

Beacon of Light

January—March 2023 • Volume 6 • Issue 1

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life." John 8:12

Pastor's Corner

Spring Cleaning for the Soul



Since Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent, we may have been wrestling with what to “give up” or what to “take on” during this special season of self-examination, penitence, and reflection. Our Generosity Committee has invited us to conduct a measure of self-inventory in our “Coins for Lent” activity, where each day of Lent we challenge ourselves to take material inventory of some of the things we have in our possession and then make a matching coin or other monetary donation in the fold-up church

Lenten bank provided. At the end of our Lenten journey, we will collect these individual funds and use them to make a church contribution to the King George VI Memorial Home for the Aged in Sierra Leone.

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But whether we participate in the “Coins for Lent” activity, or not, whatever we decide to do or not do, this Season of Lent should be a time of change, of movement, and of going from what we are to the place or condition of where we would like to be. Much like our annual “Spring Cleaning” rituals and practices, where we deliberately take stock of the no longer useful items taking up space in our closets, pantries, and households, the Lenten Season should also be an occasion to similarly prune ourselves of those no longer useful personal and spiritual habits.

If we were to examine our personal habits more closely, for instance, we might ask ourselves some very revealing questions: “Are we spending too much of our time, talents, and material treasures on frivolous things? Are our smartphones, computers and tablets, and smart TVs now occupying more of our time and attention than they should? Have we become addicted to “Facebook”, “Twitter”, “Instagram”, or any number of other social media platforms?” And more importantly, “Are these elements beginning to ‘crowd out’ the more useful spaces in our lives that perhaps could be more purposefully used in devotion and service to God?”

Our “Spring Cleaning” rituals should always include a level of personal and spiritual self-inventory such that we make way for more quality time spent with God in prayer, worship, Bible study, as well as personal devotional reading. It’s only when we perform adequate “Spring Cleaning for the Soul”, that we set ourselves up for real and legitimate “resurrection power” come Easter. The current Lenten Season is our last best opportunity to do so.

Pastor Mark D. Venson



Inspirational Thoughts and Encouragement

The Giant That Stands Between You And Great Faith

Source: Daily Hope



“Everyone assembled here will know that the LORD rescues his people, but not with sword and spear. This is the LORD’s battle, and he will give you to us!” (1 Samuel 17:47 NLT).

Before David faced Goliath in 1 Samuel, he actually had to fight four other giants. They weren’t physical giants, but they were giants in his mind.

You are far more likely to have to face those giants than a Goliath, but they can be just as big and intimidating—and they can keep you from becoming who God wants you to be and fulfilling the dream that God has put in

your heart.

The first giant in facing your dream is **delay**. No dream is fulfilled instantly. God gives you the dream on one day, but he doesn’t fulfill it the next day. It may be years before you see the fulfillment of your life dream. There is always a waiting period.

In David’s case, his dad held him back from the dream. After Samuel anointed David as king, Jesse told David to get back to tending the sheep!

When God’s plan contradicts somebody else’s plan, there’s going to be a delay, and people are going to try to hold you back—sometimes even the people who love you the most. But God is faithful, and he will complete his work in you in his time.

The second giant you may face is **discouragement**. Goliath created a climate of fear in Israel, and everybody was convinced they were going to lose the battle.

What people are you listening to that say it can’t be done? Who is putting down your dream, saying it won’t ever happen?

Sometimes you just need a fresh voice—a kid from the village with fresh eyes who says, “This guy’s nothing. We can take him down.”

The third giant standing in your way is **disapproval**. In David’s case, his own brother questioned his motives and disapproved of him going after Goliath.

When God gives you a dream that other people are afraid of and you go for it anyway, you will be misjudged, maligned, and misunderstood. You have to decide what matters more to you: the approval of other people or the approval of God.

The fourth giant you may have to face is **doubt**.

Nobody was a greater expert on war than King Saul, and he told David he was crazy for thinking a boy could fight a warrior like Goliath.

Maybe the expert is saying you can’t do it, either. That’s enough to make you start doubting yourself.



KIDZ Corner***You Are Black History!!***

In Sunday School we highlighted the accomplishments of African Americans and we discussed how we **all** are Black History!!! What have you done lately and what do you want to do in the future?



In 1976 President Gerald Ford officially designated February as “Black History Month”.

Every Generation Participates!

We read the bible verse Psalm 119:90, *Your faithfulness lasts to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands firm.* We discussed the meaning of the word “generation”, and the importance of Black History contributions and achievements through the many, many years or generations. The class reviewed how every generation has a role to play as we strive to correct problems of racism, stop discrimination, and also highlight the many achievements of African Americans. Everyone shared the many achievements of Rosa Parks and the bus boycott, and how Dr. Martin Luther King challenged Americans with his “I have a Dream Speech”. We learned about the 1968 Olympic winners Tommie Smith and John Carlos who raised their fists in the “Black Power” salute on the winner’s podium.

Sunday School Lesson

African Americans make this world awesome!

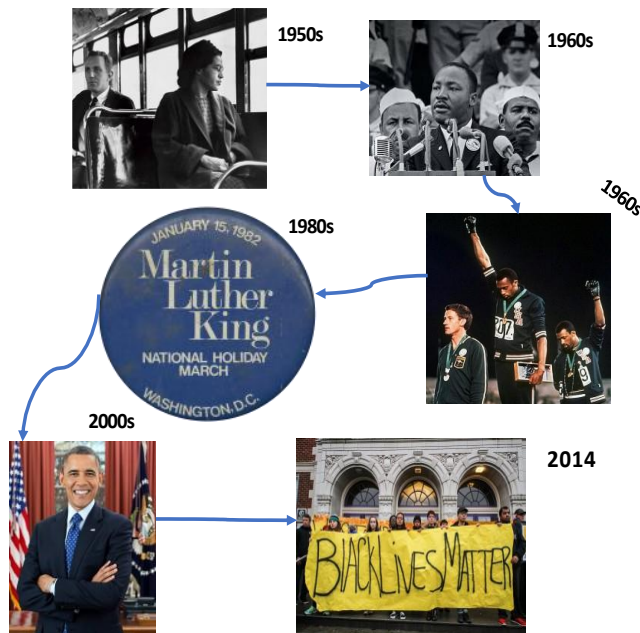


Every Generation Participates



Psalms 119:90

Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth and it abideth.

