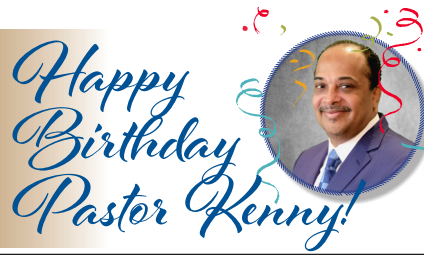


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Connecting  
People  
to Christ



# The Church at Antioch

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

April-June 2021

Volume 10, Issue 3



## Rev. Kenny inducted into elite class

The Rev. Kenneth Lamont Alexander, affectionately known at Antioch as Rev. Kenny, has been inducted into the 2021 Class of the Martin Luther King Jr. Board of Preachers, Sponsors & Collegium of Scholars.

The Martin Luther King Jr. College of Ministers and Laity is the signature program sponsored by the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College honoring individuals whose life and work exemplify the ethical ideals and servant-scholar leadership promoted by the College's most prominent alumnus, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Nominees are selected based on their commitment to the community and society as evidenced by the person's efforts to better the lives of others.

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Mary Hicks Tobin (far right) with United Shades of America host W. Kamau Bell (Center)

## Tobin a guest on CNN's United Shades of America

Mary Hicks Tobin, daughter of Dea Clarence and Dr. Mary Hicks, appeared on CNN's United Shades of America on May 30 during a special episode dedicated to Memorial Day.

The show, hosted by W. Kamau Bell, explored the irony that those who protect us are not themselves protected.

Indeed the Feres Doctrine, dating from 1950, stated that the United States is not liable for any injury or harm that happens to an active-duty member of the armed forces."

As AmeriCorps Senior Adviser for the Wounded Warrior Project and a West Point graduate, Tobin is uniquely quali-

*Continued on page 5*

## 50 races later, Rockwards finish course

"I had to be reasonable," he said. In July 2011, he set out running his first 5k on a weekend when his Omega Psi Phi fraternity was celebrating its 100th anniversary at Howard University.

"I was hyped," he remembered recently. It was an uphill battle but he made it. Rock looked down, taking a step at a time.

"I didn't think I was mentally prepared, he said, "but I found out I was physically prepared."

Michelle, an assistant chair of Morgan State's math department, didn't make that first run in Washington, D.C., but she wouldn't just remain on the side cheering

*Continued on page 6*



## A Message From The Pastor

My brothers and sisters,

A few of our members are highlighted within this newsletter, and they are to be congratulated for their accomplishments. However, I want to thank the entire membership for your faithfulness. I am blessed to pastor a strong membership, which continues to prove its devotion to God, love for people, and support of the pastor. Your constant outpouring of concern for me and for my family warms my heart and gives me strength for the journey. As I hear other pastors from across this nation express frustration and worry, I sit quietly until I cannot take it anymore. Then, I have to tell them about Antioch, where we were first called Christians and where we continue to be Bible-based, Christ-centered, Holy Spirit-led, and Mission Bound.

I am humbled by the honor I received as I was inducted into the 2021 Class of the Martin Luther King Jr. Board of Preachers, Sponsors & Collegium of Scholars. I am even more honored to have our Step Team renamed “Antioch K.L.A. Steppers for Christ!”

We will continue to remain connected virtually and through our ministries and members who contact each other via telephone, text messaging, cards and letters. All of our ministries and auxiliaries remain active, some even more so than before the pandemic! Our theme, “To Serve This Present Age” was prophetic. Our reach had been extended when we began live streaming, but now, we are truly implementing the biblical mandate in Matthew 28:19-20 to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel.” Members all across this country and in other countries, such as China and Germany are not only able to join us and watch worship but participate, bringing us announcements and presiding over “Youth on Fifth.” 230 Noonday messages and over 290 morning devotions as well as our Sunday Worship Services and Wednesday Night Bible Study have received over 64,000 views on YouTube and 658,000 active engagements on Facebook. We cannot fit that many people into our sanctuary! What’s most important is that we continue to grow as new members join and our viewers are enlightened by the Word of God.

