

The Greater First Baptist



Winter 2020-21

Fellowship of Christ's United Servants

Volume 16 Issue 1

Greetings in the Majestic, Matchless, and Marvelous Name of Jesus Christ our Lord! You are reading the 2020-2021 First Edition of *The Greater First FOCUS*. This is a historic edition that chronicles our journey from the year 2020 through the beginning of our current year 2021! My approach in trying to condense and summarize this monumental time period is to recognize and declare that God opened a wide door of opportunity for the advancement of His Church and Kingdom beginning in 2020, and the door is still open in 2021. And since The Greater First Baptist Church is a local branch of Christ's Church and Kingdom, this door is necessarily opened to us also! Even though our church's theme for 2020 was: "Greater First Baptist Church Is Living Now With 2020 Vision of Increase Through Salvation's Power In the C.I.A." (CALL of God; INHERITANCE of God; AUTHORITY from God), we still did not see what kind of year 2020 would be. But Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision the people perish..." Vision is the Redemptive Revelation of God!

Even with a 2020 Vision, I was not aware of any human being that had predicted in a prophetic way that 2020 would unfold in the uniquely, unprecedented and unexpected way that it did. And God has used these uniquely unprecedented and unexpected conditions to swing this door of opportunity open to the Church!

Most doors have three hinges. Let's look at a normal door hinge.

Parts of a Door Hinge: The door hinge is two components (leafs) attached together in a way so that it can swivel. The attaching mechanism is usually a pin (looks like a long bolt without the thread). **Leaf:** a hinge has two leafs. One leaf attaches to the door and the other to the door frame. They are connected via a **Pin**. Most doors have three hinges upon which it turns. The Hinges of the D.O.O.R. (Divinely Orchestrated Opportunity Revealed) that God has opened for us in 2020 were:

- **Top Hinge: One Leaf**—Pandemic Globally of the COVID-19 and **Second Leaf**—Our U.S.A. National Response to the Pandemic
- **Middle Hinge: One Leaf**—Protests Crystalized around Black Lives Matter and **Second Leaf**—The George Floyd Murder
- **Bottom Hinge: One Leaf**—Presidential Chaotic Leadership Failure of "Number 45" and **Second Leaf**—The Subsequent Election of President Joseph R. Biden

—THE KINGDOM OF GOD—

Romans 14:17 KJV says, "*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.*"

The Kingdom of God is that holy religion which God has sent from heaven, and which He intends to make the instrument of establishing a counterpart of the kingdom of glory among men. The word "Kingdom" is the Greek "Basileia" meaning "King." It is the royal dominion, kingdom. The kingdom of heaven or heavens is peculiar to Matthew, but the other gospel writers use kingdom of God. Essentially, the terms are interchangeable. Spiritually, the kingdom of God is within the human heart (Luke 17:21). Both expressions also refer to Daniel 2:44; 7:13 and denote the everlasting kingdom which God would set up and give to Christ, or the spiritual and eternal kingdom which was to subsist first in more imperfect circumstances on earth, but afterwards to appear complete in the world of glory. In some verses the kingdom of heaven signifies God's rule within us while we are on earth (Matthew 13:41, 47; 20:1); at other times it is only the state of glory (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 15:50; Galatians 5:21). Therefore, the Three Pins that hold the three Hinges in place and upon which the door swings represent the Kingdom of God (Romans 14:17), and they are:

TOP HINGE PIN: "RIGHTEOUSNESS"

"Righteousness exults a nation but sin is a reproach to

The Greater First Baptist Church

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Rev. Dr. Winston C. Ridley, Jr.

FIRST LADY

Bonita L. Ridley

ASSOCIATE MINISTERS

Rev. Robert Hood Rev. Frances Williams

DEACON BOARD

Gamelia Jackson, Chair

TRUSTEES

Norman Stover, Chair

DEACONESS BOARD

Margaret Green, President

Church Treasurer

Harry Richards

Church Clerk and Financial Secretary

Linda Watkins

WEEKLY & MONTHLY SERVICES

Note: The below services are now being held via conference call at 605-313-4415

Sunday School

Saturday
10:00 a.m.

Praise & Worship

Sunday
9:15 a.m.

Church Worship

Sunday
9:30 a.m.

Communion

1st Sunday

Bible Study

Wednesday
11:00 a.m.

Leadership Meeting

Wednesday
12:30 p.m.

Prayer Meeting

Tuesday
6:30 p.m.

Men's Ministry

2nd Saturday
11:00 a.m.

Daughters of Zion

GFBC Women's Ministry

Saturday before 3rd Sunday
2:00 p.m.

Greater First FOCUS

EXEC. EDITOR

Dr. W. C. Ridley, Jr., Pastor

EDITOR

Denise R. Johnson

PHOTOS

Denise Johnson

New Members

Jacqueline Robinson

LaSharn Barnes

Betty Marlene Taylor



Join
The Deacon Ministry
for Prayer
Tuesday evenings
at 6:30 pm
605-313-4415



MINISTRIES

Operational and Support

Ministries

Audio-Visual
Bereavement
Birthday
Flower

Greater First *FOCUS*
Hospitality
Kitchen

Mary E. Peyton Nurses
Pastor's Aide
IPM Ministry

(Intercrossers Praying Mightily)
Transportation

Usher Board—Junior & Youth
Usher Board—Senior

Educational

Baptist Training Union
Computer
Creative Arts
Daughters of Zion

Men's Ministry
New Members
Scholarship
Sunday School
Youth & Young Adult

Missionary Ministries

Eliza Smallwood
Outreach
Warriors for Christ (Youth)

Music and Dance Ministries

Fellowship Choir
Gospel Chorus
Judah Worship & Praise
Men's Chorus
Senior Choir
Voices of Praise Dancers
Volunteer Choir
Youth & Young Adult Choir

Congratulations to our new Deacons—
Anthony Cooper and Cannon Huggins. They
were ordained on Sunday, July 12, 2020 via a
teleconference call after the weekly 9:30 a.m.
church service call. The program for the service is listed
below:

—THE ACTS OF ORDINATION—

Catechism of Deacon Candidates:

Rev. Dr. Winston C. Ridley, Jr.

