



THE EPISTLE

*Newsletter of the
Nineteenth Street Baptist Church*

“You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men...” 2 Corinthians 3:2



Nineteenth Street Baptist Church

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Washington, DC 20011
202-829-2773

www.everyblessing.org

Ministerial Staff

Rev. James A. Crosson Jr., *Interim Pastor*

Rev. Jerry C. Cheatham Jr.

Rev. Cheryl Coleman Hall

Rev. Dr. I. Benni Singleton

Rev. Reginald Townsend

Rev. Edward Turner

Rev. Robin L. Turner

Rev. Eddie Martin Jr., *Youth Minister*

Rev. Dr. Jerry A. Moore Jr., *Pastor Emeritus*

Church School, Sunday 8:45 AM

Morning Worship, Sunday 10:00 AM

Prayer Meeting, Thursday 6:30 PM



GOD is Our Passion. Serving **People** is Our **Mission**

The mission of the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church is to profoundly *experience*, joyfully *celebrate*, and meaningfully *share* God's grace.

We do this through Christ-centered *worship, biblical instruction, prayer, nurturing fellowship*, and *caring acts* that are reflective of our love for God and one another.

We, through the power of the Holy Spirit, proclaim the Gospel and Jesus Christ to all people while supporting the work of missions in our church, our community, our country, and the world.

The Epistle

is an official publication of the
Nineteenth Street Baptist Church.

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IN THIS ISSUE...

Pastor's Corner 3

Ushers Celebrate 47th Anniversary 4

Spotlight on Deacon Sandra LeSesne 8

Musical Delights Nineteenth Street
Audience 10

NSBC Opens Arms to Family in Need 12

New Arrivals 13

Scholarship Winners..... 14

Message from the Editor 15

Welcome New Member 15

Black History Month Events 16

Calendar 17

A Black History Valentine

By Rev. James A. Crosson Jr.



Memories crowd upon us as we look back on our black history each year during the month traditionally set aside to honor matters of the heart. Many high hopes, many dreams unfulfilled, many

blunders made and, in the sharpness of our anguish, we would still not turn back the wheels of time and try again. Many unanticipated joys and many little graces have helped lift and strengthen our faith in God, ourselves and the life we have chosen. Our history can be used to shed light on those challenges found in our present day. It reflects the constancy of a sustained effort of conscious and active participation to bring about truth and justice for all.

In the face of all the uncertainties that surround us, we must use our best judgment, illuminated by the integrity of our most profound spiritual insights,

and trust in the mind and hand of God. All around us are reminders of His presence in our midst — the pangs of conscience that produce a spontaneous impulse to do the kind and gracious things, the sensitivity to the needs of others and the great anguish we feel as we look out upon the world.

At the heart of the matter is a wisdom, born out of trial and triumph, to bare our very heart and soul to God's scrutiny. That we come to know that our courage to endure comes from Him and forms the bases of our hope from ages past and for ages to come.

The connection between the celebration of Black History Month and Valentine's Day is not coincidental. At the beginning of the year these modern day traditions focus our attention on the value of remembering a love we hold dear, sharing a pride in who we are and what we have accomplished, and expressing a profound devotion and adoration to the



one who made all love possible, Jesus Christ.

So let us not forget to give homage to and for the love of Jesus as we sign our love notes, Instagrams, texts and e-cards this Valentine's Day. Remember it is also a call to understand the deeper meaning of this life that has made us the people we are today.

It is my prayer that we open ourselves up to love and be loved as one in whom God has found a dwelling place. ❖

Ushers Celebrate 47th Anniversary: Spiritually Anchored, Committed to Serve

By Deaconess Brenda Lightening-Tolbert

Sunday, January 10, 2016 had finally arrived. A grand day of celebration was underway—the 47th Ushers’ Day Anniversary. Ushers, both young and seasoned, had rehearsed for the past several months all program parts, from speaking to marching. Uniforms were checked and rechecked: gold shoulder sashes were pinned, dashing gold bow ties tied, usher badges and medallions adorned, and stark white gloves worn. We were prepared to serve, a readiness that is in keeping with our mission and this year’s theme, *“Spiritually Anchored — Committed to Serve, 1 Corinthians 15:58.*

The program began with Praise and Worship to include the Usher Processional. From program start to finish, we enjoyed a spirit-filled time in the presence of the Lord. Incoming Usher Board President Barbara D. Jumper, who served as Worship Leader, set a God-inspired, uplifting tone. The Grande March and Drill Team, led and choreographed by Usher Angela Griffin, kept the momentum going. It was a praise

performance that the congregation thoroughly enjoyed.

