



The Metropolitan Spirit

Church Newsletter

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RESTORING AND RENOVATING A LEGACY

Our beloved Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church, as is evident, is undergoing major restoration and renovation. Many years of concealed water infiltration and vibrations caused, in part, by adjacent construction projects have resulted in extensive structural damage.

In 1973, the church was added to the National Register of Historic Places for the District of Columbia (DC) and elevated to the status of National Treasure just this year. Additionally, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named Metropolitan to its 2010 list of Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places in the United States.

The work now being done represents the first phase of an approximate \$11 million restoration effort. This restoration is being undertaken by a congregation resolved to continue to worship our God in the hallowed halls built by the hands of our ancestors.

This church is located in downtown Washington, DC, and stands on the oldest continuously black-owned property in the original 10-mile-parcel

of the District of Columbia.

Metropolitan has been an anchor in the lives of Black people in the immediate Washington, DC community. The church is a cornerstone for racial justice throughout this Nation, and a key Connectional station in the African Methodist Episcopal denomination worldwide.

Metropolitan was founded in 1838, as Union Bethel, at a time when there were only 386,293 free people of color in America and 2,487,355 still enslaved. The Union Bethel congregation grew in the years before and during the Civil War. Just fifteen years after the War ended, the denominational leadership, tasked the congregation to erect a Metropolitan Church. That the church selected a location site in close proximity to the US Capitol and the White House was a deliberate decision of the A.M.E. Church Elders.

Metropolitan was, and still is, a voice of advocacy amidst the powerful of this country. When constructed the church was a symbol of racial accomplishment for a people who had been held captive; for a people who were defined as less than human; for a people who were made to believe that nothing of substance could result from their individual or collective hands.

The Metropolitan A.M.E. Church structure, built between 1881 and 1886, is a stately red-brick façade building of distinctive Victorian-Gothic design, with exquisite stained-glass windows, and carved wood pews. The edifice and its features were all built with love, great hope, and an enduring tenacity – by the

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very hands of former slaves and those who in the antebellum period were free men of color.

US Representative Robert Smalls (South Carolina), a former slave, said at the dedication of this edifice, "...I wish they could see this magnificent temple. No, we ain't going to Liberia, nor any other place else. We're going to stay here." And here we have stayed.

The Bethel Literary Society and Historical Association was founded and housed at Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. The Literary Society's major purpose was to showcase the cultural and educational accomplishments of Americans of color. The Society provided a platform for prominent and significant voices to be heard on issues of equity and parity for all as they assimilated into the fabric of American life.

This church has hosted, among many guest speakers, persons who were Episcopal leaders, Connectional officers, and local A.M.E. Church dignitaries. A few secular personalities who have been heard from this pulpit include Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, Eleanor Roosevelt, Booker T. Washington, Leontyne Price and John Philip Sousa.

Metropolitan has assisted in stabilizing the educational, economic, emotional, and spiritual lives of thousands of people as they transitioned from shackles to freedom, from being the property of to being responsible property owners and heads of households. That is our glorious history.

The twenty-first century is upon us. Slavery and oppression now have new names ... urban education, underemployment, pre-existing conditions, poverty, and homelessness. The gap between those who have and those who have not has gotten wider and the rancor that accompanies efforts to stop the deepening gulf is frightening.

The achievement gap between white children and black children is growing at an astonishing rate. The local, state, and federal prisons are overflowing with people who represent but a miniscule fraction of the total population. Our children are hungry, disproportionately so. They are opting out of

institutions 'designed' to prepare them for responsible and contributing citizenship.

Forty percent of our Black youth entering school will drop out before the 9th grade. Of those remaining, only one of every four will enter college. Hopelessness is creeping into our youth's psyche and they are living out lives where imprisonment and/or death are matter-of-fact expectations.

We have even moved to destroying each other. In 2007, 43 percent of all murder victims were Black and of Blacks killed, 93 percent were killed at the hands of other Blacks. The salience, the beauty, the productivity, and the creativity of our lives and the lives of those who look like us is being ignored, often distained, and inevitably lost to us and to others.

Just as Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, this historic facility, has been ravaged by water seepage, tremors from adjacent construction and mere time, our people are being decimated by joblessness, the lack of effective education, unresolved health disparities, and racism. Looking to others to save us has not worked and we the people must rescue ourselves; we must rescue our children; we must ensure our future.

We are in crises and the Black church must again become our North Star. This church continues its legacy of serving the common good. Among numerous other programs, Metropolitan ministries, clubs, and organizations provide monthly food baskets for families and individuals in need; award scholarships to youth enrolled in institutions of higher education; sponsor voter registration and AIDS education programs; and conduct a program to reduce prison recidivism and strengthen family, community, and spiritual relationships of African American men who have returned to society from incarceration.

Added to this litany of services is "Sundays with the MET." This is a new series of services and cultural events designed to strengthen faith, create a deepened appreciation for the Black church and its rich legacy in advancing social justice, and to incite civic action that ultimately improves the socio-economic well-being of people worldwide.

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"Sundays with the MET" serves to honor the heritage of African Methodism, to celebrate the excellence of the lives of those who execute the tenants of that heritage and most importantly, to build on the faith that our continued efforts and God's grace will bring parity and equity to the lives of all people irrespective of the color of their skin, the number of dollars they may have, or the religious discipline through which they have chosen to serve our God.

This edifice represents so much to us not only as A.M.E.s but as people of color. Not only does it stand as a Connectional church for our denomination but it stands as a beacon for all Black people. As mentioned, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church was built at a time when there were commands that Blacks be sent back to Africa.

Yet, we continue to endure, as a people and as a congregation. To us, this sanctuary represents vision, strength, and pride of a special people. The majority of those who built this church, some who were still enslaved, had very little personal resources, but they had vision and willingness to do their very best with what they had and could get. They were willing to invest their meager resources, their nickels and dimes, to help build this structure. They built an edifice that would prevail for generations.

Now it is in our hands and it is incumbent upon each of us to ensure that this structure continues to stand, restored, renovated, and refreshed. We have the opportunity to financially support this restoration. It is commendable what we have already accomplished standing as one.

Metropolitan A.M.E. Church continues in its glorious expressions of faith through advocacy, education, and the Arts. This church, that welcomes all people to worship, is being restored to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God is truly good!!

Gwendolyn Kimbrough

(Excerpts of remarks given by Gwendolyn Kimbrough on 09.17.2010 and 12.04.2010)

IN OBSERVANCE OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Why observe Black History Month?

The annual observance celebration of Black History Month highlights the contributions of Black people. The observance also provides a keener appreciation of the rich and diverse heritage of African Americans.

Why African American (Black) History Month?

The contributions of African Americans to the discovery, pioneering, and development of America had not been properly presented in text books, the media, and other communications devices in this country. In large part Blacks had been left out of the written record of America. The designation of a celebration during the month of February was an attempt to remedy this neglect and to provide all Americans with the information needed for an empathetic understanding about the role of African Americans in the making of this nation.

Who started the observance?

In 1926, Carter G. Woodson, a Harvard PhD., who, eleven years earlier had founded the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, Inc. (ASALH), initiated Negro History Week. Through this special observance, it was hoped that all Americans would be reminded of their ethnic roots and a mutual respect for all ethnic groups would be developed.

Why was a period in February chosen as the time for the observance?

Dr. Woodson, keenly conscious of symbolism in the American psyche, wisely chose the second week in February as Negro History Week because the time period contains the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln (02.12) and Frederick Douglass (02.14).

MOVING ON AND MOVING FORWARD

“Therefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:13)

As the year 2010 closed and 2011 arrived, Metropolitan paused in reflection. The words “old” and “new” are inescapable as 2010 is now old – history; and 2011 is new – a blank slate.

Reflecting on the past year, we have much to be thankful for; we have experienced great things that are amazing and wonderful. How did Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church progress from being a local historic entity to being named a national treasure and one of eleven endangered national historic sites in the entire country?

Looking back at 2010, remember the falling ceiling tile and the scaffolds later going up? Where did they get the very similar beautiful replacement tiles for the ceiling?

What about the molding around the sanctuary ceiling – looks good doesn't it? Though not readily seen by the eye, there are copper and new mechanical systems for the building which upgraded patchwork jobs that had been done in the past. These systems are now operationally sound and up to code.

Now, reflect on the amount of money that has been raised, contributed, and given sacrificially for the restoration of this church. Speaking of making sacrifices, I was told of a Metropolitan member, a true football fan, who in support of the church's fundraising efforts, delayed purchasing a new, imported Redskins fur rug for the TV room, and decided that the special Dallas footballs on sale would have to wait! A sacrifice was made.

