



*Service of  
Installation & Investiture*

**REVEREND DR. KEVIN R. JOHNSON**  
21ST SENIOR PASTOR

THE ABYSSINIAN BAPTIST CHURCH IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2024 • 3:00 PM



# J

Dr. Kevin R. Johnson's journey as a visionary leader, believer, and builder began at the tender age of 16 when he was licensed to preach at his home church, David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Austin, Texas. This early calling set the foundation for a life dedicated to spiritual leadership and community transformation, culminating as a nationally recognized religious leader.

Called in June 2024 to become the 21st Senior Pastor of The Abyssinian Baptist Church, Dr. Johnson succeeds his mentor, the late Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts, III, marking a new chapter in Abyssinian's storied legacy. As the first African American Baptist Church in New York State and one of the oldest in the nation, Abyssinian is renowned as the "flagship" church and holds a place of profound significance in American religious and cultural life. Since accepting the call as Abyssinian's pastor in June, Dr. Johnson has already made an impact, with over sixty-five new members joining the church since he began his tenure. His vision for Abyssinian involves honoring its rich legacy while breathing new life into its mission, positioning the church to address the spiritual and social needs of the 21st century.

Dr. Johnson's path to this prestigious position was paved with faith in God, family, academic excellence, and a commitment to service. He attended Morehouse College, where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa and *magna cum laude*, having been awarded both the Martin Luther King Jr. and Oprah Winfrey scholarships. His thirst for knowledge and leadership skills led him to earn a Master of Divinity degree as a Union Scholar from Union Theological Seminary and later, a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree in Organizational Leadership and Transformational Learning from Columbia University.

Prior to his current role at Abyssinian, Dr. Johnson founded and led Dare to Imagine Church, Inc. in Philadelphia. Starting with just 20 people meeting in his home, he grew the congregation to 1,500 members in seven years, developing a \$2.2 million, 6.8-acre campus in the Mt. Airy section of the city. This growth was not just in numbers, but in impact: the church has donated over \$750,000 to support local organizations providing services to citizens in need. Before heeding God's call to found Dare to Imagine, Dr. Johnson served for seven years as senior pastor of Bright Hope Baptist Church in Philadelphia, where he increased the membership and budget, expanded ministries, and positioned the church for greater growth. His experiences as a senior pastor follow his service as the assistant pastor at Abyssinian and, prior, as the assistant pastor at the Olivet Institutional Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio.

Dr. Johnson's influence extends beyond the pulpit. As President and CEO of Philadelphia Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), he revolutionized workforce training in the city. He developed new programs in banking, energy, construction, and technology, increasing the organization's budget from \$2 million to over \$5 million. His innovative approach led to securing a \$6.6 million alternative school contract from The School District of Philadelphia, creating pathways for over-aged and under-credited youth to earn high school diplomas and access life-sustaining careers.



His commitment to community development is further evidenced by his role as founder and President & CEO of Dare to Imagine Community Development Corporation. Previously, as President & CEO of Bridge of Hope Community Development Corporation, he collaborated with The Goldenberg Group to build a \$100 million, 14-story student apartment tower for Temple University, demonstrating his ability to bring large-scale projects to fruition.

Dr. Johnson's influence reaches far beyond Philadelphia. He has been invited to speak at some of the world's most prestigious religious institutions, including the largest Protestant church in the world, Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea. He made history as the first African-American in 200 years to speak at Africa's oldest Baptist church, Regent Road Baptist in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Inspired by this experience, he raised funds to establish a new church in West Africa - Bright Hope Baptist Church in Moyamba, Sierra Leone.

His expertise and insights are regularly sought by media outlets. Dr. Johnson has been featured on major networks such as CNN, NBC, MSNBC, ABC, and FOX NEWS. He reaches 400,000 listeners every Sunday morning on WDAS-FM 105.3 and pens columns for *The Philadelphia Tribune*, the oldest continually-running African-American newspaper. *Newsweek* has recognized him as one of the "up-and-coming" national post-Civil Rights ministers.

Throughout his career, Dr. Johnson has been actively involved in various organizations, serving on boards such as the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, City of Philadelphia Workforce Steering Committee, and PHL Diversity. He is a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. and Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity (Alpha Boulé), and holds a lifetime membership in the Morehouse College National Alumni Association. As an alumnus, Dr. Johnson was inducted into the Board of Preachers of the Martin Luther King, Jr., International Chapel, where he served as Chapel Assistant when he was a college student.