God’s spirit moved throughout the worship service. One pulpit participant who deserves special mention is Junior Usher Jalon Slayton who read the

scriptures. He was not rattled when the congregation stood to give reverence to God’s Word without him personally instructing them to do so. After we stood, Jalon paused and responded *“Amen,”* and quickly moved forward to read the Scriptures. His Christian teaching



Photos in this article: Deborah Crain Kemp and Deacon Kevin Little

and quick thinking were heartwarming evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence.

Our guest preacher, Reverend Adamio Charles Boddie, pastor of New Hope Community Fellowship Church, delivered a high-spirited, thought-provoking sermon, "A Labor of Love." It was a welcomed reminder that being an usher is a calling—a calling of special people with servant hearts. Ushers are God's servants called to share Christian love as people enter the doors of the church into the presence of God. That sermon continues to resonate within us.

The program included a memorial tribute to recognize the time-honored service of our fallen ushers. Deaconess Bertha Lewis donated a pulpit floral arrangement in memory of her late son, Senior Usher and former president David Lewis. Ushers Heather Boyce and Cynthia Thompson also donated a striking pulpit floral arrangement.

We recognized our 2016 award recipients. Ten-year service awards were presented to Ushers Valarie Ashley, Betty Montague, Cornelius Williams, and Vontrece Wilson. Deacon Oddie Stevens received accolades for his diligent service as doorkeeper of the church's rear door. Deaconess Eleanor Banks was recognized for being the first female president of



USHERS' DAY AWARD RECIPIENTS

Outstanding Leadership Award

Deaconess Evangeline F. Stevens,
President (outgoing), Usher Board

10-Year Service Award

Valarie Ashley

Betty Montague

Cornelius Williams

Vontrece Wilson

Certificate of Appreciation

Martha Benjamin

Hester Jones



the Usher Board in 1978. Sister Christine Green, 96, was recognized as our oldest active servicing usher. Sisters Martha Benjamin and Hester Jones, who are not ushers, received certificates of appreciation for their selfless support of the usher ministry over the years. Finally, outgoing president Deaconess Evangeline Stevens was recognized for her outstanding leadership.

Following the service, all were invited to the fellowship hall to enjoy a scrumptious repast prepared by Sister Hester Jones.

The Usher Board and 47th Ushers' Day planning committee extend to our church family and friends a heartfelt thank you for helping to celebrate our special day. Your continued support is always appreciated. As ushers, we remain *Spiritually Anchored and Committed to Serve*. ❖



USHERS' DAY COMMITTEE

Deaconess Brenda Lightening-Tolbert,
Chairperson

Edith Britt

Deaconess Sandra Caviness

Angela Griffin

Pat Hodge

“

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

1 Corinthians 15:58



Spotlight on Deacon Sandra LeSesne

By Deborah Heard

Caring for others has been a life-long calling for Deacon Sandra LeSesne.

“When I was a little girl, my mother used to tell me, ‘You know you can’t help everybody.’ But I tried,” she said.

Deacon LeSesne, a Washington, D.C. native, joined Nineteenth Street 40 years ago after a conversation with Rev. Dr. Jerry A. Moore Jr. She was taking a walk



Deacon Sandra LeSesne

in the neighborhood and saw Rev. Moore. When she told him about trying to find a church home, he urged her to come to Nineteenth Street.

“My service at the church started with the elderly women,” she recalled. “That’s where God led me. I had been a caregiver for my mother and my grandmother. ... I didn’t know then that God was teaching me.”

This mission of service has propelled Deacon LeSesne into historic roles. In 2005, she became the first woman ordained as a deacon at Nineteenth Street. In 2012, she became the first woman to chair the Board of Deacons, a position she held for four one-year terms.