Brother Anthony Cooper

Brother Cannon Huggins

Charge to the Deacons: Deacon Anthony J. Hood

Prayer of Ordination: Deacon Calvin C. Johnson

Song of Preparation: “Safe In His Arms”

Soloist: Sister Ebony Walters

Accompanying Vocals: First Lady Bonita L. Ridley,
Trustee Kendall Brown, Cilista Johnson

Ordination Sermon: Rev. Dr. Ridley

Invitation to Discipleship

Presentation of Certificates: Rev. Dr. Ridley

Remarks and Presentation of Bibles and Hymnals:

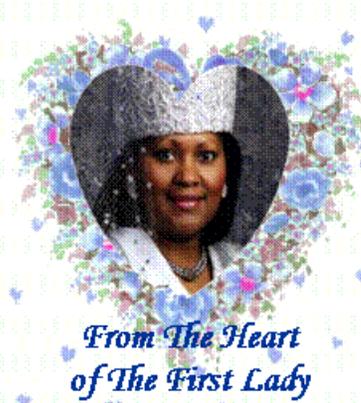
Deacon Gamelia C. Jackson, Chairman
GFBC Deacon Ministry

Closing Selection: “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms”

Vocalists: First Lady Bonita L. Ridley, Trustee Kendall
Brown, Sister Cilista Johnson, Sister Ebony Walters

BENEDICTION





Special 2020-2021 Report

CHRISTIAN SERVICE THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

“LIFE’S MOST PERSISTENT AND URGENT
QUESTION IS:

WHAT ARE YOU DOING FOR OTHERS?”

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Greater First Baptist Church’s answer to that question can be found in its long history of dedicated service to its members, the community, and beyond.

As we celebrate Black History and Women’s History months, we reflect on the three women—emancipated slaves—who begun worshipping in an humble house in the late 19th century. The First Baptist Church grew into The Greater First Baptist Church (GFBC) and still upholds its earliest, bold mission. Today, in the early 21st century, that bold mission now reads:

**“The Mission of The Greater First Baptist Church is
making Disciples of Christ by:**

EVANGELISM - “Seeking the Unsought”;

**EMPOWERMENT - “Bringing the Unbrought” and
EDUCATION - “Teaching the Untaught.”**

Matthew 28:18-20

Rev. Dr. Winston C. Ridley, Jr., Pastor

Implicit in this mission is Greater First’s legacy of service. Service is defined as friendly help, professional aid, and the work done for others. Historically, the church can trace such services provided to God’s kingdom back to the period of the earliest indignities faced by Black Americans: the Jim Crow Laws, Urban Renewal’s uprooting of Black communities and more.

Even today as we had to cease in-person services beginning on March 22, 2020, due to the rapid spread of Covid-19, we are still providing hope and support virtually, or in certain cases, in-person, closely following the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Our united effort at delivering such services is coordinated by

our Pastor, Rev. Dr. Winston C. Ridley, Jr., First Lady Bonita L. Ridley, and Associate Ministers, Rev. Frances Williams and Rev. Robert Hood; our spiritually-driven ministries; and our caring, compassionate, and Christ-centered members and friends.

Six days a week, our Pastor, with assistance from our Media Production Ministry, which also involves our Music Ministry, and some assistance from the church saints, continues to minister through our conference line (voice and visual), YouTube and Facebook. Opened also to the general public are the Sunday Worship Service at 9:30 AM; the Monday Intercessory Prayer Line (IPM Ministry) at 6:00 AM; the Tuesday Prayer Meeting at 6:30 PM; the Wednesday Bible Study at 11:00 AM and Sunday School held on Saturdays at 10:00 AM.

Aside from performing some of his ministerial duties such as visiting the sick and delivering eulogies, mostly in-person, Pastor Ridley has prepared and presented timely and stirring sermons and Bible lessons. Some of the creative sermon titles include “The Advent Advantage,” “A Message From The Mariner,” “Missionaries On A Mission,” “Black Lives Matter: I’m Built For This, Part II,” “A Shipwreck Salvation,” “The Fear Factor,” “When In Rome,” “If It’s The Last Thing I Do,” “In Case You Missed It” and “A Game Changer’s Testimony in History.” During Bible Study, Pastor Ridley introduced the subject regarding the problem with history; shared scriptures and lessons underscoring an urgent need for wisdom and discernment; and provided proof we can begin again through “The Genesis Creation Narratives.” Undoubtedly, the many praiseworthy comments, the thoughtful inquiries and moving encouragement are added blessings to the work of the church.

Likewise, First Lady Bonita Ridley, while accompanying the Pastor, would sing and play the piano and offer additional words of comfort to the bereaved family, supported by only a few persons due to Covid-19 restrictions. She also serves as the overseer for The Daughters of Zion, a ministry of women who present a monthly inspirational conference call series and donate regularly to the Central Mission Union in Washington, D.C.

Also, aside from supporting the Pastor with designated services, the two associate ministers, Rev. Hood and Rev. Williams, continue to teach, mentor, and provide important outreach services to our youth and seniors.

