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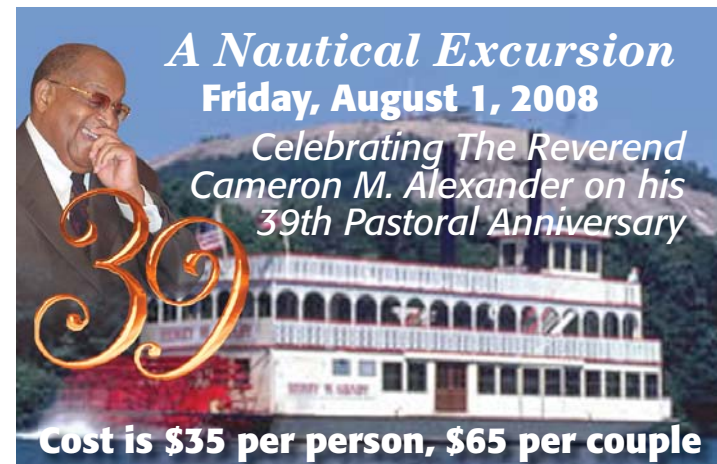
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Celebrating Antioch's Youth



The Youth of Antioch have achieved high levels of excellence throughout this school year. From elementary grades to post graduates, the Antioch church family has much to be proud of.

If You Can Believe It, You Can Achieve It!

This was the theme of the Fourth Annual Antioch Youth Achievement Banquet. Hats off to the Youth Coordinators and Volunteers for an outstanding event to salute achievements in academics, leadership, athletics, and perfect attendance. Antioch truly had a successful 2007-2008 academic year!



The celebratory program was kicked off by the Master and Mistress of Ceremonies Devin Hunter and Joncel Stephens. The MADD for Christ Choir, bell ensemble, and youth orchestra rendered musical selections along with a piano solo by Adam Alexander. The Youth Verse Speakers gave us the occasion. We were also moved by a special dance interpretation by Sister Whitney Jackson.

All who attended were proud of the many accomplishments of our Youth.

Congratulations Antioch!

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Honoring the Man, the Preacher, and his Ministry



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Special Anniversary Edition

July 2008

Volume 1, Issue 5

A pastor according to God's heart

A match made in heaven

From any place in this city too busy to hate, from any place within a 10-mile radius of Antioch Baptist Church North, you can see the cross.

For more than a decade it has stood tall, a stark contrast to a community weighed down by poverty and despair, seemingly void of hope.

And yet it is on this cross that Antioch has hung all of her hope.

It is why Sunday after Sunday for more than a century members have gathered here and why the Rev. Cameron Madison Alexander has without fail preached the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ with fear and trembling.

It has been this way since Rev. Alexander preached his first sermon – "There's a Man in Town" – at Antioch nearly



Early years at Antioch



Preaching the Word

40 years ago.

And so as he celebrates 39 years here, it is little wonder that the cross remains an ever-present symbol of the congregation's and its pastor's commitment to keeping Christ at the center of all that they do.

From a butcher shop

meeting of eight to a major metropolitan worship center of some 14,000, this has been a church that is Bible-based, Christ-centered, Holy Spirit-led and Mission-bound; that not only shoulders the responsibilities of its members'

Continued on page 6

The other match made in heaven

When the Rev. Cameron Alexander arrived at Antioch nearly four decades ago, he had already found his life-long partner in Sis. Barbara Jackson Alexander.

And so for more than 50 years, she has been at his side – the perfect preacher's wife and adoring mother of his four children: Eric, Greg, Kenneth and Maria.

It is a role she has embraced with gusto, void of any of the angst, insecurity or isolation that, experts say, many pastors' wives often feel.

