

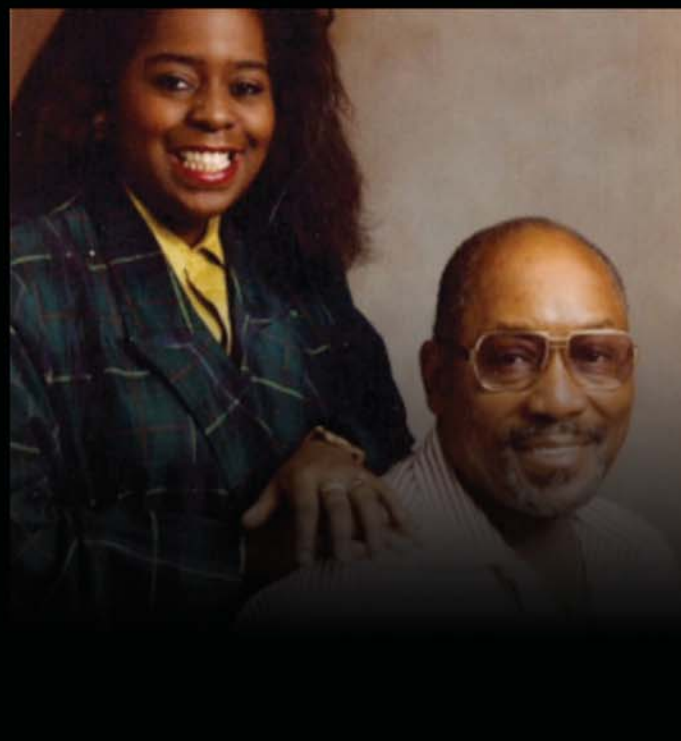
MESSAGE

from the Mount

Volume 29



Tales of Forgiveness





The Pastor's Pen

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Namaste my Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

I greet you in the name of Jesus. I wish to thank each and every one of you for all of your expressions of love, cards, gifts, words of encouragement and other ways you made known your respect, love and appreciation for 17 years of labor between Pastor and People. Let me also thank our ministry leaders, servant leaders, all who participated in the coordination and execution of our celebration. I would not have been able to do what God has called us to do without your contribution. Donna, Ahmad, Brittany (yes even Brittany) and I so greatly appreciate the opportunity God has afforded us to minister and be ministered to in such an awesome place as Mount Aery Baptist Church. Only God knows the future He has in store for us. Yet I keep believing and seeing that the best is yet to come.

As we move into August, it will be a time that many of us (including me and my family) will engage in vacation or in the words of those of us with meager means, staycation. In whatever way you choose to take time away from your employment or your daily routine, I pray it is a renewing and restoring time.

I want to thank in advance, Pastor Thomas Williams and the entire ministerial staff for stepping in and being available during my time with my family.

Though many of us will take time off for vacation, I hope that all of us will return and be ready for our Annual Friends and Family Day Church Outing, Sunday, August 28th. The church outing begins with awesome praise, worship and Word time at 9:30am at Mount Aery. Then we will travel to Beardsley Park for 11:00 am for liver and onions (lol). Let me express to Greg McBroom and our Men's Ministry and others who have taken the leadership in preparing for another great time of full fellowship, family and faith. I look to see each of you there.

God bless you,

Pastor Anthony L. Bennett, D. Min.
Senior Pastor



Editor's Desk

God has been
good to us.

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Namaste MFTM Readers,

As I sit here on this little plane staring at the clouds from above, trying to decide what to write, I say to myself "How awesome is the God we serve." Not that long ago I was in a job that I could not stand and now here I am, after only being on the job for a little over a month, travelling with my team to be trained on the new system being implemented over the next two years. I thank God everyday for his continued blessing. I never would have thought when I was going thru the storm that I would be here now but I guess that is a testimony for another day.

I want to thank God for allowing us all to make thru those sweltering days in July unharmed. Congratulations again to Pastor and people for 17 years of service. What a wonderful time we had celebrating with Pastor Bennett and his family at "A Night with the Bennetts". Then we returned on Sunday to be blessed by Minister Eli Wilson's praise and worship and Pastor TJ Thomas' powerful word. The following week we celebrated the Missionary Society with our Annual Prayer Breakfast. Missionaries from all over Connecticut came to celebrate with us as we were encouraged and inspired by the preaching of our own Rev. Velva Jean Tucker and the praise and worship of Evangelist Beatrice Somerville. We ended the month off with our Annual Seniors Cookout where a good time was had by all.

As we get ready for our Annual Friends and Family Day Church Outing on August 28th I pray that people will find it in their hearts to volunteer to help out and/or donate items to help make that day as great as possible. I look forward to seeing you all on that day and as you already know I will have my camera so be ready.

Be blessed,

Tonya N. Johnson – Managing Editor

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Forgiveness

by Michelle Porchia

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" (22) Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."

Often people hold on to words that were said to them, actions that were taken against them, and events that took place longer than they need to. Sometimes people hold on to things so long, if you ask them why they are angry at someone or why they are not talking to someone, they don't even remember what caused the break, anger, etc.

We hold on to things and don't forgive people to our demise. We are not forgiving the person and the person has gone on with their life. Meanwhile, we are carrying around this burden and we are the ones suffering...not the other person. It uses up our energy and places a load on us. What a waste! We can use that energy to do more positive things.



Michelle Porchia

I was reading in the "Daily Word" this month, they broke it down in really simple terms.

"I would not consider carrying a heavy backpack filled with things I don't need and can't use. Neither do I choose to carry the heavy load of anger or resentment about something I or someone else has said or done.

Forgiveness is possible when I act from the spirit of God within me. If it is suitable, I may speak to someone directly or write a note, giving us both a chance to renew our relationship. If the other person isn't willing, my willingness brings me immediate relief.

If for some reason contact is not appropriate or safe, I forgive quietly in my heart. God's spirit within me is greater than any disagreement. My heart is softened and my burden is relieved through the power of forgiveness"

If you are carrying around an unnecessary load because you have not forgiven someone and if you are not able to talk to the person, go into a quiet place, pray and then let it go.

Let it go and if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.--John 20:23

WHAT'S NEXT?

Important Dates

Sisters at the Well Book Club

Next meeting will be held the second Tuesday of the month. We will gather in the Narthex at 6:30 pm

Spiritual Gifts

What are Spiritual Gifts?

Spiritual Gifts are special abilities given by the Holy Spirit and distributed to every believer according to God's design and grace for the common good of the body of Christ.

Why does Mount Aery use Spiritual Gifts?

- They are for the building of the Body of Christ.
- They show us as individuals how we can make our unique contribution to the body of Christ.
- They reveal a part of God's will for our lives.
- They confirm that every believer has a place of service; gifts are given for power and purpose in our ministry.

How does the Spiritual Gifts process work? (Romans 12:4-8 NIV)

The process works by getting a basic understanding of what the gifts are and appreciating how the Lord intended for them to be used. Then by taking a series of assessments, which will help identify the gifts within you.

Classes will be offered on the following dates:

Session One

Monday, August 8, 2011 at 7 pm
Monday, September 12, 2011 at 7 pm
Monday, October 10, 2011 at 7 pm
Monday, November 14, 2011 at 7 pm
Monday, December 12, 2011 at 7 pm

Session Two

Saturday, August 27, 2011 at 1:30 pm
Saturday, September 24, 2011 at 1:30 pm
Saturday, October 22, 2011 at 1:30 pm
Saturday, November 26, 2011 at 1:30 pm

Inspirational Cruise is being held on August 13th, 2011 by the MABC Missionary Ministry. All are invited to a two-hour harbor cruise including an all you can eat buffet and live gospel performances. For more information please contact Sis. Dorcas White at (203)372-7199 or Sis. Audrey Barr at (203)374-1278.

Annual Friends and Family Day Church Outing. August 28th at Beardsley Park. Worship will begin at 9:30am at the church and we will go to Beardsley Park for the Church Outing.

- Donations are needed: cups, assorted plates, spoons, forks, napkins, water, aluminum pans, etc. The church office is open Tuesday through Friday, 9a – 5p. If the building is open and the office isn't, packages may be left outside the office.

Only a few more weeks of summer left. Are you or someone you know between the ages of 14 and 17? If so, you can participate in a **Summer Environmental Institute** that will take place here at Mount Aery on Friday afternoons beginning Friday, August 12th. The institute will conclude with a trip to the United Nations in September. You can sign up after service. See Min. Michelle Lewis, our Yale Intern with any questions.

Pastor's Engagements

September

11th at 4pm

Good News Missionary Baptist Church, Bridgeport

Ministry Spotlight



Sisters At The Well Book Club

by Tonya Johnson

The Sisters at the Well Book Club is a smaller ministry that derived from the Sisters at the Well with the intention of focusing on reading books that would uplift and inspire women. Over the time that the book club has been in existence it has grown to include members who are not disciples of Mount Aery but enjoy reading and the fellowship of the sisters. I took the time to interview some of the ladies in the book club; here is what they had to say:

Tonya: Good afternoon Ladies. This will be brief I don't want to take your whole Saturday. Can you recall what motivated you to join the book club?

Shelley: I am not a member of Mount Aery Church but I decided to become a member of the book club because I wanted to be committed to something. I used to read all the time as a child then I stopped reading when I started working and getting involved in other things. Being in the book club has been a very good experience. We have read a lot of history stuff; African-American experiences that I feel you don't even learn in school. There is a big part of our history that is not covered in school but thru reading with the book club we are tapping into that. There was one book we read "The Warmth of the Sun" that was excellent and then "The Help" is going to be a movie so all of this is really good stuff and I am glad I became a member because it keeps me committed and I get to hang out with my sisters as well.

Margarite Gilbert: I joined the book club because it is a way of connecting with other women and fellowship together because we don't meet very often after church. In the book club, coming together to discuss the books is a very appropriate way of meeting and building a good relationship with other sisters.

Rev. Chyron Kearney: I joined the book club because I had stopped reading. I was an avid reader and joining got me back into reading. A lot of the time people think that all you can read as a Christian are bible-based books not realizing that there are other books out there that can enlighten you because most books have something to do with God or the world or other people. I too enjoy the fellowship with the other sisters, the fact that we can get together and laugh and talk and discuss the different topics of the books we've read. Most of them have been excellent books and I have also learned from them

Tonya: I didn't realize that you read books that are not necessarily bible-based books.

Rev. Kearney: As a matter of fact most of them were not bible-based. The only one that may have been bible-based was "The Shack" which I didn't really care for because it was too busy.

Margarite: Some of the books also remind us of the life we live because some of us live these stories for instance, "The Help" I live that story. I can see myself in a lot of this story. I could really relate to the characters because I lived it, every part of it. These reading bring you back to that time when you were in that situation.