Despite his numerous professional accomplishments, Dr. Johnson remains blessed in his personal life. He is married to Mrs. Kimya S. P. Johnson, Esq., a corporate diversity executive and employment attorney. They are the proud parents of three children: Miles, a graduate student at New York University and alumnus of Morehouse College; Laila, a sophomore at Spelman College; and Lena, a senior at Central High School of Philadelphia.

From his early calling at 16 to his current role leading one of the nation's most historic churches, Dr. Kevin R. Johnson's life and career exemplify a commitment to education, spiritual leadership, and community development. His ability to transform organizations, inspire individuals, and create lasting change has made him a respected figure in both religious and secular circles. As he continues his work at The Abyssinian Baptist Church, Dr. Johnson stands poised to usher in a new era of growth and impact, building on the church's rich history while breathing new life into its mission and vision.

Johnson

## Our Installation Preacher

### REVEREND DR. JOSEPH C. PARKER, JR., ESQ.

Rev. Dr. Joseph C. Parker, Jr., Esq., a native of Birmingham, Alabama, is the seventh Pastor to serve the David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Austin, Texas. This year, he will celebrate his 32nd year as pastor, the longest-serving pastor in David Chapel's 100-year history. He has been described as "called by God, shaped by experience, a man of action, and a Renaissance man," and in his pastorate, "he's led David Chapel in a community-oriented direction, becoming a bastion of leadership for the Chestnut neighborhood, for the Eastside, for Black Austin, and for the city at large, being a church with a heart for the community."

A 1974 graduate of Morehouse College, Pastor Parker earned a master's degree in public administration on a graduate fellowship from the University of Georgia in 1976 and his law degree from the University of Texas at Austin in 1982, where he was selected as a member of the Order of Barristers, one of the top 10 graduating students in trial advocacy. He received the Gene Woodfin Award as a graduating University of Texas law student recognizing him as a bright student with great promise of future leadership. In May 1997, he graduated *magna cum laude* with his Master of Divinity degree from Baylor University's Truett Seminary, where he was the first Black graduate, served as the first alumnus and African American chairman of the seminary's board of advisers, and in 2004 was selected as the first Distinguished Alumnus of the Year. In 2003, he earned a Doctor of Ministry degree in Urban Ministry from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Boston.

From 1976-79 and before law school, he served as a management/budget analyst/staff assistant in the Dallas, Texas City Manager Office. Starting in 1982 and before being called as Pastor in September 1992, he served David Chapel as an associate minister and pastor. Licensed to practice law since 1983 in Texas and federal courts, he has worked as a trial attorney and mediator, including roles in the Travis County Attorney's Office, a private civil law firm, as Chief of Litigation for the State Bar of Texas, and in private practice.

In 1996, he became the first African American elected to serve as president of the Austin Bar Association. Consequently, in recognizing his "blazing the trail for minority lawyers and his lifelong dedication to championing the equal, ethical, and fair treatment of all people and raising awareness of the need to diversify our community," the Austin Bar Association named the "Joseph C. Parker, Jr. Diversity Award" in his honor. The State Bar of Texas has honored him as a "Trail Blazer," and in 2018, he was named "Distinguished Lawyer of the Year" by the Austin Bar Association. He is a Master of the Court Emeritus in the American Inns of Court. His framed

photograph, biography, and autograph are permanently displayed in a University of Texas law school classroom as a part of the Distinguished Minority Alumni Portrait Collection. Additionally, his Morehouse classmates honored him as a "Trail Blazer" at their 50th class reunion.

Pastor Parker has taught preaching at Truett Seminary and advanced civil litigation in trial advocacy at the University of Texas School of Law. He also has written articles for the *Baptist Standard* newsmagazine, the online *Smyth & Helwys Uniform Series Bible Study*, the quarterly publication, *Christian Reflection: A Series in Faith and Ethics*, and published a book, *Holy Change: A Systemic Approach to Transforming a Community*.