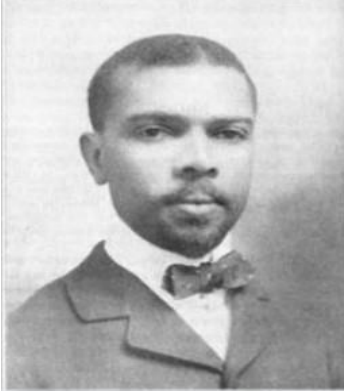


We talked about the activities and parades led by the musician Stevie Wonder to make Dr. Martin Luther King’s birthday, January 15th a national holiday and the overwhelming significance of having Barak Obama as the first African American President of the United States. Lastly, we discussed some of the recent highlights and movements such as Black Lives Matter.

We highlighted James Weldon Johnson the creator of the “Black National Anthem” and discussed his many accomplishments

Lift Every Voice and Sing

James W. Johnson

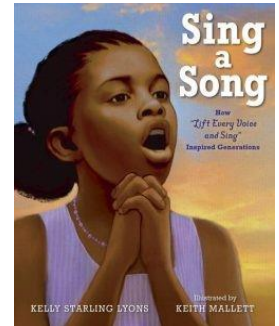


Aged around 30 at the time of this photo, James W. Johnson had already written "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" and been admitted to the Florida bar.

Often referred to as "The Black National Anthem," Lift Every Voice and Sing was a hymn written as a poem by NAACP leader James Weldon Johnson in 1900. His brother, John Rosamond Johnson, composed the music for the lyrics.

The words of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" serve as a reminder that each generation must continue to lift their voices, to ensure Black Americans have equal representation, equal rights and equal protections.

A choir of 500 schoolchildren at the segregated Stanton School, where James Weldon Johnson was principal, first performed the song in public in Jacksonville, Florida to celebrate President Abraham Lincoln's birthday.



There is now the James Weldon Johnson Institute at Emory University in Atlanta, GA, that focuses on the study of race and race relations.



EMORY UNIVERSITY



James Weldon Johnson Institute for the Study of Race and Difference

Emory University, College of Arts and Sciences

1655 North Decatur Road Atlanta, GA, 30322



Lastly, we talked about the hopes and dreams and what the children of Ebenezer want to be and do when they get older. Cheers to the next generation, we are so proud of each of you!

WE ARE BLACK HISTORY!!!





Black History Month

By Sis. Peggy Dearing

Beautiful skin we possess,
Like no other race we are,
Ambitious, desire to succeed,
Creative, courageous,
Kind to those who cross our path.

Hopeful and embracing the future,
Interested in persons from different walks of life,
Sensitive to needs of others,
Talented and having faith in God,
Optimistic about what lies ahead,
Respectful of one's rights and beliefs,
Yielding not to secular temptations.

Marvelous adventures we have overcome,
Open-minded facing many obstacles,
Notable contributions made to our world,
Tolerant of others' differences and beliefs,
Harmonious relationships we strive to achieve.

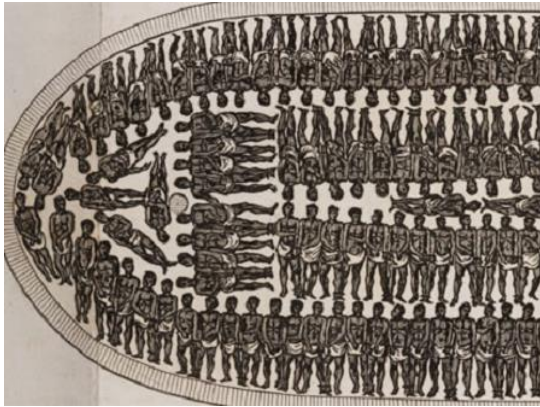
*Submitted by Sis. Terri Ware, Sis. Taylor Ware,
Bro. Aaron Ware, and Sis Peggy Dearing*



Little Known Black History Facts

Source: *Blackamericaweb.com*

The Clotilda



The Clotilda was a ship used in the illegal slave trade and is listed as the last known vessel to deliver slaves to American shores. A reporter may have discovered the wreckage of the ship originally thought to be destroyed, unlocking a historical mystery that has evaded researchers for years.

Reporter Ben Gaines of AL.com made a discovery of a shipwreck on the muddy banks of a river delta in Alabama. The wreckage does appear to be the type of boat that would have been used at the time of Clotilda's final voyage, and historians are scrambling to uncover what they've found.

A plantation owner in the region hired a sea captain to pilot the Clotilda to West Africa after making a bet he could sneak the boat past authorities. At this time, the slave trade across the Atlantic was officially outlawed, though slavery persisted in the states. Under darkness, the Clotilda sailed into Mobile and up the Spanish River, unloading 110 slaves from West Africa. The boat was then reportedly torched to hide the crime.

In 1865, slavery was officially abolished and many of the West Africans settled into a new community called Africatown, which still exists today. Many of the descendants remained in the region and it was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 2012.



Dr. John Hope Franklin

Dr. John Hope Franklin was one of the leading historians of his time and is credited with forging paths that would spark the rise of African American studies. We take a look back at his life and career.

Dr. Franklin was born in 1915 in Rentiesville, Oklahoma, to Buck Franklin, a civil rights lawyer, and his schoolteacher mother, Mollie Franklin. As a boy, Dr. Franklin narrowly missed the happenings of the Tulsa Race Riots that destroyed the "Black Wall Street" neighborhood of Greenwood in 1921. His father worked successfully to defend the Black residents of Tulsa against the city after it attempted to stop them from rebuilding what was lost.



The lessons and experiences of his parents never strayed far from Dr. Franklin, and he initially wanted to become a lawyer like his father. After leaving Fisk University in 1935, Dr. Franklin had since shifted his focus onto history and entered Harvard University where he earned a master's and Ph. D in history in 1936 and 1941, respectively.

Considering the times, Dr. Franklin faced racism and bigotry and nearly every turn despite his impressive credentials, especially during World War II. Because of his race, the U.S. Navy wouldn't let him perform clerical work, and a history project for the War Department refused his services. He was also denied entry to take a blood test for the draft because the offices wouldn't admit him, which moved Dr. Franklin to avoid it altogether.

Dr. Franklin taught at several schools, including Fisk, Howard University, and Brooklyn College. In the midst of his teaching career, Dr. Franklin wrote several books but perhaps his best-known work is "From Slavery To Freedom: A History Of African Americans," first published in 1947. Some experts say the book laid the groundwork for Af-Am studies.

After serving as a professor of history at Duke University, the school eventually honored Dr. Franklin by naming its African and African American History and Culture center after him.

Dr. Franklin passed away in 2009 at the age of 94 but worked to the end in his field. He amassed several honors over the course of his long career, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1995.



Fanny Jackson Coppin

The namesake of Baltimore, Maryland's Coppin State University, Fanny Jackson Coppin, was a woman of exceptional fortitude and ambition. Born into slavery, Coppin was the first Black woman to become a school principal and was driven by a need to spread education to newly freed slaves.



