



Unity Fellowship Church Movement HOUSE OF BISHOPS' BULLETIN

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“God Is Love and Love Is For Everyone!”

BULLETIN ARTICLES

From Good to Great By 2021
By Sr. Bishop Zachary Jones

Convocation Update
By Bishop Jacquelyn Holland

Inspiration
By Sr. Bishop Zachary Jones

Movement Update
By Bishop Harris Thomas

FROM GOOD TO GREAT BY 2021

By Sr. Bishop Zachary Jones

According to an article from the *Washington Post*, titled “Church,” donations have plunged, because of the coronavirus. Some churches won’t survive. “There’s this thing people say: ‘Oh, recessions can be good. People want to come back to religion.’ But it’s the opposite,” he said. “Recessions are very hard on churches because of the financial impact.”

The Unity Fellowship Church Movement was organized at the start of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. We have known, for quite some time, the hurt and pain a disease can cause our families and our loved ones. Among many, many first landmark findings; Unity Fellowship Church Movement, led by our founder, Archbishop Carl H. Bean, moved us onward through our grief, our sorrow and our pain. He taught us that our belief in God and each other, could carry us through the difficulties of a pandemic. It is clear that we were to be a source of light in the world, while gaining strength from our Mother, Father, Everything-God. We remained vigilant and focused on our mission, which was to disperse peace, harmony, compassion and justice upon the Earth.

I believe we are still very relevant during these changing times. We are called a “Movement,” because we are able to adapt to the inevitable changes that take place in our world. For the last two years when we closed Convocation, we closed with an organizational commitment to move our organization “From Good to Great by 2021.” Holding on to the theme of Good to Great and by taking our place as wounded healers means, we need to be ready to give love and support to people who are dealing with critical needs. Our Fellowships and Churches are social justice ministries and we will allow God to show us how to continue to build and sustain our work.

I am amazed by how prophetic our work is. When we created Fellowships and established an alternative to mortar-restricted buildings and churches, little did we know that the day would soon come, for some of our churches to convert to Fellowships and continue doing the work of Christ. I believe God was preparing us for times like these, when we would put our focus on ministering to the people and not the space we worship in. Fellowships are gatherings, in a variety of ways and forms, that allow us to develop the people and not the space. Our Fellowships gather at restaurants, homes, and a variety of places and times, for spiritual support and community. Suddenly, we have become Fellowships throughout the Movement, during this coronavirus pandemic. Perhaps many of our churches will phase into permanent

Fellowships, in the advent of coronavirus. Change is difficult for some, but we have to be willing to adapt, trust and have faith.

In our past work, we were able to build powerful outreach ministries, such as the Minority AIDS project in Los Angeles, UFC Breaking Ground in New York City, Liberation In Truth in Newark, New Jersey and the Freedom Center. God has prepared us for what our nation is going through now. We must continue to advocate for those persons who are hungry and provide support for those who are in need of love and care.

HIV taught us many lessons and we will learn new ones during this virus. Nonetheless, we were called to serve and serve we must, because this is our purpose for being.

One of the questions we have been forced to answer is whether or not there will be Convocation this year? The House of Bishops and the national board have decided that we will not conduct Convocation this year, in the way we have done it in the past. However, we are pulling together a Think Tank, with a group of people who will come together with ideas, of how we can do Convocation this year.

Recessions or not, we will continue to allow the Holy Spirit to guide our steps. We will come up with creative ways to survive and grow. Our determination and commitment will move us “From Good to Great.”

CONVOCATION UPDATE

By Bishop Jacquelyn Holland

It is with great regret that we, the UFCM House of Bishops, recommended that Convocation 2020 be canceled. We are clear that this national event meets a number of needs for our people. It is inspirational, uplifting, worshipful and a true Holy Family reunion. Yet given the climate of the times, we realize this decision is in the best interest of our people. It is the desire of the HOB, to ensure that our UFCM family and allies are safe when we gather.

During this time, we ask that you take the necessary precautions that are recommended by the national health department, and officials in your respective cities, which will help keep you and your community safe and healthy.

We will keep you updated regarding plans for our next national gathering. You can help us, by gearing up for that glorious time. Prepare yourself emotionally, spiritually and financially. Truly when we finally are able to come together, it will be a high time in the Lord.

INSPIRATION

By Sr. Bishop Zachary Jones

We are immersed in one of the most challenging diseases of all times. COVID-19 has devastated our lives and forced us to focus on nothing other than the coronavirus and its consequences. We have suffered the loss of people that are near and dear to our work, families and the Movement. Our hearts are heavy, as our prayers for comfort and love go out to all who are grieving, because of loss. Our salute goes out to first responders, doctors and medical employees in all capacities, for their hard

work and well-earned respect, for answering our calls.

Many calls have come in from Parishioners, who fear the infection of coronavirus. We advise everyone to play it safe, rather than sorry. This virus has and continues to hit the African American communities the hardest. As cities open and go back to pre-coronavirus conditions, please be prudent in knowing the virus has not left us yet and stands a strong, scientific chance of re-spiking.

