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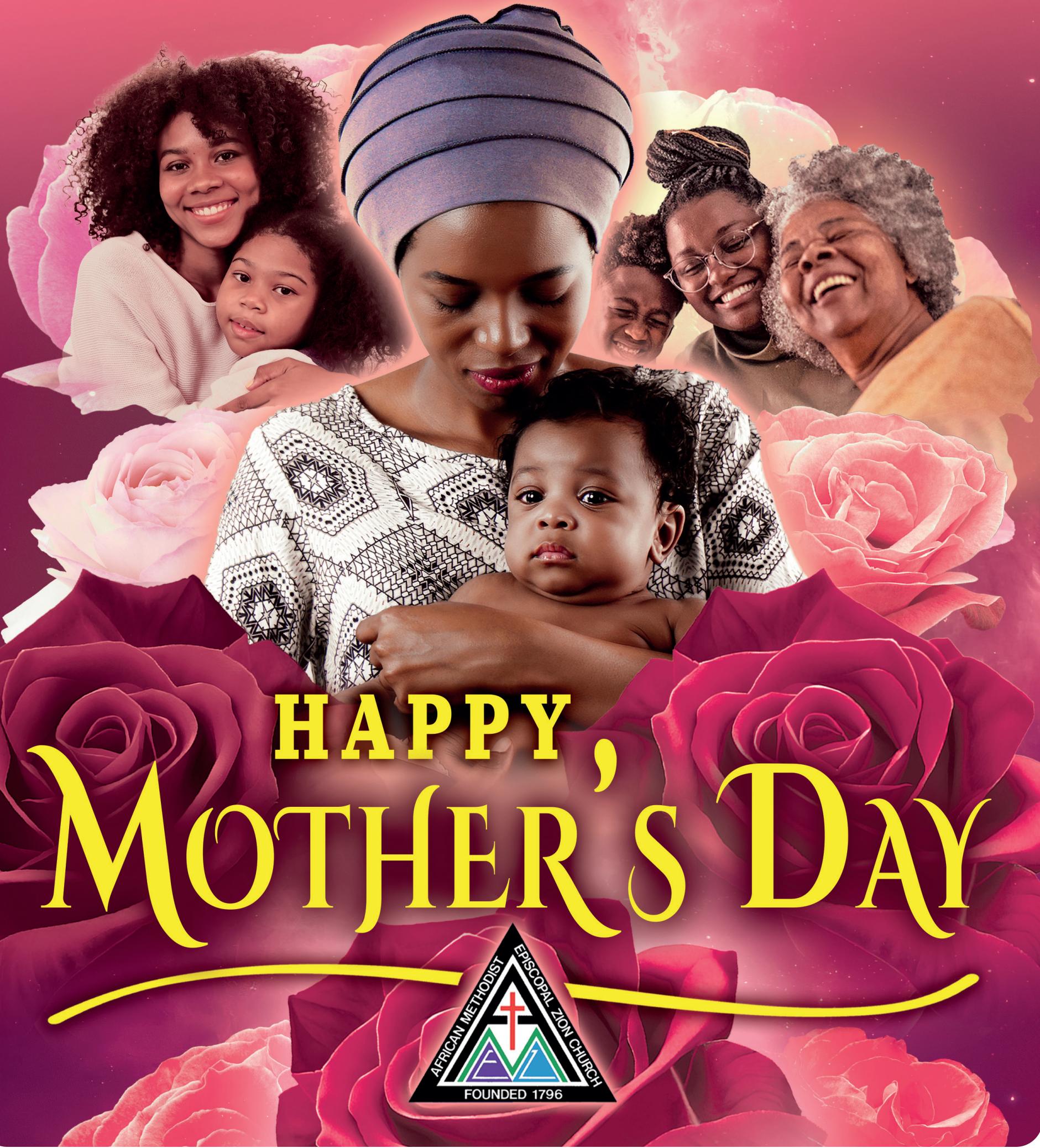
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# THE STAR OF ZION

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**THE STAR OF ZION**  
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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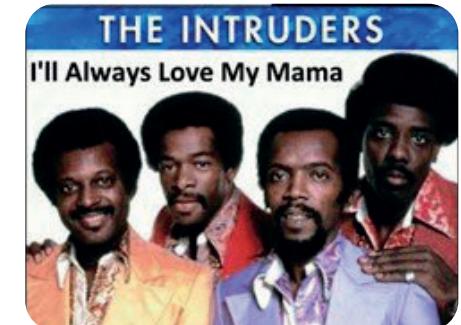
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IN THIS  
ISSUELOOK INSIDE  
PAGES3-14  
ZION  
SPOTLIGHT14-18  
EDUCATION19  
ACOLYTES20-21  
SOCIAL  
JUSTICE21-24  
HEALTH &  
WELLNESS24  
LIFESTYLE25  
FINANCIAL  
FREEDOM25-27  
GLOBAL  
LEADERSHIP28-29  
OBITUARIES29-30  
WORLD  
POLITICS31  
OPINIONHAPPY  
MOTHER'S  
DAY

By Debra Chappelle-Polk, Zion Spotlight Editor

May 2025, New York, NY... Throughout the Bible, motherhood is referred to as a high calling and revered in scripture: Genesis 3:20 “*The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living;*” Exodus 20:12 “*Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you;*” Proverbs 31:28, “*Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: ‘Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.’*”



Church Mothers in Christianity hold a profound historical significance that often goes unrecognized

in mainstream narratives. In African American churches, older women are affectionately referred to as “Church Mothers.” Church Mothers are usually older women venerated for their wisdom and spiritual leadership. However, the symbolic role of Church Mothers extends beyond their biological age and encompasses their spiritual maturity and authority within the church. Church Mothers serve as spiritual guides and mentors, offering wisdom, encouragement, and support to those in need. They provide a nurturing presence within the church, fostering a sense of belonging. They also often serve as liaisons between the church and the community.

Mothers are also revered in songs. Who doesn’t remember “I’ll Always Love My Mama, She’s My Favorite Girl!” Many of you are probably already humming the words. The song, recorded by The Intruders over 50 years ago, has become an “anthem.” It was written by Gamble & Huff, co-written by McFadden & Whitehead, and inspired by Kenny Gamble’s mother, Ruby, who died in 2012.

## MOTHER'S DAY ORIGINS

*‘I hope and pray that someone, sometime, will find a memorial on Mother’s Day commemorating her for the matchless service she renders to humanity in every field of life. She is entitled to it.’* - Ann Reeves Jarvis



Mrs. Debra Chappelle-Polk  
Zion Spotlight Editor  
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Anna Reeves Jarvis was a social activist and the founder of Mother's Day Work Clubs. As a woman defined by her faith, she was very active within the Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church community. She was also a Sunday School teacher. It was during one of her lessons in 1876 that her daughter Anna Maria Jarvis (pictured), found her inspiration for Mother's

Day and led the movement for the commemoration. By 1912, many states, towns, and churches had adopted Mother's Day as an annual holiday. In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation designating the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. Anna Maria Jarvis was successful in getting Mother's Day made an official national holiday; however, she wasn't satisfied with the way that holiday was celebrated. While lobbying to get the holiday recognized, she teamed up with florists, recommending a white carnation as the symbolic flower of Mother's Day. Interestingly, Jarvis would later denounce the holiday's



commercialization and spend the latter part of her life trying to remove it from the calendar. Anna Maria Jarvis died of heart failure in November 1948 at the age of 84 in a sanitarium; her medical bills were paid by people in the floral and greeting card industries.

Mother's Day is celebrated in May, a month that holds deep spiritual significance. May is a time of grace, favor, and divine blessings. It symbolizes rebirth, growth, and the awakening of our spiritual potential. The birthstone for May is the emerald, symbolizing love and success.

Mother's Day is all about making Mom's Day memorable, and traditionally involves buying flowers, cards, and taking Mom out for lunch, dinner, or all the above. It is important to remember that while Mother's Day is a one-day holiday, mothers are mothers 365 days of the year.

So, hug and kiss your mothers, your grandmothers, great-grandmothers, godmothers, aunts, and all the women who have been like mothers in your lives. Show them how much you love them. Pull out the CD of "I'll Always Love My Mother." If you don't have the CD, YouTube it. Play it for all the mothers in your lives. Better yet, grab their hands (literally or figuratively) and dance with your FAVORITE GIRL!

**Fun Facts:** Is It *Mother's Day*, *Mothers' Day*, or *Mothers Day*? The correct spelling is Mother's Day (with an apostrophe). The possessive noun form is required in the official name of the holiday. Also, note that Mother's Day is always capitalized as a proper noun.

Mother's Day marks the highest phone traffic of the year in the United States. So, call your Mom. Texting is not permitted.

**Reference Sources:** *Wikipedia*; *Alice E.M. Underwood Life Style Blog* @Grammarly; *QuillBot*

## Little Rock's Historic Class of New Members

By Anika Robinson and Linda Kennedy  
Photos By Gloria Joyner Johnson  
Little Rock Makes History with New Pastor

On Sunday, March 30, 2025, history was made as twenty-nine new members were received into full membership at Little Rock A.M.E. Zion Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. Dr. Derrill A. Blue, pastor in charge, was assigned by Bishop Darryl B. Starnes in October 2024, about six months prior. The congregation erupted in a standing applause, hallelujah, and amen when this announcement was made! Visitors present for worship and this presentation of new members were Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Presiding Prelate of the Piedmont Episcopal District, Missionary Supervisor Mrs. Camille C. Starnes, Presiding Elder of the North Charlotte District, Dr. Wardell Henderson, and Mrs. Myrtle Henderson.



The Leader-of-Leaders, Mr. Gilbert McRae was overjoyed as he presented the new members of Class 13 to the congregation and their class leaders. Included in the new members were singles, couples and as well as families of three, four and five. Rev. Belinda Austin, Associate Minister trains the new members class for the designated period of weeks/



months and Dr. Blue trains the final class session before they receive the Right Hand of Fellowship.

There are twelve classes at Little Rock, and the assignments were to the Class Leaders as follows:

Class 1: Rev. Dr. Sonya Campbell, two new members; Class 2: Ms. Ty Humes, one new member; Class 3: Mr. Keith Powe, one new member; Class 4: Ms. Shabara Ellis, two new members; Class 5: Mr. Lynn Crump, one new class member; Class 6: Ms. Mary Davis, six new members including Dr. and Rev. Blue as well as Makis and Norie Blue; Class 7: Mr. John Moore one new member; Class 8: Mr. Stafford Mackey, seven new members; Class 9: Rev. Michelle Courtney, two new members; Class 10: Ms. Chella Mills, one new member; Class 11: Ms. Glain Lewis, two new members and Class 12: Dr. Angelia Fryer, three new members including Bishop Dwayne A. Walker and Missionary Supervisor Donna Smith Walker.

God be praised as souls continue to be added to his kingdom through the preached word and loving-kindness!

# Zion Gathers in Mobile: 2025 Board of Bishops Meeting Mobile, Alabama

By the Star of Zion News  
Photos by Mr. James Feldman

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church convened its 2025 Board of Bishops Meeting in the historic city of Mobile, Alabama from February 12–13. Hosted by Bishop Dwayne A. Walker in the Alabama-Florida Episcopal Area, this year's meeting brought together episcopal leaders, general officers, clergy, and lay members from



across the global Zion connection.

The gathering opened with a powerful Wednesday morning worship service that set the tone for the entire meeting. The service began in a sacred moment of meditation, followed by the singing of the processional hymn, "God of Grace and God of Glory." The invocation was given by Bishop Bernardo Ngunza, and Bishop George W.C. Walker, Sr. led the congregation in the hymn of praise, "Praise Him! Praise Him!" Bishop Anthony Wither-spoon guided the responsive reading, Bishop Michael Frencher, Sr. offered the Affirmation of Faith, and scripture readings were shared by Bishop Dennis V. Proctor, Bishop Warren M. Brown, and Bishop George D. Crenshaw. The Gloria Patri was led by Bishop S. Chuka Ekemam, and the worship intensified with the prayer hymn "Guide My Feet," led by Bishop Kenneth Monroe. Bishop Melanie Miller offered a heartfelt morning prayer. Bishop Dwayne A. Walker, the host bishop, also served as the worship leader for the morning service and guided the congregation through the service with pastoral care and energy.

The International A.M.E. Zion Music Ministry blessed the service with rich anthems, and Bishop Brian R. Thompson, Sr. lifted the Minis-



try of Kindness offering. Announcements followed from Bishop Eric Leake before Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Sr. introduced the preacher of the hour, Bishop Hilliard K. Dogbe.

## "Sort out your Mess" 2 Chronicles 20:25 KJV – Wednesday Morning Sermon by Bishop Hilliard K. Dogbe

Bishop Dogbe delivered a soul-stirring message rooted in the global mission of Zion and the call to faithful, fearless discipleship. The congregation responded in full spirit, singing "I Can Hear My Savior Calling" during the invitation. Bishop W. Darin Moore led the offering, and then the Church entered a historic moment: the election of the new President of the Board of Bishops.

In a powerful and celebratory decision,

**Bishop U.U. Effiong** was elected President of the Board of Bishops. Though unable to be present at this year's session, Bishop Effiong's election was received with joy and admiration, affirming his leadership and the church's global unity. Congratulations and prayers of support were lifted for this next season of episcopal leadership.

Wednesday evening's service featured preaching from Bishop Daran H. Mitchell of the Mid-Atlantic Episcopal District, who challenged the Church to stay rooted in its calling and bold in its ministry.

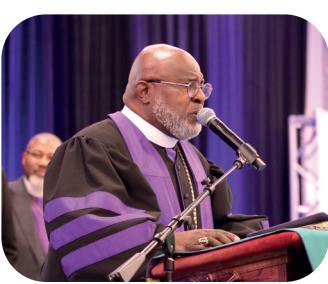
## "It's A New Day" Genesis 1:1 NLT – Wednesday Evening Sermon by Bishop Daran H. Mitchell

The night closed with praise and a sense of anticipation for the work ahead.



Thursday morning brought reports and presentations from the denomination's key institutions and ministries. Greetings were shared by Dr. Anthony Davis (Livingstone College), Dr. Vergel Lattimore (Hood Theological Seminary), Mrs. Archinya Ingram (Clinton College), and Rev. Claude Shuford (Lo-



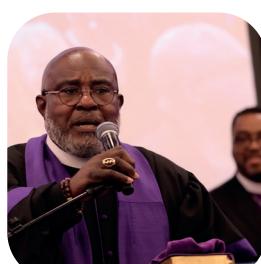


max-Hannon Jr. College). Updates also came from A.M.E. Zion University of Liberia, the Connectional Lay Council, the Women's Home and Overseas Missionary Society, Zion Benefits Services, and the Harriet Tubman Home. These reports showcased the Church's expansive work in education, missions, leadership development, and historical preservation.

The closing worship service on Thursday evening was led by Reverend Daniel Doe, Presiding Elder of the Accra West-Kasoa District in the East Ghana Conference.

#### **"Refinding Inheritance" Genesis 18: 17-19 – Thursday Evening Sermon by Rev. Daniel Doe**

Reverend Doe's preaching brought a rich and dynamic close to the gathering. His sermon was both a personal testimony and a prophetic word, reminding all present of Zion's global impact



and God's continued faithfulness.

As the benediction was offered and the saints prepared to return to their various homes and ministries, it was clear that the 2025 Board of Bishops Meeting had been more than a business session. It

was a revival. It was a moment of sacred alignment, with Bishop Dwayne A. Walker providing warm and excellent hospitality in the Alabama-Florida Episcopal Area, and with Bishop U.U. Effiong stepping into his role as the new President of the Board, The A.M.E. Zion Church continues to move forward with renewed vision, bold faith, and the anointing to lead in this present age.



