **This dual celebration invites us to acknowledge the progress made, the challenges that persist, and the critical need to support and empower fathers, particularly those from historically**



marginalized communities.

*Juneteenth and Father's Day together offer a profound reminder: Freedom is not only the absence of chains but the presence of opportunity, dignity, and legacy. Celebrating fathers on this day deepens the meaning of liberation, honoring not just a historical milestone but the lives and love that continue to shape our future.*

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As Black fathers, we must continue striving for liberation by leading our families with strength, love, faith, and purpose, breaking generational cycles, uplifting our communities, and ensuring our children inherit not only freedom but a legacy of dignity, pride, and resilience. Our pursuit is ongoing, rooted in faith, unity, and the unshakable belief that our presence and leadership are vital to lasting change.

Rev. Dr. Demetrius Lawrence Sr. is originally from Brooklyn, NY, and currently is the co-pastor at Mother Zion A.M.E. Zion Church in Harlem, where Rev. Dr. Malcolm Byrd is the Senior Pastor. He is an energetic pastor, teacher, and motivational speaker who conveys the word of God with remarkable insights. Rev. Lawrence has been preaching the word of God and touching countless lives for over 20 years since his divine calling. He was consecrated, ordained, and



licensed by his esteemed Senior Pastor, Apostle R.L. Jackson, in 1998. He previously served as the associate pastor at The Life Center Ministries in Brooklyn, NY. Rev. Lawrence is the founder of Kingdom Restoration Ministries.

As a sower goes forth to sow, Rev. Lawrence possesses an anointing that enables him to minister to those in need of healing of their mind, body, and soul. With such a significant calling, he makes time to visit the sick, reach out to family and friends, and dedicate time to studying God's word.

Pastor Lawrence's motto is simply based on "FAITH" – Express It, Expect It, Experience It.

## A DEVOUT SERVANT FOR THE LORD TURNS 90!

By La Shanda A. Ogletree

"Even to your old age I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made you, and I will bear; I will carry and will save." Isaiah 46:4. On June 2, 2025, Retired Rev. Henry L. Hall turns 90 years of age. Rev. Hall is currently retired but is still devoted to his Faith and Zion.

From conducting a funeral for the family's dog as a child to serving as Presiding Elder of the Lincolnton District, Rev. Hall was truly touched by the Lord to preach His word. Rev. Hall answered The Call at an early age. He preached his first sermon at Ebenezer A.M.E. Zion Church located in Montgomery, AL., with both parents, his family, friends, and a full sanctuary witnessing. It was said by those who attended that they witnessed God exuding from him and knew at that moment that he was chosen by God to preach his Word. He was Ordained a Deacon in 1960 by Bishop W.A. Stewart and was Ordained Elder in 1962 by Bishop F.S. Anderson.

Rev. Hall began his pastoral journey in the Central Alabama Conference, and within that conference, he pastored Clinton Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, located in Montgomery, Alabama, on the campus of Alabama State University, during that time. During his tenure in the Central Alabama Conference, and in addition to his duties as pastor of Clinton Chapel, he also served in a circuit where he pastored several smaller churches.

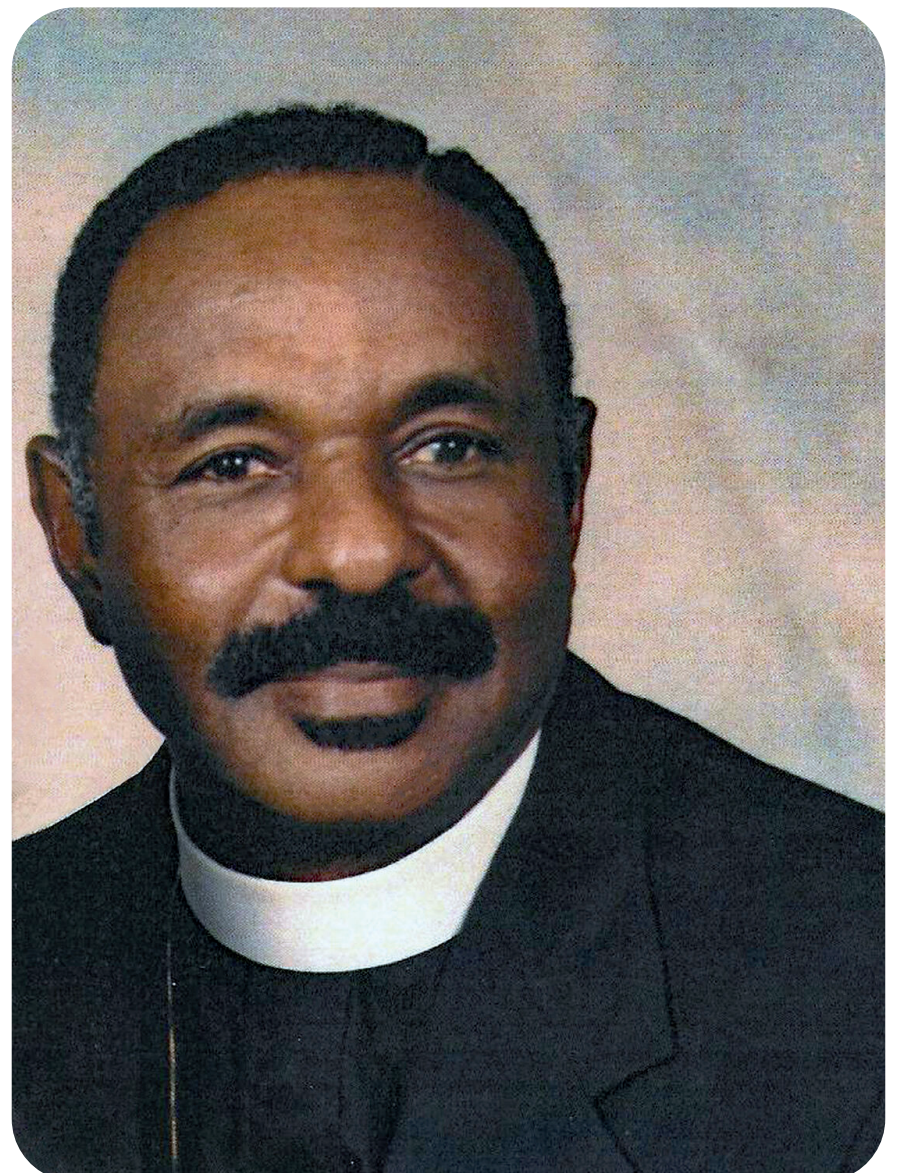
He was assigned to the Kentucky Conference and pastored Wesley Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church located in Greenville, KY. He was reassigned to the East Tennessee Virginia Conference. In this conference, he pastored First Church A.M.E. Zion Church in Bluefield, West Virginia, and Tynes Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church in Rocky Gap, VA.

He concluded his pastoral journey when he was assigned to the Western North Carolina Conference, where he pastored St. Stephens A.M.E. Zion Church and Neely's Grove A.M.E. Zion Church.

In June 1986, he was elevated to Presiding Elder of the Lincolnton. He served as Presiding Elder for twelve years, until 1998, and was responsible for 26 churches in his district. During his tenure as the Presiding Elder, he pastored Unity A.M.E. Zion and Rhynes Tabernacle A.M.E. Zion Church.

After stepping down from the role of Presiding Elder, Rev. Hall pastored Trinity A.M.E. Zion Church, Oak Grove A.M.E. Zion Church, Adams Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, and retired from Wesley Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church.

Rev. Hall is quoted as saying, "I am grateful and humbled that my life has given me the opportunity to serve the Lord and follow His calling. I have been on the battlefield now, serving Him, for over sixty-five years, and I must say that though there have been many highlights during these years, one true blessing has been to serve the various Conferences and Districts in Zion. I will cherish each and every year, hour, moment, and treasure each and every memory that I have of these enduring,



blessed times in my life."

He is a native of Montgomery, AL., and received his Christian foundation at Ebenezer A.M.E. Zion Church located in Montgomery, AL. He is a lifetime member of The A.M.E. Zion Church denomination. He is a husband of over six years (60) to Mrs. Pearl Hall and the father of two beautiful sons, Kevin Hall and Brett Hall. His other related studies include Kentucky Wesleyan College, Owensboro, KY, and Gaston College, Gastonia, NC. He also taught for seven years at West Virginia State Correctional.

It is truly a blessing that Rev. Hall has lived to witness his 90th birthday. But what is more amazing is that his life was claimed by God at an early age, and he dedicated his life to serving the Lord for 90 years! Happy Birthday Rev. H.L. Hall. Job Well Done!



# A Brief History of Astrology and the United States

By Dr. Anthony T. Browder and Rev. Dr. Sarah Fleming

The record shows that many of former President Ronald Reagan's activities, such as his election campaigns, his presidential swearing-in ceremonies, his press conferences, medical care services, and other events of earthly importance, were all decided using the guidance of the stars and other heavenly bodies. Don Regan's book *For The Record* has revealed that Nancy Reagan often consulted an astrologist. But presidential aides have tried to decrease any attention given to the subject in an effort to end the inquiries from the media about the use of astrology in the White House.

