

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ! You are reading the First Edition for 2019 of *The Greater First FOCUS*! As we have already enthusiastically and joyously embarked on the New Year 2019, we recall that on the first Sunday of January, I declared our church's annual theme: **"GFBC is Journeying with Jesus in 2019: Bountiful Blessings, Abundant Life, Doing God's Will!"** Our theme is based on Mark 3:13-19. In our thematic text, Mark's Gospel narrative highlights the **"Call Story"** of the twelve apostles of Christ. In that story, they are **called to a "Journey with Jesus" through His:**

- **Summoning them to the Summit** on the mountain;
- **Sanctifying Appointment** when he ordained them as His Accompanying Apostles; and then,
- **Sending them to Preach the word and to have Power over sickness and the devil.**

At the outset of 2019, the Lord gave me a strong sense that we were going to be traveling adventurously with God this year while experiencing His supernatural, sovereign sustenance of bountiful blessings and abundant life as we do the will of God in this church, in our lives and in this world. The Lord our God never ceases to amaze me how each and every year He reveals for us a theme that is so relevant for the times and seasons that we will encounter as we move through the course of the calendar! A **"Theme"** by definition is: **"The subject** of a talk, a piece of writing, a person's thoughts or an exhibition; **a topic.** It is **an idea** that recurs in or pervades a work of art or literature. And it

is a **setting given** to a venue or activity **intended to evoke a particular country, historical period, culture, etc."**

Divine Creative Genius is manifest through the way that God weaves the fabric of our lives with the rich, colorful, light and dark threads of the Bible, faith, family, freedom, fellowship, heritage, history, life-experience, and relationship. And with ALL this material the Lord makes the journey of our life into a tapestry-like work of art!

And now here

Pastor's Focal Point

we are in the month of February celebrating Black/African American History Month and once again we can see that God was at work concerning our 2019 thematic thrust. Unbeknownst to me in January, when I announced our church's theme "GFBC is Journeying with Jesus in 2019," that on the first Sunday in February, I would open our church bulletin to read that "The ASALH announces that their Black History Theme is: BLACK MIGRATIONS." The ASALH is the "Association for the Study of African Life and History." This association is known as the Founders of Black History Month. Their theme "emphasizes the movement of people of African descent to new destinations and subsequently to new social realities. While inclusive of the earlier centuries, this theme focuses on the 20th century through today. Beginning in the early decades of the 20th century, African American migration patterns included relocation from southern farms to southern cities; from the South to the Northeast, Midwest

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WEEKLY & MONTHLY SERVICES

Sunday School

9:15 a.m.

Praise & Worship

10:45 a.m.

Church Worship

11:00 a.m.

Communion

1st Sunday

Baptismal

4th Sunday

Bible Study

Tuesday

7:00 p.m.

Wednesday

11:00 a.m.

Prayer Meeting

Tuesday

8:00 p.m.

Mid-Day

Prayer Service

Wednesday

12 noon

Men's Ministry

2nd Saturday

11:00 a.m.

**Daughters of Zion—
GFBC Women's Ministry**

Saturday before 3rd Sunday

12:30 p.m.

**Eliza Smallwood
Missionary Ministry**

2nd Sunday

BTU

4th Saturday

Greater First FOCUS

EXEC. EDITOR

Dr. W. C. Ridley, Jr., Pastor

EDITOR

Denise R. Johnson

PHOTOS

Denise Johnson

Lenita Clark

CAN YOU FIND THE 16 BOOKS OF THE BIBLE?

I once made a remark about the hidden books of the Bible. It was a lulu, kept people looking so hard for facts and for others, it was a revelation. Some were in a jam, especially since the names of the books were not capitalized, but the truth finally struck home to numbers of readers. To others, it was a real job. We want it to be a most fascinating few moments for you. Yes there will be some really easy ones to spot. Others may require judges to help them. I will quickly admit it usually takes a minister to fine one of them, and there will be loud lamentations when it is found. A little lady says she brews a cup of tea, so she can concentrate better. See how well you can compete. Relax now for there are really sixteen names of books of the Bible in this story. **(NOTE: Lack of correct punctuality is intentional for the purposes of this game.)**

1. _____	9. _____
2. _____	10. _____
3. _____	11. _____
4. _____	12. _____
5. _____	13. _____
6. _____	14. _____
7. _____	15. _____
8. _____	16. _____

MINISTRIES

Operational and Support

- Ministries**
- Audio-Visual
- Bereavement
- Birthday
- Flower
- Greater First *FOCUS*
- Hospitality
- Kitchen
- Mary E. Peyton Nurses
- Pastor's Aide
- IPM Ministry
- (*Intercessors Praying Mightily*)
- Transportation
- Usher Board—Junior & Youth
- Usher Board—Senior

Educational

- Baptist Training Union
- Computer
- Creative Arts
- Daughters of Zion

Men's

- New Members
- Scholarship
- Sunday School
- Youth & Young Adult

Missionary Ministries

- Eliza Smallwood
- Outreach
- Warriors for Christ (Youth)