All along, there have been hard choices made and painful decisions. Sometimes it may even feel as if the church is a wandering band, worshipping...in Douglass Hall; back upstairs to the sanctuary, over to the Madison Hotel, back to the sanctuary, again to the Madison, and now to the ever improved and restored sanctuary.

In reality we know better than to even think that we should rest on our laurels. We know that there are “miles to go before we sleep”, and yet we must acknowledge just how far we've come in such a very short time. The church has indeed been given “new armor.”

Many individuals personally have gone through their own restoration process. Their bodies may have been retuned and repaired. They may have felt as if they were walking around with scaffolds holding them up; the ‘plaster’ and ‘foundation’ of so many years had shifted, and could no longer carry their weight.

These persons cast themselves before the throne of glory, and were granted grace and mercy. They asked, and believed that it would be given – contributions and offerings; sacrificial gifts of prayer, faith, and often dollars, to endure the process of their own reconstruction project. They too have seen the scaffolds come down, and the beautiful glow of Light return; they too have been clothed in new and more beautiful garments than ever before; they too have been given “new armor.”

Now, a turning point of sorts confronts the individual person and the church body. It is thought provoking to realize that, individually and collectively,

- The work that is not readily visible was probably more expensive, time-consuming and arduous than the work that does show.
- The foundation of the work will never even be thought about unless it shifts.
- It is only natural to want to preen and say, “Look what we've accomplished.”
- It is only normal and would be easy to say that, once that last coat of paint goes up, we have fulfilled our legacy, and our charge.
- It is only natural to ask, “Isn't this

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enough???"

Keep in mind, there are miles to go before it is over, and, in many ways, the journey is just beginning. Let us pledge to a self-challenge, just as the Pastor challenged the church, what are we going to do with this beautiful new edifice that now stands on a firm foundation?

What types of services and activities will occur at Metropolitan? Do we really think our ancestors built this edifice just to have a beautiful building? Do we realize that beauty serves a purpose and a cause, and that it is not true beauty if it does not reflect a purpose and a cause? Are we going to rest on our laurels, and our ancestors' prayers and accomplishments, or, are we going to "press on" and keep it movin'?

As we sit in our personal silence and the collective sits in silence one with another, reflections are in order about moving forward. Interestingly enough, questions that were present at the beginning of the process are still questions today:

- Am I going to honor the legacy of service and of being useful to myself and others?
- Am I going to honor the legacy of doing with and for others, even in danger, and during hard times?
- Am I going to do God's will, or do I think (now that I have made it through) that I can do as I, myself think?

On both the individual and collective levels, we have indeed come through and survived the "evil day" of wondering would we; could we, should we; will we actually get this done and make it through—still standing.

These are the challenges of making it through; of prevailing; of arriving. The deep realization is that, as always, you, me, and we, have only just begun. Even though, and perhaps *because*, we now have restored bodies, new shoes, and gorgeous dresses and suits; our walls aren't flaking; our paint is not peeling; and our exterior is not crumbling. We've got new armor!

As 2011 moves forward we still have a

"Charge to keep and a God to glorify." We still have a race to run, and crowds of witnesses cheering us on, and exhorting us to run on, run on, run, on. Remember, this process entails one for all and all for one to get it done.

Dr. Anne Bouie

LORD, HELP ME HOLD MY PEACE

"The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace." (Psalm 29:11)

"Depart from evil, and do good; Seek peace and pursue it." (Psalm 34:14)

Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day have passed. I have said all the right things for the occasion: I am thankful and I am blessed at Christmas to have family that really cares about me.

Now the New Year has started and the message on many cards is about peace. We wish peace on earth throughout this New Year. But this year I'm saying to myself, I wish peace for myself and it **shall** begin with me.

Many times I lack peace. Whenever I think of peace within me, I think of my driving and how I must make patience a virtue. I will strive not to press on the gas pedal to keep going when I see that yellow caution light. Instead, I want peace to guide my foot toward the brake pedal.

I'll try not to use un-church language – certain words that might come naturally when some other driver barges in front of me without warning and I have to suddenly come to a halt. I will ask the Lord to please give me strength to be peaceful and not to use non-Christian words. I really believe if I practice peace within me, then I will be able to pass that peace on to others.

I so wish peace for others in this New Year as I also wish peace for myself. If I am at peace it makes it easier to share peace, spread peace, and give peace freely and not feel like a hypocrite.

I realize that it will be a constant daily challenge when others are rude or show that they have no peace in their hearts. But I'm not going

to let this stop me. I'm going to try not to be in such a hurry all the time. When someone blows their car horn at me this time, I won't...rather I **shall not blow back.**

Next time when I just happen upon some unexpected Virginia traffic on a Saturday that looks like weekday rush hour traffic, I will do my best to remain at peace and not blurt out those impatient un-church-like words. Instead, I will strive to remain calm and peaceful and turn to the easy listening station on my car radio. I also shall remember to be thankful that I have a car to be stuck in traffic. You see I could be riding around on horseback or maybe even in a covered wagon with no air conditioning or heating, dependent on weather conditions. (*I loved to watch cowboy movies.*)

We all say things that we wish we hadn't. I remember my grandmother often said "I could hardly hold my peace." Today we say: "Bite your tongue." This too is peace. There are times when some things said would have been better left unsaid.

I like to play Chess and I find myself at peace when I play it either on the computer or with someone. Chess is unlike the game of Bid Whist where you engage in what is known as "selling wolf tickets," a play used when you know you have no winning cards in your hand. Though Whist can be noisy and boisterous (that's all in the game) it's tons of fun. But in a Chess game you don't speak or gloat or chest beat. It is a quiet, peaceful game even when it's "checkmate."

I will always play Bid Whist and at times be loud and rowdy with every slap down of the card on the table; but when I feel myself getting angry or impatient about something minute or insignificant I'll think Chess. Calm and peacefulness will be my goal.

Throughout this year I will remember to be thankful to my heavenly Father for what I have and not wallow in what I want or what I don't have. I will remember to count my blessings each day with smiles and contentment. I will pray for peace in the world and peace in others. I shall seek, pursue, and pray for peace within

myself first and foremost; for here is where it truly must begin.

Pat Rosier

SURRENDERING TO SACREDNESS

While the cold, wintry air moved on the outside of the beautiful Lansdowne Resort in Leesburg, Virginia, on the weekend of October 29-31, 2010, the warmth, love, and peace of over 45 women moved on the inside. The powerful spirit of the Lord filled the space and blessed the participants who were gathered at Metropolitan's second annual women's spiritual retreat.

"Surrendering to Sacredness" was the retreat theme. It was also the personal mantra etched on every heart as the participants lifted their voices in song, praise, and worship. Every heart was joined in prayer, fellowship, and devotion.

The women enjoyed a spirit-filled weekend of restoration, renewal, and relaxation. Minds, bodies, and spirits were revived with inspirational workshops, meditative walks and yoga sessions, retreat scriptures for reflection, group mixer activities, aerobics, and spa services.

Each of the dynamic workshop leaders led the participants on a powerful journey with two different but related messages. The messages centered on the retreat's key scripture, Psalm 19:14: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." (NIV)

The first workshop on Saturday morning was led by Ms. Karla Scott, a gifted vocalist, musician, and instructor. Ms. Scott examined the question of what will satisfy and please God with "the words of my mouth." In answering this question, she pointed out that worship should be a lifestyle and that God expects first, our love for Him and second, our obedience to Him.

Ms. Scott noted that suffering is a high call and that God has found those suffering worthy to give Him praise. She lifted a prayer

that when we are suffering, God would give us the strength to give Him praise so that others who see how we make it through will be inspired.

Rev. Marlene Jefferson, Senior Pastor of Star of Bethlehem A.M.E. Church in Baltimore, Maryland, second workshop leader, focused on "the meditations of my heart." She opened stating that meditation is the ability to hear God's voice and obey His words and to hear His voice we must be positioned to hear Him.

Rev. Jefferson pointed out that the words of our mouths cannot be acceptable unless the meditations of our hearts are right. Therefore, we must spend time pondering God and ask ourselves, "Is He the first thing on my mind in the morning when I wake up and the last thing I think of when I lie down at night?" To truly ponder Him, we must accept Him and make Him Lord of our lives.

Rev. Jefferson stressed that like David, who the Bible says was a man after God's own heart; we should be "souled out" to God, making nothing more important to us than our relationship to Him. Then He will give us the desires of our hearts, not by giving us all that our hearts may desire, but by forming and fashioning what those desires are. She reminded participants that no matter how old you may be, if you are not linked to the Word, you don't know all you should know or could know.

Earlier in the day, Metropolitan's Assistant Pastor Rev. Marie P. Braxton, led spiritually uplifting meditation worship. Before joining the Saturday evening session, she prayed over the participants' prayer requests. As intercessor for the entire retreat group, Rev. Marie lifted three scriptures that God had placed on her heart during her time with the prayer requests. Each scripture was edified with a guiding principle.

First, Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Rev. Marie advised the participants to have faith. If we believe that God is able to do all things, then we know God has already answered. He will make a way to overcome all challenges, even the financial

difficulties, the illnesses of the body, and the burdens of life.

Second, Mark 11:22: "Have faith in God, Jesus answered." As an example of faith, Rev. Marie pointed out that if anyone says to the mountain, "mountain move," with faith, we can move the mountain. Rev. Marie then related the principle that we have to speak to whatever mountain is in our lives and boldly say, "Mountain move, and it will!"

Lastly, Matthew 6:25: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"

Rev. Marie closed by stating, "You have to stop getting anxious and worrying over your situation. If you've given it to the Lord, you have to let Him work it out."

On the last day of the retreat, Rev. Kellie Hayes, Assistant Pastor of Hunter Memorial A.M.E. Church in Suitland, Maryland, blessed participants during Sunday worship service with her message, "The Profile of a God-Pleaser." She began by stating that many of us are so driven by the innate desire to please others that often we will step out of our comfort zone and become who we are not, in order to get people to accept and love us unconditionally.

By contrast, our God loves us unconditionally as we are, and each of us should for Him be a "God-pleaser" – someone who surrenders everything to God. Rev. Hayes profoundly stated "what you say and what you think determines the life you live. Let your life please Him."

Rev. Hayes pointed out three ways to please God. First and foremost, always acknowledge God in all His creations and wonders of life, no matter how busy you may be.

Second, know God, not just in church but through His perfect, transforming Word and His constant, never-changing presence. He is always the same God and He is always there. "You should get to the point in your life that when new challenges come, you don't flip out, because

you know God.”

Third, you please God by accepting what He has already done for you instead of spending time thinking something is missing or that you can get what you need from someone else. God has already given us every spiritual blessing we need to make it on earth. He had already made a place and space on earth for each of us before we were born. Most importantly, you please God by being who you already are.

In closing, Rev. Hayes stated, “We think we have to be acceptable to God, but we are already accepted in His sight.”

At the close of the retreat, each participant was asked to complete an evaluation. Jacqueline Coleman, Co-Chair of the retreat, summarized the evaluation comments in a post retreat debriefing meeting of the Women’s Spiritual Retreat Committee. Jacqueline noted the overwhelming response was that the retreat was excellent, which she attributed to the fact that God is excellent and His presence was felt throughout. Several participants commented that the retreat was very well-organized, enriching, spiritual, and peaceful.

Many felt that the retreat gave them an opportunity to fellowship in a relaxed atmosphere with other women who they would not have ordinarily met. They expressed that the relatively small number of participants fostered a special feeling of closeness and intimacy among the participants. Everyone found the retreat to be very welcoming, relaxing, and stress-free.

Celeste Garcia, Retreat Co-Chair, stated that the participants’ positive comments were primarily due to the beautiful spirits of everyone who worked on the Women’s Spiritual Retreat. “Everyone supported each other, and the way the committees worked together also set the tone.”

In future retreat planning, a goal projected for the next committee is to locate a less costly, but equally as appealing and conducive facility, so that the per person retreat cost can be lower. In doing this, more women may have the opportunity to participate and experience the blessing that the women at the 2010 retreat experienced.

Janet Oakley Higgins

WHEN YOU ARE SINGLED OUT

In January 2009, I was out of bed very early that morning, watching television to monitor reports being given on the crowds arriving for the swearing in service. I was kept extremely busy answering my phone as I was preparing to go out into the cold, cold weather.

I walked miles through the streets of northwest Washington, DC to reach the National Mall. There I would stand among millions of people who were also arriving to view the swearing-in service for our newly elected President of the United States of America.

Hurriedly I walked, did not have time to tarry, and there were oh so many people moving nearly as swiftly as I was. I was trying to reach a site that I had identified during the preceding weekend. A site that I had suggested to my family arriving from South Carolina and friends who would be here from Huntsville, AL, where we would meet so that we could stand together to witness this once in a lifetime event.

Each of us personally wanted to be on-site to experience the inauguration of President-elect Barack Obama, the first African American US President. Well, my family and friends made it to the general area of the location that I previously identified to them but I did not. Just as I got close, Security would not allow any other persons to cross into the area which had already become too fully occupied.

So, there I was, not on the part of the National Mall I wanted to be, but rather, across 14th Street standing on the Washington Monument grounds. Alone, I stood among many thousands of strangers, yet feeling closeness as I watched the inaugural service on a gigantic video screen.

Now, here it is merely two years later, almost to the exact date and once again I am up early, in the dark before dawn, wrapped warmly, standing anxiously in a long line. I am standing in line to enter Metropolitan A.M.E. Church to

enjoy worship service with special guests President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha.

In just the short span of two years, on Sunday, January 16, 2011, I am sitting on the third pew of Metropolitan behind the Obama family. My, how far I have come from being miles away from the First Family on the National Mall in January 2009, to being seated in church just behind them; my-oh-my, what a memorable and joyous experience. Additionally, I had the opportunity to shake their hands (more than once), extend greetings of welcome, express sentiments of pride and admiration for their achievement, and had my photo taken with the President.

The worship was a regular Sunday service, although the congregation sang "Happy Birthday" greetings to First Lady Michelle Obama and Rev. Marie Braxton who both would be celebrating their birthdays during the week. The First family wanted to worship and had come to Metropolitan just for that reason.

The service, in recognition of the life and legacy of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was very uplifting, inspirational, and moving – from the music of praise, to the prayer of petition and thanksgiving, and finally the empowering message, "When God Singles You Out."

The message, delivered by Rev. Ronald Braxton, challenged us to go forward with pride in doing our very best. For, when God has singled you out, you are in the flow of greatness from the beginning; God will equip you with everything that you need when you need it; and remember God has the last word.

Rev. Braxton's sermon text was from Isaiah 49:1-7 and he referred to persons singled out in the Bible and in life, persons such as Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Rosa Parks, Rev. Dr. King, and President Obama. Rev. Braxton emphatically and speaking directly to the President said that God had singled out Barack Obama and had been preparing him for such a time as this.

Participation in this worship was inclusive

of many components of the local church including our youth orchestra and Sunday Church School represented by Master Addy Hebu, who gave very warm and gracious words of welcome. President Obama acknowledged the heartfelt welcome by requesting a handshake from Addy. Also participating in the service from the Connectional A.M.E. Church were several Bishops, Episcopal Supervisors, and Presiding Elders and spouses.

Although we had to arrive at church at a very early hour to stand outside in a long line, were required to pass through an x-ray machine, waited as our personal purses were searched, and generally had to remain in the pew once the First Family arrived, it was all worth it! Know that, if I had the chance I would do it all over again, and in the same manner.

Carolyn McClain

RESTORATION

Frequently Asked Questions

This is the third article in a series to provide updated information on Metropolitan's restoration efforts. The information responds to some questions/issues raised regarding construction projects and financing.

At the Church Conference on Saturday, December 4, 2010, Metropolitan's Stewards and Trustees provided an update on the work that had been done and what remained to be done for the restoration of the church and presented financial data on the restoration project.

Pastor Ronald E. Braxton opened the portion of the conference which addressed restoration by acknowledging that the "stewardship and giving of Metropolitan's members provided a level of spiritual and financial responsibility that has sustained the ongoing operations of the church." He noted that because of the faithfulness of Metropolitan's members and its officers who have kept an eye on every detail and accounted for all funds, "we have met every obligation called upon us."

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When we look around, we can see a beautiful ceiling, a restored Episcopacy stained glass window and new lead-free walls in the sanctuary, two handicapped-accessible restrooms in Douglass Hall, a sprinkler system throughout the building, an upright and secure steeple, and exterior masonry repairs among other work that has been completed. We must know, as Rev. Braxton reminded, that God has blessed Metropolitan.

❖ What is the status of the restoration construction project?

The Phase I work is coming to a close. The amount of work completed thus far is represented by percentages in the table below.

Work in Progress			
Attic and Sanctuary	Ground Floor	Ground Floor Walls and Ceiling	Basement Electrical Work
Attic ACU/ductwork 85%	Douglass Hall ductwork 95%	General Drywall Work 90%	Electrical Feed to Closet 85%
Sanctuary Plaster Work 75%	Plumbing Lines 90%	New Ceiling Grid Work 95%	Closet Enlargement 65%
Floor Patching 80%	Douglass Hall Restrooms 90%	Electrical Wiring 90%	
Baseboard Heating Unit 90%	Men's Lobby Restroom 85%	New Lighting Work 90%	
	Ladies' Lobby Restroom 60%		
Sanctuary Lighting 97%	Family Lobby Restroom 65%		
	Pruitt Boardroom 75%		

The work completed thus far is extensive and includes: a new sprinkler system throughout the church (in the attic, sanctuary, and Douglass Hall, Pruitt Boardroom, and first floor lobby); new attic insulation; sanctuary walls lead abatement; removal of organ pipes; major brick repair work and new layout in the women's restroom; lobby floor repair and wall refinishing; demolition of the old boiler system and installation of two new boilers and pumps; installation of new gutters and downspouts; metalwork restoration; roof repair; steeple stabilization; ceramic tile replacement on center front exterior steps landing; masonry re-pointing; restoration of the Episcopacy stained glass window; electrical upgrade; and new, rear condensers.

