



The Metropolitan Spirit

Church Newsletter

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Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church

Washington, District of Columbia

METROPOLITAN A.M.E. CHURCH NEW MINISTRIES TASK FORCE

The Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church New Ministries Task Force was formed in December 2010. The Task Force is part of the Restoration effort to expand the church's presence in the Washington, DC area and to maximize the use of the recently restored church edifice. The Task Force is under the general leadership of Assistant Pastor Rev. Dr. Marie P. Braxton and Senior Stewards Maurita Coley Flippin and TJ Nicholson

The New Ministries Task Force, a vision of Rev. Ronald E. Braxton, is not an additional Metropolitan A.M.E. Church "ministry." The Task Force was organized to evaluate and identify

ways to use the restored church facility to enhance existing ministries;

particularly those with a focus on community outreach. This "ministry" also supports the church itself.

Approximately 35 dedicated persons, many of whom are leaders and experts in their respective fields, accepted Pastor Braxton's challenge and

volunteered to develop and implement proposals and strategies that would enable the church to positively impact the community.

The New Ministries mission is "to spread the word of God throughout the local community through effective stewardship of the resources He has provided, for His glory." The guiding principles are: (1) to grow the church and make it more viable through community outreach and development, and; (2) to design and execute opportunities to use the restored church facility for educational and other ministries designed to: (a) serve the community, (b) increase the church's impact in the community, and (c) generate revenue to support these ministries.

The Task Force is organized into sub-committees that operate to fulfill the identified mission and goals. The sub-committees are led by a Chair/Co-Chairs who direct and focus activities in their respective area of interest. The present sub-committees are: **Families** – Donice Jeter, Chair; **Business Ventures and Community Events** – DyAnne H. Little and Pius Akinola, Co-Chairs; **Education** – Adrienne Fikes and Charles Summers, Co-Chairs; and

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**PUBLICATION OF THE
COMMISSION ON
PUBLIC RELATIONS**

TASK FORCE from P. 1

Research – Dr. Dorothy P. Bryan, Chair.

The Task Force met with the Daniel Alexander Payne Community Development Corporation (DAPCDC) Board to establish a process to ensure synergy between the Task Force and DAPCDC. It is vital that efforts of these organizations to expand community outreach are successful and efficient in serving the community. Working jointly, DAPCDC and the Task Force are better equipped to bring a 21st century approach to community outreach and Kingdom Building at Metropolitan.

The New Ministries Task Force sponsored and coordinated several activities for both the church and the community. These service efforts were:

Allegra Summer Youth Orchestra Program. DAPCDC and the Task Force collaboratively provided assistance to this Metropolitan youth activity. Under the leadership of Vernard Dickson, Director, Metropolitan's Youth Orchestra, over 25 students employed by the DC Summer Youth Employment Program participated in a summer music program conducted at Metropolitan. Additionally, several program participants were featured performers in a Youth and Young Adult Talent Showcase sponsored by the Love and Peace Unit of the Metropolitan Sarah Allen Missionary Society. The students, in close out of the summer program, participated in a concert performance that was open to the community.

Financial Empowerment Summit and Workshop. The Task Force provided assistance in sponsoring a Financial Empowerment Summit at Metropolitan. The Summit, co-hosted by the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) program "Moneywise with Kelvin Boston" and Capital Area Asset Builders (CAAB), attracted over 500 attendees. In January 2012, the Task Force assisted in presenting a follow up financial empowerment workshop entitled "Can I Afford My Life?." Approximately 150 persons attended the workshop.

The New Ministries Task Force plans to sponsor additional enrichment opportunity events that will serve the church and community.

Maurita C. Flippin / TJ Nicholson

PASTOR'S VISION for 2012

For the past two and a half years, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church activities have borne the mantle, "Restoration." When we became engaged in the process to restore our beloved Metropolitan A.M.E. Church edifice, I do not think that anyone really knew the depth of details and involvement that awaited us.

It is not an understatement when I say that it was by the grace (good favor) of God, and the goodwill and support of many in this congregation, our denomination, and community that we have now come to this moment. We can sigh gratefully and breathe with temporary relief at the completion of 1 of 5 Restoration Phases that have been currently identified. (There is more work to be done.)

Through much praying, asking, penny pinching, and 'shaking whatever money tree' we could, Metropolitan has completed a major portion of the work that was imperative to be done to this edifice. The work completed addressed structural and safety issues.

One lesson that I learned during this process, is that there are some members who will not endure much inconvenience when it comes to their worship experience. For some, the nomadic experience was more than they were willing to bear – moving from the sanctuary to Douglass Hall, then to the Madison Hotel Ballroom, and back to a cold/hot sanctuary that was often in disarray.

However, praise the Lord, many members hung in there with us. We endured inconveniences, yet we shared our financial resources and responded to every call not just for restoration but also other church financial obligations. Many who made commitments were faithful, while others, for various reasons, have yet to make good on their promises. (We still look forward to fulfillment of all pledges.)

It was my original intent to earlier have shared my vision for 2012 with all Metropolitan

PASTOR'S VISION from P. 2

members. At the December 2011 Church Conference I initially presented my vision. Coincidentally, the Church Conference to discuss the restoration process was held during the season of Advent, a season of new beginnings. Now it is the start of a New Year when most people identify new hopes, new dreams, and new visions. Such is the case at Metropolitan A.M.E. Church as we begin the year 2012, filled with renewed hopes and restored spirits. What a marvelous time to embark on a new season, a New Year, and a new beginning for Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, a season of Kingdom Building.

In the past few years, although we have spent a lot of time and effort discussing fiscal matters, I suggest that now these matters should be approached with a new and clear vision for our historic, newly renovated (restored) edifice. God has given us this place in which to worship and serve. I pray that our sole aim and focus is on serving and blessing others to see Christ in and through us.

How do we approach the future of Metropolitan? I propose a multi-prong approach. First, and foremost, we must acknowledge that God has blessed us with a warm, sound, comfortable, inviting, and beautiful facility in which to worship. The worship of God must be at the center of all that we do. Our Sunday morning experiences should be spirit-filled, emotionally uplifting, and mentally captivating.

The music, prayers, reflections, scripture readings, and preaching ought to grasp us in such a way that our lives are shaken and empowered. And when we leave this place we should be strengthened and ready to face the world another day, another week. Metropolitan must become a place where all – young and old, male and female, regardless of race and ethnicity – who enter for worship will find that their spiritual needs are met.

Further, learning the ways of God and the life that God intends for us to live must be viewed as opportunities for worship through Bible Study, Church School, study groups, workshops, seminars, and other learning formats. It was in

the context of worship that Jesus spent most of his time teaching.

In the New Year, we must intently strive to use our edifice as a place for teaching the values of the faith. With such empowerment, as we continue to strive to be a place of worship and teaching, we will surely draw closer to God and others will seek us out. Let us never forget that at the very core of the life of Jesus was his worship of his Father, "In Heaven."

In the context of worship, Jesus also spent much time and energy in ministry meeting the needs of those around him. Jesus was very clear with the religious authorities of his day that God was equally concerned about everyday life and living. So he went about healing the sick, feeding the hungry, reaching out to those who were cast down and cast away. His worship of God and ministry of reaching out and equipping and empowering the lives of others served as the most effective tool of evangelism for winning others to God.

Men and women flocked to Jesus because they knew that he had something to offer them that would make their lives and living better. This must become our model for evangelism.

Metropolitan must be dedicated and actively involved in evangelism. Evangelism, first among ourselves, and then evangelism that reaches beyond the walls of this newly restored facility with which God has blessed us. The Board of Stewards is working very hard focusing on the concept of evangelism. They have begun to reactivate the class leader system with a goal to touch in some way, in addition to worship, each member of this church at least once a month.

The church also has advanced in the technology era. Our electronic communication approaches the top of the line in paperless correspondence. We are streaming our worship services, providing weekly activities updates, and maintaining an improved and informative website. These are 21st century approaches that have been implemented through the church's multi-media outreach.

PASTOR'S VISION from P. 3

I have recommended that Metropolitan target a specific neighborhood and develop initiatives to bring these children, and eventually their parents, to Metropolitan for services on Sunday morning. If others can do it, don't we have as much to offer, if not more? Then, why don't we?

