

ECGMBA BAPTIST INSPIRER

MODERATOR, REV. JAMES ISAAC, III

FROM THE MODERATOR'S DESK

A Daring Summons

By Rev. James Isaac, III, ECGMBA Moderator & Pastor, New Hope
Granville Missionary Baptist Church



17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." 18 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. Matthew 4:17–20 (ESV)

Change is an inevitable part of life. Even though we resist, fight, and often deny change, change will eventually come. Matthew presents to us in his gospel the one who is the ultimate change agent, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is a danger to the status quo and a threat to establishment powers. He comes in a powerful way to usher the sweeping change of the rule, reign, and righteousness of God. He announces three things that are characteristic of the gospel movement:

The Kingdom of Heaven is near. Jesus is a radical revolutionary because He announces a takeover of the existing powers. Some of his first hearers no doubt understood that He would dislodge Roman rule, the hated occupying force in Palestine. And so, they welcomed Him.

The summons of a new Kingdom, a new way of living has given rise to hope to those who live under oppressive conditions. Oppressive social and political powers that seek to dominate and divide, oppressive economic powers that marginalize and dehumanize the poor, oppressive religious powers that misrepresent God are power structures that are challenged by Jesus. Every old power of darkness and destructiveness is now on notice, because God's light is in the world in Jesus.

Repent. Just one word but full of power and possibility. It is an imperative word. It is a command change. Change directions. Change loyalties. Change from guilt to compassion. Change from selfishness to selflessness. Change from despair to hope. Change to a new way of living. Those who heard and embraced this call found that His very saying it empowered them to do it. The term is an imperative, but it is also an authorization. We are now authorized to quit serving the old practices, old systems, old fears, old guilt, old debts, freed by the coming of the marvelous light into the land of darkness and death.

Follow Me. Jesus is looking for those who will partner with Him in the new rule that will replace the old. But to do so requires breaking old loyalties. Those who accepted and embraced His summons were ready for change.

Those fishermen by the Sea of Galilee captivated by the possibilities of newness went immediately into His new world. So can we!

Prevailing Through the Dark Night of the Soul



Written by, Chaplain Audrey Langley Wilson, MDiv, BCC, BSN

John Wesley is considered the founding father of the Methodist faith. He preached over 40,000 sermons, often preaching four or five times a day. His audiences consisted of tens of thousands of people, both wealthy and poor alike. By all regards Wesley was a respected and successful religious leader.

However, Wesley encountered a life altering event when everything appeared to be going according to God's will. His faith and spiritual foci were shaken, leading to a season of darkness. This *uninvited event* challenged his sense of peace and hope. Life for Wesley was void and meaningless. He wrestled with faith and the Lord's will, ultimately arriving at a juncture that he referred to as "*The Dark Night of the Soul.*" No one is immune to darkness, suffering and doubt. Circumstances can cause sadness associated with the impact of loss or death of a loved one, the impact of life's failures or unmet expectations, the impact of illness or aging or the impact of betrayal by a spouse or loved one.

Yet, I imagine that people of faith are challenged when called upon to journey with the brother or sister who is dealing with dark nights of the soul. The reality that God allows suffering appears to be an affront to the goodness of God. Baptists embrace the catchphrase, "*God is good all the time, and all the time God is good.*" When life's hard places appear and suffering abound, God is still doing a good thing. God remains in working mode and is up to something good. That good thing will propel believers to higher heights and deeper depths. God's people must pray, stand firm in faith and keep serving. The beauty is that God provides resources to sustain us. Simple joy emerges through a story or a memory. A sermon, a prayer, a gentle touch provides assurance that we are not alone. Psalm 30:5 reads, "*For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*"

That's what happened with John Wesley: Joy came in the morning! He could not explain this feeling except to say, "*My heart was strangely warmed.*" The Lord heard Wesley's prayers and He is waiting to hear from us. The Lord's desire is for believers to prevail through **the dark nights** in order to experience **the heart that is strangely warmed**. Rogers and Hammerstein wrote and recorded these words of encouragement:

When you walk through a storm. Hold your head up high. And don't be afraid of the dark. At the end of a storm is a golden sky. And the sweet silver song of a lark. Walk on through the wind. Walk on through the rain Tho' your dreams be tossed and blown. Walk on walk on with hope in your heart. And you'll never walk alone.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isa. 40:31)

Go Deep— Getter a Deeper Relationship With Christ in 2019!