Fran: As facilitator of the book club and originating from Sisters at the Well, it was supposed to be a spinoff from Sisters at the Well. The book club had been attempted before but the timeframe of when Sisters at the Well meet does not allow for book discussions every month. From my perspective and the perspective of many others Sisters at the Well is seen as an umbrella ministry that other ministries and groups would develop from. Sisters at the Well, of course, cannot accommodate all of the women of the church or the interest of the women at the church so we were hoping that this would be the beginning of the expansion of the Sisters at the Well under several different types of interest. At Mount Aery we all agree, including Pastor, that there are a plethora of different venues here where you can come and learn about the Bible, about history, and about our culture from biblical times on up. There are a lot of different ways adults and children can access different ways adults and children can access different literature but we didn't have a way for people to come together and read about our culture which this church heavily emphasizes. Pastor really wanted us to get in touch with readings that highlighted women with strength and courage that came through struggles and highlighted our history and brought out aspects of how we used to live and how we live now, similar to the MAAFA.

After the first couple of books Pastor began to trust us. Minister Cooper gave us a little guidance in the beginning and then let us go once she knew the format looked good and we were on the right track. She made sure that the books we were choosing were in line with the philosophy of the church and Pastor's vision of what he would like his parishioners to expose themselves to in terms of literature. Reading by yourself in solitary is so much different from reading and then coming together as a group for a discussion. I think we have formed a bond that we would not have had the opportunity to form otherwise. The book club, being a small entity, has grown and we have gotten to know one another and really developed a trust

Ministry Spotlight - Sisters at the Well Book Club continues

and understanding of who we are, some of where we come from, our struggles to how we have become the women we are today and it continues to do so as we expand upon the book club. As you know we have experienced other activities in connection with the book club like going to see the movie *Colored Girls* and going to see the author of “*The Help*” in Stamford for the upcoming movie next week. We also have the flexibility of meeting outside of the church so as we continue to grow and expand I’m sure that there will be more opportunity to do other things that have to do with the readings and the subject matter that the readings bring forth.

The sisters of the book club recently read the book “*The Help*” by Kathryn Stockett. Everyone seemed to really enjoy the book as they were able to relate to the story and the characters. Here is what they had to say:

Rev. Kearney

“*The Help*” brought back memories because I lived this life in the late 50’s and early 60’s. I started working when I was 14 years old in homes of Caucasian people where I had to enter the home through the back door. Even as a young girl, I hated it because it made me feel less than human. Just like Abilene, one of the main characters in the book, while working in one room and the families in another room talking as though we were not present in the house calling our people niggers and other names even though we were within ears reach. I walked off of a domestic job because of this situation.

Sometimes it was intimidating to be around white people because they had a way of making you feel insecure. I listened to my parents telling me to always be careful because they could accuse me of doing something wrong even though I would be innocent. After work, we would leave their beautiful homes and go back to our neighborhoods. It would be so different; there was life and warmth. Everyone knew each other and helped each other out but whenever a white person came into the neighborhood, we became quiet and not ourselves. I had a complex because of the different situations I saw and sometimes was involved in for example one day my mother took me to buy a hotdog and we had to go around to the back where the trash was to buy the hotdog. We would sometimes go to my grandmother’s house in the country and we rode the bus. We entered in the front door and paid the same price the white people paid but we had to go to the back of the bus. There was an invisible line that existed and you knew where to sit.

Integration in our city, Anderson, South Carolina came in 1964 and I attended an all white school to show that I could do the work that the white children could do even though they had encyclopedias in their homes and I did not. I did the work and

was praised for it by the teachers but in the 12th grade I returned to my high school, my choice, because I wanted to graduate with my peers and really have good memories.

Today, I do not have that complex but it is hard for me to really trust any Caucasian even though I know there are people with high integrity in all races and people without integrity in all races.

Margarite Gilbert

I lived the life of the characters in “*The Help*”. There are a lot of similarities between what I have been thru and what was in the book. In St. Lucia the pay was much less for a lot of work, for example I made \$5 a month and was expected to make everything perfect. Realistically it was one step away from slavery. We could not use their facilities we had to go out back, their dishes or utensils were off limits to us. We could not eat until the whites were done and we had to go outside and would eat their leftovers. Their laundry had to be washed by hand. I remember my mom’s hands would bleed; it would hurt to see her in so much pain. Very seldom could we, the children, assist my mom because the whites would think we were going to steal. They would not even allow us in their houses.

I came to the US in 1982, after doing housecleaning for a short time I decided I would only care for children. A few of them I developed close relationships with, others would only address me to give me orders. One family welcomed me to be a part of their family, I was allowed to sleep on their beds, and they treated me very well.

The bond between one of the main characters of “*The Help*”, Abileen and Maylee reminds me of the bond between one of the children I raised, Rachel, and myself and that really intrigued me. When we went to meet the author I didn’t have a good feeling about her. I believe she did not tell us the truth about her sources because she had too much info about our culture that I don’t feel she would have known. She was also very vague and avoided direct responses to my questions during the question and answer period.

Director Tate Taylor and DreamWorks Pictures has taken the book “*The Help*” and turned it into a movie with an all star cast including Cicely Tyson, Viola Davis and Sissy Spacek to name a few. The movie will be in theaters starting Wednesday, August 10, 2011, check your local listings for theaters and times. The book club members will be getting together to view the movie as a group so if you are interested in joining them or if you have a passion for reading and would like to join the book club please contact Fran Haynes for more information.



Our Youth Speak on the 2011 Conversion Retreat Are You Listening?

by Leslie Davis-Green



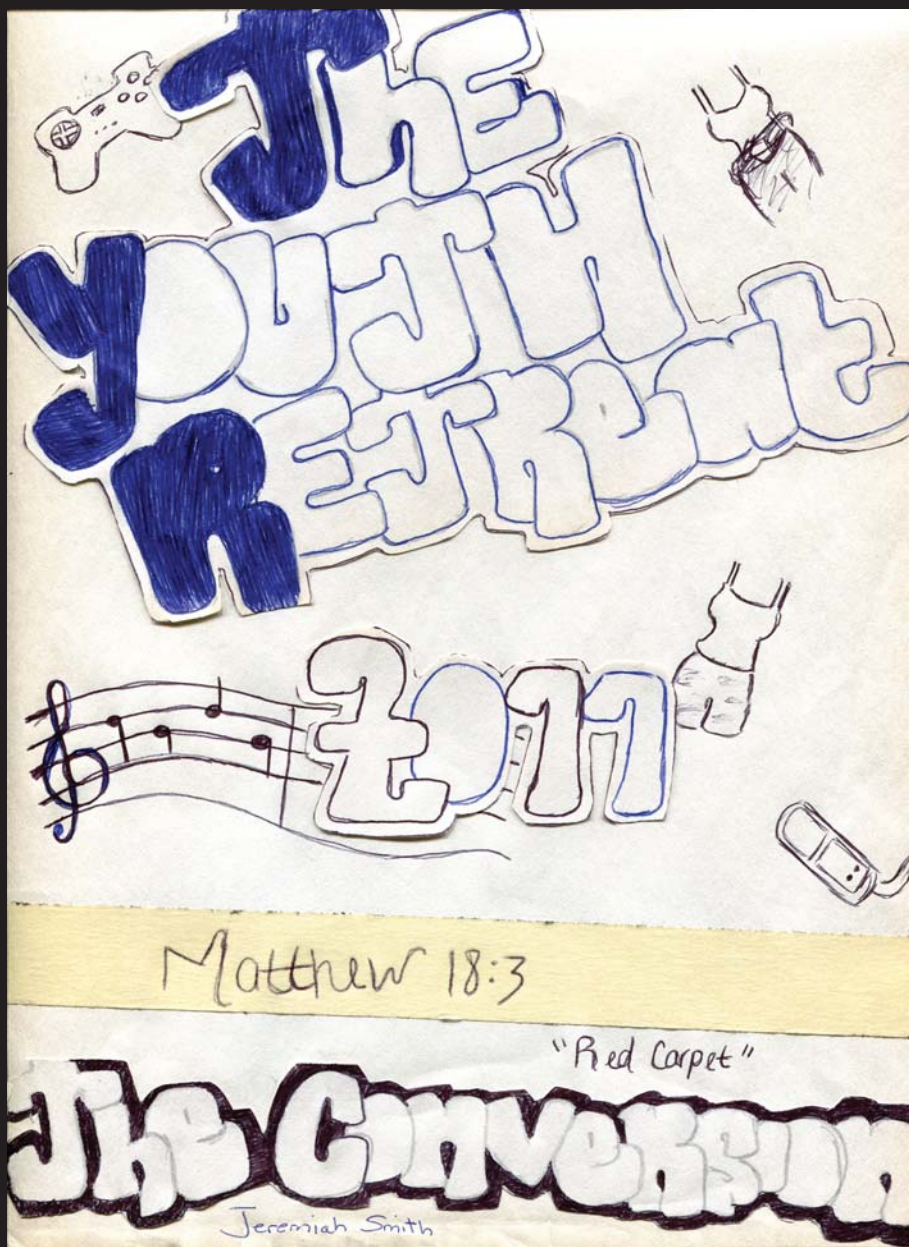
The 2011 youth retreat was a blast! The first night was “Back to Old School.” This was where we discussed the traditions of the church and how they clash with the youth of today. We also learned a little about the history of Mount Aery. I found that very interesting. The second night was “Pajama Jammy Jam.” The theme was “Not Sleeping on Christ” and we expressed this theme by staying up all night long. Personally, this was my favorite theme out of them all, because it was different than what we’ve done at previous youth retreats. The third day of the youth retreat, we had “N.E.R.D. Day” (Never, Ending, Radical Determination). On this day, everyone dressed as nerds and a retired NBA Player for the Milwaukee Bucks, Vin Baker, came and shared his testimony with us. And finally, on the last day of the youth retreat, we had the “Conversion Awards.” Everyone dressed their best and we gave out awards for things like ‘Best PJ’s’ and ‘Best Musician.’ We also had a mini photo shoot and walked down the red carpet that was set up by the wonderful leaders who helped with the youth retreat. Overall, we all had a great time (at least, I know I did) and I appreciate everyone who had anything to do with putting the youth retreat together.