We did not know what it was going to look like to not be able to gather in our traditional manner, but we now understand God’s providence even more fully. For the past 10 years, we have been talking about needed updates, but to accomplish them meant shutting down the sanctuary for months. We have been able to take advantage of this period to install brand new sound and video systems, lighting, and other updates, which will enhance our worship experience.

No one wants to return to our church campus for worship, learning, and fellowship more than I. I miss you. I miss hearing the “Amen’s” and “Hallelujah’s” and looking out and seeing your faces. Our COVID-19 Task Force has been keeping me apprised of trends and how they impact our safety. God has preserved us over this past 16 months, and we have not had a single instance of anyone contracting COVID-19 on the Antioch premises. We want to maintain that record. My father, the Rev. Dr. C.M. Alexander often explained, “I am not the pastor of Antioch; I am the under-shepherd.” I have followed in his footsteps in that I am taking my direction from the Holy Spirit. Just as he led me to know that we could no longer meet physically when the pandemic first began, he will let me know when we can safely return. Until then, we will continue to do as Philippians 3:14 states and “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Yours in God’s service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads “Kenneth Alexander”. The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and personal.

Reverend K. L. Alexander, Pastor

APRIL

# Spring Revival

The Rev. Clarence Moore, pastor of the Good Shepherd Baptist Church in Augusta and a son of Antioch Baptist Church North, was the guest evangelist for this year's spring revival. The virtual gathering was held April 28-30.

Below is a brief synopsis of each night's sermon:

## Wednesday, April 28, 2021

**Scripture:** Philippians 4: 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

**Subject:** Rejoice in the Lord

**Sermon brief:** All of us have problems but no matter how bad things are, we can find things to rejoice about. Do you have a roof over your head and shoes on your feet? Those are reasons to rejoice. Many people have the misconception that when they get rid of their problems, they will be happy. But joy is learning to enjoy life in spite of your problems and realizing the presence of God in the midst of your problems. We have a perspective that non-Christians do not have. No matter what happens to us, we know that God is ultimately in control. I may not be happy about my problem, but Paul says I can rejoice in my situation. Joy is an attitude. Joy is a choice and it is not dependent on outside situations or circumstances. We can choose regardless of the situation to be joyful. We're satisfied in ways that no large home or pay check can satisfy. Life is what we make it. Are there times when I don't feel like rejoicing? Sure. But we need to rejoice in everything, to thank God and rejoice in whatever God has given. We all have a lot on our plate and sometimes don't see an end to our problem but that's when we must dig deep and trust in the Lord. Paul repeatedly urged believers to rejoice and respond to our source of joy. Paul didn't say rejoice in your health, because your health may



*Reverend Clarence Moore*

fail you. Paul did not say rejoice in your friend because your friend can disappoint you. Paul said rejoice in the Lord always. He's encouraging us to make a spiritual inventory of those things that give life meaning, to find satisfaction in our relationship to the Lord.

## Thursday, April 29, 2021

**Scripture:** Luke 18:37 "They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

**Subject:** Jesus is passing by

**Sermon brief:** Jesus' encounter for the blind man in this text was not by chance but was part of God's divine plan. It is the Passover season and Jesus is en route to Jerusalem. This man was an outcast and in spite of the heckling, Mark writes he shouted and cried out to Jesus. He was overjoyed to finally meet the master for himself. He didn't care about being polite. Jesus asked that he be brought to him and when asked what he wanted, the man replied he wanted his sight. We should do our part and bring people to Jesus. When we come to Jesus, our lives are changed. Jesus said your faith hath healed you and immediately the man received his sight. As he followed Jesus he glorified God. Praise God not just for your blessing but when he blesses others. If you've been born again, you don't have the right to remain silent. When I look and think about the goodness of God, I can't help praising him. Praise him be-

cause he's worthy to be praised.