Fanny Marion Jackson was born in October 1837 in Washington, D.C. into slavery. An aunt purchased her freedom when she was a girl, and she worked as a domestic servant while going to school. Coppin's interest in learning was apparent early on, and an opportunity for higher education occurred when she attended Oberlin College.

As the first college to admit women and Black students, Oberlin was a godsend for Coppin and there, she became its first pupil-teacher. Coppin opened an evening school for freedmen to continue educating her people. She traveled to Philadelphia and taught at the Philadelphia Institute For Colored Youth, which is now Cheyney University. In 1869, she was promoted to her history-making role as principal of the school.

Coppin married A.M.E. Minister Rev. Levi J. Coppin in 1881. After retiring in 1902, Coppin joined her husband as a missionary in Cape Town, South Africa. She returned to Philadelphia in 1907 and completed a book, *Reminiscences of School Life, and Hints on Teaching* that was published in 1913, the same year that she passed away.

In 1926, a teacher training school was named the Fanny Jackson Coppin Normal School in her memory, which is now Coppin State.



Lady Sarah Lou Harris Carter



Lady Sara Lou Harris Carter broke a number of barriers in her modeling and fashion career. After attending HBCU Bennett College in North Carolina, Carter went on to become the first African American model to star in a national ad campaign, according to historians.

The future model was born July 4, 1923, in Wilkesboro, North Carolina. After graduating from Bennett, Carter moved north to New York after teaching for a year. While in the big city, Carter earned a master's degree and supported herself as a model, radio host, and dancer working across a variety of mediums.

In the '40s, Carter was signed to the Branford Modeling Agency, the first created for Black models. Carter and her peers began shifting the idea that glamour models were mostly blondes. Eventually, she became the first Black woman featured in the New York buyer's fashion show as part of the "Branford Lovelies."

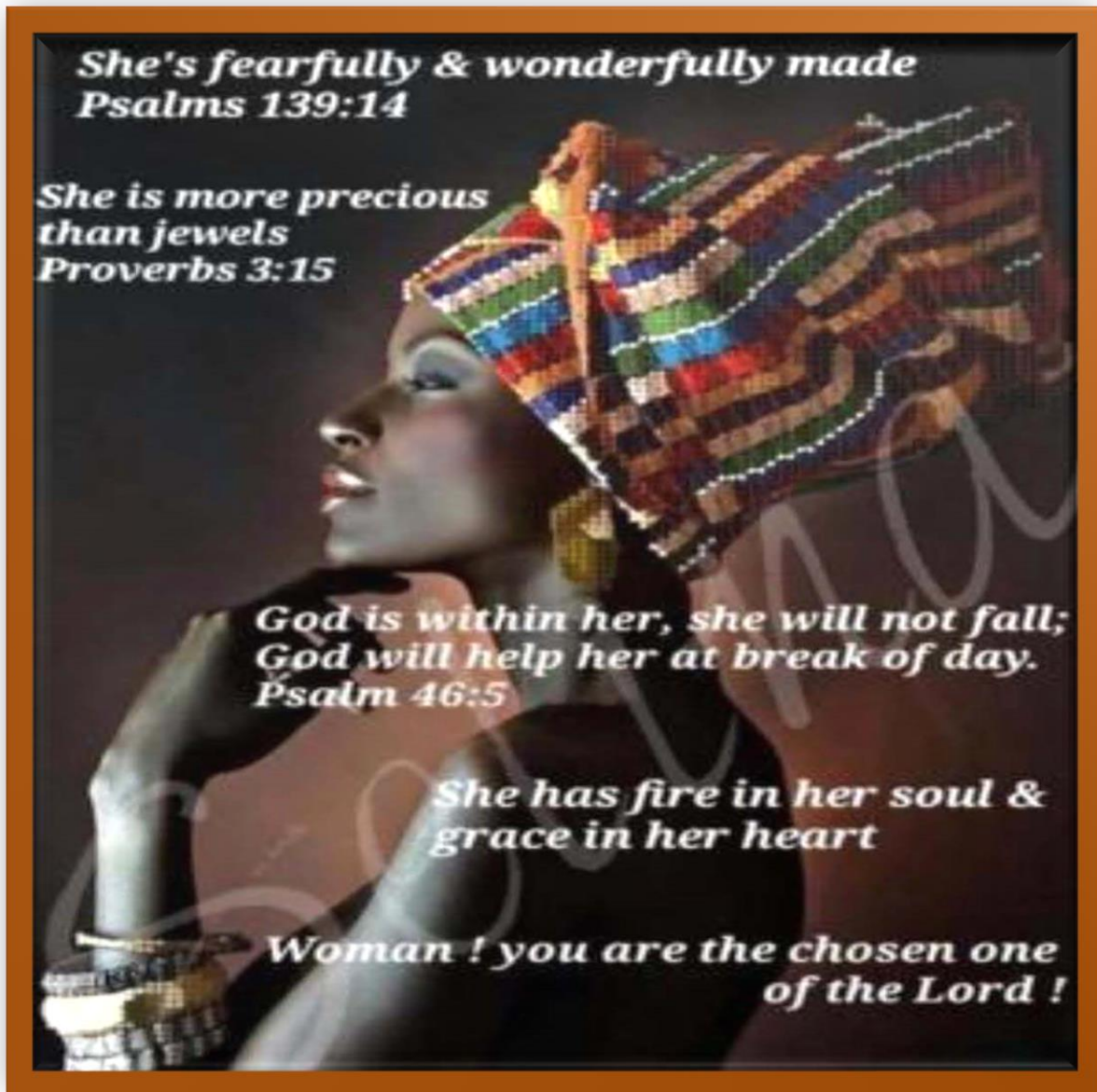
Within the decade, Carter made history once more as the featured model for the Lucky Strike cigarette company's national ad campaign. Modeling led her to Guyana, where she met and married British attorney John Carter. Mr. Carter was knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1966, thus granting Mrs. Carter the title of "Lady."

Over the course of her career, Carter appeared on the cover of *Jet*, *Ebony*, *Hue*, and *Tan* magazines among several others. She also owned and operated a charm school in her husband's home country.

Carter passed away in 2016, survived by her husband's three children and several grandchildren. She was 93.



March is National Women's History Month—



Encouraging and Lifting the Spirit of Women

Every woman who has walked with God has a story to tell you.

- ❖ Sara will tell you: "Nothing is too difficult for God".
- ❖ Hagar will tell you: "Even in the desert, God is there".
- ❖ Rahab will tell you: "God can use anyone".
- ❖ Hannah will tell you: "My God answers prayers".
- ❖ Ruth will tell you, "It's not over until God says it's over".
- ❖ Esther will tell you: "God is able to transform an unworthy into a noble".
- ❖ Elizabeth will tell you: "Even if the age is advanced, you will give birth to a great man".