Music and Dance Ministries

- Fellowship Choir
- Gospel Chorus
- Judah Worship & Praise
- Men's Chorus
- Senior Choir
- Voices of Praise Dancers
- Volunteer Choir
- Youth & Young Adult Choir



- Mr. Nathaniel Isong
- Mrs. Utenge Isong
- Ms. Jocelyn King
- Ms. Markeithia Baken
- Ms. Candice Milstead
- Mr. Michael Benjamin
- Ms. Hoa Nguyen
- Mr. Emmanuel Sidney
- Mr. J'Kwan Smith
- Ms. Darla Sierra
- Ms. Shakita Adkinson

and West; from the Caribbean to US cities as well as to migrant labor farms; and the emigration of noted African Americans to Africa and to European cities, such as Paris and London after the end of World War I and World War II. Such migrations resulted in more diverse and stratified interracial and intra-racial urban population amid a changing social milieu.”

Upon my reflection back to the Homegoing Service of Mother Wilma B. Felder on Saturday, November 3, 2018, I declared in her eulogy that our “Greatness is molded in us and manifested by us living through and participating in the “great” moments and movements of our times.” One of the “marks of the greatness” of her life was that she was a part of the “Great” Migration: when more than 6 million African Americans relocated from the rural South to a city (in her case) up North.” Many were driven from their homes by unsatisfactory economic opportunities and harsh segregationist laws. The period of time of the Great Migration was from 1915 to 1960. During that period, African Americans began to build a new place for themselves in public life, actively confronting racial prejudice as well as economic, political and social challenges. Brother and Sister Felder and family moved to Washington, DC from South Carolina looking for a better life for their family!

In Mark, chapter 3, our Lord Jesus Christ calls The 12 Disciples and us today to “Journey” with Him. This journeying involves the fact that we too must “migrate” as Mother Felder and many of our forebears did. They invite us to travel with Jesus looking for a better life in the “city.” Humanly speaking, this is an ancient quest. It is a quest fueled by our faith! As a matter of fact, according to Matthew 1:1 and Luke 3:34, our Lord Jesus’s human family descends from the lineage of Abraham the “Father of the Faith and Friend of God.” In the Book of Genesis, chapters 12 through 25 is the story of Abraham. There, beginning in chapter 12, God called him into a covenant of faithful service. It required him to leave the territory of his faithless extended family and follow God’s call: *“The LORD said to Abram: Leave your country,*

your family, and your relatives and go to a land that I will show you.” (Genesis 12:1 CEV)

Let’s look at Abraham’s background that we may discover his roots. Abraham, Moses, Samuel and David were all Horite Hebrews as evidenced by the common marriage and ascendancy structure of their families and reveals a distinctive pattern the Horite Hebrew ruler-priest caste. The pattern of Moses’ family is identical to that of the Nilo-Saharan rulers listed in Genesis 4, 5, 10, and 11, and to Abraham’s father Terah and Samuel’s father Elkanah.

David’s father was ruler-priest of the Horite Hebrew city of Bethlehem. It appears that all these great men were Horites or Horim. Jews call their ancestors “Horim” which is Horite in English Bibles. Abraham ruled in Edom, the land of the Biblical Horites. Edom is named in the Bible as one of the ancient seats of wisdom. The wisdom of Horites extended to medicine, astronomy, writing, commerce, navigation, natural sciences and architecture. Other Horite rulers are listed in Genesis 36, including Seir, the Horite, from whom Aram, Moses father is descended. At the time that Abraham lived, there were no nations in the modern sense. There were peoples, clans and castes. Ethnic identities aligned with the territorial chief. Jewish ethnicity, however, figured through the Jewish mother.

Abraham’s ethnicity was Kushite and his father was a ruler-priest descendent of Nimrod, the son of Kush. By the way, Kush (Cush) and **Kushite means “Black!”** Nimrod was a “sent-away son” who became a mighty ruler in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. This is why we first meet Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees, though his ancestors were cattle-herding Nilo-Saharans. The prefix “Nilo” means “of or pertaining to the Nile River.” And “Saharans” pertains to the Sahara region of Northern Africa.

Note: When someone asks about ethnicity of a Biblical figure, they usually want to know that person’s appearance. The Bible tells us very little

about the physical appearance of most Biblical persons. This is probably because people were less concerned about what we call “racial” distinctions. The ancient Afro-Asiatic world was extremely varied. There were black and red Nubians. Nubians are natives or inhabitants of Nubia: a member of the group of darker skinned peoples that formed a powerful empire between Egypt and Ethiopia from the 6th to the 14th centuries; any of several languages spoken in central and northern Sudan.