## Friday, April 30, 2021

**Scripture:** Hosea 10:12: Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

**Subject:** Time to seek the Lord

**Sermon brief:** Hosea is the prophet of the brokenhearted. The account of his marriage, the birth of his children, the unfaithfulness of his wife, make for sad reading. Confusion in the nation reflected confusion in Hosea's family. He tenderly pleaded for Israel to seek the Lord. Seeking the Lord is the privilege of everyday life, but there are times to seek him in an urgent manner. When we look at the times we're living in, it is time to seek the Lord. Only God can transform the nation but until now he has been left outside. Look at all the churches we have all over this land and then still look at the number of unchurched people. It's time to seek the Lord. Even those who go to church, we go but why? We see crime happening all of the time. We see police brutality. We see black-on-black crime. It's time to seek the Lord while he may be found. The question is asked then why should I seek the Lord? Because the time for sowing is coming. Whether you know it or not, we're starting to see the harvest of a failed educational system, television programming, and the music that we listen to. The time to seek the Lord will come to an end. The period of grace will end. It's time to seek the Lord. His grace is plenteous right now. His mercy is plenteous right now. He wants you to be part of the kingdom. All you have to do is say 'Lord, I want to be saved.' If you seek him, you will be saved. As Hosea said, it's time. In fact it's way past time to seek the Lord.

# AUMI: serving the least of these



# 2021 graduates

Antioch honored graduates during morning worship service in May. In all, 49 members graduated, including five from kindergarten, seven from elementary school, nine from middle school, and 13 from high school. Twenty received college and post-graduate degrees.

A full list is below.

## Kindergarten Graduates

Terryan Byrd  
Kris James  
Morgan A. Johnson  
Savannah Tate  
Sydney Tate

## Elementary School Graduates

DeJuan Cochran            Blake Kirkland  
CaNiya Flournoy        Whitney Pittman  
Alexis Herrington        Blazio Thomas  
Samirah Kelly

## Middle School Graduates

Nadia Bosley            Nyla Jackson  
Gabrielle Boynes        Indigo Jones  
Isaiah Brown            Alfred Ponder III  
William Evans, Jr.,      Charrese Taylor  
Daniel E. Gray

## High School Graduates

Michael Eason            Jaedon Rashad  
Donovan Garner        Amaya Scott  
Titus Johnson            Zavier Sims, Jr.,  
Leland Jones            Azzaria Smith  
Blair Kearns            Nathan Speed  
Alaiah McKinney        Ronnie West, III  
Elliott Rawls            Ryan West

## 2021 College Graduates

Ruben Burney – Associate Degree Atlanta Metropolitan State College  
Patricia Sias Ellis – Associate Degree Social Sciences,  
Atlanta Metropolitan State College  
Irene P. Hudgins – Certificate, Religious Studies, Atlanta Metropolitan State College  
Kennedi Jackson – BA Degree Journalism, Hampton University  
Alexander Leavell – BA Degree, Psychology, Alabama A&M University  
Bethani Price – BA Degree, Interdisciplinary Studies, Hampton University  
Freddie Ross – BS Degree, Exercise Science, GA State University  
Ronald West – BS Degree, Information Technology, Kennesaw State University

## 2021 Post Graduates

Tiffini Eugene Jones – PhD, Sustainability Education, Prescott College  
Brandis Rencher – MBA, Advance Management, Champlain College  
Sederra Ross, PhD, Chemistry, University of Massachusetts at Boston  
Tamara Ross – MEd, Education, GA State University  
Adrienne Williams – MBA, Marketing  
Julius Wilson – MSM, Project Management  
Jakayla Woolridge-Simuel - EdD Educational Leadership, Clark Atlanta University

## Retirees Recognized

Nine Antioch Baptist Church members have retired. They are:

Carol Aaron: Reading teacher, Cobb County Schools, 22 years  
  
Debra Anderson: Secondary math teacher, Fulton County Schools, 33 years  
  
Bonita Davis: Operations specialist, SunTrust, 38 years  
  
Shelia Fayson: Physical science teacher, Atlanta Public Schools, 30 years  
  
Felecia Turner-Martin: Grants accountant, Fulton County Schools, 15 years  
  
Evelyn Neal: Transportation coordinator, Macy's Logistics, 47 years  
  
Gracie Bonds Staples: Newspaper reporter/columnist, 41 years, including the last 20 at AJC  
  
Stephany Walls: Teacher, Atlanta Public Schools, 12 years  
  
Phyllis West: Processing/Receptionist, Mortgage Industry, 20 years

Continued from cover -  
Tobin on United Shades of America

fied to speak to the issue. A combat veteran who served two tours in Iraq during her 10 years in the U.S. Army as a communications officer, she said it is the inequities and attacks surrounding issues such as race and gender that leave military personnel unprotected.

