



NEWSLETTER

# timeline

SUMMER 2021



REV. DR. ROOSEVELT GRAY JR.

“There is work enough for all of us to join the Prophet Isaiah and say heartily, ‘Here am I, Lord, send me.’”

## EACH ONE, REACH ONE

Brothers James and Stephen Wiggins remember riding with their father, Rev. James Wiggins, Sr., along the red clay roads of rural Alabama in the 1960s to visit homebound and elderly members. Their last stop was a few lonely miles down a tree-shrouded two-lane dirt road to the home of Dr. Rosa Young, the “mother of Black Lutheranism in Alabama.”

As a child, James remembered the “sweet sweet spirit” of that place as their father prayed with Dr. Young and gave her Holy Communion.

Rosa Young was a mighty missionary and church planter in rural Alabama, seeking the lost, sharing a saving word and prayer, and starting over 30 schools and 35 churches for Black Lutherans beginning in 1916. She was always looking for young women and men to serve the Lord by entering the Lutheran teaching and preaching ministries.

James and Stephen both entered the ministry, as they promised. They were two of dozens of young men Dr. Young inspired (some might even say “pushed”) into entering the ministry, touching the lives of hundreds with the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ across the country.

This spring, we lost Brother James — pastor at St. Paul Lutheran, Jacksonville, Fla. — too soon, as he died from cancer. Rev. Dr. Frazer Odom, also a product of the Alabama mission field, also left us for eternal glory.

Losing ministry giants like Pastors Odom and Wiggins is heartbreaking. But even more critical is the question of who will fill their very large shoes. Where are tomorrow’s preachers and teachers? Where are our Rosa Youngs — those who encourage and motivate and inspire young men and women into ministry and teaching?

One of the great tools for reaching future teachers and pastors are our beloved Lutheran schools. Both Rev. Wiggins and Dr. Odom attended Alabama Lutheran Academy in Selma, attended Concordia universities and graduated from LCMS seminaries. It is

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Kindergarten graduates at St. Paul Lutheran Church and School, Chicago — “creating tomorrow’s leaders today through faith, family and education.”

“Before we left, she would always reach out her hand to touch my brother and I and ask, ‘Are you going to be pastors when you grow up?’ And we would always respond, ‘Yes ma’am.’”

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my hope and prayer that we will continue to plant Lutheran schools as faithful centers of the Gospel message. As Martin Luther said, “When schools flourish, all flourishes.”

In this issue, you will read some of those stories — about faith-filled Black Lutherans like Mr. Robinson, who carried his Lutheran faith from Mansura and New Orleans, where he attended Lutheran elementary schools, to Detroit, helping start Berea (now Shadow of the Cross) Lutheran Church; about an Alabama Black carpenter and brick mason whose love of Lutheran education resulted in both of his sons entering the ministry as a second career in Indianapolis and Detroit; about a fifth grader new to the all-white St. John Lutheran School in Forest Park, Ill., who later became the school’s principal and now serves a parish on the South Side of Chicago; about a Liberian immigrant whose compassion for God’s people led him to establish a large cross-cultural Lutheran church in Staten Island, and to build a school for over 300 students in Monrovia, Liberia; and more.

Thanking God for His many blessings, we seek His guidance in finding and inspiring young men and women to enter Lutheran ministry as pastors, teachers, deaconesses and missionaries. Our seminaries offer week-long programs on campus for high school students through college graduates; our Concordia universities are always looking for Christian musicians, future teachers and pastors, directors of Christian outreach and deaconesses.

Is there a young James or Stephen in your church, school or community that you can encourage, inspire and maybe even “push” a little to enter the ministry? Is there a young woman who has a heart of compassion to express through the church?

There is work enough for all of us to join the Prophet Isaiah and say heartily, ‘Here am I, Lord, send me.’

# PASTOR WILLIAMS' FAITH IS STRONG 'THROUGH THE STORM'



Rev. Byron Williams, Sr.,

**T**he mission and ministry of the Rev. Byron Williams, Sr., is a joy to behold, from his lay ministry work at Holy Cross Lutheran and Calvary Lutheran churches where I was blessed to serve as pastor, to his 10-year service at Trinity in New Orleans (destroyed in Hurricane Katrina), to his present service at St. Paul Lutheran Church and Christian Academy in Dallas. I am so grateful our paths crossed in Houston, where I had a

front-row seat to his call to ministry and his soul-giving service to the Lord.

Thankfully, Concordia Seminary has recognized this minister of the Gospel with a story in the Spring issue of their magazine. I invite you to be inspired by the Lord's work in this pastor's life, by reading the story at [csl.edu/2021/05/keeping-the-focus-on-jesus](https://csl.edu/2021/05/keeping-the-focus-on-jesus).

—Rev. Dr. Roosevelt Gray





Christ Assembly Choir

# ONE CHRIST: ONE WORLD

## CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY — TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

**N**early 300 worshippers from Liberia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Togo, the Caribbean and the U.S. gather Sundays at Christ Assembly Lutheran Church on Staten Island, New York, to worship Jesus Christ together. One faith, one Baptism, and one worship began 25 years ago — in 1996 — when five people met for Bible study led by the Rev. Philip S. Saywayne on the campus of St. John's Lutheran School.

Attendance soon grew to over 500 worshippers from many nations, and a building — an old bagel warehouse — was purchased with a Lutheran Church Extension Fund loan and renovated by LCMS Atlantic District partner gifts. Several problems in New York — from financial distress, to 9/11, to COVID-19 — have led to a decrease in members, but it is still among the largest LCMS Lutheran churches in the city of New York.