As Rev. Alexander's 39th anniversary here approached, she reflected on their years together. She is proud of his leadership and ministry and

Continued on page 3

INSIDE	General Missionary Baptist Convention of GA, Page 2	TEN ALEXANDER-ISMS, Page 4	Maria, Eric Greg, Kenny, Page 4
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FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Christian Friends:

The quarterly leadership of Vision 2008 by the Men's Division ended in June and the torch has been passed to our Youth Division. I want to take this time to thank the Men's Division for their stellar coordination of our fellowship activities, their participation in our evangelistic outreach, their demonstration of Baptist doctrine in word and deed, and their uncompromising example of stewardship. They have, indeed, led by example.



Their warm and heart-felt Mother's Day Tribute was an uplifting occasion for all mothers present; their Taste of Antioch brought together a range of dishes and a diverse level of culinary skills; the Men's Retreat was a spiritually enlightening experience for old and young; and the Pastor's Barbeque was replete with good food and a comparable fellowship. The history-making AUMI/Stone Mountain Gospel Celebration brought together new and celebrated gospel artists whose glorious renditions resonated to the top of the mountain and beyond. The men's support of the Youth Achievement Banquet set the standard of what is expected of us all as the torch is passed to the Youth Division. Without a doubt, the greeters complimented the warmth of our membership. The awesome celebration in passing the torch to the youth serves as a testament to the quality, creativity, commitment, and spirituality of the Christian men with which we, as a family, have been blessed. Thank you, Dea. Calvin Booker, Dea. Milton Dodson, and Bro. Darryl Speed, for your leadership.

As we transition, I would like to welcome our youth leaders as they prepare to continue the implementation of the Vision. They are to be commended for their acceptance of this tremendous challenge. As they prepare to lead, let us prepare to support and encourage. Throughout this country, young people have become victims of indifference and neglect, causing them to seek unproductive avenues of recognition and acceptance. This is our time to open our hearts and arms to our youth and embrace their efforts to be recognized, to be heard, and to belong.

With the restructuring of the Youth Department, new and innovative ministries are planned to nourish and sustain our youth through life's passage. These programs are designed to address their concerns at various age, educational, and spiritual stages of development and socio-economic dispositions. In this country, the high school drop out rate is nearly 50% leading to increases in teen crime, suicides, drug use, and other anti-social, self-destructive behavior. We are blessed with the opportunity to help our youth not to become a part of those statistics.

Therefore, let us welcome our youth leaders, applaud their enthusiasm and excitement, and share their joy in giving, living, and loving Christ and their fellow man. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Prov. 22:6

This is God's commandment and His instructions to us. As a Christian family, the welfare of our youth is our charge and our "duty to do." Consequently, when you commit to assist you do so in obedience to His instructions to His children. Thank you for being obedient.

God bless you and may He keep you forever in His care.

And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. Acts 11:26

Yours in God's service,

C. M. Alexander
Rev. C. M. Alexander, Pastor

ADDED MEMBERS

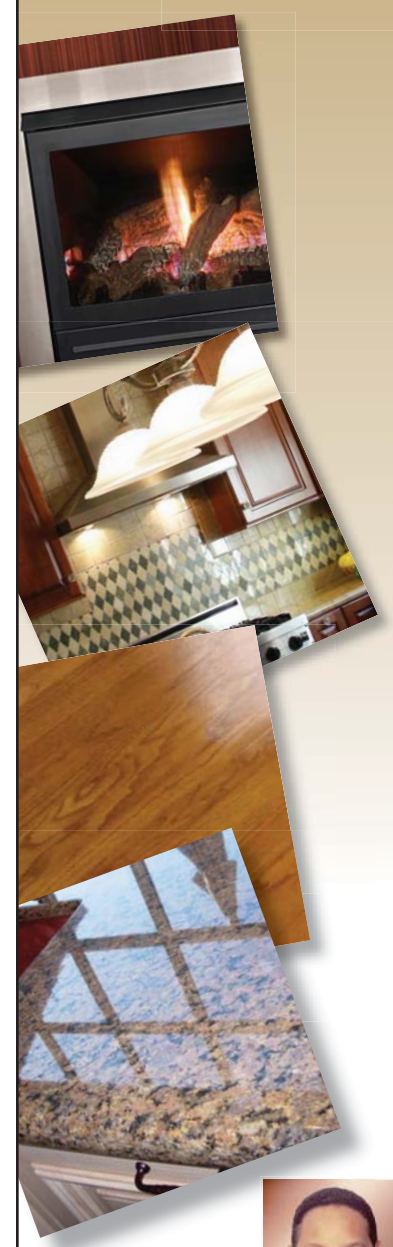
Antioch added 22 members to the family on June 11, including 12, who were Baptized. Those members, listed with their birth month, are:

