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Live the gospel, and
others will listen.



*Your faith toward God has
gone out, so that we do not
have to say anything.*

1 Thessalonians 1:8



Henrico Ministers' Conference & Vicinity Hosted Its County-Wide Revival

The evenings of April 29 and 30, the Henrico Ministers' Conference & Vicinity hosted its County-Wide Revival at the Rising Mt. Zion Baptist Church, under the pastorate of the Rev. Dr. Roscoe D. Cooper III, attracting participants and guests throughout the metropolitan area. The keynote evangelists were two potent orators of the Word of God, the Rev. Dr. Gregory M. Howard who delivered the message on Monday and the Rev. Dr. John W. Kinney on Tuesday. Monday evening, the Rev. Dr. Theodore T. Brown, Pastor of the Quioccasin Baptist Church served as Worship Leader. The music was rendered by the *United Sound of Praise* and the *Dance Movement Ministry of the Light Community Church* awed the audience with a seamless performance. The spirit-filled service continued on Tuesday with the Rev. Rudolph V. Sykes, Jr. being the Worship Leader and Pastor of the Rising Mt. Zion Baptist Church in New Kent VA. The *Tony Winslow's Rejoice Community Choir* and a guest soloist, *Sister Allison Lilly* from the Cedar Street Baptist Church of God blessed the audience

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with soul-stirring music. Each night ministers and associate ministers of churches in the conference participated in the devotional period. The *Rev. Dr. Zynora Manson*, HMCV President, gave the Benediction each night.



The Rev. Dr. Gregory M. Howard, Pastor of the Union Branch Baptist Church in Chesterfield VA masterly chose his scripture, *Genesis 26:12-22*, and entitled his sermon, “Keep Digging.” In his chosen scriptural periscope, Dr. Howard highlighted the journey of Isaac, son of Abraham who became very wealthy and highly blessed by the Lord, yet, envied by the Philistines who revengefully filled all the wells with dirt that Isaac’s father’s servants had dug. Today, as in biblical times, rejection, opposition, and power are perceived as a threat and people tend to reject and resist one’s apparent success for which God shows favor. Like his father, Isaac continued to be obedient to God. Moving away from the Philistines and settling in the Valley of Gerar, Isaac reopened the wells dug by his father’s servants and gave them the same names his father had given them. Isaac’s servants dug two freshwater wells, *Esek* and *Sitnah* and again the people disputed and quarreled that the water was theirs, causing Isaac to move and dig another well, *Rehoboth*, but this time, there was no rejection or quarreling because God’s grace positioned him to the right location. Dr. Howard stressed the fact that none is exempt from rejection but we must be obedient to God, learn to trust Him and be patient in the process. It is essential to have persistence, patience, perseverance, and know that God is watching over you. In due season, He will place you in a position minus hostility, anger, and jealousy, and give you a degree of peace. Despite rejection, continue to glorify God, be steadfast, be encouraged, and *KEEP DIGGING* until your spirit is satisfied, your blessings received, and the living waters flow in your life!



With good grace the Rev. Dr. John W. Kinney, Pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Beaverdam, VA chose the scriptural reading, *Philippians 3:13-14*, and opted for “Are You There Yet?” as his sermon title. Being in ministry for many decades, he doesn’t consider himself having arrived yet, on the contrary, he advised the parishioners not to misdirect attention to man, but more exactly to God. The action process to move toward the greatness before you are *PROLOGUE*--a word/an event that precedes something, *PAST*—clinging to the past limits your progress; *PRESS*—asking God to elevate you so that you can improve; and *PRIZE*—believing your prize is the way you live, not when you die. Know that everything in creation is in motion. Therefore, realize that if everything God made is moving; why is the church standing still? Dr. Kinney accentuated the following facts: 1) You diminish when you compare. 2) Use yesterday to launch tomorrow. 3) You are not moving if no obstacles get in your way. 4) Never sacrifice your principles for privileges. 5) To get to where God wants you to go requires persistence!

**Understand that you are not there yet,
but continue to press forward and allow
God to saturate you with His Holy Spirit!**



Greetings My Dear Zion Family,

I greet you, my Zion family and friends, believing that we are being chiseled every day in our purpose according to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the One who daily orders my steps in His Will, His Way, and His Word. As believers, we must never shift focus from God to our circumstances or step out of His plan, His promises or His Word, even when our plan seems reasonable. In my spirit, I imagine that at times we all allow the fear of our situations to overtake our faith and doubt the power of our Sovereign God. We must always remember that the enemy uses doubt, fear, worry, disbelief, and a sense of being inadequate to derail our destiny. Being fearful is like poison running through our system. God never intended for us to live in fear *2 Timothy 1:7...God has not given us a spirit of fear*. Yet, the Call of God never takes us where His grace cannot sustain us. You see Zion, I'm totally persuaded that God and His Word allow trials in our life in a most profound way that will test our faith and at the same time mold us into the person He has designed us to be. Every experience leaves a scar that may be good or not so good, physical or emotional, that permanently impacts us in such a unique way; yet, it tells our own story. The good news is that God's Holy Spirit is always present to guide us and will put people and/or things in our path that make a most insightful difference in our development. Therefore, the more we meditate, pray, read and study the Word of God, we are preparing for those experiences in our life that are beyond our capacity. It is these things that strengthen and make us more intimately aligned with God. In order to victoriously go through the most difficult times, turn to God who gives us His supernatural strength that grows us stronger/greater in our weakness. Thimble size, pint size, or 50-gallon size...**fear not for God is with you**, and every occurrence will be worth it in the end!

Treading in the Will, Way and Word of God makes us able to withstand that which confronts us from day to day, and puts us on the path to becoming a survivor and a prayer warrior. Nevertheless, we have to realize that *spiritual equipment* will not win the battle without *spiritual energy*. Things we pray for are things we trust God to do. We need to be covered in prayer, praying for others and ourselves, staying alert with all endurance, and praying a believing and victorious prayer is God-driven. It is prayer that takes the situation out of our hands and gives it over to God!