The congregation is led by Saywayne, a native of Liberia, who was called as a mission developer by the Atlantic District in 1995 and also served as a national missionary in



*Rev. Philip Saywayne, pastor of Christ Assembly and St. Matthew Lutheran churches, Staten Island, N.Y., brings Gospel power and mercy outreach to the communities he serves.*

North America and World Mission. Saywayne planted over eight mission stations in the Northeast: three became self-sus-

taining congregations with called pastors.

In 2006, he oversaw the building of Lutheran International School System (LISS) in Monrovia, Liberia, which today serves 320 students in kindergarten to 12th grade. The school is recognized by the Liberian government and subscribes to the religious teachings and practice of the LCMS.

Ardent desire to serve God's people, especially African immigrants, was and still is the motivating factor for establishing the Christ Assembly Lutheran Church and ministry for Saywayne, an immigrant himself who came to the U.S. for theological study in 1989. Pastor Saywayne is perfectly fitted to the mission on Staten Island, with its population of 8,000 Liberians, along with many West Africans and other nationalities.

With its own building completed in 1999, Christ Assembly was better able to assist Staten Island's nearby West African communities with ministry outreach in education, traditional art, citizenship classes, and fellowship with others.

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*Easter baskets help share the Good News of Jesus' resurrection with children.*

"Pastor and Missionary Saywayne is deployed on Staten Island to reach the African Immigrant Community, raising up leaders to reach out to new immigrants coming primarily from Liberia, assisting them as they find their way, sharing food and resources, welcoming those struggling to assimilate to a brand new home. Whether worshipping online or in person, their worship is warm, vibrant, musically energetic and ministers well within the style and culture of the African people," according to the Atlantic District's publication "Witness in the Public Square."

Their mission strategy is based on Matthew 28:19–20, the Great Commission of Christ. Their mission logo reflects this as well: "MAKING DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS." As they conduct their ministry, Christ Assembly emphasizes that it is not by their own power or might that people are brought in, but by the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Saywayne and the church are the "most trusted organization and social hub within the Liberian community," and he notes that approximately 90 percent of the borough's Liberians receive resettlement services through Christ Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Christ Assembly Lutheran Church," Place Matters, [placematters.net/census/detail.php?id=774](http://placematters.net/census/detail.php?id=774).

Projects are also an integral part of their mission. In addition to supporting the Liberian Lutheran school, Saywayne also spearheaded an Ebola feeding project in Liberia in 2014, under the auspices of the Atlantic District and supported by LCMS Disaster Response. Hundreds of households were fed through free distribution of hundreds of bags of rice, gallons of oil, sacks of clean water, etc. (Read an article on the project at [reporter.lcms.org/2014/liberian-pastor](http://reporter.lcms.org/2014/liberian-pastor).)

Worship at Christ Assembly reflects the congregation's African roots. "Most West African denominations clap hands, they dance, they stand up. They make a joyful noise unto the Lord, as the Book of Samuel said! And so, we encourage them to do that," Saywayne said. Many women wear lappa suits — colorful,

patterned garments featuring a wrap-around skirt, which are typically worn in West Africa.

"We try to keep some elements of home. And we make time to sit with them and remind them about their culture. We're here, but we came from somewhere," he said. Often that "somewhere" was torn by violence and war, but it is still "home." "The place we come from can never be forgotten."

Pastor Saywayne also serves as sole pastor at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church on Staten Island, New York, a traditional LCMS church founded by Germans in 1915 and now reaching a congregation that includes Asian members. Still engaging in evangelism, in April of this year he reached out to a non-Christian Caucasian person whom the Lord converted and who is being catechized by Saywayne for Baptism and confirmation to become a full communicant member of the church.

"To conduct the two different services, I always apply the Apostle Paul's ministry strategy — in the traditional church, I become a traditional priest and in the African church, I am an African pastor."

Ministry that is vibrant includes planning for a strong future, and Pastor Saywayne is doing so. "One of the many lay leaders identified by me, trained at Christ Assembly Lutheran Church, is attending St. Louis Seminary and I am his mentor."

"Christ will return, therefore I pray each day for His Grace, mercy to behold and be with Him. Thanks to the LCMS, specifically the Atlantic District, together with those who are praying for me."

*Christ Assembly Dancers*



# FROM STUDENT TO PRINCIPAL TO PASTOR: LUTHERAN SCHOOL INSPIRES MINISTRY



*Pastor Jeffrey Howell with schoolchildren from St. Paul Lutheran Church and School, Chicago.*

“ I have always prayed that God would use me as my fifth grade teacher did, to be an example to my students. I want all of them to see the love of Christ in me. ”

When Jeffrey Howell was in fifth grade, his mother transferred him from his public school in the Chicago suburb of Maywood to St. John's Lutheran School in Forest Park.

For Howell, leaving his integrated public school to enroll in the nearly all-white parochial school was a culture shock. It never occurred to him how life-directing that decision would be — for him and for his family.

“My aunt, my mom's sister, convinced her to transfer me, and I was already in a little bit of trouble so she did. My parents attended parent classes and joined the church. It was a surprise. We lived near a Baptist church, but my father never went.” At St. John's, he became an usher, then an elder.

Howell continued his Lutheran education, attending Walther Lutheran High School in Melrose Park, Ill., and graduated from Concordia University, Nebraska in 1988. Today he is pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church and School on Chicago's South Side.