Follow Your Kidney Health



March is National Kidney Month!

Did you know?



More than **1 in 7 U.S. adults** are estimated to have **chronic kidney disease**.



Early kidney disease usually has **no symptoms**.



You are at **higher risk for kidney disease** if you are over 60, have diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, or a family history of kidney failure.

How can you protect your kidneys? **Get tested!**



A urine test and a blood test can **check for kidney disease**.



Finding kidney disease early allows you time to try lifestyle changes and medicines that could keep your kidneys healthier for longer, and reduce your risk for heart attack and stroke.



Start following your kidney health today!
Visit niddk.nih.gov for more information.

Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)

Remembering Bro. Daiwo Flomo

Gone Too Soon. It breaks our hearts that you were taken so unexpectedly.

What an outpouring of love and affection for a humble, talented, and influential young man, Bro. Daiwo Flomo.

On Friday, March 10, 2023, we celebrated the life of Daiwo who tragically passed away on February 11, 2023.

Daiwo was born October 30, 2005, in Prince George's County to James Flomo and Chinegirl Gbelee. At an early age, Daiwo began attending Ebenezer United Methodist where he was baptized. For over 14 years, he was a faithful member serving as an acolyte and participating in various church activities.

Daiwo was a Junior at the Parkdale High School in Riverdale, Maryland. He spent his time playing sports, video games, making music, and enjoying time with his family and good friends. As his classmates and peers expressed, he will always be remembered for his smile, friendship, generosity, warmth, and kindness.

Bro. Stephlevan (Steven) spoke very eloquently of the love he and his brother shared and what his brother meant to him.

A Brother's Love—In Loving Memory Of My Brother Daiwo Flomo

"The dictionary refers to the word brother as 'a man or boy in relation to other sons and daughters of his parents.' To me, the word brother is someone who sticks with you the whole way, someone who can forgive you knowing your love for them. When I hear the word brother, in my eyes I think of laughter, peace, and forever joy. The brilliant young man I call my brother plays the role of a great inspiration in my life. If it was in the morning as he gets ready for school making sure he didn't wake me up, or whether it be making sure I have what I need, my brother always found a way to show that he was my brother. Never once was he ashamed to announce me as his brother, even if that meant sitting on the bleachers watching him have football practice or showing up to his job asking for food; my brother found a way to be humble. Having a brother who was older than me but close in age was a blessing. Having him around was a blessing because he taught me how to act, how to dress, and how to be respectful. Not one day will ever go by where I will not be thinking about my brother. I wanted to grow old with him, sit on the side of the road calling dibs on nice cars he drove by. I wanted to watch him get married and have a life outside of his youth filled with happiness and joy. I wanted to learn with him, learn from him, and walk through life with him. As the name Daiwo Flomo sticks in my mind, there will always be a Daiwo shaped hole in my heart. As I stand here today waiting for hope to move on, I know he will be here every step of the way. As he looks down on me from his beautiful home in heaven I want him to know he was a part of me."

*Those we love, do not go away. They walk beside us every day.
Like scattered seeds, memories of you will bloom in our hearts forever.*



Keeping You Informed**Ebenezer HBCU Weekend**

Ebenezer UMC held its first HBCU weekend, February 18-19, 2023. What better way to pay homage to Historically Black Colleges and Universities during Black History Month, than to visit our very own Bowie State University (BSU)? In honor of the support Ebenezer provides the Charles and Virginia Williams Endowment Fund for athletic scholarships at Bowie State University, BSU provided us with 20 free tickets to the Men's Basketball game during Senior Day on Saturday, February 18th. As with anything that Ebenezer does, there was support for this event. We had 17 attendees including young Robert Neal who is in the 8th grade. Guy Williams, the founder of the Endowment Fund and the son of Charles and Virginia Williams, coordinated with Bowie State University to host us for the day. We had special seating in the gymnasium and participated in the President's luncheon where we took a picture with the Bowie State University President, Aminta Hawkins Breaux. Dr. Breaux was so very gracious to us, not to mention that the food was excellent.

The BSU Men played a great game against Lincoln University and won, 67-57. After the game, we were escorted into a classroom where we received a gift of appreciation: a BSU water bottle. We heard from our host, Steve Stephens, who explained how the Endowment Fund worked and its intent. The Fund provides scholarships for track & field and basketball athletes who exemplify leadership, academic achievement, sportsmanship, and citizenship. We heard from one of the recipients of the fund, how it helped her, and how she pays it forward. We then took a brief tour of the campus while we walked to the bookstore and shopping ensued. That was the end of day one.

Day two began on Sunday, February 19th where everyone was encouraged to wear their school apparel and/or accessories. Our guest speaker for the day was Guy Williams. We invited our host Mr. Stephens to come to church and he showed up in his BSU attire to support Mr. Williams. He was greeted in Ebenezer fashion and made to feel welcome much like he treated us on the campus. Mr. Williams began his message by expressing his gratitude for the support of Ebenezer and how much his parents loved the church and Bowie State University. His message was indeed a very important one. He said we all matter and can make a difference and that redemption is possible at any time.

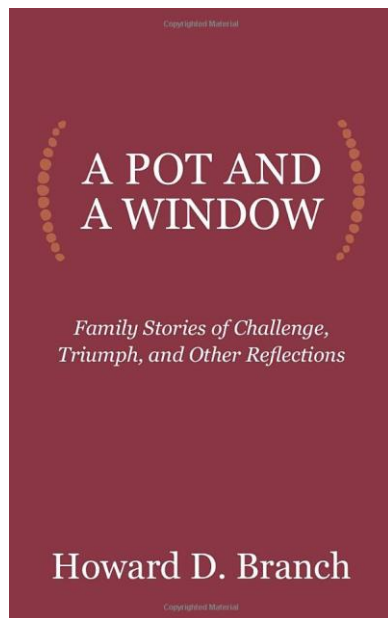
This weekend was a fantastic weekend filled with fun and excitement. While this is not an extensive list, some of the HBCUs represented over the weekend were: Bowie State University, Howard University, Johnson C. Smith University, Mississippi Valley State University, Morehouse College, & Virginia State University. If you missed this event, you surely missed a good time. If you would like to donate to the endowment fund, to help our young adults, please visit: <http://bit.ly/charlespop>

Submitted by Sis. Victoria Jones

Some Pics from the Ebenezer HBCU Weekend—



Ebenezer Salutes Another Published Author—Bro. Howard Branch



Bro. Howard Branch recently published his first book, *A POT AND A WINDOW—Family Stories of Challenge, Triumph, and Other Reflections*.