Is Gambling a Sin



I had a very good friend, who is a Christian by the way, to post this question to me last week and I struggled in answering her. Her main concern was that she was good at playing the numbers, “and what makes it a sin?” she asked.” What if I could win enough money and share it with someone who is in need, don’t you think that is Christian thing to do?” The reason I struggle with this question is because I knew my friend was not looking for the Bible’s answer, rather, my personal feelings toward gambling. However, I insisted that she allow me to answer this moral question with a biblical reference. My insistence was that sin questions can only be answered by the correct interpretation of the Bible.

I personally believe that the Word of God was given to us that we can apply it to every decision we make. The Psalmist says, “Your Word I Have hidden in my heart, that I Might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119: 11, NKJV). We Christians are to apply the will of God to all questions and challenges of the world in which we live. Don’t ever try to answer life’s questions without first understanding God’s will for your life. So, gambling is one of those questions or challenges that we need God’s Word and His Will to help us answer.

Now, let’s attempt to answer the question about gambling. What is gambling? Webster’s Dictionary defines gambling as such: “to stake or risk something of value, as money, on the outcome of something involving chance (a bet). From this definition, one can argue that gambling is all about taking a chance is what Christians do, then where does our faith stand? Chance stands in direct opposition to God’s Will, while faith stands on human dependence of God’s grace. Jesus taught us how to express our dependence on God when He told His disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is heaven” (Matthew 6: 10, KJV). This means, all of our needs and wants are met by the Will of God. If God is willing, you will have what you need. You don’t have to depend on chance or luck. You can trust the favor of God. It is God who controls what we need, not chance. The Prophet Amos says it this way, “If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in the city, will not the Lord have done it? (Amos 3:6, NKJV). In here, the Lord posed two questions to show that some things are certain in nature. Yet, nothing happens that is outside His sovereignty. Chance or luck are other words for human ignorance. We do not know the favor that is on our lives, so we take chances. We do not understand that will of God that has been prepared for us, so we take chances. We do not know what has been stored up for us, so we take chances. Stop taking chances and trust the Lord who can supply all of your needs. If you don’t have it now, just “wait on the Lord and be of good courage” (Psalm 27:14)

Do you know that luck and chance are forms of idolatry (worship of idol)? The Bible warns us not to worship any “carved image”. Because the Lord says He is “a jealous God” (Exodus 20:4, NKJV). A “carved image” is anything we create for ourselves. This includes habits, images, words we speak, and things we do, like gambling.

J. Eric Morgan, III
 Pastor, Mt. Vernon Missionary Baptist Church
 Past Moderator, ECGMBA

MARK YOUR CALENDAR
 ECGMBA ANNUAL SESSION 2019
 JULY 23 –25, 2019

Giving Honor To Rep. Michaux, Jr., The Black Church and A New Call To Action in 2019

Written By Dr. Warren L. Herndon, Visiting Minister Mt. Zoar Missionary Baptist Church



Today, we are living in some of the most divided times and we need wisdom from the past, strong leadership and action from our next generation. Some may ask the question; how will our community meet this challenge? Only, by working in unity and partnerships for a brighter future. We need people of good will strategically working together for the greater good of our next generation. The Black Church has been the rock of our family's foundation; a safe place for fellowship and the backbone of the Civil Rights movements. Therefore, for over 50 years, our Black Churches have uplifted our local, county and state leaders. To that end, our neighborhoods, communities and HBCU's (Historical Black Colleges and Universities) have been resilient and have trained our young leaders in the past.

Over the last several months, there was a new sense of interest, pride and wisdom in teaching (the called-out leaders) that we must work with a new sense of energy and vigor to ensure that we continue to build on this momentum for our future. This election cycle had some of the biggest voter turnout ever for the mid-term seats across our state. Therefore, we should be proud of the scheduled Swearing In Ceremony on Sunday, January 6, 2019 at 2:00 pm. This event will be held at The Tower At Mutual Plaza 411 West Chapel Hill Street.