“It is a joy that I am one of many chosen by God to service His ministry,” he said. “Our churches need strong Black leaders who are willing and able to make a change in the lives of His people. Becoming a pastor was not part of my plan, but it was God's plan. I was led by God using others to encourage me.”

With a giant heart for the city, Howell was first called to St. Paul on Chicago's South Side as the school principal in 2004. With others' encouragement, he studied for the ministry and now leads the 133-year-old church, founded by German immigrants in 1888 — with a school that had been organized in 1889.

Pastor Howell expects a full enrollment of 85 or more students this Fall 2021–22 in pre-K through eighth grade.

“We need men and women to become Lutheran educators: This is so badly needed as I see many schools lacking Black educators,” he said, something St. Paul is blessed with. “So much of an impact will be made if children see people who look like them teaching, caring and understanding them unconditionally. Our children need positive examples in our schools.”

“We, as a congregation, would not be able to support the school on our own, even with tuition. We are supported by organizations and individuals who believe in parochial schools, especially in the city. Parents are looking to us because we have small classroom size, and the curriculum compares very well with the public schools in Chicago. This school year, in spite of the pandemic, our enrollment was 78 (50 in person, 28 remote learning),” Howell continued.

“Our graduates were going to Luther South High School before its closure. Now they attend the Catholic high schools or academies in the Chicago area.”

As the neighborhood changed over the decades, the church continued to serve,

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Pastor Appreciation celebration.



Food giveaway to the community.  
(St. Paul students helped with this.)

and today is a small but thriving congregation and a school with a mission: “Creating Tomorrow’s Leaders Today Through Faith, Family and Education.”

“We evolved because God led us to do the uncomfortable things and get out into the community and talk with people and let them know we care and are a resource to assist. We are a church and school for the community with a family environment where everyone knows one another,” Howell said.

Making connections in the community is essential to St. Paul’s ministry to the mostly lower-income African American neighborhood. In addition to visiting and meeting neighbors, the church sponsors several activities:

- **ANNUAL BACK-TO-SCHOOL BLOCK PARTY** with food, games, carnival rides and distribution of backpacks and school supplies.
- **COMMUNITY WALK** during the spring and summer: developing relationships, praying and making connections with the people of the community.

- **CLOTHING GIVEAWAY:** St. Paul’s holds events to hand out clothes to the community while also serving hot dogs and hamburgers.
- **ANNUAL FALL HARVEST PARTY**, hosted for the children as an alternative to walking the streets trick-or-treating.
- **ANNUAL THANKSGIVING DINNER** for the community.
- **CHRISTMAS SERVICES** — as well as all worship services — and children’s programs are open to all.
- **ST. PAUL’S WEEKLY MEN’S AND WOMEN’S LIFE GROUPS** are small study groups open to all.

The protocols surrounding COVID closings limited how the church could do outreach to the community, but Howell is hoping the congregation will be fully back in the pews by September, while continuing their Facebook Live streaming, which attracted many people who were not members.

It was Howell’s Lutheran high school basketball coach who helped get him into Lutheran education, he admits. He was attending Kentucky State, a historically Black

university, when his high school coach was called to Concordia University in Nebraska. The coach invited Howell — one of his star players — to join him on a basketball scholarship.

Howell began taking classes in education. The first day he stepped into an elementary classroom as a teacher’s aid, he knew that was the career for him.

“My first day observing kindergarten students, I made up my mind to go into teaching. I love the children, the energy of the classroom, the interaction.”

His first call after graduating was to Lutheran Child and Family Services’ Lang House in Detroit. “But I really wanted to be in the classroom.”

In his next calls, he served at Concord Lutheran School, Pagedale, Mo., and St. Matthew Lutheran School, St. Louis. He returned to Chicago as principal at Zion Lutheran, then came full circle when he was called as principal at St. John’s, Forest Park.

He loved serving at his alma mater, but his heart was with urban ministry, so 17 years

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ago he took the call as principal to St. Paul on Chicago's South Side.

Today, as pastor, he is always keeping his eye on the fifth graders, looking for future Lutheran teachers and pastors.

"I have always prayed that God would use me as my fifth grade teacher did, to be an example to my students. I want all of them to see the love of Christ in me. There have been several young men who I have prayed would become positive examples in their communities. There have been several that have moved on in ministry and are serving the Kingdom, but not as Lutheran teachers or pastors. I am filled with joy to know that."

TOP RIGHT: Teacher works with students.  
TOP LEFT: St. Paul Graduates honored.  
BOTTOM: Back to School Community Event,  
reaching out and sharing with neighbors.



## SAVE THE DATE!

### LCMS LUTHERANS IN BLACK MINISTRY FAMILY CONVOCATION JULY 27–30, 2022, IN MOBILE, ALA.

Lutherans in Black Ministry will look toward the future empowering the next generation at the Family Convocation slated for July 27–30, 2022, at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church and School in Mobile, Ala., under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Ulmer Marshal. This event is based on Paul's letter to the Ephesians: "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up: (EPH. 4:11–12).

"Our church has been blessed with some dynamic leaders throughout our history, both men and women who have raised up generations of strong Bible-based Christians, many of whom went into the preaching and teaching ministry," said Rev. Dr. Roosevelt Gray.

"We need to build on their legacy and encourage, equip and educate our youth to build strong Lutheran churches and schools now and in the future."

In addition to excellent preaching and music, there will be workshops on technology, strategic planning, financial planning and more as participants learn how to build strong foundations for the church.