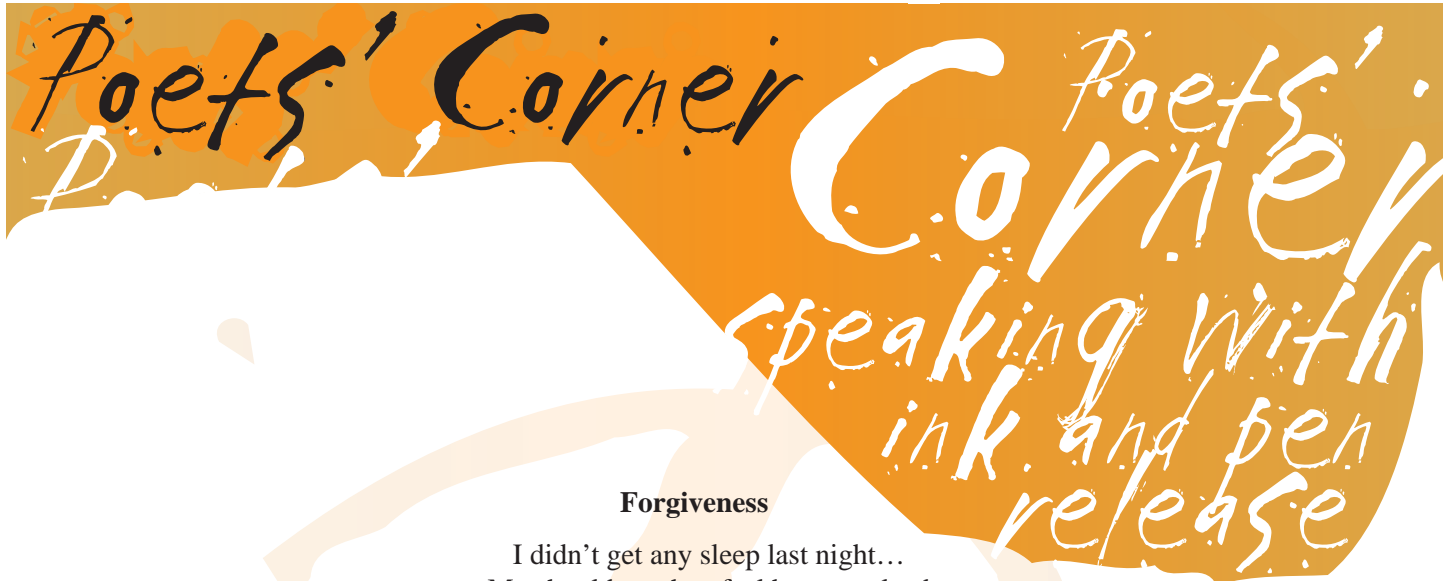
by Fredi Nielsen



This year’s youth retreat, “The Conversion” was once again better than the last. It started out with “Old Skool Night” where they had the homemade tambourines LOL!!! Friday night it was the pajama night and the crazy thing was that we tried to stay up the whole night. Praise GOD that I was able to do it. Until members of the youth choir including myself had to have rehearse at 5am for a service at 6am. Then we had to be back Saturday night for a Nerd Day. People had on some of the nerdiest outfits I’ve ever seen. Then we finished with our Red Carpet event, where everybody had to dress up. To be honest I thought I was attending a prom when I saw everyone. Guys had the nice suits and girls had hair did, nails did, everything did. In all, I had a great time and hope next year is even better.

by D’Andre Haynes





Forgiveness

I didn't get any sleep last night...
My shoulders, they feel heavy as lead
My mind, it's filled with all this red
I ran without you teaching me how to first walk
I welcomed challenges without solutions like diving head first into a pit of trouble
My manhood was what I explored without he whom I would imitate
Years continued as I couldn't get any sleep at night...
My shoulders, they feel heavy as lead
My mind, it's filled with all this red
Why do I awake behind bars
This disconnect between Father and Son
You have made me your prisoner to the world
But to God I look and utter these words under the purity of God's Agape love
May God bless my eyes to see clear
Unclog my ears so you I can hear
Touch my mouth to speak of life & not death, hatred, pain
God strengthen my spirit
Give me a heart that forgives
With each word uttered blessings & peace surround me...
Father I know you have never been there for me,
I know you have never helped teach me my ABC's, 123's
Never taught me how to apply deodorant or cologne
Never showed me how to treat a woman
Never showed me how to love God
Never showed me how to clear hurdles which come with life
Never allowed me to look up to you...
Even through this Father I forgive you
Even though you stand far yet appear closer to me than my own skin
I forgive you Father
It's not about me anymore, my son needs to know his Grandfather like I knew mine (R.I.P. Grandpa)
I forgive you Father because
My Son will not have to forgive his Father for the emptiness
Forgiveness doesn't come with conditions or expectations...
Forgiveness doesn't cost a thing yet gains eternity
Father I forgive self and since I am a reflection of you, I forgive you
Now...I'm free & so is my son

~Malék Simpson

generalNEWS

Meeting MLJ by Tonya Johnson

Meeting my birth father for the first time was a very interesting and scary experience. I say scary because I didn't know how he would react to me reaching out to him. Growing up, I always knew that my father that raised us was not my biological father but I love him dearly so he was always "DaddyPop" to me. For many years I was angry at my birth father for walking away and not looking back after him and my mom divorced then one night I couldn't sleep so I ended up watching an episode of TrueLife on MTV. This episode was entitled "I'm Looking for my Father" involving 3 young people searching for their fathers in some cases despite their families objections. One of the stories really spoke to me; it involved a girl name Jamie who was bi-racial and looking for her African-American father. Jamie and her mom searched online to find her father and they came up with a phone number that was thought to be his number but when Jamie called it wasn't her father who answered. Days go by and they continued to search until Jamie's mom got information that Jamie's father had died when she was 11 years old. Needless to say Jamie was devastated at hearing this news but her mom continued to search for more information and found family members of the deceased father including his son, Jamie's brother. After seeing this story I really began to think about my own situation and how I would hate for something to happen to this man and I never met him. The next day I spoke to a friend of mine about the episode I had seen and my thoughts about finding my father. He began to ask me questions about him and why I didn't speak to my mother or sister about getting in touch with him since they knew how to reach him. I explained to him that I didn't want to talk to them for 2 reasons, I wasn't completely sure I wanted to pursue finding him yet and I didn't want anyone to deter me from this search because of their feelings about him. As I was explaining this to him he was interjecting with questions like what was his full name, if I knew where he may live, his approximate age, etc. I was so busy talking that I wasn't really thinking about what he was asking me but I did answer him. Finally he said "Ok, his address is ... and his phone number is ..." I was in shock. It turns out that while I was talking he was searching for my father on the internet.

After that day it took about a week or so before I worked up the courage to call my father but when I called he didn't answer so I left a message stating my name and number and asking him to call me when he had a moment. He called me the following day as I was about to get on the train in Stamford after work. I wanted to talk to him but I also did not want to miss my train so I asked if I could call him back and he agreed. After working myself up again and preparing for the worse, I finally called him back. When he answered the phone I gave him my name and said "I am your daughter" after a long pause he said "I thought this day would never come." Of course I was a little confused by this statement so I asked what he meant by that. He began to tell me that he had spoken to my sister in the past about meeting me but my sister explained to him that I was very angry at



him and she didn't think it was a good idea so he was glad that I had gotten over being angry. I explained to him that I could not honestly say I was not angry anymore but I wanted the opportunity to get to know him. He said he understood and was happy either way. He asked about various family members from my grandparents to my aunts and uncles to my parents then he said "Tell me about you, who have you grown up to be and what made you move to Connecticut?" I began to explain "I am a programmer analyst by trade; I went to Baruch College in Manhattan for my bachelors and Sacred Heart University in Connecticut for my masters. I currently work for WWE but I also have 2 side businesses one selling health and wellness products and the other selling African-American art. I moved to Connecticut for work because the commute from Queens was too much." He began to ask me more about my art business because as it turns out he is an artist and he wanted to invite me to a showing he had coming up. I asked him to let me know the details as the date came closer and I would do my best to be there. We talked for a couple of hours about different things we joyfully cried together over how great this could turn out. Over the next week we talked a couple of times mostly about my showing up to the art gallery. I had spoken to my friend who helped me through this process and asked him if he

would accompany me to New York for the art show and he agreed.

On February 17, 2008 we headed to Long Island for the art show, the whole way there we were cracking jokes and acting up as we usually did when we were together but the closer we came to the gallery the more nervous I became and he noticed it. He joked that we were going to get busted by my mom because the gallery was actually not too far from her house. When we walked in the greeter asked us to sign the book so I signed in first then began scanning the room looking at the people. When I spotted MLJ (my father) I grabbed my friend's arm and whispered "There he is, I don't know about this." He said "You did not bring me all the way down here to not even talk to the man...Stop it! I got you, it will be fine." Minutes later I was face to face with MLJ and he looked right at me and said "You look just like your mom...beautiful". Meanwhile I was still holding on to my friend's arm for dear life until he pulled my fingers off of him and kind of nudged me into hugging MLJ. I introduced him to my friend and we walked around the gallery talking. He explained some of the pieces to us and introduced us to some of the people there including a cousin of mine that was there to support him in the show. We stayed to hear the presentation regarding the exhibit and the history of the Weusi Artist Collective of which he is a member. On the way home I was still kind of in the daze, I couldn't believe that after all this time I had finally met him. From just that meeting I could already answer some of the questions I had as a child like how come I am the only one of my mother's children with gaps between my teeth and where did I get my interest and love for African-American history and art. I always knew he was an artist but I didn't realize that he was actually involved in the history of bringing African-American art to the forefront. All in all it was a good meeting and I was happy that I went.

Over the next couple of months we talked on the phone at least once a week and we went out a couple of times, he even surprised me one day by showing up at my house. I didn't really get all of my questions answered but I am happy that I am now building a relationship with him and I love it that he understood when I told him "No matter what happens here I love my stepfather with all my heart and he will always be DaddyPop. I want to build something with you but I need you to understand that relationship will never end." I didn't tell my mother or stepfather until months later, I was prepared for my mother to flip out so it wasn't really a problem to tell her because I thought I knew what her reaction would be but I was wrong. She was actually cool about it but she made it very clear that she wanted no contact with him and I respect that (like I have a choice...lol). Telling my stepfather was a little more difficult for me because we are so close and I am his baby girl (his words). We went out to lunch, our usual father/daughter once a month date at the time, and I told him while we were waiting for our entrees to come. I was stuttering and everything because I was so nervous. When I finally got it out he told me that he knew that this day would come and he was proud of me for finally letting go of my anger. He went on to tell me how proud of me he is for the woman I am growing to be and that MLJ should be honored to have me in his life.

Now I speak to MLJ at the very least once a month. We have a good relationship, I can go to him to talk about things and he is willing to listen. The main thing I learned through this whole situation is that holding on to the anger really only hurts you. The other person is going on with their life while you are stuck because you are so focused on being mad. I have let go of the fact that he wasn't there growing up and am learning to just enjoy the time we have now.

generalNEWS

Letting Go of the Past!

by Deacon Fred Nielsen

Then, I just straight out asked him if he would consider developing a relationship with me, and he said, “I am 72 years old, married, and I have three grown children with a few grandchildren. I would not want to upset my wife or change my life at this point.” I took a deep breath and said, “I understand”.

It was Tuesday, April 13, 2010 at approximately 6:00 a.m. and I was on the cruise ship, Norwegian Sky, off the coast of the Cayman Islands. I had awakened to gospel singer, James Fortune, calling everyone aboard to assemble for Morning Prayer. I can't explain it, but I felt compelled to attend. It was during that early morning powerful prayer service, that I first heard gospel artist, Kevin LeVar deliver his song, “A Heart That Forgives.” Little did I know that there was a healing that was headed into my life as a result of this powerful song. It got me to thinking about many things in my life like hurt, family, and in particular, my father.



Then, I just straight out asked him if he would consider developing a relationship with me . . .

In all my dreams, I never thought that I would one day connect with my father. He had always been just some person that was responsible for me being here. I had never set eyes on him. All I had was a photo of a skinny young man in a sailors' uniform surrounded by a few other strangers that I also did not know. All my life, I wondered about my father, like what I might say given an opportunity to speak with him, or what he might say to me. As a child, I would wonder if he missed me, was he looking for me? After a while, I stopped thinking about it, or so I thought. Later in life, when I became a father of two, I sought to provide my children with everything I thought they should have. I understand now why, at times, I over did it. I can hear my wife's voice right now, “You're giving them too much!”