For those who know and understand the science of star logic, better known as astrology, one question comes to mind: "Why didn't the knowledge of astrology and its role in politics come to light before now? In fact, astrology has been a major part of politics for thousands of years, not only in this country but worldwide.

When you dig deeper, you'll find that astrology has played a major role in politics and has also been a key factor in making important political decisions. Reagan is surely not the first president to consult the stars. The very foundation of this country is rooted in the principles of astrology and numerology.

The "Founding Fathers" not only practiced the "occult arts," but also planned specific dates to coincide with celestial events. The birthday of the United States, July 4, 1776, was timed to coincide with the astrological sign of Cancer and the number 13.

Africa is ruled by the sun sign Cancer. The U.S. was founded on African principles and built by African slaves. July 4th follows 13 days after the sun entered the sign of Cancer during the summer solstice on June 21st in 1776.

Thirteen is a number which has profound numerological significance. There were thirteen original colonies, the number 13 is repeated 8 times on the Great Seal of the United States and the 13th Amendment to the Constitution freed the slaves. All of these references to the number 13, and numerous others, are surely no coincidence.

For years, the number 13 has come to represent powers of transformation and rebirth. Twelve has come to symbolize the completion of a cycle, and 13 represents the energy of that cycle transcending itself into a higher, often spiritual, plane of existence.

WE see this pattern repeated in the stories of Jesus the Christ and his 12 apostles. King Arthur had 12 knights at his Round Table. The sun exists along with the 12 signs of the zodiac. Courtroom proceedings include the judge and 12 jurors.

It is also no coincidence that presidential elections are held on the first Tuesday following the Monday of the 11th month of every leap year. Elections occur at this time because of the significance of the leap year (366 days) and the numerological significance of Tuesdays and November.

Astrologically speaking, each day of the week is governed by a celestial body. Sunday is ruled by the Sun, Monday is ruled by the Moon, Tuesday is ruled by Mars, and the pattern continues for the rest of the week, the month, and the year.

Mars is regarded as the Roman god of war, whose astrological symbol is identical to the medical symbol for man. Wars have traditionally been fought and declared by men who were often voted into office. Since the right to vote had historically been restricted to men, it was only fitting that elections were held on a day associated with men—Tuesday. The practice continues to this day.

To the layperson, all this talk about stars and numbers might be a bit confusing. That is by design. Knowledge that has the power to

liberate the mind is usually limited to a select few, or this knowledge is criticized so that it becomes undesirable for the masses of people.

In the meantime, those in power or those who desire more power (almost always men) keep metaphysical consultants close at hand. Some of the greatest rulers in ancient and modern times relied on knowledge of the stars to guide their actions. This is a science fact---not science fiction.

Adolph Hitler used astrologers and other occult practitioners before he used his armies. The swastika is a symbol that has been in use for thousands of years. When facing one direction, it symbolizes creation; when reversed (as Hitler used it), it symbolizes destruction.

During World War II, Winston Churchill consulted astrologers in an attempt to know what Hitler was planning. It is a documented fact that the U.S., in conjunction with British intelligence, employed psychics. Each attempted to project his consciousness into the war rooms of Hitler's generals.

To this very day, both the Department of the Navy and the Soviet military are experimenting with methods of "psychic warfare." Yet, we are told that psychic phenomena, astrology, and numerology are all pseudoscience's that lack any scientific foundation.

Astrology is one of the oldest sciences known to mankind. Everyone should be aware of the fact that the sun and the moon have a profound effect on the Earth. High tides, high crime rates, births, and deaths all follow low cycles related to the stars and other heavenly bodies.

Over 500 years ago, scientists believed that the Earth was flat and that it was the center of the universe. New scientific discoveries are made almost every day, indicating that scientists are still learning about the Earth and our solar system.

Just because scientists and politicians don't sanction astrology and related disciplines doesn't mean that these studies lack merit. Oftentimes, many things that are not properly understood are labeled bogus by the status quo. As Stevie Wonder said, "When you believe in things you don't understand, you suffer."

In any event, time will tell...it usually does.

## Commentary

There is a vast difference between the astrology column in your local newspaper and an astrological chart done by a trained professional. The differences are as great as those of a drug dealer working the corner and the druggist working the pharmacy in the middle of the block.

Those who study the stars (astronomers and astrologists) know that the Earth is continually influenced by gravity and the electromagnetic fields of millions of objects in the sky. Let's consider the relationship of one object in the sky to the Earth. Let's consider the moon.

The Earth is essentially a ball of rock, approximately 8,000 miles in diameter, and is surrounded by an atmosphere that extends over 1,000 miles into outer space. Two-thirds of the Earth's surface is covered by water. The moon, in contrast, is a dry, airless rock, one-fourth the size of Earth, and is 239,000 miles away.

As the moon revolves around the Earth, it literally pulls the atmosphere and water of the Earth beneath it. On the opposite side of the Earth, the force of the moon's pull is so strong that it actually pulls the solid body of the Earth away from the atmosphere and water. This gravitational effect creates two bulges called high tides.

The Earth turns, and these tides travel from east to west across the Earth's surface. This action creates the movement of two high and low tides every hour of every day. These tides are highest during the full moon, and scientists are capable of determining the exact time and





location of tides, anywhere on Earth, at any date in the past, present, or future.

The moon affects all of the water in all of the oceans, lakes, rivers, and streams on Earth. It also affects the water (fluids) of every plant and animal on Earth, including humans. Like the Earth, two-thirds of the human body is water, and your physical and mental well-being are also affected by the moon.

Hospital records indicate that there is an increase in births and strokes (among the elderly) during the time of the full moon. Police

dockets also indicate dramatic increases in violent behavior during this same time period. In the nineteenth century, doctors in a British insane asylum coined the phrase “lunatic” to describe the mental health of patients whose insanity coincided with the full moon (luna).

The moon is one of millions of objects in the sky, which can be seen at night and go unseen during the day. If the moon can exert a force which pulls all of the water and air on Earth, then why can't it affect the water in your veins and arteries and the air that you breathe? It does. It has and always will.

# Appeal for St. Louis Disaster Relief

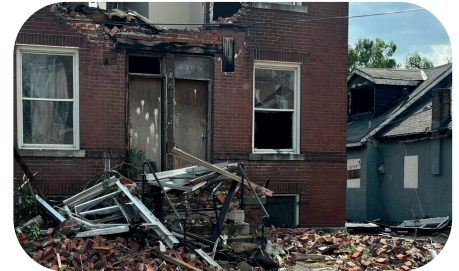
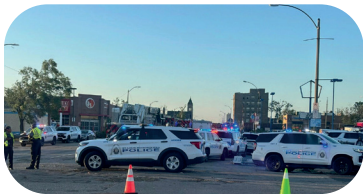
By The Star of Zion

Photos By Kyle Pyatt / Special to St. Louis Public Radio, Derk Brown

Dear A.M.E. Zion Family and friends. Our membership as well as those in the larger community have been impacted through power outages, needs for supplies, etc. We are monitoring the situation as we are prepared to lead and support those in need throughout the St Louis region.

The Washington Metropolitan Church led by Dr. William Johnson, III is playing an integral role in assisting those impacted by the storm and are prepared to receive support through gifts and checks by mail or through Givelify. Please indicate “For St. Louis Disaster Relief”.

Donations of water and supplies can be sent to the Washington Metropolitan Church, as the



church continues to collaborate with the mayor of the city of St. Louis and the American Red Cross, as well as the league of various churches and organizations in St. Louis concerning the needs of our citizens. Thank you so much in advance for your support.



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# QUADRENNIAL THEME STUDY GUIDE

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# 135th Session of the Mighty Concord District

By Cynthia Brown, District Reporter

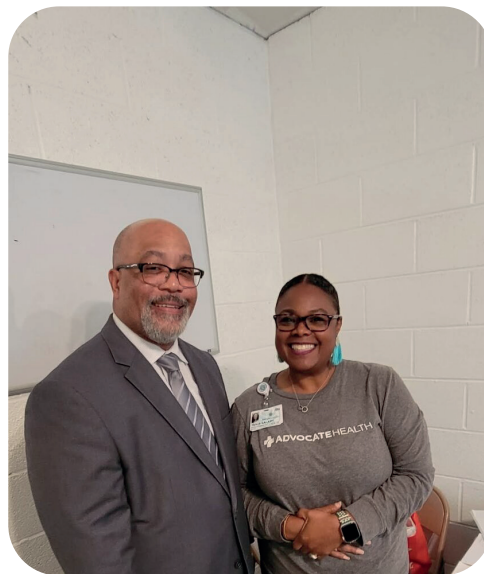
Photos By Corey Rustin & Cynthia Brown

The 135th Annual Session of the Concord District Conference convened at the Bethel A.M.E. Zion Church, Kannapolis, N.C. April 22nd-24th, 2025. Presiding Elder Kevin W. McGill stated in his greetings to the district that it was a blessing to gather once again as a people of faith, purpose, and power under this year's transformative theme: "Shifting the Atmosphere". His request for a powerful conference was made to God, and the Spirit certainly rested and moved in our time together.



from pastoring at the end of our conference year.