Passionate about social justice, Mary does not turn a blind eye to the problems in the military.

“If all leadership is white, sis-gendered, Protestant men, there’s a reasonable expectation that the decision-making, the promotion system, the respect for certain culture is going to reflect that of the dominant culture, which is the leadership,” Tobin said.

As co-founder of the West Point African-American Alumni Association and vice president of the West Point Women Alumni Association, Tobin has been privy to accounts of military personnel who have had injustice piled on top of injustice. Blacks called the “n-word,” victims of sexual assault, personnel passed over for promotion because of race and/or gender have spurred her to be a tireless advocate against racial and gender bias.

She speaks up for the many who feel they cannot speak up because of the retaliation they will face. The prevailing attitude is that one should be “a good soldier” and keep quiet, she said.

Like many veterans and active members of the military, Tobin is proud of her service. She is also insightful about differences in reasons for serving.

“I believe that the majority of my white brothers and sisters in arms serve this country because of what they believe this country to be,” she said. “The majority of African Americans serve this country because of what they hope this country will be.”

Continued from cover - 50 Races Later



*Rock at the Maine Lobster Festival with Michelle*

on her husband either. She soon joined in the fun.

"I was struggling with my weight and saw this as something I could do to combat that," she said. "I still didn't run. I would jog, walk, jog, walk my way to the finish line. Plus it gave us the chance to go to places we'd never go." It also quickly became a family affair.

"Quite a few of our children began running, trying to keep themselves in shape as well," she said. "The boys were especially excited."

Their next run would take them to Tulsa, OK., then to Vermont, Louisiana, New Mexico, Delaware, Virginia and Utah with the Rockwards recording each start and finish in a photo, collecting T-shirts, and enough memories to last a lifetime.

Some races stood out more than others. Michelle remembered the Freakin' Fast Half Marathon in Boise, Idaho, that fell six months before her 50th birthday and six months after Rock's 50th.

It measured 12.1 miles, all down hill. They arrived late, Michelle remembered, to find

fellow runners already uphill, ready to go.

"I had to drive up there," she said, laughing. "It was very scary coming back down. It was traumatic for me."

The year before, Rock ran his first marathon, a 26.2 mile run in Biloxi, Miss. Michelle jogged the 5k. Their son Richard joined Rock but that didn't turn out too good.

A Marine, Richard didn't bother to train and by mile 10, he started to cramp. He encouraged his dad to keep going. By mile 18, Richard's legs locked. It took an infusion of potassium to get him going again.

"That was funny," Rock recalled, laughing. "I finished slightly under 5 hours, 30 minutes."

The Marine didn't finish. He couldn't.

Over the next five years, there would be many more runs in many more states. Colorado, Wyoming, and Alaska for the Trenton run in May.

It was their final run. Michelle, 54, finished the 10K in an hour, 14 minutes, placing first in her age group.

"She was rocking and roll-



*4th of July Run in Brownsville, NE with college buddy & frat brother, Terry Benjamin*



*California Run in Lancaster, CA with oldest natural son, Khari Rockward*

ing," Rock recalled.

He recorded his best time, one hour, 54 minutes.

"It felt good," he said.

They had kept the faith, finished their course.

Are marathons anywhere in their future?

Well, yes. They will do at least a 5k in 60 major U.S. cities and at least six U.S. territories or international cities.

They want to travel now but more important than that they hope to encourage others to find something to do to break the curses in their families, too.

"Too many brothers are passing away because of simple health issues," Rock said. "We

can do things to change these outcomes."

Amen.



*Michelle and Rock at Gulf Coast Marathon with adopted son, Richard Corbett*

# Vacation Bible School a big hit

More than 500 children and adults signed on to attend Vacation Bible School held virtually June 7 through 11.