Instead of just taking my son fishing to some nearby lake or pond, I would seek to over compensate by taking the boy deep sea fishing! One of these times, (with both of us experiencing nine foot waves) we got so sick, neither of us wanted to ever go fishing again. Then he expressed an interest in karate (looking back on it, I don't think he ever really expressed an interest, it was probably me the whole time). I took him and his sister to one of the top karate schools in the area. It took some time, but I finally realized he hated karate...and I also realized that these were things from my childhood that I longed for, that I wanted to do with my father.

Back to my story...about this time, I decided I would attempt to find my father. After some computerized sourcing efforts and through the miracle of modern technology, I found him. He had the right name, birth date, and was living in Florida. I was even able to come up with a telephone number. I secured that telephone number in my wallet and walked around with it for quite some time, every so often taking it out, looking at it and placing it back in my wallet. Until one day, I was sitting in my kitchen alone. Father's Day was approaching and I had this overwhelming urge to connect with my father. All of the conditions were perfect. My wife and daughter were out at a church function and would be gone for awhile. My son, Caleb was upstairs out of earshot on another floor of our home playing video games with a friend. Now, whenever Caleb is engaged in video games, nothing else can penetrate his hearing, so I knew he would be completely occupied and this was the best time to call.

As I dialed the ten digit number, my heart began to race. I began to chicken-out and I hoped for an answering machine or wrong number or some other outcome because I wasn't quite sure if I wanted to make this call and speak to this mysterious person at this time. Then, what I will describe as a mature, smooth voice of a man answered saying, "Hello"....I paused, took a deep breath. In a whispering voice I said, "Sir, my name is Frederick J. Nielsen Jr. and I am looking for my father (I gave him my father's full name and date of birth). I have my parents' marriage certificate and my father would have married my mom (I gave him her maiden name and date of birth) in October of 1958, and I was conceived shortly thereafter. My birth date is June of 1959." The voice stopped me and said "...Son...I was married to your mother and believe I that am your father" (all at once my heart stopped)...He went on to say, "When you were born, your mother brought you to me at the Naval base where I was stationed and we had a blow up. After that, your mother and I divorced and I lost touch with you both." Then, I just straight out asked him if he would consider developing a relationship with me, and he said, "I am 72 years old, married, and I have three grown children with a few grandchildren. I would not want to upset my wife or change my life at this point." I took a deep breath and said, "I understand". "It is not my intention to disturb your life in any way...It's just that I have often wondered what I would say to you if I had the chance to speak to you, and I would like to tell you a few things about the man that I have become."

I said, "I am 50 years old and I have never been to jail. I am married to a lovely, saved woman of God, and I have been blessed with two children that are true gifts from heaven." I told him that I thank God for them every day and I could not imagine what it would be like to be away from them for even one day, and I do my very best for them each and every day. With that, I said, "if you would ever like to have another conversation with me, here is my telephone number and I would welcome that." We said goodbye and I hung up from the call with my hands trembling. And all at once, I let out a deep breath of air....

At that moment, I felt as though someone was in the room with me, so I turned around and my son, Caleb was standing directly behind me. He looked at me and asked, "Are you alright?" I said yeaaaah? In a questioning manner, because I was wondering what he was doing downstairs...so I asked, "What's wrong with the game son? Is it Quentin's turn?" He said, "No, I stopped playing because I felt like you needed me.....and when I got down stairs I heard part of your call; was that your father?" I said, "Yes son, it was." Caleb said, "I just want to tell you something. I think that you are the most awesome father in the world

and it's his loss if he does not want to be a part of your life. I love you Dad." Then he squeezed and hugged me real tight. It was the best hug I had in years, and I felt like the loneliness had fallen off me. He asked me again, "Are you alright?" And I said, "Never better Caleb, never better."

At that very moment, God had revealed to me through my son, that my Father was in Heaven and that I was more than okay, I was extremely blessed. By not having my biological father in my life, God saw fit to let me experience the father/child relationship from the perspective of a father rather than a child. As a result, I have been at every game, every recital, and every play. I have been there to cheer and to encourage or sometimes just to listen. And at night, to tuck them in, to pray for them and to kiss them goodnight. Thank you Father, for you are amazing to me and my family and we are truly Blessed.

Forgive or Forget?: The Power of Healing in Forgiveness As Told By Veronica Douglas-Givan

by Dannieka Wiggins, Spelman College Student & Former MAAFA cast member

Anger begets anger, that's all I could think to myself a couple of weeks ago as I sat in my dorm room at Spelman College in Atlanta Georgia, fighting the animosity inside. I was angry at so many people in my life that I felt abandoned me, lied to me, and cheated me. I always hear people say forgive and forget, but as I flash back to all the times others hurt me and think about how that affects me emotionally it's difficult not to hold grudges. I've begun to realize how much the shadows of the past cover the brightness of a future unless you forgive. Although I had been suppressing my resentment toward others in an awful attempt to sweep it under the rug, this particular night I received a phone call that was bound to change that drastically.

My mentor and close family friend, **Veronica Douglas-Givan** called me to talk about forgiveness in her life. She is known for her persistent involvement with the youth in the New Haven community and throughout the state, her former leadership role as a journalist advocating for children in state-care through her Wednesday's Child Report seen weekly on WTNH-News Channel 8, and for giving a voice to the voiceless through her lifelong career as a television producer and most recently for her work as Director of Communications and External Affairs charged to enhance the image of Bridgeport Public Schools and their scholars. However, I've always known her to be more than her achievements- an auntie and an irreplaceable role-model. I've witnessed her growth in her career as a journalist and public relations specialist first hand and have admired her as my childhood hero. So when she asked me if I'd assist her in sharing her journey in forgiving her biological father, who she didn't have a relationship with for most of her life, I was honored. Yet, I was unaware of how her testimony was going to shake my perspective on forgiveness and

motivate me to forgive those in my life I've held grudges against. Her testimony was compelling, practical, and relatable. Here is a recap of the conversation that charged me to get healing through the power of forgiveness.

Dannieka Wiggins: What does it mean to genuinely forgive someone? What does that look like?

Veronica Douglas-Givan: Dannieka, before I answer your question and share let me give you an important footnote to my journey. I was and I am so tremendously blessed. Although, my bio-logical father (John) abandoned me at birth and then came in and out of my life every 5 to ten years, I am thankful to God for all that he has done in my life. I had a daddy. A wonderful father who raised me, gave me his name, help to put me through school and I was truly daddy's little girl. I never want to share this story and forget the man who stepped in when my bio-logical father stepped out. I am grateful for my "God-sent" daddy (Jesse). I don't want the doom and gloom of my past to get lost. The truth of the matter is, even though I had a wonderful father in my life since I was a very little girl, I still yearned for the time and attention of my bio-logical father. I still wanted him to want me. Through my journey of forgiveness I realized I needed more and it was ok to need and want more, even though I lived in a two-parent household with a daddy and mommy who LOVED with their whole hearts, I still wanted the love and nurturing from the father who helped in giving me life. However, every chance I get I salute my daddy, Jesse and all the real fathers, real men who stepped in when the father stepped out.

Veronica Douglas-Givan: Back to your question. What does it mean to genuinely forgive someone? What does that look

like? I realized through this journey and I share this with children that it is ok to want more and to say you hurt me and because of that I have issues with trust, abandonment, etc. I had to acknowledge this and see how I grew from my experiences before forgiveness could take place. I had to confirm and acknowledge it for me. It also had to be a genuine look at taking off some layers of pain, shame and guilt and truly allowing myself to open up to myself first and then to others. I had to then reveal to myself the fact that I was in pain and then to say to myself now I'm ready to heal...now I'm ready to forgive so that was a very very daunting process and one that revealed a lot about myself, a lot about my family and a lot about my faith.

Dannieka Wiggins: How does forgiveness reflect your faith and religious beliefs?

Veronica Douglas-Givan:

"Because of HIS strips I am healed and because I could forgive I took power of the situation and I am healed to be a blessing to others still hurting. I'm a Christian. I got saved when I was a teenager in high school at Immanuel Baptist Church in New Haven (under the leadership of the late Dr. Curtis M. Cofield) and although I knew the word....was constantly growing and learning the word and walked around with a smile painted on my face every day, I was angry, hating a man who helped to give me life..."

Years ago I would verbally say every chance I had the opportunity "I hate this mother f----- so how then can I speak to young people in my motivational speaking and claim to be a Christian and harbor all



of that hate?" Then I realized that it was not only hate but it was real pain, shame and guilt but through my healing and forgiveness I realized I had nothing to be shameful or guilty about. The shame came from the fact that I was the youngest of 4 children and I have a different father than my siblings. I didn't want anybody to know (especially at church or in school) that the man they saw me with every day was not my biological father, so when I forgave I had to open up-I had to share parts of me that I'd never shared before, so there was a lot of grieving. You know my husband said to me one day when he knew that I was about to share publicly that I had to trust somebody as I went through this because as I started to open up more stuff would come out. So I had to trust a few folks in this process. I could not do this one alone. I promised God that once I got through it I would share because I know that there's a lot of young people and adults that have come to me since I've been traveling throughout the region sharing this process who have the same kind of pain or much worst. Pastor Bennett's teaching and conversations have taught me that I did not go through all of this just for me. There's a larger calling on my life and already people have been blessed and changed by me sharing my story. To God Be the Glory!

Dannieka Wiggins: What would you say to a person that thinks they can live without forgiving?

Veronica Douglas-Givan:

"You can do two things in your life-you can continue to mask your pain or you can turn your pain into passion..."

And, God decided that I needed to release it so I can turn my pain into passion. That's my gift. So for me holding it in for 30 plus years I was getting to the point where I just felt like I was going to blow up. It wasn't

until that Mount Aery's MAAFA Influence Production in 2004 that I still share so profoundly like it was yesterday. I was standing behind the stage taking notes from a rehearsal to share with media outlets when I heard the children of Mount Aery (cast) saying, "tell me your story", "tell me your story" over and over again as I stood behind the scenes with my clipboard in my hand being Ms. PR I heard them saying over and over again "tell me your story, tell me your story, I know I look at you like I don't care, I know I look at you with a blank stare, I know I may not remember everything you say but tell me, tell me your story your story anyway". And, in between this dialogue the senior saints of Mount Aery (cast) were chanting "please listen I have a story to tell you." Don't sit next to me during this part of the production, because I still lose it every time. (tears, tears, laughter)

When the tears began to roll down my face and I tried to wipe them away but they wouldn't stop it was like a river flowing heavy. It was at that point I realized there was a huge part of my story that I didn't know and as a journalist I tell everyone else's story but there's a part of my story/history that I didn't know and I didn't like that. I felt like I couldn't do it anymore. I needed to figure out why I was feeling this way. I discovered it during the production and then months later, I had to act on it while sitting in the doctor's office- and this is a story that I know I shared with you but that I want to share with others as well. I received a fellowship to get my masters degree in Journalism at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, CT., but before I could go through the I had to take a physical examination. So I went to the doctors and they gave me the form to fill out. All my life I would always write down on the health profile, my mother's diabetic and some of her ailments and when it came to write down my father's information I'd write down-"my God sent daddy, Jesse Douglas"

health status, prostate cancer, high blood pressure.