We began Thursday morning with our Necrology Service with the Rev. Dr. Reginald Boyd, Jr. from the Union Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church delivering the meditation. The service itself was very moving as the names were read, candles were lit, and a bouquet was created of the churches with no deaths to report. The message came from I Thessalonians 4:13-18, "They Have Priority." A Panel discussion was then held using our theme: "Shifting the Atmosphere" with participants, Dr. Reginald Boyd, Jr., Mrs. Joanne Gresham, Ms. Cynthia Brown, and Ms. Lisa Lea. Our hope is that the ideas presented will equip churches to enrich local churches. We were also blessed to have a Mini Health Fair sponsored by the Whole Health Ministry of the District with Chairman, Rev. Dr. Corey Rustin.



At the Thursday afternoon session, we welcomed Dr. Angela Davis-Baxter, who conducted the Sexual Misconduct Presentation. She provided much-needed information. We concluded with the Local Preacher & Exhorter Hour and heard from Exhorter, Cynthia Brown, and Local Preachers, Bro. Lee Kennedy and Sis. Christie Felder.

Beginning with the Welcome Program from our host, Pastor Rev. Dr. Charles H. Wilson, Jr., along with greetings from church officers, we heard from Kannapolis Assistant City Manager, Mr. Wilmer Melton, III, and Councilwoman, Mrs. Jeanne Dixon, who is also a member of the Concord District. Our opening night was a Communion Service, with all Deaconesses, Trustees, and Stewards from each local church in attendance. The Rev. Cecil Alsobrooks, pastor of the Ebenezer A.M.E. Zion Church in Midland, NC, delivered the message, "Lord Is It I?" from the text Matthew 26:20-22.

Wednesday morning, the business of the conference took place, and after lunch, the Lay Hour was observed. The District continues to miss Mrs. Betty Evans, our District Lay Council President, who passed away in December of 2024. Words of Remembrance were offered. We had as our guest for the afternoon, Ms. Minnie McRae, West Central NC Conference Lay Council President. She spoke on our theme: "Shifting the Atmosphere". There was lively discussion and questions following.



Ms. McRae, in her sharing, also gave lively examples of evangelism that will shift atmospheres and circumstances. For our evening worship, the Rev. J. C. White, pastor of the Gilmore Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, blessed us using verses from the 116th Psalm, verses 12 & 13, "What Shall I Render?" Rev. White plans to retire



The Final Night and Worship Service began with the District Praise Team setting the Atmosphere, which was electrified with the song, "My Response Is." Our guest for the evening was Presiding Elder Dr. Laticia Hill Godette of the Wadesboro-Monroe District. She was accompanied by their district choir. Dr. Godette delivered a timely word for our Evangelistic & Healing Service using Joshua 2:1-14 for her text. "Please Allow Me to Re-Introduce Myself - You Don't Know Me." During the Worship Experience, the Holy Spirit moved from heart to heart with praises freely given to our God!!

We are grateful for the Spirit of Our Living God dwelling with us for the conference. Thankful for all the visitors who came by to be with us. The Courtesy Committee gave their report, acknowledging all that took place and the Grand Style that the Bethel Church hosted. The Atmosphere Shifted during the week, and we are ready to Shift in our Local Churches. For His Glory!!!



# Mass Meeting Led by Young Adult Missionary Society

(North Charlotte District YAMS Lead the 4th Mass Meeting)

By G. Joyner Johnson

At the Torrence Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, Cornelius, NC, the Young Adult Missionary Society (YAMS), led by Rev. Wanda Merriweather, District Coordinator of YAMS, executed an informative and refreshing Mass Meeting. After the call to worship, invocation, and the opening hymn, "Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine," the scripture and prayer were delivered by Ms. Anisse Puryear and Ms. Reshika Barfield.



Attorney-at-Law Mrs. Brandy Gaylor-Price, a life-long member of Union Bethel A.M.E. Zion Church, Cornelius, NC, used the "Equity and Justice" quadrant of the Women's Home and Overseas Missionary quadrennial theme as part of her topic, "What's Going On?" The subject matter covered included how the current political climate may have been more just and equitable had everyone eligible to vote. Most decisions currently being made are about economics, not necessarily what is moral and fair. These decisions affect the cost of living, income, housing security, community safety, health, and voting rights. Attorney Gaylor-Price encouraged everyone to "handle their business" as follows: write a will, purchase life insurance, and draw up a trust. At the conclusion of her presentation, a standing ovation was rendered.



Each department leader of the WH&OM Society gave a 5-minute presentation about their department. The information presented included the founder, colors, theme song, motto, celebration day, etc. Ms. Castella Conner, President, was unable to attend but had written her presentation, which was read. Rev. Merriweather, YAMS Coordinator; Ms. Olivia Stinson, Secretary of the Youth Missionary Society; Ms. Toni Stitt, Superintendent of the Buds of Promise; Mrs. Cassandra Stephens, Secretary of the Bureau of Supply; and



Ms. Gloria Joyner Johnson, Chairman of the Life Members Council, all made their presentations in their unique manner. Ms. Joyner Johnson had the honor to stole 8 new Life Members and 3 new Matrons. Fourteen new members to be stole were unable to attend.

The attendance competition, a healthy and fun part of the mass meetings for one of the four banners resulted as follows: Group 1-Torrence Chapel (the host church), Group 2-Union Bethel, Group 3-Torrence Grove, and Group 4-Hopewell and Columbus Chapel were tied and will share the banner for equal amounts of time.



Presiding Elder Wardell Henderson and Mrs. Myrtle Henderson gave compliments and words of encouragement. The meeting closed with the Missionary Benediction.



## SCHEDULE AT-A- GLANCE

### WOMEN'S HOME AND OVERSEA'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY

#### 145th Anniversary Women's Conference

#### EMPOWERHER: REFLECTING GOD'S LOVE THROUGH HOLINESS

<b>THURSDAY</b> <b>APRIL 24</b> 3:00 PM - Conference Opening Afternoon Plenary 5:00 PM - Dinner (On your own) 7:15 PM - Concert 9:30 PM - Paint and Praise (Included in Registration) Prior RSVPs only	<b>FRIDAY</b> <b>APRIL 25</b> 7:30 AM - Legacy Walk Breakfast (On your own) 9:45 AM - Praise and Worship Keynote Plenary 11:45 AM - Break 12:15 PM - EmPowerHer Luncheon (Included in Registration)	2:15 PM - Break 2:45 PM - EmPowerHer Young Adult Panel 4:30 PM - 7:30PM - Dinner (On your own) 7:15 PM - 145th Anniversary Worship Service
<b>SATURDAY</b> <b>APRIL 26</b> 9:00 AM - Praise and Worship Morning Plenary 10:00 AM - Concurrent Sessions • Missionary Conclave ◦ Departmental Sessions • Clergy and Lay Women • Clergy and Lay Men	11:15 AM - Outreach 12:15 - Afternoon Plenary 1:30 PM - Break 5:00 PM - The 145th Anniversary Soiree (Included in Registration) • WH&OMS Gallery Walk/Reception • Program and Dinner	

SANDRA CROWDER, INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT



# Scotland A.M.E. Zion Church Celebrates Historic Restoration Completion and the End of the 2nd Century Campaign in Potomac, Maryland

By Delianny Brammer, Scotland A.M.E. Zion Church

**Potomac, MD** – Scotland African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, a cornerstone of the Potomac community and a historic place of worship, today announced the successful completion of its restoration and expansion, also marking the culmination of the church's ambitious 2nd Century Project. After more than five years of displacement, the congregation returned to its revitalized building—a church intended to stand for another 100 years as a symbol of resilience, faith, and justice.

Scotland A.M.E. Zion Church was established in 1905, and services were then hosted in a local home. The church that we know today opened in 1924 and has served the community for over a century. It stands as a testament to the strength of its members and community supporters. It has endured historical injustices and the challenges of displacement, yet remains unwavering in its commitment to the community it serves.

The Scotland A.M.E. Zion Church restoration was made possible through the generous contributions of several key partners, including Glenstone Foundation, the J.W. & Alice Marriott Foundation, the state of Maryland, Montgomery County, the Trust for Historic Preservation, Bob Buchanan, the Brickman Family Foundation, the Carl M. Freeman Foundation, and the RAST Foundation. Their support, along with countless hours of dedication from volunteers, local leaders, and church members, has made the completion of this one-of-a-kind project possible.

"The restoration and construction are complete, but our work to raise funds to operate and sustain the church for another century is just beginning. We are grateful that the 2nd Century Project connected us with a strong network of supporters in the County who are committed to our long-term success," said Reverend Dr. Evalina Huggins, Pastor and Presiding Elder of Scotland A.M.E. Zion Church. "This church has been a beacon of faith, hope, and justice for over a century. Today, we celebrate the completion of a long journey, and we look forward to the future as we prepare to continue serving the community for generations to come."

