



March 2024

VOL. XXVII Issue 1

INSIDE

- *Our First Lady*
- *The RESOURCE Pages*
- *Health Matters*
- *Spotlight On...*
- *Ash Wednesday*
- *And More...*

God has given us a job
to do and we cannot
stop until the work is
done.



*For we are God's workmanship,
created in Christ Jesus to do good
works, which God prepared
in advance for us to do.*

Ephesians 2:10 NIV

The Rising Mount Zion Spiritual Increase

The RMZ Deacon Ministry – Deacon Lorenzo Doswell, Chairman

The faith-believing members of the Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church have many reasons to thank God for its noticeable spiritual membership growth of our church under the pastorate of the Rev. Dr. Roscoe D. Cooper III, along with the Deacon Ministry whose members are ordained to work in unison with the Pastor with all things having to do with or belonging to the spirit or soul of the church. We praise and glorify God for His great favor in growing our church membership before, during and after the era of the virus. Although there are numerous components that play a major role in the holiness of the church it is the hearing, preaching, teaching, reading, studying, and believing in God's Word that give the spiritual increase, and create and bring wholeness to every area of one's life. The majesty of God's handiwork is evident that He is definitely in control at all times and His power can replenish, reorganize, and rebuild even during tough times. Our belief in the promises that God has given to us supports the fact that everything in the kingdom of God hinges on faith and belief in Him. When our faith is concentrated on eternal goals rather than temporal goals, we are able to accomplish God's work and help people conform more closely to His Will, trusting that what He has promised will come to pass.

Continued on Page 2

We are confident that God is with us in every season and in every situation. Being an All-knowing God, He knew exactly what the Rising Mount Zion church family needed. Therefore, in His time, He chose one of His best, a forward-thinking and compassionate Pastor whom He prepared spiritually, academically, emotionally, and socially for the task at hand. Additionally, He equipped Him with willing helpers and the ability to listen, teach, preach, care for and lead a congregation that awaited to be refreshed and restored in God's priceless guidance and wisdom. Under the nurturing knowledge of God's spiritual servant, the Zion body of believers have learned to plug into the wisdom of our Sovereign God, be humbled by our current understanding to hear, recognize, and listen to His voice, making Him worthy of our worship because of His goodness, greatness, love, and care for us.

In spite of the challenging circumstances, the 2023 year truly continued to boost the spiritual membership in the Zion church family. Pastor Cooper and the Zion Deacons baptized 22 persons, welcomed and extended the Right Hand of Fellowship to 52 persons, dedicated 7 babies, and at the end of December 2023, two additional persons submitted applications online for Christian Discipleship, coming by the way of Baptism. During the pandemic, upon returning to in-person worship, and continuing the online worship services, Rising Mount Zion has welcomed, baptized, and extended the Right Hand of Fellowship to hundreds of saints into its spiritual family and dedicated dozens of babies. Under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Roscoe D. Cooper III, the Zion membership has risen from less than three hundred members to more than eighteen hundred. Zion, through it all, God has truly blessed this branch of Zion to gain spiritual increase, not because we are good enough, or pray enough or read the Bible enough, but rather because our Gracious God has already won the increase on our behalf! God is our Source, our Deliverer, and our Savior whom we thank for filling our spirits with His Word and love, and for the joy and privilege to gracefully nurture people's hearts toward Him, our Almighty God!

Our Goal—to spiritually BLESS, TRANSFORM & IMPROVE LIVES





Greetings My Dear Zion Family,

Trusting that the fullness of this year is preordained with *hope, peace, joy, and love*, I greet you, my Zion family and friends, in the name of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who daily orders my steps in His Will, His Way and His Word. Having already nearly completed the first quarter of year 2024, it is my prayer that our God will help each of us to live this new year for Him, enjoying His blessings, fulfilling His purposes, and being a blessing to others. As a body of believers, above all, we thank God for the gift of life, His daily blessings of food, drink, clothing, shelter, clean running water, and all His good gifts. Secondly, we thank Him for His meaningful service---taking the opportunities God gives us, seeking His wisdom on how to prioritize work *and* play in a way that uses our gifting to serve Him. Thirdly, being forever grateful to God for planting His truths through His Word in our hearts and giving us wisdom to teach our children these same truths.

Accordingly, it is my prayer that the representation of the meaning of the Advent candles will be fixed in your spirit throughout the year and not just during the four weeks of anticipatory celebration of the arrival of Jesus Christ and the period of repentance, meditation, praise, and penance. As believers, we are constantly filled with *hope, peace, joy, and love*. We know that God is able to turn the worst possible circumstances around and fill our hearts with *hope* even when our hearts are breaking. His promises are a sure thing and the *hope* He gives us is an anchor to our souls. Sadly, we live in a stressful world. Yet, it is comforting to be assured that the most important source of strength is the *peace* that Jesus offers to those of us who love Him. His *peace* calms our spirits and refreshes our hearts in time of trouble. *Joy* is the result of an encounter with the living Savior. Believe it or not, there is *joy* in knowing that God has a loving purpose for our suffering, that no suffering lasts forever, and that trials cannot separate us from God's care but will bring us closer to Him. *Love* is the capacity to provide the care, nurturing, and support for our brothers and sisters that are essential to their well-being and spiritual growth. However, people's love will always come up short, but God's *love* for us is constant, persistent, and immutable. Throughout the year, we will be confronted with life diversities but if we turn to God's Word and prayer, He will see us through every circumstance that confronts us.

Without fail the humbleness of my spirit always reminds me that in every situation, "**patience pays off**" because God takes His time to shape, elevate, and prepare us for the blessing He has for us, knowing that His plans for us are **greater** than anything we can ask or imagine! Sometimes it feels as if God isn't listening to us when we pray but He is listening and working things out His way. My desire is for us to envisage that the year 2024 is the "**Year of Greater**" but we, as followers of Christ, must be willing to do what it takes to get more! Greater is available and attainable if we adjust the projectile of our lives, move from the mediocre to something grander, get over the progress of the past and think of the growth we can achieve in the future. God formed the bridge which is the purpose, privilege, and power of prayer. His divine Word teaches, amends, and encourages us as we follow His path. Zion, you choose that your GREATER will take place in your *family, home, school, church, and community...*and IT WILL!

You see Zion, as the spiritual darkness of our world grows deeper, we must stay focused, allow God's light to shine more brightly through our words, actions and deeds, and make it known that the powers of evil around us are no match for the power of Jesus within us!

*Through this year and beyond, as faith walkers, let us commit to being **better, wiser, and stronger** in our faith, and never ceasing to **extol, praise, and worship** in spirit and in truth, the precious name of our **SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST!***

Be blessed,

Barney D. Cooper III



Turning the Page...

Saying Farewell to the Old and Looking Forward to the New

~by Deacon Mary Kemp~

The convenience of having the Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church worship services in-person and online is a blessing and offers the opportunity to reach a plethora of people. The in-person Zion Watch Night service was held on New Year's Eve, Sunday, December 31 at seven o'clock in the evening. The online congregants could view at the same time or whatever time was convenient for them.