"It wasn't until I could hear the kids (MAAFA cast members) saying in my ear, "tell me your story", and the elders would say "I gotta story to tell you" that I said oh my gosh I don't know my story."

I sat there and I got ready to write my father's information down and that's when I started crying with the same heavy flow of tears. I realized that all my life since I could read and write-since I could understand I'd been lying because the father whose health status I had been sharing with my doctors was not of my biological father. I discovered that as much as my daddy loved and cared for me, his DNA wasn't a part of my make-up...I said I can't do this because I don't know who I am...The doctor looked puzzled and was wondering why I was losing it in her office (laughter) but, this is when I decided to find John, my father, and forgive him. He lived in Connecticut most of his life but, through my uncle (his brother) I found out he had moved to Atlanta. Ironically, I was going there weeks later for a conference for black journalists and I had planned to see him. I was going there to forgive him face to face. I didn't want to do it over the phone, I didn't want to send him an email, I didn't want to do it through family members. I wanted to forgive my father and ask him why he couldn't be there for me.



Veronica and her 'God sent' father, Jesse Douglas



Veronica and her biological father, John Hunter.

Dannieka Wiggins: What made you want to stop pretending Jesse Douglas was your biological father and get past that hurt of not forgiving?

Veronica Douglas-Givan: Let me say I wasn't pretending. Jesse was the only father I had ever known and he loved me tremendously and poured so much into me. The shame and guilt of having a different father than my brothers in my eyes back then would say something negative about my mother in the church and in school. Back then it was about the perception of others. My mother is a wonderful woman, who was just beginning her fight with Alzheimer's disease a few years ago when I shared with her my plans to forgive John. My mother was very happy and she said to me, "this is about you." Now, I know what she meant. Also, as I grew in the ministry at Mt. Aery I learned that this forgiveness piece, at the end of the day, wasn't about my father it was about my healing. I learned that through the ministry at Mt. Aery and I learned that through maturity and through growth that if I was going to move to another level in my life then I needed to go get my healing and again it was so, so profound. I'm gonna give you another example that showed me that it wasn't about my father-that it was about me and what I needed. When I went to Atlanta to forgive him I was also going to Atlanta for the National Association of Black Journalists Conference. I was going for work so I figured okay, I'm going to forgive my father, visit some friends, shop, plus I had tickets to the TD Jakes conference. I figured I am going to forgive him and then have a great time. That was my plan. God had other plans for me. I never made it to the see my friends, shopping or the TD Jakes conference. I was sent to Atlanta to forgive my father...that was it. After I forgave him I had to rush back on the next flight. My mother had been rushed to the hospital. My God, just sharing this, I am reliving some of it now.

Dannieka Wiggins: What happened as you were waiting to talk to your father?

I was sitting in my hotel room and I must've picked up the phone about four or five times before I actually dialed his number. I always knew where John was because I had a wonderful uncle, his brother, who kept us connected. He would let me know what he was doing and let him know about my accomplishments. I called information and John was listed, I called and said hello and told him I was in town staying at the Hilton downtown Atlanta. First he was like who is this and I said "Uh, this is Veronica, your daughter." I said "Listen I'm staying at the Hilton downtown Atlanta and I really need to talk to you and I'm only going to be here for a couple of days, Can we get together?" He said "When you want to get together." "How about tonight?", I said. "Alright, alright, I'll be down there" he said. I sat there and I waited and I said to a friend of mine "I'm going to call you when I get ready to go downstairs to meet John because I want you to walk down stairs and be a part of my testimony. I want you to meet my father." She chuckled and said "Your father? I thought your father was dead". I said "Jesse wasn't my biological father." That talks about how I had to let go of some shame and some guilt. So as I sat there I was just kind of talking to myself about what I wanted to share and what I wanted to say.

He called and said "Listen Veronica, can you come downstairs and talk to me in the lobby because I don't want to pay 20 dollars to park my car".

"What! I'm not worth 20 dollars"

I was like alright alright and I called him all kinds of names, every name you could think of and I shouted and I screamed, I am not worth 20 dollars!!!! All I could think about was that little girl who wanted him to come to see me and stay in my life and now as an adult I'm standing here telling you I need to see you and you don't want to pay 20 dollars to park your f____ car and I went off. Yes, I am a Christian and yes, I cursed. I just lost it. I called the church

office and Ramona put me in touch with Pastor. He and Donna were together and they prayed with me and told me this wasn't about my father it was about me getting the healing I wanted and deserved. Our wonderful spiritual leaders reminded me that I was doing alright for myself and that I made it! They continued to say, "You're not making it, you made it, SO you go down stairs and pay the parking for him and go get your healing. This is not about him. It's about you," they said. So I shook it off, washed my face, reapplied my make-up and went downstairs, I walked downstairs with my girlfriend, who is 10 years younger than I, and I could tell he didn't know Erica from me. He looked at her, he looked at me, he looked at her, he looked at me and I whispered to her, he doesn't even know who I am. He thinks you are me, he could at least do the math, you know what I mean?" I said with anger and laughter in my voice. It wasn't until I extended my hand and he was like, "Oh hey baby how you doing?" Erica whispered to me when she took a look at my dad and saw similar features, "yea boy, yea that's your daddy, wow, he's sharp!"

We went to a soul food restaurant downtown ATL to talk but I am thankful because, what if I had said I'm not going downstairs what if I had said forget him, he can't pay for parking forget that bastard? I would still be harboring that pain I still wouldn't have the healing that I needed and truth be told now that I think about it I wish I had done it earlier in my life.

Dannieka Wiggins: Do you think forgiveness can be attained without God?

Veronica Douglas-Givan:

"Well I don't know what people who live without God do. I gotta be honest with you I don't know about atheists and folks who don't believe but as a believer in Christ I can't do anything without Him, more so now, as a wife and a

mother. The more I grow...the more I yearn for his touch."

So as I grew stronger in my faith God knew it was time for me to do that. I know for me that there'd be no way that I could sit there in a soul food restaurant and look him in his eye after saying all my life, 30 plus years, that I hated him. I looked at him and said "You know what I got to be honest with you, all my life all I did was say how much I hated you but I'm a Christian and I have been for a long time and I shared with him, I'm a part of this production called the MAAFA which has really changed my life and in it, it taught me that I really needed to know my story. There are things about you I want to know. I came down here for three reasons one because of the conference, two because there's some things about you that I want to know and I need to know that's going to help me learn more about me and three, most importantly John, I need you to know that I forgive you. I forgive you for not being there for me. I need you to know that although I hated you all my life I don't want to carry that hate anymore. I'm hoping that from this day on we can have some sort of relationship because that little girl needed you in her life and this grown woman still needs you somehow and I don't know how but I would like for us to have a relationship, if you are open to that." With tears in his eyes he said "I'd love that too" and then I said "Can you please tell me why you couldn't be there for me. Just tell me why, why wouldn't you want to be there for me? Why would you visit me every five years, take me to Sears for a portrait and out to lunch and then not show up for another five to ten years?" I said "Please tell me why you couldn't be there." John grabbed my hand and simply said, I don't know.

Dannieka Wiggins: At this moment how were you feeling?

Veronica Douglas-Givan: I felt sorry for him. He missed out on having me in his life. I felt so sorry for him. As we sat there quiet John pulled out a wallet and his

wallet was big and bulky and I was like either this man has got a lot of money or this man got a lot of junk in here, ha, ha, ha. When I tell you that he was a very meticulous man, very sharp dressed from head to toe, I looked at his wallet and was like ...geesh what is this? He pulled out news paper clippings with all my awards and accomplishments. He pulled out a copy of my degree; he pulled out pictures of me in dance school when I used to take tap and jazz. He pulled out things that he had found on the internet and made copies of and they were all closed up in his wallet and he said he had a whole drawer full of things at home. He said, "Although I wasn't there I wanted to be there but I didn't stop learning about you and what you were doing and he said I am proud of you." I immediately got choked up because all my life I wanted John to say, I am proud of you. "I am so proud of you", he said over and over again. I said "Please can you just tell me why you couldn't be there for me why wouldn't you want to be there" and again he shook his head and said "I don't know." So I just stopped asking that and then I started asking him questions about his health and I found out that he was a diabetic and he had high blood pressure and my mother's a diabetic she has high blood pressure so guess what diabetes and high blood pressure run in my blood so I had to start changing some things about my diet and my lifestyle because I don't want to be a diabetic and so far so good, thank God.

Dannieka Wiggins: Sometimes we pretend like something that someone has done to hurt us doesn't bother us anymore, even though they're still holding in bitterness and anger. How do you avoid wanting to forgive someone but still harvesting animosity?

Veronica Douglas-Givan: Well first of all if you're going to play with it, why do it because you're hurting yourself more than anyone else. If you want to walk around like "I'm good, I'm good, I don't need you, I don't need you, I'm good, I don't need nobody." That's pain. That's unresolved

pain so for me true forgiveness meant acknowledging the pain of the past, accepting it. What I had to say to John was I thank you too I got to say thank you because, and I used to say this in a mean way but this time I was able to say it so it wouldn't come across as I was trying to be mean, Jesse Douglas, he raised me and I was daddy's little girl. So for every time that I said I hated you there was a man that hugged me and told me it was alright, that told me he would never let anybody hurt me and that I would always be protected. He took very good care of me. I'm talking from being a little girl, from pictures that I could see. He took care of me. He was daddy. So I had to say thank you because he could've tried to cause some animosity or something but he allowed an awesome man to raise me and that was my 'God Sent Daddy'. I can't say he allowed it but God allowed it and I say to him I just want you to know that he never said anything bad about you. He never put you down but he always used to tell me that one day in your own time you'll forgive him and he was right. I'm one of the fortunate ones; I have someone I could say who loved me. Little girls who are looking for love in all the wrong places, that was not me because I had a daddy. So in that I need to celebrate that, despite all of that pain. Even though I did have one I still wanted this man who I knew was connected by blood, I still wanted to know who he was and have a connection with him.

"So when folks ask me how I could be on TV [Wednesday's Child] week after week and tell all those stories, cause I was that kid".

So I used to dig from that piece that was in me while interviewing children living in state care who were adopted. I knew what they were feeling...abandoned, ashamed, shhhh, I don't want anyone to know. I would tell the children, it's okay to want to be connected, it's okay to want more. It's okay to want to feel complete and I knew I forgave him that day wholeheartedly and I

also knew it when he died, a few weeks before my wedding day. Before he died when he was in a coma in Atlanta and his wife called me and said before we have to say good bye to John I wanted to know if you wanted to come and see him while he's still breathing. I said yes and the next day I flew into Atlanta and I went to visit him and I met my half brother (John Jr.) and half sister (Kimberly) for the first time... I walked into the hospital room and I saw my father and was told he actually had a stroke on his way to work. John was 70 plus years old still working part time and he had a stroke right on the MARTA. The staff found him laying on the cement.