Now, let's get back to Abraham's “journey!” In the Book of Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 10 speaks of Abraham when it says, *“For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”*

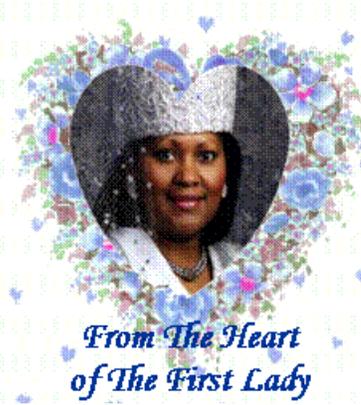
Look at the contrast of Abraham's Life Journey of Faith when compared to his distant relatives who stayed in Mesopotamia and attempted to build the Tower of Babel at the close of Genesis 11. There are five characteristic differences:

- **First, Abraham puts his trust in God's guidance rather than human device.** The tower builders believed by the work of their own skill and ingenuity they could devise a tower *“with its top in the heavens”* (Genesis 11:4). They tried to achieve **significance and security** in a way that usurped God's authority.
- **Second, Abraham trusted God's promise that He would make his name great (Genesis 12:2).** The builders sought to make a name for themselves (Genesis 11:4). The difference was their desire to pursue one's fame on their own terms. **God did indeed make Abraham famous**, not for his own sake but in order that *“all the families of the earth shall be blessed”* (Genesis 12:3). The builders still remain anonymous today.
- **Third, Abraham was willing to go wherever God led him while the builders attempted to huddle together in their accustomed**

space. They created their project out of fear that they would be scattered across the earth (11:4). In doing so, they rejected **God's purpose for humanity** *“to fill all the earth”* and to *“Be fruitful and multiply”* (Genesis 1:28). When we cease to aspire for more than we can attain on our own, our aspirations become insignificant. Ungodly work stems from no one but ourselves, and it seeks to only benefit ourselves and the few who are close to us. **Godly work is willing to depend on God's guidance and authority, and it desires to grow widely as a blessing to all the world.**

- **Fourth, Abraham was willing to let God lead him into new relationships.** While the tower of Babel builders sought to close themselves off in a guarded fortress, Abraham trusted God's promise that his family would grow into a great nation (Genesis 12:2; 15:5). Though they lived in the land of Canaan, they formed good relationships with those whom they came in contact (Genesis 21:22-34; 23:1-12). This is the gift of community. This is a theology of work: *“God's design is for people to work in healthy networks of relationship.”*
- **Finally, Abraham was blessed with patience to take a long-term view.** God's promises were to be realized in the time of Abraham's offspring, not in the time of Abraham himself. The Apostle Paul interpreted the “offspring” to be Jesus (Galatians 3:19), meaning the payoff date was more than a thousand years in the future. In fact, the promise to Abraham will not be fulfilled completely until the return of Christ. In Matthew 24:30-31 it says: *“Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”*

Continued on page 7



*Open our eyes Lord,
we want to see Jesus,
To reach out and touch
Him, and say that we
love Him.*

*Open our ears Lord,
and help us to listen.
Open our eyes, Lord,*

we want to see Jesus.

Maranatha Singers

Jesus greetings! “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

(Ephesians 1:2) Praise the Lord for giving our Pastor, Dr. Ridley the vision to circulate this wonderful mode of communication called the “**FOCUS**”. As you see on the front of the newspaper, the title “**FOCUS**” is an acronym which means “Fellowship of Christ’s United Servants.” We need to have *focus* in order to be true, committed, destiny-driven and divinely determined Disciples of Christ. When we have *focus* we can *inform* people of what the Lord our God has to say through His Word. As we *inform* it becomes information and this information provokes people to *reform* and then becomes an attitude of reformation to make plain what the Word instructs us to become. We become the avenue in which people can resist conforming to this world and experience a transformation to become *transformed* by the ‘**renewing of their mind**’ as related in Romans 12:1-2. As we remain in *focus* we can *enable* others to be *encouraged* to live an *enlightened* life. These *enlightened* lives become *enhanced* by the Light of God which will *energize* all who come in contact with us. Remember Jesus said we are the light of the world. How awesome it will be when we are in *focus* with the Lord. Being in *focus* with the Lord and His illuminating Word is what unifies us to see Him more clearly, love Him more dearly and follow Him more nearly day by day. When we, The Greater First Baptist Church, are in *focus*, we can live as our theme proclaims by triumphing to tell

God’s deeds in 2017!! Let us remain in *focus* both to do *His* will and to receive *His* good pleasure. This year as we *Focus* “**GFBC IS JOURNEYING WITH JESUS IN 2019.**” We are in a most positive sense “B.A.D.” Disciples of Christ: “**Bountiful Blessings, Abundant Life, Doing God’s Will**” (Mark 3:13-19).

In the Old Testament there was a prophetess named *Hulda*. Hulda was truly in *focus* to do the will of the Lord. I would like to share this wonderful story about Hulda with you which is found in II Kings 22:14-20.

Hulda

The Prophetess Who Changed a Nation

Hulda played a significant part in the history of Israel, although she appeared only once on the stage of the nation’s history, during a time of religious defection.

In Jerusalem, King Josiah of Judah initiated renewed interest in the Book of the Law, and Hulda participated in the subsequent spiritual revival. She was the wife of Shallum, who was the “keeper of the wardrobe” (possibly either royal robes and attire or priestly garments and vestments). They lived in the Second Quarter, a newer section of Jerusalem which developed as a westward or northern expansion of the old city (perhaps somewhat like a modern-day suburb).