“I’ve Got This! With Jesus,” the theme of the week-long course, was based on Philippians 4:13, which declares, “I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.”

On the evening when Faith was the focus of The God Squad preschool class, creative teachers, Sis. Denise Floyd and Sis. Kay Carter, played musical chairs—virtually. The children walked around their individual chairs at home as “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” played. When the music stopped, the children had to sit down

and yell “Faith.”

Each night, after the individual classes met, one or two classes presented a review of the lesson. Sydney and Savannah Murphy, very active in the class, sang “You Are Great” by Juanita Bynum as they gave the review for the class. Kris Allen gave a comprehensive review for the Praise Warriors primary class, recounting the story of Rahab and the spies and explaining that you have faith because God answers your prayers.

VBS provides everyone an opportunity to expand in his or her knowledge of the Bible as well as grow in faith. For those who are unsaved, an explanation of the plan of salvation is presented

each night using the color method. Everyone wears the colors that represent the message of salvation.

Two of the favorite fun features of VBS were retained even in the virtual space: prizes given to volunteers who reviewed the lessons and correctly answered questions and the VBS yell. The Mothers’ Ministry and the women from the Thursday Prayer Warriors squared off against the Deacons’ Ministry and the men from the TPWs.

VBS classes will continue on Thursday nights for Bible Study. Check out the church website - <http://antioch-north.org> - for class schedules.

*Continued from cover - Rev. Kenny inducted...*

Rev. Kenny’s selection in April puts him in good company. Both his father, the Rev. Cameron Madison Alexander, Antioch North’s long-time pastor, and the Rev. Rodney Turner, a son of Antioch, were both inductees.

“Our pastor exemplifies service and commitment to others daily,” said Dea. Jerome Trimble in a special tribute during the April 25 worship service. “He is the consum-

mate leader as evidenced during this past 16 months in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Trimble said that Rev. Kenny’s work stretches far beyond the spiritual health of the Antioch congregation. For example, he co-led our first 40-Day Turn Up, which focused on the physical health and well-being of the congregation. His efforts to bring mental health to the forefront have moved

people to a place of wellness. He is chairman of the nationally acclaimed Antioch Urban Ministries, Inc., the umbrella non-profit that manages and operates most of Antioch’s outreach ministries that provide holistic support to those in need.

Pastor Alexander’s efforts and accomplishments have not gone unnoticed. He has received recognition and accolades from a multitude of

esteemed organizations. Yet, he remains humble, Trimble said.

Remembering his days as a student at Morehouse, Pastor Alexander said, “I never expected to be acknowledged or recognized in this manner, so I am overwhelmed. I can’t help but think about my father; I know that he is smiling down on us in heaven.”

## Food Bank *Hours of Operation*

TUESDAY-FRIDAY, 9AM-1PM  
SATURDAY, 8AM-11AM  
SUNDAY, 12PM-2PM

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# Make time for your mental health

Although the coronavirus' impact seems to be subsiding, more and more people are in need of an outlet to process their experiences and somehow balance career and family responsibilities and relationship issues.

May being Mental Health Month, we reached out to Antioch's Dr. Shatavia Thomas about ways to better take care of ourselves during such trying times.

"Having lived through hurricanes in Louisiana and Florida, I learned that there is always cleanup after storms," said Dr. Shay. "While we appreciate our safety and survival, we also assess the damage and inspect things that require repair and replacement. The same type of reflection is essential to preserve and protect our mental health after life's storms, including the pandemic."

She suggests we take a personal inventory, focusing each week on particular aspects

of our lives to stay mentally healthy during tough times. You can find them on her YouTube channel but here's a brief synopsis:

## **Week 1: Time -**

Proverbs 16:9. There are 24 hours in a day. Think about how you are using them to maximize your mental well-being. For a full-time worker, we may divide our day into 8 hours of work, 8 hours of sleep and 8 hours of flex time spent on family, friends, personal commitments, and extracurricular activities. Consider which portion of the day should remain the same and which portion you want to change for more balance. Evaluate the implications of TIME on your well-being.