North Carolina Central University Office of Community Engagement and the Durham Martin Luther King, Jr. Steering Committee, Inc. partnered to further Dr. King's dream of empowering our young people to get more involved in the political process. These two partners worked together during early voting and on election day. Consequently, now we must carry this new energy, enthusiasm and preparation into 2019 as our millennial citizens prepare for the 2020 elections.

As communities across this country prepare for the national recognition of Dr. King's Holiday on Monday, January 21, 2019, we gather to honor the life and legacy of this social justice leader. His bold stance and courage helped championed that voting was one of the most effective ways to empower our people and communities. Dr. King stated "voting is the process in which we change what we believe into public policy and practice. Unfortunately, many of our young adults are being disenfranchised with the political process and as a result are questioning the value of the vote.

As we continue to give honor to our past leaders, it is our goal to end this crisis of voter suppression across the state of North Carolina. As self-determined people and overcomers, we must become coaches and mentors and take our young people by their hands. This was the strategy back in the day in the Black Church. Additionally, as we look back on Sunday, November 20, we must continue to build more partnerships through a series of conversations with strong leaders in our community.

The first featured speaker in this series of legendary activist was Rep. Henry "Mickey" Michaux, Jr., life-long public servant and he was a personal friend of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Candidate Zack Hawkins and moderator Andre Vann. N. C. Representative Michaux, embraced and mentored him and the voters elected Representative Zack Hawkins. Therefore, we must find other young leaders and place them into the pipeline to become ready for 2020 and beyond. In other words, as it is stated in the Bible, we must train up our next generation. This community event was the first in a planned future series with the goal of energizing our next generation of leaders. Rev. Dr. King's "Dream" of empowering young people was the motivation to bring the Church to the fore-front as he led the way back during the Civil Rights Era.

In the 21st Century, across the state of North Carolina, we have far too many citizens living on the margins of life. Our towns and cities are growing by leaps and bounds and our next generation is being adversely affected by many of the policies made in education reform, gentrification in housing, temporary employment and other supportive services for women, children and students. Therefore, we must have a call to action and train our next generation to become engaged, to advocate and to be visible for the 2020 election. The Black Church has been out front for the last 100 years, teaching the Word, preparing our youth and encouraging the people to realize that "No One Is Going to Do for Us but Us." As Elder Leaders in the community, state and country plan for the 2019 National Holiday Celebration in honor Dr. King's Birthday on January 21, 2019, we must include our next generation to give them a voice. Let's continue to teach, train and involve them in our churches, schools, universities and businesses so that they may learn the art of community empowerment and self-determination.

Food for Thought

Written by, Rev. Annie Gibson
President, Woman's Auxiliary, ECGMBA



1. Take a pumpkin. "You aren't a pumpkin, but all of us are something like one. God picks you from the patch, brings you in, and washes all the dirt off you may have gotten from the other pumpkins." Talk about how a pumpkin is like us: it has an outside and an inside. The outside is what people see. The inside is like our soul or our heart. A pumpkin left to itself will soon rot and die. We will die some day, too."
2. Carve out eyes and a small "o" shaped mouth. As you make the holes and pull out the pieces of rind, ask people what they see inside (yucky stuff). This is what we look like to others and what we are like when our hearts are not changed. The hearts of men are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live (Ecclesiastes 9:2). How can we get rid of this icky stuff?
3. God is the only one who can change our heart. But in order for God to change our heart we must become open to him." Carve an opening in the top of the pumpkin big enough to put your hand through. You might want to quote Revelation 3:20 *"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."*
4. Put in your hand and pull out the insides. "God scoops out all the yucky stuff inside of us. He removes the seeds of doubt, hate, impurity and greed." Talk about the cross and how Jesus was willing to become messy for us, so that we might be clean. *"I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."* (Ezekiel 36:25b-27)
5. "But if we leave a pumpkin with just the insides taken out, then it's just hollow. We need to have a light inside that will truly make us alive! Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (John 8:12) Add a light to the inside of the pumpkin. "When Jesus lives inside of you, you can glow! You will want to be kind and honest. You will want to please God, to help others, and to tell other people about your Friend and Lord."
6. At this point you might want to carve the mouth into a smile! "God carves you a new smiling face and puts His light inside of you to shine for all the world to see."