Bishop Anthony Witherspoon  
Presiding Prelate



Rev. Al C. Hamilton  
Guest Presenter



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



Rev. Kelvin I. Harris  
Guest Preacher



Rev. Dr. Kay M. Gabriel  
Missionary Supervisor



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Rev. Dr. Floyd Chambers & Mrs. Hattie Chambers  
Host Pastor/Presiding Elder & First Lady

# God Brought Healing to Us...The 145th Session of the Central North Carolina Annual Conference, November 7 - 10, 2024

By Rev. Debra L. Gray  
Photo By Mr. James Feldman

The 2024 elections took place two days before in one of the most divisive elections in recent years (according to the Pew Research Center). President Donald Trump was elected for a second time to the White House. Many hearts were disillusioned by the result of the election. Hurt and troubled about the future, we came to the 145th Session of the Central North Carolina Annual Conference.

On that Thursday afternoon at 1 pm, the exuberance felt from seeing one another's faces in this great gathering of the saints made every heart glad. The clergy processed to "Rejoice, Rejoice, Rejoice, Give Thanks and Sing" for our Holy Communion worship. Presiding Elder Rev. Dr. Orlando Dowdy was our worship leader, and although the music was beautiful and the occasion appreciated by all, the heaviness in our hearts was nevertheless evident. We came, however, in obedience to our tradition as Methodists that primarily began with the Christmas Conference of 1784 in Baltimore, Maryland. Thomas Coke, Thomas Vasey, and Richard Whatcoat met with Francis Asbury and others. Their purpose was to edify the American Methodist Church that was already doing a great work in this great country called America. Like the Methodists then, we, too, have been called to edify God's Church in our great country today.

Sometimes, though, in our individual walk with God, there are times we do not have answers, and the hurt has overshadowed our joy. We feel numb and unable to articulate even our heart's cry. Many of us felt this despondency after the results of the election. The dread of a future with a leader whose character had already been witnessed four years prior was frightening. He had been found guilty of 34 charges. Could racism fueled by fear and hatred have such a devastating effect on our country? It was at this intersection of pain and deliverance that our presiding prelate navigated us to a plateau I never expected. Bishop William Darin Moore, with his electrifying presence of constant joy, intoxicating enthusiasm, and rich theological understanding, greeted us in love and led his premiere annual gathering with the assurance to us that everything will be alright.

The presiding elder of the Sensational Sanford District, Rev. Dr. Sharon B. Newton, was the Communion worship preacher. Her message, entitled "I Still Believe in Miracles," encouraged the conference even more. A highlight thought in her message was if you need a miracle, you have to be broken beyond your capacity to fix the break. After our afternoon worship, the Lay Council proceeded with a wonderful program which included youth representation. The Christian Education Department honored Ms. Nora Kathi McNeill for her outstanding service to our church. Rev. Kenneth Swann was our worship leader for the evening service, and the Rev. Dr. Julian Pridgen concluded our Thursday events with a sermon entitled, "The Water at the Well". The woman discovered that the water at the well was more important than the water in the well.

Friday morning worship was presided over by our worship leader, Presiding Elder Rev. James French, which included our Episcopal Address and the responses made to it by Rev. Dr. Reginald Broadnax and Mrs. Thomascena LeGrand. We also received reports from the presiding elders and various committees. In the afternoon, we were blessed with a presentation by Rev. Dr. Hannah Broome on equity and justice. Equity gives everyone what they need to be successful, but justice tears down the walls of conflict that make things hard in the first place. Our guest prelate of the Alabama Florida Episcopal District, the Right Reverend



Dwayne A. Walker, gave us our plenary session on equipping the saints. That evening, our Missionary Supervisor, Mrs. Devieta Moore, led our Missionary Candlelight Service, which included the Missionary Stole Ceremony, which put stoles on more than thirty Zionites. It was a joy to see so many receive their stoles, as the work of the missionaries in our African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church forges ahead. To augment the joy of the stoling, our guest bishop, Rev. Dwayne Walker, filled us to overflowing with his message entitled, "Expect A Miracle" from the dry bones passage in Ezekiel 37. We will be filled with His breath; then we can fight the battle And Win.

On Saturday morning, our blessings continued with Rev. Nathaniel Cox as our worship leader and Rev. Darius Ballard as our morning preacher. In his message, "Make Me Wanna Holler," Rev. Ballard introduced us to the theologian Walter Brueggemann, who tells us that lament reminds God of His covenantal promises. A Minister's Spouses, Widows, and Widowers dinner concluded the evening.

On Sunday, the ushers from our various districts marched to the applause of all assembled. By the last day of the conference, we were not the same as we were at the beginning. We were healed from our pain, revived, refreshed, renewed, and strengthened for yet another conference year. As John Wesley fought opposition on his decision to send Bishop Coke to America, so, too, our Bishop presided over his first annual meeting of the Central North Carolina Annual Conference in the wake of a discouraging time. Our presiding prelate and pastor of us all led us to the throne of grace, where we found the power of a loving God who is able to do all things but fail. In his episcopal address on Friday, Bishop W. Darin Moore came to the floor and, standing in front of a podium (as is his custom), gave words that affirmed who we are as a people and confirmed our faith in the God that calls us to a higher calling in Him. Bishop Moore addressed our political climate as well as the health of our churches. These are rough notes from the life-inspiring words of the 99th Bishop in the line of succession, our own well-loved Rev. Dr. W. Darin Moore.

Encouraging words in a damaging political environment

- African Americans have endured insurmountable odds. Author Lerone Bennett, Jr. revealed that the circumstances of the Civil War forced Lincoln to inevitably write the Emancipation Proclamation. His first priority, though, was keeping the Union intact.
- We are survivors, and we are the soul of America
- The soul of black folk is the Black Church
- We must be instrumental at this crucial time, which has not been experienced in 50 years
- The country chose Barabbas, a criminal
- Because Barabbas was chosen, we realize that one can vote with the majority and still be on the wrong side of history
- We cannot dismiss politics from our church pulpits
- We must stand for the King of Kings
- Give yourselves room to breathe; God is still in control, but lamenting is Biblical
- Lamenting is the order of the day because we will not normalize what we see in our country today
- Don't allow despair to rule and cause us to drop out

A message to our churches:

- We have declining numbers of members in our churches
- We must be in community in order to serve and grow in God
- If we get wrapped up in ourselves, the "I" syndrome will eventually turn into "I" dolatry
- There are three categories of people other than our regular worship-

pers

1. Nones – they have no religious affiliations
2. Somes – those who come sometimes, better known as the CME (Christmas, Mother's Day, and Easter)
3. Dones – they used to come but no longer do; some have used COVID as the reason for their departure from church
- Some of us need to change what we do in our churches
1. Friendly ushers
2. Choirs that know what they're doing as worship leaders

### 3. Preachers need to be excited about what we are doing

- Some of us are monitoring but not making a change
- We must be intentional
- GOD HAS A WAY OF SHOWING UP WHEN THINGS ARE THE WORST

“and the power of the Lord was present to heal them” (Luke 5:17, KJV)

# The North Charlotte District's Lay Council Annual Recognition Luncheon A Heartfelt Celebration of Unsung Heroes

By G. Joyner Johnson

On Saturday, April 5, 2025, the North Charlotte District's Lay Council hosted its Annual Recognition Luncheon at the Wardell Henderson Ministry Center. The event was a resounding success, marked by elegance and heartfelt acknowledgments.

Ms. Danielle Covington of Greenville A.M.E. Zion Church was impeccable as the Mistress of Ceremonies, seamlessly guiding over 125 attendees through the program and the luncheon with poise and grace.

The proceedings began with an invocation and scripture reading, after which Ms. Cindy Saunders, District Chaplain, led a heartfelt prayer and blessed the food. Following this, the District Lay Council President, Ms. Carolyn Hubbard, extended a warm welcome to all present and shared the rich history of this annual observance.

A special memorial moment to honor Ms. Shameka M. Henderson, a beloved young adult who transitioned from time to eternity on September 7, 2024. She was a diligent lay leader in her local church as well as in the North Charlotte District. A certificate of honor was presented to her parents.

The luncheon itself was a culinary delight, enjoyed with great enthusiasm by all attendees. Once the meal concluded, Dr. Sheldon R. Shipman took the stage to present Presiding Elder Wardell Henderson, who delivered thoughtful remarks and invited his wife, Mrs. Myrtle Henderson, to address the assembly in her unique and engaging manner.

Presiding Elder Henderson then proceeded to honor a distinguished lay member

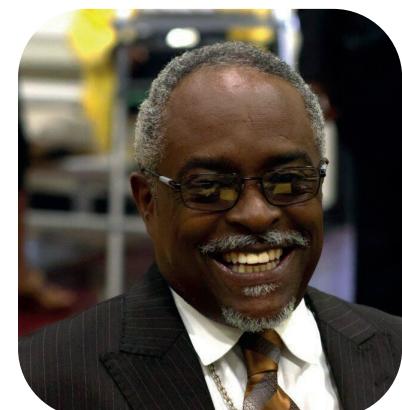
from each church in the district with a recognition certificate. As Ms. Hubbard called each church representative's name, she read a brief



biography highlighting why their church had chosen them as unsung heroes. Elder Henderson personally greeted each honoree, shaking hands and presenting their certificates with genuine appreciation.

The honorees recognized were Ms. Christy Bryant-Little Rock, Ms. Katie Weldon-Greenville Memorial, Ms. Erma Black-Torrence Chapel, Ms. Quija Marshall-Rockwell, Master Carter Little-Bethesda, Ms. Natasha Durant- Mowing Glade, Ms. Tecara “Nikki” Atkins- Torrence Grove, Mr. Charles Sharpe-Myers Tabernacle, Mr. Herman Autry-Clement, Ms. Tiffany McCain-Reeves Temple, Mr. David Witherpoon-Huntersville, Ms. Michelle Donaldson-Caldwell Chapel, Mr. Trent Neal-Columbus Chapel, and Ms. Erin Aaron-Wesley.

Adding to the ambiance of the luncheon was soul-stirring music provided by the Mowing Glade A.M.E. Zion Church, under the pastoral leadership of Rev. Morgan Glenn.



Among the distinguished guests was Dr. Mary S. Ponds, President of the Western North Carolina Conference Lay Council, whose presence added to the significance of the occasion.

The event concluded on a harmonious note with the closing hymn, “Blest Be the Tie That Binds,” led by Elder Henderson, followed by the Lay Council Closing Prayer.



The North Charlotte District's Lay Council Annual Recognition Luncheon was not just a gathering; it was a heartfelt celebration of the church community's dedication and the unsung heroes who make a profound impact within their churches and beyond.

# Rev. Dr. Curtis T. Walker Sr. Celebrates 50 Years in Christian Ministry

By Patricia M. Wilson  
Photos by Anthony Gray

“A Shepherd’s Heart 50 Years Christian Ministry” was the theme of the event recognizing and honoring The Reverend Doctor Curtis Theodore Walker Senior, Pastor of Beth-El African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Cleveland District-Ohio Conference in Cleveland, Ohio on Saturday, March 22, 2025. On this day people from across Zion, Akron OH, and Cleveland OH gathered to pay homage to Rev. Dr. Curtis T. Walker Sr. They gathered at the DoubleTree by Hilton Akron/Fairlawn hotel to recognize and celebrate his 50 years in Christian Ministry and 50 years as a clergy member and leader in The A.M.E. Zion Church.

Arriving guests were treated to an assortment of appetizers and photo opportunities with other guests and a life-size photo of the honoree as they waited to be seated for dinner. The emcee for the evening was his son, Curtis T. Walker Jr., Ph.D., who gave a summary of his dad’s accomplishments as only a loving son could. Mrs. Vanessa D. Walker was escorted into the ballroom by The Reverend Marion Wheeler Jr., Pastor of Ruth A.M.E. Zion Church in Sharon, PA, and he also gave the Invocation for the evening.

Rev. Dr. Walker was presented to his guests following the playing of his favorite hymn, *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*, and a slide show of various moments in his life from childhood till just a few months prior to the evening events. His amazement was very apparent as he entered the full ballroom and even more so when the guests all stood to recognize and applaud him.

Mrs. Laura V. Womack, a member of Beth-El, welcomed the attendees and shared the occasion by quoting his favorite scripture, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”. Verses that are engraved in his heart. He is a Man, Pastor, Preacher, Presiding Elder, Father, and Husband who is full of faith in God and does not hesitate to share it.

The Mayor of Akron, Ohio, Mayor Shammash Malik, who is also a friend of Rev. Walker, brought greetings on behalf of himself, his wife, Alice, and the City of Akron. On a personal note, he remarked on how Rev. Dr. Walker has supported him and was available to lend a listening ear and offer advice or suggestions. Mayor Malik read the Proclamation from the City of Akron that recognized the significant contributions made by Rev. Walker for the City of Akron, including when he served as the President of the Akron Public School Board of Education and was instrumental in the many programs and advancements made during his tenure.

Following the Blessing of the Meal offered by Rev. Sarah L. Thomas of Beth-El, a slide show was presented during dinner where guests were able to view many facets of his life, from high school, undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate studies to his first pastorate and current pastorate and family, fun, and social times.

After the scrumptious dinner, Mrs. Mary Bell from Beth-El gave a wonderful and very timely and appropriate rendition of Mahalia Jackson’s *I Will Live the Life I Sing About in My Song*. One of Rev. Walker’s sons in the Ministry, Rev. William Rankin, Pastor of St. Matthew A.M.E.



Zion Church in Sewickley, PA, gave remarks on how tough Rev. Walker was as a mentor, tough but fair. This sentiment was shared by two of his “Special Interns” in the Ministry, Rev. Dr. Rosalynne Mitchell-Martin, Pastor of St. Mark A.M.E. Zion Church in Dover, OH, and Rev. Deborah Hines from Beth-El. They shared stories of “watch me, learn from me, now you do it” teaching under Rev. Dr. Walker.



Mr. Michael J. Wilson Sr., Preacher’s Steward, and Mrs. Inez Adams-Brooks from the Stewardess Board commented on the many programs and activities introduced by the honoree and the love, care, concern, and discipline witnessed by them during the past fifteen years. Mrs. Patricia M. Wilson, Class Leader, presented a congratulatory message from the International Ministers and Lay Association. A City of Cleveland, Ohio, Proclamation from Mayor Justin Bibb for Rev. Walker was presented and read earlier in the evening.

The Right Reverend Brian R. Thompson, Senior (Presiding Prelate of the Mid-Atlantic Episcopal District), was previously engaged and was not able to attend the evening’s event. He was, however, scheduled to bring the morning message on Sunday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>. It was a great surprise for everyone, especially for Rev. Dr. Walker, when the Bishop and Missionary Supervisor, The Reverend Felicia R. Thompson, walked into the ballroom and was able to give remarks during the event. Bishop Thompson recalled seeing and making note of Rev. Walker early in the Bishop’s ministry and knew Rev. Walker as a trustworthy man of integrity and principles.



Additional remarks were given by his Presiding Elder, The Reverend Doctor Audie Vincent Simon I, Cleveland District-Ohio Conference; Ms. Cynthia Ann Brown, lifelong friend from Bloomfield CT; cousin, Ms. Markita Greene from Windsor CT; brother, Mr.

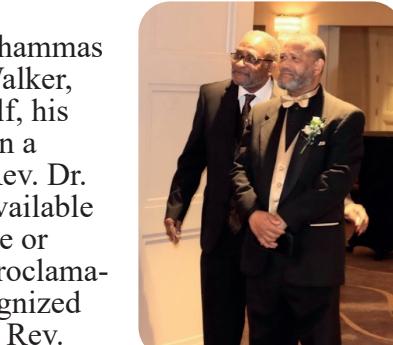
Derek Walker from East Hartford CT; daughter, Dr. Vanessa Walker Harris from Glen Allen VA, son Mr. Will Oliver from Erie PA and a surprise video greeting from his brother, Mr. Larry Walker in Australia. All told stories from their relationship with the honoree. Some embarrassing, some funny, and most of all thankful.

