



BETHEL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH LAY ORGANIZATION DEVOTIONAL | JANUARY 2024

501 West Orange Avenue | Tallahassee, Florida

The Reverend Dr. Julius Harrison McAllister, Jr., Senior Minister

Monday, *Justice* January 1, 2024

“Hirelings in the Places of Public Servants”

“...Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River!” – Mark 1:9 NLT

Dr. Carter G. Woodson, founder of Negro History Week, which has now evolved into a daily celebration Black history and culture; successfully published *The Mis-Education of the Negro* in 1933. This work examined the state of the American educational system during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and its adverse effects on Black people. Dr. Woodson provided a simple, yet seemingly insurmountable and often contentious solution for a citizenry insidiously enslaved to White Supremacy, that would translate into every area of Black society – the unapologetic centering of Black history, art, literature, science, politics and religion. By doing so, one unlocks the Black mind to think critically, build intentionally and protect fiercely, those institutions that derived his/her self-actualization and success. Dr. Woodson warned that this work of liberation could not be done grudgingly or from a place of superiority, but only with passion and humility. In *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, chapter 12 titled, “Hirelings in the Places of Public Servants,” Dr. Woodson wrote, “The servant of the people, unlike the leader, is not on a high horse elevated above the people and trying to carry them to some designated point to which he would like to go for his own advantage. The servant of the people is down among them, living as they live, doing what they do and enjoying what they enjoy. He may be a little better informed than some other members of the group; it may be that he has had some experience that they have not had, but in spite of this advantage, he should have more humility than those whom he serves, for we are told that ‘Whosoever is greatest among you, let him be your servant.’” A transformative liberator must be one who can effectively identify with and to those who are oppressed.

On this upcoming Sunday, January 7, 2024, Protestant denominations around the world will be celebrating, “The Baptism of the Lord,” scripturally outlined in Mark 1:4-11, Year B of the “Lectionary” found on page 795 of the *African Methodist Episcopal Church Hymnal*. In this scriptural passage, one will find a seemingly inconspicuous liberator – Jesus -- identifying with and to the people whom he served. John Mark, the Evangelist, wrote in chapter 1, verse 9, “One day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River.” The all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect, Jesus Christ took on human flesh to be raised in one of the poorest communities – Nazareth, in a despised region called Galilee. Jesus was baptized, an act in Hebrew traditions set-aside for Gentiles and marginal Jews; by a strange, charismatic prophet, John the Baptist, who rejected religious classism and an oppressive Roman Empire; in one of the filthiest bodies of water in the region – the Jordan River. Jesus did all this and more – to meet, to share, to serve, to love and to liberate a forgotten people from the chains of a violent and unjust society.

John Mark’s gospel, which according to the Lectionary, will be read for the majority of Sundays during this liturgical season of Ordinary Time (time after the Epiphany), reveals to the reader that Jesus was a busy man of calculated and decisive ACTION. He was not a “bad hire” in the public service sector. He was the epitome of public service. He was THE GOSPEL – The Good News to An Oppressed Community -- Personified.

On this last day of Kwanzaa, people across the African Diaspora are busy celebrating the seventh principle, Imani, which means faith! Faith in God! Faith in our Parents! Faith in our Teachers! Faith in our Institutions! Faith in Victory over our Struggle! Committed public servants have enough faith to believe that God will use him/her to divinely liberate people, communities and nations, one encounter at a time! Are you an ineffective “hireling” operating on a job with an excellent salary but very little positive community impact? Or are you a faithful public servant in your profession, busily lifting the masses as you climb? God wants fully committed, conscious, public servants, not rude, aloof, ill-placed “hirelings.” Which one are you? Selah.

The Bethel AME Church Lay Organization remains fully committed to the teaching, training and equipping of Methodists for liberating service in the church, community, country and world. Please join us at our next local Lay Meeting in The Efferson-Morgan Fellowship Hall of The Bethel AME Church on Tuesday, January 16, 2024, from 6:00 to 6:45 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

-Brother Kyle Harris, Ph.D., Contributor and Local Lay President