- Stanley Neal, April
- Jumoke Rivers, November
- DeRon Ridley, September
- Julian Moore, May
- Quetin Moore, June
- Eric Jackson, January
- Eboni Belle, May
- Rachel Henderson, January
- Michael Henderson, September
- David Wilson, January
- Bethani Price, August
- Robert Jackson, March

Members who joined through Christian experience were:

- Charlotte Cook, November
- Frederick L. Austin, August
- Leslie Moore, January
- Sydney Thaxton, May
- Tiffany Heartley, October
- Bryson Palmer, September
- Marilyn Haynes, July
- Douglas Watts, May
- Nikki Moore, September
- Asha C. Jennings, May

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General Missionary Baptist Convention of Georgia: An agent of change

Some would have called him a young whippersnapper when he announced his candidacy for the President of the General Missionary Baptist Convention of Georgia, Inc.

The Rev. Cameron Madison Alexander had been serving as the President of the Sunday School and B.T.U. Congress as it was then called. Now he felt led by the Lord to seek the presidency.

It was November 1975 and the 105th Annual Session was being held just down the street from Antioch at the Mount Vernon Baptist Church.

As the country was caught up in an upheaval that was overturning traditions, social codes, and moral guidelines, Dr. Alexander and sixty per-

cent of the voting delegates to the Annual Session knew it was time for a change. That day he launched his campaign for "New Frontiers of Christian Service."

The voting process took almost all night. Sometime during the wee hours of the morning, the GMBC, Inc., became the beneficiary of perhaps one of Rev. Alexander's greatest gifts: unselfish leadership.

For the next 29 years, he was voted in as President; in most of those years he had no opposition, but even in the years when he did, an overwhelming majority cast their votes for him.

Because each Baptist church is autonomous with no over-seeing Bishop or Board of Elders dictating the order of service, organizational structure, or financial obligations, observers say his leadership was invaluable.

Not only did he provide leadership for over 800 churches across the state of Georgia, they said, his vision and submission to the Holy Spirit allowed him to select the right people to accomplish GMBC's goals.

Establishing the theme of "Fulfilling God's Great Expecta-

tions," President Alexander led the Convention in living up to its name as a missionary Baptist Convention by setting up a four-year emphasis on mission, followed by a renewed emphasis on Christian education to train those who would serve on the mission field, be it home or abroad.

Alexander, who resigned in 2004, is credited with leading the GMBC, Inc. in many firsts that were emulated by other state conventions and the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.

Here are just a few of his accomplishments:

- Established the first annual Bryant Theological Seminary Workshop.
- Purchased the Baptist Head-

quarters and adjoining building that later functioned as the Church Supply and Bookstore at 155 Ashby (now Joseph E. Lowery) Street.

- The School of the Prophets, the Statewide Minister's Conference was initiated in January of 1977 in Toccoa at the Baptist Assembly.

- Appointed the first woman, Mrs. Minnie Wimbish, as Historian.

- Led a delegation to Washington, D.C. to negotiate plans for digging a well to provide water in Mozambique and surrounding villages.

- The Marshall Stenson 34-room dormitory was added debt-free to Bryant Theological Seminary.

- A Christian Recovery Home for men addicted to drugs and alcohol began operating in 1995 on what is now named the C.M. Alexander Land of Promise, in Culloden. Over 2,200 men have been served through this effort.

- In 2004, President Alexander resigned and was voted President Emeritus.