There were several notable persons attending the celebration: Rev. Dr. Vergel Lattimore, President of Hood Theological Seminary; Rev. Dr. Michael Posey, Presiding Elder of the Columbus-Cincinnati District-Ohio Conference; Dr. Monica Posey, President of Cincinnati State Technical and Community College; Dr. Patricia Ackerman, co-founder of INDEEDWE CODE; Mr. Vernon Sykes, former Ohio State Senator; Mrs. Barbara Sykes, former member of the Ohio House of Representatives and current Akron Public Schools Board Member; Dr. C. Michael Robinson, Superintendent Akron Public Schools; , along with representatives from the Akron NAACP and Summit County Board of Commissioners.

Just prior to final remarks by Mrs. Walker and Rev. Dr. Walker, the anniversary committee chairs, Mr. and Mrs. Michael J. and Patricia M. Wilson, presented Rev. Walker with a bound book of some of his many, many pictures that he has collected and treasured from his secular travels and Christian ministry.

The Walkers thanked everyone for the love shown them throughout their ministry, especially this evening, invited them to partake of the special thank-you gifts they had for everyone, and to enjoy the remainder of the evening with dancing and fellowship.

Rev. Dr. Walker is a native of Hartford, Connecticut, having been educated in the Hartford Public School System. He attended the Univer-



sity of Connecticut in Storrs, CT, graduating in 1976 with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. He earned his Master of Divinity degree from Hood Theological Seminary, Livingstone College, Salisbury, North Carolina, in 1979. In 1990, he earned his Doctor of Divinity from Emory University/Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Georgia.



Dr. Walker's Christian Walk began at Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Hartford, CT, under the pastorate of Rev. Dr. Alfred E. White. He preached his Trial Sermon and became a local preacher on March 7, 1975. He was admitted on June 8, 1975, to the New England Annual Conference. From 1976 to 1978, under the pastorate of Rev. Dr. Joseph Johnson, Dr. Walker served as the Youth Minister and Christian Education Director at Soldier's Memorial A. M. E. Zion Church in Salisbury, North Carolina. In 1977, Dr. Walker was ordained a Deacon by the late Bishop William Milton Smith during the Western North Carolina Annual Conference at Soldier's Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church. At the June 1979 New England Annual Conference held at Columbus Avenue A. M. E. Zion Church, he was ordained an Elder by the late Bishop Herbert Bell Shaw. Dr. Walker served as Co-Presiding Elder of the Akron District of the Ohio Annual Conference from 2013 to 2014. In December 2020, Bishop W. Darin Moore appointed him the Presiding Elder of the Akron District-Ohio Annual Conference, where he continues to serve with passion and faithfulness.

During Dr. Walker's 50 years in Christian Ministry, he has served under eleven presiding elders and served under Bishops; Herbert Bell Shaw, William Milton Smith, Ruben Lee Speaks, James Clinton Hoggard, Sr., Alfred E. White, Cecil Bishop, Marshall Haywood Strickland II, Nathaniel Jarrett, Louis Hunter Sr., W. Da-



rin Moore and Brian R. Thompson Sr.

Rev. Dr. Walker has mentored over ten young preachers. He is active in the community he lives in and the community that surrounds the churches he pastors. He has received numerous accolades both secular and in Zion.



He has served the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church as a Pastor, presiding elder, and voting delegate (1984 to 2024) to the General Conference, Christian Education Board Member-Home/Church Division, President of the International Ministers and Lay Association, and Trustee Board Member-Hood Theological Seminary.

Dr. Walker has a devotion in The African American Devotional Bible (KJV – copyright 1997, Zondervan Publishing House) regarding Proverbs 29 titled, "Signs of Hope", A.M.E. Zion Church School Herald Journal, and contributor for the Lenten Booklet devotional. His doctoral thesis was "Empowering Clergy through Education to be Advocates against Spouse Abuse".

Rev. Dr. Walker is the loving and devoted son of the late Emma T. Walker. He is the happy and devoted husband to the former Vanessa Dale Jones and proud father to Will Oliver, Tracie (Ray) McCormick, Rashara Walker (deceased), Dr. Vanessa Walker Harris (M.D.), Dr. Curtis (Betsy) Walker, Jr. (Ph. D.), and adopted daughter Meridith Mackowski. Since the death of Rashara, they have been raising her daughter, Kaelynn Walker. They are the proud grandparents to William Mackowski, Gabrielle Harris, Briana Mackowski, Elijah Kozloff, Savannah McCormick, Zachary Harris, Mya Oliver, Nevaeh McCormick, Matthew Harris, Bennett Walker, Braylon Oliver, Ariah Oliver, Evan Walker, DeAngelo Oliver, and two adopted grandchildren, Taylor Mackowski and Mikayla Mackowski.

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# CLC NEW CANDIDATES FOR OFFICE - 2025-2029



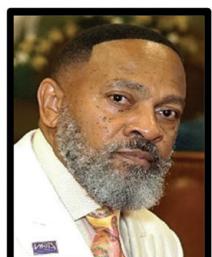
By Regina W. Rivera

The Connectional Lay Council of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church will be convening in the city of Winston-Salem, NC, July 26 – 31, 2025. The Laity pictured below has offered itself as a Candidate for the respective offices listed. Please stop by

their booths during our convention to gather more information about them and their visions for our CLC.

Don't forget to REGISTER for our CLC Convention because your VOTE will make a difference as to who will serve our Connectional Lay Council for the next four years.

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CAROLINA EPISCOPAL  
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PIEDMONT  
EPISCOPAL  
DISTRICT

# St. Louis Appeal

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. They 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.



## Electronic Donations:

Givelify name is:  
Washington Metropolitan A.M.E.  
Zion Church.

## Mailing Address:

613 N. Garrison Ave  
St. Louis, MO. 63103  
God Bless



# PALO ALTO COMMUNITY RECOGNIZES REV. KALOMA SMITH, PASTOR, UNIVERSITY A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

By Debra Chappelle-Polk, Zion Spotlight Editor  
Photo courtesy of Palo Alto News Online

On April 17, 2025, Rev. Kaloma Smith, Pastor at University A.M.E. Zion Church in Palo Alto, California, received the Tall Tree Outstanding Professional Award. The Tall Tree Awards, sponsored by the Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce and the Palo Alto Weekly, recognize outstanding contributions by local civic and business leaders. Over 200 people filled the auditorium of The Oshman Family Jewish Community Center to honor Pastor Smith for his exceptional leadership and dedication to the community.

Pastor Smith is committed to social justice. In 2017, he was appointed Commissioner of the Human Relations Commission for the City of Palo Alto. As a commissioner, he has been heavily involved in addressing issues such as police reform, renter protections, and funding for social services. He also helped to facilitate the city's initiative known as 100 Community Conversations on Race, which brought residents into small groups to discuss race and belonging in the community.

In accepting the award, Pastor Smith acknowledged the many public officials, nonprofit leaders, and other "elder statesmen" who fought to make the community better. "I realize that the Tall Tree Awards is not just a punctuation, it is simply a comma, because there's more work to be done... there's a better world to live in. The rules have changed, the work is harder, but we have to do more."

Pastor Smith said, "The one thing that is encouraging to me is that even as we face more difficult times right now, as our services are being cut, budgets change, issues of the world, I feel as I look around this room that we have the capacity to make the world better."

Pastor Smith has served as the pastor at University A.M.E. Zion since 2013. The church is located in the heart of Silicon Valley, and the congregation is a composite of the community: young, multicultural, and well-educated. Pastor Smith has embraced the mantle and embarked on a mission to utilize his God-given talents to nurture a vibrant, wholesome church community.

"Always get to know the mayor, police commissioner, and funeral director," was valuable advice Pastor Smith received from the late Rev. Dr. Frederick D. Hubbard, the former pastor of the Martin Temple A.M.E. Zion Church and Presiding Elder Emeritus. Pastor Smith has followed this sage advice.



"Redream: Seeing Your Life Through God's Eyes." Under Pastor Smith's stewardship over the past ten years, the University has entered an era of unprecedented revitalization and growth. The congregation has not only expanded in numbers but has also rejuvenated with a younger demographic. The church facilities have been significantly updated and modified to meet the evolving needs of the ministry.

Pastor Smith's unique communication style resonates profoundly with younger generations, including Gen Z and Millennials. His welcoming demeanor has fostered a multicultural congregation, uniting individuals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. This multiculturalism has become a hallmark of the church, creating a rich, inclusive community where everyone can authentically engage with God's profound and nuanced message. To further this mission, Pastor Smith and the congregation are boldly relaunching University in the fall of 2025.

Under his visionary leadership, University is celebrated for its vibrant worship and innovative ministries. Community engagement has been a pivotal focus, with the church earnestly reaching out to the most vulnerable in the community through various initiatives and partnerships.

Pastor Smith is a much sought-after preacher and speaker, known for his powerful, practical, relatable, and biblically based preaching style. He is married to Larin Smith, Associate Director of Major Gifts at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, and they have two beautiful sons.

# The Power of Prayer Propels the Wilmington District

By Laverna Hargrove, Delma Jones

The Wilmington District Women's Home and Overseas Missionary Society held its annual Supply Department Prayer Breakfast on February 22, 2025, at St. James A. M. E. Zion Church, Leland, N.C. Mrs. Delma S. Jones, President of the Wilmington District WH&OMS, presided over the august body of ministers and missionaries who gathered to send Praise and Prayers to our Heavenly King. The main purpose of the Prayer Breakfast is to support the work of the Eastern North Carolina Episcopal District in the Virgin Islands, and through the financial support of the Wilmington District's dedicated members, \$1,000.00 was donated to that work. Dr. DeShondra Smith, Secretary of Youth Missionaries, was the speaker of the morning. Dr. DeShondra Smith delivered a meditation titled "Building on Our Foundation: A Mandate to Reach the Masses" where she encouraged us to let our shared faith and collective legacy as overcomers and conquerors inspire us to serve as missionaries in a world in desperate need of hope, healing, love, peace, kindness, and most importantly, Jesus. Dr. Smith outlined a clear mandate; we've been called to action, to build on our solid foundation, which is Christ, while remaining faithful to the mission and steadfast in our pursuit of equality and justice, with an unwavering commitment to serve all.



Remarks were given by Ernestine James, Secretary of Supply, Delma S. Jones, President, and Rev. Dr. Alexander L. Jones, Presiding Elder, Wilmington District.

The second element of our Quadrennial Theme, "Reaching the Masses in an Ever-Changing World – Equity and Justice", was the focus for our Second Missionary Mass Meeting held on March 22, 2025, at Lee's Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church. The devotions were presided over by Rev. Dr. Edith Davis, pastor of Lee's Chapel. Presiding Elder Rev. Dr. Alexander L. Jones presented Rev. Dr. Charlean B. Mapson, pastor of Evergreen A. M. E. Zion Church, who shared the meditation, "Worth Saving" using the scriptural focus Luke 13: 6-9. Music was provided by the church choir.



At the First Mass Meeting, we initiated the Second Mile Observance Pins Project. Sixty-three pins were ordered. The Second Mile Pins beautifully adorned the various colors of each Department, enhancing our "Color Day" celebration. The Wilmington District proudly supported this effort. To God Be the Glory!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Our workshop presenter, Dr. Davenia Jones Lea, author of The Shulamite Series and founder of Mazuri Ministries (<https://mazuriministries.org/>), presented a workshop entitled "Ain't I A Woman?" She dispelled the myths of the "superwoman" and shared God's design, plan, and purposes for women. She spoke to the beauty of woman from the inside out and gave the charge for woman to wisely build their homes, their churches, and their communities (Proverbs 14:1). She also provided a blueprint for how women are to build based on Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the wall (Nehemiah 1-6). The interactive and engaging workshop provided the participants with the blueprint, tools, and confidence needed "to remember our awe-inspiring God as we fight for our fami-



lies (Nehemiah 4:14) as we open our mouths for the speechless, plead for the rights of the disenfranchised, speak out for justice, and stand up for the poor and the defenseless (Proverbs 31:8-9)!

Dr. Davenia Lea ended our time together, sharing the inspiration of how she learned to fight on her knees. She and her husband had been "lost at sea" in March of 2021, stranded on a cruise ship for 30 days with 14 of those days spent in quarantine. Over 135 passengers and staff contracted COVID, including her husband and four passengers, who died. She and her husband were afraid and lonely, but not without hope. God ministered to them and sent hundreds of people who prayed for them, encouraged them, and advocated for them. Friends within their Facebook communities, Prayer Groups from all walks of faith, Church communities, and family members interceded on their behalf. They received text messages that made them laugh; songs that calmed and carried them through (Psalm 91 by Shane and Shane, Smile by Jonathan McReynolds); and scripture that penetrated their hearts and souls. Their mothers contacted Senators and Mayors (They even tried to reach the President. You gotta love mommas fighting for their "babies"). Friends called news stations; some held prayer vigils, and Angela Bryant-Dungee turned Davenia's poem into a song.

## SOMEONE PRAYED

Verse: Don't know how I got here  
Life has brought me to my knees  
A life thought headed somewhere  
Now wandering aimlessly  
Just when I thought to give-in  
To defeat and fear  
A wave of peace came over me  
Cause God was near  
Chorus: Someone prayed for me  
Don't know who, don't know where  
But someone prayed for me  
While I was in despair  
And my heart from God had wandered  
And I felt lost and alone  
Someone interceded for me  
Yes, someone prayed me home  
Bridge: The prayers of someone  
Reached the heavenly throne  
God heard and answered  
And guided me home...  
Chorus: Someone prayed for me  
Don't know who, don't know where  
But someone prayed for me  
While I was in despair  
And my heart from God had wandered  
And I felt lost and alone  
Someone interceded for me  
Yes, someone, someone prayed me home

Because Dr. Lea experienced the power of prayer, she and a friend, Pastor Brenda Billings, facilitated 21 days of praying in "The Trenches" (for more information, visit the webpage) and co-wrote a devotional prayer journal for mothers.

The Wilmington District WH&OMS was inspired to become "someone's someone" and to fight through the power of prayer for our marriages, our children, our families, our churches, and our communities (Nehemiah 4:14).

For the lyric video, please enjoy here – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKAUsjy3vpQ>

Read the full story of Dr. Lea's "Rock the Boat" experience at <https://mazuriministries.org/gods-stories-studies/>

For a copy of Let's Pray for Family Fuel: A Prayer Devotional for Mothers, go to [https://www.amazon.com/s?k=davenia+lea&i=digital-text&ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss](https://www.amazon.com/s?k=davenia+lea&i=digital-text&ref=nb_sb_noss)

# Wilmington District Lay Council Holds Lay Person of the Year Celebration 2025

By Laverna Hargrove  
Photos By Deborah Price

On March 30, 2025, the Wilmington District packed the house to overflowing at the Wilmington District Lay Person of the Year Celebration hosted by the Summerville A.M.E. Zion Church Lay Council and Pastor Nathaniel Johnson. Greetings and hosting duties were completed by the Summerville Lay Council President, Brenda Brown.



The devotion, led by Chaplain Alice Fennell, featured two teens who are a part of the Wilmington District's Youth Initiative. Montana Davis of Price Cathedral A.M.E. Zion Church, Wilmington, NC, and Angela Kelly of St. Phillip A.M.E. Zion Church, Wilmington, NC. The Men's Choir of Summerville led the opening song Onward Christian Laity and gave the selection I'm A Soldier in the Army of the Lord after the introduction of the speaker. Sylvia Jenrette, President of Browns Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church Lay Council, petitioned the Heavenly Father on our behalf.

The celebration theme "Securing Our Future" was expounded upon by Veronica Freeman of Mt. Zion A.M.E. Zion Church of Lake Waccamaw, NC. She did not use the predictions of scholarly professors or forecasting tables to tell the district how to secure our future, but searched the scriptures to eloquently demonstrate that, regardless of present circumstances, our future is bright and secure because the lay council is not only hearers of the word but doers. Being doers, we are children of the Most High God. According to Jeremiah 19:11-14, God has a place for us in His plan and gives directions to us to secure our place in His plan. Ms. Freeman gave several scriptural directions that will give us a secure future that can be applied individually and at every level of our church.