## **Week 2: Perspective -**

Proverbs 3:5 & Romans 12:2. Perspective is your thoughts and how you interpret situations. Consider yourself, loved ones, co-workers, neighbors,



*Dr. Shatavia Thomas*

and meditate on how you handle these interactions. You personally risk your mental health and well-being when you do not pause long enough to develop a better perspective during your daily interactions.

## **Week 3: Communication -**

Proverbs 18:21, Psalms 19:14, Proverbs 15:28 and Ecclesiastes 7:5. The four barriers to healthy communication are defensiveness, criticism, contempt, and stonewalling. The way you communicate

impacts your mental health and wellness as well as the wellness of your relationships. Be reflective and thoughtful about the way you communicate. Think and pray before you speak and try to listen even when it hurts.

## **Week 4: Social Support -**

Galatians 6:2, Hebrews 24:25, Matthew 18:20, Proverbs 15:22. Your time can be on point, your perspective can be structured with perfect flexibility and your thoughts positive but if you are alone or lonely, you can still struggle with mental health. When solitude or being alone transfers into isolation and withdrawal, this becomes a risk factor for your mental well-being. Connect with colleagues, family, and professionals for social support, which is critical to staying connected.

You can review Dr. Shay's Mental Health moments at the link below.

[Mental Health Moments](#)

# Coronavirus prompts surge in wills

If COVID-19 has taught us anything it is this: none of us are immune from tragedy and death.

And so whether you're low income, middle class or filthy rich, many of us are grappling with our own mortality.

Indeed, experts say, one of the most loving things we can do in preparation for our death is to get a healthcare proxy and will.

Having a will gives us the ability to have a say in our final plans and reduces the stress our family can face in the event of death.

According to Georgia law, anyone who is at least 14 years old and competent can make a will. It can be as general or specific as one would like.

In addition to spelling out items you'd like to pass down, a will might also include your wishes for final disposition of your remains, whether you want a Christian burial or not, and where interment is to occur, said Antioch member and attorney Sylvia Lester.

Wills do not expire, but it is recommended the document remain updated as life changes are made. For example,

she said, if a will is created to include young children, changes should be made as the children become adults. A will, which should be kept in a safe deposit box or other safe place, must include a carefully selected executor to oversee and manage the estate of the deceased.

Finally, Lester said, Georgia law requires that all wills be signed in the presence of two witnesses, neither of whom should be a beneficiary. In the event one passes without a will, then his/her estate passes to the state.





Valencia Seay of Antioch Baptist Church North in front of interactive display

# Seay realizes dream for interactive display

In 2010, Sen. Valencia Seay was a freshman member of the Georgia State Legislature assigned to the Agriculture committee.

Asked what she knew about agriculture during the committee's first meeting, Seay told her colleagues that she knew pigs were pink.

Raucous laughter filled the room.

Having grown up in Herndon Homes, Seay wasn't kidding. She knew nothing about agriculture but that didn't mean she wasn't interested in the science of farming, including rearing animals and the cultivation of soil for food and other products.

And so Seay got busy learning and sharing her newfound knowledge with others.

"I worked with Commissioner Gary Black to bring kids from my district to the

state's largest farmers market," she recalled recently. "The kids actually made their lunch by building a pizza and learning about its ingredients."

It wasn't until she was invited to Iowa by now retired State Representative Helen Miller to an urban Ag academy, that Seay realized the vast role Georgia plays in agriculture.

A friend suggested Seay introduce a bill recognizing the state annually, but it was her four grandchildren, she said, who encouraged her to go a step further.

She did.

For the past seven years, she has been building an interactive display that tells Georgia's agriculture story.

The display, which bears her name and image, was unveiled June 4th at the capitol.



## Congrats, Gabby

Gabrielle (Gabby) Lewis, placed 4th overall in the GA USE 3 4 State Gymnastics Championships. The daughter of Autumn Lewis, Gabby competed at level 4 in the Douglasville Dream Team Competitive Gymnastics Program. The team placed fourth out of 33 teams. Gabby came in 4th out of 241 gymnasts from around the state of Georgia. The competition was held at Roswell Gymnastics. Gabby not only exceeded the goal score her coaches set, she scored her personal best, finishing a mere .6 points behind the 1st place winner. "We look forward to seeing Gabby in the Olympics," said Antioch North's Pastor, Kenneth Alexander.