After the mortgages on the church and Q Street properties were paid off, the church had \$2.5 million remaining for construction out of a \$3 million SunTrust loan. The \$2.5 million loan and the nearly \$1 million raised by contributions from members/friends/associates have enabled the church to finance the work that has been done thus far. The contractors have been paid \$1,997,513.76 to date for the Phase I work.

There has been a single construction work order for the restoration project. However, the work order was written under two contracts, Contract I and Contract II; the entire amount of work to be done could not be covered by the \$2.5 million alone. Work that is being financed by the \$2.5 million SunTrust loan is being done under Contract I. There is a current expense of \$502,486.24 for work that remains to be completed under Contract I. The remaining work listed under Contract II is to be covered by funds raised by the church.

The restoration project was originally slated to be completed by December 8, 2010; completion is now targeted for April 1, 2011, pursuant to the new financial arrangement for the \$1.1 million line of credit with SunTrust Bank (discussed in detail later in this article). Throughout the renovation work the contractors have willingly accommodated the membership's desire to continue to use the church sanctuary and boardroom during renovations. This has

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meant that the contractors had to work around congregational needs.

On April 1, 2011, the bank construction loan (from which bank drafts are released as construction milestones are met) converts to a permanent, commercial mortgage loan, which the church shall repay in monthly installments. The mortgage loan will be at a 20-year fixed rate of 5.1 percent; every 5 years the terms of the remaining years on the loan must be renegotiated.

The Stewards and Trustees have recommended that worship service be located to a different venue to allow the contractor to complete work by the April deadline. (NOTE: As of February 20, 2011, worship service is once again being held in Metropolitan's sanctuary.)

❖ How are contingencies being handled for the restoration project?

Given the age of the structure, any work undertaken is almost certain to uncover additional repair and restoration needs. Contingencies have, in some instances, taken priority over scheduled work and had to be done in order to move forward with the original statement of work.

For example, the contractors, in removing some first floor planks, found that the entire supporting structure and beams of the lobby floor on the 15th Street side of the church were not attached to anything. This structural support had been destroyed by water seepage and termites. As a result, the work that was originally planned could not be done until the issue of the supporting beams and floor planks was resolved.

Similarly, when working on the roof, the contractors discovered that the church steeple was insecurely affixed and positioned to fall. Thus, the roof work could not be initiated until the steeple was repaired and appropriately anchored.

Funds had not been set aside in Contract I with the bank for unforeseen issues that might arise during construction work. A line item for unexpected contingencies is included in Contract

II, which is funded by finances raised by the church. Additional financial obligations can continue to increase in Contract II because of unforeseen issues. These are the types of unforeseen issues that must be addressed before work can go forward on tasks that are already contained in Contracts I and II.

An amount of \$269,933.00, set aside for unexpected contingencies, was intended to cover not only unforeseen issues under Contract II but any unforeseen issues for Contract I as well. However, the actual dollar amount of unforeseen and uncovered items is now an amount of \$859,655.28.

❖ What are the options for completing Contract II?

SunTrust Bank personnel were invited to the regular Wednesday Construction meeting that is held generally weekly at the church to discuss construction progress and status. A bank representative attended the meeting and was thoroughly impressed with the renovation accomplishments. This representative recommended that the church should submit to the bank a list of uncompleted work items that needed to be done to ensure a successful restoration project.

Subsequent to the bank's invitation, the church submitted a list of items that totaled \$1,350,653.74, and included approximately \$617,913.74 of the \$859,655.28 in contingencies.

The submitted "wish list" with over 30 items included redesigning the egress stairs in the rear of the building; upgrading the heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems in the ladies' and men's restrooms to meet mechanical code; repairing sanctuary plaster due to unforeseen lead abatement; repairing a termite-damaged stairway; removing organ pipes to avoid reconfiguration of the new sprinkler system; making extensive structural repairs in the ladies' restroom due to water leaks; providing temporary power generators and switches; framing the choir loft; leveling the Douglass Hall floor substrate; restoring/replacing sanctuary

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historic stencil around walls; and installing exhibit display cabinets in Douglass Hall.

In response to the list, the bank offered to extend the church additional funding in the form of a \$1.1 million line of credit. At the December Church Conference, members voted to accept the \$1.1 million line of credit; this was finalized later in December with SunTrust Bank.

The Sudbury Road residential property has not yet been sold. Thus, the anticipated proceeds are not available from this option for meeting Contract II restoration obligations and any mandatory contingencies, such as lighting and heating.

With the lack of heat and other mandatory restoration work to be done, it became obvious that the church was subject to being declared unsafe for occupancy. These concerns, related financial issues and obligations were explored and discussed at the Church Conference and are addressed in this article. There were three expenses discussed that could be backed out of or deducted from the balance owed to Gilford Construction under Contract II.

First, the church had allocated \$208,000 in Contract II for the ceiling. However in actuality this work cost less than that amount; the total \$124,728.00, a difference between the budgeted cost and the actual cost could be deducted from the balance owed.

Second, in Contract II there was an \$83,000 allocation for Douglass Hall windows. The church has opted not to undertake this work; that cost could be deducted.

Third, the value of the contingency line \$269,933.00 originally in Contract II could be deducted from the total Contract II obligation.

In addition, contingencies totaling \$89,978.26, included in the wish list submitted to the bank, could be moved to the new \$1.1 million credit line. These adjustments would leave a total church obligation of \$161,577.25 owed to Gilford Construction on Contract II, separate and apart from any other unforeseen contingencies.

❖ What is the status of the Sudbury Road residential property sale?

In December 2010, eviction proceedings were initiated against the Sudbury Road tenant, who had not paid rent for several months. There is a proposal to sell the property to the Metropolitan A.M.E Church Rogers Memorial Trust and the Church Endowment. Sale of the Sudbury Road property is expected to generate \$800,000, and would reduce the church's restoration debt by that amount.

Ultimately, if the Sudbury Road property is purchased by the Rogers Memorial Trust and the Church Endowment, the property would still be owned by the church. If this becomes the case, then the Church Endowment would either sell the Sudbury Road property back to the church or maintain ownership of the property.

❖ What is the financial status of the restoration project?

The church membership pledged a total of \$269,955.00 for Easter 2010. Of those pledges, an actual amount of \$151,155.00 has been paid, leaving \$118,800.00 in unfulfilled pledges. Total restoration funds received as of November 28, 2010 is \$1,130,994.54. This amount includes three categories of giving:

Category 1 - Metropolitan's contributions consisting of pledges received [\$151,155.00], restoration offerings [\$418,930.50], and leadership initiative contributions [\$101,568.00].

Category 2 - External Grants/Gifts consisting of the Connectional A.M.E. Church bishops' gifts [\$56,459.00], memorials and special gifts [\$39,418.52], National Trust Grant [\$5,000.00], and special contributions donated because of the church's historic designation [\$800.00]; and

Category 3 - Cash advance investments in the sale of the Sudbury Road property, members' cash advance [\$115,000.00], the Rogers Memorial Trust [\$104,497.59], and the Church Endowment [\$98,165.93].

Restoration expenses totaling \$536,468.50 have been paid to date. These expenses include paid in full accounts for Higgins & Associates' Episcopacy window removal, restoring, storage, and reinstalling [\$134,795.37];

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DC permits [\$25,685.85]; PEPCO's preparation for the new electrical system [\$12,919.00]; Communication System Services' fee for rebuilding the electrical closet [\$4,111.60]; Session Law Firm, P.C. legal assistance with the church deed [\$6,650.00]; Marilyn Harper's assistance with historic preservation grants [\$7,000.00]; the Gasby Group's brochure design [\$9,000.00]; Grant Business Strategies' loan consultant fee [\$26,528.54]; SunTrust Bank fees [\$54,992.18] loan interest to date [\$42,976.32], commitment letter fee [\$7,500.00], returned checks fees [\$235.86], and inspections and reviews [\$4,280.00]; repayment to Metropolitan's general ledger [\$6,967.79]; Home Depot purchases [\$2,397.83] for window air conditioners [\$1,780.00] and oscillating fans [\$617.83]; Candace Giles' appraisal fee of Sudbury Road property [\$350.00] and miscellaneous expenses for audio video equipment and postage [\$1,833.64].