The celebration included honoring the five centenarians of the Wilmington District, Mrs. Inez Richardson (St. Luke), Mrs. Posey Johnson (St Andrew), Mrs. Lois Carter (Mt. Hebron), Mrs. Ruth Harrison (St. James, Leland), and Mr. Oliver "Uncle Doobie" Boykins, (St. Luke) who joined this illustrative cadre this year. Mr. Boykins has retired from three different careers. He still drives himself to worship and view the Cape Fear River every morning to ensure it is still there. He has served on many, if not all, boards of the church. The centenarians were celebrated with a PowerPoint presentation, souvenir Bible markers, and cupcakes following the service.

The Lay Persons of the Year 2025 from the local churches were presented with certificates and featured in a PowerPoint presentation. They are: Raymond Best, St. Mark, Whiteville, NC; Catherine Hines, Price Cathedral, Wilmington, NC; Yasmine Bines, Browns Chapel, Southport, NC; George Newkirk, Zion Chapel, Wilmington, NC; Monique Morgan, St. James, Southport, NC; Nathaniel Young, St. Luke, Wilmington, NC; Catherine Jacobs, Evergreen, Delco, NC; Phyllis Wright, St. Andrews, Wilmington, NC; Shelia T. Monroe, Walters Chapel, Bolton, NC; Rhonda Robinson, Mt. Hebron, Hallsboro, NC; Dana Mapson, Johnson Chapel, Leland, NC; Albert Robbins, Summerville, Leland, NC; Willie Bellamy, Christian Chapel, Winnabow, NC; Doreen Lemon, Blackwell Chapel, Leland, NC; Denise Murray, Lees Chapel, Bolton; Jefferson Graham, St. Paul, Bolton, NC; Shakira Bragg, St. Phillip, Wilmington, NC; Juanita James, Leland, NC; Mary T. Thomas, Warner Temple, Wilmington, NC; and Robert Edge, Moores Chapel, Leland, NC.

The Wilmington District Lay Person of the Year is Raymond Olando Best of St. Mark A.M.E. Zion Church, Whiteville, NC. Mr. Best, affectionately known as "Coach" for his love of athletics and his stellar coaching career. His charismatic personality and infectious joy have enhanced his gifts as a mentor and motivator. He was a math and athletics teacher with a career that spanned 53 years in North Carolina and Virginia. After his retirement, he created and led highly successful

tutoring programs to improve end-of-grade test scores for Whiteville City Schools. His life's work has focused on the intersection of Church, school, and community to serve the needs of children and youth. He has served as Trustee Board Chairperson, member of the Usher Board, Steward Board, Adult Sunday School Teacher, Vacation Bible School Teacher, and has chaired various successful church fundraising events. He and his wife Etta launched St. Mark's Backpack Ministry. They worked with the elementary school and the church to identify families that were having food insecurities when children were not in school. Enough food, which can be prepared by a child, is delivered to the elementary school on Thursday to get the child through the weekend. This ministry is currently serving approximately 50 families weekly. The presentations were made by Wilmington District Lay Council President Darryl Dyson, the 2024 Lay Person of the Year Raymond Davis, and Rev. Nathaniel Johnson.



The recognition of Keeper of the Flame is unique to the Wilmington District Lay Council. This recognition is awarded to a person or persons who work perpetually to help not only to maintain their church but are an extension of the church into the community, quietly showing Christ to all they encounter. They are the epitome of "Here I am Lord, send me." (Isaiah 6:8) The 2025 recognition was awarded to Mrs. Dorothy Barnett of Bowen Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, Wilmington, NC. Our Keeper of the Flame is a person who quietly, without question or pause, keeps on keeping on in service to others, following the teachings of Christ. She had a bread distribution ministry. She would collect bread and baked goods from the stores, which would give her the leftover baked goods. She would provide it to the churches on a weekly basis or as they needed it to give to their ministries in-house or their outreach ministries. She has dedicated her retired car to the bread ministry and calls it the 'Bread Mobile'. She volunteered at the Senior Center of Wilmington for more than 25 years, helping seniors with craft projects and encouraging them with her kind and gentle ways. She has volunteered at the Salvation Army Christmas drive for more than 25 years, stuffing stockings for the children, and "shopping" to fill Christmas wishes. She has represented her church, Bowen Chapel, on all levels of the church, and connectional level. She was president of the Wilmington District Conference Workers for more than 20 years, never failing to provide a substantial amount to help the smaller churches of the Cape Fear Conference. She started the Dimes Project to help the Conference Workers meet their goal. She served her local church as President of the Lay Council, delegate, Conference Worker, Deaconess, and choir member.



All this experience in the service of the Master has not lessened her zeal, because she continues to work as Finance Secretary of her church and on the above projects, but has 'slowed her role' only slightly.

Presiding Elder Rev. Alexander Jones acknowledged the work of the laity in all aspects of the Wilmington District, recounting personal knowledge of work done by our speaker, Veronica Freeman, the 2025 Wilmington District Lay Person of the Year, Raymond Best, and the Keeper of the Flame, Dorothy Barnett. Reverend Dr. Jones received a standing ovation as acknowledgment of the honor of being inducted into the Bishop Dunston College of Preachers, Lecturers, and Scholars at Livingstone College, Salisbury, NC, on April 4, 2025.

Following the Lay Council closing prayer, the celebration continued with refreshments in the Fellowship Hall.

Highlights of the Wilmington District Lay Council Lay Person of the Year can be enjoyed at <https://wilmingtondistrictlaycouncil.blogspot.com>



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

# Decision Day 2025: The A.M.E. Zion Church Celebrates Graduating Seniors

By Rev. Roderick J. Josey, Education Editor

May 1st marks **National College Decision Day**, a significant milestone for high school seniors across the nation. In The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, we take this moment to recognize and honor the accomplishments of students who are completing their high school journeys and preparing to take the following steps in their educational pursuits. These students represent different communities across the Zion connection and are preparing to further their education in various ways.

*We honor the following graduating seniors for their achievements and decisions:*

## Nolan G. Scott

**Greenville Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church**  
North Charlotte District | Piedmont Episcopal District

**Post-Secondary Plan:** Attending Winston-Salem State University



Nolan G. Scott is a graduating senior and a member of Greenville Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church. He is part of the North Charlotte District in the Piedmont Episcopal District. Nolan will be attending Winston-Salem State University, a public Historically Black College or University (HBCU) in North Carolina, in the fall. We acknowledge this critical step and celebrate his continued growth.

## Zahir Kirk

**St. Stephen A.M.E. Zion Church**  
Camden District | Northeast Conference  
**Post-Secondary Plan:** Attending Montclair State University



Zahir Kirk is a member of St. Stephen A.M.E. Zion Church in the Camden District of the Northeast Conference. He has decided to attend Montclair State University in New Jersey. We support Zahir as he advances in his educational journey and extend our gratitude for his presence in the life of the church.

## Syheem Curry

### The Pathway School, Class of 2025

Alleyn Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church  
Philadelphia District | Mid-Atlantic Episcopal District

Philadelphia and Baltimore Conference

**Education Focus:** Intellectual Disability/Autism Spectrum



Syheem Curry is a graduating senior from The Pathway School. He receives educational support in the areas of intellectual disability and the autism spectrum. Syheem is a member of Alleyn Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church in the Philadelphia District. As he completes his high school journey, we acknowledge his efforts and the significant role his school, family, and church have played in supporting his progress.

## Jahson Legrand

**Shiloh A.M.E. Zion Church, Staten Island**  
Jersey City District | New Jersey Annual Conference



**Post-Secondary Plan:** Attending Livingstone College, Salisbury, North Carolina

Jahson Legrand is a member of Shiloh A.M.E. Zion Church in Staten Island, within the Jersey City District of the New Jersey Annual Conference. He will be attending Livingstone College in Salisbury, North Carolina—an institution affiliated with The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. His choice to attend Livingstone connects him to the educational legacy of our denomination.

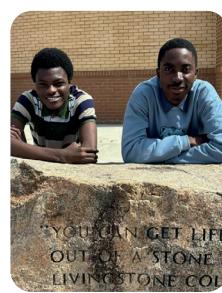
The A.M.E. Zion Church affirms the unique path of each of these students. Whether attending a historically Black college or receiving specialized education, their accomplishments deserve acknowledgment and encouragement. We pray that God will guide them and give them the strength to take every step ahead.

**Congratulations to the Class of 2025.**

# Livingstone College Presidential Scholars to Attend Yale Undergraduate Research Conference

By Star of Zion News

Two Livingstone College Presidential Scholars, Muhammed Ibrahim and Jephter Ofori, have received scholarships to attend Yale University for its ASCEND program, April 5-6. Earning recognition as recipients of the highly competitive award, both students have shown outstanding academic promise and are now taking the next step in their academic journey with exciting opportunities to present their research at the upcoming Yale Undergraduate Research Conference (YURC).



Freshman Ghana native Jephter Ofori is conducting research on cutting-edge recycling methods designed to tackle plastic waste. His study focuses on using chemical and mechanical processes to improve material recovery and sustainability, with the goal of reducing environmental pollution and promoting a circular economy. Ofori

aims to explore advanced recycling techniques that could be transformative for global sustainability efforts. He said, "Receiving this opportunity is a significant milestone in my academic journey, providing a platform to share my research with esteemed scholars while gaining invaluable insights from peers and experts. This experience will not only enhance my research skills but also strengthen my commitment to driving sustainable solutions through scientific innovation."

Mr. Ofori's innovative research is set to make a meaningful impact at the YURC, where he will present his study, compete for over \$10,000 in prizes, and network with leading innovators and professionals.

Muhammed Ibrahim, a freshman from Nigeria, is pursuing a major in Biology with a pre-med track. His research, entitled Advancing Environmental Health with PFAS Detection, focuses on optimizing the QuEChERS extraction technique for detecting perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in urban soil. By using liquid chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry (LCMS), Mr. Ibrahim's

study endeavors to improve PFAS quantification, an important step in enhancing environmental monitoring efforts to address this emerging environmental concern.

Reflecting on the significance of his selection to present at Yale, Mr. Ibrahim said, "I am honored to have been selected to present at the Yale Undergraduate Research Conference, where I will have the opportunity to share my work with a broader scientific community and learn from fellow researchers. This experience will further my passion for environmental health and analytical chemistry, reinforcing my commitment

to impactful scientific inquiry."

Both Ofori and Ibrahim exemplify the high standards of excellence fostered as Livingstone College's Presidential Scholars, and their achievements underscore the importance of empowering students to pursue groundbreaking research and innovation. As they embark on their journeys to YURC, their hard work and dedication will not only elevate their academic careers but also contribute to the betterment of society through scientific discovery and innovation.

## Congresswoman Alma Adams Joins Livingstone College Panel Discussion about the Impact of Trump Politics on April 11

By Ms. Garette Hunter, Livingstone College

Salisbury, NC | Livingstone College's Department of History and Political Science will host an open-to-the-public discussion, "What's Going On: The Impact of the Trump Administration Policies on America and Solutions," on Friday, April 11, at 6 p.m. The free event will take place in Harriet Tubman Theatre on the college's campus.



Alma Adams, representing North Carolina's 12th District, leading the discussion. Additionally, Mayor Pro Tem Michael Holmes of High Point and Mayor Pro Tem Harry McLaughlin of Salisbury will also participate on the panel.

"This event is an opportunity for the community and our local leaders to come together, understand the past, and work towards a better future," said Dr. Hasan Crockett, Dean of the Division of Liberal Arts and Humanities; the Department of History and Political Science is housed in the Division of Liberal Arts and Humanities. "Our communities' voices matter and, together, we can continue advocating for the people who need it the most," Crockett said.

The conversation will include discussions on topics including education, immigration, social security, voting rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and the economy. Audience members will have an opportunity to ask questions. The event will also feature a performance by the college's gospel choir.

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

## Clinton College Appoints Dr. Pamela Richardson Wilks as 14th President

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
May 14, 2025

*A Visionary Higher Education Leader Brings Over 25 Years of HBCU Experience to Historic Institution*

**Rock Hill, SC** — The Clinton College Board of Trustees is proud to announce the appointment of **Dr. Pamela Richardson Wilks** as the 14th President of Clinton College. Dr. Wilks, a nationally respected higher education leader with more than 25 years of experience—primarily at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)—will officially assume the presidency on **June 1, 2025**.

Dr. Wilks brings a dynamic record of visionary leadership, academic innovation, and institutional transformation. She currently serves as Provost and Executive Vice President at Paine College and has previously held senior administrative roles at Wilberforce University, Edward Waters University, and Coppin State University.

*"I am deeply honored to serve as the next President of Clinton College,"* said Dr. Wilks. *"Clinton holds a sacred legacy grounded in faith, resilience, and opportunity. I look forward to working with the Board, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the Rock Hill community to expand access and research, elevate student success, and position Clinton College as a bold, faith-driven institution for the future."*

**Bishop Eric L. Leake**, Chairman of the Clinton College Board of



Trustees, expressed full confidence in the new president's leadership.

*"Dr. Pamela Richardson Wilks' impressive credentials and vision for Clinton College resonated deeply with us. We are excited about the beginning of her tenure as our 14th President,"* said Bishop Leake. *"The Board went through an extensive national search and was pleased to consider many distinguished candidates. It is our confident hope that with Dr. Wilks at the helm, Clinton College is positioned for greater growth and sustainability. We envision a Clinton College that will emerge with great possibilities and will continue to thrive as one of the strong beacons of education and empowerment in the A.M.E. Zion Church."*

A proud first-generation college graduate, Dr. Wilks earned her undergraduate degree from **North Carolina A&T State University** and a Ph.D. in English from **Indiana University of Pennsylvania**. Known for her commitment to student-centered learning, cross-sector collaboration, and data-informed leadership, she has successfully secured significant funding for academic programs and infrastructure development throughout her career.

Dr. Wilks' presidency marks a new chapter in Clinton College's legacy of faith, resilience, and academic excellence.

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# Clinton College Homecoming 2025: “For the Culture”

By Rev. Roderick Josey, Education Editor  
Photos By Clinton College

Clinton College Homecoming 2025 was a celebration like no other. It embraced the theme “For the Culture” and took place during Black History Month, making it an especially meaningful occasion. This year marked the return of a spring Homecoming, aligning with the basketball schedule and offering a week filled with unforgettable moments that honored tradition, talent, and school spirit.

The festivities commence with a powerful Gospel Explosion, setting an uplifting and energetic tone for the week. The spiritual gathering brought together voices of praise and worship, igniting the excitement that would carry through each subsequent event.

The week continued with an electrifying Open Mic Night hosted by Clinton College’s Poet Laureate, Angelo Geter. This event provided a platform for students to showcase their incredible talents in poetry, music, and spoken word, fostering a sense of artistic expression and community.

Laughter echoed through the campus during the highly anticipated Comedy Show, hosted by No Limit Larry and featuring performances from Wild’ N Out comedians Tyler Chronicles and Darren Bland. The event delivered an evening of nonstop humor, ensuring the Golden Bear family shared moments of pure joy and entertainment.

Adding to the cultural showcase, the stage play *A Month of Sundays* captivated audiences with its powerful storytelling and dynamic performances. This theatrical experience entertained and engaged attendees



in thought-provoking narratives that resonated deeply with the Homecoming theme.

One of the week’s most anticipated events, the Greek Step Show, brought the Divine Nine organizations to the forefront, highlighting their rich history and vibrant traditions. The precision, passion, and pride displayed in the performances honored the legacy of Black Greek life, reinforcing the event’s cultural significance.



