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www.antiochnorth.org
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The Church at Antioch

Bible-based, Christ-centered, Holy Spirit-led, Mission-bound • Fellowship, Evangelism, Doctrine, Stewardship

January-March 2021

Volume 10, Issue 2

Gentry faithfully fulfilling God's call

While taking a MasterLife Christian Education class, Homerzelle Gentry sat singing songs of praise, reading scripture, and quietly listening for God's voice.

For three hours, she did this, hoping God would show her his will for her life and more specifically how she was to serve him.

"I'd already been teaching Sunday school and singing in the choir," she said recently.

But during her quiet time with God that day a decade ago, she knew God wanted her to answer the call to become coordinator of the Children's Ministry and Children's Church at New Faith Baptist Church in Houston, TX, where she was a member.

"This meant that I had to leave the

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Second Anniversary

Celebrating Pastor Alexander, our example

On the last Sunday of February, Antioch Baptist Church North gathered to celebrate the second anniversary of the Rev. Kenneth Alexander - virtually, of course.

In true Antioch fashion, dozens of members, including a long parade of grateful college students, paid tribute via Zoom. There was Sister Mary Hill

from Fort Wayne, IN, Marcus Lee Jr., a law student at the University of Kentucky, Bethani and David Price, David and Michael Henderson, Chelsi Lester, Elizabeth Scott, and Samuel Tolbert.

Sister Myrna White, leading them off, reminded those watching from home that the number two is associated with harmony, balance, consideration and

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At the Pottery Barn, a Black history lesson

The end of another school year was fast-approaching, and Marcus Bishop was contemplating his next move.

That wasn't all that unusual. After years spent in kindergarten and middle school class-

rooms in both the Atlanta and DeKalb school districts, it was to be expected. It just so happened that in 2016 Bishop was expecting something else, too - direction from God. Should he continue teaching or follow

his heart and pursue his art?

"Honestly, God said 'do the work'," Bishop said recently. "I've got the rest."

For nearly five years now, Bishop has been doing the work, producing dozens of

pieces - a collection of mixed media artwork - even through the coronavirus pandemic.

And, not surprising, God has been doing the rest, open-

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A Message From The Pastor

My brothers and sisters,

Antioch never ceases to amaze me. Every time I think we have reached the heights, Antioch goes even higher. First, let me express my sincere gratitude for all the ways you made my Second Pastoral Anniversary special. My wife, Lisa, my daughter, Ashley, and my grandsons were given the royal treatment, not just on one day but throughout the month, and even now. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

If you were unable to view the Town Hall hosted by members of our COVID-19 Task Force, find it on our Facebook page and watch. We were given solid information by our own members who are not only well-qualified in the medical and public health fields but saved and sanctified. They provided answers to a lot of questions and cleared up a lot of misinformation that has been circulating.

AUMI was instrumental in bringing vaccinations to our community through a partnership with Northside Hospital. In our Fellowship Hall, we were able to provide both the first and second shots of the Pfizer vaccine. AUMI had already established an historic partnership with CORE to provide COVID-19 testing in our community, and the ministry continues to feed people on a daily basis, house and assist people in leaving behind lives of addiction, and mentor our youth so that their potential can become a reality.

Our members continue to make history as they make the world better. Our in-residence artist, Bro. Marcus E. Bishop, Jr.'s show in Lenox Mall was the first of its kind. Bro. Julius Thomas is fighting injustice and systemic oppression with “prayer, positivity and persistence” in his position on the Executive Board of The People’s Uprising and Chairman of the Young Atlanta Leaders.

Members have continued to experience increased health and fitness—and weight loss—through the 40-Day Turnup and 40-Day Journey sponsored by my friend, Rev. Joseph Williams, pastor of Salem Bible Church. Our GriefShare Ministry continues to help people whose loved ones have passed move through the journey of grief with compassion and spiritual support. Our ministries continue to blossom, finding new ways to reach out to our membership to facilitate continued growth in the four pillars of our church: fellowship, evangelism, doctrine, and stewardship. We are socially safe, not socially distant!

Although nothing is as good as physically being together in worship, our services on Sunday mornings bring us together in a marvelous way as our deacons and their families lead us in devotion, members of all ages and in locations as far always as China read us the announcements and our musical aggregations lift us together in praise. Sunday school, Wednesday Night Bible Study, Thursday night Christian Education classes, morning devotions, and noonday services keep us growing spiritually. I miss our gatherings, as I expressed in Clergy Conversations on Friday, March 26th, with my brother in the Lord and our son, Rev. Ken Jelks on Mount Tabor’s Facebook Live. I look forward to the time when we can all get together and enjoy the renovations in lighting and sound in our beloved Antioch facility, the pillar of light on the corner of Northside Dr and Cameron M. Alexander Blvd. What a time, what a time, what a time!