Unpaid restoration expenses and outstanding balances owed are: \$32,150.73 for Devroaux & Purnell's architectural fees [\$184,596.70 total of which \$4,500.00 remains due]; Bryant Mitchell construction contract manager fees [\$51,840.00 total of which \$17,280.00 remains due]; Power Component Systems for lead abatement [\$12,520.00 total of which \$5,720 remains due]; and Griffith Energy and Sunbelt for temporary heat [\$4,650.73].

❖ What are the next steps?

The congregation must decide whether to replace/restore the floors, pews, and carpeting in the sanctuary, and if so, how the cost of these renovations will be paid. Options for payment include the possibility of using some of the \$1.1 million line of credit and/or to solicit special contributions from members.

A church conference will be scheduled to discuss this matter. In the meantime, the pastor proposed an option for 200 members to donate \$1,500.00 each, to help finance payment for necessary work on the floors and pews.

The December Church Conference authorized a committee to review and evaluate

the priority of the "wish list" items (beyond mandatory and unforeseen) to determine those work items that could be covered under the \$1.1 million line of credit. The final list of optional items is subject to review and approval by the congregation before going forward.

❖ In what ways can members help Metropolitan's Capital Campaign at this time?

The Metropolitan A.M.E. Church Capital Campaign Committee would appreciate any assistance that members can provide in identifying potential donors. Please contact Dina Curtis at dcurtis@mlkmemorial.org or Dr. Elsie Scott at scottie4of8@hotmail.com if you know of anyone who works for, or sits on, the boards of the following companies: American Chemical Society; Double Tree Hotel; Jefferson Hotel; National Association of Home Builders; National Education Association; Oracle; Whole Foods; and Westin Hotel.

Janet Oakley Huggins

<p>References: Materials distributed at the Church Conference on December 4, 2010; information presented and provided by Trustee Gwendolyn Kimbrough; Stewards Thedford Collins, Rollie Kimbrough, and Walter Morris.</p>

SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF ALLEN

The Sons and Daughters of Allen Club was organized in February 1961 by Rev. G. Dewey Robinson. The organization's purpose is to perpetuate the study and celebration of the rich legacy of our Black heritage. Since being organized, there have been three club presidents, LaVerne Clark Goldman (1961-1986), Altha Elliott (1986-1995), and currently, Joan Oxendine (1995-present).

The club engages in numerous activities and contributes faithfully to Metropolitan's restoration fund each year. In the late 90's, the club began to sponsor an Annual Cultural Arts Festival. This event features entertainment by church youth and guests, a fashion show, and a

lunch. The food is prepared by club members who use the occasion to showcase their favorite recipes. The Arts Festival is held on the first Saturday in the month of March.

Youth oratorical contests were sponsored to enrich and embellish the minds of church and community youth to the richness of Black heritage and legacy. Winning participants were awarded savings bonds as prizes. Additionally, the Sons & Daughters conducted symposiums, some of which focused on current issues in the community, and others featured Metropolitan members who were experts in their career fields.

On the first Sunday in February at Metropolitan, the Sons and Daughters has hosted the "African American Read-In," a program sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English. This idea originated as a way to promote literacy and to encourage people world-wide to read a work written by a Black author at the Read-In program. Both youth and adults have read for this event.

The organization also extends outreach to the community. The Sons and Daughters adopted a local community family in need and for several years provided Christmas cheer, school supplies, and funded a summer outing for the father and six children.

The club donated funds to church youth to travel to retreats. These funds were contributed to help defray expenses.

One most memorable experience for the Sons and Daughters of Allen was to partner with the US Department of Interior in presenting a Frederick Douglass Exhibit at the Federal agency's building. This exhibit was in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Frederick Douglass' funeral, which was held in 1895, at Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. The presentation included an actor portraying Frederick Douglass, delivering one of his famous speeches. The evening concluded with a reception. The event was educational, exciting, and enjoyable.

Each year, the Sons and Daughters of Allen celebrate its Annual Day in February by

participating in worship service and sponsoring a repast in Douglass Hall, as appropriate. A few recent Annual Day invited guest speakers have included the Honorable Rodney Slater, Rev. Cain Hope Felder, Ms. Dorothy B. Gilliam, and Mr. Michael Steele, former Lieutenant Governor of Maryland.

The Sons and Daughters of Allen Club has a membership of approximately 30. Meetings are held the second Saturday of September, November, December, January, February, April and June. Club officers are:

Joan Oxendine, President
Carl Bennett, First Vice President
Consentine Morgan, Second Vice President
Barbara Bennett, Secretary
Valerie Brooks, Treasurer

The Sons and Daughters of Allen is commemorating its 50th anniversary. The club's goal continues to be fostering the awareness of Black history in the church and community.

Consentine Morgan

**February 2011
Bicentennial Birthday
Of
Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne**

*Episcopal Leader, Author, Educator, Historian;
the most influential of the second generation of
African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church
Prelates*

- ❖ Born in Charleston, SC, February 24, 1811, to free parents of color.
- ❖ Orphaned before age 10, completed primary school at age 12, and became a carpenter's apprentice.
- ❖ Devoted his non-working hours to a rigorous self-directed study program and became a teacher.
- ❖ Opened a school in Charleston, SC in 1829, which closed in 1835, when the state made it illegal to teach Blacks to read and write.
- ❖ Left South Carolina in 1835, to study at the Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

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- ❖ Moved to Philadelphia, PA in 1839, where in 1840, he opened a school.
- ❖ Became a part of the A.M.E. denomination at Bethel (now "Mother Bethel") A.M.E. Church.
- ❖ Ordained an itinerant A.M.E. elder in 1843.
- ❖ Served as pastor of A.M.E. churches in Washington, DC (1843-45) and Baltimore, MD (1845-50).
- ❖ Preached a eulogy at the White House in 1844, for "Henry" a slave belonging to then President John Tyler.
- ❖ Operated a school in Baltimore for several years.
- ❖ Appointed the first A.M.E. Historiographer at 1848 General Conference.
- ❖ Researched data during 1850-52, and gathered historical information from every A.M.E. church in the eastern and mid-western United States, New Orleans, LA, and Canada.
- ❖ Elected and consecrated the sixth A.M.E. Bishop at the 1852 General Conference.
- ❖ Organized in 1852, the New England Annual Conference in New Bedford, Massachusetts.
- ❖ Became a trustee of Wilberforce University when the school was organized in 1856, by the Methodist Episcopal Church.
- ❖ Met with President Abraham Lincoln, at the White House in 1862, and urged the President to sign the law emancipating the enslaved in Washington, DC.
- ❖ Acquired Wilberforce University, on behalf of the A.M.E. Church, in 1863.
- ❖ Became the first Black University president in the United States in 1863, when appointed president of Wilberforce.
- ❖ Advocated forcefully for an educated and well trained A.M.E. clergy; Payne Theological Seminary, which was established by Wilberforce University, was named in his honor.
- ❖ Restored the A.M.E. church in South Carolina by organizing the South Carolina Conference at Charleston in May 1865. In its early years, the South Carolina Conference covered A.M.E. churches from North Carolina south to Alabama.
- ❖ Hosted, as 2nd Episcopal District Prelate, the 1868 General Conference, the only General Conference held in Washington, DC.
- ❖ Became the fourth A.M.E. Senior Bishop in 1873, after the death of Bishop Paul Quinn; Bishop Payne served as the senior A.M.E. prelate until 1893.
- ❖ Began in 1878, the Responsive Reading of the scripture in the A.M.E. worship services.
- ❖ Presided over a session in 1881, at the First Methodist Ecumenical (now World Methodist) Conference, in London, England; was the first Black to serve as a conference presiding officer.
- ❖ Organized in 1881, the Bethel Literary and Historical Society; for the next fifty years the Society was Washington, DC's premier lyceum.
- ❖ Honored, in 1882, for three decades of Episcopal service; at a worship service in New York City, was acknowledged as first A.M.E. prelate to reach the thirty year milestone.
- ❖ Served twice as presiding prelate of the 2nd Episcopal District, 1856-68 and 1880-84.
- ❖ Preached the dedicatory sermon in 1886, for the new Metropolitan A.M.E. Church.
- ❖ Preached the Communion, Quadrennial, and Ordination sermons at the 1888 General Conference; the only A.M.E. prelate to have preached all major sermons at one General Conference.
- ❖ Wrote in 1891, the first official history of the A.M.E. church which covered the major church and world events between 1816 and 1856.
- ❖ Celebrated forty years of Episcopal service at the 1892 General Conference.
- ❖ Had the longest active tenure of any A.M.E. prelate; 41 years (1852-93).
- ❖ Died on November 29, 1893, and was buried in Baltimore, MD.
- ❖ Willed two fifths of his estate to Wilberforce University and the other three fifths to Payne Seminary.