1983 GMBC

Continued from page 3: The other match made in heaven

gladly followed. "I have never had any problem in moving from one city to another with my husband," Mrs. Alexander said.

Nor has she had a problem feeling at home. At each place she has embraced the members and the ministry, not out of a sense of duty, but of love.

As always that love extended into the community as she taught in area schools, presided over the PTA and later worked with the Savannah

Model Cities Program.

But she gave it all up in 1969 to come here to Antioch, where she has continued to serve. "I'm glad I did," she said.

Continued from cover

"we fit like two peas in a pod"

happy for the privilege to serve as his helpmeet.

"He has my full support, my prayers and inspiration," she said.

She is the principal broker of Barbara J. Alexander Realty, where she is the final decision maker, mentor to her staff and financial overseer.

"If I don't challenge each sales associate to be continuously productive and to keep steady commissions coming in, then failure is the end result," she said.

But in the 18 minutes it takes for her to drive from her real estate office back home each day, she is transformed from



Mrs. Alexander at Pastoral Inauguration

businesswoman bearing sole responsibility for the success of a company to wife, mother, mother-in-law, grandmother of nine and great-grandmother of one.

Instead of a life in a fishbowl where she is constantly being judged, Mrs. Alexander describes a life made in heaven, where her role isn't burdensome but a source of joy. "I am partner," she said. "As the Bible teaches, my husband is the head." That isn't to say she's some shrinking violet. She isn't.

Not only is she a business and civic leader, she's a source of inspiration to both the men and women of Antioch, where she has served as spiritual advisor for the Women's Division and Minister's Wives ministry, counselor to wives with marital problems and for many years headed the Antioch Council of Entrepreneurs. More recently, she spearheaded the rebirth of the church newsletter, now called *The Church at Antioch*.

Even after 54 years of marriage, she said she cherishes their life together and attributes their long relationship to a mutual love, admiration and respect for one another.

She said, "We fit like two peas in a pod."

It is a role she relishes. "My duties and responsibilities change," she said. "I am partner – not broker."

They began their life together in Valdosta, where Rev. Alexander served in the U.S. Air Force.

They didn't have much but knew how to stretch what

they had.

"I manipulated our grocery budget," Mrs. Alexander recalled, "and we had plenty." Sunday's roast, for instance, was transformed into beef stew one day and beef soup the next.

In 1956, Rev. Alexander ended his career with the Air Force and enrolled at Morehouse College. Mrs. Alexander returned to work as a secretary at the real estate agency where she worked as a teenager.

The couple had two children when Rev. Alexander was called to his first church, Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Cartersville.

"It was a family-oriented congregation," Mrs. Alexander said, "warm, loving and faithful."

But God soon called Rev. Alexander to pastor at the Flagg Chapel Baptist Church in Milledgeville, then New Pleasant Grove in Macon, where he was involved in the Civil Rights movement.

"For me it was very frightening," remembered Mrs. Alexander.

Early one morning, she awakened to the telephone ringing. A Ku Klux Klansman was on the phone. He wanted to speak to Rev. Alexander who'd already left for the day. "He can't come to the phone,"

Mrs. Alexander told the man fearing for her life and the couple's two young sons.

"OK, let him get his sleep," the voice said. "When we get through with him he will be sleeping in hell."

Mrs. Alexander said she was terrified. Such threats had become commonplace but she was determined to be at her husband's side even if it put her in danger. She joined him at marches, demonstrations and protests, enduring the racial slurs and threats hurled at them.

When she wasn't fighting with her husband for equal rights, she was serving with him at New Pleasant Grove



Mrs. Alexander at a church event

and in the community. At church, she headed the youth department and sang in the choir. She was active in the PTA.

When God called Rev. Alexander from New Pleasant Grove to St. John Baptist Church in Savannah, she

The Church At Antioch is looking for you! 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 gstaples@ajc.com.