Yours in God’s service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenneth Alexander". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Reverend K. L. Alexander, Pastor

Antioch re-entry team provides COVID-19 update

Despite significant declines in coronavirus cases and deaths since the start of the year, Antioch will continue virtual worship for the foreseeable future, members of the church's COVID re-entry task force announced recently at a town hall held March 13.

The town hall, held virtually on Zoom and Facebook, was led by Dr. Dorothy Wiggins, Dr. Sheryl L. Heron, Public Health Specialist Robert Bailey and Jessie Hood with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In opening remarks, Pastor Kenneth Alexander expressed his eagerness for the healing of this country and its people saying, "If we are to beat this virus, we must remain focused and diligent."

The town hall, he said, was intended to provide Antioch Baptist Church North's members with information related to COVID 19 and should not be construed as medical advice or serve as a substitute for medical advice.

According to Hood, COVID cases in the United States have declined significantly since January. As of March 7, the total U.S. cases were 28,999,540 with 525,035 deaths.

In Georgia, 11.3% of COVID tests were positive with 56,797 Georgia hospitalizations, 83% of ICU beds occupied and 13.1% of the population vaccinated.

She noted that most of



Dr. Dorothy Wiggins



Dr. Sheryl L. Heron



Robert Bailey



Jessie Hood

Antioch's membership is from Fulton, Cobb, Gwinnett, Dekalb and Clayton counties. Statistics show that Gwinnett and Fulton counties had the highest number of COVID cases during this measurement period.

Not surprising, COVID has had an uneven impact on African Americans, the team said. While African Americans had only a slightly higher increase in risk of infection, their hospitalization rate is three times higher and a two times higher rate of death. And while only 7% of African Americans in Georgia are vaccinated, the vaccination rate of Whites in Georgia is 65%.

Dr. Hood said that the country experienced a slight increase in COVID cases during the summer of 2020 but by October the number of cases started to explode and remained high throughout the holidays.

"The cases are still high but currently we are making progress in the right direction," she said. "We can continue to fight COVID by wearing our masks, staying 6 feet apart, frequently washing our hands, and avoiding large crowds and poorly ventilated spaces. Together we will get through this pandemic."

The team said that when creating Antioch's re-entry plan, the goal was to align the

phases with local, state, and federal guidelines, factor in the community spread and focus on the congregation's unique needs.

In addition to being a predominantly African American congregation, Antioch's members are mostly of advanced age and enjoy a very social worship environment - elements that could put members at increased risk of infection.

For that reason, all worship services will continue to be conducted virtually until further notice. The Church office is open to essential staff only with daily sign-in, temperature checks, masks required and social distancing. Homegoing Services are held at graveside only with masks and social distancing required. And all in-person wedding ceremonies are suspended, and pre-marital counseling is provided via phone and web conferencing.

Only culinary services provided by AUMI are permitted with no dining or serving inside the building. Food prep requires daily sign-in, temperature checks, masks, and social distancing.

To move to Phase 2, the task force said there has to be a 21-day decline in confirmed cases, 21-day decline in COVID-related hospitalizations and the % of positive cases. The recommendation is 8% and we are currently at 11%.

Once we are in in-person

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love – all characteristic of a servant’s heart.

“Thanks for being a blessing to us,” she told Pastor Kenny. “Today we honor you as a pastor, husband, a father and grandfather, a counselor, a motivator and a friend.”

Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms thanked him for his support and told him that though they were separated by the coronavirus pandemic, they were together in spirit.

“The work that you do,” she said, “has been a true labor of love for the city of Atlanta. When the pandemic hit you pivoted to make sure Antioch ministries were able to meet the moment. I’m grateful and thankful for all that you have done for the city of Atlanta.”

Then, after a stirring rendition of “Amazing Grace” by the Wardlaw Brothers, the Rev. Rodney K. Turner, pastor of Mt. Vernon Missionary Baptist Church, delivered an equally stirring sermon, celebrating what Pastor Alexander has done and is doing in Jesus’ name.

Referring to Matthew 28:19-20, Turner said Jesus gives the command to the disciples to go into all the world, to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded them.