From the Heart

Our dedicated ministries, as well, continue most of their work virtually. Our deacons and deaconesses lead weekly prayer lines and maintain “wellness checks.” Over the holidays, they sponsored gifts and cleaning supplies for a needy family. The Missionary Ministry continues supporting our neighboring Community of Hope. The Sunday School Ministry provided holiday gifts for women at the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA (PWYWCA). Earlier, The Daughters of Zion gifted the Book Club at the PWYWCA with copies of “Battlefield of the Mind” by Joyce Meyer. Adhering to strict Covid-19 protocol, The Music Ministry, with assistance from the Media Technology and Creative Arts Ministries, continues to spread joy with pre-recorded music, Biblical reenactments, and dramatic readings for our virtual Sunday services.

Even individual members of Greater First provided services beyond our community. Upon learning that a virtual Christian summer camp in North Carolina needed learning materials for the children, a member quickly shipped 81 books and games. Also, along with a representative from The Gideons International, two affiliated church members visited the PWYWCA to donate Bibles to over 80 residents and staff. In another instance, a group of friends organized a community-service “pop-up,” appropriately named the Covid-19 Angels. They performed phenomenal services, delivering door-to-door Fall health & wellness baskets and Christmas gift bags to seniors in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. Other acts of service have included trips to the pharmacy, rides to medical appointments, donations of non-perishables, mentoring students, and for one lady, a brand new winter coat.

Our intergenerational voices have become especially important at this time. On the 4th Sundays, our children, youth (C.E.N.T.E.R.E.D.) and young adults lead by serving as the worship leader, praying, reading scriptures, and singing. Some Saturdays, they share the Bible background for the Sunday School lesson. Also, throughout this year, they have participated in holiday services and special celebrations such as Black History Month and Women’s History Month. Likewise, through the pandemic, one of our centenarians, 100-year old Deaconess Willie Mae Osborn, has prayed, witnessed, and sung for us all. Some good news from the latest research on the music-memory link is showing how singing and listening to “old favorites can boost mood, reduce falls, and decrease the need for the sedative drugs.” (Our Daily Bread, January/February/March 2021). Psalm 147:1 reminds us how good it is to sing praises to our God.

To keep our Godly, proud legacy of service alive, may we faithfully continue to encourage one another, remain prayerfully in Christ’s service, and plant an even greater footprint toward Kingdom Building.

Thanks to Dr. Judith Webb for the excellent report helping me to launch this series that will show how The Greater First Baptist Church of Mount Pleasant Plains is sitting at the top of the hill at the corner of 13th and Fairmont Streets, Northwest, Washington, District of Columbia, in our nation’s Capital, letting our light *shine* before mankind, that they may see our good works done in our community and beyond as we glorify our Father in Heaven!

Thanks be to God, Elohim, for this insightful article highlighting just some of the “good works” the Lord is inspiring Rev. Ridley, the Associate Ministers, the various ministries and individuals of The GFBC Family and Friends to do. As mentioned, this is the first of an ongoing series that will serve to inform members and friends of our church’s faithful activity in the DMV community and beyond.

To God, Adonai, be the glory for the things He has done, He is doing and He has yet to accomplish in and through this branch of Zion!!

Let us remember the instruction of the Scripture, “But let a man (male and female) examine *himself*...” (1 Corinthians 11:28). This gives rise to how this article opened with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King’s quote “...What are *you* doing for others?”

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works

And glorify your Father in Heaven”

Matthew 5:16 NKJV

Make Me a Blessing

Ira B. Wilson George S. Schuler

Make me a blessing, Make me a blessing,
Out of my life may Jesus shine;
Make me a blessing, O Savior, I pray,
Make me a blessing to someone today.

First Lady Bonita L. Ridley

Pastor's Focal Point (continued)

any people" Proverbs 14:34 KJV

- **Righteousness:** In the Greek is "Dikaiosune," Pardon of sin, and holiness of heart and life. It is the essence of that which is just of him who is just or righteous. Righteousness fulfills God's claims. Righteousness is the believer's conformity to the claims of the higher authority of God. It is conformity to all that God commands or appoints in our life. The believer adopts these claims as their standard for living.

The quality or state of being righteous; holiness; purity; uprightness; rectitude. Righteousness, as used in Scripture and theology, in which it chiefly occurs, is nearly equivalent to holiness, comprehending holy principles and affections of heart, and conformity of life to the divine law. (Romans 12:1-2)

God's righteousness is imputed and imparted as a gift to humanity and is not earned. It results in God's act of justification by faith through Christ. We can only accept the claims of God upon our life as we repent from our sin and receive Christ as our Lord and Savior by faith and thus become a child of God; realizing God's claims upon us by the miraculous regenerating (Being Born Again) action of the Holy Spirit. (John 1:12; Romans 4:11-13; 5:21; 6:16; 8:10; 9:30; 10:6; 2 Corinthians 6:7, 14; Ephesians 4:24; 6:14; 2 Peter 1:1)

Righteousness is the state of being in:

Right Relationship with God: Parental—God is our Father and we are God's Children: "Born Again"

Right Standing with God: Positional—Status or Station with God "In Christ"

Right Character from God: Personality—the inherent complex of attributes that determines a person's moral and ethical actions and reactions: "A New Creature"

Right Conduct in God: Performance—Doing Righteousness through the "Obedience of Faith"

MIDDLE HINGE PIN: "PEACE"

"No Justice, No Peace"

The Cry of the Protestors

- **Peace:** In the Greek is "Eirene" and it means "Peace, Rest." In contrast with strife it denotes the absence of or end of strife. In the soul, from a sense of God's mercy; peace regulating, ruling, and harmoniz-

ing the heart. It is the opposite of the sword, division, guile, commotion or confusion. This Peace denotes a state of untroubled, undisturbed well-being. It is the state of being whole: nothing lacking, nothing missing and nothing broken.