Another vision that I have is to present training that will empower and enrich our church and community residents. The New Ministries Task Force and the Daniel Alexander Payne Community Development Corporation (DAPCDC) worked jointly in presenting the "Percy Julian Morning of Discovery" workshop for middle-school students. The workshop challenged the students to consider careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

I am pleased to share with you portions of a letter that I received from a community resident after his family had attended the "Percy Julian Morning of Discovery" workshop. The letter reads: "Rev. Braxton, I like to thank you and the Science Fair. My wife and son went; I was busy and wanted to go. Later that day after the Science Fair, when they got home, my son started acting weird, he wanted to help out with everything as far as cleaning the house and my weekend responsibilities, like yard work, everything, I SAW A CHANGE IN MY SON, and it was a Blessing, to see him come home and be concerned about the things around the house, not only that he could not stop talking about doing Volunteer Work. I like to thank God for METROPOLITAN A.M.E., REV. BRAXTON, ANTHONY HAWKINS, and the rest of the staff, and the SCIENCE FAIR. My Family thanks you, and God Bless All."

The Task Force and DAPCDC also worked with the Capital Area Asset Builders to sponsor a Financial Empowerment Summit and follow up financial workshop which was entitled "Can I Afford My Life?". The financial seminar was attended by approximately 500 persons and the subsequent workshop by 150 persons from across the area.

Correspondence of thanks has also been received from several persons who attended the financial summit. These are just a few examples of the church's efforts and ministries, along with our feeding programs, men's and women's ministries, and missionary work that represent areas where we are called to serve. I believe that a church clearly focused on worship and learning, ministry and evangelism is a church that will prosper and grow to do more.

With God's guidance and the support of the congregation, Metropolitan can look forward to successfully meeting the challenges of 2012.

Rev. Ronald E. Braxton

Senior Minister

THE CLASS LEADER SYSTEM

"CARING FOR OUR CONGREGATION"

The Class System is a basic organizational unit of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church that connects each member of the local church. Since the beginning of the A.M.E. Church, the Class System has played a vital role. Richard Allen, the founder and first bishop of the church, at the first A.M.E. General Conference, adopted the Methodist doctrine, including the "Class System."

John Wesley, at the very birth of Methodism had instituted class leadership. "Each society (congregation) was divided into small companies, called classes, according to their respective places of abode, and one person was appointed the leader."

Bishop Henry McNeal Turner is given credit for promoting the sensitivity and importance of the system. He described the class leaders "as proxy-pastors who assist the pastor to minister to each member of the congregation." In his *Methodist Polity*, Bishop Turner referred to the "class system" in the church as: "Next to the Word of God." (Excerpts from Bishop Henry McNeal Turner *Methodist Polity* (1885))

CELEBRATING THE SEASON

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

The Reason for the Season

Many scientists and astronomers state that Christmas is celebrated around the time of the winter solstice, which takes place on or about December 21 each year. In the northern hemisphere, this means that at the winter solstice, the sun will rise the latest and will set the earliest of any day of the year. Since that day is the year's shortest, the winter solstice is also the longest night.

The winter and summer solstices (the longest day of the year) and the spring and autumn equinoxes (night and day are approximately equal lengths), all demonstrate the enduring cycle of the heavens. These occurrences have happened throughout time, year in and year out and century after century. Some of our fore parents “planted and harvested by the moon,” looked to the heavens in search of the North Star for directions, and to the sky to foretell the coming of rain and storms.

Celebrations and observances at these pivotal times were, and still are, held by virtually every culture in the world. Solstice ceremonies continue to be practiced by such diverse groups as Native Americans, Celts, Persians, Asians, and Africans. In early cultures, the winter solstice represented the death of the old solar year and birth of the new.

Yule festivities, accordingly, were scheduled to mark this planetary turning from darkness to the blessed return to light. During the winter solstice the darkest night in all the year is followed by a day that will dawn just a little bit earlier. A new year begins with the turning of the winter solstice and brings a reoccurring cycle of darkness to light, ultimately symbolizing nature's birth, death, and rebirth.

The spiritual meaning of the season was profound ages ago and still holds true for current-day Christians. Yule signifies the completion of a year; and, it is believed to be an appropriate time for self-examination and meditation. Examining and meditating on hidden energies, those lying dormant within the earth, and also those within one's inner self.

The birth of Christ is recognized by Christians as a turning point between death and eternal life. Devout Christians celebrate Christmas as the beginning of a new spiritual age of eternal life.

Interestingly enough, Advent is the beginning of the Church Year for many churches worshiping in the Western tradition. The season begins four Sundays before Christmas Day, the Sunday nearest November 30th, and ends on Christmas Eve, December 24th.

Historically, purple is the primary sanctuary color of Advent. This is the color of penitence and fasting as well as the color of royalty, welcoming the Advent of the King. The purple of Advent is also the color of suffering used during Lent and Holy Week, an important connection between Jesus' birth and His death. The Nativity and Incarnation cannot be separated from the Crucifixion. Similar to the Season of Lent, Advent was once a time of penitence and fasting.

Jesus came into the world, the "Word made flesh," and dwelled among us to reveal God and His grace to the world through Jesus' life and teaching. Jesus teaches through his suffering, death, and resurrection.

As detailed in Luke's gospel, Jesus came into the world to bring "good news," heal brokenness, deliver from bondage, release from oppression, accept the "favor of the Lord,"

CELEBRATING from P. 5

to assure that though darkness and sorrow may linger for a night, Light and Joy will return in the morning. Given the hectic pace and “reality” we are engaged in, we often now view the birth of Jesus in a more subdued manner.

We accelerate our celebrations of a holiday even before the one at hand is over. Many bemoan the “commercialization” of the season. Thanksgiving decorations are displayed before Halloween; Christmas decorations before Thanksgiving; and stores extend their hours to be open later and later and earlier and earlier.

We are bombarded by advertisements with messages that the gift is more important than the gesture and that the gift has nothing to do with actually sharing with the recipient at all. And – the kicker – the amount of money that is spent on the gift is a direct indicator of the receiver’s value to the purchaser. Even Christ has been removed from the word Christmas and His name has been replaced with an “X” (Xmas)!

Some people brag that their Christmas decorations are up around Thanksgiving, their shopping is completed early, and gifts have been wrapped in early December. Others debate whether to send Christmas cards. Who should be sent cards and which style to send, the “nice ones” or the “regular ones?” Self worth may be assessed by the number of invitations received to the “best” holiday parties, and social status may be measured by inclusion – and others – by exclusion at some covenanted events.

In the midst of the holiday whirlwind we grimly observe that people have “forgotten the Reason for the Season.” We know what “should” be done, and yet, unless living alone on an isolated island, most people readily fall into the holiday whirlwind. It is very difficult not to become involved in the trivialities.

During the holidays there are many activities and varied emotions. Regular routines are drastically altered. Children are out of school, football games have replaced regular television viewing, product sales are everywhere, and there are many extra things to do: We tend to use activity, frenzy, work, people, and other things to cover up, ignore, and dodge various

emotions that may be more prevalent during the holidays. Remember, no matter what issues the season lays upon you:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4: 18-19)

Just one last thing before I:

- Get ready to go shopping,
- Buy stamps,
- Get groceries,
- Call my local friends to let them know when I will be leaving and returning,
- Make sure I find someone to feed my feral cats while I am gone,
- Call my friends at home to let them know when I will arrive, and make plans to connect,
- Revise my Christmas card list,
- Try to find a new outfit for the great, exclusive, inclusive, special, who-will-I-see-there-who-will-see-me-there-don't-you-wish-you-were-going-to-be-there-party,
- Mail packages,
- Send invitations for my own little party,
- Make sure I invite everyone I know to the presentation of Handel’s Messiah at church (it’s free; it’s free!),
- Divvy up year-end contributions to my favorite charities, and try to act as if I am actually getting a head start on organizing my tax materials,
- Make sure I get the clothes to be donated to the shelter together, and then, make sure that I get them there – before spring,
- Finish making the gifts I had planned to give,
- Pick up airline tickets and car reservations,

CELEBRATING from P. 6

- Make sure I meet, or at least not be ridiculously late in meeting, stated deadlines that nobody, mind you, nobody, but me, set for myself, and
- Make sure this article gets to "*The Metropolitan Spirit*" by COB TODAY!

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4: 18-19) This day this scripture is fulfilled before you.