Do you remember my Sermon title and Prayer Call devotional comments, "From the Tomb to the Table?" In this case, the "table" is a "Place of Favor". We, the body of believers, know that Jesus shows up, can perform miracles in life and turn things around. When we get to the table, have the perseverance to remain there although we will be targeted; because there will always be some who will hate on your glory because you are a survivor perpetually allowing God's peace to rule in your heart. This is a year of abundance, wealth, and favor of which God wants us to enjoy and get ready to be infinitely blessed. Allow me to remind you that each of us must go through the process to get to our place of promise and understand that we should not become weary in the process. It is essential that we remain authentic/genuine, faithful, and endure being proven that our corruption has been removed and that we have the capacity to reflect. Additionally, we have to encounter pressure, knowing that pressure reveals who we are, and know that God puts pressure on us to bring out our better self. Thirdly, we must remember that we have to experience some perils. Our Omniscient God has to see Himself in our actions, attitudes, character, walk and our talk. It is then that His promises can bless us, not the places we tread!

Immeasurable love was shown to First Lady Candice and me following the announcement of our wedding. We claim gratitude and praise to the goodness of God and humbly thank each of you who blessed us with such an incredible degree of kindness and an amazing honor that warmed our hearts beyond measure. We love, appreciate and thank you, and pray God's grace and mercy upon you and your families!

Be blessed,

Barney D. Cooper III





Women's History Month 2024

Researched via Google and Microsoft Bing

By Deborah S. Andrews

It's hard to imagine that less than a century ago, women in the United States were not given many of the same freedoms as their male counterparts, including the right to vote. That's why it's important to celebrate the honorary observance of the Month of March as National Women's History Month, as designated in 1987 by the United States Congress, in recognition of women's many accomplishments throughout history. A variety of agencies, schools and organizations observe the month by focusing on the "consistently overlooked and "undervalued" role of American women presently and in times past. Communities promote special events that emphasize the achievements and offerings of women to history, culture and society.

The National Women's History Alliance, formerly the National Women's History Project, is a leader in promoting Women's History and is committed to the goals of education, empowerment, equality, and inclusion. The Alliance designates a yearly theme for Women's History Month. The 2024 theme celebrates "Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion." This theme recognizes women who understand the need to eliminate bias and discrimination from individuals' lives and institutions.

Women from every background have realized since the dawn of time that an uneven playing field will never bring equality or justice. Many feel the "urgency of now" to speak up and work harder for equity in our institutions and social interactions. During 2024, women are familiar with the examples of their counterparts who are committed to embracing everyone and excluding no one from their common quest for freedom and opportunity. They know that people change with the support of families, teachers and friends and learn from hearing different stories with varying points of view.

It takes moxie for women to advocate for logical targets like equity, diversity and inclusion when deep-rooted forces aim to misinterpret, exploit or discredit them. As members of families, civic and community groups, businesses and legislative bodies women are in the forefront of reevaluating the status quo. Throughout 2024, we honor women from the past and present who have taken the front line to demonstrate the importance of change and to apply safeguards, practices and laws reflecting those values. Following decades of discrimination, we are proud to celebrate women who work for basic inclusion, equality and fairness.

Women's History Month is a great time to reflect on the impacts of countless remarkable women who have shaped many lives. It's an opportunity to ponder the ongoing pursuit of gender equity and to acknowledge the challenges that women still face in various aspects of life.

Who are the women in your community or organization that you will honor?

"If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair."

~Shirley Chisholm, U.S. Congresswoman



The RESURRECTION: Looking Forward to Life Without End!

~by Deacon Mary Kemp~

*So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen,
since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:18 NIV*

Resurrection Sunday, also known as Easter Sunday, is considered the most significant and joyous event in the liturgical calendar, and is a Christian festival and cultural holiday commemorating Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead. This year on Good Friday, March 29, Jesus was crucified, buried in a tomb, and on the third day of His burial He rose from the dead, signifying victory over sin and death. It is believed that the Resurrection should be celebrated all year long because we, as Christians, daily need His resurrection power in our lives because it is that power where our hope is and how we overcome the inevitable trials and problems of life. Christians around the world gather for special worship services and participate in various traditions to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus which is a time of reflecting, gratitude, and celebration of the central principle of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, we realize that churches as we know them today would not exist if the disciples of Christ would never have gone forward to preach, being that the Resurrection is the key to the Christian faith. Christ is within every believer and the Holy Spirit is our assurance that He is within us. Jesus first appeared to His faithful followers, women, as well as other witnesses because He knew that sometimes humans must see to believe. Seeing is believing and yet, there's something greater. Although people today have not seen with our eyes our heart knows the presence and love of Christ and there is a life beyond this life. Because of the Resurrection, death lost its power and its sting and Jesus lives to bring the glory to God to all who believe!

Again, on Good Friday Pastor Cooper participated in a worship service entitled the "Final Sayings of the Savior" that was viewed virtually and in-person during which seven pastors preached power-packed sermons referencing Jesus' Seven Last Words. Pastor Cooper set a high benchmark for those to follow and delivered the first Word, emphasizing the scriptural reading, *Luke 23:34*, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.*" Pastor stated that Jesus had been tortured, ridiculed, betrayed, and His enemies insisted that He be killed despite not committing a crime. Yet Jesus is able to see past the sin, and recognizes our need for healing and forgiveness. Jesus also understands the thoughtlessness of human conditions, and empathizes with being drawn into evil. Pastor described this as "Biblical Forgiveness" and we should learn to forgive without waiting for an apology. Everyone has a "them" but their actions are not reason for us to hate, knowing that a silent friend is worse than a vocal enemy. Practice being more Christ-like in forgiving others who have wronged you. He concluded, "Praise God who always has the final Word."