Such a state of peace is the object of divine and saving promise and is brought about by God's mercy, granting deliverance and freedom from all distresses that are experienced as a result of sin. It is mercy for the consequences of sin and grace which affects the character of the person. Peace as a Messianic blessing is that state brought about by the grace and loving mind of God wherein the derangement and distress of life caused by sin are removed. Hence, the message of Salvation is called **the Gospel of Peace** (Acts 10:36; Romans 10:15; Ephesians 2:17; 6:15). It is called:

Peace of God—Not that God needs it but God gives it (Philippians 4:7; 1 Thessalonians 5:23)

Peace of Christ—(Colossians 3:15)

Peace with God—This Peace can only result because of accomplished reconciliation (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:16-17), referring to the new relationship between God and man brought about by the atonement (Romans 5:9-10).

BOTTOM HINGE PIN: "JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST"

"Rejoicing in the removal and replacement of Number 45"

"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan."

Proverbs 29:2 NKJV

- **Joy in the Holy Ghost:** In the Greek is "Chara" meaning joy in general and to rejoice (Matthew 2:10; 13:20; 25:21, 23; Luke 15:7, 10; 2 Corinthians 7:4; Hebrews 13:17; James 4:9; 1 Peter 1:8); Cause or matter of joy or rejoicing (Luke 2:10; Philippians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). It is synonymous with exultation, exuberant joy, good cheer, mirth and gladness of heart.

Solid spiritual happiness; a joy which springs from a clear sense of God's mercy; the love of God being shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. In a word, it is happiness brought into the soul by the Holy Spirit, and maintained there by the same influence. This is a genuine counterpart of heaven; righteousness without

sin, Peace without inward disturbance, Joy without any kind of mental agony or distressing fear.

One of the manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit is **Joy**. Joy is an outward expression or evidence of the inward content or condition of the heart. In the Book of Nehemiah he declared that “The Joy of the Lord is my Strength!”

—THE WISDOM OF GOD—

However, in recent days God has shown us that through the processes of memory and remembrance that the Lord’s wisdom concerning His will can and would be made clear to us. It is how God enabled me to capture this illustrative Vision of God’s Wisdom concerning the D.O.O.R and the Hinges etc. through the revelatory remembrance of the events of 2020. Ultimately, we find that our Lord Jesus Christ is here the fulfillment of His 7 “I AM” statements of the Gospel of John. In John 10:9 Jesus said, “*I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*” There are three biblical levels or phases of a progressively unfolding process through which we must pass in order to attain the Wisdom of God concerning the Church and the Kingdom in this fallen, sinful world. Wisdom is the trait of utilizing knowledge and experience with common sense and insight; ability to apply knowledge or experience or understanding or common sense and insight to accomplish God’s plans and purposes for us according to God’s pleasure. The Three Phases of unfolding Wisdom are:

Phase 1: HIDDEN: “The Door of the Church is Open” (John 2:17) God’s Mystery of Wisdom (putting them away) is opened by His Revelation of Exclusive Knowledge (as in a Word of Knowledge). Paul speaks of it in 1 Corinthians 2:7-8 where it says, “*But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*” Christ’s Consuming Connection to His Disciples is Collaborative and Cooperative: God makes it a mystery by keeping it hidden from view to all other eyes except to those to whom He reveals it. It is God’s way of:

- Protecting it from hindrances that undermine God’s Plans and Purposes.
- Protection from having to navigate where God’s plans had no intentions for us.
- Protection from the misuse of the enemy for evil purposes. This is exclusive knowledge because everyone in the text does not have it.

It is a Word of Knowledge that gives access to the thoughts of God, the mind of God, knowing what God

thinks about this situation and what His will is in it. Only His disciples make the connection of Christ’s Actions in Cleansing the Temple through a Revelation of Remembrance of Psalm 59:10. It is the All Consuming Zeal of Christ to Promote God’s Glory and to Keep God’s Worship Pure! **Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple exemplifies His Authority!**

Phase 2: HINDSIGHT: “The Doors of Our Opportunity Opened by God’s Ordination” Psalm 37:23 KJV says, “*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*” Memory of Experiences (putting them together/ connecting the dots) Experiences giving Understanding. Christ’s Disciples’ Connecting the Dots of Their Experiences with Him. See how this fits together with that in the bigger picture. You begin to see how similar experiences are linked and then you file them away in memory for future reference. This Part of the Process gives us Understanding. The Disciples were experiencing the life and ministry of Christ as they journeyed with Him:

John 2:1-11—Jesus Performed His First Miracle at Cana Turning Water to Wine; **John 2:12—Jesus Passes through Capernaum** and stays a few days while the Passover is at hand

John 2:13-17—Jesus Purges the Temple at the Feast of the Passover

John 2:18—Jesus’ Proof of His Authority: a Miracle Required by the Jews

John 2:19-22—Jesus’ Proclamation and Prediction referring to His own Death and Resurrection as an Answer to those questioning His Authority

Phase 3: HIGHEST INTELLIGENCE: “Walking Wisely Through the Resurrection D.O.O.R. of God” We have the meaning of the Resurrection’s Wisdom. We must “walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7) if we are going to successfully navigate forward through and to the opportunities that the Lord our God has in store for us. But we know “these are the things God has revealed to us by His Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 2:9-10) It is knowledge and experience **PUT INTO ACTION (Practicing Wisdom)**. Through Wisdom’s Power Christ’s Disciples’ Connection to the Power Source of Christ’s Resurrection “Understanding is the Bridge between Knowledge and Wisdom.” A Word of Wisdom speaks of what God is doing, what God is accomplishing in this particular situation. And Disciples cooperate and collaborate with God by doing their part and performing their duties of His command through obedience of Faith.

So what is this D.O.O.R that God has swung open for us? It harkens back to 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 where

Continued on page 13

WE WILL GET THROUGH THIS!