Asked to describe a few memorable moments, she cited two: “The church coming together for the 175th anniversary—that was one of the joys of being part of Nineteenth Street,” she said. Another was assigning Deacon Larry Holland to oversee the food pantry because service has dramatically increased since he has been on board. “That outreach to those in need—and doing what ‘thus saith the Lord’—is

phenomenal. That’s what we’re supposed to do as a board and as members.”

Making history as a deacon also was a challenging experience at times because her election changed a men-only church tradition more than 160 years old. Her response was to adopt her grandmother’s approach and advice: “The love of God makes you want to get along with everybody. And, some battles aren’t worth fighting.”

Last year, Deacon LeSesne decided that it was time to step back from a leadership role. “I wanted to serve more,” she explained. “The responsibilities of chair took me away from serving. ... A chair has less time to call senior members, to send out cards, for outreach.” Besides, she said, Deacon Fred T. Leftrict Jr. has been a vice chair and was ready to lead the board.

She still has other intense responsibilities, including serving on the Pastoral Search Committee. And, outreach remains an essential mission.

She is deeply involved in His Homeless Ministry, which prepares and delivers bagged lunches to homeless men and

women in the city on every second Saturday. “Not only do we feed them,” she said, “we share our spirit with them and let them know they’re loved.”

That fellowship recently expanded to include a nearby church— St. Stephen and the Incarnation Episcopal Church on Newton Street, which serves a hot meal every Saturday to those in need. After members of Nineteenth Street developed a relationship with members of St. Stephen, they were invited over to combine efforts to prepare and serve lunch. “It was very rewarding,” Deacon LeSesne said.

Her outreach efforts also include the church’s food pantry, where she served as a previous captain. That role was a natural outgrowth of her career in the federal government, where her job as an agricultural marketing specialist was to get healthier products to people in need. In the 10 years before she retired in 2007, her focus was ensuring that school children were receiving nutritious lunches.

Deacon LeSesne gives God the credit for her service. A sermon by Rev. Dr. Derrick Harkins about helping others provided the push she needed to act. “It touched my heart,” she said. ❖



Deacon LeSesne (right rear) with His Homeless Ministry Team members

“For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.”

1 Timothy 3:13

Acclaimed Musical Delights Nineteenth Street Audience

By Karen E. Williamson

Minister of Music David Griffiths debuted his first musical, *Journey to Worship*, before an appreciative audience at Nineteenth Street Baptist Church on Saturday, December 5, 2015.

The musical is based on Griffiths' own travels to Korea as an English teacher in 1989. It traces his search for true worship and shares what he learned. Read in his own words about these learnings and experiences on his blog: www.journeytoworship.org.

Journey to Worship includes 11 original songs written by Minister Griffiths. The NSBC performance was produced by Griffiths and Deacon Gerald Young and was directed by Nicole Morgan. Reviews raved about the cast members and gave kudos to Patrick D. McCoy, director of the Journey to Worship Community Choir,

and Edmond Charles, musical director.

Sarah Hearn of *The Washington Examiner* described *Journey to Worship* as “a triumph in storytelling and a story that needs to be told time and again, because after all, life is a journey.” ❖



Photos: Richard Joseph Gordon



Journey to Worship Cast Members

Jahari GriffithsNarrator

Dante PopeYoung David

David GriffithsPastor Davidian

Monique GriffithsMother

Marlissa HudsonAngel

Oh Kyung HeeKorean student

Marcellus CrewsPastor Williams

Gary NelsonUncle Gary



NSBC Opens Arms to Family in Need

By Yvonne Gowdy



Photo: Deborah Crain Kemp

Nineteenth Street Baptist Church has adopted a family through the D.C. Department of Human Services (DHS) One Congregation, One Family Mentoring Program. This initiative is led by the Outreach Committee, formed as a result of the church's Future Search sessions in 2014.

The One Congregation, One Family program enlists local churches to adopt and be a mentor to a family transitioning from a D.C. shelter to a home environment of their own. We have

adopted the Coleman Family, a young mother and her 4-year old daughter who live in Southeast D.C. They moved from a shelter to their apartment in 2014.