Resurrection Sunday at Rising Mt. Zion didn't disappoint in any way. The service began by silencing the crowd with the video depicting the sorrow and penance of Jesus' crucifixion---His Resurrection! The rendition of gospel songs by the Mass Choir and the elegant performance of the Zion Praise Dancers were a calming inspiration. Pastor Cooper's message was based on the scripture, *John 20:19-20*, and entitled, "Today Is The Day To Get It Back." Enthusiasm makes the difference in whether a person pursues his goal or abandons it. It's not like "Salvation" because one can lose enthusiasm, but not salvation. The crucifixion of Jesus traumatized the disciples, causing their most precious thing, their faith, to fade, as well as their fellowship affected and fractured. No matter where you are now, God is able to give back your enthusiasm/joy, show you favor, and make a way. However, we must do the following things to get it back: a) *The presence of Jesus must be revealed in your situation.* b) *The peace of God must be released.* c) *God's power must be received.* One cannot re-enthuse or light his own light; enthusiasm is given back only by the Lord through the power of His Holy Spirit that can speak life into a dead situation. The video, singing and the dancing enhanced the worship service but it was the preached Word of God, the four persons who joined in-person and the two online that sanctified the Resurrection Sunday service to be a truly blessed and enthusing day!

Glory To God...
HE IS RISEN!



Spratley Allen Missionary Circle

By Sister Valorie McBee

Then He said to His disciples, "the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." Matthew 9:37 NIV

The Spratley Allen Missionaries praise God for all blessings as we continue to serve others by praying, sending get well and sympathy cards, and donating food items and monetary gifts for those in need. The missionaries are continuing to participate in the Baptist General Convention and Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Ministries. The Baptist General Convention led by President, Rev. Milton Palmer Bunting and Executive Minister, Dr. Leo Whitaker sponsored a virtual information session that was presented by Dr. Linwood Blizzard II, Rev. Dr. Eugene Quarles and Rev. Dr. Mary Young, an independent consultant. The presentation focused on the Lilly Endowment grant that the Lord has blessed BGC to fulfill its mission--- Bringing People Together, Growing Churches, and Changing Communities. (*Acts 1:8, Matthew 9:35-38, Mark 10:13-16*). The focus points centered on how we are bringing people together; for instance, who is involved, who is missing, what impact has the pandemic had on our members, children, youth and adults, and how can people's lives be changed for the better. Our responsibility is to **prayerfully follow the path of Jesus**, to serve faithfully with prayer on what and how we serve, to foster stronger churches and to make a positive impact on communities. As we connect with God and each other, and reflect upon who we are in this post pandemic era, we must assess the gaps and challenges. Therefore this grant-funding can be used to assist churches in what they need to become successful. It can help provide a financial blessing to the church as it serves the congregation whether it's for education, revitalization, help create new space for congregations, and/or help to provide support to the community for housing, food, and other community outreach endeavors. A portion of the funding is also being used for the BGC building improvements and technical support. An outside consultant will assist with data collection and analysis and make determinations pertaining to a church grant request in accordance with the Lilly Endowment Foundation.

The BGC Women's Ministry (Sisters of Substance) met for their quarterly meeting at Fifth Baptist Church, where the Rev. Ricardo Brown serves as pastor. The very informative and productive meeting was presided by the Women's Ministry President, Rev. Dr. Margaret Delk Edney. The Council of Elders committee is seeking members eighty years or older in order that these seasoned women of faith may share their wisdom and knowledge about their experiences with the Women's Ministry. Their stories will serve as a contribution to the BGC Women's Ministry's historical records.

Sister Barbara Crump shared information on the Lott Carey Global Ambassadors Fundraiser. The Lott Carey global Christian missional network invests in indigenous communities around the world through prayer partnership, financial support and technical assistance primarily through ministries of evangelism, compassion, empowerment and advocacy. Over the last seven years, \$85,000 has been raised for Lott Carey's Global impact. The goal this year is \$15,000 to help build a high school in Bopolu, Liberia. Funds can be donated directly to the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Society, please make note - Global Ambassador.

On behalf of the BGC Women's Ministry, Rev. Dr. Edney presented a monetary check to the Baptist Center of Virginia, Inc. (formerly the Baptist Children's Home) to assist with renovation and repairs of several of its buildings. The Baptist Center is planning to provide facilities for church retreats, weddings and receptions, police protection staff, and install security cameras. There will be programs for children, and limited housing for the Virginia State College students. The Baptist Children Home was founded in 1947 on 250 acres and was established as a residential care facility for children.

The Women's Ministry is continuing the Wonder Working Hour of Prayer on every third Monday at 7 a.m. as well as the Sister-to-Sister Roundtable conversations. Thank God for all blessings.

*Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves...
defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

Proverbs 31:8-9 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; and He will help, guide, strengthen, and comfort you in your dark and deepest sorrow. His Word speaks a refreshing truth about your hope in Him; and 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.