"A highlight of course is the opportunity this convocation gives us for fellowship and worship with brothers and sisters in Christ from around the world," Pastor Gray said.

The Regional Planning Committee is asking each congregation to support the convocation with a \$300 planning fee, with a \$1,000 contribution from each Synodical district. This support will allow LCMS Black Ministry to assume the bulk of the



costs of the event, rather than depending on LCMS support. Checks should be sent to Trinity Lutheran Church, 2668 Berkley Avenue, Mobile, AL 36617, and tagged "Trinity Lutheran Church – Black Ministry Planning Fee."

Please prayerfully make plans to attend this important convocation as we celebrate our historic LCMS Lutheran faith. Registration information will be available in the coming weeks.



## Two Mission Giants from the Alabama Field and Lutheran Education Called to Glory

The Rev. Dr. Frazier Norton Odom of Buena Vista, Ala., and the Rev. James Wiggins, Jr., of Selma, Ala., were called to their heavenly glory and eternal rest this spring. Both were mighty proclaimers of the Gospel and strong arms of mercy ministries, and both came to faith through the Holy Spirit on the Alabama mission field.

THE REV. DR. FRAZIER NORTON ODOM was born to the late John Quincy and Mabel (Clausell) Odom on July 23, 1937, in Buena Vista. He died April 20. He was 83.

THE REV. JAMES WIGGINS, JR., was born July 2, 1960, in Selma. He entered into the eternal presence of God on March 23 after a valiant battle with cancer. He was 60. Wiggins was the eldest son of four children born to the Rev. James and Katie Wiggins, Sr.

## REV. DR. FRAZIER ODOM



Dr. Odom received his education in Lutheran schools, graduating from Alabama Lutheran Academy, Selma, Ala. (1955); Immanuel Lutheran Junior College, Greensboro, N.C. (1957); Immanuel Lutheran Seminary, Greensboro, N.C. (1961); Concordia University Chicago, Bachelor of Arts (1972); and Concordia Seminary in Exile, St. Louis, Master of Arts in Religion (1976). He received his Doctor of Ministry degree from Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago (1977).

Odom married Ida Watson on June 12, 1960, at Saint James Lutheran Church in Buena Vista, Ala. To this union were born Pamela Lareese Deloney (Anthony); Ina Frenae Roberson (Kirk); John Quincy

Odom (Gwendolyn); and Monique Charell Nunes (John Arthur).

Odom served as pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church, New Orleans (1960–1966); pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Selma (1966–1968); pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Chicago (1968–1986); director of Urban Ministry and pastor at Transfiguration Lutheran Church in St. Louis (1986–2003); chaplain at Ted Foster and Sons White House Funeral Home (2003–2008); interim chaplain at the LCMS International Center (2010–2012); and interim executive director of LCMS Black Ministry (2008–2013).

The Rev. Dr. Roosevelt Gray, Jr., director of LCMS Black Ministry, described Odom as “the quintessential image of a pastor; a scholarly theologian who exhibited impeccable pastoral compassion and community leadership acumen in connecting the Gospel of Christ to the life of the congregation and community. He will be truly missed by his wonderful wife, family, pastors, congregations and the leaders in the LCMS and Black Ministry. His life’s legacy in following Christ on the ‘Great Commission’ is one to be imitated.

“For 33 years as a pastor in the LCMS, I have quietly watched and tried to mimic his pastoral leadership. Well done, good and faithful servant.”

## REV. JAMES WIGGINS, JR.



The eldest son of a Lutheran pastor, Rev. Wiggins was baptized and confirmed at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Vredenburgh, Alabama by his father, the Rev. James Wiggins, Sr.

Wiggins graduated from Alabama Lutheran Academy High School in 1977, and from Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Neb., in 1981 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Secondary Education. He spent a year teaching at St. Peter Lutheran School in Chicago before entering the seminary. In 1986 he completed the Master of Divinity

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degree at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. Having answered God's call, he was ordained into the office of pastoral ministry June 29, 1986, in his home congregation of Trinity Lutheran Church, Montgomery, Ala., where his father was pastor and his mother a teacher at the school.

Since ordination, he has shepherded congregations at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Kannapolis, N.C., (1986–1990); Outer Drive Faith Lutheran Church, Detroit (1990–1998); and Peace Lutheran Church, Washington, D.C. (1998–2010). Wiggins served as the president of the LCMS Black Clergy Caucus. He served as first vice-president of the LCMS Southeastern District, chairperson and member of the Board of Regents of Concordia College Alabama, Selma, Ala., member of the LCMS Board

for Black Ministry Services, and circuit counselor in the LCMS Michigan District.

On January 30, 2011, Wiggins was installed as the seventh shepherd at Saint Paul Lutheran Church, Jacksonville, Fla., where he served until he was called to glory. In 2020, he was chosen to receive the Alumni Servant Leadership Award from Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Neb. Such an award is a testimony to his work in the church and community. He served the church-at-large as chairman of the LCMS Florida-Georgia District Regional Ministerial Interview Committee, as consecrated steward guest leader of the Florida-Georgia District Pastoral Conference Committee, as catalyst for Florida-Georgia District First Coast Circuit 0-2 Outreach and as co-chair of Interfaith Coalition for Action, Reconciliation and Empowerment.

Throughout his ministry he served as revivalist and keynoter for congregations and conference events, including the 90th anniversary of his alma mater, Concordia College Alabama in Selma. If not at the church or in the community, you would find him at the gym, fishing or riding his Harley-Davidson.