Hulda, and not Jeremiah or Zephaniah, both of whom were active prophets during this time, was consulted when the king instructed the priests to “inquire of the Lord” as to the meaning of the Book of the Law, a scroll that had been found during the work of restoration and cleaning in the temple. It was significant that with the number of prophets living in Jerusalem at that time, the priest Hilkiah and the rest of the king’s advisors turned to a woman for a word from God. This nullifies the reasoning some use to suggest that God only uses women for ministry when no

From the Heart

men are available. Obviously, whether in a private audience or in the presence of the congregation, God used Hulda to bear testimony and deliver a message from Him to the High Priest and to the king (II Kings 22:14-20).

The regard for Hulda's own integrity and authority as a woman of God made her validation of the recently discovered Book of the Law all that was required for immediate action on the part of the king. Her message was not her own, but from the Lord. The fact that the phrase "Thus says the Lord..." is repeated four times in her short prophecy emphasizes that Hulda understood her responsibility and opportunity to be a channel through whom God delivered His Word (II Kings 22:15-17,19).

All reforms set forth by King Josiah were based on the Word of God as given to this woman. Hulda, was apparently so well known as a woman of God and so highly trusted with regard to her understanding of God's Law that for a time her nation's whole religious consciousness and practice was re-ignited in faithfulness to God. Hulda, a deeply devout woman, made her God-given spiritual gifts available to God, and she was obedient and faithful to deliver the Word of God from God to her people. (The Woman's Study Bible by Nelson)

Hulda was a woman in *focus*. Therefore, be encouraged Daughters of Zion. Be confident, exhilarated and expectant as women of the Most high God. As we remain in *focus* we will see and hear the Lord God more clearly. He will use us as a catalyst to rekindle the passions of our Family, friends, school mates, fellow workers, etc. to being fully dedicated and devoted to Him. The Lord will fulfill our divine destiny as we serve Him with an attitude of devotion, gratitude, humility, steadfastness and, last but not least, unconditional love. Rejoice, Saints of God! Our latter days will be even greater than our former days!! The best is yet to come!!!

*Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord,
By the power of grace divine;
Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope,
And my will be lost in thine.*

*Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord,
To the cross where Thou has died;
Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord,
To Thy precious, bleeding side.*
Fanny J. Crosby

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies—presenting all your members and faculties—as a living sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world—this age, fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs. But be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind—by its new ideals and its new attitude—so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].
Romans 12:1-2 The Amplified Bible

Pastor's Focal Point (continued)

In summary, God promised Abraham fame, fruitfulness and good relationships, by which He meant Abraham and his family would bless the whole world, and in due course be blessed themselves beyond imagining (Gen. 22:17). Enjoy the Journey!

Christmas 2018 at Greater First Baptist Church

The Christmas season at Greater First Baptist Church is a wonderful time of year. The Senior Choir sang the perennial favorite “Rockin’ Jerusalem” directed by Dr. Jacqueline Ransom. The Creative Arts and Music ministries present a musical dramatization of the birth of Christ, this year entitled “The Light of the World” (see below article). The November and December birthday ministries work together to serve delicious food representing their respective months. Last, but not least, the Sunday School presents its annual Christmas program complete with candy and oranges, this year held in the Rev. Dr. Edward Thomas Fellowship Hall.



A Bright Light on the Second Sunday of the Advent Season

The Music Ministry of the Greater First Baptist Church (GFBC) under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Blanche R. Hammond, has done it again – retelling the nativity story with a unique blend of the old and familiar with the new and non-traditional.

On Sunday, December 9, 2018, during the morning worship service, the Ministry presented “Light of the World,” a musical dramatization of the birth of Christ. The updated version was conceived by church musician, Dr. Jacqueline Ransom. From the very beginning, the musical became a team effort involving several ministries: namely, the Creative Arts, the Audio-Visual and the Sacred Dance Ministries. Both very new and long-standing members helped stage and present the production.

As the Pastor, Rev. Dr. Winston C. Ridley, Jr., called the congregation to worship, he introduced the Worship Leader, Sister Evelyn Rodgers-

Washington, a seasoned, multi-talented member of GFBC. She then led the congregation as they recited verses and an invocation and sang, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” which served as the prologue to the musical. As the Worship Leader exited, the musical unfolded with three main characters – the father, mother and son – narrating the Christmas story using applicable Bible verses.

The story flowed with sequential scenes appropriately titled:

- The Prophecy of the Messiah
- The Coming of Jesus as Announced to Mary and Joseph
- The Preparation for the Birth of Jesus
- Jesus is Born
- Jesus’ Birth is Announced to the Shepherds
- The Shepherds Find the Baby Jesus
- The Shepherds’ Reaction to the Baby Jesus
- The Wise Men Bring Their Gifts to Jesus
- The Wise Men Present Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh
- The Light of the World is Here!!!