When I walked in his hospital room I looked at him and the first thing I noticed was that this man whose hands were always nicely manicured they were all chipped up, they were all dirty and I grabbed his hand and I kissed his hand. I said "John, this is not how I remember your hands. I know you like to keep them really nice". I just happened to have a manicure set in my pocket book and I set there and I filed his nails down and I cleaned them, pulled by his cuticles and put clear polish on them and they looked really nice and I talked to him. I just wanted to smell him, he always wore nice smelling cologne when I saw him and the smell would linger after he left me. I just wanted to touch his hair. I just wanted to be next to him and it was the most wonderful experience. I said "I'm here and your other children are here too, so if you're tired and you want to go we understand we're all here". He gripped my hand really tight and I held his hands for hours, I didn't want to let go of his hand. I didn't want to stop touching his brow and just being next to him. Then together me and his children left that evening and after we were all gone and John was alone, God called him home..he passed away.

The next day we all went to prepare for his funeral. I was so happy to be a part of the process, happy to have a voice. His children and their mom also asked me to

speak at the funeral, and I was honored. My topic: Forgiveness...A healing journey. I shared my journey through the MAAFA production and some of our teaching at the Mount. After I spoke the Pastor of the church said, "Now, that's the eulogy right there. I don't need to say another word because this young lady has found the true gift of forgiveness that it's about you and your healing first and foremost

"...so if there's people out there you need to forgive. Go get it. Go get your healing".

It was a phenomenal experience because I knew that when I sat him down to have dinner that night that I had forgiven him but I really knew when I was able to articulate it and touch him and not be able to feel like I didn't want to be around him or be close to him. I wanted to really turn back the hands of time and forgive him when I was 5 rather than when I was 35 and again it was a wonderful feeling because I had a few chances to speak with him before then. I even invited him to my wedding but he was too sick to come and he died about two weeks before we got married.

Again if it wasn't for that MAAFA experience I don't know if I would've ever been so open, so vulnerable to finding out who I was and letting go of those layers. I mean, even when I talk about shame and guilt I had to go to my job, I was at Channel 8 and you know I was there for like 17 years and again everyone there that had been there more than 10 years had met my 'god sent daddy'. Many of them went to his funeral. So I had to come back and say, "I need time off to go to my father's funeral" and they were like "What, your father?" Keith Kountz, who's a close friend, was like "Your father? I went to your father's funeral" and I said "No, he wasn't my biological father, he was the father who raised me but my biological father died". He said "Wow, I didn't know". May not have been a big deal for a lot of people but for me it was opening up to the fact that I had a different daddy. I don't want you to

know that because that says something about what, my mother? You don't talk about my mother. What does that say about me? Why do I have a different father?

Dannieka Wiggins: What would you say to someone who wants to forgive but is still hurting and hindered from their healing by suppressed bitterness?

Veronica Douglas-Givan: First, I would tell them to pray, trust and write down their feelings. ...

"...if they're Christian they need to pray about that feeling they're having and ask God to please take it away".

If they're feeling hate, if they're harboring any ill feeling toward them, ask God to take it away. Ask God to remove it in the name of Jesus because that's when the process is going to start because as he removes it he's going to help you figure out how you need to release yourself from this pain. See that's the first thing. Then I would say you're going to start going through a process because again, it was painful. It was painful to know my father was in the same city and he wouldn't call me and then it was painful when he did call and I'd be like slamming the phone down knowing I wanted to talk to him but if he told me he was coming over at 3, didn't show up until 6 or didn't show up at all, I wasn't going to put myself through that again. So to protect my own heart I would just decide early on "you're not doing that to me today". So again it's a process and know that if you need some counseling get it and also don't go to the table with a lot of expectations. It hurt for a while when he said he didn't know why he couldn't be there for me. That's when I wanted something profound to be said. Like why couldn't you be there for me. I wanted him to say something that would make it alright but he couldn't articulate it.

So don't come with an agenda, just be open to whatever. Just sit down and if you really

want the truth just be open and then realize that it's really about your healing. So once you decide "I'm ready to heal. I'm ready to lose all of this stuff", then you can do it.

I learned some amazing things about myself when I went to his funeral and I met some of his friends. I was walking through his housing complex and many of the residents knew about me. Everyone I met had a wonderful story about John and how he helped others, especially the young and the old. That sounds like yours truly. I learned that he loves burgundy and green and guess what colors I love? Burgundy and green! His living room was burgundy and green. My living room is burgundy and green. His kitchen is yellow my kitchen is yellow. People in the community talked about how he gave back to the community.

Where did that come from? I knew it came from my mom but John had the spirit of giving to others too, I didn't know that. I also didn't know that he took pride in being a homeowner and that sometimes he would vacation by himself. It was amazing for me to hear like, I'm not weird. I like to vacation by myself too, or I used to...ha, ha, ha. I just thought something was wrong with me. So I learned a lot by going through that process. Recently my half brother John reconnected with me on Facebook. I hadn't heard from him in a while but we reconnected and during one of his visits to town we had lunch in New Haven and it was nice to just talk. We promised each other that we would stay in touch. It was ok to be selfish in that moment and say this about nobody else but

me and that was okay. Any other time it's about everybody else. No, no, no, no, no, this is about my healing, my education, my healing, my knowledge of myself and why I am and how I got here and all of that stuff. Now, I know more about me than ever before. I now know my story...

Dannieka Wiggins: Auntie Veronica, thank you for sharing. I have some work to do. Also, I feel a book in the works.

Veronica Douglas-Givan: Dannieka, I am just thankful I am free from the pain of my past, and I plan to share my story with others.

Reflections of the Missionary Society's Annual Prayer Breakfast 2011

by Min. Nancy Kingwood

Eighty-one years ago Deaconess Rosa Watkins became the first President of the Mount Aery Baptist Church Senior Missionary Society to work on behalf of the Lord to serve the congregation and the community. As time passed, many women and men answered the call to serve God in this unique and distinguished way.

On Saturday July 16th the missionaries of Mount Aery celebrated their annual prayer breakfast proclaiming the powerful and profound theme, Pressing Forward Armored with the Power of Prayer. Supported with the Old and New Testament scriptures, 2 Chronicles 7:14 and Matthew 6:5-8 verses, declares that God will heal the land as well as demonstrating the power and impact of prayer. Sister Lori McFadden read the scriptures with such elegance.

The devotion and Lord's prayer was led by our own Sister Sylvia Jackson and her sister, Sister Willa Mae Gray. The Worship Leader was the dynamic and Holy Ghost filled Evangelist Beatrice Somerville. A sight to behold was the spectacular processional. As the missionaries marched in, I thought of all the years of hard work of those that labored in the vineyard. As we know the road had not always been easy but we are confident that God has not brought them this far to leave them now.

Pastor Thomas Williams, a man after God's own heart prayed fire down from Heaven with a very moving prayer as He proclaimed the mission for missionaries. Sister Barbara Smalls extended a

warm welcome to the invited guests and congregation. First Lady Charlene Hickman of New Canaan Community Baptist Church wholeheartedly accepted the welcome although the Spirit of the Lord welcomed her at the door.

It's preaching time: Sister Audrey Barr introduced the preacher of the hour, our own, Rev. Velva Jean Tucker. Rev. Tucker preached on the subject, Pray for your Healing. This Rhema word taught us the importance of turning from our wicked ways, repenting to God and watching God heal our land. The sermon was off the chain!!

Under the leadership of our current president, Sister Dorcas White, Mount Aery's Missionaries are on the move as they continue to do the work and the will of the Father.

I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I onward bound,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

After the powerful service, the guests enjoyed food and fellowship in the Bass Hall. I must tell you, the food was just delightful and the company was great. While I enjoyed the service and the breakfast, most of all I am proud of the Missionary ministry of the best church on Frank Street.

PS: Sister Dorcas is hilarious on the mic. She deserves an encore! Be blessed for God is well pleased



I'll Take You There - Pre-Father's Day Concert

by Gregory M. McBroom

Music above all other arts has always been esteemed for its power to speak directly to our higher consciousness. It is capable of expressing distinct emotional and spiritual states.

The title of the iconic Staples Singers 70's era song states in plain language what musicologist term as a transformational experience, which in laymen's terms means the power to take one to a time, a feeling, or even a place you have yet to experience.

The Staples Singers said "I know a place – I'll take you there" Well if you were in the sanctuary of Mount Aery Baptist Church on June 18th at 6:00pm for the Pre-Father's Day Concert featuring Deon Kipping, Kevin Levar, and LaShaun Pace you had the opportunity to go to a place some may be familiar with and some may not have know before that night. A place of joy, a place of remembrance, a place of forgiveness.

Here are some comments from a few of the attendees, which illustrate that feeling of transformation.

Shalishea Laws:

What I can say is that music is very powerful and gospel music definitely transforms one to a place where healing takes place. As I listened to Ms. Pace, her vocals, the cords, the music in the background, the words, and the melodies in the songs I took my focus off of the crowd and myself, closed my eyes and let the tears flow as I thought about the sweetness of Jesus. It is as sweet as the music that I was hearing. I imagined that God was singing to me and in that I heard Him sing these words "its gonna be alright." The way the music transformed me was to a place where all I heard was God singing to me. I was touched and left the concert with a song and a melody in my heart and because I listened with my heart, I heard God singing to my soul. This is the power of music. It can transform you and take you to a place where you can hear God, and hearing God can change your situation and mood.



Gina LeVon Simpson:

Ministry comes to mind when thinking of the Pre-Father's Day Concert. Every group or soloist ministered in one way or another. LaShaun Pace's testimony spoke volumes. The artistry and professionalism of Min. Mark Murray as musical accompaniment was tremendous. Deon Kipping has a heart of worship, which was evident in his songs. The song that pulled at my heart and caused me to delve within the recesses of my soul was one of Kevin Levar's songs; A Heart that Forgives. That is a continual prayer of mine. The song is by no way superficial. The lyrics are meant to transform and restore. To take me to a place where only God can take me to be repaired.



Some of the lyrics to the song are:

I want a heart that forgives
A heart full of love, One with compassion just like yours above

One that overcomes evil with goodness and love
Like it never happened, never holding a grudge
I want a heart that forgives that lives and lets live
One that keeps loving over and over again
One that men can't offend Because Your Word is within
One that loves without price, like You Lord Jesus Christ
I want a heart that loves everybody....even my enemies'
I want to love like You, be like You, just like You did
I want a heart that forgives, I want a heart that forgives!
When the ones that are closest, that I've known the longest, hurt me the most;
I still wanna love them just like You love me
Even though I'm hurting
I want a heart that forgives ...

Alecia Thomas:

Gospel music has always played an integral role in our society and culture. People often say that music feeds the soul and is so powerful that it spiritually awakens the inner core of a human being. That is exactly how I felt after attending the Pre-Father's Day concert at Mount Aery Baptist Church on June 18th. The anointing that filled the room through the Ministry of Deon Kipping, Kevin Levar, and LaShaun Pace brought me back to a time where my soul was first being fed through the initial walk of my Christian faith. Metaphorically, I started to wonder what the concert meant in lieu of Father's Day, which was looming right around the corner. Why is this night coincidental and chosen as a time to celebrate the fathers in our society? After contemplative prayer, I realized that this was the perfect venue to honor men who serve as fatherly figures in our society. Music has always been the key that unlocks doors and has been known to intertwine all aspects of our lives. In a sense, music is the patriarch of our world...the foundation to which we exist. Just like the role that men play when it comes to the family and the continuous heartbeat in our lives. According to Plato,

"Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, gaiety and life to everything; It is the essence of order and lends to all that is good, just, and beautiful."