The grand finale of Homecoming weekend saw alumni and students uniting to cheer on Clinton College’s Men’s and Women’s Basketball teams as they took to the court. The energy in the arena was unmatched as the Golden Bear spirit was on full display, bringing the community together through the love of the game.



Homecoming at Clinton College is more than just a series of events—it is a time to reflect on the institution’s proud history, strengthen connections among alumni and students, and celebrate the enduring legacy of HBCU culture. The 2025 Homecoming will be remembered as a vibrant and inspiring tribute to the past, present, and future of Clinton College.

Thank you to everyone who participated and contributed to making this an unforgettable experience. Until next year, Golden Bears!

## Livingstone Strada Scholars Attend HBCU Summit in Dallas

By Star of Zion News

Nine Livingstone College students, Jacob Adkins of King; Eve Beyan of Monrovia, Liberia; Christian Bussey of Pensacola, Florida; Jaden Hines of Charlotte; Jayden Reeder of Long Island, New York; Kaiyon Courtney of Charlotte; Harmony Clark of Hampton, Georgia; Robert Osei of Ghana; and TyAnna Robinson of Mooresville traveled to Dallas, Texas on March 28 for a three-day leadership summit of Strada Education Foundation’s HBCU Initiative.

Filled with workshop sessions on learning leadership styles, health and wellness, financial literacy, professional and dining etiquette, career exploration, and more, the Strada Scholars engaged consistently in professional development that offered networking opportunities and conference speaking. Jayden Reeder, a junior majoring in sport management, said, “Much of my undergraduate experience has been focused on football. This conference has helped me to identify the skills I already have and has given me strategies on how to apply them to my prospective career. I feel inspired.”

Freshman Harmony Clark was equally inspired by the support of Dallas area alumni of Livingstone College, as Donna McCollum and Shinea Wright welcomed the undergraduates to Dallas with Blue Bear love and monetary expressions. Harmony said, “I was completely surprised to see Livingstone College alumni. Their presence was warming, and it affirmed that the college’s alumni invest in and care about us. I can see myself welcoming students to Georgia in the future.”



As of 2025, Strada Education Foundation’s HBCU initiative has 49 partner institutions where students earn scholarship, leadership, and internship support to elevate the transformative economic, social, educational, and cultural influence by investing in leaders of the future and positioning them to change the world.

As the program is designed in continuity from freshman to senior year, this year’s conference hosted a “Senior Send-Off” at the final session, recognizing over 100 career-focused scholars with exceptional grade point averages, graduate school acceptances, and/or in-hand job opportunities. Senior Jacob Adkins earned an internship with Amazon through a Strada opportunity and will begin employment with the enterprise upon graduation. “The Strada initiative is so positive and upbeat, you feel motivated to make moves towards your future. The program has impacted me personally, and I am thankful,” said Jacob.

The Strada seniors of Livingstone include class Valedictorian Christian Bussey who has employment with Sodexo, salutatorian Jacob Adkins with Amazon, Eve Beyan who will attend graduate school at Fayetteville State University’s MSN program, and Jaden Hines who will serve as an officer in the United States Armed Forces.

Daryl Graham, who serves as senior vice president of HBCU engagement for Strada, said, “This initiative is not just about scholarships. It’s about equipping the next generation of leaders with the coaching and internship experiences they need to connect education to career.”

To learn more about Strada Education Foundation, visit <https://www.strada.org/about/partners/hbcu-initiative>

# Livingstone Unveils Innovations Lounge with \$59k Home Depot's Retool Your School Grant Church Celebrates Graduating Seniors

By Ms. Garette Hunter, Livingstone College

Salisbury, NC | Livingstone College opened its first Home Depot Innovations Lounge on March 26 in the W. J. Walls Center Student Center. Livingstone President, Dr. Anthony J. Davis, welcomed students into the new space, which was the College's former student center, outfitted with new furniture and technology, and dedicated spaces for student collaboration.

"I am moved, truly moved to see the students here today...this is what it's all about," Davis said. "On the campus of Livingstone College, one of the things that we are definitely being intentional about is making sure that our students are our first priority."

According to Dr. Orlando Lewis, Livingstone's Vice President for Student Affairs, this is the first year that Home Depot offered its student innovation lounge program grant. We were one of a few colleges to receive it," he said. The \$59,000 grant included \$34,000 for renovations – including new flooring, doors, and freshly painted walls – and a \$25,000 furniture package.

This is not the first time the college has received funding from Home Depot's "Retool Your School" program grant. In 2018, the college received \$30,000 to renovate its campus pavilion and another \$30,000 in 2021 to develop and implement a high-profile Podcast Café, the first

of its kind in the State of North Carolina.

Lewis added that this year's grant guarantees student internships and scholarships, providing them with opportunities for growth and learning. "This will become a lounge for students to innovate, ideate, and collaborate," Lewis said.

The space also features a commissioned mural painted by artist Phillip Osborne to represent all sides of the student experience at Livingstone. "I just wanted to embody the many different elements within the innovation center as well as the college itself," said Osborne, who incorporated some of the most important experiences of HBCU student life: academics, football, civic engagement, Greek life, and extracurricular activities.

## About Livingstone College

*Livingstone College is a private historically black institution that is secured by a strong commitment to quality instruction. Through a Christian-based environment suitable for learning, it provides excellent liberal arts and religious education programs for students from all ethnic backgrounds designed to develop their potential for leadership and service to a global community.*

## Livingstone College Women in History Brunch

By Star of Zion News

Livingstone College hosted its annual Katharine W. Osborne Women in History Brunch at the School of Hospitality Management and Culinary Arts, Friday, March 14, 11:30 a.m. with author and guest speaker, Vanessa Miller. This year's theme, Moving Forward Together: Women Educating and Inspiring Generations welcomed over 200 attendees who were graced with the Mistress of Ceremony, Terri Stevenson, prayed for by the campus counselor Dr. Rhonda Flowers-Corpening, greeted by pre-Alumni Council student Alkayla Tanner, and celebrated by Pete Teague, vice president of Institutional Advancement.

The year's memorial tributes were in honor of event namesake Katharine Osborne, Elizabeth Fields, and Mayor Karen Kirk Alexander; extraordinary women who broke barriers and left legacies of service and uplift throughout their communities. UNCF Director Deborah Johnson reiterated the positive impact the women in tribute have had on Livingstone College and reminded attendees that the event has been, for years, monetarily supported by Osborne.

As guests dined on the delectable dishes of Wideman Family Catering, Alumni Affairs director Chanel Quick introduced the speaker, student Mia Mason entertained guests in song, and best-selling author, playwright, and motivational mover Vanessa Miller shared women's odes and affirmations, challenging women to believe and position themselves for opportunity. "God has called me to minister to readers and to help them rediscover their place with the Lord," Miller shared.



Miller's works have appeared on Essence Magazine's bestseller list and have earned the "Best Christian Fiction Mahogany Award" and the "Red Rose Award" for Excellence in Christian Fiction.

Miller spoke extensively about two of her works of historical fiction, The Filling Station, referencing the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, and The American Queen, honoring an African American woman during the Civil War era.

Adorned in fascinators, hats, and fancy fashion, the women engaged in a hat parade, whereas attendees voted for the best Fascinator, Unique, Church, Casual, and Sassy hats to a tune themed for the category played by Patrice Evans-Saunders and Ezekiel Perez.

"This event was so fun and inspiring. I plan to attend all four years as a student, and support other students to attend when I graduate," said Anait Wilson, a freshman from Richmond, Virginia, who entered the hat parade's Sassy Hat category.

As the room filled with cheers of joy and laughter, that welcomed dance steps and other forms of creative expression, Chi Chi Ray Leazer, winner of the Church Hat category, shared that she purchased her accessory for her nurse sorority conference during Covid, whereas she was never able to wear it. "Thank you, Livingstone College," she expressed while remembering a very sensitive time in history.



.....  
Continued on Next Page

This year's table sponsors included: alumnae Carolyn D. Anderson '67, Sarah J. Norman '70, Earle L. Smith '70, and Phyllis Mahmud '74; churches Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church, Moore's Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church of Salisbury, Incorporated; organizations the Delta Xi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, and the Salisbury Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, and consistent sponsor, Dr. Catrelia Steele Hunter.

To learn more about Vanessa Miller's works, visit [vanessamiller.com](http://vanessamiller.com).

To learn more about ways to contribute to Livingstone College's UNCF, contact Deborah Johnson at [djohnso@livingstone.edu](mailto:djohnso@livingstone.edu).

# President Trump's Proposal to Transfer Student Loan Management to the Small Business Administration Raises Concerns

By Rev. Roderick Josey, Education Editor

In a move that has garnered significant attention, President Donald Trump has announced plans to transfer the management of federal student loans from the Department of Education to the Small Business Administration (SBA). This decision is part of a broader initiative to dismantle the Department of Education, aiming to streamline operations and improve service delivery.

The Department of Education oversees approximately \$1.7 trillion in federal student loans, serving over 40 million borrowers. The proposed transition would shift these responsibilities to the SBA, an agency traditionally focused on supporting small businesses through loan programs like the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL).

## Implications for Borrowers

Experts and advocacy groups have expressed concerns about the potential impact on borrowers:

### • Customer Service Disruptions:

The SBA's primary experience is managing business loans, not educational financing. Due to differing operational focuses, this shift could lead to service disruptions and confusion among borrowers.

**• Reduced Workforce:** The SBA has announced a 43% reduction in its workforce. Managing the vast student loan portfolio with a diminished staff raises concerns about the agency's capacity to provide adequate support and maintain efficient operations.

**• Legal and Logistical Challenges:** Transferring the Federal Student Aid's functions to the SBA may require congressional approval and faces logistical hurdles, given that the Office of Federal Student Aid is legally a unit of the Department of Education.

## Potential Outcomes

While the administration asserts that the SBA will offer better servicing for federal student loans, critics highlight several potential issues:

**• Increased Borrower Confusion:** The transition could result in erratic and inconsistent management of federal student loans, leading to costly errors for borrowers and taxpayers.



- **Higher Default Rates:** Disruptions in customer service and unclear repayment information may cause more borrowers to default on their loans.

- **State Capacity Concerns:** If student aid programs are shifted to state governments, there may be a lack of capacity to fully take over servicing of federal loans, leading to inefficiencies.

For the Black community, which often faces disproportionate financial challenges, these changes could have significant implications. Access to clear and consistent information about loan repayment options is crucial. Any disruptions or confusion in loan servicing could exacerbate existing disparities, making it harder for Black borrowers to manage their student debt effectively.

The proposed transfer of student loan management to the SBA introduces significant uncertainties for borrowers. The potential for service disruptions, legal challenges, and decreased borrower protections underscores the need for careful consideration and planning before implementing such a substantial change. As this situation develops, it is essential for borrowers, especially within the Black community, to stay informed and advocate for their interests to ensure that their educational and financial futures are safeguarded.



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# STAY LIT!



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

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



@acolytesamez or  
acolytesamez@gmail.com

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GIVE:  



**UPCOMING EVENTS**



**MUSIC & WORSHIP FESTIVAL**

The Worship & Ritual Committee of the A.M.E. Zion Church presents the

**Mother AME Zion Church Harlem, NY**

Bishop U.U. EFFIONG, Bishop George D. CRENshaw, Bishop Daran H. MITCHELL

SAVE THE DATE - OCTOBER 10 - 12, 2025

LITURGICAL MINISTRY | DEACONESS | MUSIC & ARTS | ACOLYTES | MIME | POETRY | HYMNODY | LITURGY | PRAYER | USHERS | GREETERS



**ACOLYTE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE**

SAVE THE DATE  
3.29.25 RAM JAMES ZION

TIME: THE SEASON OF CHANGE  
Ephesians 4:24 "All things are possible"

\$25.00 Registration

**ACOLYTE LEADERSHIP Retreat**

SAVE THE DATE 28 & 29 OCTOBER 2025

FREEDOM TEMPLE AME ZION CHURCH



**MUSIC & WORSHIP FESTIVAL**

The Worship & Ritual Committee of the A.M.E. Zion Church presents the

**Mother AME Zion Church Harlem, NY**

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

**WORSHIP & MUSIC FESTIVAL**

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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 shared on all music platforms. We are looking for others who will generously give of their talent and gifts to this initiative. All original submissions are due by April 15, 2025.

## 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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# 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"

All Chaperones must have background checks completed and certificate submitted to the Board of Acolytes.

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

**ONLY Registered Acolytes are free! All acolytes must register with the Board of Acolytes.**

Acolytes are encouraged to have four to a room unless a parent or chaperone stay in the room. For more info: [acolytesamez@gmail.com](mailto:acolytesamez@gmail.com)

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# African Americans in World War II



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

By Rev. Dr. Garrett M. Thomas

On 5 December 1918, in Kittrell, North Carolina, Charity Adams was born to Rev. Eugene Adams, a college-educated pastor in The African Methodist Episcopal Church, and Charity Nash-Adams, a schoolteacher. They were a power couple who made a substantive commitment to their community. Rev. Adams taught his family that education is the key to overcoming all societal ills and provides the pathway to freedom (Adams Obituary, 1968).



Charity, the eldest of their four children, was a natural-born leader and an intellectually gifted child (Spring, 2007). She was skipped twice in grammar school and was the valedictorian of Booker T. Washington High School before attending Wilberforce University, an HBCU in Ohio, where she pledged to the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, majored in mathematics, and minored in history, graduating with a B.A. in 1938. She began her career as a middle-school math teacher and then transitioned to a career in the military when she joined the segregated U.S. Women's Army Corps (Spring, 2007).

When America joined the world at war after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, African Americans were still oppressed nationally, living under Jim Crow segregation, and fighting to throw off the smothering blanket of white supremacy, to force the winds of change, and fan the flames of liberty to breathe freely the air of equity. Many believed that if they volunteered to fight for freedom and democracy abroad, they would finally receive the human rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. But systemic racism has always ventured to defend the objective of white supremacy, thwart progress, and stifle the advancement of Black people. Whenever gains were made and the playing field appeared to be leveling out, obstacles and barriers were always strategically placed to ensnare and trap those who were trying to break free and get over the hump. Yet, the resolute spirit of Africans has never wavered. So, when Hitler was committing genocide against six million Jewish people, and America allied with Britain and Russia to fight for human dignity, Black Americans, who believed that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" (King, 1963), joined every branch of the American military to fight for freedom and justice abroad, believing that it would lead to freedom and justice at home.

Jim Crow ruled the military just as he ruled the nation. The White Women's Army Corps was welcomed into service and deployed to serve in clerical positions as secretaries and office personnel, and in transportation troops as drivers, pilots, air traffic controllers, and mechanics. White female soldiers were deployed domestically and abroad. Nearly half a million women were killed in active duty, and nearly a hundred were prisoners of war (POWs) (nps.gov).

The Black Women's Army Corps spent an exorbitant amount of time in training, but there were no immediate intentions to use them to be of service, other than to serve as maids and cooks, until the Honorable Mary McLeod Bethune (1875 - 1955) stepped in. The daughter of a formerly enslaved couple, Bethune graduated from Barber-Scotia College/Seminary in 1894. She was one of the most influential social justice advocates during the first half of the 20th Century. She was an educator, a civil rights leader, and a feminist, leading the women's rights movement, and she is the founder of the HBCU that bears her name, Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, Florida (Michals, 2015). She was an advisor to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, teaming with the latter to establish the Black WAC and to allow them the right to fight for their country (NPS, 2025).

On 1 July 1943, The 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion of the Black WAC was established. Consisting exclusively of African American, Caribbean American, and Afro-Latina American females, this battalion was tasked with the duty of delivering mail from the families

and loved ones of the soldiers who had been deployed during the war. This undistributed backlog of mail had been warehoused in several locations in Birmingham, England and was said to be stacked in bags and boxes from the floor up to the ceiling. Soldiers were said to be suffering from low morale because they had not been hearing from home; while parents and wives were baffled and confused, not knowing if their boys, and their men, were still alive and receiving the correspondence they had sent.