This familiar passage can never-ever-lose its power, its beneficence and graciousness, and its Gift to us. Yet, it is one of the most pointed, challenging messages ever stated as well.

The passage describes that the most important thing we can do especially at this time of the year, is to do a self-searching starting from the head; explore the deep caverns, nicks and crannies of the heart, and the complex, sometimes violated, dimensions of the soul. We must do this so that we are able to receive the Gift of Gifts from the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings who reigns Forever and Ever.

The issue becomes, just how seriously do we take into our hearts and minds the glad tidings that Immanuel has come; that He is with us, and that He is on a mission from God. Let us begin the New Year with faith in God's promise that He and He alone will see us through the good times and the bad. Be of good faith.

Just one more thing: *I have got to get my nails done!*

Dr. Anne S. Bowie

**JESUS LOVES ME! THIS I KNOW,
FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO**

THE "PERCY JULIAN MORNING OF DISCOVERY" WORKSHOP

Over one hundred twenty-five students, parents, associates, and staff from area middle schools participated in the "Percy Julian Morning of Discovery" workshop held on Saturday, October 29, 2011, 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM. The Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church served as the main venue for the event, and several primary stakeholders assisted in hosting what proved to be an exceptional opportunity for middle-school students to crystallize their exploratory thinking regarding careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

The stakeholders were the American Chemical Society, Metropolitan's Daniel Alexander Payne Community Development Corporation (DAPCDC), the National Organization of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers (NOBCCHE), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Persons who planned the "Percy Julian Morning of Discovery" workshop sought to challenge middle-school students to consider pursuing careers in the sciences. This was in keeping with themes associated with the International Year of Chemistry 2011 and the 2011 International Year for People of African Descent.

Following the opening session at Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, approximately seventy middle-school students, ten percent of whom were from Metropolitan, went to the American Chemical Society headquarters at 16th and M Streets, Northwest, Washington, DC, to engage in experiments conducted by persons in the field of chemistry. A few Metropolitan students indicated that they particularly enjoyed the chemical experiments that dealt with "acids and bases" and "atmospheric conditions."

Clearly, this well-planned program that was coordinated by an outstanding group of professionals and role models in the field, realized its primary goal. With breakout groups,

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exhibits, and experiments for students and parents focusing on "Planning for a STEM Career," "Strategies and Resources for Nurturing a Child's Interest in STEM," "Academic Planning," and "Hands on Experiments," the minds of those in attendance were inspired.

Preceding the hands-on experiments, Dr. Victor McCrary, of AT&T Bell Laboratories, delivered an informative keynote address. "The Percy Julian Morning of Discovery" workshop was most successful. At the conclusion, participants were given certificates. The video, "The Greatest Stories Never Told," highlighting the Jesse Russell story, produced by Sheila and David Garnett of iAm Solutions, was shown.

Congratulations to the organizers, presenters, and participants of the first "Percy Julian Morning of Discovery" for conducting such a worthwhile workshop. Thanks are extended to Dr. Gladys Gary Vaughn, Dr. James Turner, Ms. Sheila Garnett, Mr. David Garnett, Dr. Sarah Elizabeth Brown, Dr. Vernon Morris, Ms. Miquel Antoine, Mr. Charles Breece, Esq., Ms. Edith Buffalow, Dr. Joe Cannon, Ms. Paula Christopher, Ms. Ethel Rollins, Dr. Charles Curry, Ms. Gladys Fitzhugh-Pemberton, and Ms. Anita Drayton Wood.

From an overall perspective, the "Percy Julian Morning of Discovery" workshop promoted awareness and offered hands-on experience for middle-school students. The impact of the workshop, which assisted in highlighting the need for more African Americans and minorities, including women, in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), has yet to be realized.

Appreciation is certainly given to the sponsors, contributors, supporters, friends, and members of the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church and the DAPCDC for their contributions and assistance in conducting this workshop. Special thanks to the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church Ministerial staff: The Rev. Dr. Ronald E. Braxton, Senior Pastor; The Rev. Dr. Marie P. Braxton, Assistant Pastor; The Rev. Aisha Karimah, Associate Minister; and The Rev. Jonathan V.

Newton, Esq., Assistant Pastor, for all of their support.

The Rev. Dr. Sandra Shands-Strong

PEACE CORPS 50 YEAR REUNION and the SIERRA LEONE VOLUNTEERS

The Peace Corps, since its inception in 1961, has been one of the most notable successes of U.S. foreign policy. Yet, a question left unanswered at the end of the agency's 50th anniversary gathering of 5,000-plus former staff and volunteers was, "with the current low-level of resources provided and a general misunderstanding of the services provided, could the Peace Corps even get off the ground today."

When proposed, the "agency that Richard Nixon, among others, had ridiculed as 'Kennedy's Kiddie Corps,' barely made it through Congress. Mr. H.R. Gross, an Iowa Republican isolationist and deficit hawk, dismissed the agency as 'a haven for draft dodgers.' "Mr. Gross would not even talk to Sargent Shriver, the corps' first director; Shriver was also President John F. Kennedy's brother-in-law. During an interview, "Bill Moyers, whose job it was to sell the idea of the Peace Corps to Congress, was asked by Democrat Otto Passman (Louisiana) 'Now, this organization isn't going to be racially integrated, is it?'"

"It was Moyers, author and television journalist, who at the September 2011 Washington reunion event, seemed dubious that today's Congress would even consider establishing such a government program that would support the unrealized potential of ordinary people to go out and do good." During the reunion, "Moyers told a breakfast gathering of Peace Corps old-timers at the Mayflower Hotel that we are living in a time when nearly half the country has 'seceded' from the social contract laid out so beautifully in this country's founding documents, and a reactionary Congress reflected

PEACE CORPS from P. 8

that ...turning away from our most generous and far-sighted values." (Richard Lipez, Op-Ed, *Berkshire Eagle*, October 07, 2011)

A group of Peace Corps volunteers who served in Sierra Leone held part of their reunion celebration at Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. The volunteers included Metropolitan's Rufus T. Stevenson, who is owner, curator, and traveler extraordinaire for Jah Kente International, Inc. Jah Kente International, Inc. is an organization that supports an African Health Project; produces and performs classic African American poems; manages a permanent African art collection; and offers genealogical resources to empower African Americans.

These volunteers are the "Sierra Leone II," a group of sixty men and women who trained together in the summer of 1962, at the State University of New York (SUNY), New Paltz, in preparation for Peace Corps service in West Africa. Most of these trainees were newly-minted liberal arts graduates from across the United States. Even though few members of the group had previous teaching experience – or even teacher training – they had been selected to fill the teaching slots at secondary schools in Sierra Leone, a country many had never even heard of prior to receiving the invitation to participate in the training.

This project was part of an audacious attempt to advance opportunities for African children to get an education. Another goal was to prepare African students to attend college and subsequently to fill teaching positions themselves in vastly-expanding school systems in Africa. Walter Carrington served as Project Director, and Mike McCone, Assistant Director, from 1962-63; Don McClure directed the program the second year of this group's service.

The country of **Sierra Leone**, officially the **Republic of Sierra Leone**, is in West Africa. It is bordered by Guinea to the north and east, Liberia to the southeast, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west and southwest. Sierra Leone covers a total area of 71,740 km² (27,699 sq. mi.) and has a population of 6.4 million people. This was a colony under the auspices of the Sierra Leone

Company from March 11, 1792, until in 1808, when the country became a British colony. (Wikipedia) In 1961, Sierra Leone achieved its independence.

Sierra Leone has a tropical climate, with a diverse environment ranging from savannah to rainforests. The country is divided into four geographical regions: the Northern Province, Eastern Province, Southern Province, and the Western Area. These regions are further divided into fourteen districts. Freetown, the capital, is the largest city and the economic and financial center. Other major cities are Bo, Kenema, Koidu Town, and Makeni. (Wikipedia)

These persons who served in Sierra Leone celebrated each other as well as the Peace Corps itself at a Saturday evening event hosted by Stevenson in the recently renovated Frederick Douglass Hall at Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. Each of the twenty plus participants was given an opportunity to share how the Peace Corps had impacted their lives as well as to describe their specific experiences.

It was indeed an inspiring and informative evening that ended with a climactic dinner at the home of Stevenson. Bob Hopkins had suggested and funded the dinner activity.