The church's completion also marks an important chapter in the ongoing effort to correct the wrongs of past discriminatory practices by local government. Over the years, the church and its members have faced significant challenges, and the restoration is a step toward healing and reconciliation. The support from local and state officials has been instrumental in this journey.

"We are honored to stand with the Scotland A.M.E. Zion Church and its community in celebrating this momentous occasion," said Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich. "The restoration of this church not only restores a place of worship but also a piece of the community's history. We recognize the struggles the church has faced and are proud to be part of a solution that rightfully honors its legacy."

The church is also recognizing the resilience of its congregation that was displaced for over five years due to the restoration process. This community has stood strong, showing unwavering support and faith throughout the church's renovation journey. With the church's restoration now complete, these members will return to a stout, modernized, and expanded building that will allow the congregation's sustainability and continued service to the community.

"We've waited for this day for so long, and it's a blessing to see our church restored," said LaTisha Gasaway-Paul, a leader in the Scotland community and fifth-generation resident of Scotland. "This is more than just a building—it's a place where we find strength, unity, and purpose. Today is a reminder of how far we've come and the bright future ahead."

The Scotland A.M.E. Zion Church is eager to welcome the community back to its restored building, with future events, programs, and services aimed at fostering unity, faith, and community.

For more information about the Scotland A.M.E. Zion Church restoration or to get involved, visit <https://scotlandamezion.org>.



**About Scotland A.M.E. Zion Church:** Scotland A.M.E. Zion Church is a historic African American church in Potomac, Maryland, that has served as a pillar of faith and community engagement for over a century. The church's mission is to nurture and sustain a community of believers through worship, service, and advocacy, while preserving its rich cultural heritage.





# STAY LIT!

Miss Samia Richardson, President  
Simon Temple AME Zion Church  
Fayetteville, NC

Rev. Dr. R.J. Chandler Sr.,  
International Director of Acolytes



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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**MUSIC & WORSHIP FESTIVAL**

**Mother AME Zion Church**  
Harlem, NY

**Bishop Uduak Effiong**  
**Bishop George D. Crenshaw**  
**Bishop Daran H. Mitchell**

**SAVE THE DATE - OCTOBER 10 - 12, 2025**

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MIME | POETRY | HYMNODOLOGY | LITURGY  
| PRAYER | USHERS | GREETERS

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**ACOLYTE LEADERSHIP RETREAT**  
28 & 29

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Rev. Dr. R.J. Chandler Sr.  
International Director of Acolytes

Bishop Daran H. Mitchell  
Worship & Ritual  
1st Vice Chairman

Bishop Uduak Effiong  
Worship & Ritual Chairman

**CALLING ALL WRITERS!**

Please scan the QR Code and submit your song for consideration.

**Dr. Lisa Moore**  
International Director of Music

**SAVE THE DATE - OCTOBER 10 - 12, 2025**

Music is essential to worship. The International Music Ministry of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is recording original music that will be streamed on all music outlets. We are looking for writers who will generously give of their talent and gifts to this initiative. All original submissions are due by April 15, 2025.

**MUSIC & WORSHIP FESTIVAL**

**ACOLYTE LEADERSHIP RETREAT**  
28 & 29

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**Rev. Dr. R.J. Chandler Sr.**  
International Director of Acolytes

**Bishop Daran H. Mitchell**  
Worship & Ritual  
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## Don't delay, be a sponsor today!

Platinum Sponsor: \$5,000.00 - The business or ministry logo will be on all marketing materials and celebrated at the festival. Two-page AD page in the commemorative souvenir journal. Commercials will be displayed during the festival. Sit down interview with the sponsor.

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Bronze Sponsor: \$500.00 - 1/2 Page AD page in the commemorative souvenir journal.

Sponsor: \$250.00 - 1/4 Page AD page in the commemorative souvenir journal.

Patron: \$100.00 - the name is listed in the commemorative souvenir journal.

# MUSIC & WORSHIP FESTIVAL

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2025**

**5:00PM - 7:00PM**  
Registration  
Worship Practicum  
(All Areas)

**7:00PM - 9:00PM**  
Turn Up for the Glow  
Up Concert

**9:15PM - 10:15PM**  
Choir Rehearsal

**9:15PM - 10:15PM**  
Acolyte Mixer  
"Know your Church"

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2025**

**9:00AM - 10:30AM**  
Morning Glory Worship  
Bishop Daran Mitchell

**10:45AM - 12:30PM**  
Worship Practicum  
(All Areas)

**12:45AM - 2:00PM**  
Zion Excellence  
Awards Luncheon  
(Included in  
Registration)  
Tickets: \$100.00

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2025**

**9:00AM - 10:30AM**  
Worship Experience  
Installation of  
Acolytes

**Confirmation of  
Acolyte Officers**

**Consecration of  
Deaconess**

**Bishop George D.  
Crenshaw**

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

# First Lady of Little Rock A.M.E. Zion Church, Dr. Paula B. Blue, Earns Ph.D. in Education from Boise State University

By Dianna Davis

Boise, Idaho – On May 10, 2025, Dr. Paula B. Blue, First Lady of Little Rock A.M.E. Zion Church, achieved a significant academic milestone by earning her Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Education from Boise State University. She successfully defended her dissertation titled: “Exploring Communication, Connection, and Culture during Technology Implementation: An Autoethnography.”

Dr. Blue’s accomplishment is a testament to her unwavering commitment to learning, service, and leadership. As First Lady of Little Rock A.M.E. Zion Church, she is not only a spiritual guide but also a mentor and educator who continues to empower the congregation and the broader community through education, advocacy, and grace.



This moment represents the strength, vision, and faith that Dr. Blue consistently brings to every space she enters. Her Ph.D. in Education is a celebration of her passion for equipping others through knowledge and leadership.

Dr. Derill A. Blue, Pastor, the Little Rock A.M.E. Zion Church family, and a wide network of supporters join together to congratulate Dr. Blue on this extraordinary achievement.

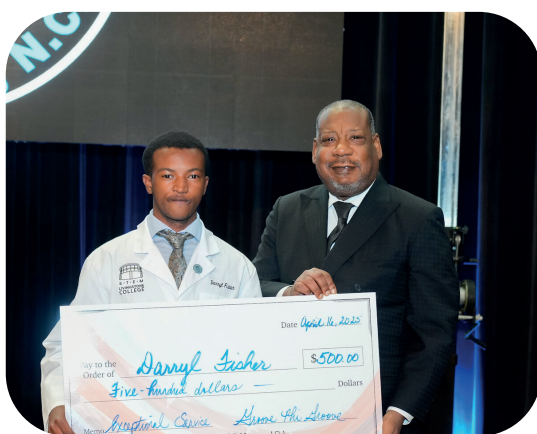
## Livingstone College Celebrates Academic Excellence and Service at the Samuel E. Duncan Honors Convocation

Photos By Livingstone  
College Media

**SALISBURY, N.C.** — Livingstone College proudly hosted its annual **Samuel E. Duncan Honors Convocation**, a momentous occasion recognizing students who have demonstrated academic excellence and a deep commitment to service-oriented leadership.

The convocation, named in honor of the College’s seventh president, **Dr. Samuel E. Duncan**, serves as a living tribute to his vision of intellectual rigor paired with moral responsibility.

Held in the historic Varick Auditorium, the ceremony brought together students, faculty, families, and community leaders to celebrate those who embody the spirit of Livingstone College—students who not only excel in the classroom but



also uplift communities through acts of service and leadership.

Livingstone College was honored to welcome **Ben Jealous**, Executive Director of the Sierra Club, former President of the NAACP, and a champion of civil rights, as the keynote speaker. His powerful address stirred hearts and minds, calling students to “lead with purpose and passion” as they prepare to make a positive impact on the world.





Jealous, known for his work at the intersection of social justice and environmental equity, challenged students to use their education as a launching pad for transformative leadership.

Students recognized during the convocation had earned distinctions, including placement on the **President's List**, the **Dean's List**, and awards from various academic departments. Beyond academic performance, honorees were also recognized for their leadership in voter registration efforts, coordination of campus food pantries, tutoring of underserved youth, and organization of health and wellness initiatives.

The Samuel E. Duncan Honors Convocation remains a cornerstone of Livingstone College's academ-



ic calendar. This event not only applauds scholastic achievement but also honors the social responsibility at the heart of the College's mission. It is a reminder that at Livingstone, learning is not just about knowledge gained, but about lives changed.



# Livingstone College Introduces 2025–2026 Mister & Miss Livingstone: Kaiyon Courtney and Christian Oliver

By Rev. Roderick J. Josey, Education Editor

Livingstone College proudly announces its newly elected student leaders for the 2025–2026 academic year: Mr. Livingstone, Kaiyon Omarri Courtney, and Miss Livingstone, Christian Oliver. These two distinguished individuals exemplify the college's commitment to leadership, service, and community engagement.

## Kaiyon Omarri Courtney: 21st, Mister Livingstone College

Hailing from Charlotte, North Carolina, Kaiyon Omarri Courtney has been elected as the 21st Mister Livingstone College. A junior, Kaiyon, has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to student leadership and campus involvement. He currently serves as the Vice President of the Student Government Association, where he has been instrumental in fostering student engagement and advocating for campus initiatives.