Under the leadership of Major Charity Adams, the Women of the Six-Triple-Eight were given a seemingly impossible task and ordered to complete it in an unreasonable dearth of time – six months. Major Adams organized the soldiers to work in three eight-hour shifts so the work would continue nonstop. Sixty-five thousand pieces of mail were processed each shift. Nevertheless, their success was originally met with contempt and consternation. A white, racist general to whom Major Adams reported arrived at the base to perform an inspection, positing that the project had been an abysmal failure. The obnoxious commander demanded that all the soldiers of the Six-Triple-Eight be presented for inspection. Adams took offense when he attempted to enter the sleeping quarters and shower area of those who were not present. She informed him that the ladies were indisposed and she denied him access (WWP, 2025).

When he tried to force his way in, Adams refused to stand by and passively accept the racist, misogynistic disrespect. To ensure that her intentions were not misconstrued, she physically blocked his way to deny him entry. He then accused her of incompetence and threatened to have her replaced with a white male major, to which Adams yelled, "Over my dead body, Sir!" making it apparently clear, so there would be no misconception as to who was in charge of the soldiers under her command (WWP, 2025). The general was dismissed. Before he could write the order of replacement, soldiers began singing the praises of the Six-Triple-Eight because they were finally receiving their mail. On 27 April 2023, Fort Lee in Virginia was renamed Fort Gregg-Adams, to honor the first African American Lieutenant General, Arthur Gregg and Major Charity Adams of the Six-Triple-Eight (NPS 2025).

Black servicemen also dealt with an appalling and shocking level of discrimination and humiliation, being placed in nearly impossible situations, but never falling victim to their plight. Instead, they chose to thrive and survive. The first Black fighter pilots were known as the Tuskegee Airmen. They overcame a plethora of obstacles, discrimination, low expectations, and stagnation, having to undergo an excessive amount of training exercises while they waited and bided their time. An overwhelming majority of Black men, including Jamaican Americans and Dominican Americans, passed entrance exams and qualifying exams with high scores to become fighter pilots, and each of them was already a college graduate before attending Tuskegee Flight School. Nevertheless, racist federal government and military leaders sought to end the program before it got off the ground.

That is when the honorable Eleanor Roosevelt (1884 - 1962) stepped in. On 11 April 1941, The First Lady of the United States boarded a plane at the Tuskegee University Airfield and sat in the back seat behind a Black pilot and took to the sky, flying in the plane of Chief Charles Alfred Anderson, a Tuskegee Airman. Chief Anderson, known as The Father of Black Aviation, piloted Mrs. Roosevelt through the skies of Alabama for over an hour. When they landed, no one could question the Black man's ability to handle a jet, and no one could question the president's confidence in their avionic skills. The Tuskegee Airmen then received the funding and the support they needed (National Archives, 2025). Their experiences serve as the paradigm for persistence, the model of magnificence, and the example of excellence, a symbol of not only Black achievement but Black resistance.

The Navy only used Black men as shoeshine boys, cooks, and janitors; and would not even allow them to swim in the ocean when white sailors were swimming until Seaman Carl Brashear decided he had enough and jumped overboard into the ocean for a swim, blazing past white seamen who tried and failed to keep up with him. A commanding officer who was very moderate and pragmatic was impressed with Brashear's heart and skills as a swimmer. He realized that Brashear

could be of good service regardless of the color of his skin. So he entered Brashear in the Navy's diving program, an elite group of seamen who journeyed to the ocean bottom on reconnaissance missions. Carl Brashear became America's first Black Master Diver.

The Associated Press reported in January 2025 that the U.S. Military has ceased providing military personnel with history lessons referring to the Tuskegee Airmen and the Six-Triple-Eight in compliance with an executive order signed by the president ostensibly to eradicate efforts at diversity, equity, and inclusion (Copp, 2025). In actuality, it appears the intent is to erase the historic record of African American military achievements. In March 2025, according to the AP, the service records of Lieutenant Jackie Robinson, General Colin Powell, and General Charles Calvin Rogers were all eliminated from a defense department database (Christenson, 2025; Copp, 2025; & Harper, 2025). Lt. Robinson played a direct role in the desegregation of the U.S. Military and

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All these records were restored after public outrage. There ought to be some sort of cognitive dissonance in those who are taught to perpetuate racism, a conflict within that forces their brain to war with their heart in a struggle for truth and righteousness. Currently, the outrageous perpetrators of white supremacy are not conflicted but operate under the conviction that white lies must be promulgated to support their failing ideology. Black Power and Black Resistance shall always demand justice.

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## HEALTH & Wellness

# Ovarian Cancer: Awareness and Protection

By Daman De Leon, Health and Wellness Editor

Ovarian cancer is the fifth-leading cause of cancer death among women in the United States. Over the past few decades, there have been advances in the treatment of ovarian cancer, but not all racial and ethnic groups have benefited equally. For example, between 1975 and 2016, the 5-year relative survival rate for ovarian cancer increased from 33% to 48% among non-Hispanic White women but decreased from 44% to 41% in African-American women.

Potential reasons for this disparity have been suggested by previous studies. Researchers involved in two of the new studies have previously found, for example, that African-American women were more likely than non-Hispanic White women to have a reduction in the dose of chemotherapy, a delay in treatment, and early discontinuation of therapy.

The new studies, which will use different populations of patients, data, and methods, could help fill in the current gaps in knowledge, noted Lisa Galicchio, Ph.D., an epidemiologist in DCCPS.

#### Focusing on Access to Care

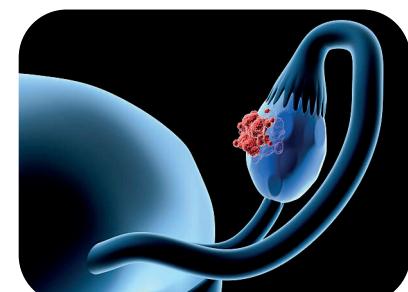
Many women with ovarian cancer do not receive the treatments recommended by professional medical guidelines, particularly for African-American and Hispanic women, explained Tomi Akinyemiju, Ph.D., of the Duke University School of Medicine, who is leading the study that focuses on health care access.

"Lack of access to health care is likely to be a key factor in these low [treatment] rates," said Dr. Akinyemiju, noting that access to care is determined by many factors. For the study she is leading, the researchers have defined five dimensions of health care access: affordability, availability, accessibility, accommodation, and acceptability.

Using data from NCI's SEER program, from Medicare, and from patient surveys, the researchers will investigate racial disparities in three main areas—whether patients receive the recommended initial, or primary, treatment for ovarian cancer; supportive care for pain and depression; and survival.

The survey component will involve more than 1,000 women with ovarian cancer across seven states. By studying women who have just completed their initial treatment, the researchers hope to better understand the barriers patients experienced, including those associated with cost of care, travel to and from doctors' offices and hospitals for treatment, and interpersonal interactions with health care providers.

"Each of the five dimensions captures a distinct aspect of access, and barriers in one or more of these can significantly affect whether a patient receives quality care," Dr. Akinyemiju said. "We can also examine differences between patients who reside in rural and urban areas, and



Continued on Next Page

between White, African-American, and Hispanic patients.

"Lack of access to care has implications for everyone, and what we learn from this study will help us to design interventions to ensure quality care regardless of race or income level," she added.

### Cells to Society

Another of the new studies brings together several lines of research to examine interactions among multiple factors that may contribute to ovarian cancer survival disparities across racial and ethnic groups.

*"It is increasingly recognized that a multitude of factors affect cancer health disparities, and these factors range from biological to societal influences,"* said study co-leader Jennifer Doherty, Ph.D., of the University of Utah. *"Rather than focusing on single factors, we are conducting a comprehensive evaluation of their interplay."*

Dr. Doherty and her colleagues will analyze detailed clinical data and tumor samples collected from approximately 4,500 women with ovarian cancer who received care through Kaiser Permanente Northern California. The researchers will assess, for example, the characteristics of patients' tumors (such as the presence of specific genetic alterations), patterns of treatment (such as the timing and type of surgery or chemotherapy and delays in treatment), and geographical factors (such as access to care) that may influence the care and prognosis of a woman with ovarian cancer.

"Many studies do not enroll women until several months or a year after diagnosis," she continued. "Unfortunately, as ovarian cancer still has relatively poor survival, those studies are unable to obtain data from women who, at the time of enrollment, have already passed away, and may provide important information to understand factors influencing mortality."

The study is being co-led by Elisa Bandera, M.D., Ph.D., of the Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, Lawrence Kushi, Sc.D., of Kaiser Permanente Northern California, and Scarlett Gomez, Ph.D., of the UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center.

The goal of the third study is "to better understand the complex causes of poor survival in African-American women with epithelial ovarian cancer," said study co-leader Joellen Schildkraut, Ph.D., M.P.H., of the Rollins School of Public Health and the Winship Cancer Center at Emory University.

Dr. Schildkraut and her colleagues are recruiting 350 African American women newly diagnosed with ovarian cancer from eight state

cancer registries. Data collected on these women will be incorporated into the African American Cancer Epidemiology Study-Exit Disclaimer, which already includes 600 women with the disease.

In previous research, the investigators found that inflammation associated with obesity or physical inactivity, or the use of certain pain-killers, such as aspirin, might affect the risk of ovarian cancer. They also identified inherited genetic variants that might influence ovarian cancer risk in African-American women.

In the new study, the researchers will integrate information about participants' social and physical environments, such as unemployment rates and other measures of economic disadvantage, with information about the women's inflammation-related exposures and data on inflammatory pathways in their tumor tissues.

*"The geographical diversity of this group and the breadth of data and biospecimens from participants will give us an unprecedented opportunity to explore factors involved in survival differences among African Americans with ovarian cancer,"* said Dr. Schildkraut.

### Taking Steps to Eliminate Disparities

All three new studies will help researchers to better understand why certain groups of patients with ovarian cancer do worse than others. This research is an important step toward addressing the disparities in ovarian cancer survival, noted Dr. Elena.

*"Access to care,"* she continued, *"as well as economic factors and gaps in health insurance, influence disparities, not only for ovarian cancer but for people with many other cancers."*

*"By investigating biological factors, behavioral factors, and societal influences to learn which factors are driving the disparities,"* Dr. Elena said, *"these studies can help researchers develop new strategies to improve the care of women with the worst outcomes for this cancer."*

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# The Church and Mental Health Awareness

By Daman De Leon, Health & Wellness Editor

The month of May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Mental healthcare has not always been accessible for Black Americans due to a combination of factors. Stigmas, institutional racism, misdiagnoses, and financial hardship are just a few barriers to receiving treatment. Added to these is the challenge of finding culturally sensitive providers who are representative of Black American communities.

Could the Church be part of the solution?

According to the **American Psychiatric Association**, only one in three Black Americans who need mental health care receives it. In addition, Black people with mental illnesses, particularly bipolar disorders, schizophrenia, and other psychoses, are more likely to be incarcerated than members of any other racial/ethnic group with similar conditions.

Black counselors Keith Dempsey, S. Kent Butler, and LaTrece Gaither suggest that churches could play a role in helping Black people access mental health support in their own communities.

"Historically, [the church] has functioned as a community center, social club, and training center," they write. "The Black church has also been the place where African Americans seek emotional refuge from their daily problems."



According to the authors, there are several reasons Black people may already turn to their churches for support instead of mental health agencies. Seeking services from churches often doesn't impose an extra financial burden; economic hardship and inadequate insurance coverage "may force some African Americans to seek free services from paraprofessionals at their churches or forgo treatment of their mental health needs altogether."

For others, "seeking professional help for emotional problems is a sign of spiritual flaws in one's life." Drawing on their faith to improve their emotional well-being may be their first choice. In addition, turning to a mental health agency may "produce strong feelings of shame and guilt," leading people to rely solely on the church. And many have prior relationships with their churches and feel more welcome there than in a clinical environment.

Finally, what the authors describe as a "lack of ethnic matching" in the mental health industry presents a significant obstacle to treatment. There is a limited number of Black clinicians, and "mental health agencies that do not have a diverse ethnic representation struggle to understand the client's worldview or life experiences."

While the church may be the first—or only—resource to which some Black Americans turn, the authors note that receiving counseling solely from clergy may be counterproductive if a mental health issue doesn't align with a church's values. For example, "historically the Black church has taken a strong stance on heterosexual relationships and abstaining from sexual activity before marriage, causing some clergy to resist exploring issues such as sexuality and sexual promiscuity."

Where clergy may be inclined to "correct" values or behaviors that contradict the church's teaching and use the teachings of the Bible to guide parishioners, "mental health professionals are trained to listen without judgment."

The authors noted that this doesn't need to be an "either/or" situation, pointing out that "Black churches and outside agencies have benefited from several successful collaborations." The most notable collaborations have been related to physical health and wellness, but the model could be built upon to provide mental healthcare as well.

The most important part of the solution requires that healthcare agencies have permission to work with Black churches from their clergy and that they take the time to become a part of the community. "Establishing a trusting relationship provides a foundation for continued conversation," write the authors.

"Mental health professionals have better success when they respectfully become an active member of the community they serve," observe the authors. Healthcare workers should use "culturally appropriate out-

reach methods within the contexts of the Black church's existing system." Joining the community and "holding meetings in Black churches rather than respective agencies and institutions signifies a partnership as well as a physical presence."

Beyond that, clergy could receive mental health training, and more research could be conducted to determine what other methods could best support Black churchgoers.

Dempsey, Butler, and Gaither hope that these collaborations better support Black Americans, as untreated mental illnesses in their communities continue to grow "at an alarming rate."

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# The Effects of Autism and The Tools For Treatment

By Daman De Leon, Health and Wellness Editor  
Photo By andreswd

One of the health & wellness themes for the month of April is that it is National Autism Awareness Month. As an individual with an autistic sibling, there have been several educational aspects of this illness that I have learned, and I have embarked upon a personal journey to learn more about it. It is an unfortunate reality that many people with special needs will encounter hardship and discrimination throughout their lifetime. However, it is essential that we acknowledge the additional obstacles and stigma Black individuals with autism face. This issue of the intersectionality of race and ability is not often widely addressed, and because of this, many Black individuals on the spectrum continue to face great challenges in society and within their own communities.

## Identity & Intersectionality

According to the Oxford Dictionary, intersectionality is defined as the multiple and complex identities we each have, such as race, gender, class, etc., that create and affect unique experiences of discrimination. The different and multiple identities a person may have lead to their experiences of oppression.

Black individuals with autism encounter obstacles and stigma within their own community and in society. This is because the Black community and the autism community are both marginalized, so individuals who lie in both of those categories face even more challenges. Stereotypes about Black people may be amplified when an individual presents symptoms on the spectrum. This is a result of the misconception that autism is less prevalent in the Black community when, really, disparities in care and education exist.

## Access to Care

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), due to stigma and a lack of health services in largely minority communities, Black people are significantly less likely to be identified and diagnosed with autism. Without a diagnosis, it is difficult to find a treatment or intervention model that best suits one's needs. Access to quality resources allows individuals to have their needs met, which can either improve development or quality of life.

The disparity of health services in black communities creates a gap in access to care and physical, mental, and emotional health in general. Without proper access to care, those who experience social, cognitive, or behavioral challenges may continue to struggle due to the lack of intervention and services for their symptoms. According to the CDC, intervention and treatment are extremely beneficial, primarily for those at a young age. Treatment and intervention can help young children reduce symptoms and improve social, cognitive, or behavioral development. This has a huge impact on the lives of those with autism as well as the families of those with autism because proper health care and services allow for needs and challenges to be met, which can positively affect future development and outcomes.



## Stigma & Community Understanding

The lack of intersectional narratives leads to a lack of understanding and awareness of autism in the Black community. According to the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, the cultural differences in healthcare access influence interpretations of symptoms. Since there are later and fewer diagnoses of autism in the Black community, doubts and misconceptions may arise when a Black child or individual presents symptoms of autism. Misconceptions from cultural perceptions can either lead to a lack of diagnosis or quality care.