Stevenson stated, "Our time in DC was a wonderful reunion – much better than anything, speaking for myself, I had dared hope for. Thursday night and the two Saturday events stand out especially in my mind."

Rufus Stevenson, who had been responsible for the advance logistics, specifically thanked Peace Corps volunteer Char for her steady hand throughout the planning process. The entire reunion was a true milestone of reflection and purpose for the Sierra Leone II group.

Emanuel Payton

**Metropolitan A.M.E.
Church
173rd Anniversary Celebration**

METROPOLITAN'S MINISTRIES, CLUBS, AND ORGANIZATIONS

THE STEWARDESS BOARDS

(Each edition of the Metropolitan Spirit will feature one of the many Metropolitan ministries, clubs, and organizations, and describe its service to the church and/or community)

The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church defines *stewardesses* as "women who assist the stewards in their duties." The Discipline is even more specific in describing the stewardess' main function as assisting the stewards in the discharge of their duties relative to the rituals of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Stewardesses are to:

- Prepare the bread for Holy Communion,
- Make appropriate preparations for all baptisms,
- Dress the pulpit and altar rail with clean white coverings for the rituals,
- Polish all utensils,
- Provide appropriate bowl(s) for water and white linen towels for the ministers to cleanse and dry their hands before serving Holy Communion, and
- Dress the pulpit and altar with suitable clean covering for the various seasons of the Christian year, funerals, memorials, etc.

These duties and responsibilities are executed admirably by the stewardesses of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. In December 2009, Rev. Braxton appointed Stewardess Barbara Farrow Jones as president of the Stewardess Boards.

The organization is comprised of three boards – The First Board/Senior Stewardess Board, handles the finances for all three boards; the Second Board/Fannie Skinner Board, headed by Stewardess Eugenia Jacobs; and the Third Board/Alice B. Curry Board, the Junior Board.

Barbara Jones, a member of the Stewardess Board since 2002, says she was impressed and somewhat overwhelmed after realizing how much is involved in fulfilling the duties of a stewardess. She quickly learned it was more than just dressing up in a white outfit on the First Sunday mornings.

Considerable time and effort are involved in setting-up for communion. One responsibility of the stewardesses is to clean and iron the altar skirts. On the Saturday before Communion Sunday, the stewardesses are very hard at work preparing for the church ritual.

Another duty of the stewardesses is to provide clean bibs and towels, and to prepare the water for baptism. In addition, they are responsible for making sure that the pulpit and the altar are properly dressed with the appropriate color and that the chancel candles are lit and replaced as needed.

Stewardess Jones is learning valuable information from the experienced, seasoned stewardesses and deaconesses. These senior women have helped Barbara to develop a greater appreciation for the roles of the stewardess. She is thankful for the service of the Late Deaconess Irene W. Keene for having been a mentor and advisor.

In recent years, some responsibilities of the stewardess have changed. Several stewardesses recall when communion cups were made of glass and had to be hand washed before and after each use. Or, when the communion skirts were made of heavy cotton and linen and it took three or four times longer to iron each piece. Some changes have definitely been for the better.

STEWARDESS from P. 10

When Stewardess Jones was asked what 'does it take' to be a good stewardess, she quickly responded that a person must be work-devoted; must be able to humble herself; must have the appropriate attitude; must have the desire and be of the right mind; and must have a heart for it! Stewardess Jones' vision or goal for the stewardesses is to increase in number. She recalls visiting another A.M.E. church where there were multiple pews filled with that church's stewardesses. She particularly would like to see more teenagers and young adult females serving on Metropolitan's Stewardess Boards.

A female youth may become a member of the Junior Board as early as age fourteen. Barbara realizes that everyone is busy and appreciates that there are many family issues that consume one's time. However, she feels it is critical that women of the church be trained to become a stewardess. More importantly, when many of the younger stewardesses go away to college they do not return, and this leaves vacancies in the number of active stewardesses on the boards to serve. Sister Barbara adds that now that the church has returned to two worship services it is even more critical to have a sufficient number of stewardesses to be on duty for each service.

Recently, the Stewardesses bid farewell and best wishes to fellow Stewardess Annie Barr, when she and husband Theron relocated to the state of Florida. Barbara says Stewardess Barr was another valued advisor and she will be sorely missed by the boards.

In addition to President Barbara Jones, the officers include: Peggy Peagler, Vice President; Cheryl Harrod Brown, Recording Secretary; Judith Watkins, Corresponding Secretary; Annie Barr, former Treasurer; and Eugenia Jacobs, dubbed by the president as "Miss Dependable." Eugenia has been a stewardess since she was a teenager, and now heads the Fannie Skinner Board.

According to the A.M.E. Church Discipline, stewardesses are nominated by the Pastor and confirmed by the Senior Steward Board. A woman nominated must be in good

and regular standing in the church and of good character.

If you have a strong work ethic and are able to humble yourself; if you have the desire and the right attitude and mind; AND, if *you have the heart for it*, consider serving your church and taking part in kingdom building by becoming one of the ladies in white. But remember, it is more than just wearing white. You must have the attitude, mind, and heart. If you would like to serve in this position, please contact Stewardess Jones or Pastor Braxton directly to indicate your willingness.

Ellen H. Figer

Metropolitan A.M.E. Church

*"A Season of Thanksgiving
And Recognition in
Kingdom Building"*

June 1, 2011 - April 8, 2012

**LARGE AUDIENCE ATTENDS
MEMORIAL MEETING IN CHURCH
Justice John Marshall Harlan
Called (Colored) People's Friend**

*(This article commemorates the 100th
anniversary of this memorial meeting hosted
at Metropolitan A.M.E. Church)*

A memorial service to honor Justice John Marshall Harlan was held on December 11, 1911, in the sanctuary of Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church, 1518 M Street, Northwest, Washington, DC. The tribute was organized by a committee of 200 local Colored community activists, who were predominately ministers and teachers.⁽¹⁾ John W. Cromwell, the committee chairman, was a Metropolitan officer and a member of its lyceum, the Bethel Literary and Historical Association.⁽²⁾

MEMORIAL from P. 11

John Marshall Harlan was born in 1833, into a prominent Kentucky slaveholding family. Prior to the Civil War, he had held local and state elective offices as a Democrat in Kentucky. After Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860, John Marshall Harlan helped to prevent Kentucky seceding from the Union. He fought for the Union in the 10th Kentucky Infantry.

After the end of the Civil War, in 1868, John Marshall Harlan joined the Republican Party. In 1876, he supported Rutherford B. Hayes (Republican) for president. After taking office, President Hayes removed federal troops from the South. When the troops departed, the southern Colored people lost many civil and political rights that had been gained during Reconstruction.

President Hayes nominated John Marshall Harlan as an associate justice to the U.S. Supreme Court in the fall of 1877. On December 11, 1877, Hayes took his seat on the court. As an associate justice on the U.S. Supreme Court, John Marshall Harlan supported the rights of Colored people in cases that came before the nation's highest court.

Harlan was most notable as the lone dissenter in Civil Rights Cases (1883). The cases struck down as unconstitutional federal Reconstruction Era anti-discrimination legislation and Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) which upheld southern segregation statutes/Jim Crow Laws. Justice Harlan also dissented in Giles v. Harris, (1903), a case where the highest court allowed the "grandfather clause" to be used to deny Blacks the franchise. ⁽³⁾

Justice Harlan died on October 14, 1911, at 1401 Euclid Street, Northwest, his Washington, DC home. Although he was 78 years old, Justice Harlan's death, from acute bronchitis, was unexpected. He had attended the traditional Supreme Court opening on October 2, the first Monday in October. On Thursday Justice Harlan had gone home with a cold which steadily grew worse. Just after 8:00 AM on Saturday he passed away. ⁽⁴⁾

The Justice was survived by his widow, Mrs. Malvina S. Harlan; two daughters, Laura and Ruth Harlan; and three sons. Richard, the eldest son, a Presbyterian minister; James S., the second son, an attorney with the US government; and John Maynard, the third son, an attorney and city official in Chicago, Illinois. ⁽⁵⁾

The Harlan family had originally planned a quiet funeral service at their home. ⁽⁶⁾ These plans however were believed to be too modest for a man dubbed: "The Grand Old Man of the Court." Justice Harlan had (at that time) the third longest tenure of any member in the history of the US Supreme Court.