Deaconess LoRetta Reddick Wiggins was his devoted and loving wife for seven years. They shared and loved their blended family; he also leaves behind his father, the Rev. James Wiggins, Sr.; brother, the Rev. Stephen Wiggins, Sr., (Annetta) of Atlanta; sisters, Felicia Thornton and Karen Wiggins of Dallas; his St. Paul family; the Jacksonville community; and the "brothers" of the annual fishing trip.

## CONCORDIA SEMINARY'S VOCATIO RETREAT WELCOMES HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS BACK TO CAMPUS!



Concordia Seminary welcomed 19 young men and women to Vocatio, held on campus June 19–24, 2021. This retreat — normally an annual event — is specifically designed for high school students who are considering church work vocations. Director of Recruitment

Rev. Micah Glenn led this great group, introducing them to life at the seminary and encouraging each of them in their faith journeys. This was the first in-person seminary tour for prospective students since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020.

Of the 19 participants, four were Black students who had the opportunity to travel to the event at no cost thanks to a generous donor. Nehemiah Seraile, one of these participants, reflects, "I attended Vocatio because I was thrilled by the thought of getting to know more people my age who are like-minded in the ways of God's Word." With a schedule that included joining in a service project, participating in a Concordia University System-sponsored college fair, and hearing from a number of seminary professors, the participants enjoyed a full schedule packed with lots of learning, growing and fun.

"Vocatio helped me get a grip on what really goes on in worship," said Seraile. "Being at the seminary helped me come to terms with the fact that my callings in life are chosen for me by God, not myself."

“IT HAS BEEN A JOY AND PRIVILEGE TO KNOW JIM FOR THE PAST FOUR DECADES, HE HAS WELL AND FAITHFULLY FULFILLED HIS CALL AS AN UNDER-SHEPHERD TO THE GOOD SHEPHERD AS HE CARED FOR CONGREGATIONS, FELLOW CLERGY AND A VARIETY OF MINISTRIES WITHIN AND BEYOND THE CHURCH.”

— REV. DR. BRIAN L. FRIEDRICH



Rev. Dr. and Mrs. James McDaniels

## LUTHERAN TEACHER AND PASTOR AWARDED HONORS AT CONCORDIA, SAINT PAUL 2021 COMMENCEMENT



Rev. Dr. James McDaniels receives honorary doctorate from his alma mater, Concordia, St. Paul.

Faithful Lutherans Rev. Dr. James (Jim) McDaniels and his wife, Janis (Grant) McDaniels, a former Lutheran school teacher, were awarded for their service at Concordia University, St. Paul (CSP), St. Paul, Minn., at its commencement ceremony April 30. Pastor McDaniels was awarded the honorary Doctor of Letters degree and Mrs. McDaniels was honored with the Aeterna Moliri Award.

“It has been a joy and privilege to know Jim for the past four decades,” said CSP President, the Rev. Dr. Brian L. Friedrich. “He has well and faithfully fulfilled his call as an undershepherd to the Good Shepherd as he cared for congregations, fellow clergy and a variety of ministries within and beyond the church.”

A native of Philadelphia, Rev. McDaniels attended public schools before attending Concordia College New York, Bronxville, N.Y. After graduating with an Associate of Arts degree, he transferred to CSP, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in education. He then attended Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and

transferred to Christ Seminary–Seminex (now part of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago), where he received his Master of Divinity degree. He then entered the LCMS ministerium through the colloquy process.

During his 40 years in ministry, he has served with many boards, committees, congregations and ministries of the church. Rev. McDaniels has pastored congregations in New York; Omaha, Neb.; St. Louis; and Greensboro, N.C. He also worked for the LCMS Iowa District West, and the LCMS Nebraska District as an executive staff member. He is a member of the Interim Ministry Network, Inc., and during the past 15 years he has worked with seven congregations in transition.

In 2002, he completed a two-year residency in clinical pastoral education at Alamance Regional Medical Center in Burlington, N.C. He then worked at the Lutheran Nursing Home (now Trinity Glen) as a chaplain and retired from there. The LCMS honored Rev. McDaniels with the Christus in Mundo (“Christ in the World”) award in 2019 in recognition of





Janis McDaniels receives award from Concordia, St. Paul.

his work in specialized pastoral ministry, which includes chaplaincy.

Rev. McDaniels has been a leader and advocate in Black ministry in the LCMS, and was the first African American to serve in an executive position for the LCMS Board of Mission Services or on the district level. Rev. McDaniels currently serves as interim pastor of St. Luke Lutheran Church in High Point, N.C.

As a servant of Christ and God's people, Jim has consistently devoted himself to God's Word and the application of Law and Gospel in the lives of the people he ministers to. His nominator called him a "trail blazer and change agent ... [who] has devoted his lifetime to the enhancement of others."

"Concordia University, St. Paul is thrilled to bestow on our distinguished alumnus the Doctor of Letters degree," Friedrich said. "We pray that this recognition will acknowledge the significance of his ministry and celebrate the 'well done' of his service among us."

The Aeterna Moliri Award, meaning "builders for eternity," is conferred on individuals who, in their vocations, advance the Gospel through word and deed in significant ways.

**"Concordia, St. Paul is thrilled to bestow the Aeterna Moliri award to Janis for the depth and breadth of her service among us. Countless persons have been and continue to be blessed by Janis as she radiates the love of Jesus to all." — REV. DR. BRIAN L. FRIEDRICH**

Concordia, St. Paul first conferred this award in 1974, and has bestowed it on 40 deserving individuals and couples.