Many of the in-person parishioners arrived early, greeted others, chose a seat, and anticipated a night of great gospel singing by the Zion Mass Choir, accompanied by musicians, and directed by Sister Amber Hughes, Choir Directress, fervent prayers offered by Associate Ministers, Rev. Rosemary Morris and Rev. Harold Sayles, and the Word of God delivered by Zion's Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Roscoe D. Cooper III.

Promptly at 7 PM, the musicians struck a musical chord, the Mass Choir members positioned themselves to begin singing, just as Pastor Cooper and the Associate Ministers entered into the sanctuary. Pausing briefly, allowing Pastor Cooper time to greet the large standing crowd and inviting them to sit. The Mass Choir almost immediately had the audience clapping, seated and/or standing, rocking and singing along with them. Rev. Morris offered a powerful and inspiring opening prayer. The song, "I am Blessed," was the prelude to the preaching of the Word of God, and touched the innermost emotions of the audience, causing them to enthusiastically join in the singing, as they praised and glorified God.

Being that New Year's Eve fell on Sunday, the morning and evening services were very well-attended. That morning, Pastor emphasized that God had blessed, kept, and highly favored us, His children, during the 2023 year. Thus, he confidently chose as his basic scripture, *1 Kings 17:19*, and entitled his sermon, "Don't Doubt God Now." He stressed the following important facts: 1) Life is not a lineal journey; it has ups and downs. 2) Stay faithful to God during your difficult season. 3) Focus on the character of God. He is Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Omnipresent. 4) Never doubt God's power! Trust Him through the tough and good times. 5) God has a plan for your life. Whenever you stay in God's plan, know that all will be alright. The evening message was also inspirational, thought-provoking, and blessed. Pastor accentuated verse 37 of Romans 8, putting emphasis on the fact that Chapter 8 is filled with encouragement, hope, confidence and support. He chose as his sermon title, "Get Ready to Conquer." Pastor stated the following poignant points: a) There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. b) Nothing can separate you from His love. c) You are more than conquerors. d) Whatever you face, you will be victorious. e) Your expression is more than your experience. f) 2024 will be a blessed year. Some new doors will open. g) What's ahead of you is greater than what's behind you. Thank God for the Holy Spirit that guides us in the Way of the Lord.

The evening was concluded with the choir singing, "If It Had Not Been for the Lord on My Side, Where Would I Be?" Rev. Sayles prayed a powerful and heartfelt closing prayer and Pastor Cooper offered the Benediction. Everyone departed from the services praising and thanking God, and believing that there is no condemnation at the beginning; no separation at the end; and no domination in between.

BELIEVE the WORD!
We are SURVIVORS! We are CONQUERORS!



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Year 2023 was known as the Year of Women. Therefore, for Black History Month, the VOICE editors chose Black Women to research and write a brief report. Consequently, the selected women will be highlighted throughout this issue. They are Carla Diane Hayden, PhD, Simone Arianne Biles, Jennifer McClellan, Dr. Kizzmekia S. Corbett-Helaire.

Black History Month

*Year of the Woman
Recognition*



Carla Diane Hayden, PhD

The First Woman and First African American Librarian of Congress

Researched and reported by Valorie McBee



The Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. is the largest library in the world with millions of books, films, videos, audios, recordings, photographs, newspapers, maps, and manuscripts and other items in its collection. The library assigns a control ID number uniquely created for each book or item in its collection. (It is noted that every book published is not listed in the Library of Congress if the information is not submitted to the Library for a unique control number). The library was originally established in 1800. The Gutenberg Bible is one of the oldest treasures owned by the Library. The Library of Congress is the unique, global institution that is a free, non-partisan service to congress, librarians, scholars, and the public in the United States and around the world. It houses the U.S. Copyright office and is the main research authority for the members of Congress and is the nation's oldest federal cultural institution employing approximately 3,000 people.

In 2016, President Barak Obama nominated **Carla D. Hayden** to serve as the 14th Librarian to lead the Library of Congress. Dr. Hayden is the first woman and first African American to serve in this capacity. Carla Diane Hayden was born in Tallahassee, Florida. Her very first position in a library was working as a Library Associate at the Chicago Public Library while also studying for her Bachelor of Arts Degree at Roosevelt University; she earned her Masters and PhD from the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago. Dr. Hayden pursued her doctoral research in children's literature, and her dissertation focused on how museums serve children. She was an assistant professor for Library and Information Science at the University of Pittsburgh. Her first leadership role was as the head of the Chicago Public Library and during that tenure she was named Librarian of the Year by the Library Journal.

In 2003 to 2004 Dr. Hayden served as the President of the American Library Association. Prior to her nomination and commission as the head of the Library of Congress, Dr. Hayden was the second African American Chief Executive of the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland. Among many awards throughout her career, **Dr. Hayden is the 2023 recipient of the American Association Ken Haycock Award for Promoting Librarianship.** One of her favorite quotes is by Frederick Douglass, "Once you learn to read, you will be forever free."

"As a descendent of people who were denied the right to read, the opportunity to serve and lead the institution that is our national symbol of knowledge is a historic moment."

- Carla Diane Hayden



SPOTLIGHT on.....

Sean M. Ingram

By Tanise Y. Ingram



Sean M. Ingram, the eldest of two children born to Deacon Marshall Ingram and Mrs. Hazel J. Ingram, grew up in Highland Springs, Virginia. He accepted Christ at an early age, was baptized, and joined the Seven Pines Baptist Church located in Sandston, Virginia, where he participated as a youth usher and sang in the youth choir.

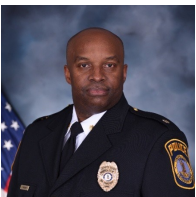
As a student in Highland Springs High School, Sean served as the President of the Student Advisory Council, the Boys Basketball team manager, statistician, and the Battalion Commander of the Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps, and graduated in the Class of 1989.

After graduating from high school, Sean followed in his father's footsteps, enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, and had the opportunity to travel the world, and experience the lifestyle and culture of different ethnic people. He completed three grueling months of recruit training at Parris Island, South Carolina before being assigned to the Marine Infantry School at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. He was then sent to Mare Island, California to attend Security Forces School, and was later assigned to Marine Detachment U.S.S. Nimitz in Bremerton, Washington.



While assigned to the Nimitz, Sean was deployed to the Persian Gulf in support of Operation Desert Storm in 1991. During his deployment, he visited the Philippines, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Hawaii. Upon his return, he was assigned to the Second Battalion, Seventh Marines at Marine Base 29 Palms, California in September 1991, was promoted to the rank of Corporal and was assigned as his infantry company's Training Non-Commissioned Officer until his unit was deployed to Okinawa, Japan in August 1992. While in Okinawa, he was reassigned to the Camp Schwab Base Police Department where he served as Sergeant of the Guard. After his deployment in February of 1993, Sean decided not to reenlist and returned home to Virginia.

