

God Our Father, Christ Our Redeemer, Holy Spirit Our Comforter,  
Humankind Our Family

## Saint John AME Church

708 15<sup>th</sup> Street North

Birmingham, Alabama 35203

The Reverend Dr. Ronald D. Sterling, Pastor || Sister Kim C. Sterling, First Lady

### Mission

Saint John's mission is to "love God and love others" by ministering to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people.



Sunday, February 9, 2025

### Fifth Sunday After Epiphany

The Praise & Worship.....Music Ministry

The Doxology

AMEC Hymn No. 647 [Tune: Old 100]

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

**The Call to Worship..... Pastor Sterling**

**Minister:** I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord! Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!

**People:** **For a day in your courts is better than a thousand, elsewhere, I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.**

**Minister:** For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.

**People:** **They are planted in the house of the Lord, they flourish in the courts of our God.**

**Minister:** O Lord, I love the habitation of your house, and the place where your glory dwells.

**People:** **But the Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.**

**Minister:** Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my Rock, and my Redeemer.

**People:** **O sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things! Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth, sing praises!**

**The Hymn of Praise..... "Great is Thy Faithfulness"**

Great Is Thy faithfulness,  
O God my Father,  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not,  
As Thou has been Thou forever wilt be.

*Refrain*  
*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!*  
*Morning by morning new mercies I see;*  
*All I have needed Thy hand hath provided;*  
*Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endured,  
Thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine with ten thousand beside!

**The Invocation ..... Brother Brandon Cleveland**

**The Choral Response**

**LITANY .....Sis. Kim C. Sterling**

**CELEBRATING OUR INHERITANCE**

Leader: We praise God for the prophetic witness and compassionate ministry of Richard Allen, our sainted founder.

**People: The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. I have a goodly heritage (Psalm 16:6 NRSV).**

Leader: We thank God for the justice-seeking legacy of African Methodism given to all of us who serve in faith and live in hope.

**People: The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. I have a goodly heritage.**

Leader: We celebrate the countless gifts of our sainted forebears who preceded us in the ageless struggles for love, justice and peace.

**People: The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. I have a goodly heritage.**

Leader: We remember with thanksgiving their many labors and countless sacrifices.

**People: The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. I have a goodly heritage.**

Leader: We are grateful to God for their ceaseless prayers, sacred tears, and perpetual longing for your "brighter day".

**People: The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. I have a goodly heritage.**

Leader: We praise God for their courage stamina and zeal.

**People: The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. I have a goodly heritage.**

Leader: We thank God for the gifts of their hands and knees, their hearts and backs, and their groans and sighs.

**All: The lines have fall to us in pleasant places; yes, we have a goodly and Godly heritage. Amen. Amen. Amen.**

**The Right Reverend McKinley Young, Deceased**  
*109<sup>th</sup> Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*  
*Published in The Anvil (2009)*

**The Scripture Lesson (s)**

**Old Testament ..... Brother Shaun Barnes**  
**Isaiah 6:1-13**

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. <sup>3</sup> And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" <sup>4</sup> And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup> And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" <sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. <sup>7</sup> And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." <sup>8</sup> And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."

**Gospel ..... Sister Shirley Bailey**  
**Luke 5:1-11**  
**(Please stand for the reading of the Gospel)**

On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, <sup>2</sup> and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup> Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. <sup>4</sup> And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." <sup>5</sup> And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." <sup>6</sup> And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. <sup>7</sup> They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup> But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." <sup>9</sup> For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, <sup>10</sup> and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." <sup>11</sup> And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

**The Preface to the Decalogue**

**AMEC Hymn No. 69 From All That Dwell Below the Skies**

*From all that dwell below the skies,  
Let the Creator's praise arise;  
Let the Redeemer's name be sung,  
Through every land, by every tongue.*

**The Decalogue (Abridged)**

**Leader:** And God spake all these words saying, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

**People:** Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

**Hymn:** *Nearer my God, to thee!  
Nearer to thee, E'en though it be a cross  
That raiseth me;  
Still all my song shall be,  
Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee.*

**Leader:** Hear what Christ our Savior saith, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto It: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**The Gloria Patri:** *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Ghost.  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen, Amen.*

**Ministry of Stewardship** (Tithes/Offerings/Benevolent)  
*All things come of Thee, O Lord; and of Thine own have we given Thee. Amen*

**Announcements and Acknowledgements** ..... **Pastor Sterling**

**The Worship through Music**.....**Music Ministry**

**Introduction of the Speaker**.....**Presiding Elder Dwight E. Dillard, Sr.**  
*Presiding Elder of the Birmingham Florence Tuscaloosa District*