Additionally, in 1910, Harlan had temporarily served as the nation's chief justice. Chief Justice Melville Fuller had died in July 1910, and Justice Harlan was the acting chief justice until December 1910. At that time, President William Howard Taft elevated Associate Justice Edward D. White to the position of chief justice.

The funeral service for Justice Harlan was held on Tuesday, October 17, 1911, at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church (Washington, DC). He was a lifelong Presbyterian and had been an elder and Sunday School teacher at the church. The eulogist acknowledged Harlan's long public career, as well as his life as a Christian.

The Rev. Dr. Wallace Radcliffe, Justice Harlan's pastor, said about Harlan: "He placed his feet on the Rock of Ages and his eyes were toward the hope of immortality. It is a great thing to have in this community in these days a man of his station and his record who was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. We can catch the words from the lips of the King and say to one another: 'Know ye that there is a prince, and a great man has fallen this day in Israel.'"

In respect to Justice Harlan's memory, every court in the city had adjourned until after his funeral. The church was basically filled with members of the US Supreme Court, other judiciary, Congress, Civil War veterans, and the armed forces. President Taft was on the West

MEMORIAL from P. 12

Coast and could not attend the funeral service. Justice John Marshall Harlan was buried in Rock Creek Cemetery.⁽⁷⁾

In the days after Justice Harlan's death, many sympathy telegrams and messages were received at the Harlan home. Sympathy messages were sent by President Taft, former president Theodore Roosevelt, former US Vice President and Mrs. Charles W. Fairbanks, justices of the Supreme Court and other courts, members of Congress, Robert T. Lincoln, son of Abraham Lincoln, and many others.⁽⁸⁾

In addition to messages sent to the home, tributes to Justice Harlan from notable Colored organizations were published in the Washington, DC newspapers. The preamble to a resolution from the Shiloh Baptist Church read: "Whereas in the death of Mr. Justice John Marshall Harlan, that great and wise and unseen hand has removed from our midst a Christian gentleman, an eminent jurist, and the highest type of American citizenship; who was also an earnest advocate of the respect for, and the upholding of the Constitution of our beloved country; an able defender of human rights and a conscientious, sympathetic friend of our race."⁽⁹⁾

In its message, The Wilberforce University Alumni stated that Justice Harlan had accompanied President Taft to an alumni association fund raising gathering in March 1910. The gathering, held at Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, drew several thousand alumni and friends of the university. Speaking to the capacity crowd, President Taft and Justice Harlan referred to their support of higher education for the Negro. The Justice then joined President Taft in praising Wilberforce for its history in educating those who were leaders in the Negro community. The President and the Justice pledged to make a donation to the university's fund raising effort.⁽¹⁰⁾

A week after Justice Harlan's funeral, The Evangelical Ministerial Alliance of Washington and vicinity assembled at First Baptist Church, Dumbarton Avenue, Northwest

for its October meeting. This group of Colored clergymen concluded the meeting with a memorial service for the late jurist. Rev. Isaac N. Ross, pastor of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, was the first of six eulogists. Each eulogist spoke in glowing terms about Justice Harlan; cited his many court decisions for the race; and opined that the race had lost one of its best friends with his death.⁽¹¹⁾

By the end of October 1911, discussions were underway in the Colored community for formal city-wide commemorations for Justice Harlan. One commemoration was to be held in November 1911, at Metropolitan Baptist Church with Booker T. Washington as the featured speaker. The announcement concluded: "There is no man in this country to whom the Colored race is more indebted than to the late Justice John Marshall Harlan."⁽¹²⁾

In early December, John W. Cromwell announced plans for a memorial service at Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. Justice Harlan had been a guest at the church many times. Since the 1880s the late jurist had attended meetings and given lectures at Metropolitan's Bethel Literary and Historical Association. In 1895, Justice Harlan had attended the requiem of The Honorable Frederick Douglass at Metropolitan. In 1903, the Bethel Literary Association had held a 70th birthday celebration for Justice Harlan.

The date for Justice Harlan's memorial service at the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church was chosen: "The date of the exercises are also commemorative of the 34th anniversary of the appointment of the late justice (Harlan) to the Supreme Court of the United States, and much interest has been manifested by citizens in all walks of life to make this an appropriate and fitting testimonial to this champion of human liberty, justice, and equal and exact application of the law regardless of race or condition."⁽¹³⁾

Invitations to the memorial service were sent to US President William Howard Taft, Justices of the Supreme Court, former President Theodore Roosevelt, former US Senators

MEMORIAL from P. 13

Joseph B. Foraker and William E. Chandler, Dr. Booker T. Washington, Professor W.E.B. DuBois, Rev. Wallace Radcliff, Dr. Wilbur Thirkleld, and members of the Harlan family. The public was also welcome to attend the service.

The Memorial Meeting

"A memorial meeting in honor of Justice John Marshall Harlan was attended by a large audience last night at Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. The meeting opened with Beethoven's 'On the Death of a Hero' played by the church organist, Professor W.G. Braxton. Mr. John W. Cromwell, event chairman, made the opening remarks. The Metropolitan A.M.E. Church pastor, Rev. Isaac N. Ross, gave the Invocation, and a vocal solo by Miss Jean Kelly followed. Archibald H. Grimke, of the Boston (Massachusetts) bar, presided. He read letters of regret from President Taft, the Jurists of the Supreme Court, former President Theodore Roosevelt, and former Senators Joseph B. Foraker and William E. Chandler.

William Justin Carter of the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Bar, delivered the principal address. He cited many decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States in which Justice Harlan dissented, and praised Harlan's action, calling him a true friend of the (Colored) people.⁽¹⁴⁾

After the address by Mr. Carter, there was a presentation of resolutions by Lafayette Kershaw. The principle resolution in Memory of Justice Harlan stated: "The sincere sorrow and sense of loss which the race, the country over, feels in the death of John Marshall Harlan, late associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, by the colored people representing the citizenship of the several states, territories and the District of Columbia."

The preamble of the resolution cited the late Justice Harlan to be an "unfailing friend of the lately emancipated slaves and their descendants extol his broad and fundamental conception of the nature of slavery which made it possible for him to give to the war amendments to the Constitution a reasonable and

understandable interpretation and declares that in his religious life Christianity meant the present, practical Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man." It also commended the Justice as being "a philanthropist who never ceased to emphasize the duty of the favored to the ill-favored, the strong to the weak."

"He was no condescending friend of the Negro," it declared. "Never by word or manner did he exploit his humane sentiments, or claim a vested right to the gratitude and reverence of the race. He had both, but they were spontaneous, unaffected, and sincere. He was the friend of human kind and freely acknowledged the humanity of the Negro."⁽¹⁵⁾

"After short talks by Rev. Dr. Wilbur P. Thirkleld, president of Howard University, Judge Robert H. Terrell, of the Municipal Court, and Harry S. Cummings, of the Baltimore City Council, the benediction was given by Rev. D.F. Rivers of Berean Baptist Church. The Cadets of the M Street High School and Armstrong Technical High School acted as ushers."⁽¹⁶⁾

Those who attended the memorial meeting were given a 12-page commemorative program. The program cover displayed a photo of Justice Harlan and the words, "A True Friend of the People."⁽¹⁷⁾

Summarizing the memorial meeting, one newspaper reported: "The Afro-American citizens of Washington, DC did well to honor the memory of the late Justice John M. Harlan, who was a staunch friend of the race. Similar memorial meetings should be held in every city in the country."⁽¹⁸⁾

