



THE SANCTUARY AT KINGDOM SQUARE

TSAKS National News

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WITH **TSAKS NATION**

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Mission Statement... Our mission is to promote the spread of the Gospel, the winning of souls to Jesus Christ, the changing of lives, and establishing the presence of the Lord in the world through evangelizing, biblical teaching, economic development, and community outreach. With faith in Almighty God, we seek to be a church preparing born-again believers for the Kingdom of God.

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The Sanctuary Delivers Aid to Hurricane Helene Victims in North Carolina

The Sanctuary church recently delivered vital supplies to victims of Hurricane Helene in North Carolina. Members and volunteers united in a collective effort to load a tractor-trailer bound for Buncombe County, one of the regions hardest hit by the devastating storm. The relief mission was conducted in partnership with Pastor **Benjamin Cuthbertson**, a son of The Sanctuary and pastor of Honoring God Ministry and New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, who received and distributed the donations to the affected communities.

“These people are hurting and in great need. I’m so glad that we follow the model of Jesus Christ,” Pastor Cuthbertson shared in a heartfelt social media video. Quoting scripture, he added, “When you’ve done it to the least of these, you’ve done it also unto me.”

The effort was made possible through the generous support of Deacon **Cherrelle Wilkerson** and her father, **Russell Wilkerson**, owners of Wilkerson Freight Express LLC. Russell drove the relief truck, with Cherrelle joining him to ensure the safe delivery of the supplies.

Hurricane Helene left a devastating path of destruction in its wake. News reports confirm that the storm was responsible for at least 118 deaths in North Carolina alone, accounting for nearly half of the 243 lives lost across multiple states. The hurricane made landfall on September 26 along the Gulf Coast as a Category 4 storm, before continuing to carve a destructive path through the Southeast. Historic levels of rain and powerful winds wreaked havoc on the region, with inland mountainous areas—often unprepared for such severe weather—bearing the brunt of the storm’s fury.

The Sanctuary’s relief effort brought much-needed supplies to these vulnerable communities, offering not only material support but also a message of hope and spiritual solidarity to those in crisis.



MEMBER ACCOMPLISHMENTS . . .

Bridging Cultures Through Dance: A Journey of Faith in Bali and Vietnam

By Nylah Jackson

In the summer of 2024, I was blessed with the opportunity to travel to Bali, Indonesia, with **Black Rebel Nomads**—a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering creative cultural exchange through international travel. The organization selects young Black artists to offer new perspectives, expand their work, and create projects for the **BRN Exhibition**. Black Rebel Nomads was founded by Alyssa and Gaye Bigbee, teachers and friends of my dear companion and fellow believer, Dorien Harris.

I embarked on this journey alone, departing from Dulles International Airport with excitement for the month ahead. As I prepared to begin my professional career, I eagerly looked forward to reconnecting with the joy of dance. Before I left, I reassured my parents that God's presence would be with me throughout this journey. Upon arrival, I was welcomed by Dorien, Alyssa, and her son Kane, and we settled into our home in Sukawati, known as the "Obama House."

Our adventures began immediately. We visited the famous **Tegallalang Rice Terraces**, climbed the majestic **Mount Batur**, and explored the vibrant **Sukawati Art Market**. In the first few days, I also visited several waterfalls and encountered the warm and welcoming Balinese people. The Balinese culture is marked by a deep



Continued on next page

sense of community—even brief encounters were filled with kindness and hospitality, with a smile or greeting shared at every turn. Each morning, just steps from our home, we enjoyed breakfast at **Simpel Kopi**, a cozy café run by a local family. They shared insights about traditional Balinese homes, explaining how most families have temples within their homes for private celebrations like birthdays, weddings, and funerals. Larger, public temples are used for community worship and grand funeral ceremonies.

Midway through our time in Southeast Asia, we took a week-long trip to Hanoi, Vietnam. We stayed in a three-story house located in the middle of a bustling produce market, with vibrant streets lined with restaurants, spas, and shops selling art and souvenirs. Our first adventure took us to the **Imperial Citadel**, followed by a visit to the **HaNoi Train Food Alley**, and a house dance class at **The Last Fire** dance studio. After class, we connected with new dance friends over dinner at a local café, where the house class teacher shared fascinating

insights into Vietnam's dance industry. We learned that while some Vietnamese dancers see dance as a form of personal expression and community-building, others approach it as a professional business. We also saw how African American culture has spread across the globe, with dancers teaching its styles worldwide. However, we observed a subtle tension—the locals admired Black culture but seemed more reserved when interacting with people of African descent.