- **Sister Arnetha Ellsworth** mourns her father, *Brother Melvin Banks, Sr.*
- **Sister Danita Barnes Jones** mourns her sister-in-law, *Sister Minnie Blowe.*
- **Sister LaFran Walker (Brother William “Bill”)** mourns her first cousin, *Brother Michael Brooks.*
- **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)** mourn their sister-in-law and their aunt, *Sister Beverly Street*
- **Sister Audrey Robinson, Sister Leondra Sutton, Sister Tamara Johnson and Brother Quane Robinson** mourn her grandson, her nephew, and their cousin, *Brother Monte Orlando Robinson.*
- **Sister Barbara Jones (Brother Steve A.)** mourns her brother, *Brother Charles W. Farrar, Sr.*
- **Sister Danisha Wilson and Sister Cheryl Woodley** mourn her mother and her aunt, *Sister Terry Hudson.*
- **Sister Angela Arrington-Deronce and her daughter, Sister Mickaela Arrington-Deronce** mourn her aunt/great-aunt, *Sister DeLanda P. Clarke.*
- **The Zion Family** joins *Sister Denise Williams* in mourning her brother and Zion member, **Brother Reginald Williams III.**
- **Brother Frederick “Fred” W. Moffett (Sister Barbara G.)** mourns his mother, *Sister Yvonne Moffett.*
- **Brother Jonathan Calhoun (Sister Karey) and Sister Angel Calhoun, Sister Annette Farmer and Sister Alice Calhoun** mourn their mother, her sister, and her sister-in-law, respectively, *Sister Claudette Calhoun.*
- **Brother Warren Reid (Sister Edith)** mourns his mother, *Sister Mary Lee Reid.*
- **Brother Lenso Haywood (Sister Michelle), and their sons, Marquise Haywood and Mikhail Haywood** mourn his nephew and their cousin, *Brother Jamar Baker.*
- **Sister Mary Walker-Griffis, Sister Denean Anderson, Sister Jeriel Champion, Sister Danielle Anderson, and Young Adult Miss Saniya A. Terry** mourn her husband, her step-father, their grandfather, and her great-grandfather, respectively, *Brother Lonnie Griffis.*
- **Sister Cherjuana “Cher” Morton and Sister Jaylah Morton** mourn her brother and her uncle, *Brother Carroll Morton, Jr.*
- **Sister Dorothy James** mourns her son, *Brother Sylvester L. Banks.*
- **Brother Maurice Black (Sister Sonya) and Deaconess Helen Day** mourn his sister and her aunt, *Deacon Rosa Black Porter of Baltimore Maryland*
- **Brother Bernard L. Jackson, Sr. (Sister Veronica), Quiana Jackson, KiJhon Jackson-Bonner, and Dominiek Jackson-Bonner,** mourn his mother, her grandmother, and their great-grandmother, respectively, *Sister Marian Lois Jackson.*
- **Brother Orlando Battle, Sr. and Sister Martisha Battle** mourn his grandson and her nephew, *Brother Shawn Battle.*





A MOTHER'S LOVE

By Karen Allen

Happy Mother's Day! I greet all the mothers, bonus mothers, grandmothers, aunts and every woman who has filled in the gap as a mother here at Rising Mount Zion, in the name of the One who orders our steps and meets us where we are.

My father, brothers and I were truly blessed with a virtuous woman. My mother lost her mother at the age of 6 and was raised by her oldest sister. We often asked her how she was such an incredible mother after losing her mother at such a young age. She would always give all credit to God in whom her faith was unshakable. Even after losing my brother in a car accident in 1989, her faith in God remained strong. She urged us to have a relationship with God at an early age so I'm sure you can imagine where we were every Sunday---in the youth choir, ushering, and anything else that needed to be done at church. One of my Mom's favorite verses was *Joshua 24:15-- As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

My mother's love for God was evident in the way she took care of her family, served in the community and her church. Her love was unconditional and she shared it with everyone that she met, expecting nothing in return. She never asked, "Is there anything that I can do?" But without hesitation, she always said, "I have to do something." Being such a good listener made her kitchen table the place where so many came to share their problems with her and knew with confidence that she would give sound advice with no judgement. Before they left, she had prayer with them which was her response to everything. My brothers and I knew whatever we shared with her; prayer was going to take place first. Now I find myself doing the same thing with my daughter. My mother was not just a great listener, she readily welcomed everyone in her home where the best home cooked meal was waiting. No doubt, she loved being a wife and mother, but the title she loved most was being "Nanny" to her grandchildren! At the age of 16, my oldest nephew's Mom passed away due to breast cancer in 2000. There was no question where he was going to live after the passing of his Mom. My mother immediately moved him in our home and enrolled him in school. She would often change her shift at Nabisco so that the grandchildren would not have to go to daycare. She made sure they boarded and got off the bus, and arrived safely at home.

After retiring from Nabisco, we had a family dinner daily. And if for some reason we couldn't make it she made sure our dinner was delivered. There is so much that I can say about this remarkable woman. I thank God for loaning her to me for 48 years. I asked God not to take her on Christmas Day. God answered my prayer and she received her crown on December 26, 2021. She lived her life so that she could spend eternity with Him. This gives me peace on those days when I miss her so much. As we all know, grief is a process that is overwhelming at times. I lost my mother, the sister I never had and my best friend all in one person. Every day I push through, asking God to give me strength to keep going. I'm so thankful, grateful and blessed for my Pastor, Dr. Roscoe D.

Cooper III, First Lady Candice and the best church family in the world who have been with us every step of the way.

I will continue to make my mother proud by being the best mother possible to my daughter, McKinley who was beyond blessed to have my mother for 16 years. She taught all of us to keep God first, be respectful, work hard and find a way to be a blessing to others even if it meant going out of our way. She encouraged us to do what is right especially when no one is looking. Her love knew no bounds and it was a gift that she urged us to share with everyone we meet. Love cost us nothing was her response to nearly everything. One of her favorite lines, "Let God fight that battle; that's not what God told me to do." Even when it was evident that she was being treated wrongly or unfairly, she would say, "They have to answer to God for that."

My Mom was part of a village to all our friends and countless others. We need those villages today to help discipline our children and more parents/adults who support the idealism, it takes a village to raise a child, and making the world a much better place if everyone lived and loved like my Mom. She feared God and followed His instructions. As the tears are falling right now, I thank God for blessing us with the best mother in the world who sacrificed so much for us.

In closing, *Proverbs 31:10-31* clearly summarizes my mother and whom I aspire to be like. When you read the verses mentioned above, the adjectives, *noble, strength, sacrifice, confident, hard-working, dedicated, loving, respectful, wise, faithful, worthy, charming, willing, honorable, blessed, caring, diligent, and God-fearing* are some adjectives that describe my Mom who gave so much to be a blessing to her family and so many others!

A special thanks to the Voice Ministry for allowing me to share our journey with the one God blessed us to have. To all those who are having your first Mother's Day without your Mom, I'm praying a special prayer, asking God to bless, strengthen, comfort, and give each of you peace. Lean on God and let Him do what only He can during this difficult time. I love each of you so much.