## 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](mailto:gracie.staples@gmail.com)





## Mission provides Easter baskets to homeless children

Antioch's Women's Missionary Ministry, under the leadership of President Christine Goodwin-Hall, prepared and delivered Easter baskets to 27 children at the Atlanta Union Mission.

The Mission is the largest provider of services for those experiencing homelessness in metropolitan Atlanta.

Personnel at the Mission provided Antioch's ministry with the gender and ages of the children at the Mission. The Missionary Ministry then purchased age-appropriate gifts and treats to include in baskets for infants through teenagers.

Because of the pandemic, ministry members could not distribute the baskets to the children, but President Goodwin-Hall received a report about how excited the children were to receive the baskets and a hearty thank you from Mission staff.



*Reverend John Byrdsell, Pastor of Concord Missionary Baptist Church*

## Byrdsell called to pastor

The Rev. John Byrdsell, a long-time son of Antioch Baptist Church North, has been named pastor of The Concord Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta.

Byrdsell, who joined Antioch in December 1992, was called to preach in June 1994 and answered his calling in February 1998.

On April 9, 2002, he said, he gave his trial sermon and was licensed to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ at Antioch with eight other preachers, who became known as "The divine 9."

On December 17, 2014, he was ordained by Antioch's late Pastor Dr. Cameron Madison Alexander.

Over the years, he served in various capacities, including the Preacher/Wor-

ship Leader for more than 10 years at the Antioch Lakewood Mission, where the Rev. Kenneth L. Alexander, current pastor of Antioch North, was the presiding minister.

Byrdsell was named pastor of Concord in February. He and E. Jean Byrdsell, president of the Antioch Ministers' Wives Ministry, have been married 26 years.

"I consider myself to be 'a nobody trying to tell everybody about Jesus who can help and save anybody,'" the Rev. Byrdsell told *The Church at Antioch*.

As Philippians 1:6 assures us, he said, he is confident "that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

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Kroger

# Mansfield: On following her muse to *Neux More*

Soon after Erica Mansfield submitted her letter of resignation from her corporate job last year, she went home and sat down on her porch, listening to Etta James playing in the background.

Her muse spoke and she began writing. Every day for five to eight hours a day, for five months, she wrote.

The result was *Neux More*, a collection of poems, her way, as she describes it, of remembering and then beginning the healing process.

We asked Mansfield, daughter of Maria Hunter and granddaughter of the late Rev Cameron and Barbara J. Alexander, five questions. Here's what she had to say:

**The Church at Antioch:** When did you first realize you wanted to be a writer?

**Mansfield:** This honestly didn't come until late in life. I've always been good at writing, but of course I went through the phase where I changed my mind about my career almost every other week. When I started to become more conscious of myself, education, and literature, I became more intrigued in pursuing writing more seriously. By the time I reached high school, maybe towards the end of high school, my answer for "What do you want to be when you grow up" became: "It's not what I want TO BE, it's what I want to do. And, that is to travel the world, help people, eat wonderfully, and write, write, write."

**The Church at Antioch:** Would you say *Neux More* is your attempt at healing past wounds?

**Manfield:** This collection is DEFINITELY a journey of healing. It takes you through everything I've felt from negative thoughts I've had to familial emotions to trauma and grief. Some of these emotions and thoughts I've grown to learn weren't true, but were emotions I constructed in my head from past



*Erica Mansfield*

trauma. Without writing everything out, I don't know if I would've ever properly healed. As the series goes on, there will be more works centered around what it feels like to heal, what friendships now look like, and how that process has changed me for the better. This first collection is strictly about emotions that I've made the conscious decision to say "Neux More" to holding, which is why I entitled it as such.