In this book, “the author captured life for he and his siblings in a light-hearted way as they grew up as a large African American family in rural Mississippi during the mid-nineteen-hundreds. They are children of a sharecropper. The book chronicles their life on the farm by exploring births, work, housing, food, clothing, school, church, idioms, and other aspects of their life. Life was hard and made harder in part due to the systemic inequities of the time. However, they did not dwell on their circumstances but rather their aspirations. Their story is presumed to be representative of their community's story.”

Bro. Howard's book can be purchased at www.Amazon.com or through other Book Retailers.

A Few Amazon Reviews:

- **Joyful and Detail-Oriented.** *I enjoyed reading "A Pot And A Window." The author captured rural life in his hometown in a very positive and endearing manner. It was a fast and easy read. I loved how the author departmentalized aspects of his family's life, yet wove it in a way that revealed a very compelling picture of growing up in the Deep South.*
- **Hear the Truth as told by Author - Howard Branch!** *A Pot and Window clearly explain how a large family survived challenge, triumph and other life experiences. Howard way of demonstrating each topic importance will lead you to enjoy each saying or quote followed by defining what's being said. Howard is an exceptional writer, a must read with the family. Congratulations Howard, job well done!*



A Note of Thanks

To Pastor Venson and EUMC family, I wish to thank each one of you for your encouragement and support for my book. All who read *The Girl With the Iron Leg*, I appreciated your calls, texts, and emails expressing thoughtful comments, commentaries, and reviews especially the ones sent to amazon.com.

You said you loved Book 1. Get ready for Book 2. It should be available by October or November, 2023. FYI, It is totally different from Book 1.

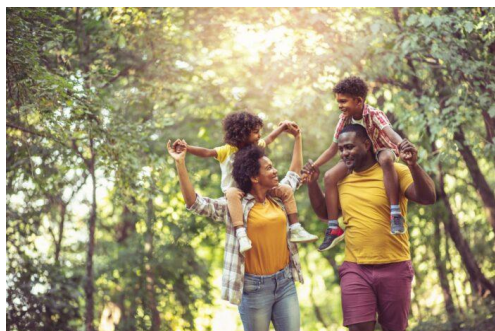
For those who were unable to watch my interview on You Tube, it can be viewed at any time by using the following link: <https://youtu.be/ZWCSiooVluI>

Sis. Griselda Clemons



A 2-Minute Walk After Eating Can Improve Blood Sugar

Source: *Black Health Matters*



There are numerous benefits to walking. It makes you feel good, and a nice walk can improve your health.

However, did you know a quick stroll can reduce your **blood sugar**? According to a 2022 study in *Sports Medicine*, a two-minute walk after a meal will do the trick. In addition, standing up after a meal can help, but not as much as walking.

“Intermittent standing breaks throughout the day and after meals reduced glucose on average by 9.51% compared to prolonged sitting. However, intermittent

light-intensity walking throughout the day saw a greater glucose reduction by an average of 17.01% compared to prolonged sitting,” Aidan Buffey, a doctoral student in the physical education and sport sciences department at the University of Limerick in Ireland.

“This suggests that breaking prolonged sitting with standing and light-walking breaks throughout the day is beneficial for glucose levels,” he added.

Benefits of A Short Walk

The study showed that a quick walk after a meal stabilized insulin levels in the participants. According to experts, keeping blood sugars from spiking is good for the body as large spikes and fast falls can raise the risk for diabetes and heart disease.

Furthermore, studies proved blood sugar levels would spike within 60 to 90 minutes after eating.

Our muscles need glucose to function. Therefore, movement helps clear sugars from the bloodstream. For instance, runners rely on carbo-loading before a big race. If you want to put in a more significant effort to lower your blood sugar, then make sure you are doing 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity and two days of muscle training per week.

“People who are physically active for about 150 minutes a week have a 33% lower risk of all-cause mortality than those who are physically inactive,” the U.S. CDC. Meaning that just 21.43 minutes each day of the week cuts your risk of dying by one-third.

Will you add a two-minute walk as an after-meal activity? Comment below!

Submitted by Sis. Victoria Jones



3 Warning Signs of Macular Degeneration

Whether wet or dry, these symptoms warrant a visit to an eye doctor.

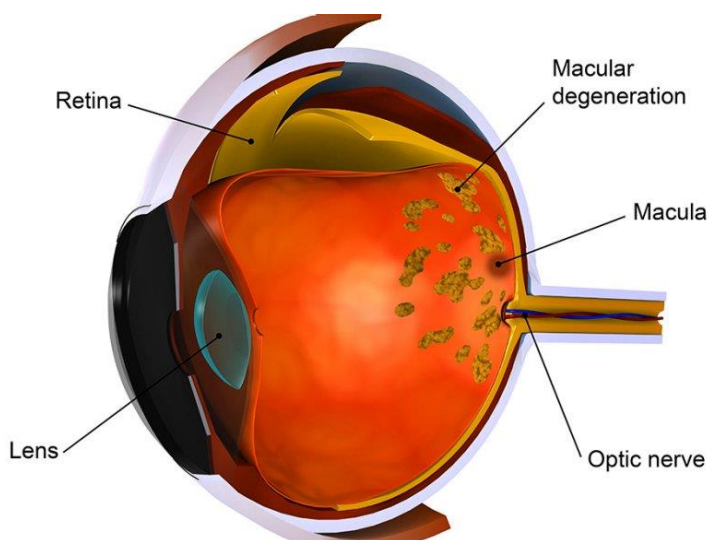
by Kimberly Goad

You can ward off plenty of health conditions by looking out for early warning signs. But that’s not possible with age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the leading cause of vision loss in people over 50. That’s because there are no warning signs in the early stages.

“Age-related macular degeneration is a disease that can be insidious, often with symptoms coming on slowly over years,” says Michelle Andreoli, M.D., an ophthalmologist at Northwestern Medicine and spokesperson for the American Academy of Ophthalmology. “The slow onset of symptoms can lead to advanced disease before patients are aware of the change.”

AMD, which affects 11 million people in the United States, is a progressive eye disease that affects the central vision and, as a result, the ability to see fine details. If you have advanced AMD, it’s all but impossible to drive, read, watch TV, or recognize faces.

There are two types of AMD: dry and wet. The overwhelming majority of people with the disease have dry AMD. With the dry form, parts of the macula — located at the center of the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of your eyes — become thin over time and tiny clumps of protein called drusen grow, gradually blurring your central vision. Any stage of dry AMD can turn into the wet form, but the reverse isn’t true; wet AMD is always late stage.



Biomedical illustration of macular degeneration

With wet AMD, abnormal blood vessels grow under the macula, ultimately leading to fluid and blood leakage, causing scarring of the macula.