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son....”

John 3:16

As one ministry’s attempt to post a Black Lives Matter banner at the church became problematic amidst surging racial unrest across the city, it proposed sharing a more diverse, spiritual and universal message instead. Part of that newer effort delivered online at a church leadership meeting in mid-summer is presented.

We are deep into a global crisis that is not new to the planet. History has shown us that past pandemics over thousands of years have reshaped world societies in profound ways. Empires have fallen, governments have toppled, generations have been wiped out, but **We Are Here**.

Briefly, I shall share some of that profound history with you. During Biblical times, many historians traced the fall of the Roman Empire to the Plague of 165-180 AD where five million people died. During the 14th Century, it was the Black Death caused by the Bubonic Plague that transformed the Middle Ages into a Modern European Society. Other centuries followed:

- 16th Century – The New World Smallpox
- 17th Century – The Great Plague of London
- 19th Century – The Yellow Fever

Our Ancestors Got Through It!

- Early 20th Century – The 1918 Flu where 500 million were infected and President Wilson was bedridden for days
- 1957-58 – The Asian Flu

We Got Through It!

- 2009 – The Swine Flu
- 2014-2016 – Ebola, and
- February 2020 – COVID -19

Let me place these historical snippets in a 21st Century context. James Baldwin, the African American author of such great works as The Fire Next Time and If Beale Street Could Talk, said that we will remain trapped in history if we fail to learn from it. Greater First knew the larger picture – the dreaded journey across the Atlantic in a slave ship; life on the plantations; the Underground Railroad; and the Civil War, as our pastor, Rev. Dr. Winston C. Ridley, Jr. announced in a recent sermon, “We Were

Built For This.” Today there remain many members of Greater First who experienced such indignities as the Jim Crow Laws of segregation and the removal of Black communities during the City’s Urban Renewal of Southwest D.C. **The Saints got through it**. It was during the Civil Rights Movement that they learned how to peacefully protest and they boldly marched in 1963, and again 50 years later, with continuing commitment to the Great Cause. All in all, **they got through it**.

It has been our strong and enduring church legacy that has helped to launch many brave journeys. At Greater First, we have been blessed to stand upon the shoulders of legendary Christian giants, including those awesome women who founded the church, first as a house mission in 1911 on a Corner of Hope at Sherman Avenue and Kenyon Streets, N.W. They later moved to a brick church on a Corner of Hope at Sherman Avenue and Lamont Street, N.W. Finally, the Saints were blessed to march in 1956 to a new heavenly-imposing church on yet another Corner of Hope at 13th and Fairmont Streets, N.W.

At these Corners of Hope, we have been blessed with anointed pastors, including Rev. Dr. Daniel Washington, Rev. Dr. Edward Thomas and Rev. Dr. Winston C. Ridley, Jr., a 21st Century Visionary, who is leading Greater First today with “20/20 Vision of Increase Through Salvation’s Power in the C.I.A.

The Call of God
The Inheritance From God
The Authority From God”
(Taken from the Church’s 2020 theme)

Again, it is during a time such as this that we are given unexpected time to reflect, not only upon the role of the church, but also upon the legacy of those Saints who were NOT AFRAID, but innovative, bold and steadfast in their FAITH. We are duty-bound to carry the baton forward by providing hope for the rising generations. And, we can with a message of Faith and Hope as our nation and world look toward healing.

With such in mind, The Creative Arts Ministry, which provides special programs and exhibits; public speaking and dramatic coaching; and artistic outreach has been listening closely to a cross section of our church membership and other ministries. Also, we have reflected upon the virtual, inspiring messages shared during Sunday Morning Service; the Monday Morning Prayer Line; the Wednesday Bible Study; the Daughters of Zion Session; and the Saturday Sunday School. We have internalized and continue to honor the historic Black Lives Matter movement which was launched on July 13, 2013, seven years ago.

As we continued our important reflections, we experienced a remarkable revelation – Our Pastor Ridley delivered his trial sermon on Sunday, July 13, 1980, in Duquesne, Pennsylvania. In a most timely fashion, Our Pastor delivered on June 28 and again on July 5, scholarly Bible-based sermons entitled “Black Lives Matter – We Are Built For This,” Parts I and II. He strategically merged African-American history with applicable lessons from the Bible. We learned much from it and were inspired.

Today, the Black Lives Matter movement provides the framework for an even greater WORLDWIDE MISSION - PEACE and a new momentum for our rising generations (A Shout-out for our youth and young adults at Greater First). Following such enlightenment and support from brave Christian warriors, The Creative Arts Ministry is proposing that The Greater First Baptist Church, as a pillar in the community, post a message of HOPE and FAITH at our CORNER of HOPE. In the wake of COVID-19 and other extreme challenges, people would welcome HOPE.

As other members and friends may share their messages, we propose this message:

WE WILL GET THROUGH THIS!

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son....”

Each of the words in this message is powerful and non-threatening:

- We:** Plural pronoun (all inclusive)
Will: An auxiliary verb used to indicate future time/stronger than “shall”
Get: A verb meaning to move
Through: A preposition from beginning to the end; when “get” and “through” are paired, they mean to finish and manage to survive.
This: Word can be used as an adjective or pronoun. Here, it is used as a pronoun designating something. The use of the word “this” is key in this message. It can translate into:

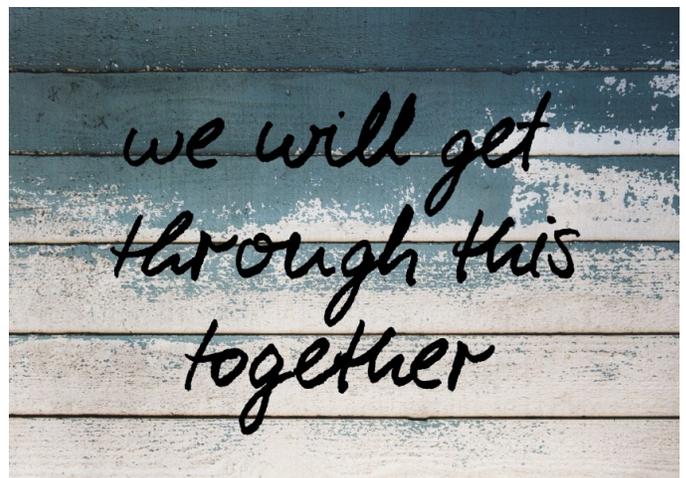
This Pandemic
This racism
This poverty
This police brutality
This homelessness
or any personal trials

GREATER FIRST, MAY WE CELEBRATE OUR TOMORROWS BY CHOOSING HOPE TODAY! WE WILL GET THROUGH THIS!

Submitted by the Creative Arts Ministry
Sis. Tameka Johnson, President
Bro. Michael Benjamin, Vice President
Dr. Judith Webb, Advisor

Special resources for this proposal include the Washington Post and Greater First Baptist history.

WE WILL GET THROUGH THIS!



Gifts From the Angels

During this life-changing pandemic, record numbers of well-known philanthropic organizations, along with lesser-known grass roots groups, are providing urgently needed assistance and services across the United States and the world.

Locally, pop-up groups have joined to help meet the many new and overwhelming community needs. Even bold individuals have stepped forward bravely. One such person is Ms. Tameka Johnson—a millennial on a mission. In the midst of a crippling and deadly virus and rising protests against never-ceasing racial inequalities, her vision emerged: providing a message of hope for all people with special attention to our most vulnerable citizens—our older seniors and elders.

Ms. Johnson shared the vision with her “Fun Brunch Crew,” who immediately embraced it. However, their first major project had to be scaled back—the one for placing a “Black Lives Matter” banner in a rapidly growing diversified and gentrified neighborhood. With cautious input from supporters and the fast-rising civic and political unrest in the City, the Fun Brunch Crew decided to rethink the banner idea and move forward with a different project.

Quickly, the Crew morphed creatively into the new independently-based Covid-19 Angels, who chose as a goal the preparation of “Covid-19 Stay Safe Love Baskets” to be delivered to the eldest members and friends of The Greater First Baptist Church. Each basket would contain items such as Clorox, Spic and Span, Pine Sol, sanitizer wipes, paper towels, masks, hand sanitizers, water, coffee and tea, crackers, candy, a word find puzzle book and The Daily Bread booklet. A special prayer and a verse from the Bible were attached: The 103rd Psalm, verse 20, “Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word.”

In mid-summer, as each Angel wearing a Covid-19 Angel tee shirt delivered the baskets to the designated homes, she, too, received a blessing as the recipients happily thanked her and smiled cheerfully for a parting photo. It was a double blessing as family and friends had generously donated to make the project a phenomenal success.

Those remarkable Covid-19 Angels who bravely volunteered their time and talents are Ms. Tameka Johnson, chair, Dr. Blanche Hammond, Ms. Della Cobb, Ms. Marcia Linder and Ms. Carmen Peters.



Left to Right: Covid Angel Della Cobb with Mrs. Yeldell; Covid Angel Carmen Peters with a masked Senior member; Covid Angel Marcia Linder with Deaconess Osborn; and Covid Angel Tameka Johnson with a grateful trio of recipients.



GFBC Trailblazers

Carmen Peters

In 1972, Carmen Peters matriculated from Banneker Junior High School to Cardozo Senior High School. However, she wanted to go to a trade school so that she could take up offset printing, so she transferred to Bell Vocational School.

What makes this move historical is the fact that she was the first female student at Bell. Carmen had to take twelve shop classes, including welding, painting, auto mechanics, wood shop, sheet metal, printing and upholstery which was taught by the late Trustee Grady Humphrey.

Carmen said that the guys at the school treated her great and would always greet her. She did, however, have one teacher who was prejudiced against females and refused to take the time to work with her—the offset printing teacher.

She was contacted by Jet magazine to be interviewed about the historic event. She dressed up for the interview on the appointed date, but they never showed.

The rest of the vocational schools in DC began integrating females into their classrooms, including ROTC. It is no surprise that it was Carmen who broke the mold.



Bell Vocational Senior High School



Chanel Olden

It's funny how the way things turn out. As a young girl growing up on 14th & Clifton Streets, NW, I've always had dreams of becoming the first mortician in my family. I literally told any and everyone who would listen to me about my dream career.

Fast forward to now and my career choice has changed—but not too far from what my initial idea had been. Instead of preparing a loved one for their last goodbye, I take everything I've been taught in my eight-month DCFD training course to keep someone's loved one alive. DCFD has taught me so much discipline – how to be punctual and most importantly, how to be still and scan your surroundings. Being a young, Black female in a predominantly male field, I hold my own. I am strong, kind-hearted, and goal-driven. I am Chanel Olden, a member of the District of Columbia Fire Department, and also a proud member of the Greater First Baptist Church.

Overcoming Tourette's

In identifying my favorite quote, I must turn to a musical artist who I believe left an indelible legacy to the entire world. Michael Jackson is one of the greatest musical prodigies to become an international star. He paved his own path, pushed racial barriers, and broke music records that no artist to date has been able to achieve. In all his stardom, one quote still resonates with me today: "I'm happy to be alive; I'm happy to be who I am." Michael's showmanship highlights the type of leadership and acumen I wish to obtain as I mature into adulthood.