In 1994, Sean again followed in his father's footsteps and joined the Virginia Commonwealth University Police Department. During his 22-year career, he worked a variety of assignments including the Patrol Division, the Special Operations Unit, the Investigative Division, and the Support Services Division. While employed by the VCU Police Department, he obtained the rank of Captain, before transferring to the Virginia State University Police Department as the Deputy Chief of Police, and earning the rank of Lieutenant Colonel for approximately 5 years before retiring in July 2021. During his career, he also worked with local agencies including the Richmond, Henrico, Chesterfield, and the Virginia State Police Departments, the FBI, DEA, and Secret Service. He met former Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton, and Qatar First Lady Moza bin Nasser Al-Missned while being assigned to their respective security teams.



Sean loves to spend time with his wife, Tanise, of 19 years, their 16-year-old daughter Aaliyah, and their 15-year-old son Andre. He enjoys cooking, traveling, especially to the beach, and watching football. He frequently converses with his parents for guidance that helps him to be a better husband, father, and Christian. He also spends time talking about politics and leadership with his younger brother, Andre, who is a Colonel in the United States Marine Corps.

In early 2013, Sean and Tanise decided to strengthen their relationship with each other and God, leading them to the Rising Mt. Zion Baptist Church where they joined under the pastorate of the Rev. Dr. Roscoe D. Cooper III. Currently, Sean serves as the head of the Zion Security Ministry; and believes "*All things are possible through Christ Jesus.*" He and his family love being a part of the Zion church family.

Congratulations **SEAN M. INGRAM** for being chosen the spotlight person for the March 2024 issue of the RMZ VOICE Newsletter!

Black History Month

Year of the Woman
Recognition

Dr. Kizzmekia S. Corbett-Helaire

Viral Immunologist at the forefront of developing the Moderna vaccine to combat COVID-19

Presented by Deborah S. Andrews



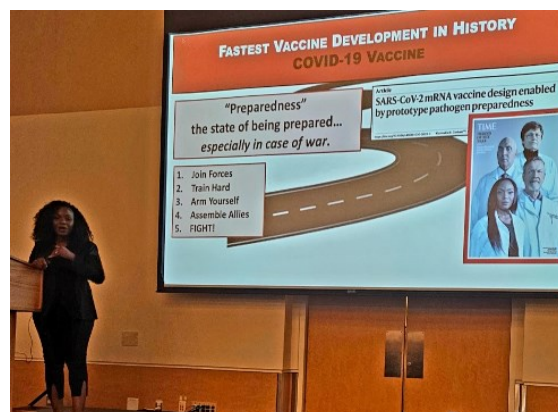
Kizzmekia S. Corbett-Helaire, Ph.D., was the scientific lead of the Vaccine Research Center's coronavirus team at the U.S. National Institutes of Health where her investigations focused on coronavirus biology and vaccine development. Her research led to the groundbreaking discovery that a stabilized version of a spike protein which is a microscopic element that is found on the surface of all coronaviruses, would be a key target for vaccines, treatments, and diagnostics. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, she and her colleagues were central to the rapid development and safe and effective deployment of the Moderna (mRNA) vaccine, that has protected tens of millions worldwide. As a result of this extraordinary achievement, the **Moderna vaccine** is not only used in the state of Virginia and other states throughout the United States, but is also now used around the world to prevent COVID-19 disease. Her work has had a substantial impact on ending the worst respiratory-disease pandemic in more than a hundred years.

Dr. Corbett is now an assistant professor in the Department of Immunology and Infectious Diseases at Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, where she heads Harvard's Coronaviruses & Other Relevant Emerging Infectious Diseases (COREID) Lab. Its scientists study immune responses to coronaviruses and other emerging and re-emerging viruses to set in motion novel vaccine and antibody therapy development and preparedness. Alongside Moderna (mRNA-1273), a leading vaccine against the SARS-CoV-2 virus, Dr. Corbett boasts a patent portfolio which also includes influenza vaccine concepts. Though aware of ideological differences, misinformation, and partisan rancor, in her assessment as an immunologist, vaccinologist and vaccine developer, she believes vaccines to be the most effective and life-saving way to prevent covid diseases.

In addition to her research and beyond being a Harvard professor, Dr. Corbett is a vocal advocate for health equity, and uses her gift for science communication to reach out to her community with questions about vaccines. She has spoken at churches and with other community organizations, working to demystify the science of vaccines and improve confidence in the coronavirus vaccine, especially among minority populations, which have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Dr. Corbett embraces her visibility as a Black female scientist and encourages others to be involved in science in their communities.

Dr. Corbett has garnered a vast array of awards and recognitions along her trailblazing ascent including the 2021 NAACP Key of Life Award. Her research and work as lead scientist on the Moderna vaccine has earned praise from *President Joe Biden, Anthony S. Fauci, M.D., Former Chief Medical Advisor to the President of the United States, and Barney S. Graham, MD, PhD, Senior Advisor for Global Health Equity, Professor of Medicine and Microbiology, Biochemistry and Immunology, and Former Mentor to Dr. Corbett.*

"I became one of the world's vaccinology teachers and for that, I am grateful."
Dr. Kizzmekia S. Corbett-Helaire



<https://prep.ucdavis.edu/news/meeting-scientific-pioneers>



Spratley Allen Missionary Circle

By Sister Valorie McBee

*I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in His Word I put my hope. Psalm 130:5 (NIV)
For nothing will be impossible with God. Luke 1:37 (NIV)*

The Spratley Allen Missionary Circle was blessed by God while being faithful in doing His Will by serving others. The year of our Lord and Savior 2023 was filled with many blessings as the missionaries were able to continue in prayer, send get-well, sympathy and gift cards to the sick and the bereaved. The missionaries contributed to back to school drives and organizations that needed assistance. Additionally, in collaboration with our very own *Sister Thelma Matthews*, March Funeral Home donated turkeys and our Rising Mt. Zion Church donated other food items to go along with the turkeys for families in need. All praises to God for providing us with resources and the heart for community outreach. Under the leadership of our President, Sister Pauline Holmes, our missionaries also hosted a Mental Health Workshop conducted by Ms. Winfred Williams and Mr. Kendall Robinson from the Henrico Mental Health Department. The missionaries continued to participate in the Baptist General Convention and the BGC Women's Ministry district meetings, retreats, sessions and workshops in person and online.