Thelma Dean Jacobs

METROPOLITAN'S MINISTRIES, CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

THIS NEWSLETTER WILL FEATURE METROPOLITAN'S MANY BOARDS, MINISTRIES, CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR SERVICE TO THE CHURCH AND/OR COMMUNITY.

CONTACT PERSON: ELLEN FIZER

THE SARAH ALLEN MISSIONARY SOCIETY (SAMS)

In Mission Service

Mission service is a vital part of the “heart and conscience” of Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. The Sarah Allen Missionary Society, founded in 1880, primarily provides a major portion of this service for the church.

“As women **called** to discipleship to grow in knowledge and experience of God through Jesus Christ, **committed** to support the mission of the church, and **empowered** by the Holy Spirit, we are **challenged** to help one another engage in ministry and action and grow and respond in faith to God’s redemptive plan for the church, the society and the world.” (Purpose: Article II – Section 2, Constitution and Bylaws of the Women’s Missionary Society (WMS), African Methodist Episcopal Church)

The Sarah Allen Missionary Society was named in honor of Sarah Bass Allen, the second wife of Richard Allen, founder of the A.M.E. Church. Sarah, born in slavery in 1764, in Isle of Wight County, Virginia, was brought to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, when she was about eight years old. Little is known about her early life, but by 1800, she had obtained her freedom. Sarah Bass met Richard Allen in 1800, and within a year they were married.

The Reverend Ezekiel Cooper, pastor of Old St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, PA, united Sarah and Richard in marriage on August 18, 1801. She was the mother of six children: Richard, Jr., James, John, Peter, Sarah, and Ann.

Bishop Richard Allen died in 1831, and Sarah Bass Allen died on July 16, 1869, in the home of her youngest child Ann. She was interred beside her husband in a tomb in the lower level of Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, Philadelphia, PA.

Sarah Bass Allen was the first missionary in the A.M.E. church. Her official duty was to look after the physical condition of the ministers that her husband sent into the field of ministry.

From 1846 to 1880, the women of then Union Bethel, which later became Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, carried out the work of missions in an informally organized manner. Three areas have shaped the structure of missions at Metropolitan from 1880 to the present.

- The establishment of greater in-service and outreach activities of the society for the needs of people in the community.
- A continuously growing interest and participation in the work of the society in spite of obstacles.
- An enhanced knowledge regarding the holistic goals of the Connectional Missionary Society as it relates to the District, Conference, Area, and Local societies.

SAMS is Metropolitan’s senior missionary society, and under its umbrella there are three organizational components: The Young Women’s Initiative (YWI), established in 2003, by the Connectional WMS to nurture and ensure active participation in the WMS by young women ages 25-40; The Love and Peace (LAP) Missionary Unit, organized November 22, 1980, by then Metropolitan First Lady Mrs. Lola A. Pruitt (Boxley), dedicated to proactively addressing emergent issues of the day with compassion and understanding; and The Young People’s and Children’s Division (YPD), founded in 1911, to stimulate interest of the church’s young people in the work of missions, and to encourage participation in the other organizational levels of the Women’s Missionary Society, at the appropriate time.

As described in Matthew 25: 35-36, 40, SAMS conducts and administers numerous outreach projects to help those in need. SAMS has always set as its primary focus in the local and global communities to be of Christian service. Some such efforts are: the provision of **School Supplies** to four District of Columbia public elementary schools (Seaton, Minor, Moten

at Wilkinson, and Mary Terrell); **Scholarships/Stipends** given to graduating high school students who are members of Metropolitan's YPD; and Area, Conference, and District outreach such as "**Taking it to the Streets**" serving those in need. SAMS, in sponsorship with the University Club, coordinates three cultural enrichment field trips to share a learning experience with youth and their parents.

The **Monthly Food Bank** provides and delivers groceries to approximately 80 families or individuals who may be elderly, disabled, sick, or the working poor. The University Club (DC) assists by giving fresh fruits and vegetables (poultry for the holidays) to these families. The Society quarterly donates approximately 10 cases of canned goods to So Others Might Eat (S.O.M.E.) to aid in their feeding.

Led by the Love and Peace (LAP) Unit, SAMS, sponsored and coordinated **Project Angel Tree 2010** serving the community by providing and delivering a total of 300 plus Christmas gifts to 162 area children and the 65 caregivers of these children. SAMS donated the funds to purchase a gift for each caregiver. These presents were delivered to the families by missionaries, the Mighty Men's Ministry, and other associates. Fellowship and words of encouragement were shared with the caregivers during each telephone contact and at the home when gifts were delivered.

Each quarter LAP volunteers at Food & Friends assisting in some preparation of the meals that are to be delivered to persons who are ill; and at N Street Village providing and serving dinner to the residents. In celebration of the youth and young adults, LAP sponsors an annual showcase of talent; and in recognition of the church's Deaconesses conducts an activity especially for their enjoyment.

On Annual Day in September 2010, SAMS honored Mrs. Christene H. Chambliss and Mrs. Monta J. Taylor, Life Members of the Women's Missionary Society of the A.M.E. Church. These ladies have provided stalwart service at each level of the WMS and to the church.

Mrs. Christene Chambliss became a missionary in 1958, when her husband Rev. Carroll R. Chambliss entered seminary. At that time, they were members of St. Paul A.M.E. Church, St. Louis, MO. Chaplain (Captain US Navy Retired) Chambliss' military commitment has resulted in this loving couple's physical relocation various times during their 68 year marriage.

Many years of Mrs. Chambliss' early missionary participation was in the 5th Episcopal District, Southern CA, where she served in many capacities. She was Conference Branch Financial Secretary, Recording Secretary, and 1st Vice President. In addition, Mrs. Chambliss has worked in many positions on the District Level for the WMS. She served as president of SAMS (1981-1982).

Mrs. Chambliss says that some of her most interesting missionary experiences included work to address women's rights issues. She was employed in the Federal government as a Federal Women's Coordinator. Her professional career along with missionary affiliation provided options for Mrs. Chambliss to focus on female issues. She worked to better the conditions of women both in a political and religious capacity; for in her own way she personally sought to help move the women's movement forward. Mrs. Chambliss was conscientious in doing what needed to be done at that particular time.

Sister Christene Chambliss has always enjoyed working with missionaries. This service gave her the opportunity to work with women from all walks of life and multiple religious and civic organizations, including "Women in Community Service," "Church Women United," and the "National Council of Negro Women."

Additionally, Mrs. Chambliss is a former president, North America Area, World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women. The Federation is an international fellowship divided into nine geographical areas. The North America Area includes the United States, Caribbean, and Canada.

Dr. Dorothy I. Height, Dr. Mary Frizzell, Episcopal Supervisor Darrie Robinson, and

former Connectional WMS President Wilhelmina Lawrence, all now deceased, were just a few of the women who influenced Chris Chambliss in life and in her work. The guidance of the Lord and the dedication and focus of these women helped Mrs. Chambliss to have a commitment to that which she was led to do. Chris Chambliss developed positive relationships with like-minded women of God and with purpose she moved forward.

Mrs. Monta Jones Taylor, born in Fort Worth, Texas, was raised in Wichita, Kansas where she began her missionary service as a child. Monta Jones' mother was a devout missionary and her father was a dedicated Steward in their church, St. Paul, A.M.E. Church.

During worship services in Kansas, the minister would collect pennies from the children for the Missionary offering. Monta Jones (Taylor) believes that her missionary life began with those penny collections.

She was married to Rev. Jesse Taylor, an A.M.E. Minister, and the first church that they served was in Selma, NC. Rev. Taylor's ministry moved the couple to Baltimore, North Carolina and Washington, DC.

During the period when Mrs. Taylor served as first lady of a local church, the minister's wife was normally appointed president of the church's Women's Missionary Society. Monta J. Taylor has held many officer position in the WMS, including YPD Director, Conference Branch Vice President and Worship Director for several Quadrennial Conferences.

Mrs. Taylor, a musician, has played piano and organ for large WMS events. She also has taught students to play the piano and organ. In addition to her love of music, Monta Taylor loved performing recitations. She served as Program Chair for many activities in the church and the WMS. Dedicated and committed to being a missionary in the true sense of the role, Mrs. Taylor attended required meetings as part of her service.

Although she did not have children, Mrs. Monta Taylor enjoys being with and being a role model for children. She lovingly inspires others

and feels that everyone can do anything they want to do if they try.

SAMS acknowledged missionaries, Mrs. Vera J. Curry and Mrs. Fannie D. Smith, who passed away during the conference year. Their dedication to the church will be truly missed.