“What Jesus is saying is go carry the message, go do the work and I will be with you always even until the end of the world,” Turner said. “All of us who are blood bought, all of us who are saved, and called out have been given the same



Rev. Rodney K. Turner

commandment to go, to serve this present age.”

How unfortunate it is, however, that all of us don’t have the mind to serve, Turner said.

To serve, he said, you must be thankful, love God, and be sincere, characteristics Pastor Kenny embodies.

“To go is the command,” he said. “To serve is the response. To go and serve is a great responsibility to handle the Lord’s business. To go is to be obedient and allow God to use you.”

Turner said that as we celebrate Pastor Alexander’s anniversary, we also celebrate his long history of serving.

Rev. Alexander, he said, knows a lot about serving because he first served under his father, the late Rev. Cameron Madison Alexander.

“He’s a chip off the old block not just because he looks like his daddy and preaches with power like him but because he knows how to lead like him,” Turner said,

“I’ve watched him serve this present age. I’ve watched him suffer, sacrifice and surrender his total self for the cause of Christ. I’ve seen him even when he was hurting, when the enemy tried to trip him up, when he was up and when he was down. I’ve even seen him serve when tragedy happened in his life.”

Because of his sacrifice, because of his labor of love, Turner said that Pastor Alexander has been asked by many, including the Morehouse School of Religion and the Westside Future Fund, to serve with them to make this place a better world.

“We love you because you know how to give back, how to stay the course, how to captain the ship, how to get the job done,” Turner said.

Pastor Kenny is able to do those things, Turner said, because he possesses and recognizes the importance of the four Ps – privilege, passion, purpose and power.

First, he knows it’s a privilege to preach, to pastor, and to be in the position he’s in. He’s not arrogant or conceited. Second, he understands passion. When you’re leading a flock you ought to have a passion, a deep desire to give your best to God.

Third, he demonstrates how to serve with purpose. He understands how important it is that men and women see Christ. You’re motivated by his mercy and guided by his grace. He has a mind to run

on to see what the end will be.

And fourth, he understands the importance of teaching, leading and operating in the power of the Holy Ghost.

“This day is about recognizing your service to the kingdom, and service to the Lord Jesus Christ,” Turner said.

Still, he reminded us that we share in the charge to serve, that we’re not saved to sit.

“All of us must heed the clarion call to serve, let our light shine before men and to be the salt of the earth. Salt changes the dynamic. Salt makes a difference. Yea ... All of us have been drafted, all of us have been chosen, all of us have been picked out to be picked on. All of us have been redeemed. All of us have been empowered.”

Pointing to Paul’s words in Romans 5:8, Turner said that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners.

“Why would you not serve him until the day you die?” he asked. “If you press rewind and look back over your life and everything God has done for you, why would you not serve him with all you got?”

He deserves for you to serve him, to lift him up. Serving is giving your best for the cause of Christ. Serving is giving your all to Christ to make a difference.

The Rev. Kenneth Alexander, Turner said, is our example.

Continued from cover - Gentry

choir, because Children's Church was every Sunday except the second Sunday," she remembered. "I thought it would be hard for me to leave the choir because I really love music and singing, however, I was at peace. As they say, when you know...you know that you know."

Thus began Gentry's long tenure working in the youth ministry.

She has not looked back. Not once.

Her passion and desire to give her all to young people has been on full display since then, including here at Antioch Baptist Church.

Looking back, she said her journey began in her hometown of Hearne, TX, long before she became a member of New Faith.

In Hearne, a teenage Gentry taught adult Sunday school every youth Sunday at Independent Baptist Church where her father was the pastor. Other times and at other churches, she was the guest speaker at Youth Day services.

She was a sophomore in college when she joined New Faith and began teaching Sunday School and working with the leadership team for the GIRLS Rites of Passage program.

"I even worked on staff full-time at New Faith, where I developed and led the summer day-camp program for our youth," she said.

Her ministry at New Faith ended in 1997, when Gentry got a job offer at Georgia System Operations Corporation and moved to Atlanta.

She joined Antioch that year and several years later was named Youth Director, Coordinator of the Nursery (on Sundays), and Coordinator for the Drama Ministry.

Not surprising, it was the late Rev. Cameron Madison Alexander, Gentry said, who provided the guidance she needed to take her ministry to new heights and inspired her to begin hon-



Homertzelle Gentry

ing her drama skills. Alexander, she said, saw something in her that she did not see in herself.

"I had never done drama until I came to Antioch, but this is the way God works," she said. "He speaks through others, uses them to be a blessing to someone else. I don't profess to be an expert in drama, I just ask God to give me His direction, and I try to faithfully follow."