Beyond his role in student government, Kaiyon is the founder of Omarri Photography (OMP), showcasing his entrepreneurial spirit and creative talents. His platform as Mister Livingstone centers on building a culture of respect, development, and involvement, aiming to inspire and represent the Livingstone community with pride.



## Christian Oliver: 96th Miss Livingstone College

Christian Oliver, a psychology major from Houston,

Texas, has been crowned the 96th Miss Livingstone College. Despite being a freshman, Christian holds a junior classification, reflecting her academic dedication and excellence.



citeturn0search5

Christian is also a proud member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated, having joined the sisterhood on April 6, 2025. Her platform emphasizes unity, inclusivity, and active engagement, aiming to uplift and empower the Livingstone community through meaningful connections and positive change.

Both Kaiyon and Christian are committed to fostering a culture rooted in respect, growth, and active participation. Their leadership embodies the ideals of Livingstone College and The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, emphasizing the importance of unity and service.

As ambassadors for Livingstone College, Kaiyon and Christian will play pivotal roles in representing the student body, promoting campus initiatives, and engaging with the broader community. Their dedication to leadership and service sets a commendable example for their peers, underscoring the college's mission to develop leaders who are prepared to make a positive impact in the world.

We congratulate Kaiyon Omarri Courtney and Christian Oliver on their respective titles and look forward to the contributions they will make in the coming academic year.



# Livingstone College President Dr. Anthony J. Davis Seeks Kidney Donor Amid Health Battle

By Rev. Roderick J. Josey, Education Editor

In a heartfelt revelation during Livingstone College's commencement ceremony on May 3, 2025, President Dr. Anthony J. Davis disclosed his ongoing battle with stage 5 kidney failure and his urgent need for a kidney donor. Despite his health challenges, Dr. Davis has continued to lead the Salisbury, North Carolina-based HBCU, undergoing nightly dialysis treatments for the past year and a half while



fulfilling his presidential duties.

Dr. Davis shared that his family members were tested for compatibility, but none were suitable matches due to differing blood types—he is O-positive, while his children are B-positive. In response, he launched the “Be My Match” campaign, appealing to the broader community,

especially within the HBCU network, consider becoming living kidney donors.

The president's announcement has garnered widespread support, with many sharing his story and encouraging others to participate in the donor search. Dr. Davis remains hopeful that through collective effort and faith, a suitable donor will be found.

For those interested in learning more about kidney donation and how to assist Dr. Davis, information is available through the Duke Health Transplant Program at <https://www.dukehealth.org/treatments/transplant-program/kidney-donation>.

Dr. Davis's resilience and dedication to Livingstone College exemplify the strength and unity of the HBCU community. His journey underscores the importance of organ donation and the profound impact it can have on individuals and their communities.



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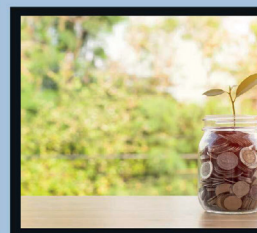
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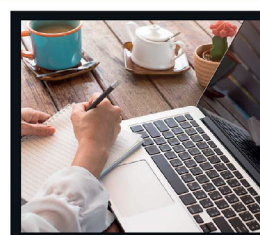
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# LIVINGSTONE COLLEGE TO CONFER 60 BACHELOR'S DEGREES AT 143rd COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

By Mai Li Muñoz, Livingstone College

SALISBURY, NC — Livingstone College will award five associate's degrees, 60 bachelor's degrees, and six master's degrees during its 143rd commencement on May 3.

Among the graduates will be 10 students who've earned summa cum laude honors with a cumulative grade point average of 3.7-4.0; three who will graduate magna cum laude with a cumulative GPA of 3.5-3.69; and 10 who will graduate cum laude with a cumulative GPA of 3.5-3.49.

In addition, Livingstone will award three honorary doctorate degrees, including one to its scheduled commencement speaker, social justice leader Rev. Dr. Frederick Haynes, former CEO of Rainbow PUSH Coalition, and pastor of Friendship-West Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas.

The Rev. Julian Charles Pridgen, pastor of Saint Mark A.M.E. Zion



Church in Durham, and the Rev. Dr. Steven W. Pogue, who leads Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church in Mount Vernon, N.Y., will receive special academic recognition.

A native of Whiteville, N.C., Pridgen is a United States Marine Corps veteran who began his pastoral career while enlisted. Pridgen's pastoral journey has led him to church leadership roles in Tennessee and across North Carolina.

The Presiding Elder at Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church, Mount Vernon, N.Y., Pogue was elected President of the United Black Clergy of Westchester, N.Y., in 2022. He served as pastor of Greater Hood Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church in Harlem and Greater Cooper A.M.E. Zion Church in Oakland, Calif., before returning to the East Coast to assume the pastorship at Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion.

For more information about Livingstone College, contact Mai Li Muñoz, Chief Communications Officer, at [mmunoz@livingstone.edu](mailto:mmunoz@livingstone.edu).

## Two Livingstone Students Selected as Black Student Leadership Ambassadors for Children Defense Fund

By Star of Zion News

Livingstone College has two students who have been selected as Ambassadors for the 2025-2026 Black Student Leadership Network (BSLN) Fellowship, hosted by the Children's Defense Fund. Mia Mason, a music major from Salisbury, and Joel Thompson, a computer information systems major from Ghana, will join over 100 students from multiple HBCUs throughout the nation in efforts to nurture the next generation of Black servant-leaders.

This year's cohort will engage in a variety of training courses that focus on leadership development, organizational skills, advocacy, and policy interpretation and production, as they kick-off their experience with a retreat at the Freedom Schools National Leadership Training Institute in Nashville, Tennessee from June 4 – 7, 2025.

"I am humbly excited about this opportunity," said Joel Thompson. "As a Ghana native, America's rich history of advocacy and social justice has intrigued me to grow more and want to serve others. I plan to infuse the skills and knowledge I acquire as an Interfaith America ambassador and a BSLN ambassador for the common greater

good of our mosaic world."

As BSLN provides opportunities to center and amplify young people's voices in efforts to shape a brighter tomorrow for their generation and the generations to follow, the organization aims to provide financial support, training resources, and community engagement/building opportunities to college-aged organizers, equipping them to become advocates for justice, equity, opportunity, and well-being on their campuses and in their local communities.

Mia Mason is excited about working with an organization committed to mentoring, supporting, and uplifting students. She said, "I am looking forward to the interactive training on organizing and gaining skills to develop strategic initiatives to implement on campus. As a campus leader, it is important to me to build a community of support among peers."

Under the operational arms of the Children Defense Fund, BSLN endeavors to guide the nation towards a future where young people are provided every opportunity to thrive. To learn more about the program, visit <https://www.childrensdefense.org/our-work/building-a-movement-for-youth/black-student-leadership-network/>.





# Harrisburg District WH&OMS Blesses Lincoln University Students with Snack Bags for Finals Week

By Rev. Roderick J. Josey, Education Editor

Avondale, PA – In a shining example of faith in action, the Harrisburg District Women's Home and Overseas Missionary Society (WH&OMS) of the Mid-Atlantic Episcopal District of The A.M.E. Zion Church extended a hand of love and support to students at Lincoln University of Pennsylvania during one of the most stressful times of the academic year—finals week.

Under the dynamic leadership of



District President **Rhonda Means**, the WH&OMS organized and delivered "Snack Bags" to help nourish students both physically and spiritually as they faced the pressures of end-of-semester exams. The initiative is part of the Society's ongoing commitment to missions, education, and community empowerment.

Each snack bag was thoughtfully prepared with grab-and-go items, including granola bars, trail mix, fruit snacks, bottled water, and encouraging notes of affirmation and prayer. The gesture was meant to be more than just a snack—it was a reminder to each student that they are not alone and that the







Zion Church stands with them in their educational journey.

“Finals week can be incredibly overwhelming,” said Rhonda Means. “We wanted to provide not just sustenance, but also a spiritual lift—a tangible reminder that the Church cares. As missionaries, our call is to serve, and what better place to serve than among the students who represent the future?”

The partnership with Lincoln University, a historically Black institution and the nation’s first degree-granting HBCU, reflects The A.M.E. Zion Church’s ongoing commitment to historically Black colleges and universities and to empowering young Black scholars.



Local Lincoln students expressed heartfelt appreciation for the surprise gifts. “It felt like someone was praying for me and cheering me on,” said one junior biology major. “These snacks got me through a long night of studying, and the note reminded me to keep going.”

This effort is just one example of the Harrisburg District WH&OMS’s broader vision of community care, intentional outreach, and intergenerational ministry. As the Society continues to uplift communities both

near and far, its commitment remains firm: service with love, leadership with purpose, and missions with impact.



Mr. Thomas Umstead  
Entertainment & The Arts Editor  
Entertainment\_Arts@StarofZion.org

## ENTERTAINMENT & THE ARTS

# Audra McDonald Makes History with Record 11 Tony Award Nominations

By R. Thomas Umstead, Entertainment and Arts Editor  
Photo By HBO

When veteran stage performer Audra McDonald graces New York’s Radio City Music Hall during the June 8 Tony Awards ceremony, she will do so as the most nominated performer in Broadway history.