One of sessions led by the BGC Women's Ministry President, Rev. Dr. Margaret Edney was held remotely through zoom. The speaker for this particular session was the Rev. Dr. Patricia Goode-Champ, founder of Faith Community Baptist Church, Richmond VA. Rev. Dr. Goode-Champ served as the 35th and **first** female President of the Baptist General Convention. She is the Assistant Professor of Theology at VUU Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology. Rev. Dr. Goode-Champ is also a member of the Sisters Network of Virginia, the Shiloh Baptist Association, and the Alzheimer's Association. It is noted that she was the caregiver for her mother who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Rev. Dr. Goode-Champ shares a very personal and mighty testimony through the publication of her book entitled, The Gospel According to Cancer. Her message for the session focused on the subject, *Moving Past Traditional Mindsets to Truthful, Transformational, and Triumph Lifestyles*. She stressed that we first must keep God in the center of our lives. Our families and self-care are important, and as women we must lift one another up, continue to encourage our sisters and remember that we have God on our side.

Congratulations to the *Rev. Dr. Margaret Edney*, BGC Women's Ministry President on her Ordination. Under the leadership of the Executive Minister, the *Rev. Dr. Leo Whitaker*, and President, the *Rev. Milton Palmer Bunting*, the Baptist General Convention has been blessed with a grant for the furtherance of the work of the Lord. Congratulations are also in order for our own Rising Mt. Zion Pastor, the *Rev. Dr. Roscoe D. Cooper III*, who is the newly elected Henrico County Fairfield District Supervisor. Previously he represented the Fairfield District for eight years on the Henrico County Public School Board, and served as the Vice-chair and Chairman for six of the eight years. In addition, Rev. Dr. Cooper was one of three awarded the 2024 Distinguished Community Service Award at the Henrico County 38th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Commemoration Celebration. *Deacon Jaron Dandridge* has been appointed to the Henrico County Planning Commission and *Sister Valorie McBee* is appointed to serve on the Henrico County Library Advisory Board – Fairfield District.

Please pray for our BGC leaders, Executive Director, Dr. Leo Whitaker, and President, the Rev. Milton Palmer Bunting and all persons who have lost loved ones during the past year.

The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Psalm 46:11 (NIV)





Sick, Shut-in & Bereaved Families

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him,
So that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13 NIV*

In GOD, the hopeless find HOPE. Open your eyes to the blessings from God and make praise your first response to difficulties. Regardless to the obstacles you face, God is still present, still good, and still faithful. He will help, guide, strengthen, and comfort us in your dark and deepest sorrow. His Word speaks a refreshing truth about your hope in Him. He whispers, “Trust Me”. Pastor Cooper and the Zion family support, encourage, and pray for you as you adjust to the physical separation of your loved one. Your greatest comfort in sorrow is knowing God is forever present with you.

- **Trustee Phil Downey (Sister Marie), Brother Phio Downey and Sister LaToya Delamar** mourn his sister and their aunt, *Sister Barbara Downey Wyche* of Norlina, North Carolina.
- **Sister Stella Dickerson** mourns her sister, *Sister Jennifer Dickerson*.
- **Sister Gloria E. Cunningham** mourns her cousin, *Deacon Raymond F. Ellis* of Maryland, and two aunts - Sister Donzella Cole White and Sister Yvonne Lampley.
- **Brother William Robinson (Sister Carolyn), Sister Maxine Robinson, Sister Frances Robinson, Sister Mae Dean Miller, Brother John Robinson, and Sister Deborah Murray** mourn their cousin, *Brother James Robinson* of New Jersey and later Delaware
- **Sister Beverly B. Johnson, (Brother Ronald), and Dr. Kendra Johnson** mourn her sister and her aunt, **Sister Patricia Brooks-Matthews**.
- **Brother William Kemp, Jr. (Deacon Mary)** mourns his sister-in-law, *Sister Josephine Goodwin* of Washington DC.
- **The Zion family, Sister Barbara General, Brother Charles General, Jr., and family** mourn a dedicated member, her husband, his father and their relative, **Brother Charles General, Sr.**
- **Sister Thelma Vaughan, Sister Ella Robertson, Sister Syreeta Tyler** and relatives mourn their brother and her uncle, *Brother Tony Robertson* of Waldorf, Maryland.
- **Sister Thelma Vaughan and Sister Syreeta Tyler** mourn her nephew and her cousin, *Brother Robert Vaughan* of Tappahannock, Virginia.
- **Sister Antoinette J. Gregg** mourns her mother, *Sister Mary E. Jefferson*.
- **Sister Barbara Garrett Moffett (Brother Fred)** mourns her cousin, *Brother Jasper Brinkley, Jr.* of Maryland.
- **Deaconess Ola R. Luck and Sister Sally L. Collins** mourn their sister, *Sister Lois L. Woltz (98)* of Danville, Virginia.
- **The Zion family joins Brother Stewart Street, Sr., Brother Henry Street, Jr., and Sister Cassandra Street, Sister Lisa Street, Trustee Marion McMackle, Sister Marchena Gaither, Brother Bruce McMackle, Sister April Gaddy (Brother Malcolm) and Sister Normie Cameron and Sister Marva Harris** in mourning a faithful member, their niece, cousin and dear friend, **Sister Carolyn Johnson**
- **Sister Cherjuana Morton and Sister Jaylah Morton** and the **Zion family** mourn her mother, her grandmother, and dear member, **Sister Corliss Freda Johnson**
- **Sister Arnetha Carter, Brother Terence Carter, Sister Tiffany Carter-Ellis, and Young Miss Kennedi Ellis** mourn their aunt, *Sister Delma Haley*, and her brother and their uncle, respectively, *Brother Mitchell L. Reynolds*.
- **The Zion family joins Brother Fernando Davis (Sister Vanessa), Brother James Davis (Sister Therese), Sister Daphne Smith (Brother Christopher), Sister Crystal Cosby (Brother Robert), Sister Tawnya Ford-Williams (Brother Roderick), Dr. Cheryl Jordan-Sayles (Rev. Harold) and family** in mourning a loyal and devoted member, their mother, aunt, and caring relative, **Sister Geraldine Benjamin**.
- **Sister Jacqueline “Jackie” Wilson, Sister Robin Ballard, and Brother Zaya Anderson** mourn her mother, her grandmother, and his great-grandmother, *Sister Sarah Ray*.
- **Brother Robert Ward** mourns his wife, *Sister Willie Bennett Ward*.





WHY VOTING IS IMPORTANT...

~researched & reported by Deacon Mary Kemp~

*Your **VOTE** can be more than a **VOICE**, it's a **CALL TO ACTION!***

VOTE to save our DEMOCRACY

VOTING is your **civic duty** and **power**. Some elections are razor thin, making every vote the capacity to make a big difference. The theory of democracy is that it is a government for and by the people. The vote is the basic building block that gives people the power to control their government and to shape what policies they want and the future direction of their town, state, and country. In an era where information as well as misinformation is at our fingertips, it's both a privilege and responsibility to be informed, especially when it comes to our democratic processes.