Pastor Parker has actively participated in various faith-based, interfaith, educational, social justice, legal, and community initiatives, including efforts to improve race relations. His extensive service includes roles on several boards, and he has received numerous accolades for his contributions. Among these are KFIT Radio Station's 1998 Pastor of the Year, the 2002 Polly Scallorn Community Trustee Award from Leadership Austin, and selection by Wake Forest University Divinity School in 2009 for an all-expense-paid two-week pastoral pilgrimage to Israel. He has also been honored by Morehouse College with induction into the Martin Luther King, Jr. International Chapel Board of Preachers, received the 2011 Hope Award from Interfaith Action of Central Texas, the 2013 Heman Marion Sweatt Civil Rights Legacy Award from the University of Texas at Austin, and the 2018 Founder's Award from the Austin NAACP. In 2022, Austin Mayor Steve Adler presented him with a "Key to the City." He was also honored with the 2024 "President's Volunteer Service Award" and Baylor-Truett Seminary's "2024 Legacy Award."

He is a Life Member of the Morehouse College National Alumni Association and the NAACP, and a member of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity ("The Boulé"). Currently, he serves as Sire Archon (or president) of the Gamma Gamma Boulé. He is the Chair of the Ministers Conference of the St. John Regular Baptist Association (in Central Texas) and the Vice President of Boards of the National Missionary Baptist Convention of America. He has served on the executive board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

He has been married to J. Laverne Morris-Parker since 1976. They have three adult daughters – Jessica L. Parker-Battle (Rev. Dr. Jeremy D. Battle, Sr.), Jennifer L. Parker, and Janetta L. Parker – and three grandchildren: Jordan L. Battle, Jeremy D. Battle, Jr., and Jennifer-Jocie L. Battle.



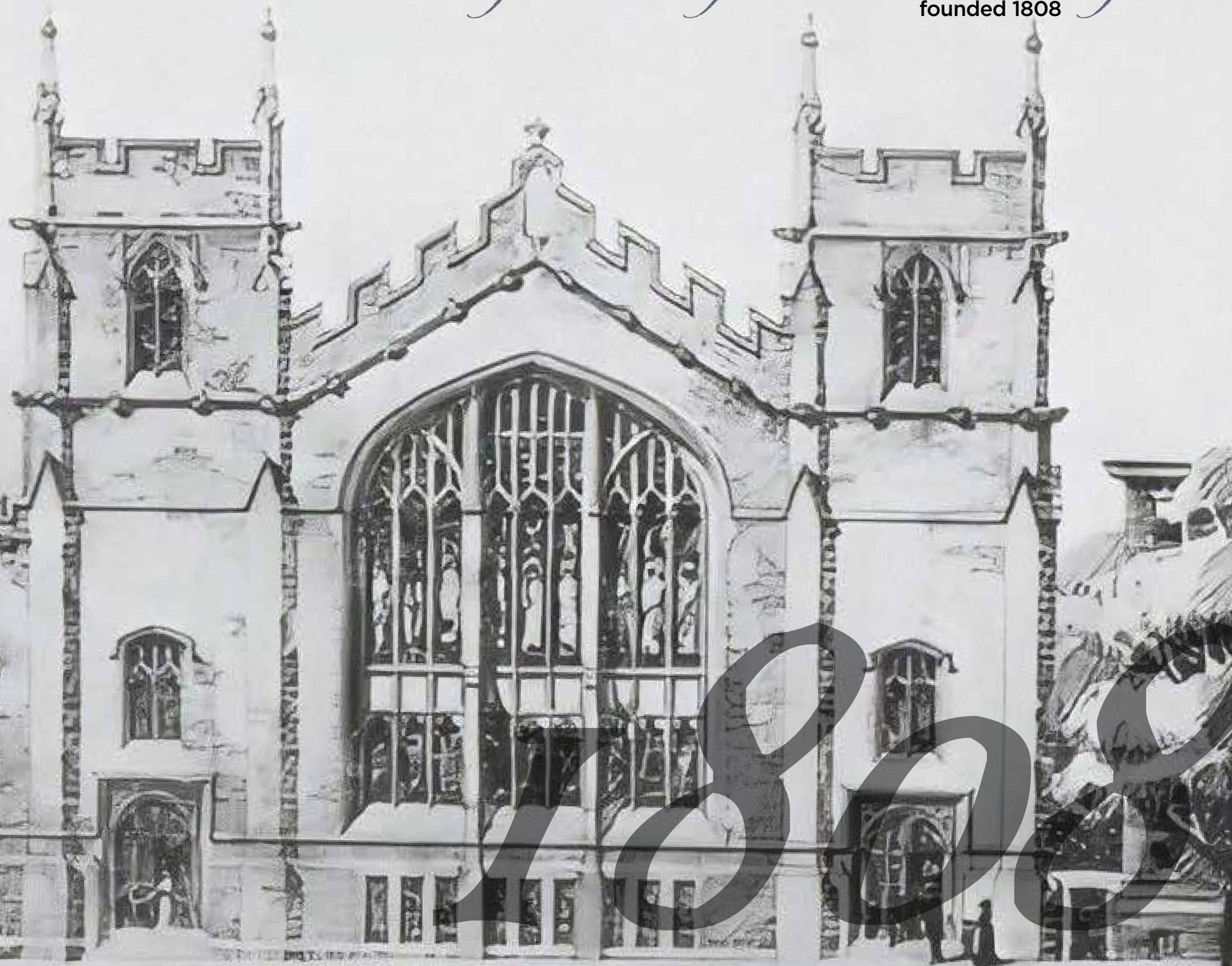
Named for our Holy Land, the ancient Abyssinia (present-day Ethiopia), The Abyssinian Baptist Church in the City of New York was established in 1808 by 15 African Americans living in New York City. Its founding emerged from their refusal to accept racial discrimination while worshipping at First Baptist Church in lower Manhattan. Reverend Thomas Paul, a minister from Boston, helped the congregation to organize as the first African American Baptist church in New York State.