Many things to love: Pastor's children speak on his love and his advice

There are many things to admire about Antioch's pastor, the Rev. Cameron Madison Alexander: his love of God, the church and family. Here, his children share one thing that they admire most about him and the best piece of advice he's ever shared. Here's some of what they had to say:



Cameron Eric Alexander, Sr.
Spouse: Pamela J. Alexander
Children: Cameron Alexander Jr., 26, and Adam Michael Alexander, 10, member of the youth verse speaker, youth choir and junior ushers
Best piece of advice: Don't let the actions of others control your response.
One thing you admire most about him: His ability to forgive others.



Greg M. Alexander
Spouse: Zeporia Alexander
Children: Shatavia, 32; Greg Jr., 28; Brandon, 21
Best piece of advice: Have a personal relationship with God.
One thing you admire most about him: His dedication and love for the church.



Rev. Kenneth L. Alexander
Spouse: Lisa K. Alexander
Children: Kathleen Alexander, 22; Ashley Alexander, 21; one grandson, DeMario Lee Franklin Jr., 14 months.
Best piece of advice: Go get you a mop or lawn mower and work for yourself.
One thing you admire most about him: His sense of humor.



Maria Hunter
Spouse: Ray Hunter
Children: Erica, 15; Raymon, 15; and Lailah, 3
Best piece of advice: Learn patience – nothing has to happen by Friday; work toward a perfect balance, meaning work toward independence – never have to rely and depend on someone else; learn to be humble – the same people you see on the way up

will be the same people you see on the way down – care about how you treat others; God's word is faithful and true – live your life in a manner that is pleasing to him.

One thing you admire most about him: His love and compassion for the least of these. His dedication to God, to Antioch and our family. He is always available for fatherly advice. Lastly, I can't forget his sense of humor.

TOP ALEXANDERISMS

- 10** If you're not going to participate in worship, you should stay at home because here at Antioch, we expect you to participate. When the preacher says something that's right, say, "Amen." That means "it is so," and everything in the Bible is so.
- 9** Don't confuse your cross with your crop.
- 8** I don't want any 'skeered' preachers.
- 7** Jesus will turn a period in your life into a comma, so wait for what comes after the but.
- 6** If you're a sinner, raise you hand. If you're a sinner saved by grace, stand up.
- 5** Speak to the people on your left and on your right and behind you and in front of you. Was anybody actin' funny? Well, get up and hug about 50 people.
- 4** I'm not talking about nobody, I'm just talking about what I'm talking about.
- 3** You've got more going for you than you've got going against you.
- 2** We will serve the least, the less, and the lost.
- 1** Antioch is Bible-based, Christ-centered, Holy Spirit-led, and Mission-bound.

Fabulous food, fun and fellowship mark Pastor's barbecue

If you were anywhere else other than Bessie Branham Park on Saturday, June 21, you missed a treat.

"This is the best anniversary picnic in the last three years," said Sis. Lynn Roberts. "And the watermelon was good too."

And not just watermelon, members said.

There was great food, fabulous fellowship, and loads of fun as we kicked off the 39th Anniversary Celebration for Rev. Dr. Cameron M. Alexander with a picnic at the park.

The event, sponsored by the Men's Division, featured a full playground for the children (and adults) to play soccer and try their hand at volleyball.

There was face-painting by Bee the Clown and a balloon artist made keepsakes for the children.

Members danced to the beat of old and new school music in between eating watermelon and a couple of hands of spades and bid whist.

And if sitting under a tree and relaxing was what they wanted, the weather was perfect for that as well.

"I ALWAYS enjoy this event, said Sis. Bonita Hammond, a regular at the picnic. "It gets better and better each year."