As I evaluate my core principles, I consider advocacy for others and myself to be very important as I attempt to make a positive impact on this world. When I received my diagnosis of Tourette's Syndrome, I wasn't fully sure how to adjust and what it meant for me moving forward. Now as a young man I realize that this diagnosis is not a limitation but an opportunity to spread awareness on my behalf, as well as those who have no platform or are fearful of sharing their diagnosis. The quote above resonates with the core principles of who I am because I am happy to be alive; I exude a sense of happiness each day as I live comfortably in my own skin. Being happy with life and accepting the fact that Tourette's Syndrome is one of the many multifaceted layers that makes me who I am has helped to usher me to a place of leadership. As I continually grow in a society that is constantly advancing in science, medicine, and technology, I realize that I must continue to grow and stay true to my core values. I realize that there will be days that present new challenges and obstacles, but I know that if I continue to push forward and strive to be the best that I can be, I will develop my leadership skills.

A few years ago, I started spreading awareness about Tourette's Syndrome via social media. Initially, I was reluctant to share my condition, but after taking such a huge risk I received nothing but love, support, and respect. During my junior year of high school, I became a Youth Ambassador for the National Tourette's Association of America. With that opportunity presenting itself, I also was a Key Note Speaker at National Advocacy Day on behalf of the Tourette's Association of America. I spoke to Senators, US Representatives, and I also spoke about Tourette's on Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C. Being a Youth

Ambassador requires courage, determination, and acceptance. Acceptance of the fact that I have Tourette's Syndrome has helped me as a young role model. I am a sophisticated young man who values honesty, transparency, loyalty, and integrity. I often challenge myself intellectually with the question: "How do I demonstrate all these great traits to others given that they are important in my life?" I have concluded that my acceptance of life as it comes with all its good and bad is how I will continue to be congruent while I spread awareness about Tourette's Syndrome. It is true, I am happy to be alive, and I am happy to be the young man that I am.

Submitted by William Atkins IV



Note: Tourette (too-RET) syndrome is a disorder that involves repetitive movements or unwanted sounds (tics) that can't be easily controlled. For instance, you might repeatedly blink your eyes, shrug your shoulders or blurt out unusual sounds or offensive words. Treatment can help, but this condition can't be cured.

Mayoclinic.org

2020 In Review

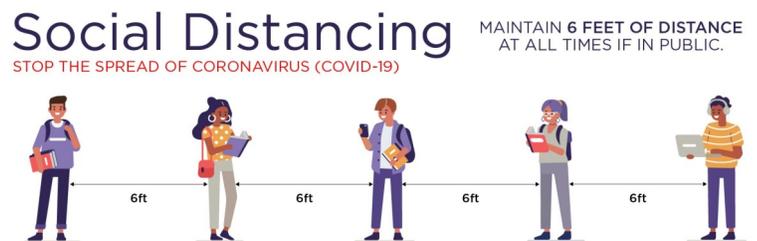
Words and Phrases We Used

pandemic

Event in which a disease spreads across several countries and affects a large number of people. What is the difference between an epidemic and a pandemic? An outbreak is called an epidemic when there is a sudden increase in cases. As COVID-19 began spreading in Wuhan, China, it became an epidemic. Because the disease then spread across several countries and affected a large number of people, it was classified as a pandemic.

social distance

The physical distance maintained between individuals in social contexts. What is the social distancing guideline for COVID-19? Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people.



the new normal

A current situation, social custom, etc., that is different from what has been experienced or done before but is expected to become usual or typical.

defund the police

George Floyd's death has galvanized much of America to move the needle toward police reform ideas—such as defunding police—that were previously viewed as radical. “Defund the police” means reallocating or redirecting funding away from the police department to other government agencies funded by the local municipality. Different from abolishing and starting anew, defunding police highlights fiscal responsibility, advocates for a market-driven approach to taxpayer money, and has some potential benefits that will reduce police violence and crime. (As defined by Rashawn Ray)



virtual

1. Not physically existing as such but made by software to appear to do so. 2. Created, carried out, accessed, simulated or stored by means of a computer, especially over a network, such as 'a virtual library.' 3. Of, pertaining to, or taking place in cyberspace or in virtual reality, such as virtual shopping.

app

An application, especially as downloaded by a user to a mobile device, that allows you to perform specific tasks. To download apps to an Apple product, go to the App Store. For Android users, apps are found in Google Play.

virtual reality

Virtual Reality (VR) is the **use** of computer technology to create a simulated environment. Unlike traditional user interfaces, **VR** places the user inside an experience. Instead of viewing a screen in front of them, users are immersed and able to interact within artificial three-dimensional environment using electronic devices, such as special goggles with a screen or gloves fitted with sensors.



streaming



The technology of transmitting audio and video files in a continuous flow over a wired or wireless internet connection. Streaming refers to any media content – live or recorded – delivered to computers and mobile devices via the internet and played back in real time. Podcasts, webcasts, movies, TV shows and music videos are common forms of streaming content. Elevator music was among the earliest popular music available as streaming media. All you need to stream is a reliable and fast high speed internet connection, access or subscription to a streaming service or app, and a compatible device.

Live streaming is the broadcast of an event over the internet as it happens. Awards shows, sports, boxing matches, video games and special one-time events are the most popular types of live streaming.

podcast

A recorded program of talk, music, etc. made available over the Internet as a multi-media digital file (typically MP3) that can be downloaded to a computer or portable device (such as an iPod) for listening or viewing when you want, where you want and how you want. The term comes from a combination of the words iPod (a personal digital audio player made by Apple) and broadcasting.

teleconference

A conference with participants in different locations linked by telecommunications devices. **Teleconferencing** is a way for three or more people to **meet** via a phone call, no matter where they are in the world. A **teleconference** is also sometimes referred to as an audio conference, conference call, telephone **meeting** or remote **meeting**.

video conference

Video conferencing is a technology using software that allows users in different locations to hold live, face-to-face meetings using video-enabled devices. Multiple people can meet and collaborate by transmitting audio, *video*, text and presentations in real time through the internet. As an increasing number of companies switch to remote work, video conferencing is gradually becoming the new normal, shaping the way we communicate, learn and work.