Especially without a proper diagnosis, Black individuals with autism may be negatively interpreted as different, leading to an unwelcoming environment. Black individuals who may present the social or behavioral symptoms of autism may not be properly cared for or accepted in their community because they may be viewed in a negative way.

The stereotypes and discrimination Black individuals face are already dangerous as it is, but those things are multiplied when they have special needs. Racially motivated stereotypes depict and describe Black individuals as aggressive and hostile, something that is awfully

discriminatory. With the notion of intersectionality, both Black and autistic communities are marginalized, so some of the symptoms that appear with autism that are already stigmatized may amplify the stereotypes Black autistic individuals face. Rather than being patient and understanding of a black individual on the spectrum, others may interpret certain behaviors as a matter of being disobedient, dramatic, or aggressive. This false narration is very damaging because it subjects Black individuals on the autism spectrum to harmful situations.

### Police Brutality

The negative stereotypes and stigma Black individuals with autism face may put their lives at risk. It is known that police brutality is already a huge issue that minority communities are subject to. The justice system has failed several times to keep BIPOC communities safe. This is due to deep-rooted systemic racism.

Rather than using procedures to ensure the safety of Black individuals, especially those with autism or other special needs, police often interpret mental health crises as aggressive and criminal behavior (TIME). This has resulted in several deaths and a high rate of incarceration of Black individuals on the spectrum.

We must work to dismantle and erase the stigma against Black individuals with autism and increase understanding of individuals with special



needs—it could save a life.

### How can you help?

Carefully listen to the stories and experiences Black autistic individuals face in order to properly accommodate their needs. Use your voice to spread awareness and educate others on how harmful stereotypes are. Educating just one person can influence how they treat others, which can make a difference and possibly prevent future conflict. If you can, donate to a local charity and/or enrichment programs designed to raise awareness and provide quality resources to community members.

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### LIFESTYLE

## Dressed for the Heat, Styled for the Sanctuary

By Angel Eason, Lifestyle Editor

Big hats? Fascinators? Suits? Neckties? Are these appropriate during the summer months for Sunday service? Absolutely.

As someone who attends church weekly and works as a personal stylist, I am often asked how to transition your fall and winter church attire into spring and summer. The key is simple: diversify your fabrics and not shy away from accessories.

In the summer, wearing lighter and breathable fabrics is essential. They allow you to move comfortably from service to brunch. Think French toast, fresh juice, and good conversation without missing a beat.

*Key Fabrics to Embrace This Summer:*

- Cotton
- Linen
- Rayon
- Bamboo

According to Terrera, Bamboo is especially summer-friendly due to its hollow structure, which allows air to circulate more freely. This helps regulate body temperature and keeps you cool and dry.



### Key Accessories to add to your Summer Wardrobe:

Summer is the perfect time to experiment with lighter accessories that make a stylish impact.

- Lightweight scarves
- Wide-brim Hats
- Sandals
- Slouchy Bags
- Bright Neckties

Adding a bright necktie, such as a clementine orange with a grey or navy-blue suit, instantly elevates a look. A wide-brimmed hat keeps you protected and polished as the sun shines brighter.

### Trendy Colors to add to your Summer Wardrobe:

Color sets the tone, and these summer shades bring fresh energy to your Sunday style.

- Clementine: Vibrant and energizing
- Pink: Pairs well with neutrals
- Butter Yellow: Works well as a neutral and blends beautifully

As seasons shift, so can your style. Church fashion is not about rules but respect, self-expression, and reverence.

### Source:

<https://terrera.ca/blogs/news/whats-a-better-summer-fabric-bamboo-or-cotton?srsltid=AfmBOor5zmAsWZMjedjZU7SdQc3hb7AdzrP0pOoxMIE3ZmRd4cDLFWQ>



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# Trumps Tariffs: Time to Take Action



**By Dana G. Stilley, Financial Freedom Editor**  
On April 2, in response to a “national emergency,” President Trump announced retaliatory tariffs on 57 countries and a flat 10%

tariff on most of our other trading partners. This move ignited a trade war and sent the stock market into a sharp decline, erasing trillions of dollars in global equity value and instilling fear and anxiety in many. Those planning to retire soon worried about their savings and financial future, while others, already concerned about skyrocketing prices, agonized about the imminent increase to their household expenses.

Days later, on April 9, in a social media post, the President communi-

cated his 90-day pause on the reciprocal tariffs for all countries except China but maintained the 10% base tariffs. The 25% tariffs on steel and aluminum, which were announced in March, remain. The stock market reacted with a sharp rise, but most economists and analysts stated that the damage to the world economy had already been done. As we continue to navigate the ever-changing announcements about Trump’s tariffs, it is important that we weigh our options. I encourage everyone to pause and plan how best to spend and save in the near future. Remember, tariffs are basically taxes on imported goods. To offset the new “tax,” the importing company often passes the additional cost down to the consumer by raising prices. While it is hard to predict exactly when prices may jump, the anticipated increases will likely occur in food products, home improvement items, appliances, electronics, technology, and cars, including car parts. Now is the time to consider prioritizing any necessary large expenditures that you may have been contemplating. How much more will the car you have been eyeing cost after the tariff increase? Do you need a new refrigerator, stove, or laptop? A purchase now may save a considerable amount of money.

## A.M.E.Z. GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

# Official Statement from the Board of Bishops on the passing of Pope Francis

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

We, the members of the Board of Bishops of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, wish to express with great sadness the passing of Pope Francis on Easter Monday, April 21, 2025, at the age of 88 years. Pope Francis (born Jorge Mario Bergoglio on December 17, 1936) was the head of the Catholic Church and sovereign of the Vatican City State from March 13, 2013, to April 21, 2025.

From the seat of St. Peter, he exercised primacy with humility, true love for humanity, and consistently advocated for peace, love, unity, and justice. He demonstrated strong compassion for the poor and consistently advocated for their well-being across the world. Pope Francis would be remembered for many unique actions upon his election as Pope. He was the first Pope to come from Latin America; the first Pope from the Society of Jesus (the Jesuit Order); the first Pope to choose to live in the Vatican Guest House, outside the Apostolic Palace, being the official papal residence; the first Pope, since Pope Lando (913 – 914), to choose to be named Francis, a name not used by a predecessor.



He introduced a significant shift in the style of leadership of the Catholic Church, in which he made it clear that the “fundamental task of the faithful is not so much to follow rules but to discern what God was calling them to do.” And to the clergy, he steered them away from “clericalism” (which dwells on priestly status and authority) toward an ethic of service. This was because Pope Francis insisted that the Church’s shepherds must

have the “smell of the sheep” by always staying close to the people of God. Beyond all these, Pope Francis was apostolic, evangelism-oriented, and called all to a life of holiness and prayer. He will be greatly missed.

Among the final words of the Pope was a thank you to the nurse who had helped him through his recent illness and allowed him to surprise the crowd at St. Peter’s Square on Easter Sunday with a short tour in the Popemobile.

Though Pope Francis is no longer physically present with us, we will forever remember his legacy in all of Christendom. Rest on, Pope Francis!

*Sincerely,*

**The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church Board of Bishops**

Bishop U.U. Effiong, President

Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Senior Bishop

Bishop Eric Leake, Secretary

Bishop W. Darin Moore

Bishop George D. Crenshaw

Bishop Hilliard Dogbe

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Bishop Daran H. Mitchell

Bishop Anthony N. Witherspoon

Bishop Melanie Miller

Bishop Dwayne A. Walker

Bishop Bernando Ngunza

Bishop Seth O. Lartey, Located

Bishop Joseph Johnson, Retired

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

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# Mr. Roderick Bowman

## July 2, 1965 - March 28, 2025

### By The Bowman Family

Roderick Bowman was born in Mount Vernon hospital on July 5, 1965 to Ms. Odessa J. Bowman and Mr. Robert Bowman; Two minutes after the birth of his "wombmate", Robert Bowman.

Roderick, "Rod" graduated from Mount Vernon School District's public schools. He was described as an energetic, bright, comical student who enjoyed math, gym, and the arts. As a middle schooler, he played bass drums in the Martin Luther King (MLK) Drum Corps. He often spoke of the pride he felt while marching in parades in this capacity. In addition, Rod began developing a love for gospel music. This is evident by his tape and CD collection of gospel greats left to his children for their enjoyment as well.

Rod graduated from The Art Institute of New York City, majoring in culinary arts. He had a Twenty-five-year career as a cook and chef within Food Service Corporations and kitchens within the New York area. Rod was a no-nonsense chef, both at work and at home. His love language was food and he fluently fed the masses.

Rod was a proud Mount Vernon Boys Club alumnus. It was there at a young age that he found refuge from life's challenges and nurtured his athletic interests as well! After school, Rod could be found in the Boys Club's after-school program. There he completed homework, participated in activities, and learned the fundamentals of playing basketball and other sports. Socializing within the clubs made available to youth in the Mount Vernon community at that time was also essential. Roderick credits the Boys Club for immeasurable support throughout his youth.

Rod loved football! As a youth, he played on two New Rochelle teams: The New Rochelle Vikings and the New Rochelle Colts. As a proud New Rochelle Viking on the New Rochelle Tackle League, wearing the colors purple and gold, the "Vikings" title would imprint on his heart and would remain as his team throughout his life. If you knew Rod, you knew that he was a "sold out" Viking!

As an adult, Rod remained faithful to athletics. He played on several Semi-Professional Football Teams: The Yonkers Pitbulls, The Yonkers Packers, The Westchester Steelers, The Brooklyn Mariners, and his very own, Mount Vernon Centennial Kings, which he founded and operated for several years. Rod's love and commitment to the sport were immeasurable. Rod leaves a legacy of former football players who proudly say they played with him and even argued with him. He didn't mince words or back down from his stances, but as he aged, he learned to apologize more when he realized his position was wrong.

Rod strongly believed in the foundation, self-confidence and work ethic afforded by a commitment to athletic programs for youth. He coached football with the Mount Vernon Razorbacks, under the direction of his childhood peer, Mr. Tony Williams, devoting countless hours to the organization. Rod believed in their mission, so much so that he enrolled his daughter and son as a cheerleader and a youth player with them.

For years, Rod also organized a Mount Vernon Fourth Street Play-ground Summer Basketball League with the assistance of Pastor Bejoy of Bethel Gospel Center and Bridge Church and the sponsorship of Greater Centennial A.M.E.Z. Church and Mount Vernon's City Athletic Department. Rod recruited players, referees, and team sponsorship to host annual championship games. When he wasn't "supervising", he could be found purchasing food and grilling fish and burgers to sell for his makeshift "concession stand". This brought Roderick just as much joy as the basketball games did.

The church was also instrumental in Rod's development. His grandmother, Mrs. Julia Holcomb, ensured that Rod and his siblings were active in church. They attended Full Gospel Church full-time as children. Throughout his teen/young adult life, Rod attended other local churches in Mount Vernon, developing family ties with notable church communities. In the early 2000s, Rod proudly joined Greater Centennial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, where his childhood neighbor, Reverend W. Darin Moore, was pastor. He bragged about its' powerful teachings, phenomenal music, and dance ministries, and the joy received from his church family. It was there where Roderick was



baptized, met and married his wife, baptized his children, sang in several choirs, danced in ministry, and established lifelong relationships that sustained him through any and all triumphs and trials endured. Rod loved Greater Centennial! He remained a faithful member until his earthly departure. His presence will be missed at his home church.

Roderick also danced with the Dance Ministry Institute under the leadership of founder, choreographer, and director, Minister Robert Evans. Rod and his family ministered regularly in their Nativity production, as well as other ensemble pieces shared throughout the tri-state area. Rod enjoyed the opportunities such as exercising, dancing, worshipping, fellowshiping, performing, and bonding with like-minded Christians afforded through DMI. This past December, Rod was the only Bowman from his household to minister in DMI, but he enthusiastically brought his nephew, Kayden, as a new cast member, a sheep. DMI became family to Rod, and he was happy to be a part of this dance company.

Roderick was a loyal and proud family man. His family meant the world to him! He had six siblings from his mother and four siblings from his father. He was excited to be a brother and had endless stories of times with them. Rod's greatest joy, though, was being a husband and a father! Shortly after high school, he was blessed with the birth of his daughter, his "mini-me" and fellow cook, Jeriesha Bowman. It was through her that Rod first shared the gift of unconditional love.

Then in 2002, while celebrating a Greater Centennial choir member's performance, he met his soon-to-be "Wifey", Tanée. They formed a friendship, eventually courted, and married in April of 2005.

In September 2006, Rod became a proud dad once again when Genesis Imara, his "Gem" and his listener, was born. He was totally committed to cooking and providing care for her daily, believing that God had blessed him with Genesis to inspire him to strengthen his spiritual walk. They shared their love for liturgical dance together.

Finally, in August 2009, he was granted his "miracle" in the form of his son, Gerod "Roddy". He continued to cook and to care for him also; however, as Roddy aged, he was able to instill his love for sports, The Boston Celtics, New York Mets, and Minnesota Vikings in him. They proudly represent their teams, donning their jerseys and sharing memorabilia boldly amongst opposing fans. As his kids committed to cheerleading, lacrosse, field hockey, football, wrestling and pick-up basketball games in the park, Rod was there... and everyone knew! Sometimes embarrassing them, while always critiquing and encouraging them to soar! A void will be felt by "The Bowman Bunch" at all games for years to come.

Rod Bowman was also a "soldier" who used the military to escape personal traps at home. He served in the army and the National Guard for three years after high school. He proudly marched in Mount Vernon's Veterans Day Parade. His life was filled with joy and complexities, too. At times, he was burdened with financial, familial, spiritual, and emotional weights that haunt countless individuals within urban black and brown communities. Therefore, Rod didn't always make "good choices," but he boldly proclaimed that he made the choices required to mold him and to enable him to help others on similar paths. Rod was our "Warrior", fighting to overcome what he perceived as injustices within his family and his community.



Roderick and Tanée's union blossomed into almost twenty-three years of love, laughter, loudness, loyalty, and light. They "road tripped" south annually to spend time with Tanée's family and friends. They also traveled to the Caribbean, as recently as last summer, for Roderick's first cruise. He had a great time and was looking forward to going again. There was never a dull moment when "The Bowmans" were around and close friends say they missed their opportunity at a reality TV show like none other (smile).

In the early hours on March 28, 2025, after his final lap running the stairs in his building, Rod was called by his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He leaves to mourn his devoted wife, Tanée, his three children,

Jeriesha, Genesis, and Gerod. His three grandchildren are Tyniesha, Tyler, and Glynnis. His eight Bowman siblings are Adora, Robert (Michelle), Shawn, Kimberly, David, Gennette, Ada, and Elijah. His aunt Sylvia Walker. His in-laws are Samuel Johnson, Walter & Tina Jacobs, Tiyia & Jardel Jean-Pierre. Over forty-five nieces, great nieces, nephews, and great nephews. Countless cousins, friends, and neighbors.

Rod was predeceased by his parents, Robert & Odessia Bowman,

his maternal grandparents, Lawrence & Julia Holcomb, and paternal grandparents, David & Gennette. His sisters are Yvette Holcomb and Monique Holcomb-Darby. Several aunts, including his Aunt Marianna, and several uncles. His mother-in-law, Madeline Johnson, and a special cousin/sibling, Robert "Tuddy" Holcomb.

Your love & prayers, and support mean the world to us during this difficult time.

## WORLD POLITICS

## Aggrey Memorial A.M.E. Zion Senior High School Celebrates 85 Years



Rev. Ronald Nathan  
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By Candice Kpanga

Aggrey Memorial A.M.E Zion Senior High School marked its 85th anniversary with an exciting durbar at Cape Coast. The week-long celebration climaxed on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2025, with a Speech and Prize Giving Day durbar at the school premises. The event brought together students, alumni, representatives from the church, and dignitaries.