Gospel fest combines with Juneteenth for a historic celebration

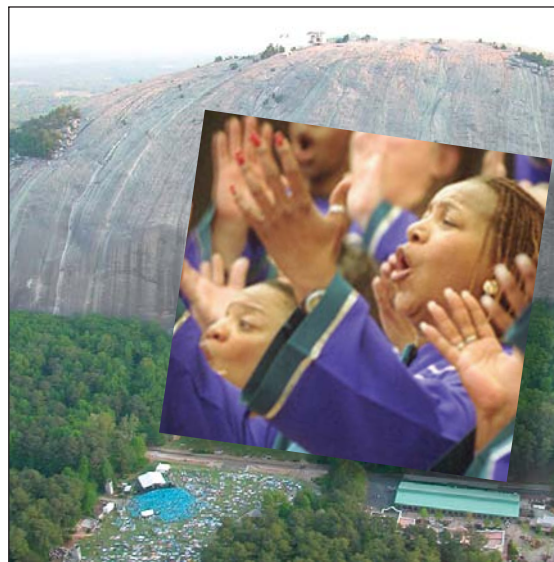
When the first gospel fest was held in 2005, organizers saw it as a way to attract the African-American religious community to Stone Mountain Park.

It was a successful and historic partnership between park representatives, Antioch Urban Ministries and Praise 97.5 FM, attracting some of the best performers in gospel music.

This year, the 50th anniversary of the park, the celebration took on a whole new focus: Juneteenth.

Juneteenth, short for June 19, marks the belated arrival of news of the Emancipation Proclamation. The proclamation took effect New Year's Day 1863, but news of it did not reach Texas slaves until the Civil War ended two years later.

Going forward, Antioch's pastor, Rev. Cameron Alexander hopes to make the Juneteenth Celebration at the Park the largest commemoration of Juneteenth in the Southeast. This will help pass on our history, celebrate our progress, and anticipate our future accomplishments through Christ Jesus.



There is much irony but even more to celebrate in holding the Juneteenth/Gospel Celebration in the place where the Ku Klux Klan gathered for some of its biggest rallies in the past and where three Confederate heroes of the Civil War are memorialized in a gigantic stone carving. The movement of the gathering from a side area to the Laser Lawn is a testament to the importance this celebration has attained. The Lord has brought us not just a mighty long way but all the way!

At this year's event last month, patrons enjoyed the park's attractions for and feasted on mountains of food. Children played impromptu games of tag and hid-and-seek.

What made the day unique, however, was the line-up of church choirs, praise teams, step teams, mime groups, and liturgical dance troupes that reigned the crowd.

Brother Otis Byrd and Adoration represented Antioch well. You won't want to miss Juneteenth at Stone Mountain Park next year. Put it on your calendar now.

continued from page 7: A match made in heaven

All have been granted. That along with having sent so many of his members to heaven, he said, is his greatest source of pride.

He has dedicated and baptized three generations of family members, including his own four children. He has married and buried them.

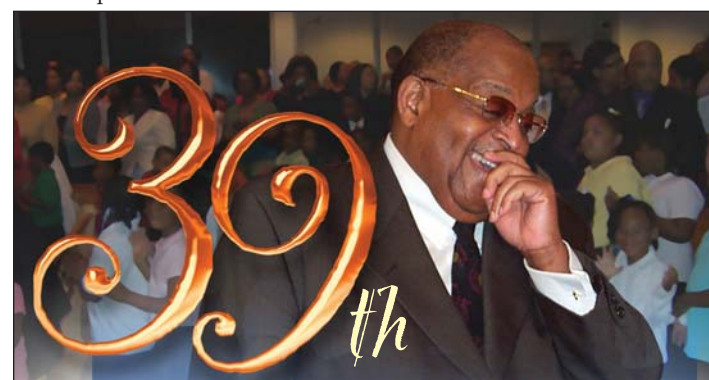
"That's the great joy of a long pastorate," he said.

For 39 years now, he has begun each day with his Maker, reading his favorite scripture, the 23rd Psalms, and praying.

Reading the Psalm, he said, he becomes David and is reminded that he is not the shepherd but the sheep.

"I read it not to finish it," he said. "I stop wherever the

Holy Spirit tells me. Read it and stop so that it reads me."



Sometimes when he has questions, he said, he lies prostrate, gets his pillow, screams and kicks and wrestles with God.

During a recent sermon, he had a question for his flock: "Why we keep doing this?"