Casting an informed vote is about understanding how that choice will affect your daily lives for the years to come. Voter education is the avenue that leads to such an informed decision. It's the responsibility of both the individual and the larger societal systems to ensure voters understand the candidates and ballot. Listed below are some tips on how to become more informed and some resources to help you do so:

THE POWER OF LOCAL ELECTIONS

- While **presidential elections** command a lot of intentions, it's the **local elections** that have the most immediate and tangible impact on our daily lives.
- Each ballot carries tremendous power and more significant weight since fewer voters turn out to vote in their local elections. Each vote offers an opportunity for individuals to influence their immediate surroundings and advocate for the issues that matter most to them.
- Elected officials at the local level, such as Governorships, Mayors, Supervisors, City Councilmen, School Board Representatives, etc. shape policies on everything from public transportation to local taxes, to educational reforms and more...

WHERE TO FIND RESOURCES

- Find out if your state offers an **APP** for voting. APPS can offer access to the upcoming ballot, tell you where to vote, help you update your registration, vote by absentee ballot, etc.
- Your **local newspapers** and **community websites** offer reliable information.
- **Vote 411** offers a comprehensive look at the ballot, from top offices to the local issues and provides insight on measures and candidate viewpoints or opinions.
- **Ballotpedia** serves as an objective online encyclopedia of neutral, detailed information about elections at all levels.

INTERPRETING THE BALLOT

- To get the true meaning and implications of these measures, voters should turn to nonpartisan resources like the ones indicated above or attend local community forums that offer clear and concise explanations.
- Additionally, it is beneficial to check candidate's official websites and social media pages.

ENGAGE WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS

- Local officials tend to be more accessible (easier to reach) and responsive to their constituents.
- You can send an email or make a phone call if there's a question about a candidate's opinion on an

- Direct engagement provides valuable insights and informs officials about the issues that matter to their community.
- Also, attending town hall meetings or public forums hosted in local community centers, schools, or libraries offers a direct channel to engage with and learn from candidates.

MAKE SURE YOU ARE REGISTERED TO VOTE

- Make certain that your right to vote has not been taken away under the *Discriminatory Voters ID laws*--has not been purged or removed.
- Know that purging voter rolls is a necessary and important process.
- Registered voters can be removed for a number of reasons, including *death, moving, committing a felony*, among others.
- Once your record is purged, you become ineligible to cast your ballot.
- Check to make sure your registration is active before the **November 5, 2024 election**.

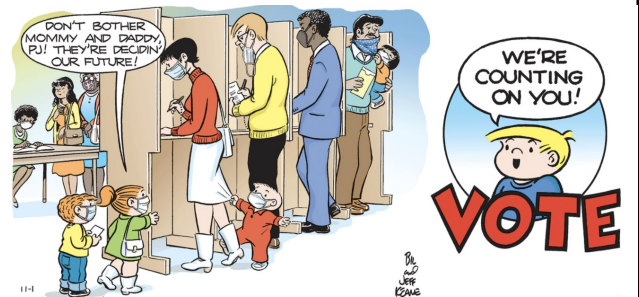
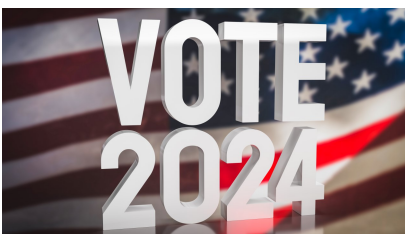
NOW IT'S TIME TO VOTE

- A thriving democracy relies on the active and informed participation of its citizens.
- Understanding the democratic processes, the candidates and the issues, make you become an integral part of shaping your community's and nation's future direction.
- Prepare to **exercise** that **power** in every **Local** and **General Election**!

ADDITIONAL HELPFUL INFORMATION

- Virginia is an open primary state with nonpartisan registration which means **anyone once registered, can vote in a primary election regardless of their party affiliation.** However, **voters** can only cast one ballot per primary election which means they **CANNOT** vote in the Republican and Democratic primary during the same contest.
- Voters should **register or update their registration by October 15, 2024.**
- **Deadline to apply to receive a ballot by mail is October 25, 2024. Send in mailing ballots early.**
- **Early in-person voting starts on October 26, 2024, and the last day of in-person early voting is November 2, 2024.** Take advantage of early voting.

Election Day is Tuesday, November 5, 2024.



Health Matters

By Cheryl Jordan-Sayles, MD

Beyond the Brush: Nurturing Oral Health for a Healthier, Happier You

Good oral health is linked to the health of the whole body. The mouth is the gateway into your body and any bacteria from your mouth can travel to other parts of your body and put you at risk for other health conditions.

Research shows that infection in the gum or gingivitis and inflammation or infection in the root of the teeth and surrounding gum crevices or periodontitis can contribute to certain health conditions. These health conditions include cardiovascular disease, stroke, pneumonia, endocarditis which is infection of the lining of the heart and pregnancy complications. Person diagnosed with periodontal disease are twice as likely to be diagnosed with heart disease that is caused by plaque and bacteria that enters the body from the gums. Bacteria from your mouth can also travel by the blood stream and cause infection in the lungs causing a greater risk of suffering from bronchitis and pneumonia or to your heart causing endocarditis. Good oral hygiene helps to prevent tooth decay and cavities which increase these harmful bacteria. Good oral hygiene also helps to prevent bad breath caused by bacteria in your mouth. Routine oral exams can detect gum disease early when it may be reversible with treatment and detect oral lesions which may be the cause of oral cancer.

The important steps to maintain good oral hygiene to help prevent these health problems:

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day. Be sure to brush all the teeth surfaces, including the back and sides of the teeth.
- Floss once daily. It allows you to reach between the teeth where brushing alone cannot reach.
- Brush your tongue. Your tongue holds bacteria like a sponge. You can use your toothbrush or a special tongue scraper.
- Use an antibacterial mouthwash every day. This helps to rid your mouth of harmful oral bacteria and helps to reduce plaque buildup.
- Visit your dentist regularly for routine dental exams and cleaning. The general recommendation for dental visits is every 6 months.
- Change your toothbrush every 3 months. It is about this time that the bristle on the brush began to breakdown and are less effective with brushing.
- Avoid smoking and other tobacco and smoking products. Smoking is the leading cause of gum disease and oral cancer.



Good oral health is important to your overall health. Eating a healthy balanced diet and limiting added sugar are also important in maintaining good care of your teeth.

Black History Month

*Year of the Woman
Recognition*



Simone Arianne Biles

**The most decorated American gymnast, with
24+ Olympic & World Championship medals**

Researched and reported by Deacon Mary Kemp



*Being an athlete in my younger years had an impact on my choice of an outstanding
Black Woman athlete during Black History Month. - Mary T. Kemp*

Simone Arianne Biles was born March 14, 1997 in Columbus, Ohio. However, she grew up in Spring, Texas, in the Houston metropolitan area, after she and her sister were adopted by her grandparents, Ronald and Nellie Biles. Simone became interested in gymnastics at age 6 during a day care field trip to Bannon's Gymnastrix, and remained there for eleven years.

She rose to fame in 2013, winning two World Championships golds at age 16, including the all-around title. The world renown gymnast followed that with four World golds in 2014 and another four in 2015.