McDonald’s lead role in the current Broadway revival of “Gypsy” earned her a record-setting 11th Tony nomination, breaking a three-way tie with the late Julie Harris and Chita Rivera.

If McDonald wins the award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role during the live Tony Awards telecast on CBS, she will add to her record six Tony Award wins. She earned awards for her performances in 1994’s “Carousel,” 1996’s “Master Class,” 1988’s “Ragtime,” 2004’s “A Raisin in the Sun,” 2012’s “Porgy and Bess” and 2014’s “Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar and Grill.”

She is also the only performer to win top honors in leading and featured categories for both musicals and plays, according to “Playbill.” (<https://playbill.com/article/audra-mcdonald-is-the-most-tony-nominated-performer-in-broadway-history>)



Not limited to the stage, McDonald—also a recipient of two Grammy Awards and an Emmy Award—has starred in such theatrical films as “Respect,” “Beauty and the Beast,” and “Rustin.” On television, her credits include roles in “Law & Order: Special Victims Unit,” “Private Practice,” “The Good Wife,” and “The Gilded Age.”

Juilliard-trained in classical voice, McDonald has also performed with such musical organizations as the Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the New York Philharmonic.

McDonald’s legendary career achievements on the stage and screen earned her a 2015 National Medal of Arts from then-President Barack Obama.

In an interview with the “Hollywood Reporter,” McDonald said she was “grateful” for her record-setting Tony nomination. “The one thing I always wanted to do growing up, one thing that gave me joy and kind of gave me purpose and made me feel most like myself was to perform theater. And so to be at this point and to have that kind of recognition is just overwhelming,” she told the magazine.

Congratulations to Audra McDonald as she continues to make Tony Awards history.



# T.D. Jakes Extends Footprint, Impact With Media Projects

By R. Thomas Umstead, Entertainment and Arts Editor  
Photo By T.D. Jakes Group website

T.D. Jakes in April announced that he is stepping down from his leadership role as senior pastor of the Dallas-based church, The Potter's House, that he founded in 1996, but he's not stepping out of the public eye.

Along with continuing to serve as Chairman of the T.D. Jakes Group, Jakes will look to expand his global footprint in the media business, according to a company press release.

The faith leader and cultural influencer announced this past April that he will soon launch a new podcast, "My Next Chapter," as part of a new partnership with iHeartMedia, from which he will launch his own slate of shows with iHeartPodcasts.

For nearly two decades, T.D. Jakes has also been very active as a producer of numerous theatrical and television movies that have entertained and inspired audiences around the world. Such projects include theatrical releases, *Jumping the Broom*, *Sparkle*, *Black Nativity*, and *Heaven Is for Real*, as well as TV content such as Lifetime's *Seven Deadly Sins* film franchise.

In a 2023 conversation with me for the Multichannel News cable TV trade publication about The *Seven Deadly Sins* franchise—which attracted nearly seven million viewers with its first four films, *Wrath*, *Greed*, *Envy*, and *Lust*, which aired between 2021 and 2022 (followed by a fifth installment, *Pride*, in 2023) (<https://www.nexttv.com/news/lifetime-tackles-pride-in-new-seven-deadly-sins-movie>)—Jakes shared his reflections on his screen projects and how they align with his broader mission to inspire and uplift while tackling pressing social and economic issues both on-screen and behind the scenes.

An edited version of the interview appears below.

**R. Thomas Umstead:** When you first created and started to think about the *Seven Deadly Sins* franchise, did you think that it would have the impact and get the reception that it has?

**T.D. Jakes:** There is a great affinity in the Black community to see movies for us by us where we tell our own stories and tell our own narratives and power our own people, and we're grateful that Lifetime has created a platform that allows African-American actors and producers to have a stage to share our talents, not only with the Black community, but with the rest of the world.

**RTU:** How important are these movies in terms of bringing stories that we haven't seen in the past?

**T.D.J.:** I think it's extremely important from a sociological perspective as well as it closes the wealth gap by creating jobs not only for the actors and producers, but also for the makeup artists and the caterers and all the other jobs that are created. Anytime we do a film, it also pumps the wealth into the Black community that I think is important, but the primary reason that I think it is important is because a lot of assumptions are made about Black people and Black families. For us to have a narrative where people get to see us and know us rather than just work with us and pass us in the street, helps to bring about a greater synergy in the overall American texture of society in a way that I think is very important and very profound. Other groups begin to understand that

we are people too, and we love our families, and we have our issues, and we have our strengths. It also really shows how important entrepreneurship is to our community, and how critical it is to our family's aggregate wealth.



**RTU:** Obviously, this is one of many projects that you've done in the television space. Where do you see the television industry today, and what are you looking to continue to accomplish with the projects that you're working on?

**T.D.J.:** Well, I think this is a turbulent time economically for all industries, and that television is not exempt from that turbulence in terms of how much they're able to get for advertisements, which really helps to thrust income into the industry. So sometimes you have to do more with smaller budgets than what I would like, and maybe perhaps than they would like, and that's all indicative of the times that we're living in, where people are inundated, number one, with so many different options with which they can consume content from streaming to television and all the myriad of cable stations that are available to them. So we have to be very creative in how we go about presenting the kind of provocative stories that draw attention and continue to affirm and escalate how we are seeing.



**RTU:** And obviously, those are valuable messages that again, we don't necessarily see on mainstream television. Will you look to continue to develop content in that genre going forward, or will you look to maybe expand some of the things that you're developing and working on?

**T.D.J.:** Well, we're primarily going to be value-based television because that fits our overall brand, and we might do dramedies, we might do some more dramatic content, but I try to do films that have an underlying message in them. They may get gritty because life is gritty, but they always have an underlying cautionary tale to them that helps us to rethink how we interact with our families and with people in the world around us.

**RTU:** Having said that, what else are you working on going forward?

**T.D.J.:** Oh, some of everything. So we're going to continue to put things in the pipeline, maybe interviews, podcasts, sociological is-

sues, and subjects that help America to better understand minorities, underserved communities, and the diversity that exists in the Black community. We're not a monolith, and we're not all underserved or underprivileged, and our films have tried to reflect that. If you notice, the common thread in all of our films is you see a spectrum of Black people up and down the socioeconomic levels of life to dispel the myth that all of us come from one sector economically or sociologically. We're everywhere. We're in first class, we're in coach, and we're putting bags on the plane, we're driving the truck. I mean, we're all types of people, and so our movies try to reflect that diversity, which I think helps to deter stereotypical ideas and ultimately may affect in some small degree, racist behaviors and assumptions that are so prevalent in our society right now.

**RTU:** I thank you very much for taking the time out to talk to me, and I wish you well on all your future endeavors going forward.

**T.D.J.:** Thank you so much, Tom. Have a great day, sir.

# New Book Explores the Pros and Cons of Tithing: A Comprehensive Analysis

By C. R. Street, Sr.  
Photo By Kimberlee Y. Delgado

[Atlanta, GA] — [May 14, 2025] — Renowned author and retired A.M.E. Zion Church pastor, C.R. Street, Sr., announces the release of his latest book, *The Sacred Tenth: Understanding the Purpose and Power of Tithes*. The book delves deeply into the spiritual, social, and financial dimensions of tithing, providing readers with a balanced exploration of its benefits and challenges.

## The Sacred Tenth: Understanding the Purpose and Power of Tithes

To tithe or not to tithe

C. R. Street, Sr.

Drawing from biblical teachings, historical practices, and contemporary experiences, Street examines how tithing has shaped religious communities, supported charitable initiatives, and fostered spiritual growth. The book also addresses critical concerns, such as financial strain on congregants, lack of transparency, and potential misuse of funds within religious institutions.

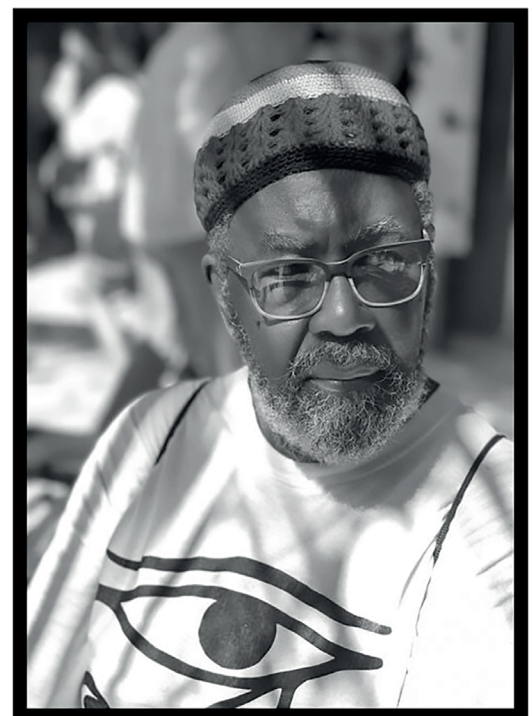
"My goal is to open a dialogue around the true purpose and impact of tithing," says Street. "I want readers to understand its history, its spiritual significance, and the practical realities people face when committing to it."