The church was quiet now. Alexander spoke just

above a whisper at first and then cut loose as he declared

the answer: "This is bouncing back day."

For 52 years, he has stood in pulpits proclaiming Jesus Christ like a poet laureate, shunning the media spotlight.

Now amid a whirl of Amens, he tells his sheep he has an attitude because he trusts and knows the God he has

preached about all these years. "I trust him implicitly," he says, his voice rising. "There is nothing I will not commit to his hand."

"I trust him with every breath, with every beat of my heart, with every oozing of my blood. I trust him. I know him in the free pardon of my sin. I go to sleep in his care. I wake up in his grace and I move around in his love and keep getting stuff from him."

For 30 minutes or more, he holds the congregation in rapt attention, then finally with the entire congregation standing in agreement, he leads them back to the beginning, to the cross where Christ died, where he and Antioch hang all their hope.

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continued from cover: A match made in heaven

well-being but those it considers the least, the less and the lost.

Under Alexander's leadership, it has built affordable housing and through a series of innovative programs rescued drug abusers, provided jobs for the unemployed and college scholarships for its youth.

And despite its status as a mega church, Antioch has maintained a favorable reputation in the community, in part, because of its track record of service to the community, its integrity and fearlessness, said Robert M. Franklin, president of Morehouse College, the pastor's alma mater.

"It may be that people are also a bit in awe and cautious about criticizing a ministry," Franklin said, "that has been strong, courageous, and focused on representing the voice of many who have been locked out of Atlanta's prosperity."

A MAN IN TOWN

From the beginning, the union between Alexander and Antioch seemed to be a match made in heaven.

For one thing, when Antioch began its search for a new pastor in 1969, Alexander was senior pastor of St. John Baptist Church in Savannah and had no intention of leaving.

"I loved St. John and thought I'd retire in Savannah," he said.

But Antioch was set to vote on five finalists. To avoid giving one of the candidates an edge, they needed a neu-



Early photo of the Alexanders

tral party to preach.

Against his wishes, Alexander's father volunteered him.

"I was pretty sure," he'd say later, "I wasn't in charge of anything."

As he mounted the pulpit

"I knew I was in trouble, because they knew a different Cameron."

that Sunday, Alexander immediately spotted some of his old classmates from Booker T. Washington High School. One of them, Betty Harris, was on the piano.

"I knew I was in trouble," he recalled, "because they knew a different Cameron."

That Cameron played the jazz circuit not the pulpit.

He was nervous. Playing the sax, he didn't worry so much about his audience.

Being in the pulpit was different. He knew people came to church for a reason and it was his job to minister to them.

But if he'd learned anything about preaching, it was this: having been led to a scripture is like having air-

planes lining up for landing. "They're stacked at different levels of prayer and meditation — When they land, it's time to preach that," he said.

On that Sunday, it was time to preach Mark 4:39. His subject: "There's a Man in Town."

FEEDING THE FLOCK

Alexander was born the son of a preacher, raised in Atlanta and the Lindsay Street

Baptist Church where his father pastored.

If Harris and the other classmates saw the jazz saxophonist at the start of his sermon, they had to have seen the preacher at the end.

Rosa Jean Tomlinson did. To this day, she remembers that sermon and the impact it had on the congregation.

"Everybody was very excited," she recalled. "They enjoyed (Alexander's sermon) so much, they added his name to the ballot."

Two days later, Deacon Clinton Robinson called Alexander. They wanted him to pastor Antioch.

Alexander was stunned but agreed to come on board.

"I drove back as fast as I could to Savannah to tell St. John," he said. "I knew the Lord wanted me at Antioch."

Over the next two decades, under Alexander's leadership, Antioch would not only expand its membership base, it would also expand its outreach ministries, distinguishing herself by her good works.

Thus by 1987, the church was bursting at the seams. A new sanctuary was in order.

Where they would build loomed large. City leaders advised church staff that staying would mean its demise.