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in the articles in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of East Cedar Grove Missionary Baptist Association of NC, Inc.

Our Past and Our Pioneers : From The ECGMBA Archives

In Loving Memory of Missionary Dorothy Boone Okeke, May 15, 1913—April 13, 2000

“ A Committed Christian, Woman of Faith & An Example of God’s True Love”

Compiled by Rev. Joyce Daye Clayton, Asst. Pastor New Red Mountain Missionary Baptist Church



Dorothy Boone Okeke, daughter of the late James N. & Eliza B. Allen, was born May 15, 1913 in Granville County, North Carolina. She departed this life on Thursday, April 13, 2000 at Northwood Manor Nursing Center, Durham, North Carolina, after an extended illness.

Dorothy was educated in Granville County Public School Systems, and received her degrees in Education and Mission Wrok from Shaw University and St. Augustine's College. At an early age she joined Synama Grove Baptist Church in Granville County, and at age 16 her membership was transferred to Pine Grove Baptist church in Creedmoor, North Carolina.

Dorothy' dream of doing mission work in a foreign land such as Africa, came true on February 20, 1950 when she left for Liberia, Africa. Her journey continued to the Lott Cary Mission School for girls in Breivenelle, where she was principal for six years. During this time she taught Biblical and Social Studies until she returned to America. Her work in Africa was inspired by many, and Sister Okeke developed a master list of names which included former students, who eventually came to America, and kept in touch with her.

While working at the mission station, Dorothy met and was untied in Holy Matrimony to Brother Lazarus Okeke, on November 5, 1952, whom preceded her in death. She returned from the mission field in Africa and continued her mission work through her church and has been President of the Woman's Auxiliary of East Cedar Grove Missionary Baptist Association, as well as of the Missionary Circle of Pine Grove, organizer of the young adult missionary group, President of the District 3 Organization, active in NC State Baptist Women's Mission programs, and continued to attend the Lott Cary Baptist Foreign Mission Conventions until her death.

Left to cherish her memory are: one sister, Ruth Allen Jones of Durham, NC; two nephews, James green (Toni) of Sanford, NC and Nelvis Allen, Jr. (Patricia) of Durham, NC; three nieces, Mrs. LaVonda Bobbitt of Collen, TX, Mrs. Claudia Allen and Mrs. Deitra Lipscomb of Durham, NC; one sister-in-law, Mrs. Julia Allen of Durham, NC; one brother i-n -law, Willie green of Wake Forest, NC; caretaker and cousin, Margie Bullock and Laura Boone of Durham, NC; longtime and devoted friends, Bett Glover, Dorothy Thomas, and Nannie Lyon, and a host of other relatives and friends.



The Homegoing (*“Homecoming”*) Service for Sister Okeke was held at the Pine Grove Missionary Baptist Church. The late Rev. Larry Mc. Elroy, pastor ,officiated and Rev. Lola Mangum, past president of the Woman's Auxiliary of East Cedar Grove delivered the eulogy. Among those bringing reflections on the life contributions to missions were: Sister Doris Smith, President of the Pine Grove Missionary Circle, Sister Emily Cogwell, 3rd Vice president of the Woman's Auxiliary , Dr. Priscilla A. Brodie, Executive Secretary –Treasurer of the Woman's Baptist Home and Foreign Missionary Convection, former students from the Mission School of Brewerville, Africa, and a beloved nephew, Mr. Nevis Allen of Durham. The scripture was read by Rev. Annie Gibson (23rd Psalm) and Sister Glennie Carver, President of the Woman's Auxiliary. (1 Cor. 13).

*Source: Obituary and Durham Herald Sun article donated from Sis. Esther Lee F. Gooch Collection donated by Sis. Emma Daniels.

Adjusting to a New Normal

Written by Rev. Shelton Harris, Assoc. Minister, Pettiford Grove Missionary Baptist Church



In life we already have or will face loss. This thing called loss forces us to adjust to a new normal. Death is the first loss I will address in series of articles concerning the various losses in life. Perhaps it's the loss of a loved one the circumstances of death can affect your grief. If a loved one suffered with a long illness, death is often considered a blessing. For the families of terminally ill patients, mourning begins with the onset of the disease, long before death occurs. Because of the time spent in anticipating death, this kind of bereavement differs from the intense grief over someone who dies following a brief illness, surgery or accident.