After graduating high school, Janis, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., worked in the financial sector as well as with the Lutheran Council in the USA. She and Jim married in 1981. While Jim was serving a parish in Omaha in 1988, Janis completed a bachelor's degree *cum laude* at the University of Nebraska—Omaha. Her major was Spanish, along with minors in religion and sociology.

Janis became a Lutheran educator, sharing the Good News of Jesus with her students. She taught Spanish and English at St. Matthew Lutheran School in St. Louis; taught Spanish and served as a substitute teacher

at St. Matthew Lutheran School in New York; and was a teaching assistant at Grace Lutheran School in Greensboro, N.C.

Beyond her work in the classroom, Janis has tirelessly served in many capacities in her congregations and throughout the LCMS, seeking to bring the Gospel message to people of all cultures, ethnicities and abilities. Her dedication, energy and enthusiasm have made a significant, eternal impact in the lives of many people.

At the congregational level, she has served as a Sunday school teacher, choir member and choir director, pianist and organist, VBS teacher and song leader, and a church council member. On the district level, she served on the board of directors for the LCMS Atlantic District from 1980–1983 and 1991–1993 and the LCMS Southeastern District from 2016–2019. In addition, she served on various committees and task forces.

On the Synodical level, Janis has been involved with the Coalition for Black Lutherans since 1993. She served on the Concordia College Alabama, Selma, Ala., Board of Regents from 2013–2018. She also served on the Board for Black Ministry Services from 2004–2010. In 2019, she was elected to the LCMS Board for National Mission.

Janis has also been deeply active on all levels of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) over the past 28 years. Highlights of her service to the LWML include serving as president of the LWML Carolinas from 1998–2002 and vice president of Gospel Outreach on the national level from 2005–2009.

In 2018, the Southeastern District awarded Janis the Servant of Christ Award in recognition of her ministry efforts. Over the course of more than four decades, she has been a dedicated leader in Christ's church.

"Concordia, St. Paul is thrilled to bestow the Aeterna Moliri award to Janis for the depth and breadth of her service among us," said Friedrich. "Countless persons have been and continue to be blessed by Janis as she radiates the love of Jesus to all."

# BUILDING BRIDGES AND LUTHERAN SCHOOLS, A SELMA NATIVE PLANTS SEEDS OF FAITH AND REAPS HARVEST OF MINISTRY

BY: AISHA J. LEWIS-SCOTT



*Lynn Hall on the campus of the former Alabama Lutheran Academy in Selma built by the Lewis' grandfather in 1922.*

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Who would imagine that one man's dying wish would birth a legacy of ministry? Charles Sheppard was a native of Dallas County, Selma, Ala., and worked as a carpenter and brick mason. He helped build several structures in Selma, including the water company building and water tower, the courthouse, the Edmund Pettis Bridge and residential housing in rural areas. Charles was an active member in the community and, along with his masonic lodge brothers, worked to share literature with community members to involve them in early civil rights activities.

While the goal of keeping the community informed was important to him, the task was met with certain risks, including facing backlash from the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) if they were discovered. It was for this reason that Charles and his lodge brothers would often share literature under the cover of night, leaving materials on the porches and doorsteps of community members between 2:00 and 3:00 a.m.

In addition to many of the structures in Dallas County, Charles also helped build the school, chapel and dormitories for Alabama Lutheran Academy, which would become Concordia College Alabama (which closed in 2016). Charles was moved by the campus devotions held during the work day and Bible studies

during lunch, and often commented on how impressed he was with the Lutherans for their valor. He knew the Rev. Nils Bakke, the Lutheran pastor sent to aid Dr. Rosa Young, was not always welcomed by white people in the community, but didn't let that overshadow his mission work.

Charles also traveled alongside Dr. Young, the Rev. Bakke, and the Rev. Edward Wescott, the Academy's superintendent, to help build a network of Lutheran schools in several settlements, including Brown Station, Bogue Chitto, Camden, Rosebud, Snow Hill and the Sardis church and school. Knowing the importance of a sound, Bible-based Christian education, and seeing the effectiveness of Lutherans in the community, Charles asked on his





*Rosa Young*

deathbed that his grandchildren attend the Academy. He wanted them to become pastors and teachers because of the examples of Black people serving in those professions. The Lutheran school focused on reading, writing, arithmetic and the catechism, which served as a recruiting tool.

Though unaware at the time, Charles's request for his grandchildren to receive an education through the parochial school system would set the foundation for a calling in ministry and education for two of his grandsons: the Rev. Cleveland A. Lewis and the Rev. Bertram B. Lewis, Sr.

### REV. CLEVELAND A. LEWIS

Pastor Cleveland was baptized into the Lutheran faith when he was just six months old by the Rev. Albert Dominick, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Selma. The Lewis family lived on First Avenue, approximately 3 and a half blocks from the school, and Cleveland attended the Academy along with his brothers. Their father, Levi Lewis, Sr., wanted his children to grow up in a world where they could vote and receive a decent education. Working as a delivery driver, the pay was not great, and Levi grew weary of the dangers the KKK posed at night. He feared for his sons' safety as the civil rights movement was beginning to grow stronger in Selma. Levi's sister had recently settled in Indianapolis and shared the news that foundry jobs were available there. In 1953,

the family moved to Indianapolis. Upon relocating his family, Levi began working at International Harvester, a motor truck and farm machinery foundry now known as Navistar Corporation.