The church was in a declining neighborhood and across the street from public housing. Alexander, though, refused to abandon the community.

"Rather than listen to those who controlled the wealth," said Deacon William Harding before his death last month, "he listened to the Lord and stayed at 540 Kennedy

"I can't be motivated by personality in the pulpit or the pew."

Street."

It wasn't the first time Alexander had forgone conventional wisdom in favor of God's will. It wouldn't be the last.

In or out of the pulpit, Alexander appears to be a man at peace with himself, who by his own admission does a little of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X.

And yet to this day, Alexander said, he is uneasy in the pulpit.

"I think it's the mystery of why I have been drawn and why I have been led to one book out of 66, one chapter in the book and a few verses in a chapter as a text," he said. "I know that the Holy Spirit has led me to that text for a reason."

"The second part of the mystery is I do not know who is in need of the message besides me. They don't look like it but people come to church for a reason. The fear of not feeding the flock makes me nervous."

DEAN OF PREACHING

Franklin first heard Rev. Alexander preach in 1984 during Rev. Jesse Jackson's campaign for the White House but it wasn't until five years later, when Franklin moved to Atlanta, that the men met.

"We visited several churches and Antioch was one of my favorites," he said, "because of the quality of his preaching and richness of the worship culture at Antioch."

It was hard, Franklin said, not to look up to Rev. Alexander, to appreciate his leadership both at Antioch and

in the community. From the beginning, he was one of the few black pastors in the city who was a voice for justice and inclusion of people living in poverty.

"Antioch's focus on community ministries is faithful to the church in the book of Acts and a model for contemporary churches everywhere," he said.

For this, both Antioch and Alexander, who tempers his ministry in activism, have become respected world citizens.

"As a person, he is a man of quiet power, a natural aristocrat who possesses a common grace and a remarkable sense of humor," said Franklin. "He has an infectious smile and a warmth that is uncommon for a powerful leader."

And as a preacher, Franklin said, Alexander is one of the dean's of black preaching in America today.

"He combines a strong social justice analysis with a focus on personal integrity, service, and spirituality," he said. "His ministry has expanded to claim and renew his local neighborhood instead of abandoning the central city. In this respect, Rev. Alexander and Antioch are remarkable and commendable."

Franklin recalled visiting Antioch one Easter Sunday along with a standing-room only crowd.

Rev. Alexander, he said, asked the men of the church to stand and yield their seats to women. He then invited the men to sit on the steps around the pulpit.

"The tradition stuck and



Rev. and Mrs. Alexander enjoy a church function.

brothers began to sit there each Sunday," he said. "It was a powerful symbol, to see black men gathered around the pulpit, sitting at the foot of the Bible and the preacher. I think it was an inspiring image for the entire village."

Once, Franklin said, a group of local and national politicians visiting Antioch crowded the pastor to shake his hand.

When Alexander noticed an elderly grandmother and her grandchild walking by, he stopped everything, pushed through the VIPs and went over to greet and hug them.

"I had to smile and nod in approval as the VIPs were put in their place," Franklin said.

HOPE IN THE CROSS

The church, Rev. Alexander said, ought to have some sense of its significance. Why it's a church, for instance, and not a bank. Why is it and where is it on a corner and what is it supposed to do there and how can it do it.

"That leads me," he said, "to what is the foundation of

the church no matter the size or location. What holds it? What keeps it standing?"

For Alexander and Antioch, the church has to be Bible-based, Christ-centered, Holy Spirit-led and Mission-bound.

"It can't be motivated by personality in the pulpit or the pew," he said. "Jesus Christ was the only one nailed to the cross at Calvary. That's what the church is about, what underpins it and that never changes."

It is why he insisted the cross be the first part of the church erected when Antioch decided to build a new sanctuary. It was to be a reminder that as the church built its new building, building its members was its first priority.

It is why in all his years at the helm, Alexander has never asked the church for anything for himself. All of his requests have been driven by the four pillars of the church: fellowship, evangelism, stewardship and doctrine.

Continued on page 8