



**Freedom Fund Banquet
Keynote Speaker,
Rev. Gadson, better
known as "Pastor T."**

The Oconee County Branch NAACP held its 37th Annual Freedom Fund Banquet on Saturday, October 21, 2023, at the Seneca River Missionary Baptist Association Family Life Center in Seneca, S.C. The event began at 6 PM and emphasized this year's theme "Fighting Forward: Breaking Down Barriers".

We were fortunate to be able to meet again in-person for the second year following the end of the coronavirus pandemic. There were approximately 226 attendees present for the Freedom Awards Dinner and Banquet award celebration.

The Freedom Fund Awards Dinner is Oconee County Branch NAACP's primary fundraiser designed to support programming, activism and outreach, branch student awards, as well as voter education and advocacy throughout the year. Banquet funds also assist the branch's mission to address issues in the community related to education, equity, labor and economic disparities, voting rights, housing opportunity, access to health care, and environmental and criminal justice. The bottom-line goal is to ensure that the rights of all citizens are protected.

Minister Tashara Scott served as this year's Mistress of Ceremonies. Invocation was provided by Reverend WC Honeycutt, Jr. Entertainment was provided, to the delight of the audience, by the Seneca High School Steppers. Greetings from the City of Seneca were provided by Mayor Pro Tem Ronnie O'Kelly and Police Chief Casey Bowling; Lieutenant Jon Merck of City of Westminster Police Department also addressed the attendees with an update on progress that is being made in the City of Westminster. The Occasion was presented by Ms. Anna Ruth May, Council Member, Westminster City Council; and the blessing of the meal was provided by Reverend WC Honeycutt, Jr. Ms. Cindy Speed provided soul stirring musical renditions of "I'm not looking Back while Pressing for the Finish Line; the Prize is Up Ahead and not Behind" and "Because He Lives", while Mr. David Walker provided music for the event.

The keynote Speaker was the Reverend Telley Lynette Gadson, MDiv., District Superintendent and Chief Mission Strategist of the Heart- Warming Hartsville District of South Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. She was introduced by Mrs. Helen Rosemond-Saunders of Seneca, S.C.

An informative, inspirational and engaging message was presented by Reverend Gadson that was based on the subject: "I won't let Go, I Need This Blessing" taken from Genesis 32: 22 – 32.

We were reminded that we don't need anyone's permission to serve a glorious God. The Lord's creation all around us is a constant indicator of who God is – an awesome sovereign power all by himself. In our Lord there is liberty and freedom. Sometimes the things we consider our biggest loss is our biggest gain. If God is for us, who can be against us. Too often, we are busy trying to box God into our thoughts and ways. If you want to be successful in the fight forward, you must believe that your best days are still ahead. She concluded her message with three thoughts, I won't let go because:

1. My deliverance is in my struggle.
2. God has a plan designed for my good.
3. I fully expect God to bless me.

The speaker's message definitionally left us charged up to continue to Fight On!

Oconee County Branch NAACP President Mr. George Anderson, Vice President Mr. Willie Wahington, and Secretary Mrs. Kathy Jenkins awarded this year's education student awards to Omari Mayfield, Ethan Summerville, Elijah Jones, and Ana Chaney.



Special thanks to our Gold and Bronze sponsors: Oconee Federal Saving & Loan – Gold Sponsor; Seneca Light & Water – Gold Sponsor; Valu Teachers – Bronze Sponsor; Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative – Bronze Sponsor; and to all those who supported us by putting an ad in our souvenir journal.

On behalf of our Freedom Fund Committee members and Chairperson Mrs. Kathy Jenkins, the Oconee Branch NAACP also thank all guests and attendees for making the event such a success.

We encourage community members to become NAACP members. We especially need Silver and Gold Life Members. Membership is the life blood of the NAACP. If interested, please contact us at phone: 864-972-6122, email: naacpscoconee@gmail.com, or visit our webpage: NAACPOconee.org.

END OF MESSAGE