By the time her first Olympics rolled around in Rio 2016, she was already a superstar and the fieriest of hot favorites for the titles. She didn't disappoint, winning Bronze - Balance Beam, four Golds - Floor Exercise, Horse Vault, Individual All-around, and Team All-around. It was her sixth time winning Individual All-around Title.

Simone made history in 2019, becoming the first gymnast in more than six decades to win five gold medals. Due to COVID, no major events were held in 2020. At the 2021 U.S. Classic she became the first female gymnast to land the sports most difficult vault, the Yurchenko double pike, during a competition. Later that year she captured her seventh all-around title and won three gold medals and one bronze.

The Tokyo games were delayed until 2021. However, Biles withdrew from most events due to "the twisties," a mental block in which gymnasts lose their spatial orientation during aerial moves. Her decision not to compete sparked discussion about the pressure placed on athletes and their *mental health*. She returned for the final event, the balance beam, and won a bronze medal.

Simone had a stellar return to the 2023 Artistic Gymnastics World Championship in Antwerp, Belgium, setting several records, becoming the **most decorated gymnast** of all time, and further cementing her title as the "**GOAT**" (**Greatest Of All Times**) of **Gymnastics**. She ended the year with the most world medals (**30**), most combined world and Olympic medals (**37**), most world all-around (**6**) in Women's 2013-2015, 2018, 2019, and 2023. She was the first woman to land the **Yurchenko double pike vault**, now known as the **Biles II**. Simone wed Jonathan Owens, a Green Bay Packers defensive back on April 22, 2023.

What a comeback year for Simone Arianne Biles Owens!!!



BOOK REVIEW

15 Ways to Live Longer & Healthier

By Joel Osteen

Overview by Sheila Cunningham Price



Just as we try to eat right, exercise, get enough sleep and take our vitamins/supplements, we should spend time taking care of our soul. Living stressed, worried, bitter and angry robs us of our energy and weakens our immunity. We are not meant to live wounded from the tormented spirits, mental illness, anxiety and depression, but rather to live with joy. Scripture tells us that *a merry heart is like taking medicine, being joyful brings healing, but a broken spirit dries up the bones*. For this reason, we must look inside ourselves, release things over to God and keep our heart pure, then we can experience good success and healthier lives.

It is important to stay positive toward ourselves, by focusing on what's right about us, rather than on what is lacking in us. We all have faults and weaknesses, but God loves and accepts us just as we are. Even as we work to change the things we need to improve upon, we must acknowledge the good in ourselves, celebrate the things we do right, and change the things we desire to change. Our past mistakes do not disqualify us from achieving our purpose instead, we must learn to see ourselves as God sees us, believe that we can accomplish our dreams, and God's plans for our destiny. Thus, develop faith in ourselves so that we can bless others.

In spite of our circumstances, we can start by **choosing** to be happy on purpose, as our will is greater than how we feel. Living happy honors God and shows that we trust Him to do amazing things, knowing that when we think happy thoughts, we lift our spirit, recognize that we can rely fully on Him, and are able to greet each day as a wonderful gift from Him.

We must learn to let go of control and allow God to make things happen in His way and in His time holding tightly to our dreams and loosely to God's way. He will allow trials to move us to where we should be, by transporting and planting us in the proper space. Although we may not necessarily understand the rationale for the journey or the detour we were subjected to, we simply need to stop resisting, learn to rest in the knowledge that His ways are always best, and He sees things that we cannot see.

Learn to declutter our mind, allow for God's intervention in our lives, be still and know that He is in control and He will fight our battles. When we are at peace, we are at a place of power. Our Sovereign God wants us to do our part by quieting our minds of worry and doubt, then trusting Him to do His part in bringing about healing and many of the desires of our heart.

If we learn to deal with difficult people in our life, it will determine how far we will go. As God's people, we are like eagles and should not engage in battles that do not matter. We were created to soar above the fray, knowing that the crow cannot go where the eagle can go. If we let God fight our battles, He will be our vindicator, giving us promotion, favor and breakthrough.

In order to be fulfilled we must live in the present, appreciate the people in our lives, and never take them for granted. Be present and connected with significant loved ones while allowing for change. Give them the grace to be human. Strive to keep joy in the home, by being loving, forgiving, and showing mercy to others. Live each day as the gift that it is and rejoice and be glad in it.

Let go of past indignities and hurts, and seek to heal so that we are able to develop and sustain healthy relationships with others. We should work on perpetual forgiveness because it is always harder to deal with the poison of unforgiveness. Since our value comes from God, we have nothing to prove to others. Therefore, we do not have to rely on other people because we can grow to be self-sufficient in God's sufficiency. The less we depend on people, the greater the anointing on our lives.

We can win the war within us if we stop allowing the things that hold us back, make room for more of God's favor, and begin to break bad habits and resist temptations. If we learn to tame the tongue rather than creating strife with the sharpness of it, we can invoke harmony, hope and passion in our relationships and in our lives. This makes way to receive our full inheritance, for God hears what we say. He wants us to live **cause-driven**—to be a blessing—while we are waiting for Him to bless us. Furthermore, He wants us to fight for those who cannot fight for themselves, to lift up others in ways that we can, live for something bigger than just for ourselves; and God will bless us for blessing others.

We must keep ourselves healthy and whole, staying in balance with our physical and emotional well-being, learn to recognize what drains us and what replenishes, and make ourselves a priority. When we train our minds to stay at peace, to have faith, to give thanks and praise, magnifying God and not our problems, we can soar through life full of joy and full of victory!