Asked what keeps her going, Gentry said seeing Antioch youth participate in the Youth Ministry go off to college, military, or other levels of higher education and become productive adults who are giving back to their community, the church – showing their love for Christ and doing what God has appointed them to do.

"What moves my heart is when they stop by the Nursery to see me just to say 'Hi,'" she said. "It makes me so proud and gives me the feeling that I've done something in their lives that they appreciate. Even if they don't stop by I'm so happy to see them, talk to them, and hear how they are doing. Then when you get invited to their college graduations, weddings, baby showers, or when you call them and ask them for their help and they so willingly accept

the request, I can't describe how happy my heart is. It's the best feeling in the world."

Gentry, a mother of two adult sons, said she sometimes feels concerned because many youth don't seem to realize that the main power source for all of the great things that they are able to achieve comes from God.

"I see their strong commitment and dedication to doing the things that they are passionate about doing like football, baseball, cheerleading, band," she said, "However I don't see that same commitment to studying and growing in their knowledge of God's word. They don't see the connection between their ability to be successful in these activities and how the main source of these abilities comes from God."

Although her mission to fulfill her call is simple, Gentry said her wildest dream is that Antioch's Youth Ministry aligns perfectly with the vision of Pastor Kenneth Alexander - a ministry that is well-rounded, stands on the four pillars of the church; supports parents, and builds a solid foundation on which our youth can build a productive future for themselves that aligns with God's will for their lives and the rest of society.

The Coronavirus pandemic has made that harder because social activities, fellowship and community service are the heart and soul of any youth ministry, but she intends to persevere and hopes others will join her.

Plus, she said, "we are trying to be sensitive to the fact that on line schooling has its challenges to both the child and the parents, so we've tried not to add additional activities that would be over taxing.

Each day, Gentry said, she is reminded that the reward is in the journey.

"Doing what God has called you to do," she said, "is definitely a rewarding journey."



Antioch sons get real about the year in lockdown

In what was billed as “Clergy Conversations,” the Rev. Ken Jelks brought together three sons of Antioch for some real talk about life during the coronavirus pandemic.

The panel discussion, the brainchild of the Rev. Jelks, pastor of Mt. Tabor Baptist Church in Columbus, Ga., convened March 26 and consisted of the Rev. Kenneth Alexander, pastor of Antioch Baptist Church North, the Rev. O. Jermaine Simmons, pastor of Jacob Chapel Baptist Church in Tallahassee, FL, and the Rev. Sean Smith, pastor of New Horizons Baptist Church in Atlanta.

The ministers discussed how each church made the pivot to virtual worship services and changed other ministries and outreach, while focused on the safety of their respective flocks. Pastor Alexander said he was grateful that Antioch was already live-streaming and has been able to enhance the worship experience and carry on other ministries throughout the year, giving special thanks to his sister, Maria Alexander Hunter, and her husband, Ray Hunter, who lead ABCNN.

The experience was the exact oppo-

site, however, at New Horizons.

“We didn’t have anything in place, so we had to start from scratch,” said the Rev. Sean Smith.

Despite being at a disadvantage, Smith said the church was able to continue its ministry.

In all instances, the ministers said their jobs became more difficult, agreeing that their work load changed significantly.

Although there have been reports of pastors “out on their boats,” Rev. Simmons said that none of them could be included in that number.

Each of them said the increased load was created by the uncertain times and misinformation as they counsel and comfort parishioners.

Preaching eulogies has been particularly hard at Antioch, said the Rev. Alexander, noting some had taught him in Sunday School.

Not being able to have traditional home going services has taken a toll on everyone in our community, he said.

The good news is when the toll is heavy, they’ve had each other to turn to for support.

Scholarship ministry accepting applications

The Antioch Baptist Church North Scholarship Ministry is now accepting applications for financial aid.

Graduating high school seniors are encouraged to apply now through August, when awards will be mailed to students’ schools.

In addition to financial aid, students can also apply for book and memorial scholarships which are awarded in November, and made available for the second semester of the school year.

The ministry, one of the many organized by the late Rev. Cameron Madison Alexander, not only provides scholarships to graduating high school seniors, but supports young adults in pursuit of advanced degrees.

In addition, it works in concert with other church ministries to recognize and award achievements of members graduating from kindergarten, elementary, middle school, graduate school, and those moving into retirement.