After purchasing property on Anthony (now Worth) Street in lower Manhattan, Abyssinian called Reverend John Van Velzer as its first Pastor. Several pastors followed Rev. Van Velzer.

In 1856 Rev. William Spellman was called to the pulpit and served nearly thirty years. It was during his pastorate that the church sought a permanent place of worship and finally purchased property on Waverly Place. During Rev. Spellman's administration, The Abyssinian Baptist Church greatly prospered and its membership reached 1600. Rev. Spellman retired in 1885 and the Rev. Robert D. Wynn of Norwich, Connecticut was called.

In 1902, Rev. Wynn was succeeded by Rev. Charles Satchell Morris, who later became a missionary to South Africa. Under Dr. Morris and in less than nine months Abyssinian moved to West 40th Street. Morris served until May, 1908 when his health failed and he relinquished his pastoral obligations.

The *Abyssinian Baptist Church History*  
founded 1808

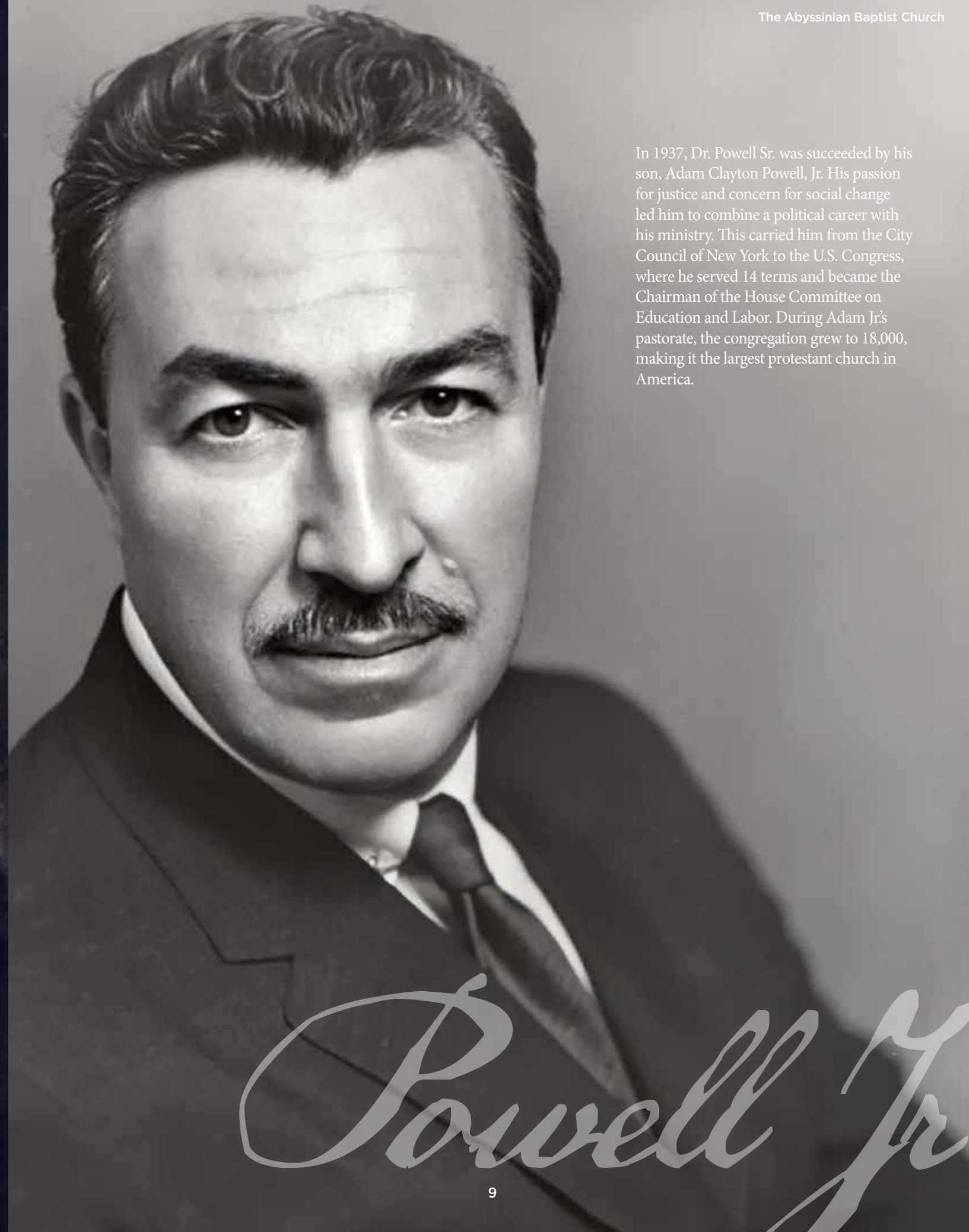


In 1908, The Abyssinian Baptist Church called to its pastorate a young gospel giant from Immanuel Baptist Church, New Haven, Connecticut, Rev. Adam Clayton Powell Sr., who brought a greater vision for the church's growth.

On April 9, 1922 ground was broken at the present site. The Sanctuary was erected along with the first community recreation center in Harlem. Within seven years it was completely paid for. Dr. Powell was a strong influence in shaping the Church's ministry to meet the needs of the thousands of new arrivals in Harlem during the 1920's.



*Powell Sr*