Suggested

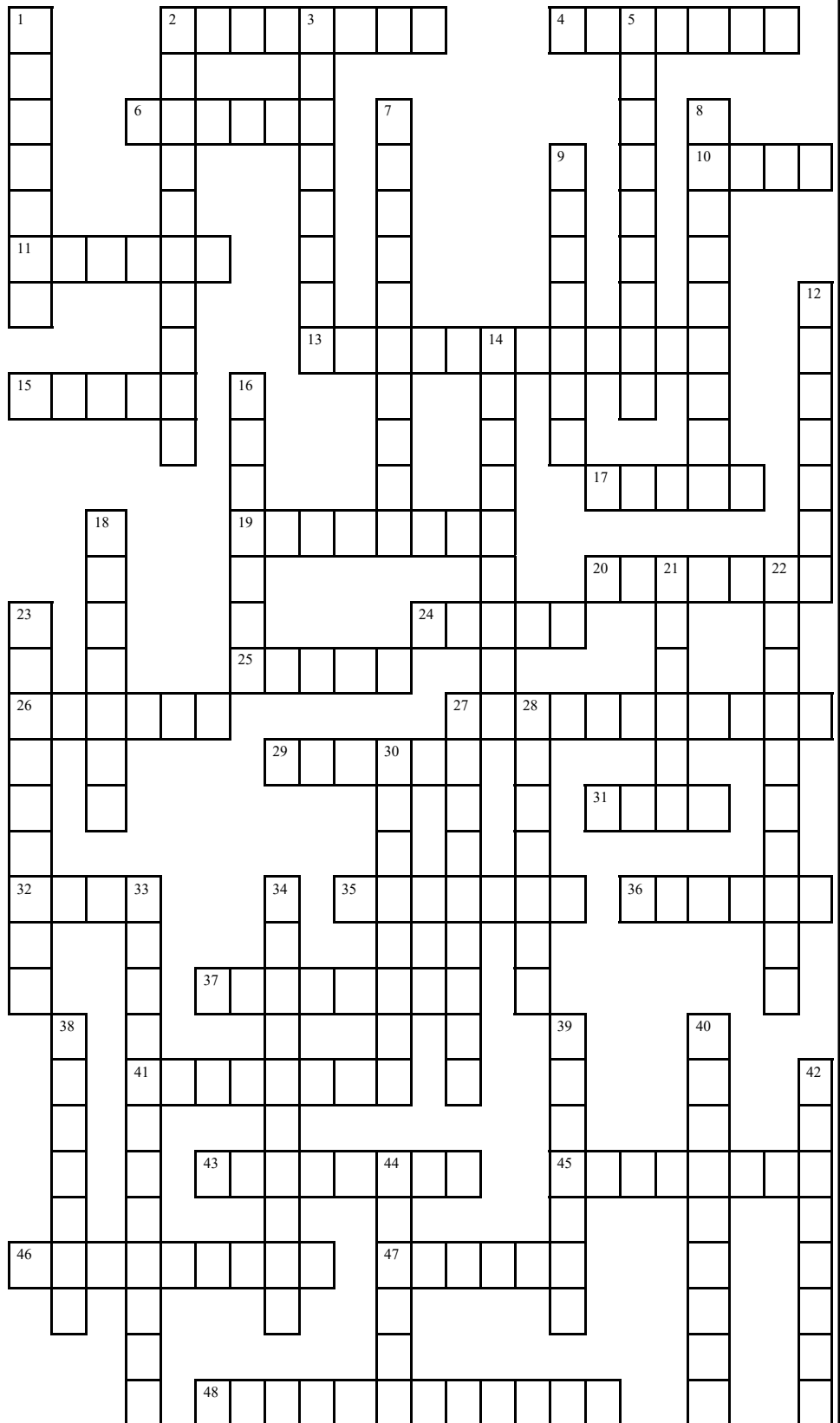
"All Hope is Found"
By
Sarah Jakes Roberts



DO YOU KNOW YOUR STATE CAPITAL?

ACROSS	
2	South Carolina
4	Helena
6	Topeka
10	Des Moines
11	Colorado
13	Indiana
15	Boise
17	Austin
19	Wyoming
20	Nebraska
24	Augusta
25	Delaware
26	Juneau
27	Bismarck
29	South Dakota
31	Salt Lake City
32	Columbus
35	Arizona
36	Salem
37	Springfield
41	Connecticut
43	Annapolis
45	Lansing
46	Madison
47	Massachusetts
48	Harrisburg

DOWN	
1	Tallahassee
2	West Virginia
3	Jefferson City
5	Tennessee
7	Rhode Island
8	St. Paul
9	Washington
12	Mississippi
14	Santa Fe
16	New Hampshire
18	Montgomery
21	Carson City
22	Arkansas
23	Kentucky
27	Trenton
28	North Carolina
30	Virginia
33	Oklahoma
34	Sacramento
38	Atlanta
39	Montpelier
40	Baton Rouge
42	Hawaii
44	New York



Black History Month*Year of the Woman
Recognition*

Jennifer L. McClellan

First Black Woman Elected to Congress from Virginia

Researched & reported by Karen S. Brown

Jennifer Leigh McClellan was born December 28, 1972 in Petersburg, Virginia. Jennifer's mother, Lois, grew up in the segregated South and did not get to vote until she was in her 30's after the Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965. Both her mother and father, James F. McClellan, worked at Virginia State University.

Jennifer graduated from Matoaca High School as the valedictorian of her class. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in English and Political Science from the University of Richmond in 1994. In 1997, she graduated from the University of Virginia School of Law. After law school, she practiced law at Hunton & Williams and worked as a regulatory counsel for Verizon Communications.

Jennifer began her political career in the Virginia House of Delegates from 2006-2017 where she represented the 71st District, which includes parts of the city of Richmond and Henrico County. While in the General Assembly, she became Vice Chairwoman of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus and became the first pregnant Virginia delegate to participate in a legislative session. From 2017-2023, she was a member of the Virginia Senate from the 9th District. McClellan co-sponsored the Repeal Act which would have lifted some of Virginia's restrictions on abortion. McClellan ran for Governor in 2021 but lost to Terry McAuliffe in the Democratic primary election. Upon the passing of Representative Donald McEachin in 2023, she sought to fill his seat in the special general election for the U.S. House Virginia District 4. Jennifer defeated the Republican candidate Leon Benjamin with 74% of the vote. Jennifer's mother, at the age 90, got a chance to vote for her daughter who would become the first black woman elected to Congress from Virginia. Jennifer assumed office on March 7, 2023. In Congress, she sits on the House Armed Services Committee and the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee. Her current term will end on January 3, 2025.

Jennifer married David Mills in 2008. Her mentor, Tim Kaine, officiated the wedding ceremony. She lives in Richmond with her husband and two children.





RMZBC Ash Wednesday

by

Deacon Mary Kemp

This year Ash Wednesday fell on February 14 which was also Valentine's Day. However, Ash Wednesday is a movable date, always in the month of February or March, the first day of the Lenten season, and a 40-day countdown to Easter/Resurrection Sunday. It awakens Christ-believers to Jesus' entry into the desert preceding His death. Before Easter/Resurrection Sunday, we must prepare our hearts for His Resurrection. Our season of preparing our hearts for Resurrection begins by recognizing our brokenness and a need for us to turn our hearts to God. Also, it is a period to focus on sacrament preparation, a new habit, volunteering, studying, serving, and loving God and others. Accordingly, we can understand the magnificence of God's Love for us as He humbled Himself and gave His Life on the Cross that we might receive the gift of Eternal Glory with Him. The most essential part of the day is that it makes one feel closer to Christ, and reminds him/her of the true meaning of Easter/the Resurrection season.

During the Imposition of Ashes Service, the ashes that are placed on parishioners' forehead in the shape of a cross symbolize our mortality and are a physical reminder that our bodies will decay but our souls will live on in eternal life. It is a corporal signal of worshipers' sign of humility, mortality, sinfulness, repentance, and a need to ask forgiveness from God. The custom qualifies the memory of Christians that we are *dust and to dust we shall return*. It describes our human condition that we are broken and need repair, and that we are ultimately sinners and need redemption. As followers of Jesus, we are to examine our faith, deepen our commitment to live a Christ-like lifestyle, and carry our crosses.