A PRAYER FOR MOTHERS

By Valorie A. McBee © 2022

*Dear God, we pray for mothers everywhere.
We pray that You will keep them in Your care.
Bless their children from the youngest to the oldest,
whether they are near or far.
We ask that You direct their paths
and guide them as a shining star.
We pray that You grant all mothers strength, patience, wisdom,
and love.
God, Your agape love is a blessing for all mothers
throughout the world.
We thank You Dear God and give Your name
all the honor, praise, and glory.
Amen*

THE EASTER TRADITIONS AND SYMBOLS

Researched & reported by Deacon Mary Kemp

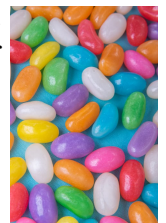
*The EASTER season is one of the most important central holidays, or Holy Days, of Christianity. Christians glorify and give thanks for the **Resurrection of Jesus Christ** who rose from the grave three days after His crucifixion, death, and burial. By this, He conquered death and redeemed us from sin. For Christian churches, Easter is the joyful conclusion to the **Lenten** season of devoted prayer, fasting, and penitence. Accordingly, new Easter outfits came from the belief that wearing new clothes to church on Easter Sunday would bring good luck. Easter bonnets worn by girls/women became part of the tradition over time and gradually led to the tradition of church-goers parading through the streets after service ended to show off their finery. Accordingly, many of the most solemn and preeminent traditional celebrations of Jesus Christ Resurrection customs and symbols are mixed with pagan and secular commercialism.*

EASTER TRADITIONS

- **Easter Traditions** include Sunrise services or Late-night Vigils, Exclamations and Exchanges of Paschal Greetings, Flowering of the Cross, the new outfits and wearing of Easter bonnets by women/girls, Clipping the Church, and the decorations and communal breaking of Easter eggs (a symbol of the empty tomb). Additionally, the marking the forehead with ashes on Ash Wednesday, waving palms on Palm Sunday, and the symbolism of the crucifix on which Jesus died.
- **New Easter Outfits** came from the belief that wearing new clothes to church on Easter Sunday would bring good luck. **Easter bonnets** worn by girls/women became part of the tradition over time and gradually led to the tradition of church-goers parading through the streets after service ended, to show off their finery.

EASTER SYMBOLS

- **Easter Egg Hunts** represented the resurrection of Jesus. The eggshell symbolizes the tomb in which Jesus' body was placed; opening the egg represents His rising from the dead. Christians would hide hard-boiled-dyed eggs for their children to find, symbolizing the search for Jesus' body after crucifixion. Eggs were dyed red to represent the blood of Jesus during resurrection. As the tradition continued, Christians would paint scenes from the Bible on the eggs. Today, children search for colorful plastic eggs filled with candy treats since it's the end of Lent. Every year in Washington DC, there's an egg-rolling party on the lawn of the White House. This custom is traced back to Sunday School picnics and parades at Easter in the years before the Civil War. At the picnics, children amused themselves with a variety of games such as egg-rolling.
- The "**Easter Bunny**" was an invention of German Protestants; the "Easter Hare" brought eggs and sweets to "good children," in the same way the Santa Claus brought gifts to well-behaved youngsters. When the German immigrants came to American colonies, the folklore spread across the United States. Initially, children fashioned nests for their Easter bunnies out of bonnets, hats, or boxes. Eventually, these became the colorful Easter baskets. In an egg shortage during World War I, the egg-like shaped jellybeans were a delicious substitute in all the Easter baskets.



- **Baby Chicks** are also a common symbol of Easter as illustrated by the popularity of Peeps marshmallow candy. Baby chicks are born by hatching from an egg and symbolize new life and fertility.
- **The Butterfly** symbolizes the resurrection and represents the transformation the *Christian faith* can lead to, through the grace of God.



- **The Lamb** is the most significant of the great feast because it is said to symbolize Jesus, as it embodies purity and goodness but also represents sacrifice. The lamb was a sacrifice made during the Jewish Passover. Jesus was crucified during Passover Week and gave the ultimate sacrifice, HIS LIFE. He is referred to as the “Lamb of God” and “our Passover Lamb” in the Bible. During Easter, we celebrate Jesus’ Passover from death to life. The ancient tradition of the Paschal lamb inspired the Christian’s use of the lamb meat as a popular food at Eastertime.



- **Easter Ham** is also an age-old custom and an ancient symbol of good luck and prosperity. The savings boxes for children in the figure of a pig (piggy bank) continue the ancient symbolism of good luck and prosperity.
- **The Hot Cross Bun** is a delicious sweet bun that’s served on Good Friday, prior to Easter Sunday. The sweet bun is marked with a cross to help the bread rise and is a visible sign that the bread was “blessed.”



- **Soft Pretzels** is a food eaten during Lent because it is only made with flour, salt and water.
- **The Easter Lily** with its sheer white petals, symbolizes life, purity, innocence, joy, and peace. Many ancient allegories connect the flower with motherhood. It is said that beautiful white lilies sprang up in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus wept in the last hours before He was betrayed by Judas. The lilies sprang up where drops of Christ’s sweat fell to the ground in the final hours of sorrow. The lilies from Christ’s time were not the Easter lily that we know today which is a native to the southern islands of Japan and are cultivated in areas such as California and Oregon. The lilies in Jesus’ era were wild lilies of the valleys and fields. Our Easter lily serves as a reminder of the lily mentioned throughout the Bible. They grace homes and churches each spring as a symbol of new life.



- **Palm Branches (Fronds)** represent the Biblical story honoring Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, by tossing small palm branches ahead of His path. Palms symbolize victory and peace.
- **Dogwood Tree** is believed to be the tree used to build the Cross upon Jesus was crucified. Even though Easter isn’t the same time every year, the dogwood tree usually blooms on or is very close to blooming on Easter. The tree no longer grows to be a tall, strong and its blossoms are not pure white but have a reddish stain in the shape of a cross, representing Jesus’ blood.