*Darwin Curry / Eugenia T.A. Jacobs /
Thelma Dean Jacobs*

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MEMORIAL from P. 14

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End Notes

- (1) Carter G. Woodson, then a new teacher in the Division II (Colored) Schools of Washington, DC, was a committee member. In 1915, he established the Association for the Study of Negro Life; and in 1916, he established *"The Journal of Negro History."* Dr. Woodson began the commemoration of Negro History Week (now Black History Month) in February 1926.
- (2) In 1896, Mr. John W. Cromwell wrote a *"History of the Bethel Literary and Historical Association."* He also wrote an article *"The First Negro Churches in the District of Columbia"* that was printed in the January 1922 issue of *"The Journal of Negro History."*
- (3) "John Marshall Harlan, Jurist," *Washington Herald* (October 15, 1911).
- (4) John Marshall Harlan II, son of John Maynard Harlan, in 1955, was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court by President Dwight David Eisenhower.
- (5) *"Justice Harlan: Grand Old Man," Washington Times* (October 14, 1911).
- (6) *"Family Changes Plan," Washington Times* (October 16, 1911).
- (7) *"Harlan Service Impressive but Simple Tribute," Washington Times* (October 17, 1911).
- (8) *"Taft and Others Offer Sympathy to Mrs. Harlan," Washington Herald* (October 15, 1911).
- (9) *"Justice John Marshall Harlan," Washington Bee*, (November 13, 1911).
- (10) *"Wilberforce Alumni Fill Metropolitan," Washington Times* (March 10, 1910).
- (11) *"Memorial to the Late Justice John Marshall Harlan," Washington Bee* (October 28, 1911).
- (12) *"Memorial to Harlan," Washington Bee* (October 21, 1911).
- (13) *"The Harlan Memorial," Washington Bee* (December 9, 1911).
- (14) *"Harlan Called People's Friend," The Washington Herald* (December 12, 1911).
- (15) *"In Memory of Justice Harlan," The St. Paul Minnesota Afro-American Appeal* (December 16, 1911).
- (16) *"Harlan Called People's Friend," The Washington Herald* (December 12, 1911).
- (17) Copy of program located in Justice Harlan's papers at the University of Louisville.
- (18) *"In Memory of Justice Harlan," The St. Paul Minnesota Afro-American Appeal* (December 16, 1911).

Afterwards:

In 1921, when Chief Justice Edward D. White died, President Warren G. Harding appointed former President William Howard Taft as the nation's chief justice. Taft had been defeated in the 1912 presidential election by Woodrow Wilson.

The 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court ruling found racial segregation in public schools to be a violation of the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. This Amendment overturned the separate-but-equal doctrine established by the Plessy v. Ferguson decision of 1896. The Black plaintiffs in the 1954 case were represented by Attorney Thurgood Marshall of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund. In 1967, Thurgood Marshall became the first Black U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

MEET ADDY HEBOU

Upon meeting Addy Hebou, one cannot but notice his mannerly, intellectual demeanor. This author found that Addy not only possesses these described attributes, but he has many more.

Addy, 11 years old (his birthday was December 16th), son of Luc Hebou and Annick Nguewou, is in the 6th/7th grade at Potomac Heights Christian Academy in Indian Head, Maryland. Addy is a very positive role model for his siblings Brian and Joyce. His outstanding academic achievements resulted in Addy being advanced over the 4th grade level of school. His favorite subjects are mathematics, science, and composition; and apparently he has excelled in all. Even at his young age, Addy's participation in Metropolitan A.M.E. Church activities is already historic.

On Social Justice Sunday, in January 2011, Addy welcomed President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, and their daughters Mahlia and Sasha to Metropolitan and the worship service. At the service, commemorating the birthday and service of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Addy received a cordial handshake from President Obama. Addy shared that when Rev. Braxton invited him to speak he

did not know exactly what was expected. However, he was excited by the opportunity.

At the Washington Annual Conference in April 2011, Addy introduced Bishop Adam J. Richardson, Jr., Presiding Prelate of the Second Episcopal District, expertly reading the Bishop's bio that Rev. Braxton had prepared. Addy also has served as co-master of ceremonies and a puppeteer in the puppet show for a Church Sunday School Cradle Roll program.

Addy performed a Michael Jackson song and dance routine at a Metropolitan Youth and Young Adult Talent Showcase in July 2011. Not only did he dance a Michael arrangement outstandingly, Addy also sang along as Michael would have done. On various occasions, Addy joyously has shared his many talents in the service of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. When asked about his aspirations, it is obvious that Addy aims high. He wants to be a scientist, inventor, songwriter, and singer (the latter influenced by his mother).

"Varied," is an apt term to describe Addy's many interests, which include reading the Bible, playing internet games, writing parodies of songs, watching his basketball hero Kobe Bryant, and "trying to be good all the time." So far, it seems as if Addy is definitely on the right track.

Nancy C. Harvin

PERSONALITIES

Heartfelt thanks to Metropolitan's in-house photographers/videographers – **Pius Akinola, Wade Dugger, Isiah Dupree, Eugenia Jacobs,** and **Terry Johnson** – for faithfully recording church events and activities for posterity. We are indeed grateful for the memories you record with your trusty cameras.

Have you paid attention to the beautifully sewn communion linens now being used on each First Sunday morning? Well, we owe hardy gratitude to **Stewardess Barbara Farrow Jones** for sharing her creativity and talents in

PERSONALITIES

making the communion linens. (Barbara is also a fantastic cook). Sister Barbara, know that Metropolitan is eternally grateful for your dedicated service to this church.

Helen McClam Green Lee is a very dutiful Senior usher. In her service to Metropolitan, Sister Lee dutifully stands at the church entrance on duty. With a warm smile on her face she welcomes all worshippers to the church. Though Helen is a faithful daughter who cares for her mother, Mrs. Lizzie McClam, she still takes the time to visit other senior members of this congregation. Helen is a great person to emulate.

Every time we hear any comments about the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial on the National Mall, **Dina Curtis** should proudly come to mind. We commend Dina for her work with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation, Inc. Her dedication helped to ensure the completion of an awesome and appropriate memorial to a very worthy individual. Dina, we are pleased to acknowledge your assistance in this accomplishment.

We cannot say thanks enough to **Gwen Kimbrough, Alton Green, Willie Oxendine** and **Vernard Dickson**, for their efforts in shepherding the successful completion of Phase I of the church's restoration. You are congratulated for a job well done and we look forward to future church restoration phases.

Thanks, **Jocelyn Harris** for always willingly stepping up to the plate, volunteering to provide a service wherever and whenever needed. And now, Jocelyn has done it once again, sharing her culinary skills. With the assistance of **Carol Jones Ali**, Jocelyn is fast becoming Metropolitan's 'Head Chef.' This talent is in addition to Jocelyn's horticulture skills that she uses in maintaining the church's front yard – the lawn, planting flowers seasonally, and pruning shrubs, with the assistance of **Greg Johnson**. Jocelyn definitely does not hide her talents. Thank you, thank you, thank you...

PERSONALITIES from P. 16

Rev. Aisha Karimah, how can we thank you for all that you do? Mere words cannot express our deepest gratitude. Through your service in missions, this church is better prepared to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and care for persons with needs. You are a caring angel and we are blessed to have you in our midst.

What can I say to you, the **Metropolitan family**, about your generous participation in the Angel Tree project during the Christmas season? I begin with sincere thanks. Once again you rose to the occasion and met the needs of these families. The requests that we receive for Christmas gifts are from families that have an incarcerated parent who participates in the Prison Fellowship Ministry, children who have a parent who attends Metropolitan's Daniel Alexander Payne Reclamation First Saturday Program, families who are served by Metropolitan's Sarah Allen Missionary Society Monthly Food Bank, and requests from community residents. Whether you took an angel from the tree and purchased a gift, made a personal or an organization financial donation, assisted in organizing the items for delivery, and/or delivered gifts to a family, know that you brought smiles to the faces and joy to the hearts of about 130 children from 57 families. Two gifts were presented to each child. In addition to the gifts, a present for the caregiver and an invitation to worship with Metropolitan were delivered to each family. Glowing words of thanks and gratitude have been received from many families who were recipients of your kindness. Metropolitan, you are such caring people. On behalf of the Love and Peace Unit of the Sarah Allen Missionary Society, we are grateful for whatever you did. Without your assistance we would not have been able to fulfill these Christmas wishes.

Dr. Yvonne Bolling has announced that it is time to submit entries for the Lenten Devotional. A devotional (published at Advent and Lent), edited by Dr. Bolling and **Ms. Janice C. Evans** is distributed to some A.M.E.s around the globe. Thanks to Dr. Bolling and Ms. Evans for their commitment and we look forward to

being inspired by this upcoming publication.

Metropolitan is home to many seemingly ordinary people who are doing some extraordinary things. Take heed and just look around. You might be pleasantly surprised...