The theme for the event was *"Building on 85 Years of Quality Education: The Role of Stakeholders"*. The Chairperson of the celebration was Bishop Hilliard K. Dela Dogbe, who was represented by the Chairperson of the Presiding Elder's Council – Ghana Region, Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Essilifie.

Some activities that took place during the week included a community clean-up exercise by the school in two surrounding communities. There was also a drama night and a musical festival for the students. On the Friday preceding the durbar, the old students, predominantly the 2000-year group, arrived in a beautiful convoy amongst cheers and dancing, in their mauve and yellow colours, announcing their homecoming to the township and the school. They were cheered on by the students and welcomed by the headmistress, Mrs. Dorothy Adentwi-Hayford, and the staff of the school.

The school's army cadet commenced the durbar with an impressive drill, setting the tone for what was one of the most memorable occasions the school had ever witnessed. In her address, the headmistress applauded the school's academic standing and achievements but underscored sever-



al pressing challenges, including limited infrastructure, inadequate accommodation, transportation difficulties, security concerns, and unreliable water supply. She appealed to the government, the Parents' Association, the Aggrey Memorial Old Students' Association (AMOSA), and The A.M.E Zion Church to rally behind the school in tackling these challenges.



The Millennium Year Group of AMOSA (AMOSA 2000) held the torch in supporting this year's anniversary, as it also marked their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary out of school. As part of their contribution, AMOSA 2000 inaugurated a modern 10-seater washroom facility to improve sanitation on campus. They also spearheaded efforts to revamp the school's water system to alleviate shortages and upgraded the milling facility, ensuring a more efficient food processing system for students.



The guest speaker for the occasion, Mr. Ekow Panyin Okyere Eduamoah, Central Regional Minister, pledged his support to the school's continued progress. He assured attendees that his office would engage with school authorities to find sustainable solutions, including securing a generator to ensure an uninterrupted power supply.



A total of about thirty students and ten teachers received awards. The students from the second year to the third year received awards for their excellence in various disciplines.

## North Ghana Women's Home and Overseas Missionary Society (W.H. & O.M.S) Convention

By Brianna Dika  
Photos By WWAED, Media Team

The Women's Home and Overseas Missionary Society (W.H. & O.M.S) Convention of the North Ghana Conference was held at Kpatitinga in the North East Region of Ghana, from 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

The theme for this year's Convention was "Reaching the Masses in an Ever-Changing World: The Journey Continues. Equity and Justice. The convention exemplified The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church's dedication to holistic ministry—addressing spiritual, physical, and socio-economic needs. In her address at the convention, the Missionary Supervisor, Mrs. Cynthia



Dogbe reiterated the message in Luke 4: 18-19, where she admonished participants, to be Christ's witnesses to their generation, they were to carry the mission forward, breaking barriers and reaching out to the forgotten the marginalized, and the oppressed in all spheres of life.

She further stated that the gathering was not just a routine convention, but it was a divine appointment to renew the strength and deepen the understanding of missionaries, as well as strategize on how best to be vessels of transformation in their communities.

The missionary supervisor attended the convention with a delegation that visited schools in two presiding elder districts, a skills development session, and a health screening exercise as part of the event.

The delegation included the fieldworker of the East Ghana conference, missionaries, a health team, and volunteers.

In line with custom, the Missionary Supervisor and her delegation, together with the Presiding Elders of the Nankpanduri; Rev. Laarison, and Temaa Districts, Rev. Dubik Jubong, paid a courtesy call on the leaders of Kpatritinga township. During the visit, W.H. & O.M.S donated some items to the leaders, for which they were grateful.

#### SCHOOL VISITATION AND DONATION

Despite the very dusty and rocky terrain in addition to unfavourable weather conditions, the Missionary Supervisor with her team visited and donated items to four selected schools within the Nankpanduri and Temaa districts. The health team sensitized the students on personal hygiene. Items such as school supplies, sanitary pads, and more were donated to the students.

The schools that benefited from the donation were: Kpatritinga A.M.E Zion Primary & JHS, Gbingbammon A.M.E Zion Primary (Nanjo), Temaa A.M.E Zion Primary and JHS, and Gurugu A.M.E Zion Primary School.

Some of the challenges in the schools were infrastructural, such as dilapidated classroom blocks, insufficient classroom blocks at certain schools for the various levels, and a lack of sufficient teachers due to the housing deficit, among other things. Also, some schools lacked textbooks, exercise books, desks, and stationery; none of the schools visited had a working computer lab or library. Some students also did not look healthy and thus were invited to the health screening exercise for treatment and medication. These challenges and more hindered the communities from accessing quality education.



The delegation also engaged with the residents and offered spiritual support. The interactions fostered a sense of unity and highlighted the church's commitment to missions.

#### FREE PUBLIC HEALTH SCREENING

As part of the convention, Mad. Elsie Fummey, the health team lead, addressed prevalent health issues, emphasizing the importance of accessible healthcare. Together with her team, a free public health screening was conducted at Kpatritinga, which had approximately 200 people in attendance. The prevalent diseases were malaria and some skin conditions. i.e., scaly scalp conditions especially amongst children, and people who were unaware they were hypertensive. The event was highly successful, and community members expressed gratitude, noting the positive impact on their well-being.

#### SKILL TRAINING WORKSHOPS

The empowerment sessions equipped participants with practical skills aimed at promoting self-sufficiency and economic empowerment. Topics ranged from vocational training to small business management, aligning with the convention's theme of moving beyond trauma through equity and justice.

During the skills training, women from all six districts were taken through the process of producing liquid soap on a small scale. All districts were given extra materials to enable them kick start their liquid soap business.

**God be the glory for such an uplifting intervention. Kudos to the Missionary Supervisor and the Bishop for their leadership. Congratulations to the North Ghana Conference WH&OMS for a successful convention. The delegation that went on the trip was such a fantastic team.**



## Reclaiming Economic Agency Part 3

By Rev. Ronald A. Nathan, World Politics Editor  
Photos By © Getty Images, © KERA NEWS, Pentecostal Credit Union ©

The Black Church has long been a cornerstone of spiritual guidance and community support. However, its potential as an engine of economic empowerment remains largely untapped. In a world where economic systems disproportionately disadvantage Black communities, particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, the Black Church has a unique and powerful opportunity to change the narrative.



Black communities in the United Kingdom, much like those in the Global South, face systemic economic exclusion. According to the National Church Leaders Forum (NCLF) manifesto, Black people are among the most financially excluded groups in the United Kingdom. Financial exclusion is defined as the inability to access essential financial services that leads to what is known as a "poverty premium," where those without access to affordable financial options end up paying more for basic services.

This is an injustice that affects generations, perpetuating cycles of poverty and economic disempowerment. But this system is not inevitable—it is shaped by policies, choices, and structures that can be changed.

This is where the Black Church can make a profound difference. Historically, Black churches have played an important role in advocacy and community mobilization, often becoming spaces for social activism and support. Yet, their potential to drive economic change is often overlooked. The Black Church must embrace its theological and practical role in shaping the economic

future of Black communities in the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

At the heart of this shift is the recognition that economic empowerment is not just a social service—it is a theological imperative. Scripture calls us to act justly and to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves (Proverbs 31:8-9). The Bible emphasizes justice and equity, themes that resonate deeply with the mission of the Black Church. Economic empowerment—whether through financial literacy, entrepreneurship, or wealth-building—aligns directly with these Biblical principles. By supporting initiatives that promote financial inclusion, Black-owned businesses, and wealth-building strategies, the Black Church can be a key player in transforming the economic landscape for its members.



The UK Vision 2030 report calls for a self-sustaining system of wealth creation within Black communities, with an emphasis on financial literacy and the reinvestment of funds into Black-owned enterprises. The Black Church can be a central institution in this movement, supporting Black economic empowerment through practical strategies such as financial literacy programs, mentorship for entrepreneurs, and investment in small and Medium Enterprises businesses.

In conclusion, the Black Church in the United Kingdom is positioned to be a force for economic justice, helping to break the chains of financial exclusion and pave the way for a future of economic self-determination. This is not just about charity; it is about challenging the systemic inequities that perpetuate poverty and building a legacy of empowerment and self-sufficiency. The time for action is now. Let us embrace the theological mandate to empower our communities economically, for this is an essential part of our faith and our future.



# I THIRST: The Cry of a God-Man Dying on a Cross

By Reverend Leona Nicholas Welch

HE WAS HUMAN. He grew weary and needed some place to lay His head, when he travelled the dusty roads, blessing and healing His Father's people.

HE WAS DIVINE. He gave rest to the weary and encouraged them with promises from His Father.

HE WAS HUMAN. He acted in righteous anger that day toward those who dared to defile His Father's temple with buying and selling.

HE WAS DIVINE. He forgave those who sinned against His Father.

HE WAS HUMAN. He wept at the tomb of his friend, Lazarus.

HE WAS DIVINE. He raised that same friend the dead and called him forth from the tomb.

HE WAS HUMAN. He cried out that night in a garden while His friends slept and He sweated and prayed in anguish and fear: "Father, remove this cup from me."

Yet He was in tuned to the divine plan that had Him in that garden anyway, and He submitted: "Not as I will, but your will be done, Father."

And so it was, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made man, born of flesh and blood, born of a woman, walked in both a human and divine nature, equal in kind. Both natures were consistently presented to a world that needed a God-Man, to a world that was desperately in need of a Savior.

My Dear Sisters and Brothers, for almost two thousand years we have been privileged and blessed to be benefactors of the most inhumane, agonizing death ever suffered by any human being.

Here we are, gathered once again, at the foot of the cross. Still, after all these centuries, the truth, the power, and the reality of Jesus' death grips our very souls and still causes us to tremble. Mother Mary and her friends, with the Apostle, John, trembled that horrific day, there at the foot of the cross.

They lived through His suffering. They were gripped in His pain. They saw His blood pour from His body to the ground, right at their feet. They cried, and then they carried His demolished body to an unmarked, borrowed grave.

Tonight, once again – far, far beyond the day of His crucifixion, we gather. Our souls cry. Our minds and hearts fill with love and thanksgiving for what Jesus gave to us that day, almost two thousand years ago. Tonight, we cry.

HE WAS THE SON OF GOD, fully divine, fully human, and His body felt every ache and pain any human body would feel.

He had been beaten with sharp spikes and his flesh was torn and ragged. He had a crown of thorns, a few inches long, dug into his head, causing his blood to drip down His face. He was spat upon. He had a sword pierced deeply into His side. He spilled water and blood.

Any doctor today, observing what Jesus' body was going through, could give us some very specific scientific and medical facts about what was happening to His body.

I am not attempting to give a medical report on a dying Savior, but we state time and time again, the words that Jesus cried out from the cross, that caused a centurion to offer Him hyssop. In a moment of dire, human need, Jesus cried out, "I THIRST!"

QUESTION: From a human standpoint, did we ever stop to wonder why Jesus got so thirsty on the cross?

A story is given of a contemporary doctor who could not hold back his



tears when He gave an account of the scourging of Jesus' flesh, the crown of thorns, and the trauma to His body. The doctor cried, as Mary cried, as we cry when we meditate on it all.

Yes, this was a man of broken flesh, suffering from what medical doctors call HEMATIDROSIS, a condition caused by blood mixing with sweat, due to tiny capillaries in the sweat glands breaking down under emotional stress.

HE WAS HUMAN! His Divinity did not protect Him from human pain.

FOR US! FOR US! He became completely human for us, and everything you and I would have suffered, HE SUFFERED FOR US.

According to the reports of many doctors, who have studied and written on the death of Jesus Christ, by crucifixion, Jesus died from cardiac and respiratory arrest, due to another medical occurrence, termed HYPOVOLEMIC SHOCK.

Is it no wonder that Our dying Savior would die from a heart attack, seeing that He was carrying the weight of our sins and that His heart was heavy with sorrow and heavy with love, heavy with a desperate need to set us free. The weight of it all on the shoulders, the head, and the entire body of this God-Man who loved us so much to die for us – the weight of it all threw Him into a deathly shock.

He was human, and He died like a human. Jesus was gripped in pain, and His body was in shock – Hypovolemic. This is the condition that caused Jesus to need water. This is why He cried out, 'I THIRST!'

The paradox: THE LIVING WATER NEEDED WATER. They gave Him hyssop, a bitter, minty herb that contains some medicinal properties. Jesus refused the drink. He would take nothing to mitigate this ultimate giving of Himself. He would give us the full value of His offering.

HE WAS DIVINE! This, Sisters and Brothers, is where we insert a deeper spiritual understanding of Jesus' words, I THIRST. While His body ached for water, we can know that JESUS' SPIRIT ACHEDED FOR US. This is, after all, why He died. We can say that on the cross that day, existed a sharp and deep parallel of needs running through the body and soul of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Son of the Living God. While He thirsted for physical water, He also thirsted for our souls, for our salvation. Jesus thirsted for us!

Our salvation, Dear people of God, our salvation was the first and foremost reason that Jesus went to the cross for us; but before we leave for our eternal life with Him, Jesus wants a rich and abundant life for us here on this earth. "I came to give you life, and that more abundantly," He declared.

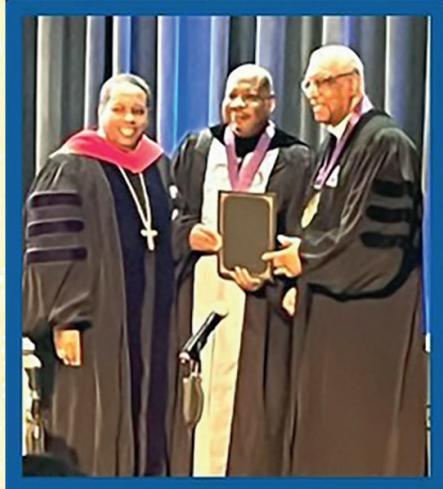
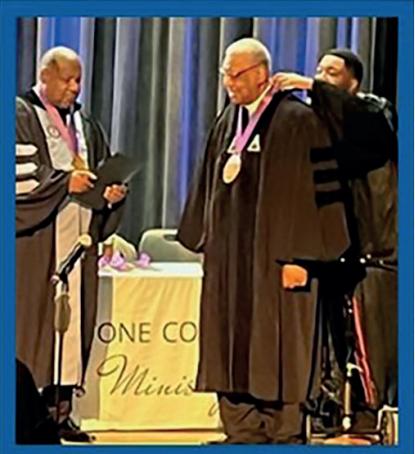
In other words, Jesus' heart was heavy with a desire for our joy, our peace, our happy and fulfilled lives here with one another. Jesus had a thirst to see us live in harmony. He had a thirst for seeing us walking in the light, not in darkness. Jesus had a thirst to see us take care of ourselves and one another.

Jesus had a thirst to see us carrying one another's burdens, lifting one another's spirits, and encouraging one another toward a rich and fruitful life. Jesus had a thirst to see us loving one another unconditionally and doing for the least. Jesus had a thirst to see us working for justice and peace and fair play for all.

Ultimately, Jesus had a thirst for the Goodness of His Father to permeate and flow through our lives so that our souls would not suffer from HYPOVOLEMIC SHOCK and die.

My Dear Brothers and Sisters, there are centuries between the time these words of Jesus were spoken and our repeating them now, but these words carry a blessed assurance for us. These words, themselves, are water for our very souls. These words hold an eternity of joy for us – an eternity of joy in the words, I THIRST!

# Congratulations!



*Reverend Dr. Alexander Jones, Sr.*

Presiding Elder of the Wilmington District

on being inducted into the

**Bishop Alfred G. Dunston, Jr. College of Preachers, Lectures, and Scholars**

Of

Livingstone College, Salisbury, NC on April 4, 2025.

You inspire all of us to keep giving God our best,  
 The pastors and laity of the **Wilmington District, Cape Fear Conference**  
**Eastern North Carolina Episcopal District**