*The Sacred Tenth: Understanding the Purpose and Power of Tithes* is now available through Amazon. For a signed copy, contact him at [pes-treet@gmail.com](mailto:pes-treet@gmail.com).

### About the Author:

C.R. Street, Sr., is a retired A.M.E. Zion Church pastor with over four decades of ministry experience. His work focuses on faith-based stewardship, church history, and financial ethics within religious communities.

(Amazon link: <https://www.amazon.com/Sacred-Tenth-Understanding-Purpose-Tithes/dp/B0DJYPPPT8>)



Author C.R. Street





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



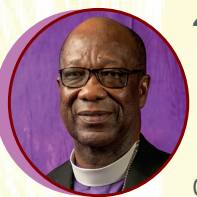
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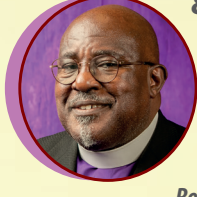
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# The Board of Bishop’s Congratulations to the Catholic Church on the Election of a New Pope

By The Board of Bishops, The A.M.E. Zion Church

We, the Board of Bishops of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, would like to congratulate the Catholic Church on the election of a new pope!

The election of Robert Francis Prevost is historic in the life of the Catholic Church. The new pope is the first American-born Pope from the United States, having been born in Chicago, IL. The new pope has chosen the name Leo XIV. Pope Leo XIV is known as a leader with global experience. He spent much of his career as a missionary in South America and, most recently, led a powerful Vatican



office for bishop appointments. Pope Leo XIV is a member of the Augustinian religious order, which is spread across the world. He led the order for more than a decade as its prior general. The new pontiff used his first remarks to say he is a son of St. Augustine, and he quoted the saint’s famous phrase: “For you, I am a bishop, with you, after all, I am a Christian.” That reflects the idea that all the people in the church hierarchy – from leaders to everyday members – walk together.

We pray for God’s guidance, wisdom, and protection for Pope Leo XIV. We continue to pray for the Catholic Church and all of Christendom that there may be peace, love, hope, jus-



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This 9<sup>th</sup> Day of May, in the Year of Our Lord 2025





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

# Congratulations Graduate! Now What?



## ...now what?

By Dana G. Stilley, Financial Freedom Editor

The undergraduate class of 2025 has proudly walked across the stages at colleges and universities across the country and received their coveted degrees. The transition from college to career is both an exciting and challenging time. Many students find themselves poised to begin the career of their dreams, but economic uncertainty and a tough job market have made it difficult to secure employment that reflects a field aligned with their degree.

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, entry-level hiring will increase by less than 1% compared to a year ago. Overall economic uncertainty is impacting employers' hiring decisions. With the on-again, off-again Trump administration tariffs, companies remain uncertain about future operating costs related to the supply of goods and the potential for slowing demand from consumers. Fears of a recession and inflation pressure remain primary economic concerns. In addition to decreased employment opportunities, new graduates are also facing a decline in available internships. As of April, internship posts had declined 11% versus the same time last year. These factors suggest that 2025 graduates may find themselves still job-hunting beyond the average timeframe of three to six months.

Regardless of the time it may take new graduates to secure employment, creating a financial plan after college is essential. Developing good financial habits and building a financial foundation should begin as soon as possible. Working to build a healthy credit score is a good place to begin. A credit score is a three-digit number ranging from 300 to 850 that represents a person's creditworthiness, or how likely they are to repay a loan or credit card debt. Determining factors for your score are your payment history, the amount of unpaid debt, the length of outstanding debt, and new applications for debt. Recent college graduates can build their credit score by managing credit card debt, establishing utility bills in their name, and paying rent on time. It is also important to pay student loans on time. Missing student loan payments may lead to costly late fees, wage garnishment, and damage to your credit score. Establishing and maintaining a good credit score is important, as it impacts the ability to secure the lowest interest rates on credit cards, car loans, and other types of credit. Landlords, insurance companies, and employers also check credit scores.

Congratulations to the class of 2025! As you continue to celebrate your accomplishments and create your new path, I encourage you to think strategically about your financial future. Planning early is an excellent way to ignite a secure financial future.





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

# Africa: The Forgotten Heart of Early Christianity

By Ronald A. Nathan, World Politics Editor

Photos By © Encyclopædia Britannica Inc. and © BBC World Service

It may come as a surprise to many that there was a time when North Africa was predominantly Christian—Catholic, in fact, for a significant period spanning from the 1st to the 7th centuries AD. Long before the Arab conquests reshaped the region's religious landscape, North Africa stood as a thriving center of Christian thought, life, and leadership. And yet, this crucial chapter in Church history is often overlooked, as if Christianity's deep African roots have faded from our collective memory.

Part of the issue is geographical and conceptual dislocation. We tend to isolate the region of Palestine—the birthplace of Christ and the early Church—from the African continent, forgetting the constant movement of people, ideas, and cultures between these interconnected spaces. This historical amnesia has led to a diminished understanding

ous bishoprics, early Christian texts, and towering figures in Church history. Names like Tertullian (c. 160–220 AD), Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200–258 AD), and Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD) are frequently cited in Christian thought, but rarely are they recognised as African voices. These thinkers helped define key doctrines of the Church, from the nature of the Trinity to the idea of original sin, and yet their cultural and geographical roots are too often ignored.

## Egypt: Birthplace of Christian Monasticism

Meanwhile, in Egypt, Christianity took deep root very early. The Coptic Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria both trace their foundations to the Apostle Mark, who is said to have established the Church of Alexandria around AD 49. This Church is not only one of the oldest in the world—it is the cradle of Christian monasticism, but also a movement that profoundly influenced global Christianity. From the deserts of Egypt came spiritual giants like St. Anthony and St. Pachomius, whose lives of prayer and discipline shaped the monastic traditions that continue to this day.



of the African Church's role in the shaping of Christianity as we know it today.

## The North African Church: A Powerhouse of Christian Theology

North Africa was not just a fringe community of believers; it was a theological and ecclesiastical powerhouse. The region boasted numer-

## Christianity Beyond the Roman Empire

Christianity in Africa was never limited to the Romanized elite. The faith also flourished among indigenous African communities, especially the Berbers. The Mauro-Roman Kingdom, an independent Christian Berber kingdom, arose in what is now Northern Algeria following the weakening of Roman control around 477 AD. This kingdom and