As the trip neared its end, I embraced the quiet moments of solitude for reflection and rest. My mornings began with reading scripture and journaling in our common area, reflecting on the incredible experiences God had allowed me to witness during this journey. I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to travel 12,000 miles away from home, as it broadened my perspective and deepened my faith. This trip taught me patience and left me yearning for more time in scripture, where I continue to build upon the faith that sustains me.

U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Bria S. Gates Promoted After Completing Advanced Leaders Course

United States (U.S.) Army Staff Sergeant **Bria S. Gates** advanced to the rank of E6 after completing the Advanced Leaders Course as a Geospatial Engineer (12Y). Notably, Staff Sergeant Gates graduated in the top percentile of her class.

According to the U.S. Army's website, Geospatial Engineers are responsible for using geographic data to support both military and civilian operations, including Disaster Relief and Homeland Security. They collect, analyze, and distribute information to represent terrain and its potential effects, as well as extract geographic data and compile it into maps.



Deacon Turns Hearse Dreams into Over 40 Years in the Funeral Industry

By Angela Hulett

As a young boy, Deacon **Derek Slocum** developed a fascination with funeral services after two family members passed away. He told his family that he wanted to become a funeral director, though they didn't take him seriously at first. However, when he connected clothes pins to resemble a long vehicle and explained he was driving his "hearse," they realized his passion was genuine.

For the past 40 years, Slocum has dedicated himself to serving families in their time of need. His wife, **Tuconya**, along with his staff, has played a crucial role in his success. Reflecting on his work, Slocum shared, "The most fulfilling part of the job is being a caretaker of the deceased, ensuring that things are done the way the family, and the deceased themselves, would have wanted." He emphasizes handling everyone with care and dignity, noting that this often-overlooked responsibility is essential.

After graduating from H.D. Woodson High School in Washington, D.C., Slocum attended mortuary school in Georgia. At 18, he returned to D.C. and applied for apprenticeships at several local funeral homes but was told he was too young to drive a hearse. Fortunately, Alexander Pope of Pope Funeral Home created a position for him, which gave him his start in the industry.

Slocum's career as a funeral director has taken him far beyond local services. He has assisted in recovery efforts following national disasters, including Hurricane Katrina and the 9/11 terrorist attacks. "As a director, you don't stay still. When disaster calls, you go where you're needed," Slocum explained, adding that not every assignment is paid.

In 2017, Slocum launched Slocum Funeral Services, furthering his commitment to serving families during difficult times.

Over the years, he has witnessed significant changes in the funeral industry. In the past 15 years, the focus has shifted toward celebrating a life well-lived. Funerals have become more



personalized, with families often highlighting the deceased's personality, hobbies, and passions. Slocum notes that pallbearers sometimes perform tributes, vehicles reflecting the deceased's interests are used, and guests may write personal notes on caskets. He recalls one family renting a boat for a committal service on the Chesapeake Bay, where they scattered their loved one's ashes, followed by a repass.

These trends have prompted some funeral homes to rebrand themselves as family life centers, moving away from the traditional "funeral home" title to reflect the evolving nature of memorial services.

One of Slocum's most memorable moments came early in his career in the 1980s, while preparing a woman for embalming after she had died during an eviction. As he worked, about \$1,800 in cash fell from her clothing. The funeral home notified the family, who explained they had no additional funds to pay for services. The funeral home, in turn, considered the service paid in full.

Despite the many notable moments in his career, Slocum says the highlight of his life has been becoming a deacon. "Only what you do for God is going to matter," he said.

SANCTUARY HAPPENINGS . . .

The Sanctuary Prison Ministry: A Decade of Transforming Lives Through Faith and Community Support

By Rev. Eric Williams

The TSAKS Prison Ministry was the vision of Bishop **Anthony G. Maclin**, who saw a great need within our church and community to create a support system for the incarcerated, returning citizens, and their families, all guided by the Word of God.

Bishop Maclin entrusted Rev. **Eric Williams** with the responsibility of coordinating and leading this vision, establishing the Prison Ministry. Founded in 2008 with the help of Sisters **Gail Battle**, **Barbara Johnson**, and **Sheila Brinkley**, the ministry has grown steadily. While many others have come and gone over the years, Gail and Barbara have remained steadfast, continuing to serve alongside me to this day. We see ourselves as a remnant team, serving not for recognition by men, but as unto God.

Through the grace of God and the unwavering support of our congregation, the TSAKS Prison Ministry has been able to expand its reach and impact. One of our notable initiatives is the annual Toy Drive, which provides Christmas gifts and clothing to children of incarcerated parents. This effort has allowed us to bless numerous families over the years. Additionally, we were able to secure housing for one individual for two years, thanks to the generous support and resources provided by Sister Brinkley.