Five stages of grief were first proposed by Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her 1969 book *"On Death and Dying"*. In our bereavement, we spend different lengths of time working through each step and express each stage with different levels of intensity. The five stages of loss do not necessarily occur in any specific order or you may not experience them all. We often move between stages before achieving a more peaceful acceptance of death. Dr. Kübler-Ross's stages of loss include the following: (1) Denial- you will probably react to learning of the loss with numbed disbelief. You may deny the reality of the loss at some level, in order to avoid the pain. Shock provides emotional protection from being overwhelmed all at once; (2) Anger- you may lash out and lay unwarranted blame for the death on someone else. Please try to control this, as permanent damage to your relationships may result. This is a time for the release of bottled up emotion in a positive manner; (3) Bargaining- you may rail against God's will and try to bargain in vain due to ease your despair; for example, *"I will never do wrong again if you just bring my loved one back;"* (4) Depression- during this time, you finally realize the true magnitude of your loss, and it depresses you. However, depression is not the same as isolation; you may isolate yourself on purpose. Reflect on things you did with your lost one and focus on memories of the past; and (5) Acceptance- during this time learn to deal with the reality of your situation. Acceptance does not mean happiness.

Given the pain and turmoil you have experienced, you may never return to the carefree, untroubled "YOU" that existed before the death of your loved one. But with the help of God you will find a pathway forward. As you become more functional, your mind starts working clearly again, and you will find yourself seeking realistic solutions to problems posed by life without your loved one. You will start to work on practical situations and reconstructing yourself and your life without him or her. As you start to adjust to life without your dear one, your life becomes a little calmer and more organized. Your physical symptoms lessen, and your "depression" begins to lift slightly.

Support from others can help you to handle the aftermath of your loss but, definitely does not fill the void left by the passing of your loved one. It is important to reach out and accept support from your trusted community. These are normally individuals who are already in your close circle of family and friends. They should allow you to cry and to express your uncensored feelings without judgment or correction. They don't offer you advice or rush your grieving; for example say that *"he or she is gone so start looking for another mate or its time to move on now."* Instead simply listen well and provide practical help when you need it. Sometimes others will seem ready for you to move on to the acceptance stage before you are ready. There may be moments when others may leave you feeling pressured to pretend you are okay when you are not. Don't pretend that you are okay. That can lead to other issues.

Remember that God offers comfort in times of bereavement. Jesus said, *"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you"* (John 14:18 KJV). Realize that there is a difference between mourning and grief- internal versus external. Mourning is when you take the grief you have on the inside and express it outside of yourself. Another way of defining mourning is *"grief gone public"* or *"the outward expression of grief."* **There is no one right or only way to mourn. Turn to God for strength as you adjust to your new normal**

Announcing

The Annual Prayer Breakfast

Woman's Auxiliary

Saturday, May 25, 2019

8:30 am - 9:00 Arrival Time; Service Begins
9:00 am

Smith -Thomas Convention Center
Creedmoor, North Carolina

Chairperson, Sister Magdalene Ragland
Past President of Woman's Auxiliary

Theme: "Stop, Get Ready; It is Praying Time"



Mark Your Calendar

Congress of Christian Education

The Spring Institute

April 9-11, 2019

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isa. 40:31)

"Go Deep— Seek a Deeper Relationship With Christ in 2019!"

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APPRECIATION

Appreciation is expressed to members that submitted articles for publication to include: Rev. James Isaac, III, Rev. J. Eric Morgan, III, Chaplain Audrey Wilson, Rev. Dr. Warren Herndon, Rev. Shelton Harris, Rev. Annie Gibson, and Rev. Joyce D. Clayton. Gratitude is also given to Sister Emma Daniels for the donations from her Mother's Collection, Sister Esther Lee F. Gooch. Thanks for prayers and encouragement from my son and daughter, Lucious and Latrise Clayton, Rev. Shelton Harris, Pastor Larry Wilson, and a host of supporters. All praises and thanksgiving belong to Almighty God for inspiration, courage and strength.

From: Rev. Joyce Daye ECGMBA *IBAPTIST INSPIRER* Editor & Preparer

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