Merry Christmas

The narration was punctuated with awe-inspiring selections sung by the majestic GFBC Choir and talented soloists. Among the selections were “Emmanuel,” “And the Glory,” “I Choose You,” “Star Child,” “O Holy Night,” “Rise Up Shepherds and Follow,” “Now Behold the Lamb,” “Bethlehem,” and “In the First Light.” Also, costumed characters, including tiny angels, special lighting, slides and visuals, a handcrafted nativity set and a liturgical dance accented the narration.

A beautiful parallel occurred as the congregation became a part of the production during a brief interlude. Just prior to the Three Wise Persons bringing gifts to Jesus, the congregants sang “The First Noel” and presented their own gifts in the form of weekly offerings.

For the closing scene, Pastor Ridley served as the narrator and presented a short, inspiring message. The closing selection – sung by everyone – was “Go Tell It On the Mountain.”

The outstanding cast and crew included: the narrators - Dr. Frazier O’Leary, LaSonya Olden and Dillon Atkins; the angels – Lynaea Moten, Ainsley Walters and Marcia Linder; Joseph and Mary – Nicholas Felder and Melinda Bing; King Herod – Michael Benjamin; the Three Wise Men – Neena Felder, Jennifer Asante and Donnell Banks; the shepherds – Storee Denson, LaDean Holman, and Cannon Huggins; the Sacred Dancer – Rev. Theresa Denson; the Soloists – Sister Linda Watkins, First Lady Bonita Ridley, Trustee Kendall Brown, Sister Ebony Walters, Brother Michael Hamilton, Deacon Lucius Manley and Sister Harolyn Harrison; the Musicians – Sister Janet Johnson, Brother Douglas McMillan, Sister Cilista Johnson, and Dr. Jacqueline Ransom; the Stage Crew – Brother William Atkins, Brother Lawrence Turner and Sister Diamond Hernandez; Audio-Visuals – Sister Pamela Lee; Sister Shawn Pearson and Deacon John Richardson; Artistic Director – Sister Tameka Johnson; Creative Arts Advisor – Dr. Judith Webb and the steadfast GFBC ushers.

Submitted by Dr. Judith Webb



The Greatest Of These Is Love

On Tuesday, December 18, 2018, at 6:00 pm, Leon Clark, Jr. directed the Cleveland Elementary School Choir in its annual Christmas program. The choir sang favorites such as “Oh, Holy Night,” “All I Want for Christmas,” “This Christmas,” and “Jingle Bell Rock” among others. Guest musicians included Greater First Baptist’s own Janet and Cilista Johnson. Several GFBC members were in attendance as well.



Member News

Visitation With Edith Tapscott

On Tuesday, November 27, 2018, members of the Deaconess and July Birthday Ministries made a trip to Woodbridge, VA to visit Sister Edith Tapscott. The following persons were on the trip: Pastor Ridley, Deaconesses Margaret “Gerri” Green, Delorace Bowman, Doris Jackson, Minnie Gardner, Jean W. Johnson and Sharon Cooper. Sisters Annetta Beatty and Antoinette “Toni” Jones also attended.

We arrived around noon and were warmly greeted by the staff at Tribute at The Glen. This facility is about two years old and is quite lovely. We were led to a separate dining room that was all set up for lunch. We had not planned to have lunch but soon readjusted our schedules. Sister Tapscott was brought down to the dining area by an attendant. After a round of hugs and kisses, she took a seat at the head of the table. Pastor Ridley was by her side and offered additional greetings and prayer. Oh, how we enjoyed her company, the fellowship with each other, and the delicious lunch. The beautiful

rays of sunshine radiating through the large, stately windows in the dining room appeared to say, “see how God loves us so much.” Before we left, Sister Tapscott’s



daughter, Pam, stopped by. She was glad to see us and stated that we should come again, soon.

Toni Jones, a member of the July Birthday Ministry said, “It was such a joy to visit and break bread with my friend and member of the July Birthday Ministry.”

After giving cards, gifts, more hugs and kisses we departed and had a safe return to Washington, DC.

Submitted by Deaconess Margaret “Gerri” Green

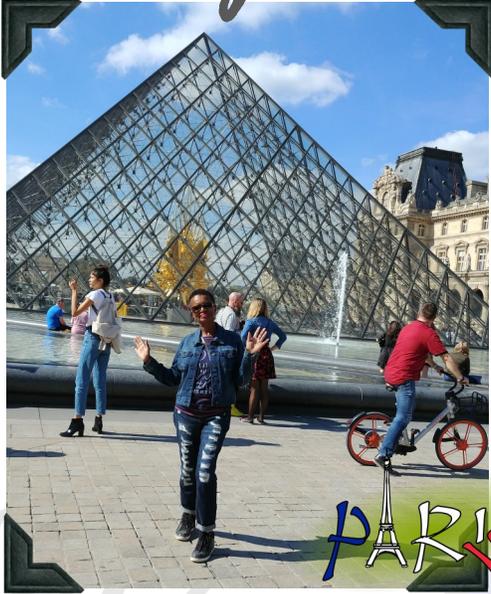


Thank You for Your Service

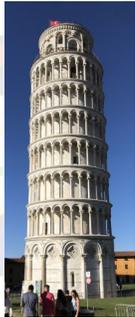
Sunday, January 27, outgoing Church treasurer, Trustee Larry Green, was presented a plaque from the Trustee Board and Rev. Ridley. Also recognized were the following trustees emeriti.: Raymond Jarvis, Eules Pratt and Grady Humphrey. A plaque for Trustee Jacqueline McQuillar will be sent to her residence in Georgia.