**The Message**..... **Bishop Julius H. McAllister, Jr.**  
*Presiding Prelate of the Ninth Episcopal District*

**The Invitation to Christian Discipleship**

**The Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. The third day, He arose from the Dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, The Church Universal, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

**The Doxology (Contemporary)  
Benediction**

## African Methodist Episcopal Church



The African Methodist Episcopal Church grew out of the Free African Society (FAS) which **Richard Allen**, Absalom Jones, and others established in Philadelphia in 1787. When officials at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church pulled blacks off their knees while praying, FAS members discovered just how far American Methodists would go to enforce racial discrimination against African Americans. Hence, these members of St. George's made plans to transform their mutual aid society into an African congregation. Although most wanted to affiliate with the Protestant Episcopal Church, Allen led a small group who resolved to remain Methodists. In 1794 Bethel AME was dedicated with Allen as pastor. To establish Bethel's independence from interfering white Methodists, Allen, a former Delaware slave, successfully sued in the Pennsylvania courts in 1807 and 1815 for the right of his congregation to exist as an independent institution. Because black Methodists in other middle Atlantic communities encountered racism and desired religious autonomy, Allen called them to meet in Philadelphia to form a new Wesleyan denomination, the AME Church.



The geographical spread of the AMEC prior to the Civil War was mainly restricted to the Northeast and Midwest. Major congregations were established in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Washington, DC, Cincinnati, Chicago, Detroit, and other large Blacksmith's Shop cities. Numerous northern communities also gained a substantial AME presence. Remarkably, the slave states of Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, Louisiana, and, for a few years, South Carolina, became additional locations for AME congregations. The denomination reached the Pacific Coast in the early 1850s with churches in Mother Bethel Church Stockton, Sacramento, San Francisco, and other places in California. Moreover, Bishop Morris Brown established the Canada Annual Conference.

The most significant era of denominational development occurred during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Oftentimes, with the permission of Union army officials AME clergy moved into the states of the collapsing Confederacy to pull newly freed slaves into their denomination. "I Seek My Brethren," the title of an often-repeated sermon that Theophilus G. Steward preached in South Carolina, became a clarion call to evangelize fellow blacks in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Texas, and many other parts of the south. Hence, in 1880 AME membership reached 400,000 because of its rapid spread below the Mason-Dixon line. When Bishop Henry M. Turner pushed African Methodism across the Atlantic into Liberia and Sierra Leone in 1891 and into South Africa in 1896, the AME now laid claim to adherents on two continents.



While the AME Church is doctrinally Methodist, clergy, scholars, and lay persons have written important works which demonstrate the distinctive theology and praxis which have defined this Wesleyan body. Bishop Benjamin W. Arnett, in an address to the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, reminded the audience of the presence of blacks in the formation of Christianity. Bishop Benjamin T. Tanner wrote in 1895 in *The Color of Solomon – What?* that biblical scholars wrongly portrayed the son of David as a white man. In the post-civil rights era theologians James H. Cone, Cecil W. Cone, and Jacqueline Grant who came out of the AME tradition critiqued Euro-centric Christianity and African American churches for their shortcomings in fully impacting the plight of those oppressed by racism, sexism, and economic disadvantage.

In the 1990s, the AME Church included over 2,000,000 members, 8000 ministers, and 7000 congregations in nearly 40 nations in North and South America, Africa, Europe, and now Asia. Twenty bishops and 12 general officers comprise the leadership of the denomination.

*Prepared by: The Reverend Dennis C. Dickerson, Ph.D.  
Former Director of Research & Scholarship,  
African Methodist Episcopal Church*



***Bishop Julius Harrison McAllister, Jr.  
Presiding Prelate,  
Ninth Episcopal District  
African Methodist Episcopal Church***

Julius Harrison McAllister, Jr. was elected and consecrated the 144th bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 2024 at the 52nd Quadrennial Session of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Columbus, Ohio. He is the son of retired Bishop Julius Harrison McAllister, Sr., and retired Supervisor Joan Marla McAllister. Bishop McAllister, Jr., and Bishop McAllister, Sr. have the distinction of being the only father and son bishops to serve in active episcopal ministry, at the same time, since the inception of the AME Church in 1816. Bishop McAllister, Jr. was assigned to the Ninth Episcopal District, which makes up the state of Alabama. During the 2024-2028 quadrennial, he will serve as commission chair of the Women In Ministry.

Bishop McAllister is the 35th anointed Senior Minister of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Tallahassee, Florida. A fourth-generation minister, he answered the call to the ministry in 1992. Prior to his appointment to the Bethel AME Church in 2008, Bishop McAllister distinguished himself as an outstanding pastor in the Detroit and Chicago areas. He was a youth minister at Oak Grove AME Church in Detroit Michigan. Subsequently, he served as pastor of Payne Chapel AME Church in Chicago, Heights, Illinois, and the Greater Institutional AME Church in Chicago, Illinois.