I agree with Jim Walls, the Editor and Founder-in Chief, of Sojourners magazine when he states, “When we look back upon history it will reveal the deadly consequences of corruption and blustering incompetence at the highest levels of an administration seeking to exploit the contagion to consolidate power, taking action against everything from independent watchdogs and federal gas mileage standards to immigrants and environmental protections-with particular efforts aimed at suppressing access to the ballot box.” We must remember to be Pro-Active this year and lift our voices against this type of blatant disregard, for the “rule of law.”

There are many questions we all have about the coronavirus, with very few answers provided by government officials or medical experts. Questions like: How long will it be before there is a vaccine? Do I have antibodies against the coronavirus? or Will we ever return to the life we once knew prior to coronavirus? Specifically, believers and people of all faith walks have posed coronavirus questions such as, Where is God in all of this? Is God angry at the human race? Are plagues like the coronavirus mentioned in the Bible? and the list goes on. According to Orhan Pamuk of the *New York Times*, in an article titled, “What Plague Novels Teach Us,” “The terror we are feeling, however, excludes imagination and individuality, and it reveals how unexpectedly similar our fragile lives and shared humanity really are. Fear like the thought of dying, makes us feel alone, but the recognition that we are all experiencing a similar anguish draws us out of our loneliness.” It appears we are all in a fog or some state of shock, as we listen to many people talking, but no one having an answer.

As we spend time in prayer and reflection, the Holy Spirit will reveal to us our next steps. The fact that we are all seeking answers, is the nucleus of spiritual power. The Bible speaks to us about the “power of seeking.” Mathew 7:7 reads, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” This is an opportunity for us to seek and to listen, because we all have a part of the answer, to every problem that lies within us. As we seek answers to this pandemic, let us be aware that a major part of seeking, is to practice deep listening. Another phrase for deep listening is spiritual listening, which opens us up to nature, one another and all the elements of the sound waves around us. We must be alert and pay close attention to all that is being said. It is okay to say to one another, “What do you hear? I trust the God in you. What is the spirit of God saying to you?” It may be the answer we need to survive. By listening more, we gain insight into each other’s thoughts and ideas. We gain knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom gives us all a clear sense of direction.

Given this new reality of quarantine, face mask wearing, excessive hand washing and sanitizers, we are expected to look to God, our creator and protector. According to scripture, “We are to abide under the shadow of our almighty God,” because God is our refuge and present help. God’s grace and guidance will be the saving element for all of us. No, God is not angry at the human race. He/She is not trying to teach us any lesson, although there are lessons to be learned during this time. God does not need a disease to teach us those lessons, no more than you would use a disease on your children to teach them a lesson.

Plagues are recorded in the biblical stories; however, they were steeped in stories of God's anger and God's wrath. Now that we are in the dispensation of grace, because of God's love through Jesus Christ and His teachings of Agape love, we don't have to be fearful of the wrath of God showing up through plagues, as He did to persuade Pharaoh to release the Egyptians from slavery, for example. Since then, many biblical scholars have identified the 10 deadly disasters prior to the second coming of Christ, which are to proceed the end times. I have enormous respect for scholarly work and I find it fascinating to read and study. However, I recall what Jesus tells us about the end of times; that none of us, not even Jesus Himself, knew when that time shall come. Our focus should never be on the end times and when it will be, but our focus should remain on the idea that when the Master comes, He/She will find me Pro-Active, fulfilling my work and purpose that I was called here to carry out.

As we have been taught, faith without work is dead. It is going to take the work of the health community, the church and people caring and loving each other, to take us to safety. We have to be careful and make sure we wash our hands excessively, wear our mask and continue to keep our distance from persons we don't know.

Matthew 7:7-8 also states that everyone who asks, it will be given; everyone who seeks, they shall find. And everyone who knocks, the door will be open to them. We will emerge from this pandemic triumphantly. We will be better and stronger. Our faith will have been tried by the fire. Our eyes will see the beautiful potential within us and all around us. Let us give honor and praise to God now, for our victorious journey. The doors that we are knocking on, for answers to our many questions, will be opened, just as it has been promised. It is okay not to have all the answers at this moment. I believe as we listen deeply and spiritually to each other, it will make being in quarantine with family much easier. The fact that we are seeking answers, makes us students of life and open to the truth that sets us free. As we connect with our inner sanctuary, we find comfort and solace. By taking time to go to a quiet space, breathing slowly and deeply, stilling all thought, and releasing all worry, concern, or attachment, I create that place to listen and hear God's voice. As I share what I hear, I also wait to hear confirmation from other sources, to those truths that come from within. Let us affirm, "I share my thoughts with clarity and confidence, that God speaks through each one of us.

MOVEMENT UPDATE

by Bishop Harris Thomas

This month's Movement's House of Bishops' Bulletin, is dedicated to those impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the local churches. Our condolences to those who lost family and friends. We salute the front-line workers and the essential workers.