**The Church at Antioch:** Did you write as a child? Did you do research or are these poems written from experience?

**Mansfield:** I wrote as a child often! But, it wasn't until I went to college that I began studying and learning my writing style. Actually, my last year of college was when I studied poetry and learned that was a writing style that I enjoyed. My breakthrough moment with poetry was when my cousin, Kat, passed. I had so many different emotions at that time, and they wanted to come out. My teacher knew what was going on and we had an assignment due that week. She told me I didn't have to submit my assignment, but something in me completed the assignment and showed up for class. I don't know what got into me to this day! We were asked to read our

poems out loud, and I received so much amazing feedback regarding my poem about what happened to my cousin and best friend and how I felt. From then on, I've used poetry as an outlet for my emotions, my experiences, and my learnings from life. I also read a lot more poetry than I've ever done in my life. So, yes, I guess you can say I research a lot as well.

**The Church at Antioch:** Do you find writing easy?

**Manfield:** Sometimes I do, and sometimes I don't. Sometimes the words just flow on the page, and I never really know what I'm writing until the end. I call this my subconscious writing. Other times, I have a clear idea and write about that. The times that I find the most difficult to write are when I have an idea or topic, but it requires me to go to a place I may not want to re-visit. But, when you're wanting to heal, you have to revisit all parts of yourself, even the parts you've shoved behind a closet door that you've locked with ten keys. Those are the most difficult parts for me, but end up being beautiful works of art.

**The Church at Antioch:** What advice would you give other youth interested in pursuing writing?

**Manfield:** Write every single day! Even on those days you don't want to write. Even if you can only write a sentence. Even if what you write doesn't make any sense, write, write, write. And understand that if you've been called to write or pursue writing, it's greater than you. You're writing for someone else, and your writings will be here when you're not. And remember to be as real, raw, and transparent in your writings because you could save someone's life. Writing is the beginning of educating others, so write well, write bravely, and write nonstop!

## Prayer isn't just talking, it's also listening

Prayer is a dialogue.

Too often, however, we don't wait to hear what God has to say after we make our requests known to him.

"Sometimes, you need to listen for what God has to say before making a request because some of our requests may not be in God's will," said the Rev. Kenneth Alexander.

Alexander, pastor of Antioch Baptist Church North, was the keynote speaker at the Men of Antioch North's April Prayer Breakfast.

He recalled how prayers we learned as children were straightforward and short, and said we may need to remember the

simplicity and depth as we pray as adults. He admonished us to trust in the Lord and praise him for what he is about to do.

He noted several types of prayer, including intercessory prayers as we stand in the gap for others; "I don't want to do as you've asked, God" prayers; nevertheless prayers; last nerve prayers, and midnight prayers.

For each type of prayer, Pastor Alexander provided scriptural references, giving the accounts of those who prayed the type of prayer and relating them to current situations in which we need to utter the prayers. "Midnight hour prayers turn to morning blessings."

Continuing in a series on financial management, men were reminded to educate themselves before deciding where to place funds for savings and investments and the need to have a plan.

Whatever they do, they were encouraged to tithe first, then save, habits every father should pass on to his children as soon as they can count.

Instead of a June Prayer Breakfast, the men were treated by Antioch Womanhood to a drive-thru celebration of Father's and Father Figures. The gift bags included a hat and a cooling neck gaiter, with "Man of Faith" and the church and pastor's name imprinted on them.

## Ministers' wives, widows host conference

The Georgia Association of Ministers' Wives and Ministers' Widows held its State Conference in April.

The three-day gathering was the last over which two-term President Janetta W. McIntyre presided. Members approved a scholarship fund in the name of Sis. Dr. Ethel P. Stokes, President Emeritus, to award two scholarships to ministers' wives and ministers' widows. These schol-

arships are in addition to those already presented to high school seniors.

In other business, new officers were elected in a very smooth virtual process. One of the highlights of the three-day conference was an intergenerational panel. The perspectives on serving as a minister's wife and handling COVID-19 were engaging and enlightening from the youngest panel member, 23 years old, to

the oldest panel member, 96 years old, who told the audience she didn't have to have help logging into Zoom because she "kept up with technology."

Former State and International President, Sis. Beverly Glover gave condolences to Sis. Doris Terry, widow of the Rev. Ronald Terry, son of Antioch, and fondly remembered Sis. Barbara Alexander and her contributions to the GAMWMW.



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