“Symptoms like the ones described below should prompt patients to see their eye care specialists for an eye exam,” says Akrit Sodhi, M.D., professor of ophthalmology at the Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins Medicine. “They could be due to development of advanced AMD, dry or wet.”

Here are three warning signs of AMD.

1. Blurriness. The haziness comes on so gradually you may think the solution to the fuzzy print on the page or your computer screen is a new eyeglass prescription, if not a brighter bulb in the overhead lighting. And it may be. But blurriness is also a hallmark symptom of AMD.

2. Straight lines appear wavy. Imagine looking at lines of text on a page that look bent or curved. Or maybe it's the window blinds, bathroom tiles or bookshelves that appear that way. When lines that should be straight aren't, you may have AMD.

3. Blank areas in your central vision. Often, the earliest changes associated with AMD are tiny blind spots in your central vision — as opposed to your peripheral vision — that can slowly enlarge and multiply over time, says Andreoli. “Eventually, these tiny blind spots start to blend together, leading to central vision loss.” And although you may retain some peripheral vision, it's difficult to read and recognize other people's faces.

How to Treat AMD

With AMD, there's no cure, but there are ways to prevent the disease from progressing. That's why the American Optometric Association recommends annual eye exams for people over 60. During the exam, your doctor will look at the macula for what's known as drusen, yellow deposits of fats and proteins. Some small drusen are to be expected with age and don't cause vision loss. But medium-sized or larger ones are a classic sign of AMD. “Regular visits with an ophthalmologist can detect AMD years before patients notice anything is wrong,” says Andreoli. “Early detection of changes can lead to treatments that can slow progression or reverse vision loss in some cases of AMD.”

Vitamins to treat age-related macular degeneration

Research shows that taking certain high-dose vitamins and minerals — specifically, vitamins C and E, zinc, lutein, zeaxanthin, and copper — slows progression of the disease in people with intermediate AMD and those with late-stage AMD in one eye. But that's not to say you should load up on these vitamins and minerals willy-nilly. Supplements known as AREDS2 are sold over the counter in specific quantities. Talk with your eye doctor about whether such high-dose supplements make sense for you.

“Wet AMD is treated with the same AREDS2 vitamins as dry AMD, but also with injections of medications into the eye to treat the leaking blood vessels,” says Andreoli. These medications help reduce the number of abnormal blood vessels in your retina. They also slow leakage. “Currently, these treatments are focused on stopping progression of disease, but good treatments that reverse damage are still in the works.”

Prevention strategies

Lifestyle also plays a part in treating AMD, adds Sodhi. “Reducing exposure to sunlight by wearing sunglasses, avoiding cigarette smoke, eating a healthy diet and getting annual eye exams can help lower the risk that a patient develops vision loss from AMD as they get older,” he says.

Who's Most at Risk

You're at risk for AMD if you are:

- **Over age 60**

As we age, “the cumulative exposure to oxidative stress can affect the health of the retina and, in particular, the macula,” says Sodhi. “The blood flow to the outer retina is reduced, the delivery of oxygen to the retina can be compromised, and the ability of the retina to tolerate the additional burden of oxidative stress declines.”

- **Regularly exposed to cigarette smoke**

Research shows that not only smokers, but also people who are regularly exposed to cigarette smoke, are at greater risk for AMD. That's because smoking speeds up the deterioration of the macula by increasing the number of damaging chemical compounds and reducing blood and oxygen to the eye. The good news? A study published in the *British Journal of Ophthalmology* found that stopping smoking can reduce your odds of AMD; the risk in former smokers who hadn't smoked for over 20 years was comparable to nonsmokers.

- **Have a family history of AMD**

If your parents, siblings or children have AMD, you have a higher risk for getting it too.

- **Caucasian or Asian**

Research shows that white people have 10 times the prevalence of AMD as African Americans. And a review of population studies in Japan, China, Malaysia, India and South Korea found that prevalence of AMD in Asians 40 to 79 years old was almost equal to that of Caucasians, 6.8 percent versus 8.8 percent, respectively.

Kimberly Goad is a New York-based journalist who has covered health for some of the nation's top consumer publications. Her work has appeared in Women's Health, Men's Health and Reader's Digest.



7 Ways to Lower Cholesterol without Medication

Source: PERMANENTE MEDICINE®, Christie Youssef, DO



Perhaps you are one of the nearly 40 percent of American adults who have high cholesterol. When you heard the news from your doctor, you may have been scared and worried about your increased risk for heart attack and stroke.

Fortunately, there are many lifestyle changes you can make to get your cholesterol numbers back to healthy levels. I encourage my patients to feel empowered to make changes because the benefits are

tremendous. And if lifestyle changes don't help, there are medications you can take to lower your cholesterol.

Here are 7 things you can try to lower your cholesterol without medication:

1. Understand the role cholesterol plays and why having cholesterol at healthy levels is important to your overall health. Cholesterol is a type of lipid in your blood. If you have too much cholesterol, it starts to build up in the arteries in the form of plaque. As the arteries narrow and harden—a condition known as atherosclerosis—blood may not easily flow throughout the body. This can lead to coronary artery disease, heart attack and stroke.

Total cholesterol levels should be less than 170 mg/dl for anyone 19 or younger. A range of 125-200 mg/dl is ideal for age 20 or older. The total cholesterol number is made up of two parts: low-density lipoprotein (LDL) or "bad" cholesterol; and high-density lipoprotein (HDL) or "good" cholesterol. LDL can cause blockages in the arteries; HDL helps remove bad cholesterol from them.

Ideally, LDL should be less than 100 mg/dl. HDL should be 45 mg/dl or higher for anyone 19 or younger; 40 mg/dl or higher for men age 20 or older; and 50 mg/dl or higher for women age 20 or older.

2. Eat healthy foods. The role of eating a healthy diet cannot be overstated. Read nutrition labels and become familiar with the ingredients in food. Look for nutrient rich foods with little or no cholesterol. Some tips:

- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. The more plant-based your diet is, the better your cholesterol will be. Plant-based diets are full of healthy fats and soluble fiber. Avocado, grapes, blueberries, strawberries and apples all have great nutritional benefits.
- Avoid trans fats. That means avoiding foods with partially hydrogenated vegetable oil and hydrogenated oils. Trans fats are found in cookies, cakes, pastries, margarine and crackers.
- Choose proteins low in saturated fat, such as fish and chicken. Eliminate red meat from your diet, but if you do eat red meat, choose lean cuts and trim off excess fats. Meats should be grilled, poached, baked or broiled. Do not fry. Aim to eat fish high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring or trout.
- Eat more soluble fiber. Soluble fiber grabs cholesterol in the gut before it gets into the bloodstream; soluble fiber reduces LDL. Oats, quinoa, barley, chickpeas, lentils and wholegrain breads are good options.
- When eating dairy, look for low-fat milk, cheese and yogurt. Almond milk is a great substitute for cow's milk.
- Avoid adding butter, margarine and shortening to your dishes when cooking and baking. Olive oil, sunflower oil and grapeseed oil are healthier options.
- Add nuts to your meals and snacks. Nuts are healthy, especially when not salted or fried. Walnuts, almonds, pistachios and cashews are good choices to help lower cholesterol. Since nuts have a lot of calories, limit yourself to a healthy portion size of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup a day.
- Include oats, beans and legumes into your meals.