The ministry coordinates parent meetings throughout the year with focused discussions on how to better assist with their children’s academic needs, information on new laws and procedures for college entrance, and finding nationally posted scholarships and preparation information from testing coordinators and bank college loan agents.

Antioch scholarships are made possible through donations from her members.

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worship, we can always go back to a previous phase if data is not moving in a favorable direction, they said.

“We do not want to spread disease among ourselves or others,” Wiggins said. “Remember, despite what you may hear nationally, at the state level or locally, our

movement is based on Antioch and our membership is significantly high risk. We are making good sound decisions to ensure a return to in-person worship in a safe manner.”

Brother Robert Bailey covered in detail the five re-entry phases to in-church

worship. We can view these phases at www.antiochnorth.org, Corona virus update, and click on re-entry phases for the details.

Dr. Sheryl Heron encouraged members to share our unique circumstances with our personal physician to determine if or how our indi-

vidual risks can be addressed.

“Remember that masks should cover our mouth and nose and we should wash our hands for at least 20 seconds each time,” she said. “Pay attention to the signs and remember it is imperative for us to get tested. These actions will take us a long way.”

Continued from cover - Pottery Barn



ing doors Bishop hadn't even imagined.

His recent exhibit at the Lenox Pottery Barn is a perfect example.

In early January, a company manager reached out to Bishop after seeing his work on Facebook of all places. Would he do

something to celebrate Black History Month in the store?

“I was actually surprised but I knew it was coming,” Bishop told the Church at Antioch. “God said it was coming.”

After meeting with a team of Pottery Barn employees who explained their vision, he agreed to display six pieces of his choosing that celebrate Black history and metro Atlanta culture. By month's end, a Pottery Barn crew was hanging portraits of Harriett Tubman and the late Cong. John Lewis, Bishop's Thread Series, which includes Voting rights activist Stacy Abrams, Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, and former Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin; and “Efulgence,” watercolors of three boys wearing sweatshirts bearing inspirational messages.

The exhibit, he said, has been “truly a blessing. It did well, and the turnout was amazing. I was able to talk about the work. I made connections with people who collect black art.”

Although he chose not to sell the original pieces, Bishop said he produced 18x24 prints of five of his pieces and customers snapped them up. The exhibit was so popular, Pottery Barn went a step further, extending the exhibit through the month of March to depict Women's History Month.

Bishop, a member of Antioch Baptist Church North since 1999 when he arrived here from Mississippi, credits much of his success to the support he has received from the congregation. He has been on an upward stroke ever since Pastor Kenneth Alexander introduced him and hosted his first solo show five years ago.

“They always come out,” he said of Antioch's members. And Bishop always delivers stunning works of art.



ANTIOCH FAMILY!

Proud of the job you do or want to nominate your sister or brother in Christ to be featured in an upcoming issue of *The Church at Antioch*?

E-mail your story idea to Sis. Gracie Staples at: gracie.staples@gmail.com



Antioch hosts COVID-19 vaccination clinic

Antioch Baptist Church North, in partnership with Northside Hospital, vaccinated more than 170 people in late March.

Fellowship Hall and church classrooms were transformed into clinics where Antioch members and community flowed in, filled out the required paperwork, and rolled up their sleeves for the Pfizer vaccine.

Those vaccinated were cleared after the 15-minute waiting period.

Antioch member Eleveltra Cossie said she felt good about getting the vaccine

and felt “a little adrenaline rush,” but no ill effects. She also said she felt comfortable because the shot was administered in a familiar place.

It helped that Faye Weekes and Jennifer Stokes, both Antioch members and retired nurses, were on-site to help.

After seeing them, they said, members felt more relaxed.

One Northside nurse said she and her colleagues were looking forward to returning in three weeks

“This is rewarding,” she said. “I feel like every time I give a shot, I’m getting

closer to being back to my normal life, where I can hug people.”

Healthcare workers were very complimentary of how welcoming people were and how efficient the Antioch clinic was at getting people in and out. They said they enjoyed their time at the church because “everyone has been so kind and accommodating.”

“They even fed us a delicious lunch,” another worker said.

But of course. That’s Antioch.

Managing Editor
Gracie Bonds Staples

Design Editor
Reggie Tolbert

Writers
Karen McKinney Holley
Gracie Bonds Staples
Betty Jo Cooke
Bennie McDonald
Maryann Morgan

**The Church at Antioch
Newsletter Staff**

**Contributions by
June 1, 2021**

540 Cameron M. Alexander Blvd, NW • Atlanta, GA 30318 • 404-688-5679 • www.antiochnorth.org