GFB C World Travelers



Cape
Town



Pisa



CUBA



ROME



AMTRAK®

Travel Adventures

Synopsis of Trip to South Africa

I traveled to South Africa with a group called ‘Seniors On the Go,’ who are members of the Rising Star Baptist Church from St. Louis, Missouri. There were 14 of us in the group. My sister, Patricia Brown, is a member of the church and has traveled with them on numerous trips.

Our trip took place from September 13-22, 2018. It was indeed a very long journey of over 8,900 miles. The group flew on South African Airways from Dulles and the first stop was Accra, Ghana, which took eleven hours. After about an hour’s layover in Accra, we flew on to Johannesburg, South Africa (SA) which took another five hours. We then transferred to another plane to Cape Town, SA which was another two hour plane ride.

We were met in Cape Town by our tour guide, Robbie, where we spent four extraordinary days. We stayed in the Commodore Hotel, which offered spectacular views of the city. The highlight of our stay in Cape Town was our visit to Robben Island where Nelson Mandela spent 18 of his 27 years of imprisonment for his fight for freedom from the apartheid system of segregation in SA. It was a very emotional experience as we visited his tiny cell. Our guide at Robben Island was a former prisoner himself who was also in prison seven years during some of the time Mandela was there. He was asked how he is able to go there now and he responded by saying that it is a job and he gets to go home each day. He appeared to be in his

late 80’s and said the pay helps.

We visited Table Mountain which has one of the most beautiful and scenic views in all of Cape Town.

After leaving Cape Town we flew back to Johannesburg, where our tour guide was Lindsey, and traveled to Soweto. Johannesburg is a city with awesome beauty and yet oppressive slums. However, what I found to be amazing are the people and their resilience in spite of the circumstances in which they happen to live. In Soweto, we visited the Mandela House—the home where Mandela lived with his second wife, Winnie and their two daughters—before he was arrested. In his book “The Long Walk to Freedom” Mandela wrote “It was the opposite of grand, but it was my first true home of my own and I was mightily proud.” We also saw the Presidential home he occupied after he was elected the President of South Africa following his release from prison. We stayed in the DaVinci Hotel and Suites in downtown Johannesburg for one night.

We then traveled the next day to the Ivory Tree Game Lodge, located in the Pilanesberg National Park—a three hour bus ride from downtown Johannesburg—for a two-night stay. We enjoyed expertly guided game drives with other lodge guests in this spectacular wildlife kingdom. Our game drivers



Travel Adventures

took us to places where we were able to spot lions, zebras, elephants, hippos and giraffes, to name a few, in their natural habitat.

This is just a brief synopsis of the trip, although I could say so much more. Even though the journey in getting there was very long, I feel very blessed to have had the opportunity to do so. While I may not travel to South Africa again, the lasting memories of the trip with that wonderful group, Seniors on the Go, are priceless and will stay with me always.

Submitted by Irma D. Salley



VISIT TO CUBA

On November 12, 2018, I boarded the Norwegian Sky Cruise Ship for a cruise to Cuba! After all I had read about the Cuban culture and the former Fidel Castro regime, I never thought this would be a place I wished to visit. Well, out of curiosity, I decided to go. Not only was the cruise ship beautiful and offered lots of entertainment, I found the landscape of parts of Havana, Cuba to be beautiful, the people appeared friendly, and the words of the tour guide to be informative.

I was only able to take one “exclusive” and extensive tour on this trip, so I must go back to see and hear more about the current political state of the country and enjoy the flavor of the culture. Besides being fascinated by beautiful buildings [on our tour route](#) throughout the city and the old, colorful cars (for hire), our guide said “all persons in Cuba are educated”. Her definition of educated is any person who receives a ninth (9th) grade education. [My introduction to Cuba left me wanting to know more](#), so I must return to see more of the country and hear more about its culture.

Submitted by Deaconess Margaret “Gerri” Green

TRIP TO PARIS

Trustee Gloria Stewart traveled to Paris in September with her two sisters, Ethel and Mary. The trip was great and an inspiring experience.



Travel Adventures

All Aboard!!!

Cross Country on Amtrak, from Union Station to Chicago, Illinois to Flagstaff, Arizona to Las Vegas, Nevada to Los Angeles, California to Albuquerque, New Mexico! The group consisted of approximately forty persons from New York, North Carolina, Virginia, Michigan and of course Washington, DC and Maryland.

In preparation for my trip, I laid out the potential outfits with shoes based on the activities, i.e., travel or sightseeing for the day. Of course, I added and removed until the final packing day. I got everything, including toiletries for 13 days in one suitcase, under the 50 pound limit with room to spare for souvenirs.