Carolyn McClain

METROPOLITAN HONORS FORMER U.S. AMBASSADORS

In celebration of the 2011 International Year for People of African Descent, Metropolitan A.M.E. honored four church members for their distinguished service in international diplomacy. Each was presented the church's legacy award. The Metropolitan A.M.E. Church Legacy Award, created in August 2010, recognizes "the singular accomplishments and contributions of individuals to the nation and the world, while simultaneously acknowledging the role of Metropolitan in extolling the importance of faith, family, culture, and community in American heritage."

The award, originated by Metropolitan's Circles of Twelve and first presented on September 19, 2010, "provides a vehicle to celebrate and recognize extraordinary achievement over a lifetime." The persons, honored on Sunday, July 17, 2011, shared a few highlighted career experiences, gave advice for persons interested in Foreign Service careers, and recalled their Metropolitan and A.M.E. Church connections.

Ambassador Howard F. Jeter, keynote speaker for the worship service, grew up in the Baptist Church. In 1972, he and wife Donice joined Metropolitan during Rev. (later Bishop) Robert L. Pruitt's tenure.

Mr. Jeter's career included serving as Deputy Chief of Mission and later Charge d'Affaires in Lesotho, where a neighbor was A.M.E. Bishop Richard Chappelle, then Presiding Prelate of the 18th Episcopal District. As Deputy Chief of Mission in Namibia, Jeter had numerous occasions to interact with A.M.E. Bishop Robert Thomas. Mr. Jeter was U.S. Ambassador to Botswana during A.M.E. Bishop William P.

AMBASSADORS from P. 17

DeVeaux's assignment to the 18th Episcopal District.

Ambassador Jeter has served as U.S. State Department director of West African Affairs and as President Clinton's Special Envoy for Liberia, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, and ultimately, Ambassador to Nigeria. Although Ambassador Jeter enjoyed his overseas assignments, he considers his latter assignment to be the most challenging experience due to the country's size, complexity, and political issues. Ambassador Jeter retired, at the rank of Career Minister, from the US State Department in 2003 after a 27-year meritorious career in Foreign Service.

Ambassador Jeter says that far too few African Americans and Latinos are even aware of Foreign Service as a career. He encourages persons to pursue such a career, for he knows that this type work offers great opportunities for travel and learning about other people and cultures.

Ambassador Horace G. Dawson, Jr., entered Foreign Service in 1962, as a Cultural Affairs Officer in Uganda and Nigeria, and later as the US Information Agency Director in Liberia. He also held a prominent position as director of all American information and cultural programs in Africa.

Dawson was the counselor of embassy for public affairs and the director of American information and cultural programs in the Philippines until he was named Ambassador to the Republic of Botswana by President Jimmy Carter. He held key positions in the US Department of State and the US Information Agency.

Ambassador Dawson, an active member of Metropolitan, acknowledges a strong family history in the A.M.E. church. After many years of Foreign Service, Mr. Dawson returned to Washington, DC, and joined Metropolitan in 1983, under Rev. (later Bishop) Robert L. Pruitt. He has served Metropolitan in a number of roles, including Pro Tem of the Senior Board of Stewards and in that role under Rev. (later Bishop) William P. DeVeaux, developed

Metropolitan's first recent directory of church members.

Ambassador Dawson connected with the A.M.E. church in Liberia. While Ambassador to Botswana, Dawson worshipped at an A.M.E. church in that country.

Foreign Service in Botswana was memorable for the Ambassador because he had the responsibility of being the US President's surrogate and serving the needs of all Americans in that country. He was also tasked with ensuring that the host country's leaders and populace understood American policy issues. Ambassador Dawson was instrumental in getting Botswana's assistance for the United States during the Iranian hostage crisis in the late 1970's/early 1980's.

Ambassador Dawson encourages youth to read to become conscious of what is happening beyond their personal country's borders. He said he can't emphasize enough the need to study world history and learn a foreign language.

Ambassador Shirley E. Barnes, from an A.M.E. family, began her relationship with Metropolitan about 22 years ago. She relocated to Washington, DC from New York when recruited by the State Department, and served in various prestigious positions. An aunt had encouraged Ms. Barnes to attend Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. Ms. Barnes held positions in both private industry and non-profit foundations. She worked for the Ford Foundation in the Congo-Kinshasa prior to her diplomatic service.

During Barnes' Foreign Service career, she served in Cairo, Egypt; Dakar, Senegal; West Berlin, Germany; Sofia, Bulgaria; Sanaa, Yemen; and as US Consul General in Strasbourg, France. Barnes was Director of Western European Affairs in the Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs with responsibility for France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, the Vatican, Malta, Monaco, Andorra; and San Marino.

Ms. Barnes was nominated by President William Jefferson (Bill) Clinton as US

AMBASSADORS from P. 18

Ambassador to the Republic of Madagascar. While serving overseas, Ambassador Barnes maintained her affiliation with the A.M.E. Church even as she worked with a young women's project of the United Methodist Church. Currently, Ambassador Barnes operates the Barnes Findley Foundation, which is "dedicated to women and girls of the African Diaspora, to foster education, job and economic development opportunities, and to support the elimination of human trafficking of African women and children."

Ambassador Joseph M. Segars and family joined Metropolitan in 1983, under Rev. (later Bishop) Robert L. Pruitt. Even before joining the church, the Segars family had attended Metropolitan whenever travel allowed. The Ambassador's wife, Mrs. Elizabeth N. Graham Segars, was a member of an A.M.E. Church in her hometown of South Bend, Indiana.

Mr. Segars' early diplomatic assignments included a tour in Vienna, Austria and work in the US Department of State Operation Center. He served subsequently in South Africa, Jamaica, Nigeria, and Tanzania. Segars was twice Country Officer in the Department's Africa Bureau – Liberia/Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe/Lesotho/Swaziland; Consul General in Nigeria, and Department Chief of Mission in Tanzania. President William J. "Bill" Clinton appointed Segars Ambassador to the Republic of Cape Verde.

Ambassador Segars was recruited to serve in South Africa during a period when anti-apartheid sentiment was growing globally. He believes that each of his overseas assignments had its own unique dimensions, but South Africa was most challenging. At that time, though South Africa was resisting interference, Segars found that he was in a position to help people get along across ideological lines. The Ambassador admitted that his experiences were not always enjoyable, but indeed they were enlightening.

While discussing his career in diplomatic service, Ambassador Segars reflected on his love for travel, but he also emphasized that early and on-going preparation is a must, such as

engaging in studies in international relations. He cautions that this career is not necessarily a path to great riches; however, the experiences will indeed be invaluable.

These Ambassadors were acknowledged for their contributions "made to the world in every sphere, including diplomacy." Where ever they served each was prepared to understand various peoples and their cultures. These diplomatic servants' goal was to work toward improving the situations that they found. We honor Ambassadors Howard F. Jeter, Horace G. Dawson, Jr., Shirley E. Barnes, and Joseph M. Segars, members of this congregation, for their distinguished Foreign Service careers.

Nancy C. Harvin

(Resource: The Metropolitan A.M.E. Church Sunday Worship Program, July 17, 2011)

"Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (Excerpted)
The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds."

"Such an attitude stems from a tragic misconception of time, from the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men [ed. and women] willing to be co workers with God. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right."

"Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty."
(Resource: "Remembering MLK" message prepared by HUD/FHEO Deputy Assistant Secretary for Enforcement)

"BUT LET JUSTICE RUN DOWN LIKE WATER, AND RIGHTEOUS LIKE A MIGHTY STREAM!" – Amos 5: 24 (NIV).

RESTORATION

IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR THE LORD ON OUR SIDE WHERE WOULD WE BE God's Saving Grace and Mercy Undergird Our Restoration and Preservation Efforts

“If the Lord had not been on our side when men attacked us, when their anger flared against us, they would have swallowed us alive; the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us, the raging waters would have swept us away.” (Psalm 124: 2-5 NIV)

Tuesday, August 23, 2011, marked an historic day in most of the eastern region of the United States. On that day, millions of people stood in their homes, offices, and on the streets, wondering what was happening as they felt a 45-second tremor and saw buildings sway from side to side. At a magnitude of 5.8 on the Richter scale, the second largest earthquake in Virginia's history struck approximately 84 miles from Washington, DC, in an area that is not known for seismic activity.

While the earthquake caused massive building evacuations, the number of injuries and instances of major structural damage were few. In this metro area, the Washington Monument and the Washington National Cathedral sustained significant damage as a result of the earthquake. The Monument had to be closed indefinitely, and the Cathedral has initiated a \$25 million fundraising project to meet its initial restoration costs for 2012.