The harmonizing spirit of that night was manifested into the soul of our lives, which is the foundation of our existence!

In summary let me say that we are all extremely happy with the fact that this fund raising event was a complete success by raising approximately \$10,000 dollars. I also believe the fact that it raised individual and collective spiritual awareness is just as profound and perhaps even longer lasting.

In closing, may I quote a great man of God:

"If I can help somebody as I pass along,
If I can cheer somebody with a word or song,
If I can show somebody he is traveling wrong,
then my living shall not be in vain."

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.



The Return of Jethro

A Conversation with Brother and Teacher Paul Mendes

by Leslie Davis-Green

Upon the privilege of this assignment, I deluded myself into believing it would be another one of the wonderful inter-exchanges that I usually enjoy with these interviews. This was far from it. It occurred to me that an interview was not being conducted but a conversation held. Like many conversations I, and I am sure many, have had with Bro. Mendes you walk away knowing that you are now a little wiser than when you arrived.

My husband and I and our youngest daughter pulled up to Paul's home around 3:00 on a beautiful, warm Sunday afternoon. It is always such a pleasant visit and Aliyah had pleaded with us to go saying that she wanted to see Paul and Mama (Paul's devoted wife Theresa). As Paul and Lee convened in the office, Mrs. Mendes, Aliyah and I sat in the living room and eased right into conversation on many topics and issues of the day and life. She clearly adores life and shares nuggets and moments that are both charming and fun in the warmth their home.

After a while, Paul sits back in a chair and says to me while gesturing, "Come on, bring it on." I turned and smiled a giant smile as I cannot contain my adoration for this family. I asked him if he was ready and he waived a hand at me to come and sit down in the office. When I told Paul what we would like to title the article he gave me the strangest look almost as though I had either lost my mind or he never considered himself a Jethro. I haven't decided which it is yet. I explained that we would like it if he was comfortable to share about his recovery. He let out a good, healthy laugh and exclaimed, "You want that, my physical recovery?" I said, "no, no, we are more interested in sharing your spiritual recovery and the faith-walk you are on through this journey." Without hesitation, he was happy to oblige.

Bro. Mendes started out by telling me how he felt a great deal better now, than he did prior to his hospitalization. He shared how he had no knowledge of the procedure that had taken place and felt that in a way it was a good thing. I've got to admit I was a little taken aback by that statement. I would've thought that it is our obligation to know exactly what was going on in grave detail. Almost enough detail to self-treat, I might add. Well here is where a little bit of that wisdom I talked about earlier comes in. Paul definitely agrees that knowing is good to a certain degree but the plus for him was that he did not know the intimate details of the internal procedure which he credits to have helped him recuperate faster. Paul said he learned a lesson. The lesson is to listen to your doctor and know what he says. The lesson is to go to your doctor anyway, regularly. The lesson is that it is best to listen, not to be over anxious but to listen. He shares, "I've learned to listen very well not many of us do that, but recovery gives us a great deal of time to listen and think."

While in recovery Paul has relocated his office, scaled down his hours, done some reading, and continues his role as Secretary of the NRZ (Neighborhood Revitalization Zone) for the Hollow. The NRZ is responsible for the beautification of Madison Avenue and the agency looks forward to acquiring the funding and working alongside with those who can help to make complete the project through Washington Avenue in 2012.

Like Jethro, Brother/Teacher Paul Mendes'

generalNEWS

Trauma

by Deacon Doreen Cotter

Historical/Intergenerational Trauma:

- Collective and cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations that results from massive Historically Traumatic Events
- The trauma is held personally and transmitted over generations. Thus, even family members who have not directly experienced the trauma can feel the effects of the event generations later
- The multigenerational aspects of trauma often is not considered in treatment, the behavior of survivors of massive trauma is misunderstood at times and not treated appropriately.

Emotional and Psychological Trauma is the results of extraordinarily stressful events that shatter one's sense of security, making the person feel helpless and vulnerable in their environment. Traumatic experiences often involve a threat to life or safety, but **any situation that leaves a person feeling overwhelmed and alone can be traumatic, even if it doesn't involve physical harm.** It's not the objective facts that determine whether an event is traumatic, but one's subjective emotional experience of the event. The more frightened and helpless a person feels, the more likely they are traumatized.

As a response to trauma, one may include **Substance Abuse** as a vehicle for attempting to numb the pain associated with their traumatic experience. Horrible events damage people, families and communities; it may also create distance, distrust and disconnection between people who may develop **Mental Health issues**; along with other **self-destructive behavior**, suicidal thoughts and gestures, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, et cetera. Unresolved grief often times accompanies historical trauma.

- 24.6 million Americans suffer from a serious mental illness
- African Americans suffer from the same serious mental health conditions but they are less likely to seek help
- Minorities have less access to, and availability of, mental health services
- Those in treatment often receive a poorer quality of mental health care.

It is important to know that people can differ in how they react to traumatic events:

- One person may perceive an event as deeply traumatic, while another does not
- Particular types of traumas affect some individuals more than others
- A history of trauma may make some people more susceptible to later traumatic events, while others become more resilient.

Whenever a traumatic event occurs, it is a natural reaction for the survivors to go through a grieving process. This process, while inherently painful, is easier if one seeks professional support. With the right kinds of **Counseling** or **Therapy**, most people can become more psychologically and emotionally healthy.

Healing comes in many forms – Individual counseling or therapy, spiritual help, and group or whole community gatherings are all important aspects of the healing approaches to trauma treatment. They are important elements in helping people recover from traumatic experiences: a renewal of hope, positive self image and spiritual beliefs, renewals of family connections and reaffirming one's place in the human community.

GUESSWHO!!!

From the list of names that is given, select the correct name and place it beside the numbers below:

Deacon Ted Gardner
Deacon Esau Failey
Sis. Brenda Williams
Sis. Mageuna Adatona,
Sis. Carol McGhee
Deacon Brad Belcher

- (1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____
(4) _____

(1)

**“In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps”
(Prov. 16:9)**



(2)

**“Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you”
(Ps. 116:7)**



(4)

**“If the Lord delights in a man’s way, he makes his steps firm . . .”
(Ps. 37:23)**



(3)

**“The Lord replied, my presence will go with you and I will give you rest.”
(Ex. 33:14)**



Answers for July: 1) Bro. Gregory Cummings; 2) Sis. Tonya Lee;
3) Bro. David Greatheart; 4) Sis. Carrie Simpson Greatheart



Doreen's Top **TEN** Biblical Questions

by Doreen Cotter

- According to the book of Romans what does tribulation produce?
a) Mercy b) Patience c) Love d) Grace
- To whom was the book of James written?
a) All the saints c) To the Church
b) To the twelve (12) tribes d) None of the above
- Through Ezekiel God compare the Israelites to a prostitute but with one difference. What was the difference?
a) Israel did not enjoy prostitution
b) Israel is a nation not a person
c) Instead of receiving money she paid money to men
d) None of the above
- In the book of Ruth, the elders asked the Lord to make Ruth like what two other women?
a) Sarah and Hagar b) Miriam and Rahab c) Hannah and Mary d) Rachel and Leah
- Malachi deals with the same sins addressed in what other Old Testament book?
a) Nehemiah b) Zechariah c) Hosea d) Daniel
- Right before he died God appeared to Moses and asked him to do what?
a) To write down the Law
b) To write a song and teach it to the Israelites
c) To tell Joshua he was the new leader
d) None of the above
- Why did Jeremiah cry out "Woe is me, my mother that thou hast borne me ..."?
a) Because he was disowned by his father
b) Everyone cursed him because of God's message
c) Because he was tortured for his faith
d) All of the above
- Complete this Proverb: "A good man leaves an inheritance to his ..."
a) City b) priest and God c) Slaves d) children's children
- Which Psalm contains these words? "Search me, O God, and know my heart ... know my thoughts:"
a) 10 b) 73 c) 121 d) 139
- How many years were the Israelites in captivity when Ezekiel received his vision of Jerusalem?
a) 20 b) 1 c) 6 d) 77

ANSWERS for May

- b) Patience (Rom. 5:3)
- b) To the twelve tribe (James 1:1)
- c) Instead of receiving money she paid money to men (Ezk. 16:33-34)
- d) Rachel and Leah (Ruth 4:11)
- a) Nehemiah (Malachi 1:6-14)
- b) To write a song and teach it to the Israelites (Dut. 31:19)
- b) Everyone cursed him because of God's message (Jer. 15:10)
- d) Children's children (Prov. 13:22)
- d) 139 (Ps. 139:23)
- c) 6 (Ezk. (8:1)

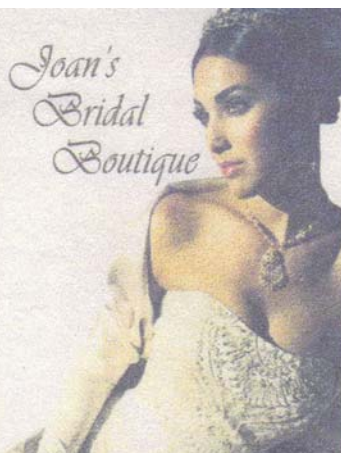
Announcements

- Please be advised the Deacons on Call for the month of August are Deacons Seawright and Vermont.
- Submissions of announcements and due dates:
 - Message From The Mount
> Send information to mftm@mtaerybaptist.org by Wednesday after the first Sunday
 - Mid-Month Message From The Mount Update
> Send information to mftm@mtaerybaptist.org by Wednesday before the third Sunday
 - Monitors in the Sanctuary
> Send information to media_ministry@mtaerybaptist.org by the Wednesday before the Sunday you want the announcement

If announcements are not received by the due dates they may be omitted or placed in the next edition.

Recognitions

- Congratulations to Edwardo and Shamika Paul, Celebrating 13 years of marriage!



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Bridgeport, CT 06606

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MON - FRI - SAT 10:30am - 6pm
TUE - WED - THUR 10:30am - 7pm
SUNDAYS CLOSED

Hospitalization & Nursing Home

Please be aware that there are strict legal and ethical guidelines regarding giving out patient information. Therefore, if you are hospitalized and desire pastoral support, you or your family member must notify the church office in advance, if possible. When you are admitted, state your denomination and place of worship.

Please address all correspondences for the above disciples to the church and the administrative office will forward all mail. Thank you for your cooperation.

Grover Gardner Sr.

Gardner Heights Nursing Health Care, 172 Rest Rock Road, Shelton, CT 06484

Bernice Adams, West Barnes, Leroy Wilson

Maefair Health Care Center, Maefair Court, Trumbull, CT 06611

Sadie Kinder Cole

Subacute Center of Bristol, 23 Fair Street, Bristol, CT 06010

Deaconess Okakue Brown

St. Joseph's Manor, 6448 Main Street, Trumbull, CT 06611

Carolyn Gray

St. Vincent's Hospital, 2800 Main Street, Bridgeport, CT 06606

Please Pray for Our Healing List

Deacon Brad Belcher

Clinnie Black

Deaconess Queen Boone

Millie Burton

Sandra Cameron

Delores Cox

Eunice Faison

Harold Farrar

Lois Farrar

Barbara Foust

Bernice Geter

Sally Gordon

Jodi Green

Tiffani Green

Deaconess Milla Green

Evelyn Hill

Susan Holmes

Brenda Johnson

Selaja Johnson

Unice Jones

Kenneth Knight

Barbara Macey

Nanette Malone

Regina Manns

Clyde McLaughlin

Paul Mendes

Eulalia Pettway

Monique Pugh

Lillian Ragsdale

Deacon Willie Mae

Richardson

Bonita Robinson

Sally Soares

Mary Thigpen

Cecilia Williams

June Williams

Cecelia Wilson

Deaconess Anna Watkins

Bereavement

- **Frank Bridgeforth and family** in the loss of his sister.
- **Deacon Brad Belcher and family** in the loss of their cousin Blair Belcher, Jr.