To occupy my time on the train, I found "Gratitude - A Prayer and Praise Coloring Journal". It was made for me. I was able to write and color my way across America!! There were beautiful sunrises and sunsets; mountains and hills; wheat fields and corn fields; cows, sheep, horses, prairie dogs, buffalo and then miles and miles of land.

Sightseeing highlights included Garretts Popcorn, the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, Boulder Dam, Navajo Point, Hollywood Walk of Fame, Wagon Mound, and Old Town Albuquerque.

Submitted by Sister Donna Brooks

Pictures from Page 11

- Trustee Gloria Stewart in Paris
- Sister Irma Salley in Cape Town, SA
- Old cars in Cuba taken by Deaconess Margaret "Gerri" Green
- The Clark Family in Rome, the Sistine Chapel and the Leaning Tower of Pisa
- Sister Donna Brooks at the Grand Canyon

CUBA

Cuba was a popular destination in 2018 for Greater First Baptist members. In addition to Deaconess Green, Sister LaSonya Olden (picture below), Mr. and Mrs. Geraldine and Clivious Johnson and Sister Frances Williams also visited Cuba.

Havana is the largest city in the Caribbean and considered to have one of the most culturally-rich city centers in the world. Havana has successfully preserved its colonial past as displayed in cathedrals, castles, museums and residential mansions. Vieja Habana or Old Havana has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage as it is the seat of the Presidential Palace and has more than 900 historical and cultural landmarks.

Classic cars are one of the more famous tourist attractions in Havana. Vintage cars from the 1950's, still in pristine condition, are available for sightseeing tours.



Above: Sister LaSonya Olden at the Christ of Havana statue.



Left: Hand-painted fans are popular souvenirs.

Happy Anniversary!



The Senior Usher Ministry celebrated its 138th Anniversary on Sunday, November 11, 2018 during morning service. Rev. Robert Hood delivered the message.

Veteran's Day was also celebrated on Sunday, November 11. GFBC veterans marched into the sanctuary, followed by the ushers. Deacon John Richardson gave a Veteran's Day Message and Trustee Denise Johnson gave a brief history of African Americans and World War I.



The Eliza Smallwood Missionary Ministry celebrated 140 years on Sunday, October 21, 2018 during the morning service. Their theme was "Reaching the World Through Mission Work." (Scripture reference: Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15)

Rev. Theresa Denson delivered the message. Deaconess Minnie Gardner served as the Worship Leader. Sister Gladys Baskettt is the president.



Musical Celebration

On Sunday, October 14, 2018, Dr. Blanche Hammond and the Music Ministry presented “Praise Is What We Do,” A Service of Celebration. The special worship service honored choir members who have served Greater First Baptist Church for over 40 years. The honorees received plaques presented to them by family members.

The Honorees

Trustee Norman Stover
Deaconess Doris W. Jackson
Sister Pamela Lee
Deaconess Willie Mae Osborn
Sister Elnora Baker
Sister Shawn Pearson
Brother James Beatty, Sr.
Sister Geraldine Johnson
Sister Christine Powell
Sister Annabelle Brown
Deacon Lucius Manley
Sister Lynne Freeman Bannerman
Deacon Gamelia Jackson
Rev. Frances Williams
Deaconess Lillian Broadnax
Trustee Marion Washington
Sister Lula McLaughlin
Sister Bessie Lampkins
Deacon Robert Bookhart

Sister Ina McNeil
Sister Donna Brooks
Deacon Calvin Johnson
Sister Lena Humphrey
Deaconess Doris Pearson
Sister Maudenia Makins
Brother Ennas McSwain
Sister Janice Queen
Trustee Karen Freeman
Deaconess Minnie Gardner
Sister Norma Hood
Sister Robin Yeldell
Sister Pauline Harris

Deceased members were also honored by family and friends:

- Sister Thelma Brooks by Sister Robin Yeldell
- Sister Lillian Fulp by Rev. Frances Williams
- Sister Marian Davis by Brother Brian Davis
- Sister Ollie Freeman by Sister Lynne F. Bannerman
- Brother Willard King by Sister Carolyn Hereford
- Brother John Thomas by Deacon Eugene Scates
- Sister Ophelia Stephens by Sister Edna Scott
- Brother Charles Brown by Trustee Kendall Brown
- Sister Irene Holmes by Deaconess Janice Lartman
- Sister Barbara Jarvis by Trustee Raymond Jarvis
- Sister Yvonne Robinson by Sister Kim Bradshaw
- Deaconess Virgella Randolph by Sister Ina McNeil



Greater First Baptist Events



Above: Lenita Clark, Neena Felder, Jatu Pajibo, Kiyarri Wilson, Jaiya Smith and Lisa Turner, advisor.

Below: Guest model, Tierra Nanches and moderator, Donna Brooks.



The Youth Ministry, C.E.N.T.E.R.E.D., presented “On the Runway Fashion Show” on Sunday, September 23, 2018. Sister Donna Brooks served as the moderator; Sister Lisa Turner is the advisor.