Cleveland attended Shortridge High School and participated in ROTC, Glee Club and the Fisher Body Craftsman Guild. After graduation, he joined the U.S. Air Force and was assigned to an Air Refueling Wing. For over two years he served in the Transportation Squadron at Malmstrom Air Force Base as part of the SAC Minute Man Missile Program. An 18-month stint followed at Ernest Harmon Air Force Base in Newfoundland.

Cleveland graduated from Purdue University with a bachelor's in industrial engineering technology and from Indiana Wesleyan University with a master's in business management. For almost twelve years, he worked at the Chrysler Corporation's electrical plant as a production machine operator and an accounting clerk before being promoted to a laboratory test technician and an industrial engineer. Cleveland continued working for 27 years as a senior production engineer and senior industrial engineer with Allison Transmission, a division of General Motors, retiring in 2003.

Cleveland's formative years at the Academy instilled in him a lifelong commitment to education. He currently serves as an adjunct professor in the School of Engineering and Technology at Indiana University—Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI). He has earned several awards, including the IUPUI Distinguished Alumni Award, the Outstanding Faculty Award and the Maynard K. Hine Award for his significant contributions to IUPUI and its alumni programs. Cleveland serves on the board of directors of the school's alumni association. He is past president of the Purdue alumni association at IUPUI and the CCAL Board of Regents. He also taught graduate and undergraduate classes in business management at Indiana Wesleyan University for six years. In 1996, he received the Miles Christi (Soldier of Christ) Award from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. In 2014, he was inducted into the Shortridge High School Hall of Fame, joining a select group of inductees including former U.S. senator Richard Lugar and television producer Judy O'Bannon.

On August 16, 1976, Cleveland felt a calling to ministry after attending a concert at Redeemer Lutheran Church in central Indianapolis. The concert featured a 30-voice youth choir from Cross Lutheran



*Rev. Cleveland Lewis*

Church, Milwaukee, Wisc. Their pastor, the Rev. Joe Ellwanger, also was in attendance and had strong connections to Selma and Black history. He was a civil rights activist in the 1960s, and had served as pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Birmingham, Ala. Ellwanger also officiated the graveside service of one of the four girls killed in the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. His father, the Rev. Walter Ellwanger, had served as superintendent of Alabama Lutheran Academy and the Alabama Mission Field from 1945–1963. Cleveland was so impressed with the choir and what he had witnessed that evening that he couldn't rest. He had just graduated from Purdue and had more time on his hands. In that moment, he decided he wanted to work with the youth in the church to ensure they knew about Lutheranism and its Alabama roots, in addition to their Black roots and cultural history, and of opportunities to learn and grow all the way from the King Center in Atlanta, Ga., to the Space Center in Huntsville, Ala. Cleveland formed the first youth choir for Our Savior Lutheran Church, the only predominately Black Lutheran church at the time, located in central Indianapolis. He served as choir director, and his work inspired and nurtured over 50 children over the years.

While attending Our Savior, Cleveland also served as an elder for sixteen years, twelve of which he served as chairman of the board of elders. Yet once again he felt a greater calling to serve, and saw a need for evangelism in the community. As an industrial engineer, his background and coursework gave him the expertise to build organizations and manufacturing facilities — all of which were needed when the opportunity arose to build a new church on the west side of Indianapolis. Cleveland is a founding member of First Timothy Evangelical Lutheran Church, and was instrumental in laying its groundwork to become the second predominately Black Lutheran congregation in Indianapolis. The church was located in the Haughville community, an area perceived by some to be less than desirable. Yet the families living in the community at the time of its founding were interested in knowing what Lutherans were. During the first vacation Bible school, 75 youth attended, and parents of

many of the attendees were excited to learn about Lutheranism and how it exists in the Black community. First Timothy also received project support from the Rev. David Dubbelde, mission executive for the LCMS Indiana District, and from the Rev. Dr. James McDaniels, mission developer for the Synod.

In addition to its work in the Haughville community, the church early on developed a rapport with the Rev. Dr. Harold Zietlow, a professor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. In addition to Rev. Zietlow's classroom curriculum, he provided extra credit to students who would travel to First Timothy to preach and assist with mission activities, such as neighborhood canvassing and outreach. First Timothy welcomed over 20 seminary students representing various cultural backgrounds, including Australian, African, Japanese and Native American, to spend the weekend in Indianapolis and preach during the Sunday worship services. Among the seminarians who ministered at the church on several occasions were the Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, who would go on to become Synod president; the Rev. Tim Sims and the Rev. Dr. Reuben Garber, both of whom served as Indiana District presidents; and the Rev. Dr. Robert King, Synod fourth vice-president, also ministered at First Timothy. In 2001, the church relocated to the city's northwest side on Lafayette Road, just north of the Municipal Garden Community Center. The ministry work at First Timothy continues to grow, and the church has been blessed to welcome and baptize new members in the community, including white, Asian and Hispanic families.

In the early 1990s, the LCMS experienced a scarcity of seminary students, leading to shortages in pastoral ministry. This turn of events led to the creation of the Lay Ministry Program to help fill the shortage.

Cleveland, having so many roots in the LCMS through experience and his involvement as an elder and youth choir director, and from serving in a pastor's role at First Timothy, after prayer and consultation with the Indiana District officials, responded to the need to become a certified lay minister. He began the lay deacon program in 1990 through Concordia University Wisconsin and received certification as a Lutheran lay minister in 2013. During the 2016 Synod convention, a resolution was passed to phase out the lay deacon program. However, those who had qualified to serve as



*Rev. Bertram Lewis*

lay deacons were invited to phase into the Specific Ministry Program (SMP) as a path to ministry. Cleveland completed the SMP program in December 2020 and will be ordained and installed at First Timothy in August 2021.