During Bishop McAllister's thirty-three years of ministry in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, his mission has been to preach and teach, with power and conviction, the Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in the belief that souls will be saved and lives will be transformed into His likeness. At the same time, however, he has passionately pursued the AME Church doctrine of serving the needy through acts of mercy and charity. Consequently, he has encouraged the people of God to **make a difference** in the lives of others as we are encouraged to do in Matthew 5:16. At each of his three pastoral assignments, Bishop McAllister has guided parishioners to develop and implement ministries and programs that address problems of hunger, homelessness, affordable housing, literacy, drug and alcohol abuse, and other life-challenging issues.

As pastor of the Greater Institutional AME Church, Bishop McAllister's devotion to community growth and development led to the creation of the Come Home For Christmas Ministry that serviced nearly 5,000 homeless, poor, and underprivileged adults and 2000 children; and raised seven hundred thousand dollars to support needy families in Chicago during the Christmas season.

At Bethel, Tallahassee, Bishop McAllister guided and encouraged ministry experiences to reflect not only the enduring love for Jesus Christ, but also love for one another. He insisted that "our focus, as we turn the proverbial pages of time, should show the outside world that we are on the CARING END of ministry." To this end, as President/CEO of the Bethel Community Development Corporation (Bethel CDC), an affiliate church ministry, Bishop McAllister supervised the construction and rehabilitation of 85 homes for low-income families in the city of Tallahassee at



a cost of 15 million dollars, and led the church in the building of ten single-family rental homes. He also served as Chairman of the Board of the A Life Recovery Center that provides drug and alcohol rehabilitation to residential and outpatient clients; and where nearly a thousand men and women received treatment during his tenure. Under Bishop McAllister's leadership, Bethel's annual Thanksgiving Basket Project provided hearty meals for approximately twenty-five hundred people annually; the Families Reaching Families Christmas Project provided toys, bicycles, clothes, and other gifts to thousands of needy children in the community; and the Tallahassee Homeless Shelter Food Project provided hot lunches for approximately 250 plus shelter residents monthly. Over a span of five years, Bethel partnered with the State of Florida Department of Agriculture to prepare and serve eight hundred thousand hot meals to underprivileged school age children in low income communities at a cost of 1.5 million dollars. This ministry experience also provided employment for 85 millennials yearly.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Bethel was one of the first black churches in the nation to address the coronavirus vaccine distribution disparity in African American communities by becoming a vaccine distribution site. In 2015, Bishop McAllister motivated the members of Bethel to renovate Bethel by The Lake, a ten-acre camp site located three miles from the main worship, study, and community complex. The commercial swimming pool was renovated, six basketball courts were added, and the fellowship hall was completely renovated. The church raised a quarter of a million dollars in 22 months to liquidate the mortgage. In honor of the church's former episcopal leaders, Bishop Adam J. Richardson, Jr. and Supervisor of Missions Connie Speights Richardson, the camp was renamed Camp Richardson Recreation and Retreat Center.

Bishop McAllister is passionate about Christian Stewardship. He has led his congregations to understand and accept stewardship as a biblical mandate, teaching them that managing and giving one's time, talent, and material resources to glorify and serve God is an expression of one's faith, and an integral part of Christian commitment and responsibility to build up the body of Christ. During his sixteen-year tenure at Bethel, he guided the church in averaging nearly 2 million dollars in tithes and offerings, and raised 3.5 million dollars from all sources in 2022-2023.

Bishop McAllister received the baccalaureate degree in criminal justice from South Carolina State University in Orangeburg, South Carolina in 1993, and a Master of Divinity degree from the Turner Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia in 1996. In 2007, he earned the Doctor in Ministry degree from the Chicago Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois. He is the first minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church to earn a Doctor in Ministry degree in the area of Christian Stewardship.

Bishop McAllister is married to the former Deana Elizabeth Young, a committed educator, an astute school administrator, and a compassionate Supervisor of Missions. She is the daughter of the late Senior Bishop McKinley Young, the 109th elected and consecrated bishop of the AME Church and retired Supervisor Dorothy Jackson Young. Supervisor McAllister is currently employed as an Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Labor and Employee Relations and Chief Negotiator for Leon County School Board. Bishop and Supervisor McAllister are the proud parents of three children: Julius Harrison McAllister, III, known also as J. Harrison, Colin McKinley Young McAllister, and Dylan David Jeremiah McAllister.