3. Exercise. Physical activity lowers bad cholesterol and increases good cholesterol in your body while helping you lose or maintain a healthy weight. We recommend 150 minutes of moderate activity each week. Aim to include a combination of cardiovascular, stretch and weight-bearing exercises into your routine. Even little things, like taking the stairs or parking your car farther from the entrance in a parking lot, add up and count as minutes toward your goal of 150 minutes. You don't need to join a gym to reap the benefits of physical activity.

4. Quit smoking – and if you don't smoke, don't start. Quitting smoking improves your HDL. Reach out to your physician if you need help quitting.

5. Limit alcohol. Drinking one or two glasses of wine a week is okay but try to avoid drinking more than that because too much alcohol can increase your LDL and reduce your HDL.

6. Manage stress. Chronic stress can increase your cholesterol. Manage stress with exercise, meditation, mindfulness, yoga and getting 7-8 hours of restorative sleep each night. Kaiser Permanente members have access to the Calm and myStrength apps at no cost.

7. Consider over-the-counter supplements. Soluble fiber and omega-3 fatty acids/ fish oil have been shown to lower cholesterol.

Many people see great results by trying these suggestions, but for some patients, lifestyle changes are not enough, particularly if they have a family history of high cholesterol. If lifestyle changes do not help lower your cholesterol, discuss medication with your doctor. Statins are often prescribed to lower cholesterol and have good outcomes. Medication should be taken in conjunction with eating a healthy diet and exercising for best results.

Christie Youssef, DO, is a board-certified family medicine physician with the Mid-Atlantic Permanente Medical Group. She sees patients at the Kaiser Permanente Fair Oaks Medical Center.



Fresh Herbs with Great Health Benefits

by Nissa Simon, AARP

Try these for perking up your mood, helping control cholesterol levels, easing a queasy stomach and relieving a cough

While some herbs simply boost the flavor of the food you cook, others can go beyond that to boost your health. “The term ‘herb’ has a fuzzy definition,” says Michael Castleman, author of *The New Healing Herbs*. “What we call medicinal herbs contain chemical compounds in them that have drug-like effects.” Be careful with taking these herbs as supplements in pill form, as some are linked to side effects and medication interactions, and always talk to your doctor before taking any supplement. Here we’ll tell you about how to use some of these fresh and dried herbs.

1. Basil

If you thought basil was meant only for making pesto or sprinkling on pizza, think again. Basil is the family name of more than 100 different species. Two of its best-known varieties are sweet basil and holy basil. Researchers who studied sweet basil found that it could help control blood pressure and that its fragrance eased stress and relieved anxiety. Clinical trials focused on holy basil found that participants experienced reduced stress, anxiety, sexual problems and depression. Both studies were done in a lab, however, so the benefits may not translate to at-home use.

Tip: As with other fresh herbs, add basil late in cooking; it loses its flavor if cooked too long.

2. Dill

Dill is known for its feathery foliage and seeds, and both are used in pickling and cooking. The seeds spice up pickles, flavor borscht and complement fish. Dill has far more going for it than that, however. Researchers at Penn State University recruited 71 men and

women with risk factors for heart disease and provided daily meals seasoned with about a teaspoon of added herbs and spices, including dill. After 12 weeks, the participants had both lower systolic (upper number) and diastolic (lower number) blood pressure.

Tip: If you want to get rid of bad breath, chew a handful of dill seeds

3. Garlic

Although widely used as both an herb and a spice, garlic — a member of the lily family — is botanically a vegetable. Its pale yellow flesh has been hailed for its ability to fight off the common cold. (Though research hasn't caught up with grandmother's advice.) Some research has found garlic helps reduce blood pressure and prevent hardening of the arteries.

Tip: To activate its health-promoting compounds, chop or crush garlic five to 10 minutes before cooking or adding to other ingredients.

4. Ginger

Some call ginger an herb, others a spice, but no matter what you call it, it's got a slew of impressive health benefits. Research has found that ginger can ease the pain of knee osteoarthritis, quell the queasiness of motion sickness and seasickness, improve muscle recovery after exercise and reduce high cholesterol. Ginger may even help at the dentist's office. Patients who had an impacted molar removed found powdered ginger as effective as ibuprofen in controlling pain after surgery.

Tip: The juice left from grating ginger has a lot of flavor. Save the juice and include it in your recipe, recommends *Cooks Illustrated*.

5. Lavender

Although it's an edible herb, most research on lavender focuses on its fragrance. The scent of lavender, a member of the mint family, can relieve anxiety, improve sleep and melt away irritability and stress, according to several studies. Trying to fall asleep? A small bag of lavender blossoms slipped under your pillow at night calms the nervous system by lowering blood pressure and heart rate, relaxing you enough to lull you to sleep.

Tip: If you want to use lavender as a cooking or cake-decorating herb, be sure it's designated as culinary grade. Start out with a small amount; lavender can overpower a dish if you use too much.

6. Lemon balm

The wrinkled heart-shaped leaves of this perennial herb were used as far back as the Middle Ages to reduce stress, relieve anxiety and provide a good night's sleep. It seems to work as well now as it did then. Lemon balm can bring on a feeling of calmness and lift a feeling of negativity, according to a study in the journal *Psychosomatic Medicine*. Combined with other soothing herbs such as valerian and chamomile, it can promote relaxation.

Tip: This minty herb can help heal cold sores and relieve itchy bug bites. Soak 2–4 teaspoons of crushed leaves in a cup of boiling water for 10 minutes. Cool. Use cotton balls to dab the tea on the sores throughout the day.

7. Oregano

Its minty flavor and aroma make oregano a winner when it comes to flavoring everything from tomatoes to potatoes. Along with bringing out the best in food, oregano offers some useful health benefits. The leaves are rich in carvacrol, a compound that has proved effective against norovirus, a highly contagious stomach bug. In addition, oregano tea can help boost the immune system and help the body fight infections.