UFCM DECEASED

Pastor Janyce Jackson Jones' uncle, Samuel Sands

UFCM BALTIMORE INFECTED/AFFECTED

Elder Jamie Washington's nephew, Charlie Morris (recovering), Mary Jeter (Grandmother diagnosed), Orlando Batson (Son diagnosed), Cedric Meekins (recovering), Jacqueline Walker, Inez K. McClendon, Mother Crawford, Malcolm Kee, Catherine Dorsey, Mildred Wilkinson

UFCM BUFFALO FRONT LINE ESSENTIAL WORKER

Elder Gerard Williams - Direct Support Assistant in a group home

UFCM CHARLESTON INFECTED/AFFECTED

Reverend Robert Arrington's 84 year old Aunt and 3 Cousins

UFCM COLUMBIA DECEASED

Donald Rodney Foote

UFCM COLUMBIA INFECTED/AFFECTED

Celeste Joyner - Childcare provider and PreK teacher in Baltimore City; Amy Adashek - Son and Daughter-in-law (both doctors) tested positive; Andre Jackson (recovering)

UFCM COLUMBIA FRONT LINE ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Trustee Deb Dunn, Physician Assistant; Dion Smith, doctor in New York City; Cecile Lewis, nurse in New York City

UFCM DC DECEASED

Earl-Rodney Holman's Sister

UFCM DC INFECTED/AFFECTED

Richard Spencer (recovering), Mrs. Johnson, Dr. Alice Cogill, Mr. Percival, Mauryce Peters' aunt Jean

UFCM DC FIRST LINE RESPONDER

Elder Akosua McCray - Pastoral Counseling

UFCM DC PASTOR'S ENCOURAGEMENT

I would like to add how overwhelmingly challenging it is for everyone during this time. The world has, in itself, been challenging for the last several years and now having to deal with this evil, aggressive pandemic, puts us in a state of worry, unknowing and heightened alertness. Each day I watch or hear about those infected, affected, or those who lost their lives. I am healthy, thank God; however, in the midst of a spiritual warfare! I pray to God for Her Grace and Mercy.

Elder Akosua

UFCM INLAND EMPIRE (RIVERSIDE) DECEASED

Rosa Luna, RN (grandmother of one of our youth participants)

UFCM INLAND EMPIRE (RIVERSIDE) FRONT-LINE WORKERS

Minister Terry Evans, Deacon David Sesate, Cynthia Williams

UFCM INLAND EMPIRE (RIVERSIDE) PASTOR'S ENCOURAGEMENT

We appreciate the sacrifice you are making as essential staff, to keep our community safe and equipped, to face all of the realities of living in this new environment. We pray for your safety daily.

UFSJM/RAINBOW PRIDE YOUTH ALLIANCE & IEHPC

Rafael, Gustavo, Amber, Julia, Jason & Lydia, Rev. Elder Benita Ramsey

UFCM INLAND EMPIRE (RIVERSIDE) PASTOR'S ENCOURAGEMENT

We are grateful for how you show up for young people and folks living with HIV, in this changing environment and economy.

UFCM LA ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Yolondo Orsot, Janet Harvey, Marshawn Jones, Kirk Hill, Arthur Miller, Kimberly Coleman, Kimberly Lashawn, Mickey Johnson, Staci Spencer, William Gray, Ralph Trujillo, Jace Dawson

MAP ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Elder Leslie Burke, Juan Soto, Marlon Johnson, Fay Talei, Vivian Viscarra, Marlon Johnson, Santos Carillo, Roberto Olivo, Terrence Clemens, Rosa Frias, Antonia Barrios, Elder Russell Thornhill

UFCM LA PASTOR'S ENCOURAGEMENT

We honor your work, as you bless the community through the food bank. You exhibit and live the LOVE OF GOD FOR EVERYONE. THANK YOU.

Your Pastors, Elder Russell Thornhill and Elder Leslie Burke

UFCM NEWARK AFFECTED

Trustee Jeanette Williams' mother, Martha Ella Nesbit Williams (Passed); Candice Shanell Parker's mother, Sister Cynthia Parker (New Brunswick, Passed); Deacon Beatrice Simpkins' mother, Annie Katherine Jones (Née Byrd, Passed)

UFCM NEW YORK CITY DECEASED

Reverend Alicia Deborah Rice - Senior Pastor

Deacon Edith Robinson

UFCM NEW YORK CITY INFECTED/AFFECTED

Reverend Pauline Kennedy-Rice

UFCM SAN DIEGO ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Minister Charles Nelson, Sister Jamie Woods, Sister Angelle Malaika Maua, Brother Kenny Hooks, Brother Willie Lang, Brother Miko Uhuru, Brother Percy Payne, Sister/1st Lady Tamilya Rogers Williams, Mother Joann Lee, Deacon Garry Irving White, Deacon Melvin Lucas, Deacon Linda Guerrero, Deacon Kenya Perteet-Trahan, Rev./Pastor Cecelia Caldwell, Rev./Pastor Romie Wilford, Jr., Elder Rev./Pastor Gerald Green

UFCM SPECIAL RECOGNITION

We would like to recognize the continuous work of our educators and the parents, that were called to take on home schooling, during this pandemic.