Zoom

Zoom is a videotelephony software program developed by Zoom Video Communications. The free version provides a video chatting service that allows up to 100 devices at once, with a 40-minute time restriction for free accounts having meetings of three or more participants. **Zoom** is a cloud-based video conferencing service you can use to virtually meet with others - either by video or audio-only or both, all while conducting live chats - and it lets you record those sessions to view later.

Signs & Lines



Faces & Places

and Empty Spaces

Opposite Page:

Signs of protest,
Signs for our own safety,
Signs of encouragement
Long lines to get into grocery stores, and Black Lives Matter signs

This Page:

As physical doors to churches closed (GFBC's doors closed on March 21, 2020), virtual church doors were opened. Pictured are Sister Janet Johnson and daughter Cilista Johnson—two of the musicians who play for the GFBC virtual services.

Downtown DC streets were empty at lunch time in March.

Drive-by celebrations became the norm since in-person gatherings were prohibited. Friends and family participated in a drive-by to celebrate Deaconess Bernice Williams' 99th birthday.

After standing in long lines outside of the grocery store, shoppers were faced with empty shelves once inside.

DC Mayor Muriel Bowser gave frequent Covid-19 updates.

Covid-19 testing sites popped up around the city.



Things We Hoarded

Toilet Paper
 Paper Towels
 Bleach
 Food
 Hand Sanitizers
 Alcohol—for external AND internal use

Water
 Disinfectants
 Tylenol
 Wipes



Summer Heatwave



While June and August were only a touch hotter than average, a punishing 28 of 31 days in July reached 90 degrees or higher. That’s the most of any month on record since 1872, surpassing 25 in July 2011.

We began the month with 15 straight 90-degree days, part of a 20-day streak that started in late June. It ended up as the second-longest streak of 90-degree days on record. Only 1980 and 1988 saw more, with 21 each. Including 2020, the seven hottest Julys on record have all occurred

since 1990, and five of the top seven since 2020. more, with 21 each. Including 2020, the seven hottest Julys on record have all occurred since 1990, and five of the top seven since 2020.

By Ian Livingston, *The Washington Post*

America Votes!



On November 3, 2020 Joseph R. Biden and Kamala D. Harris won the 2020 elections! More Americans voted in this election than ever before.

President-Elect Joe Biden is the oldest president elected at age 78. Vice President-Elect **Kamala Harris** made history as the first woman—and first woman of color—to reach the number two spot in American government.

Loved Ones We Lost

January

Mr. Rodney Butler
Ms. Deidra Johnson
Ms. Evelyn Holman

February

Ms. Jacqueline Johnson
Mr. Anthony Rogers
Mr. Vincent Brown

March

Trustee Grady Humphrey
Ms. Nancy Bryson

April

Ms. Betty Chisley
Mr. John Dunston
Mr. William Blocker
Mrs. Cordelia Freeman
Mr. Thomas Thornton

May

Deacon Robert Bookhart
Mrs. Barbara L. Cobb
Mr. Wyman Adams, Jr.
Mr. James Lindsay
Ms. Patricia Bullock

June

Mr. Michael Peters
Ms. Jennifer Carson
Mr. Monroe Ratliff
Ms. Jean Harris
Ms. Jocelyn King

July

Ms. Idella McMillian

August

Ms. Meesha Goodwin
Mr. William Harris
Mr. Michael Starke Johnson

September

Trustee Kenneth L. Wallace

November

Mr. Brodies Stover
Ms. Barbara Stover Jones
Mr. William R. Washington
Deaconess Helen S. Johnson

December

Mr. James Beatty, Sr.
Mr. David Thomas James, Jr.

* Names that appear in bold were members of The Greater First Baptist Church.

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith...”

II Timothy 4:7

2020 Humor & Inspiration

It took
“Click it or Ticket”
 to get people to
 wear a seatbelt.
 I wonder if
“Mask it or Casket”
 might work?
 Donald Ray Whatley

Rev. Dr. Barber
 @RevDrBarber
 Republicans are now
 asking what they
 should do with Trump.
 Here's an idea: what
 would you have done if
 it were Obama? Do that.



Hello. Welcome to Flight #2021

- We are prepared to take off into the New Year.
- Please make sure your ATTITUDE and BLESSINGS are SECURED and LOCKED in an upright position.
- ALL SELF-DESTRUCTIVE devices should be TURNED OFF at this time.
- ALL NEGATIVITY, HURT and DISCOURAGEMENT should be put away.
- Should we LOSE ALTITUDE under pressure during the flight, reach up and pull down a PRAYER.
- PRAYERS will automatically be ACTIVATED by FAITH. Once your faith is activated, you can ASSIST other passengers.
- There will be NO BAGGAGE allowed on this flight.
- The Captain (GOD) has cleared us for takeoff.
- Destination: PEACE, GRACE, MERCY, SALVATION and HEAVEN!

- I was so bored I called Jake from State Farm just to talk to someone. He asked me what I was wearing.
- 2019: Stay away from negative people. 2020: Stay away from positive people.
- The world has turned upside down. Old folks are sneaking out of the house & their kids are yelling at them to stay indoors!
- This virus has done what no woman has been able to do. Cancel sports, shut down all bars & keep men at home!
- I need to practice social-distancing from the refrigerator.
- Never in a million years could I have imagined I would go up to a bank teller wearing a mask & asking for money.
- The spread of COVID-19 is based on two things:
 1. How dense the population is.
 2. How dense the population is.