Tip: To make oregano tea, mash the leaves of a sprig of oregano in a mug, pour in a cup of boiling water, let steep for five minutes, remove the leaves, add lemon juice and honey to taste. Enjoy!

8. Rosemary

Rosemary is a rich source of several antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds that may boost the immune system and improve circulation. This piney herb also contains naturally occurring chemicals that can help keep blood sugar in check, important in controlling diabetes. Carnosic acid, an antioxidant abundant in rosemary, helps protect brain cells from age-related changes such as deteriorating verbal skills and increased difficulty in learning new information, says Chris D'Adamo, director of the Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Maryland. He adds that rosemary contains other compounds that may also contribute to improved memory.

Tip: Rosemary has an assertive flavor, so go easy when you add it to food.

9. Sage

Sage, an evergreen shrub, is a member of the mint family. Its distinctive velvety leaves have a minty, cool fragrance. According to a study in the *Journal of Traditional and Complementary Medicine*, sage tea has been customarily used to treat bronchitis, cough, asthma and more. One study concludes that sage can help memory and elevate mood and alertness. As if that's not enough, some research has found that drinking sage tea improves levels of cholesterol and triglycerides among people with type 2 diabetes.

Tip: A little sage goes a long way, so use it sparingly when seasoning food.

10. Thyme

As far back as the Middle Ages, this hardy member of the mint family served both as a kitchen staple, providing an earthy flavor to food, and as an herbal medicine to ease bronchitis and relieve coughs. According to researchers at New York's Mount Sinai Health, several studies suggest that thyme hasn't lost its healing powers; it still works to soothe inflamed bronchial tubes and quiet coughs.

Tip: To help get rid of a nagging cough, brew a cup of thyme tea. Steep two or three sprigs of fresh thyme (or dried leaves if you don't have fresh) in boiling water for a few minutes, strain, and add a squeeze of lemon juice and a touch of honey.

Grow Your Own Herbs

Growing herbs is easier than you think. Here's some advice from the experts at the New York Botanical Garden.

- **Herbs need ample space.** They generally come in small 3- to 4-inch pots. To grow happily at home, they'll need a bigger pot so the root system can expand to support the plant's growth.

- **Give them the right light.** If you have only partial light indoors, parsley, chives and mint are good bets. In the garden, most herbs prefer a sunny site with good drainage, although some — including parsley, mint, lemon balm and tarragon — like afternoon shade.
- **Mint can be pushy.** The many varieties of mints have a habit of taking over the garden when given a chance, so plant them in a large plastic pot that you sink in the ground with the rim just above the soil. This provides a barrier to their habit of rampant growth for about three years.
- **Neglect them a little.** The rule of thumb with most herbs is the more you neglect them, the better they grow. Many people kill their herbs with kindness by overwatering and overfeeding. (The exception: basil, which likes to be fed.)
- **How to feed them.** Fertilize your herbs with an organic granular fertilizer just at the beginning of the season. Fertilize herbs grown in containers once a month. Basil likes its boost every two weeks.
- **Feel free to pinch.** Pinching back herbs encourages them to branch, so the more you harvest them, the better they'll grow.
- **Starting from seed.** To start your own seedlings of basil, sow seeds indoors five or six weeks before the last frost. Seeds will germinate in a few days. When the weather warms and the seedlings each have three pair of leaves, slowly get them used to being outside by increasing their time outdoors over several days, then transplant them to the garden bed about a foot apart.
- **Winter care.** As the cooler weather of autumn slows the growth of your garden herbs, consider potting them up and bringing them indoors for the winter. Don't be surprised if they lose their vigor and look droopy by spring.
- **Don't overwater indoors.** Wet feet (roots) and forced-air heat are the enemy of a rosemary plant wintering indoors. In fact, wet feet are the bane of herbs perched on saucers that protect the furniture. To keep your herbs happy, be sure to empty saucers of any standing water.

If you have a question about herbs or any other gardening problem email plantinfo@nybg.org.



Birthdays

January

Marie Fuller	5
Shauna Douglas	6
Avis Jenkins	9
Lynn McGill	12
Bernadette Miller	18
Charles Jones	19
Clayton Butler	19
Harold (Randy) Smith	28
Angelei Gibson	29
Deborah Branch	29
Joelle Smith	30
Sidney A. Brown	25
Daphne Fuller	25

February

Eric Bell	1
Alice Jackson	1
Danielle Branch	1
Malcolm Maycole	2
William Murdock	3
Jaime Winbush	3
Jocelyn Smith	4
Joyce Smith	4
Joanne Barber	5
Joilyn Smith	6
Edith Wright	9
Jalen Butler	10
Doug Jackson	10
Naomi Kamara	11
Janet Sledge	12
Khia Forbes	13
Pastor Mark Venson	13
Jobie Bell	19
Joshua Chinagorom	23
Angela Brown	27



March

Rotee Neal	1	Sonya Robinson	17
Linda Porter	3	Darrell Jackson	17
John Grantham	4	Stephanie Hazell	17
Aaron Ware, Jr.	4	Alabama Brumskine	18
Caprice Brown	6	Diane Stinson	19
Eddimae Tisdale	10	Bella Randall	20
Carolyn Winbush	11	Kendra Freeman	21
William Butler	13	Bernadette Bailey	21
Nakita Smith	13	Andre Bailey	22
Melissa B. Riley	13	Jackie Tyler-Hope	24
Cordelia Maycole	14	Aaron Ware, Sr.	28
Jacqueline Bell	16	Vernon Bell	29
		Brianna Miles	30

Wedding Anniversary



Donald & Alice Jackson
March 30, 1974
[49 Years]



From The Newsletter Editor



What if, GOD couldn't take the time to bless us today because we couldn't take the time to thank Him yesterday?

What if, GOD decided to stop leading us tomorrow because we didn't follow Him today?

What if, We never saw another flower bloom because we grumbled when GOD sent the rain?

What if, GOD didn't walk with us today because we failed to recognize it as His day?

What if, GOD took away the Bible tomorrow because we would not read it today?

What if, GOD took away His message because we failed to listen to the messenger?

What if, GOD didn't send His only begotten Son because He wanted us to be prepared to pay the price for sin.

What if, the door of the church was closed because we did not open the door of our heart?

What if, GOD stopped loving and caring for us because we failed to love and care for others?

What if, GOD would not hear us today because we would not listen to Him yesterday?

What if, GOD answered our prayers the way we answer His call to service?

What if, GOD met our needs the way we give Him our lives?

Sis. Ellalene Barnaby



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"May His name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun." Psalm 72:17



The name of God is not to be spoken of in praise and worship alone.
Whenever we look at this world in all of its majesty and beauty,
let us lift God's name in prayers of thanksgiving.

Source: Morning Whispers