- **The CROSS** is among the most powerful and important religious symbol of Easter. A plain wooden cross most accurately depicts the cross upon which Jesus was crucified and where He died before being placed in the tomb.

FATHERHOOD: A Journey of Love, Strength, & Growth

From the Perspective of Dr. Matthew C. Jones PhD



In life, there are very few roles that are as profound and transformative as that of a father. As a father blessed with the privilege of raising two beautiful daughters alongside my beloved wife, I've come to cherish every moment of this journey — a journey marked by boundless joy, unforeseen challenges, and immeasurable growth. The joys of fatherhood are plentiful. For me, it is a musical arrangement of emotions. It is a melody composed of laughter, tears, frustrations, and triumphs. From the very first moment I held each of my daughters, I was overwhelmed by an indescribable sense of love and responsibility. In their eyes, I saw the promise of tomorrow...the embodiment of hope...the legacy of generations past.

When speaking with friends that have been fathers for various periods of time, we share many of the same sentiments. From watching our children grow up and come into their personalities in which they learn and adapt...to the looks on their faces when we pick them up from school or daycare. These joys are indescribable! But, amidst the joys, there are also challenges that test our resolve and shape our character. The journey of navigating the complexities of parenthood while striving to be a present and positive role model are tough. It's juggling the demands of work, family, and personal aspirations, often feeling stretched thin but always finding strength in the love that binds us together.

As an African American father, I am acutely aware of the unique challenges that my daughters & others may face — navigating systemic inequalities, confronting racial prejudice, and forging their identity in a world that often fails to recognize their worth. These fears and others rush through my mind daily. But it is precisely in the face of these challenges that the true essence of fatherhood reveals itself. It's in the resilience to persevere in the face of adversity, the courage to have difficult conversations, and the unwavering commitment to provide a safe and nurturing environment for my daughters to thrive. It's in leading by example, embodying the values of integrity, empathy, resilience and depending on God that I hope to impart to my daughters as they chart their own path in life.

To my fellow fathers who may be grappling with the challenges of fatherhood, I offer these words to you: **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!** Embrace the journey, with all its twists and turns, knowing that every moment — the highs and the lows — is an opportunity for growth and connection. Lean on God and your support network, whether it's your partner, family, or community, for strength and guidance. Most importantly, cherish the moments with your children, for they are fleeting and precious. Fatherhood is about love, commitment, and dedication. The true measure of a father lies not in perfection, but in the love, commitment, and the sincerity of our efforts to nurture and support our children. It's about showing up and being present.

In the end, fatherhood is a journey of love, growth, and legacy. I am honored and humbled to walk this path, knowing that with each step, I am shaping the future and leaving a legacy of love that will endure for generations to come. It is truly a privilege and honor to be a father. To all fathers, past, present, and future—may your hearts be filled with the boundless joy and immeasurable blessings that fatherhood brings.



HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

TO MY CHILD: THINGS I CAN AND CANNOT DO

I can share your life, but I cannot live it for you.
I can teach you things, but I cannot make you learn.
I can give you directions, but I cannot always lead you.
I can allow you freedom, but I cannot account for it.

I can take you to church, but I cannot make you believe.
I can teach you right from wrong, but I cannot decide for you.
I can give you love, but I cannot force it upon you.
I can teach you to be a friend, but I cannot make you one.
I can teach you to share, but I cannot make you, unselfish.
I can teach you respect, but I cannot force you to show honor.
I can tell you the facts of life, but I cannot build your reputation.
I can tell you about lofty goals, but I cannot achieve them for you.

I can teach you to obey, but I cannot answer for your actions.
I can warn you about sins, but I cannot make your morals.
I can love you as my child, but I cannot place you in God's family.

I can pray for you, but I cannot make you walk with God.
I can teach you about Jesus, but I cannot make Him your Savior.

I can teach you about prayer, but I cannot make you pray.
I can tell you how to live, but I cannot give you Eternal Life.



Author Unknown

Health Matters

By Cheryl Jordan-Sayles, MD

Preventing Insect Bites



Spring and summer are here and along with the warmer temperatures are outside activities. Being outside also brings on the nuisance of insect and especially mosquito bites can be very irritating and itchy that can also spread diseases which include West Nile virus - a severe infection causing headache, fever, muscle pain and weakness, tremors, seizures and can cause coma and even death. The number of cases of West Nile virus increases during the spring and summer seasons in most parts of the country. The best way to avoid insect bites is to prevent the bites from happening. Here are some ways to protect yourself.

1. When outside, wear appropriate clothing such as loose-fitting clothing to help block insects from biting. Insects find it harder to bite thru loose fitting clothes but can bite thru tight skin fitting clothing. Wearing long sleeves, long pants and socks limit the amount of exposed skin.
2. Use insect repellents, applying them to the exposed skin not covered by clothing and reapplying regularly. This helps to stop the insects from landing on and biting your skin. Other methods which have NOT been shown to be effective include applying *tea tree oil*, *bath oils* or *skin softeners*, or using *electronic buzzers* or *mobile phone apps* that emit high frequency sound waves. Wearing insect repellents such as *wrist bands* or *anklets* are also NOT effective in preventing bites.
3. Use a fan when sitting outside, aiming the flow of air from the fan to the area to help prevent insects coming to that area. The breeze from the fan makes it more difficult for the insects to fly.
4. Remove the breeding ground by eliminating standing outside water which tends to be areas where insects and mosquitos can lay eggs to breed. Clear areas of standing water such as bird baths, flower pots and buckets.
5. Use a screen-in porch or mosquito nets to help prevent insect bites when sitting outside. Keeping screen doors or screen windows to the outside areas closed help prevent insects from getting inside the home. Additionally insects are less likely to enter rooms where air conditioning is used regularly. Insect repelling candles, burners and coils can be used to help reduce insects in a confined area outside.
6. Consider adding plants around the home which can deter/repel insects in the area. These plants include citronella, lavender, lemongrass, marigolds and basil. However these plants need to be planted in large quantities to make a difference.
7. Treat your yard with an insecticide if you live in an area where mosquitos and other insects are prominent.
8. Avoid scented products such as *perfumes*, *lotions* or *soaps* that can attract insects and mosquitos, and should be avoided if outside in an area where you may be prone to getting bites.