AUGUST2011 Birthdays

August 1st

August 1st
Blackwell, Patrice
Bohannon, Henry
Caribe, Bonnie
Hill-McCall, Bernadette
Holden, Emma
Smith, Artent
Vermont, Terence

August 2nd

Holland-Ennis, Phyllis
Lumpkin, Jeffery
Murphy, Lois
Powell, Rochelle
Slade, Keith
Spearman, Lynda

August 3rd

Carther, Anthony
Cesar, Alain
Dawson, Blair
Gary, Soraya
Perez, Elizabeth
Perry, Leonard
Ruffin, Dametrias
Sanon, Caroline
Santos, Dwayne

August 4th

Durrah, Robert
Hopkins, Brianna
Lee, Henry
Plata, Julena
Rankin, Lisa
Roundtree, Shamoni Laraye
Simmons, Sonya
Warren, Terence
Wright, Rickie

August 5th

Bass, Gloria
Bevel, JeRel
Dicks, Frances
Hall, Shawna
Jones, Tykeem
Myrie, Adrian
Pettway, Ryan

August 6th

Alvarez, Danielle
Dickey, Nicole
Hodges, Lonnie
Holmes, Naomi
Jackson, Loretta
Lamar, Quinne
Oquendo, Crystal

August 7th

Berry, Patricia
Bush, Jessica
Dewitt-Smith, Janet
Hayes, Willie
James, Tina Marie
Studivant, Bernadette

Tate, Tonya
Tucker, Velva

August 8th

Anderson, Ina
Baker, Carolyn
Boahen, Stephen
Combs, Catherine
Green, Frankie
JeanBaptiste, Jazmin
Spillman, Guy
West, Rashidydaa

August 9th

Blackwell, Grace
Dennis, Claude
Dewitt-Smith, William
Jones, Samuel
LaRose, Terrence
Nichols-Rhoden, Lynette
Pettway, Christopher
Reid, Ronnie
Scott, Sarina
Turman, Kara
Velez, Pedro

August 10th

Allen, Lacy
Bendolph, Genesis
Daniels, Freddy
Dixon, Quinnette
Fulton, Nancy
Grace, Jr, James
Graves, Marquisha
Parker, Tina
Pettway, Joe
Reynolds, Byron
Williams, Ella June

August 11th

Bracey, Lisa
Chest, Debra
Estrada, Nelly
Horton, Linard
Robinson-Turner, Loretta
Smith, James
Thompson, Petrelle'
Washington, LaTonya
Whittington, Karen
Wilson, Mark

August 12th

Batson, Manuel
Desrouilleres, Stacy
Gardner, Glover
Kennedy, Inell
Lamar, Senetta
Powell, Iasia

August 13th

Brown, James
Dalrymple, Damian
Gant, Gayle
Johnson, Carla
Pettway, Dennis

Riddick, Chakena
Walker, Janet

August 14th

Abdul-Karim, Samira
Cannady, Carol
Ely, Ruby
Hutchinson, Raquel
Lemdon, Mable
Pettway, Chelsey
Shaner, Michelle
Sherrod, Twana
Upchurch, Jerry

August 15th

Bradley, James
Hamilton, Carlton
Hopkins, Eric
Lazarus, Theresa
Lazarus, Theresa
Upchurch, Harold

August 16th

Grisby, Lee
Livingstone, Dolores
Miller, LaShalle
Spearman, Glenn

August 17th

JeanBaptiste, Julian
Johnson, Chamya
Johnson, Chanea
Jones, Lyle
Pugh Sr, Gerard
RayeII, Akiam
Romero, Robin
Santiago, Angelica
Vazquez, Crucito
Whitaker, Shanta

August 18th

Boyd, Joan
Cruz, Desiree
Ferguson, Michael
Hawthorne, Marvin
Holloway, Fern

August 19th

Allen, Toquiah
Bryant, Rhonda Bristow
Danson, Kwabena (NaNa)
Ebron, Crystale
Fenwick, Victoria
Jordan, Sarita
Lawhorn, Kendell
Lewis, Michelle

August 20th

Hawkins, Barbara
Laws, Shalishea
Lowe, Jonathan
Pettway, Patricia
Proctor, Joseph
Raines, Grover
Williams, Adrienne

August 21st

Blackwell, Monique
Blaine, Elnora
Commodore, LaShonda
Ebron, Lorraine
Godfrey, Venus
Moraes, Tyler
Moye, Renee
Paul, Edward
Smith, Emajai
Williams, Patricia

August 22nd

Bryant, Mary
Hardison, Stephanie
Jackson, Kenneth
Pettway, Annie Mae

August 23rd

Abraham, Jazmine
Baker, Andre
Cotter, Doreen
Keller, John
Rogers, Clara
Rogers, Wanda
Royster, Ivy

August 24th

Bethune, Elijah
Gardner, Tendon
Harrell, Sarah
Higgins, Justin
Santiago, Emily

August 25th

Brown, Tinerra
Hanna, Vickie
Johnson, Louise
Jones, Glenda
Marrow, Evelyn
Murray, Malcom
Williams, Ronald
Williams, Ronald

August 26th

Dennis, Kathie
Hudson, Curtis
Jackson, Walter
Johnson, Otis
Jones, Maxine
Larose, Timothy
Parker-Ervin, Latoya
Wells, Desirae
Williams, James

August 27th

Anderson, Brooke
Davis, Shamika
Forney, Kiesha
Lee, Ryan
Paul, Shamika
Randolph, George
Vann-Dennis, Justine

August 28th

Blanding, Regina
Jones, Teresa
Stanley, Chyna
Stewart, Michael
Vermont, Regina
Wallace, Shirlene
Wray, Juliet

August 29th

Dyer, Carmen
Gautier, Edith
Goodwin, Roderick
Hart, Latoya
Higgins, Clive
Rawls, Alfreda
Stewart, Charles
Vermont, Jada

August 30th

Barr, Audrey
Charles, Shawn
Craddock, Allison
Gardner, Germar T.
Harrison, Anthony
Miller, Bernetha
Myrick, Antonio
Pryce, Michael
Smith, Jordan
Thomas, Joyce

August 31st

Fleming, Kieth
Freeman, Kazmain
Kingwood, Jocelyn
Richardson, Joseph
Tuck, Tanjala
Wilson, Cecelia

August 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 6:00 AM Daily Prayer	2 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 5:00 PM Prayer Ministry 6:30 PM Marital Arts CT 7:00 PM SAW Facilitators 7:00 PM Praise Team Rehearsal	3 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 12:00 PM Daytime Bible Study 6:45 PM Bible Study	4 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 6:00 PM Exercise Class 6:30 PM Annual Church Outing Meeting 6:30 PM Deacons Ministry Meeting 7:00 PM Mass Choir Rehearsal	5 6:00 AM Daily Prayer	6 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 8:30 AM Men's Ministry 11:00 AM ASHE Workshop 11:00 AM Mass Choir Rehearsal 11:30 AM Budget & Finance Meeting 12:30 PM Interpreters 4:00 PM MAAFA Rehearsal
7 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 7:45 AM Worship Celebration 9:45 AM Olmecs Store 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship Celebration 1:00 PM Olmecs Store 6:00 PM IMA "Concert"	8 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 6:00 PM Fellowship Ministry 6:30 PM SAW Gathering 7:00 PM Spiritual Gifts	9 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 5:00 PM Prayer Ministry 6:30 PM Marital Arts CT 6:30 PM SAW Book Club 6:30 PM SAW Facilitators 6:30 PM Trustees Ministry Meeting	10 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 12:00 PM Daytime Bible Study 6:45 PM Bible Study	11 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 6:00 PM Exercise Class 6:30 PM Jasmine Miller Wedding Rehearsal 6:30 PM Annual Church Outing Meeting 6:30 PM REFUGE	12 6:00 AM Daily Prayer Sat. August 13 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 8:30 AM Men's Ministry 11:00 AM Praise Team Rehearsal 4:00 PM Jasmine Miller Wedding	13
14 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 7:45 AM Worship Celebration 9:45 AM Olmecs Store 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship Celebration 1:00 AM Youth Church 1:00 PM Olmecs Store	15 6:00 AM Daily Prayer	16 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 5:00 PM Prayer Ministry 6:00 PM CT Sponsoring Committee 6:00 PM MAAFA Production Team 6:30 PM SAW Facilitators 7:00 PM Praise Team Rehearsal	17 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 12:00 PM Daytime Bible Study 6:45 PM Bible Study	18 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 6:00 PM Exercise Class 6:00 PM MAAFA Rehearsal 6:30 PM Annual Church Outing Meeting 6:30 PM Deacons Ministry Meeting 6:30 PM REFUGE	19 6:00 AM Daily Prayer	20 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 8:30 AM Men's Ministry 10:00 AM Male Chorus Rehearsal 11:00 AM Chosen Generation Rehearsal 12:30 PM Interpreters 2:00 PM MAAFA Cust 5:30 PM Couples Ministry Event
21 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 7:45 AM Worship Celebration 9:45 AM Olmecs Store 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship Celebration 1:00 AM Youth Church 1:00 PM Olmecs Store	22 6:00 AM Daily Prayer	23 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 5:00 PM Prayer Ministry 6:00 PM MAAFA Production Team Mtg. 6:30 PM Marital Arts CT 6:30 PM SAW Facilitators	24 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 12:00 PM Daytime Bible Study 6:45 PM Bible Study	25 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 6:00 PM Exercise Class 6:30 PM Annual Church Outing Meeting 6:30 PM M.A.Y.A. 6:30 PM REFUGE	26 6:00 AM Daily Prayer	27 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 8:30 AM Men's Ministry 10:00 AM Scholarship Ministry 11:00 AM Chosen Generation Rehearsal 1:30 PM Spiritual Gifts
28 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 9:30 AM Worship Celebration 9:45 AM Olmecs Store 11:00 AM Annual Church Outing Meeting 1:00 PM Olmecs Store	29 6:00 AM Daily Prayer	30 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 5:00 PM Prayer Ministry 6:30 PM Marital Arts CT 6:30 PM SAW Facilitators	31 6:00 AM Daily Prayer 12:00 PM Daytime Bible Study 6:45 PM Bible Study			

** Church Calendar is subject to change daily. Please be certain to read all media from the church to keep you updated. **



BEFORE

AFTER



Refinish

- ▣ Color faded
- ▣ Sun damage



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- ▣ Cleaning
- ▣ Conditioning



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- ▣ Small cuts
- ▣ Cracks
- ▣ Cigarette burns



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