In spite of ever increasing and urgent needs, SAMS continues to be committed to similar ideals of earlier missionaries who used their meager resources in caring for those in need. *"I was hungry. And you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty. And you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger. And you invited me in. I needed clothes. And you gave them to me. I was sick. And you took care of me. I was in prison. And you came to visit me. ... Anything you did for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did for me."* (Matthew 25: 35 – 36, 40b)

Sheila Garnett / Carolyn McClain

INTRODUCING METROPOLITAN'S WEBSITE

When the church sanctuary restoration needs were first identified in 2009, it became apparent that Metropolitan A.M.E. Church would definitely benefit from improved website publicity which would better tell the church's story. That same year Metropolitan launched a new and exciting website, which facilitated the church's entry into the technological age of electronic transactions and communications with local, national, and global outreach.

A visit to the website at www.metropolitanamec.org provides the viewer an engaging, interactive experience with flashing photos, attractive pop-ups, and informative links. The new website allows Metropolitan to present the mission, history, and legacy of this historic landmark church in a sophisticated manner. The website simultaneously supports the church's restoration and fundraising efforts, online giving, and publicity of church ministries, programs,

special events, and community activities. It serves as a source of current information for members and friends and as a means for reaching those who may be interested in attending worship service.

The website is managed by Rev. Marie P. Braxton in coordination with a Website Committee, which includes Elsie Scott, Dina Curtis, and Dorothy Gilliam. Metropolitan's Commission on Public Relations (PR Commission), chaired by Dorothy Gilliam, is responsible for keeping the webpage updated and maintaining its overall accuracy and efficiency.

Several years ago, through the initiative of Terry Johnson, our own professional, technology expert, Metropolitan's webpage was initially created. Later, Brian Jones, one of Metropolitan's talented young adults, was designated as Webmaster. This renewed effort led to brainstorming and discussions on a myriad of ideas for the website's design.

Early in 2010, Rev. Lela Harris, an independent entrepreneur and Webmaster for Metropolitan Baptist Church, was recommended to the Website Committee. Rev. Harris was considered to be a person who could quickly implement Rev. Ronald E. Braxton's vision for the website.

The initial outlay for setting up the website was less than \$100, using the server that Rev. Harris already had in place. The costs for maintaining, updating, and enhancing the website are less than \$200 a month and are paid as a line item in the general church operating budget.

Why use this website?

The website is one way to be informed of activities at Metropolitan and to immediately learn about events on the church calendar. Highlights of sermons are available on the church's webpage.

The website offers members the option to contribute their tithes and offerings and to make donations by check or credit card online. (Other persons may also contribute to the church

online.) The website is a means of building awareness, posting announcements, appealing to potential members, and providing information to all who might visit the website. Metropolitan's organizations, clubs, and ministries are encouraged to make full use of the website to publicize their programs and activities. Suggestions, comments, corrections, and questions concerning the website are welcome and should be submitted to the Website Committee.

Proposed feature of Webpage is to Spotlight Metropolitan's Ministries, Clubs, and Organizations.

The PR Commission has proposed to feature a Metropolitan ministry each month on the webpage. Each Metropolitan ministry is asked to submit a narrative profile of the ministry, including its purpose or mission, programs, activities, achievements, and any community outreach initiatives or goals. A photo of the ministry/membership, if available, is requested to include in the featured article. This submission must have the approval of the organization's president/chair.

Procedural steps for requesting that information be posted on Metropolitan's website.

Information for posting on the website must be submitted in type written form, preferably electronically. The Website Publicity Subcommittee members to receive written submissions are Dorothy Gilliam, Elsie Scott, and Janet Oakley Huggins. The submitted information should be categorized as: *News and Announcements*, *Upcoming Events*, or *Spotlight a Ministry*. Use the following process to submit information for the website or a profile (and any available photograph) of the ministry, organization, or club that is to be spotlighted. (Photographs will be returned)

- Type the information or profile and preferably submit electronically (see sample electronic format below).

WEBSITE from P. 19

- Submit the information or profile to dbgilliam7@gmail.com.
- If it is not possible to submit an electronic version, you may place a typed version in the PR Commission's labeled wooden box. The box is located in the church lobby, adjacent to the door leading to the lower level. Copies of the submission form are available at the box.
- Follow up with a subcommittee member to advise them of the date the information was placed in the PR Commission's wooden box.
- Sufficient lead time (at 7 days before the event) must be allowed for time-sensitive announcements to be posted.

Metropolitan Webpage Submission Format

Category (check as appropriate):
 News and Announcements: _____
 Upcoming Event: _____
 Spotlight a Ministry: _____
 Member/Ministry Name: _____

 Persons Submitting Request: _____

 Ministry President/Chair: _____

 Profile Attached _____ Photo Attached _____
 Telephone No.: _____
 E-mail Address: _____
 Name of Event or Activity:

 Date: _____ Time: _____
 Deadline, if any _____
 Description of News, Event, or Activity:

 _____ (attach additional pages, as needed)

Janet Oakley Higgins

I Am Because He Was...

A Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Each year that passes, each celebration held, I think about the man and his mission – his dream and his hope.

I did not march with him. I did not boycott for the cause.

I was not jailed or jaded, bruised or beaten or tried in the court of the public's domain.

This drum major for peace, this drum major for justice – led the way – and fought on battlefields that I will never face, weathered storms that I will never witness, and sacrificed for many, when most would not for a few.

This gentle soul – a man of the cloth – he from the south, I from the north, touched me before I became who I was to be.

My feet now freely walk on global paths that he paved....

I am because he was.

Years have passed since he spoke of his vision.

A vision of peace and justice for all.

A vision of a world where the peoples of the world – "...little black girls and little black boys; little white girls and little white boys..." "...black men and white men; Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics...." – all embracing the likenesses and differences within – and among themselves.

His spoken word instructed and inspired generations then, now – and those that are to be. He saw the promise of tomorrow. He believed, and so did we.

And now my destiny knows no boundaries for the barriers have been removed....

I am because he was.

Time has been a wonder.

Despair has given way to hope, and I am thankful for his role.

The dream – his dream – is my reality. My task – is to pass it on.

I cannot be silent when injustice is abound. I cannot be indifferent when peace is not assured.

I cannot be complacent, when others are discontent.

I may not speak before masses; I may not be awarded a prize.

But I will ensure that those that marched with him, those that were jailed, jaded, bruised and beaten with him – did it – but not in vain....

I am because he was.

By Edythe L. Challenger

January 14, 2011

THE SENIOR CITIZENS CLUB

It seems appropriate that I begin this series to feature a Metropolitan ministry, club, or organization with one of the church's most seasoned organizations. This club may also be one of Metropolitan's best kept secrets.

The Senior Citizens Club has been organized almost 40 years and has been a continuous, viable ministry at Metropolitan since its inception. The first president was Ms. Maude Smothers. Other persons who have served as club president: Ms. Luberta Jennings (Campbell A.M.E. Church), Mrs. Ethel P. Hall, and Mrs. Almera Johnson. Those longest tenured club members are Sister Daisy Bivens, Deaconess Nicie Reece, Ms. Jennie V. Harper, Ms. Constance P. Lamberth, and Deaconess Alnett Wooten.

Twice a month (on the first and third Thursday) a group of Metropolitan's oldest and most knowledgeable members meet at the church from 11:00 a.m. until approximately 2:00 p.m. for good, wholesome, Christian fellowship. Each meeting begins with spirit-filled devotion led by Florence Dungy, club chaplain. Deaconess Beverly Lee, chaplain for many years, preceded Florence in this role.

The group takes care of a little business, which includes updates on members who are unable to attend the meeting. There is always a program or activity planned as a part of each

meeting. Past events and programs have included activities from a briefing on health care reform and HIV/AIDS amongst senior citizens to sing-a-longs, Bingo, and poetry readings. On religious holidays, a minister from the area is invited to provide special meditation.

Robert F. Skinner, the distinguished and much loved club president for the past 10 years, says he has been a club member since 1990. He describes the Senior Citizens Club as a fun organization, where the focus is on having a good time and not taking things too seriously. What Mr. Skinner says he enjoys most about the club is the fellowship. And fellowship they do. After each meeting a delicious lunch is served. Everyone gets to socialize and catch up with one another talking about issues that concern and may affect all.

Dianne Gant Black, recently retired from her career in the educational system, is a new member of the club. Dianne, who grew up in Metropolitan, says as a youth she was a member of the Sunday Church School, YPD, Junior Usher Board, and the Youth Ministry. As an adult, Dianne has served as a church trustee and member of the Children & Youth Protective Policy and Procedures Committee. She continues her participation in the Sunday Church School, and is currently active with the Sarah Allen Missionary Society and the College Connection. Dianne and husband, Stanley are members of the Married Couples Ministry.