Treating Insects Bites

Reducing the itch can help prevent scratching and prevent breaking the skin which can become infected. Sometimes the bite can cause an allergic reaction and become swollen and red.

1. Using *ice* immediately after a bite can reduce the swelling and itching.
2. Treatment includes "itch relief" creams such as a *steroid cream* which usually has hydrocortisone cream 1% and/or an antihistamine ingredient such as Benadryl or Zyrtec tablet to help reduce the itch and redness.
3. Home remedies include a *mixture of half bleach and half water* to the bites to help soothe area. Another home remedy is using a *paste of mixing baking soda and water* and applying to the bite. Wash off after 10 minutes.
4. Using the *aloe vera plant* or an *aloe vera gel* also is helpful in reducing the itch.





The List of Life

1	The most destructive habit	W----
2	The greatest Joy	G-----
3	The greatest loss	L--- of ---- -
4	The most satisfying work	H----- o-----
5	The ugliest personality trait	S-----
6	The most endangered species	D----- l-----
7	Our greatest natural resource	O—y----
8	The greatest “shot in the arm”	E-----
9	The greatest problem to overcome	F---
10	The most effective sleeping pill	P---- o- m---
11	The most crippling failure disease	E-----
12	The most powerful force in life	L---
13	The most dangerous pariah	A g-----
14	The world’s most incredible computer	T—b----
15	The worst thing to be without	H---
16	The deadliest weapon	T—t-----
17	The two most power-filled words	I C—
18	The greatest asset	F----
19	The most worthless emotion	S--- p---
20	The most beautiful attire	S----
21	The most prized possession	I-----
22	The most powerful form of communication	P-----
23	The most contagious spirit	E-----
24	The most important thing in life	G—

Cryptogram Answer: “We have simply got to make people aware that none of us are free until we’re all free, and we aren’t free yet.”
Ms. Opal Lee.

BOOK REVIEW

All Hope is Found

By Sarah Jakes Roberts

Overview by Sheila Cunningham Price



A divine expectation is the belief that we, as people, are not alone and somehow things are going to work out in a way than leaves us better than we were before. It produces a deeper level of trust in God, wholeness for self and inspiration to others. God's vision for how an expectation and our vision for how it will be fulfilled may be completely different. Sometimes we may need to redirect our own expectations from planning for the **demise** (saying I don't want to get my hopes up) to anticipating the **divine** with a quest of hope. That requires us to trust God's favor in transforming our expectations to fulfilling our dreams.

Sometimes life throws us curves that cause us disappointment. This may result in our becoming despondent and complacent, accepting less than God's best. Some setbacks shake us up tremendously and seem to stop us in our tracks. We may lose hope, thinking that we cannot come back from certain adversities. Our goals may seem less attainable, as we look closer at the obstacles in our way, rather than ways to overcome them. We must learn to train our minds and posture our hearts to expect the goodness of God in every circumstance.

God has plans for our lives that are beyond what we are willing to settle for. All of us have experienced issues or traumas that cause us considerable distress from which we may require healing and breakthrough. We must be willing to do the work necessary to release the identity created by those experiences in order to heal. This will allow us to shift our transgressions in the direction of hope and our expectations into faith. ***Faith is the substance of things hoped for.*** Hebrews 11:1

For faith to serve us in every season, it must be robust and also flexible. It is easy to leave our faith in the place of our disappointments; however, our faith should fill us with the hope, confidence and determination to rise from those disappointments. It should allow us to determine through prayer and supplication where we go from there. Even in times of devastation, grief and pain, we can embrace hope, for our God will meet us in our dark seasons. We can be empowered by God's Grace in the survival from past hurts and the harvest of the new opportunities that followed. His Glory may be demonstrated through our travailing, as we move through tribulations to the stages of hope and triumph. We might adopt the prayer of a particular church mother: "Any way You bless me, Lord, I'll be satisfied."

We must activate our hope-walk, while guarding our hearts, minds and speech. We can begin by making choices today as if the hope for tomorrow is already present in our lives. We can start speaking like the persons we were hoping to become, rather than those we invented in order to survive. We can attempt to release some of the anger and resentments we carry and begin to live with more compassion and vulnerability. We can bring our petitions to God and rest in the connection with Him and His Peace.

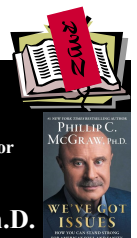
Understand that our expectations and values are subject to change the more we pursue God's identity. Our hopes will align as we begin to walk out our lives with the vision He has in mind for us. This is different from allowing our hopes to die because they seem too unrealistic. This will be due to a spiritual evolution that recognizes His plans are greater than our own and His promises are true. There will surely be times when we become adrift, focused on pursuits for happiness, success and fulfilling obligations. That happens, but we should remember that the real anchor worth holding on to is that which will help us to maximize every challenge we encounter. That anchor is the hope in God and the trust in His Plan. It is important that we own our hope with faith and that we share it publicly. This gives others permission to join us in the journey. Our world is in dire need of hope and that means the world is in dire need of us.

For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11

Suggested

**"We've Got Issues:
How You Can Stand Strong for
America's Soul and Sanity"**

By
Phillip C. McGraw, Ph.D.





Spotlight on...

DAWN MICHELLE STALEY

"Basketball Greatness Personified"

By Deborah S. Andrews



Dawn Michelle Staley is an American Basketball Hall of Fame player and head coach for the reigning South Carolina Gamecocks women's basketball team. Her coaching genius and inherent ability to effectively relate to her players have been paramount to her success. She doesn't just make her players run laps and review highlighted footage. The renowned coach is incredibly nurturing and the members of her team consider her a mother figure when they are away from home. She's known to appear at graduations and other important events. Those she's molded into champions have spoken of their appreciation of her as their head coach and mentor.