Thus far, we have helped Ms. Coleman with resume writing, interview skills, nutrition, parenting skills, house cleaning and laundry habits. We purchased school uniforms and accessories for her daughter through a stipend from DHS. Committee member Cheryl Calloway, who has since moved away, offered legal advice to help with a housing issue. Church members have responded to our requests for furniture, household items, clothes, toiletries, linen and a host of other things to help make their home pleasant and comfortable. As part of the mentoring process we meet twice a month with the family; the Benning (Dorothy I. Height) Neighborhood Library is one of our favorite meeting places.

DHS works with us along the way and has provided a mini-grant to cover our administrative costs. We completed the first phase of a six-month program last November. The next phase is eight months long and begins in February.

Our experience thus far has been both rewarding and challenging. The Committee is very grateful for the church's support, and Ms. Coleman is very appreciative of all that we have done for her family. It can take a while for a family to get back on its feet, so continue to keep the Colemans in your prayers and join us as we continue to nurture and provide a foundation of life skills to this family.

For further information and to volunteer, contact Outreach Committee Team Leader Yvonne Gowdy at (301) 559-3139 or (202) 731-1399. ❖

Outreach Committee Members

Yvonne Gowdy (Team Leader)
Sybil Barbour
Cheryl Calloway
Gloria Spann
Ferlandia Townsend
Rev. Reginald Townsend
Deaconess E. Louise White

New Arrivals



**Asher Noel Jones &
Bolden Noel Jones**

August 21, 2015

Asher - 5 lbs. 7oz., 19 inches

Bolden - 3 lbs. 10 oz., 17 inches

Parents:

Shaylah Nunn and Charlie Jones

Maternal Grandparents:

Deaconess Cathy Nunn and Irving Nunn

Paternal Grandparents:

Gregory Jones and Martha Jones



Mia Caris Renée Rice

January 4, 2016

6 lbs. 9 oz., 18.5 inches

Parents: Libi and Ron Rice

Maternal Grandparents:

Charlie Sprow and Renée Sprow



Evan Fox Suggs

January 10, 2016

6 lbs. 2 oz., 19.5 inches

Parents: Kiel and Shani Suggs

Maternal Grandmother: Rhonda Glaudé



Photo: Deborah Crain Kemp

Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to the college students who received scholarships from the church on January 3, 2016. The scholarships result from the combined efforts of the church's general scholarship fund and the Geraldine L.M.Tate/Edward A. Beasley scholarships, sponsored by the Helping Hand Club. Pictured from left to right: Youth Minister Rev. Eddie Martin Jr., Milan Wolfe, Taylor Weldon, Grace Lightfoot, Lawrence Hayes, Nicholas Brandon, Deacon Stan Britt (standing in for daughter Amara Britt), Dorean Collins, Leah Dawson, Carolyn Wilson (standing in for nephews Triston Thompson and Tyler Thompson), and Interim Pastor Rev. James Crosson Jr. (Scholarship recipients not shown: Clarence Bradford Ellison, Jamal Gregory, Edmund Hundley, Christopher Trotman, Arnita Turner, and Sydni Williams) Sheila Beale is president of the Helping Hand Club. Deaconess E. Louise White coordinates the NSBC scholarships.

FROM THE EDITOR

Karen E. Williamson



Are you receiving The Epistle in your inbox?

If you did not receive an emailed copy of *The Epistle* from Nineteenth Street Baptist Church (19thSt@everyblessing.org), please send a note with your preferred email address to Epistle@everyblessing.org. We will help you get added to the distribution list.

You can read current and past issues of *The Epistle* online at the church website, www.everyblessing.org. You can also print specific pages or entire issues, if you prefer a paper copy.

Have good news you want to share in The Epistle?

Send announcements of weddings, engagements, births, promotions, new jobs, retirements, awards, graduations, performances and other news with a photo to Epistle@everyblessing.org.

Correction

A photo caption last month incorrectly identified the organization giving gifts to NSBC Ministers. The caption should have stated that the gifts were from the Jarvis Memorial Club.