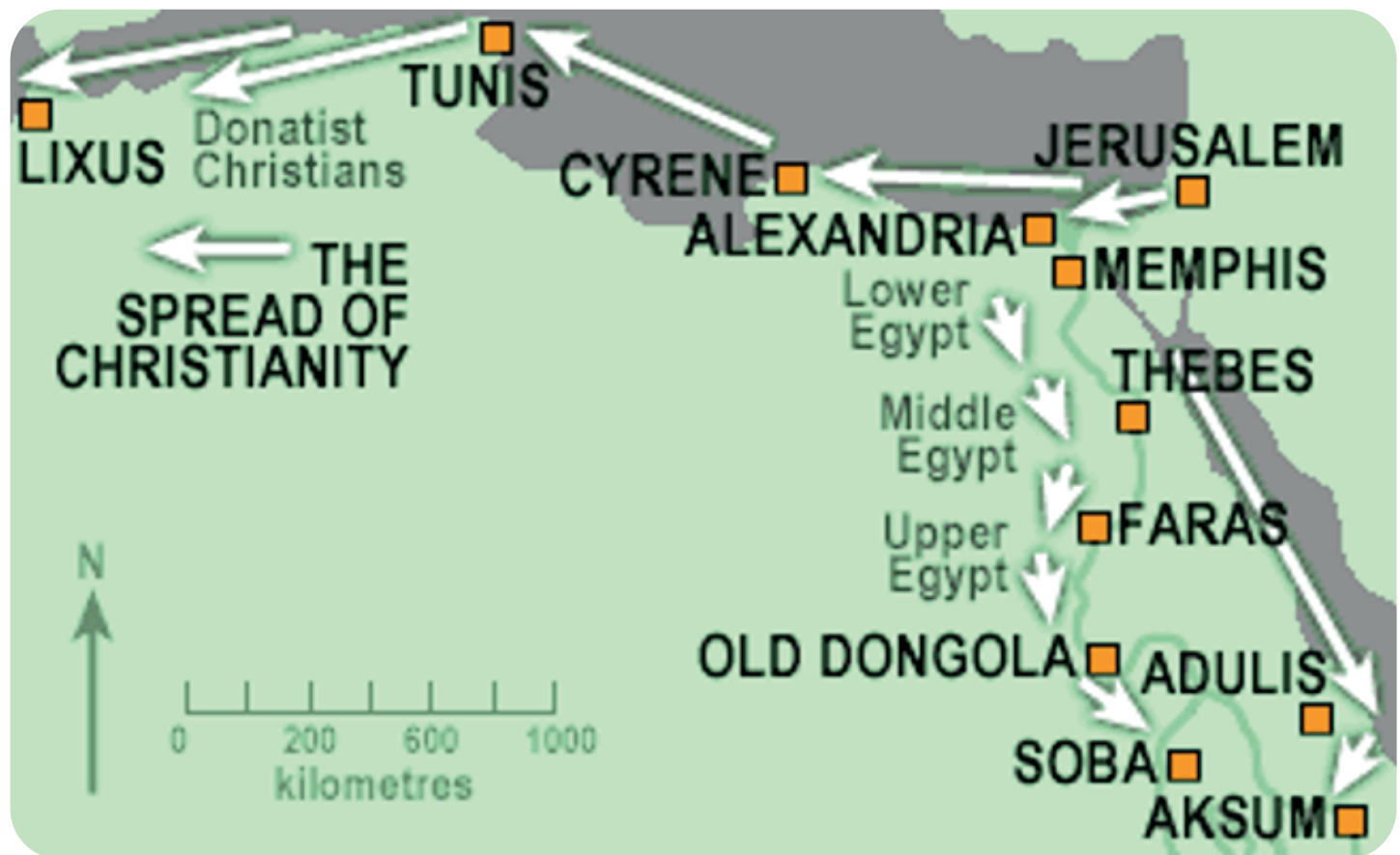


the eight Christian Berber states that followed it stand as a testament to the enduring strength of African Christianity even in times of imperial decline.

And further south, Christian kingdoms thrived in the Aksumite Empire (modern-day Ethiopia and Eritrea) and the Nubian states of Nobatia, Makuria, and Alodia. These kingdoms preserved Christian traditions for centuries, often in isolation, showcasing the resilience and depth of African Christianity beyond Roman borders.

#### African Popes and Apostolic Legacy

It's worth noting, too, that the African Church was not only vibrant at the grassroots—it was represented at the highest levels of leadership in the universal Church. Three African men served as popes: Pope Victor I, Pope Miltiades, and Pope Gelasius I—all canonized saints. Their legacies remind us that Africa was not just on the receiving end of the Christian mission but stood at the heart of the Church's leadership.



#### Looking Forward by Remembering

As speculation swirls about whether the next pope might come from Africa, we must pray that the Church recovers from its historical amnesia. Africa is not a newcomer to Christianity; it is part of its foundation. To fully understand the Church's past and to envision its future, we must remember the vital role Africa has played—and continues to play—in shaping the body of Christ.

## Reclaiming Economic Agency Part 4

By Rev. Ronald A. Nathan, World Politics Editor

Photos By © CADTM, © Istock

Currently, Africa stands as the most Christian continent in the world. With this significant reality, what should this mean for the continent's economic future? Poverty in Africa remains widespread and deeply rooted, with a large portion of the population living below the poverty line. According to the World Bank, more than 40% of Africa's population lives in extreme poverty (earning less than \$1.90 a day), though these statistics may vary depending on specific regions and countries. Is it too much to ask of God that this situation change? Can faith give us the vision to see the African continent experiencing the biblical concept of *shalom*?

*Shalom* represents not just a state of peace, but a flourishing, whole, and just existence—a condition of well-being that touches all aspects of life: physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and economic. It is the vision of a world in which everything is in its right place, working in harmony for the good of all. In the African context, this vision mirrors the expansive programme of African Redemption—an idea intertwined with Ma'at, an ancient African moral code

rooted in truth-telling, justice, and balance. This is further reinforced by the concept of *Ubuntu*, which emphasizes communal sharing, generosity, hospitality, mutual care, and the prioritization of community over individual greed. The collective joy and success of the community



.....  
Continued on Next Page





are paramount, and in this, we find the essence of *shalom*.

However, the historical experiences of Africans and people of African descent have been marred by enslavement, segregation, and colonialism. This history challenges the African Church and African Christians to develop a decolonized hermeneutic—one that critiques the colonial theologies imposed on African societies, which have contributed to the undermining of African economic systems and the continent’s underdevelopment. The African Church is called to reclaim its economic agency, understanding that *abundant living for all* is not merely a spiritual

attainment in heavenly places but a real and tangible vision linked to abundant resources for the benefit of all.

In today’s context, African-American-founded denominations are an integral part of African Christianity. These communities blend faith traditions and cultural identities, worshipping, praying, and witnessing alongside Christians from older, historically established denominations that originated from European and American missions, as well as from African Indigenous, and independent churches. This diverse body of believers now faces the pressing question: How can the African Chris-



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tian community—numbering over 718 million—reclaim its economic agency in a way that fulfils its spiritual calling to bring “good news” to 1.2 billion Africans?

The challenges are manifold. Africa’s diverse communities face numerous obstacles, including political instability, economic inequality, and the lingering effects of colonial exploitation. Yet, within these challenges lie immense opportunities. As African Christians engage in mission work and community development, they must blend their spiritual commitments with a holistic approach to human flourishing. This approach should not only focus on evangelism but also address the creation of economic opportunities, the promotion of education, the extension of health services, and the advocacy for social justice.

The dynamism of African Christianity, particularly within Pentecostal and Indigenous African Churches, has not always translated into economic agency. The gospel’s transformative power has not consistently led to economic empowerment or political transformation. Yet, African churches—through their widespread influence in communities across the continent—hold a unique opportunity to play a pivotal role in addressing the economic challenges faced by ordinary Africans, particularly those who have yet to benefit from the continent’s vast mineral wealth.

Despite Africa’s rich natural resources, including oil, gold, diamonds, and rare earth minerals, economic injustice, inequality, and poverty remain pervasive in many parts of the continent. African churches are uniquely positioned to advocate for economic empowerment, social justice, and ethical governance. Through a unified voice and actions rooted in *shalom*, African churches can champion the causes of economic fairness, ethical business practices, and political accountability.

Poverty in Africa is a multifaceted issue, deeply influenced by a combination of economic, political, social, and environmental factors. While significant efforts have been made to reduce poverty, profound challenges persist. To create lasting change, a coordinated approach involving governments, international organizations, the private sector, and local communities is essential. However, the church can also play an

indispensable role by offering a transformative theological and practical approach to the alleviation of poverty.

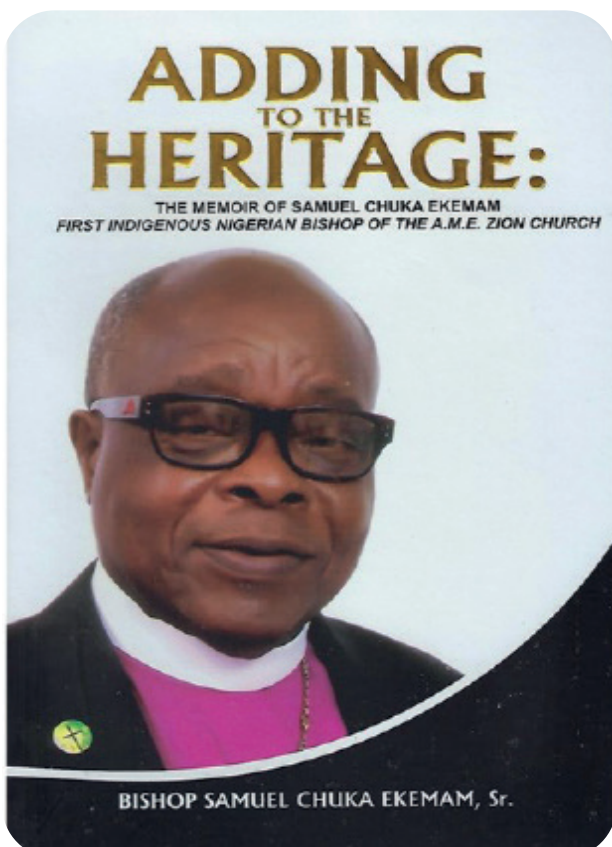
Finally, African churches can foster a culture of economic discipleship. This means teaching their members to be responsible stewards of their finances while also cultivating a sense of communal responsibility. Churches can stress the importance of:

- **Financial Stewardship:** Encouraging individuals to manage their finances wisely, save for the future, and invest in sustainable development within their communities.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Promoting small businesses, entrepreneurship, and local economic development as vehicles for creating wealth and job opportunities.
- **Ethical Business Practices:** Encouraging ethical entrepreneurship that uplifts communities and ensures that wealth is distributed fairly.
- **Education and Skill Development:** Advocating for access to education and vocational training to equip individuals for self-sufficiency and the betterment of society.
- **Collective Action for Social Justice:** Mobilizing churches to advocate for policies that address economic inequality, land rights, access to resources, and fair governance.

Through these initiatives, the African Church can once again become a powerful force for both spiritual and economic transformation, leading the charge in the movement to reclaim economic agency for the masses and helping to usher in a new era of prosperity and justice for Africa. The church’s role in this process is not just to preach spiritual liberation but to actively participate in the economic liberation of its people, ensuring that the gospel’s message of abundant life touches every dimension of existence.

**Rev. Ronald A. Nathan is an elder of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and the Star of Zion’s world politics editor. He is currently located in the United Kingdom.**

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