### **REV. BERTRAM B. LEWIS, SR.**

The Rev. Bertram also was baptized into the Lutheran faith at six months old at Trinity Lutheran Church in Selma by the Rev. Rockefeller Jenkins. He was just a few



years old when the family moved to Indianapolis. He too attended Shortridge High School, and participated in the Acapella Choir, Music Man, ROTC and Club 30 for senior class business. In college at IU-PUI, Bertram was a member of the Downtowners, a singing group. In addition to his school activities, he was very active at Our Savior, working with the youth group and serving as a counselor. Bertram worked for the City of Indianapolis for six years as an administrative assistant in the Department of Training and Employment and was responsible for the city acquiring \$26 million for employment and training.

Bertram discerned his calling to ministry through a series of events. In 1965–1966, Our Savior's pastor, the Rev. Robert Coleman, had just departed, and the LCMS Indiana District asked the Rev. Dr. Robert King, then pastor of St. Philip Lutheran Church, Chicago, Ill., who was working on his MBA at Indiana University Bloomington at the time, to serve as vacancy pastor. King had a conversation with Bertram and asked if a preacher was coming out of his family, thus planting another ministry seed that would quickly grow. King served as a mentor for him and led by example. Later on, the Rev. John Kendrick was installed as pastor of Our Savior,

and Bertram continued as his assistant during services. Bertram also accepted an opportunity to grow further in ministry by serving as Sunday school superintendent at Redeemer Lutheran Church. During his time at Redeemer, he met with the pastor, Rev. Harold Huxhold, to inquire about the Lay Ministry Program. Huxhold questioned him about his decision and suggested he go into public ministry. Bertram began an internship in Milwaukee with Cross Lutheran Church, working with Ellwanger, and later returned to Indianapolis to continue in leadership growth in service to several congregations on the city's east side. In 1977, he returned to Our Savior as assistant to the Rev. Dr. Philip Campbell while working with Rev. Harold Kallio as a chaplain's assistant at Wishard Hospital.

In 1987, Bertram followed his calling to Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. During his vicarage, he was the host of "Shepherd's Voice," a weekend radio program on WLAB, the seminary's radio station covering Northeastern Indiana. He was also the founder and host of "Shepherd's Watch," a cable television program airing four times per week due to the uplifting content and insight it provided into the Black church and its leaders.

Bertram graduated from Concordia in 1990 with a focus on systematic theology. He holds a Master of Arts and Religion and is currently working on a doctorate in apologetics.

In the early 1990s, Bertram's ministry work became more involved at the Synod and District levels. He served for two years on the Synod Board for Stewardship, and nine years on the Synod Board for Communication Services. He preached the opening worship service of the LCMS Black Ministry Family Convocation in Chicago, the opening worship service of the LCMS Ohio District Convention held at Concordia University, Ann Arbor, and was the first Black pastor to be nominated for the office of vice-president of the Ohio District.

Bertram has ministered in several congregations throughout the Midwest, including Shepherd of the City Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind., and St. Philip Lutheran Church, Cleveland, Ohio. He served part time as an associate pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church, Garfield Heights, Ohio, and was influential in outreach in the Black community and in building the congregation's attendance for their Saturday evening contemporary worship service to 200



*Students in front of Bakke Hall (one of the first two campus buildings built by Charles Sheppard) circa 1928.*



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*The Lewis Brothers*

parishioners. Bertram also taught religion classes at Lutheran High School East in Cleveland. Throughout his thirty-plus years of ministry, his leadership and commitment to sharing the Gospel have been demonstrated through his work in church planting in the Ohio and Michigan districts. Bertram was a founding member and instrumental in the formation of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, Highland Heights, Ohio, and of Tabernacle of Praise, Romulus, Mich. He currently serves as pastor of St. Philip's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Detroit, Mich.

#### SHARING THEIR LEGACY

Pastor Cleveland says that his passion for ministry comes from the work that was started by Dr. Young and the Rev. Bakke. "Their vision was to grow pastors and teachers involved in Lutheranism. The vision they developed in the 1920s is still necessary and continues to grow and have and influence in North America. It's no accident — some of us who were babies then are still working in it now," he said. "No one can design it but God: He's leading the way." Cleveland also can attest to

its growth: "My grandfather, brother and daughter have all been heavily involved in LCMS ministry." Cleveland believes in the same doctrine that Martin Luther taught: "Lutheranism is the true church," he states, "and I'm passionate because I'm seeing it fulfilled." For Bertram, his mission and work is found in preaching and teaching the Word and in prayer. "My passion is to grow people to the point they know that Jesus is Lord through teaching the Word and through prayer. I want people to know that God loves them," he says, "and that they can share that love with other people."

Cleveland enjoys spending time with his family and traveling. He's been married 55 years to his wife Betty, a native of Greenville, Ala., and they have one daughter, Aisha, and a son-in-law, Leonard, who live in Raleigh, N.C. Bertram has been married 45 years to his wife Cheryl-Ann and enjoys reading and spending time with his grandchildren.

*Aisha J. Lewis-Scott is an independent gospel recording artist and principal of His Alto Ministries™, Raleigh, N.C. She is a member of First Timothy Lutheran Church.*