Having always been active in the church, when Dianne retired, she says it was just a natural progression to become active with the Senior Citizens Club. "It was something I have always wanted to do – like a rite of passage. I have always looked up to the members of the club and it just feels good to be around people who believe what I believe."

Dianne believes she can learn from some of the more seasoned members of this club. At the same time, she hopes to bring new ideas and resources to the group. For example, based on Dianne's personal experiences she'd

like to develop a resource bank of services and community assistance agencies available for seniors. This will include those agencies that serve as ombudsmen for eldercare issues. Dianne sees her membership in the Senior Citizens Club as the beginning of a new chapter in her life.

Many members of the Club express the same feelings as Dianne. They look forward to the annual Christmas Party and the end-of-the-year event, which has included such activities as a luncheon boat ride up and down the Potomac on the Spirit of Washington and the Odyssey, to a day bus trip to "Sights and Sounds" in Pennsylvania to see a play, as well as tours of various historical sites both in the area and up and down the east coast. Mother Pearl Cook, the club's treasurer and activity chairperson, is always seeking new ideas and exciting places to visit and things to see.

Anita Drayton Wood, also a new member of the club, has been instrumental in bringing fresh and innovative ideas and activities.

Although some of the members of the group may be physically challenged, this is by no means a sedentary group. Sometimes it becomes difficult to keep up with the energy in the room. In fact, if you drop by, you may just catch members in the midst of an exercise/aerobics class.

Approximately 50 names are on the club's membership roster. While all persons may not physically be able to attend meetings, their presences are truly felt. When asked how old a person must be to become a member of the club, the response is there is no age requirement – members range in age from 50 to 104 years old. If you are retired or do not work during the day you are invited to become a part of this thriving ministry.

During the restoration process the club is only meeting once a month (normally on the third Thursday). To become a member of the Senior Citizens Club, please contact Mrs. Pearl Cook. If you would like to make a presentation to the group on a topic that might be of interest; or if you have information or materials from which the

group may benefit, contact Mrs. Cook or Ellen Fizer.

The Senior Citizens Club officers:

President – Robert F. Skinner

Vice President – Franklin Rogers

Recording Secretary – Jeanette Spicer

Financial Secretary – Carol Jones-Ali

Treasurer/Activity Chairperson – Pearl Cook

Assistant Activity Chairperson – Ellen Fizer

Chaplain – Florence Dungy

Benevolence Chairperson – Alnett Wooten

Director of Music – Daniel Hodge

Band Leader – Michael Horton

Photographers – Julius Cook & Alfred Spicer

Fun; sharing of resources; educational information; exciting activities and field trips; good food; Christian fellowship; and being around other seniors who believe as you believe – that is Metropolitan's Senior Citizens Club.

Ellen H. Fizer

PERSONALLY METROPOLITAN PERSONALITY ROUNDUP

People Making a Difference; Ordinary People
Doing Extraordinary Things

Dr. Ruby M. Gourdine was feted, at the Cosmos Club, Washington, DC, along with 23 other inductees as Social Work Pioneers. These newly installed pioneers are representative of social workers throughout the United States. The Social Work Pioneers is a group that is honored by the National Association of Social Workers Foundation (NASW Social Work Pioneers). NASW has described this group of honorees as "highly accomplished, and selected for their recognition by their peers for their contributions to the evolution and enrichment of the profession." The mission of the NASW Social Work Pioneer Program is to preserve the legacy and provide inspiration for future generations of social workers. Ruby Gourdine was recognized for her professional contributions. **Dr. Beryl Rice** is also a social work pioneer. She was inducted several years ago.

PERSONALITIES from P. 22

Mrs. Joan W. Oxendine was elected President of Church Women United, Prince Georges County, MD Chapter. At Metropolitan, Joan serves in many roles, to name just a few: President, Sons and Daughters of Allen; Secretary, Sarah Allen Missionary Society; Floral Chair and former President, Presidents Council; and member of the Senior Board of Stewards. She is also a member of the Commission on Social Action, Washington Conference Branch, Women's Missionary Society. Joan is a lady always adorned with a stunning hat on her head.

Mrs. Wilma G. Shepherd, former editor of this newsletter for many years, celebrated her 101st birthday on January 15, 2011. We extended heartfelt birthday greetings to Mrs. Shepherd.

Kudos, to **Ms. Anita Drayton Wood**, acknowledged for her ministry of support and guidance to our youth and young adults. Anita is working with young people preparing them to feel comfortable speaking to large groups. She is preparing them to formally greet and welcome visitors during worship service. One fruit of her labor was the welcome extended by **Master Addy Hebou** to President Barack Obama and family. Anita is also sharing her talents with the Sunday Church School, Sarah Allen Missionary Society, and the Senior Citizens Club. Keep up the good work Anita Drayton Wood.

Congratulations and applause to **Mr. Vernard Dickson**, Director, Metropolitan Youth Orchestra. The talents of this group are truly enjoyed with each performance. We are blessed each time that the orchestra gives a musical presentation. Vernard, just keep on mentoring and working with these young performers. Their futures seem bright and very promising.

Mere words of thanks cannot express our gratitude to **Mrs. Thelma Dean Jacobs** who combs through information that is presented in this newsletter to ensure the material is historically correct, appropriately written, and clearly stated. This newsletter is a better product because of her faithful assistance and readiness to share advice.

Carolyn McClain

HISTORY from P. 3

Why was the name changed to Afro-American (Black) History?

The name change, which focused on the new thinking by Black Americans, was made after young delegates to the Cincinnati, Ohio Convention of ASALH in 1972 exerted pressure. The name indicated both the new recognition of one's African background and the appreciation of oneself as an individual and as a citizen and major contributor to the American culture.

Why has the annual observance been changed to include the entire month of February?

During America's Bicentennial in 1976, the Afro-American celebration was expanded by ASALH to the entire month of February. This change provided more time for programs, observances, and celebration. This idea caught on and the Association was besieged with requests to continue it as a month-long observance.

2011 THEME: "African Americans and the Civil War – Civil War to Civil Rights and Beyond"

Carolyn McClain

MARCH WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

The purpose of Women's History Month is to increase consciousness and knowledge of women's history and to take a month of the year to remember the contributions of notable and ordinary women, in hopes that the day will soon come when it's impossible to teach or learn history without remembering these contributions.

In 1911 in Europe, March 8 was first celebrated as International Women's Day. In many European nations as well as in the United

WOMEN'S from P. 23

States, "women's rights" was a political hot topic. Women suffrage – winning the vote – was a priority of many women's organization. With "women's liberation" in the 1960s, interest in women's issues and women's history blossomed.

By the 1970s, there was a growing sense by many women that "history" as taught in school – and especially in grade and high schools – was incomplete with attending to "her story" as well. In the United States, calls for inclusion of Black Americans and Native Americans helped some women realize that women were invisible in most history courses.

In 1978 in California, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women began a "Women's History Week" celebration. The week was chosen to coincide with International Women's Day.

The United States Congress passed a resolution establishing National Women's History Week. In 1987, at the request of the National Women's History Project, Congress expanded the week to a month, and the US Congress has issued a resolution every year since then, with wide support, for Women's History Month.

(Excerpt: "Women's History Month, How Did March Come to be Women's History Month" by Jone Johnson Lewis)

2011 THEME: "Our History is Our Strength"

Carolyn McClain

**The National Week of Prayer
For the Healing of AIDS**

**Sunday, March 6 – Saturday, March 12, 2011
We Believe in the Power of Prayer and
Education!!**

The **National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS** is the coming together of all people of faith to unite with purpose, compassion and hope. Through the power of God's love we will educate every American about HIV prevention facts;

PRAYER

encourage and support HIV testing; advocate for the availability of compassionate care and treatment for all those living with the disease in every community in America; and love unconditionally all persons living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

**God's Heart is Big Enough for Everybody!!
Let us Pray and Educate Together!!**

Healing Through Prayer, Education, Advocacy and Service!

Every Church, Synagogue, Mosque, Temple and Home is invited to join in prayer, education, advocacy and service for the healing of AIDS in the United States and the World.

(Courtesy of The Balm In Gilead, Inc.)

DON'T QUIT

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit –
Rest if you must, but don't you quit.

Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As every one of us sometimes learn,
And many a person turns about
When they might have won had they stuck it out,
Don't give up though the pace seems slow –
You may succeed with another blow.

Often the struggler has given up
When he might have captured the victor's cup;
And he learned too late
When the night came down,
How close he was to the golden crown.

Success is failure turned inside out,
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt
And you never can tell how close you are,
It may be near when it seems afar;
So stick to the fight when you're the
Hardest hit cause, it's when things
Seem worst that you mustn't QUIT!!!

Anonymous