“
To this day I believe we are here on Earth to live,
grow, and do what we can to make this world a
better place for all people to enjoy freedom.”

~ Rosa Parks

Welcome New Member



Dottie Huggins

grew up and attended school in Richmond, Virginia. She is an alumna of Virginia Commonwealth University.

She moved to this area in the 1970s and now

lives in Silver Spring, Maryland.

She started working for what is now Verizon in high school as an operator, which led to an early retirement as an information system manager.

Ms. Huggins maintained her membership in her home church in Richmond until now. She decided to join Nineteenth Street Baptist Church because of friends at the church and because when her mother moved here in the last year of her life Rev. Crosson visited several times to minister to her.

Photo: Deborah Crain Kemp

Black History Month Arts & Cultural Events

Compiled by Sharon Anderson

Black History Month is associated with the work of Dr. Carter G. Woodson. In 1915 he founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life & History which is now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life & History (ASALH). According to the ASALH website:

In 1926, Dr. Woodson initiated the celebration of Negro History Week, which corresponded with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. In 1976, this celebration was expanded to include the entire month of February, and today Black History Month garners support throughout the country as people of all ethnic and social backgrounds discuss the black experience. ASALH views the promotion of Black History Month as one of the most important components of advancing Dr. Woodson's legacy.

There are a number of events during February to celebrate Black History. Here's a sampling to get you started.

January 27 – February 21

Father Comes Home from the Wars
Round House Theatre
4545 East-West Highway, Bethesda, MD
www.roundhousetheatre.org
(240) 644-1100

February 2–7

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
The Kennedy Center
www.Kennedy-Center.org
(202) 467-4600

February 6

National Museum of African American History & Culture
Black History Month Family Day
Smithsonian National Museum of American History, 1400 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004
nmaahc.si.edu

February 10 – March 25, 2016

National Museum of African American History & Culture
Changing America: The Emancipation Proclamation, 1863 & the March on Washington, 1963: A Traveling Exhibition
Harford Community College, 401 Thomas Run Road, Bel Air, MD. (443) 412-2495



February 20

Association for the Study of African American Life & History (ASALH)
90th Annual Black History Month Luncheon
Washington Renaissance Hotel
999 9th Street, NW, Washington, DC
asalh100.org/asalh-calendar

Month of February

National Museum of African American History & Culture
Through the African American Lens: Selections from the Permanent Collection
National Museum of American History, 1400 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004
nmaahc.si.edu

Month of February

Newseum, 555 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW; Washington, DC 20001
Exhibits: 1) Make Some Noise: Students and the Civil Rights Movement
2) 1966: Civil Rights at 50
www.newseum.org/visit/tickets

Calendar

FEBRUARY

February 5-7 - Youth Ministry Weekend, The Rock Retreat, Ocean City, Maryland

Tuesday, February 9 - Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, 5:30 PM

Wednesday, February 10 - Ash Wednesday Lenten Service and Lunch, Noon

Wednesday, February 10 - Joint Board Business Meeting, 7 PM

Friday, February 12 - Church Business Meeting, 7 PM

Saturday, February 13 - Music Ministry Concert - 4 pm, Jazz Pianist Dwayne Adell performing

Sunday, February 14 - Helping Hand Club Sunday

Wednesday, February 17 - Lenten Service and Lunch, Noon

Sunday, February 21 - Youth Church, 10:45 AM

Wednesday, February 24 - Lenten Service and Lunch, Noon

Sunday, February 28 - Jubilee & Global Missions Sunday

MARCH

Wednesday, March 2 - Lenten Service and Lunch, Noon

Wednesday, March 9 - Lenten Service and Lunch, Noon

Wednesday, March 16 - Lenten Service and Lunch, Noon

Sunday, March 20 - Palm Sunday

Sunday, March 20 - Youth Church, 10:45 AM

Thursday, March 24 - Maundy Thursday Supper, Communion and Foot Washing, 7 PM

Friday, March 25 - Good Friday

Sunday, March 27 - Church School Easter Program, 8:30 AM

Sunday, March 27 - Easter Sunday