The University of South Carolina (USC) women's basketball team celebrated its third National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) championship on April 7, 2024, after defeating Iowa 87-75 in the title game, a feat that further solidified their place in the premier program of this era. They overwhelmed the competition from November to April finishing with a flawless 38-0 season, winning their games by an average margin of nearly 30 points. The win was a quintessential end to an undefeated season under the leadership of head coach Dawn Staley who coached an entirely new starting five to a perfect season. Her mastery of the sport and coaching ability is glaring in her strategic assembly of what has been penned the "perfect team."

When the buzzer signaled the end of the conference, the esteemed South Carolina head coach was overcome with emotion at what her team just accomplished. "It's a heavy load to be undefeated, to finish the job," Staley said. "You get emotional because you just want that for them." Coach Staley took a moment during her victory speech to express gratitude to God for their impeccable season, to congratulate Iowa on an incredible season, and to give a shout out and big thanks to Iowa's Caitlin Clark, who played a huge role in bringing national attention to the sport of women's college basketball. When asked about what the championship win meant to her Gamecocks after they finished their season undefeated, Coach Staley suggested that they made history and etched their names in the history books when this is the unlikely group to do so.

While fans continue to bask in the exuberance of South Carolina's storybook season, under the extraordinary leadership of Coach Dawn Staley, here are additional noteworthy facts about the team's coach:

- *She is lauded for having had an impressive career as a player with three Final Fours; one national title game appearance as a player for the University of Virginia (UVA); five WNBA All-Star honors with the Charlotte Sting; three Olympic gold medals playing with Team USA.*
- *She is the first Black coach to win multiple titles after her 2017 and 2022 wins.*
- *She is the first Black coach - male or female - to win three Division 1 basketball titles.*
- *She is the fifth coach to win at least three All-Star national championships.*
- *She is the highest paid Black head coach in NCAA Women's Basketball.*
- *She is consistently outspoken on issues of civil rights.*
- *She is strong in her faith and attributes South Carolina's success to a higher power, thanking God for the season's championship win and achievements throughout the season; using her faith to inspire her players. She has a meal with her team before each game where she shares a "Gameday Devotional" which includes a team picture and Bible verse.*

As a player and coach, Dawn Staley certainly has made a name for herself in the world of basketball. She has become a voice of leadership and direction in the women's game. When asked about the future, she suggests that because the audience is broadening, this is **the best time** to participate in women's basketball.



Unscramble the following words that describe or characterize God

lguorsio

rtoeacr

tlrenea

uhialfft

violgn

ratfeh

drgwenoelkofe

odog

ragiscou

sisohlen

thlig

jiestacm

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pratilmal

pedntenedni

ftininei

beisnvlil

gudje



Answers for *The List of Life*

- | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. I Can | 2. Our youth | 3. Encouragement |
| 4. Self pity | 5. Worry | 6. Loss of self respect |
| 7. The brain | 8. Hope | 9. Giving |
| 10. Faith | 11. Love | 12. Fear |
| 13. A gossip | 14. Helping others | 15. Selfishness |
| 16. Dedicated leaders | 17. Excuses | 18. Self pity |
| 19. Smile | 20. Integrity | 21. The tongue |
| 22. Prayer | 23. Enthusiasm | 24. GOD |

FUN FACTS ABOUT EASTER

Respond to the “**FUN**” **FACTS** about Easter that are listed below:

WHAT IS A SHORT POWERFUL EASTER MESSAGE?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT EASTER SUNDAY?

WHY IS GOOD FRIDAY CALLED “GOOD FRIDAY?”

WHAT POPULAR FOOD IS EATEN ON EASTER SUNDAY?

WHAT TREE WAS USED TO BUILD THE CROSS?

DESCRIBE THE EASTER LILY.

WHAT RELIGION IS EASTER A PART OF?

WHAT ARE 3 INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT EASTER?

WHY IS EASTER A BIG DEAL?

WHAT’S ANOTHER NAME FOR EASTER SUNDAY?

WHAT IS THE MOST POWERFUL AND IMPORTANT RELIGIOUS SYMBOL OF EASTER?

NAME THE TWO ANIMALS KNOWN FOR NEW LIFE AND FERTILITY.

TODAY, WHAT DO CHRISTIANS USE TO SUBSTITUTE FOR DYED EGGS?

WHAT ACTIVITY TAKES PLACE AT THE WHITE HOUSE DURING EASTER?

NAME A TRADITION YOU PARTICIPATE IN ON EASTER SUNDAY?



The Staff

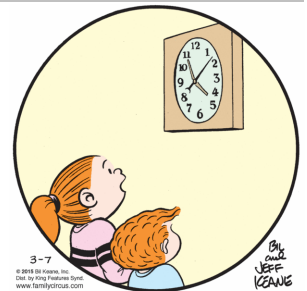
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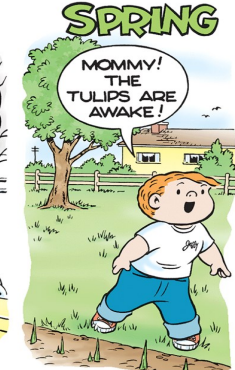
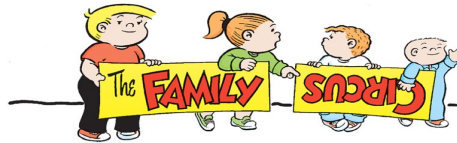
Graphics
Daphne Hill

Activity Page



"Tonight's the night we have to lose one of our o'clocks."

By Bill Keane



... Thanks Ms. Opal Lee!

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How to solve this cryptogram...

Each letter in the quote by Ms. Opal Lee has been replaced with a random letter or number.
Try to decode the message.