Pastor Roscoe D. Cooper III reverently greeted the believers and asked Rev. Harold Sayles to offer prayer, followed by Deacon Mary Kemp who shared the principle purpose of the Lenten season. The ambiance of the seamless hour-long service was blessed as Pastor spoke the words of the opening selection, "I Am Thine, O Lord," while the audience sang the words.

Remaining at the sacred podium, Pastor invoked God's presence through prayer, chose his principle scripture, *Proverbs 4:23*, and entitled his sermon, *Your Heart Matters*. Some of his poignant points stated that we should: 1) Reflect on our self, our attitude, and our actions, and see ourselves as we truly are. 2) Put aside our faults, wrongs, and short comings, by reconnecting to God through prayer. 3) Start and finish your resolution so that it permanently impacts your relationship with God. 4) Draw closer to God who keeps, holds, heals, and makes a way for us to persevere and grow. 5) Fix our eyes on God's glory, goodness, and greatness. 6) Know that matters of the heart bring joy, tears, peace, and connects us to God and each other. 7) Don't allow dirt/dust to accumulate in your heart, but rather cleanse it by repenting, confessing to God, and allowing it to flow strongly and be washed by the Word of God. 8) Guard your heart with diligence, be obedient to the Word of God, and pray about everything. 9) Thank God, focus on Him and know that Lent is a season of peace, hope and love. As a body of Christ followers, we must let our Lenten season help us to be more intimate with God, meditate, read, study more, focus on our spiritual reflection and cleansing, and know that we are resilient people who have victoriously journeyed through many trials.

At the conclusion of the service, each congregant received a cross of ashes on his forehead that was administered by Pastor Cooper and assisted by Zion Associate Ministers, Rev. Rosemary Morris and Rev. Sayles. At the completion of the Imposition of ashes, only Pastor Cooper's prayer/Benediction was orally spoken, asking God to create in each of us a pure heart and renew within us a steadfast spirit. The audience silently and obediently departed the sanctuary, feeling spiritually recharged and blessed! What a POWERFUL and INSPIRING evening!





Falling in Love with Valentine's Day

RESEARCHED VIA GOOGLE AND MICROSOFT BING

By Deborah S. Andrews



Many people adore Valentine's Day and everything it portrays. Though there are critics who believe it is a money-making and somewhat unnecessary date on our calendars, there are countless others who genuinely love this 14 February day. Valentine's Day is one of the most widely celebrated days throughout the world. For many, it serves as an earthshaking reminder of the importance of showing up for our loved ones. It unites us in love and in friendship, ensuring we schedule quality time and, if it is what you want to do, treat your special person/s to something extra kind to show you care. Whether you're in a relationship or single, there's a cause for everyone to enjoy Valentine's Day. So, let's dive into reasons why you should fall in love with this holiday.

♥♥ **It's an excellent day to celebrate a relationship.** Valentine's day is reserved for celebrating meaningful relationships. Life can get busy and many couples aren't able to slow down and connect in the way they want to. Valentine's Day is the perfect excuse. It's about spending time together and doing something you both enjoy. Relationships benefit when couples take the time to openly communicate their appreciation for each other.

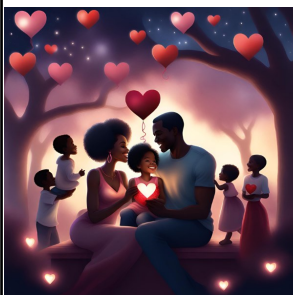
♥♥ **Valentine's Day is a good opportunity to celebrate your accomplishments as a couple.** In healthy relationships, couples celebrate successes, big and small, so on Valentine's Day, it's time to celebrate your partnership, what you've accomplished together and obstacles you've overcome. Reflecting on your relationship and celebrating how far you've come boosts your admiration for each other, as well as feelings of happiness.

♥♥ **Celebrating Valentine's Day can show you're invested in/devoted to a relationship.** Everyone wants to know his/her partner is invested in them and in the relationship that they're building. This is especially true if the relationship is new and the people involved are learning how to communicate. If you want to show you're serious about a person, Valentine's Day is a great opportunity. Taking the time to plan something meaningful shows your commitment to the relationship.

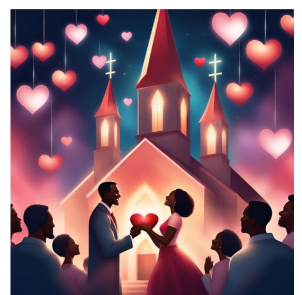
♥♥ **Strong social ties can extend your well-being.** Research suggests strong social ties can help your quality of life. This doesn't apply just to romantic relationships. Good relationships with friends and family have numerous benefits, too. While other factors, such as genetics, exercise, and diet apply when it comes to living healthy and happy lives, relationships are certainly meaningful.

♥♥ **Lastly, Valentine's Day can be a great day for you to celebrate you!** It's time to treat yourself, whatever that looks like for you. Maybe that means taking yourself out for a nice dinner, reading a new book, or taking a trip. Whatever your goals are and wherever you are in your life, you deserve a day to feel special and good about yourself.

"When we love, we always strive to become better than we are. When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too." — Paulo Coelho, The Alchemist



Happy Valentine's Day!





Embracing Love: Welcoming Our First Lady



At the end of the worship service on Sunday, February 18, the Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church family gloriously cheered, clapped, smiled and screamed expressions of joy when Pastor Cooper gracefully announced his marriage to the love of his life, First Lady Candice Cooper, whom he humbly invited to join him before the attending audience. They were wed in holy matrimony on February 14, Valentine's Day ❤️ -an anniversary that no doubt will be easily remembered!

As a church family, we are so happy for them. We are praying that their love will grow stronger and deeper each year, and that God will bless and grant all the best to both of them as they start their life together. May they always remember to allow God to be their guide in all they do as a couple, nourish their love to glorify Him in all things, and to keep God as the nucleus of their marriage. By doing this, they will arise above all life's challenges. May God's grace and mercy forever bless this union as they savor their marriage on a diet of God's Word.

John 15:12 █ 1 Corinthians 13:13 █ 1 Peter 4:8 █ Proverbs 3:3-4 █ Colossians 3:14

*Joy, Peace & Love to You Both
Your Rising Mt. Zion Family*



*Congratulations on your Wedding,
Pastor & First Lady*





Activity Page

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A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

The words listed below can be found in a straight line horizontally, vertically, or diagonally and may be read forward or backward. Learn to pronounce, spell, define, and be about to use each word in a sentence.

BUILD UP

SCATTER

MOURN

REFRAIN

EMBRACE

LOVE

HEAL

WEEP

LAUGH

GATHER

SPEAK

MEND

SEARCH

HATE

PEACE

R	J	J	Z	A	Y	S	W	P	E	A	C	E	D	H
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R	D	R	I	P	S	T	W	E	E	P	Y	I	M	S
R	E	T	T	A	C	S	A	P	S	U	F	W	J	L
W	F	K	Q	D	Q	Z	E	H	E	N	L	C	G	F