Our ministry extends beyond local efforts. We have visited numerous incarcerated individuals, sometimes traveling hundreds of miles to ensure they know they are not forgotten. We have also hosted multiple training sessions for the Good News Prison & Jail Outreach Ministry, preparing others to engage in similar work. To further our outreach, we established a nationwide pen-pal program, exchanging hundreds of letters filled with encouragement and hope with inmates across the country.

Also, we conduct weekly Bible studies at the Prince George's County Correctional Facility in Upper Marlboro, MD. We also participate in worship services there, singing and preaching to bring glory to God.



U.S. Chaplain's Ministry Brings Hope and Spiritual Support to Senior Facility

The TSAKS Chaplain's Ministry was established in response to a deeply tragic and heartbreaking incident that occurred October 8, 2021, at the Gateway Village Senior Living Facility, a National Church Residences community in Capitol Heights. Sadly, one of the tenants took the lives of two employees in an act of violence.

Following this tragedy, a senior chaplain from National Church Residences reached out to Bishop Anthony G. Maclin for ministerial support to visit the facility to offer prayers and spiritual guidance. Bishop Maclin entrusted me, Rev. **Eric Williams**, with this responsibility—and without hesitation, I accepted.

This moment of calling brings to mind my guiding scripture from Isaiah 6:8: “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.’”

When I first arrived at the facility, the atmosphere was heavy with sorrow and confusion. The tenants were understandably distressed, but they were also receptive to the message of hope and healing through God's Word. By His grace, I was able to build a spiritual connection with them, offering comfort and support during such a dark time.

During my early visits, I met Chaplain James Zippay, an executive chaplain for National Church Residences. He recognized the need for sustained spiritual support and asked if I could continue visiting regularly. I agreed, and after discussions with Bishop Maclin, we devised a plan to support ongoing ministry at Gateway Village.

National Church Residences provided me with the training necessary to become one of their volunteer chaplains. After completing the training and receiving my formal charge to serve, I began to recruit additional help. Reverend **Betty Carter**, Sister **Gail Battle**, and Sister **Barbara Johnson** answered the call to assist. They also received training and were entrusted with the same mission to support the spiritual needs of the tenants.

Together, we established weekly activities that gradually lifted the spirits of everyone involved—both the tenants and our team. Our consistency was the key: we faithfully showed up week after week. Today, the tenants are thriving, and our visits are now reduced to twice a month, as their spiritual well-being has grown stronger.

At 94, Deacon Emeritus John Addison Reflects on a Lifetime of Faith, Service, and Gratitude

Deacon Emeritus John Addison



Deacon Emeritus **John Addison** continues to defy expectations. He still drives, handling everyday tasks with remarkable independence. It's not uncommon to see him out on errands—whether picking up groceries, stopping at the cleaners, or filling up his gas tank. His energy and dedication to living life to the fullest are clear to anyone who knows him. He recently celebrated his 94th birthday.

For Addison, life has always been about work and service. Growing up in Virginia, one of his earliest memories is his desire to work and help out. This strong work ethic has followed him throughout his life. However, when asked about the secret to reaching 94 years, his answer is simple yet profound: “I just serve a good God. God has been good to me.”

It is this deep faith that has shaped every aspect of Addison's life. A member of the Sanctuary for over 60 years, the church has been his constant source of strength, teaching him to trust in God and to learn His word. That trust, built over decades of service and dedication, has been the foundation of his life.

For young people, Addison has a clear message: “Trust in God and give the best that you've got.” He believes that no matter what challenges life may throw, faith and perseverance will always carry you through.

When asked about his legacy, Deacon Addison reflects on a lifetime of faith and hard work. “I've done the best that I can. I serve God, and that's what I want to be remembered for.”

His spirit and dedication continue to inspire those around him. Through his unwavering faith and service, he leaves behind a powerful example for future generations—one of trust, humility, and commitment to God.



New Ministry Journey Beacons for TSAKS National News Editor

By Angela Hulett



*“Thank you
for being my
family in
Christ for all
these years.”*

After more than 20 years at The Sanctuary, it's with a mix of joy and sadness that I announce my departure. My husband, Ray Hulett, has recently been named the new pastor at Iconium Baptist Church, and together, we are preparing to embrace this new chapter in our ministry journey.

The Sanctuary has been my home for over two decades, and I have loved every moment of being a part of this beautiful church family and serving under Bishop Anthony Maclin. I have had the honor of serving as the editor of our church newsletter for a short season, and it has been a true labor of love.

Thank you for being my family in Christ for all these years. I'll miss seeing your faces regularly, but I know that we are always connected by the love of God. May His grace continue to guide and bless this amazing church.