At Metropolitan, the effects of the earthquake were minimal. As Pastor Braxton pointed out in his report after the earthquake, “In all probability, we would be in bad shape today had not we had a mind to work and the Lord our God made provisions for the work to take place.” The God of heaven gave Metropolitan the success that Nehemiah knew with certainty would come to Jerusalem through God's servants who were about the business of rebuilding. (Nehemiah 2:20, 4:6 NIV).

If it had not been for the Lord on our side, moving Metropolitan to begin its restoration two years ago, the unfortified, 125-year-old structure probably would have been too weak to withstand the earthquake. The leaning steeple would have completed its downward path and possibly could have collapsed. The fragile Episcopacy Window could have fallen to its

demise. Existing, internal and external structural damages would have multiplied. Instead, Metropolitan's damage consisted of just a few of the new tiles in the sanctuary ceiling were dislodged, and some of the support brackets around the ceiling sprinklers were shaken loose.

In Psalm 124, David reflected on the protection, love, grace, and mercy that God bestowed on Israel. Similarly, God blessed Metropolitan and ultimately spared us from the devastation and destruction that undoubtedly could have befallen the church, if the congregation, the Connectional Church, other donors, lenders, church officers, and several professionals, had not generously responded to the appeal for restoration assistance. Metropolitan received contributions totaling \$585,287 and \$56,460 from the congregation and the Connectional Church, respectively.

Notwithstanding the money that has been raised, Metropolitan continues to have obligations that require additional funds, as we go forward with Kingdom Building in a beautifully-restored edifice. At the Church Conference, held on December 10, 2011, Pastor Braxton and the church officers provided the following details on the financial status of the church:

Income and Expenses - The church has a total amount of \$4.1 million outstanding in bank debt. For the 2012 budget, approximately \$1.2-\$1.5 million is projected year-end income, and \$1.3-\$1.4 million is projected year-end expenses. Metropolitan's budget is funded through congregational giving. The 2012 proposed budget was voted on and adopted at the Church Conference.

Real Estate - the Q Street residential property generates a monthly rental income of \$4,200. Some of the rental proceeds have been

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used to offset expenses, including repairs, eviction fees to remove tenants from the Sudbury Road residence, and management fees for both properties. After a protracted legal process to remove the non-paying tenants from the Sudbury Road residence, the property is now vacant and being prepared for listing and sale. For one and a half years, the Sudbury property had been listed for \$875,000, but at present, it is not listed on the sales market. The current average listing for comparable properties is \$675,000, but the Sudbury property will be listed as close to \$875,000 as feasible.

Advanced Funding - The church must repay advance funds received from the Rogers Memorial Trust, the Metropolitan Endowment, and several church members. The repayment amount totals \$307,665.

Operational Expenses - The church has experienced a 2 percent increase in operational expenses over the amount projected a year ago. The mortgage payment for the restoration loan, which must be raised by the church, is the critical difference in the 2012 budget.

Salaries - The church's salaries have remained flat for all church employees; no staff has had a raise in three years. The Pastor reduced his housing allowance as a leadership gesture during Restoration. The reduction was 15 percent. Although the church offers and makes available health insurance to all church personnel, participation is voluntary. The church makes a matching contribution to the health insurance for all staff who participate. Per IRS Publication 517, ministers are considered as self-employed for Social Security purposes. Therefore, instead of paying into the traditional Social Security system under the Social Security Act, their contributions to Social Security are covered under the Self-Employment Contributions Act. Based on this regulation, the employer (the church) cannot collect these taxes on behalf of the minister.

Special Event Sundays - The Pastor has announced six special event Sundays to be celebrated in 2012. It is hoped that each Sunday will generate an additional \$30,000 in revenue,

above normal tithes and offering, or a combined total of \$180,000. The designated Sundays are: Men's Day (2nd Sunday in February), Women's Day (3rd Sunday in April), Church Anniversary (2nd Sunday in July), Officers' Day (1st Sunday in September), Homecoming (3rd Sunday in October), and Family Communion Sunday (1st Sunday in December).

Mortgage Payment and Mortgage Pledges - The church has a monthly mortgage payment of \$33,125.47, which the church began paying in September 2011. Every 5 years, the bank and Metropolitan will renegotiate the interest rate of the mortgage loan, which is amortized over a 20-year period. The 3rd Sunday of each month has been designated Mortgage Pledge Sunday. The goal is to raise the next month's mortgage payment on each 3rd Sunday. Members are encouraged to make a contribution on that Sunday to the mortgage payment. Donations are gladly accepted at any time, you may designate how your donation is to be used.

The Stewardship and Finance Commission is scheduled to meet monthly and will routinely keep the congregation informed of the financial status of the church. Members and their contributions will continue to be central to the church's financial forecast.

Metropolitan's members have been faithful in their giving and in believing in God's omnipotence. His saving grace and mercy brought us through Phase I of the restoration project, and He is on our side. For these reasons, we can steadfastly believe that God's saving grace and mercy will undergird our continuing efforts to restore and preserve His church. In the words of hymnist and Methodist leader, Charles Wesley, "*Jesus, we steadfastly believe the grace thou dost this moment give Thou wilt the next bestow; wilt keep us every moment here, and show thyself the Finisher, and never let us go.*"

Janet Oakley Higgins

References: Materials from Church Conference, December 10, 2011; information presented and provided by Pastor Ronald E. Braxton; Trustees Clayton Aarons and Gwendolyn Kimbrough; Stewards Thedford Collins, Wade Dugger, Rollie Kimbrough, and Walter Morris.

CLASS LEADERS from P. 4

At Metropolitan, the Class Leader System is being reorganized to embrace more contact with the membership. The classes have been organized by zip codes to create Metropolitan "communities" across the metro area. This organization should facilitate contact, visitations, and group interactions.

The Book of Discipline of the A.M.E. Church states that a class is usually composed of twelve or more people. It is formed to discern whether members are indeed working out their own salvation and to receive what they contribute to the support of the Gospel. The Class Leader is appointed annually by the minister, serves for one year, and may be reappointed as long as the person's conduct is satisfactory. A Class Leader is examined quarterly by the minister and the presiding elder.

A Class Leader is important to facilitate communication and a connection within the church, provides spiritual support, and serves as a liaison between the congregation and the pastor. The Class Leader must have a Christ-centered approach to discipleship.

Class Leaders are expected to "touch" each class member at least once per month, inform the pastor and/or Cluster Leader about members who have special needs, maintain confidentially, check on members who have missed service, and provide a monthly status report to the cluster leader. This reporting is due the first Sunday of each month for the prior month.

The Cluster Leader, a member of the Senior Board of Stewards, is responsible for a group of classes. A Cluster Leader serves as a liaison between a Class Leader and the pastor; fulfills the duties of a class leader for the class leaders within that cluster (serving approximately 15 class leaders); provides leadership to the class system, and will serve as temporary class leader when needed.

All persons joining Metropolitan are assigned a temporary Class Leader, called an "anchor," until that person completes the required new members' orientation. Upon completing the orientation, each new member is assigned to a

class. Each member of the congregation is to be assigned to a class.

Metropolitan's class system is named in honor of the Bishops of the A.M.E. Church. The Class Leader system is a two-way street; members are strongly encouraged to maintain communication with their class leader. The Class Leader's main responsibility is to serve as a representative of the pastor and to monitor the general welfare of class members.

Carolyn McClain

Resources: Material distributed at Class Leaders Training sessions conducted by the Late Steward, Dr. Victor Bibbins, former Chair, Class Leaders Council; and Class Leaders' Training, *Caring for Our Congregation*, Saturday, December 3, 2011, and Saturday, January 14, 2012, presented by Rev. Ronald E. Braxton and Stewards Thedford Collins, Celeste Garcia, Joan Oxendine, and Flavia Walton.

FACTS – DID YOU KNOW...

* A Metropolitan A.M.E. Church congregation (formerly Israel Bethel and Union Bethel) has existed for 173 years.

* The Metropolitan Church physical structure has been located at 1518 M Street, NW, Washington, DC for 125 years.

* The African Methodist Episcopal Church has membership in 20 Episcopal Districts in 39 countries on 5 continents. The work of the Church is administered by 21 active bishops, and 9 General Officers who manage the departments of the Church.

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