

JULY SUGGESTED READING
Ancestors: Those Who BLESS US, LOVE US & CURSE US
AUTHOR: Rev. William H. Lamar IV

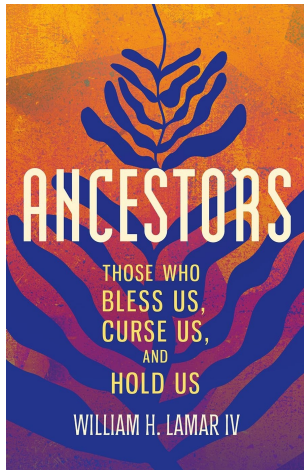


William H. Lamar IV is pastor of [Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church](#) in Washington, DC. Ordained as an itinerant elder in 2000 at the Florida Annual Conference of the AME Church, Lamar has also served congregations in Monticello, Florida; Orlando, Florida; Jacksonville, Florida; and Hyattsville, Maryland.

Prior to his two most recent appointments (in Maryland and the District of Columbia), Lamar was the managing director of Leadership Education at Duke University Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina. Through his association with Duke, he convened and resourced executive pastors of large churches, denominational finance executives, young denominational leaders, Methodist bishops, and the constituency of Lilly Endowment's Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Program. For nearly 15 years, Lamar has been actively involved with organizations like Direct Action Research Training (DART), Industrial Areas Foundations (IAF), and Washington Interfaith Network (WIN) for faith-based community organizing for justice. Most recently, he has collaborated with Repairers of the Breach, the Center for Community Change (CCC), and People Improving Communities through Organization (PICO) to enact a social justice ministry in surrounding communities and to exhibit a real embrace the beloved community. Under his leadership, Metropolitan remains committed to worship, liberation, and service.

A 1996 magna cum laude graduate of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, Lamar earned the Bachelor of Science degree in Public Management with a minor in Philosophy and Religion and a certificate in Human Resource Management. In 1999, he earned the Master of Divinity degree from Duke University. Lamar is currently a doctoral student in the inaugural cohort of Christian Theological Seminary's Ph.D. program in African-American Preaching and Sacred Rhetoric. An avid reader and writer, Lamar has published articles in outlets such as Christian Century, The Christian Recorder, Divinity Magazine, "FaithandLeadership.com," The Anvil, "TheUndefeated.com," and the "Huffington Post." He has also been featured in The Washington Post and the Afro-American and on "The Takeaway," the "Huffington Post Live," and PBS "News Hour."

Lamar is honored to serve Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, where he seeks daily to extend the cathedral of African Methodism's nearly two centuries-long legacy of bearing witness to and ushering into this world the reign of the living God.



"Interweaving his personal story with commentary on the Bible, music, and contemporary events, Lamar brings our attention to the ancestors who journey with us." --*Sojourners*

We must speak the word *ancestor*. We must call their names. We must see them at work.

The hand of ancestors in our affairs is undeniable. They exist all around us, motivating individuals and cultures. And yet, the United States is a nation that does not often use the word *ancestor*. But ancestors are as active here as they are in cultures that center ancestral presence--maybe more so. By failing to name the ancestors who bless us--as well as the ones that dehumanize us--

we harm ourselves, our communities, our country.

As the pastor of one of the oldest Black churches in Washington, DC, William H. Lamar IV has a deep connection to his own ancestors and the ancestral legacy of his church in a city built of ancestral political voices and their ideologies. Drawing on this experience, he offers readers a new perspective on the role that our ancestors play in shaping our lives and communities, for without acknowledging their importance, we cannot move forward morally, ethically, spiritually, or politically.

Lamar examines family ancestors, political leaders, and voices of Scripture, and draws from African and African American historical ancestors to show how they shape our identities and moral compasses. By choosing our ancestors, we choose the stories we tell about ourselves and choose the kind of humans we want to be. This is more than a feel-good notion; Lamar writes, "This is a matter of life. This is a matter of death."

Challenging the dominant, white-led theology that cloaks its own ancestor veneration, while seeking to keep others from the liberation that could come from their own, Lamar deconstructs the religious myths that restrict wise voices of life-giving influence. For when we integrate the voices we call on for ethics, strength, moral courage, justice, and community, we transform our personal and national narratives.