The show featured five scenes that were associated with Bible verses:

- Scene 1: All White Party (I Timothy 4:12)
- Scene 2: Seasonal Favorites (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2)
- Scene 3: Sunday’s Best (Psalm 100)
- Scene 4: Career Driven (Psalm 27:14)
- Scene 5: Uniquely You! (Psalm 139:14)

On Sunday, February 10, 2019, the Creative Arts Ministry performed a skit for Black History Month during morning service entitled “All Aboard!!...That Great Journey.” The skit was in line with the 2019 Black History Month theme “Black Migrations,” and featured various members “migrating” North through the Fayetteville, North Carolina train station.



Above: The entire cast. Below: (l-r) Darrell Pleasants, Storee Denson, Carmen Peters and JoAnn Chukwu. Deacon-in-Training Frazier O’Leary is the ticket collector at the station.



Greater First Baptist Weddings



Ms. Roshonda Den'e Campbell and Mr. Chidiadi Obizie Ugorji entered into holy matrimony on Saturday, September 8, 2018. Their wedding combined both American and Nigerian customs.

Ms. Ebony Jackson and Mr. Alan Walters were married on April 27, 2018. Their wedding also had an African theme. Pictured also is their daughter Ainsley.

In Loving Memory

January

Mr. Willard King
Mrs. Myrtle Tinsley

March

Mrs. Alma Holland

April

Mrs. Maggie Barnes

May

Ms. Paulette Cuffie
Ms. Salome Slade

July

Mrs. Marian Davis
Elder Edward Thomas, Jr.

August

Deacon Samuel Broadnax
Deacon Major Stewart
Mr. Maurice Holmes

October

Mrs. Wilma Felder
Mr. James Hereford

November

Miss Alma Williams

December

Deaconess Bernice Brooks
Mrs. Annie Blair



Helpful Tips

Take Control of Your Health: 6 Steps to Prevent a Fall

Every **11 seconds**, an older adult is seen in an emergency department for a fall-related injury.

Many falls are preventable.

Stay safe with these tips!

1

Find a good balance and exercise program

Look to build balance, strength, and flexibility. Contact your local Area Agency on Aging for referrals. Find a program you like and take a friend.



2

Talk to your health care provider

Ask for an assessment of your risk of falling. Share your history of recent falls.



3

Regularly review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist

Make sure side effects aren't increasing your risk of falling. Take medications only as prescribed.



4

Get your vision and hearing checked annually and update your eyeglasses

Your eyes and ears are key to keeping you on your feet.



5

Keep your home safe

Remove tripping hazards, increase lighting, make stairs safe, and install grab bars in key areas.



6

Talk to your family members

Enlist their support in taking simple steps to stay safe. Falls are not just a seniors' issue.



ncoa

National Council on Aging

To learn more, visit ncoa.org/FallsPrevention.

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON AGING



Are You a Victim of Identity Theft?

Is someone using your personal or financial information to make purchases, file taxes, get benefits or commit fraud? That's identity theft. Listed below are steps you should take immediately upon discovering the theft.

1. Call the companies where you know fraud occurred. Call the fraud department and explain that someone stole your identity. Ask them to close or freeze the accounts so that no one can add charges unless you agree.

Change logins, passwords and PINs for your accounts.

2. Place a fraud alert and get your credit reports. To place a free fraud alert, contact one of the three credit bureaus. That company must tell the other two.

Experion.com/help 888-397-3742
TransUnion.com/credit-help 888-909-8872
Equifax.com/personal/credit-report-services
800-685-1111

Get your free credit reports from the bureaus listed above. Go to annualcreditreport.com or call 877-322-8228.

3. Report identity theft to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Go to IdentityTheft.gov or call 1-877-438-4338.

For more information, go to IdentityTheft.gov. The site provides detailed advice to help you fix problems caused by identity theft.

Announcements

Inclement Weather Call Number

Is the church going to be open this Sunday or for this event?

If you find yourself asking this question, here is where you'll find the answer!

- In case of snow, severe inclement weather, street closings in the area, etc. dial 1-641-715-3900.
- A voice will ask you to enter a pin number. Enter 119010#
- You will hear a prerecorded message that will let you know the status of the services at the Greater First Baptist Church.



SAVE THE DATE!

The Baptist Ministers' Wives and Widows Association
of Washington, DC and Vicinity, Inc.
will hold their

Annual Fellowship Breakfast and Scholarship Fund

on

Saturday, April 13, 2019

at

The Camelot of Upper Marlboro

13905 Central Avenue

8:00 am until Noon

Tickets are \$50.00

Special Honoree: Della Cobb

Please see First Lady Bonita L. Ridley for scholarship information and tickets.

The Intercessory Prayer Ministry

will host a

Prayer Breakfast

Saturday, March 16, 2019

9:30 am until 11:30 am

Location: The Greater First Baptist Church Fellowship Hall

Theme: "Answering the Call to Prayer"

Facilitator: Elder Angela Thornton

National Community Church, Washington, DC