In 1937, Dr. Powell Sr. was succeeded by his son, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. His passion for justice and concern for social change led him to combine a political career with his ministry. This carried him from the City Council of New York to the U.S. Congress, where he served 14 terms and became the Chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor. During Adam Jr.'s pastorate, the congregation grew to 18,000, making it the largest protestant church in America.

*Powell Jr*

After Dr. Powell's death in April, 1972, Dr. Samuel D. Proctor, former president of Virginia Union University and North Carolina A & T State University, and Martin Luther King Memorial Professor at Rutgers University, was called to the pastorate.

During Dr. Proctor's tenure, Abyssinian expanded its ministry to include several major housing projects, including senior citizen housing, housing for the homeless and for middle income families. The installation of a five Manual 62 rank Schantz Organ along with other major renovations have also been part of the Proctor years. Through Dr. Proctor's efforts the fine arts have become a significant part of Abyssinian's outreach, including performances by The New York Philharmonic, Leontyne Price, Andre Watts, and Billy Taylor, among many others. Throughout Dr. Proctor's pastorate, he was ably assisted by Dr. Calvin O. Butts, III, furthering a commitment to the building of God's Kingdom on earth.

Following Dr. Proctor's retirement, on November 12, 1989, Dr. Butts was installed as the 20th Pastor of The Abyssinian Baptist Church. Under his leadership, Abyssinian served at the forefront of revitalizing Harlem. Reverend Butts led the fight against police brutality in New York City, as well as a nationally acclaimed and most effective campaign to eliminate negative billboard advertising in Central Harlem. He also called attention to the adverse effects of popular culture on youth through his ardent fight and public campaign against negative lyrics and images in the recording industry.

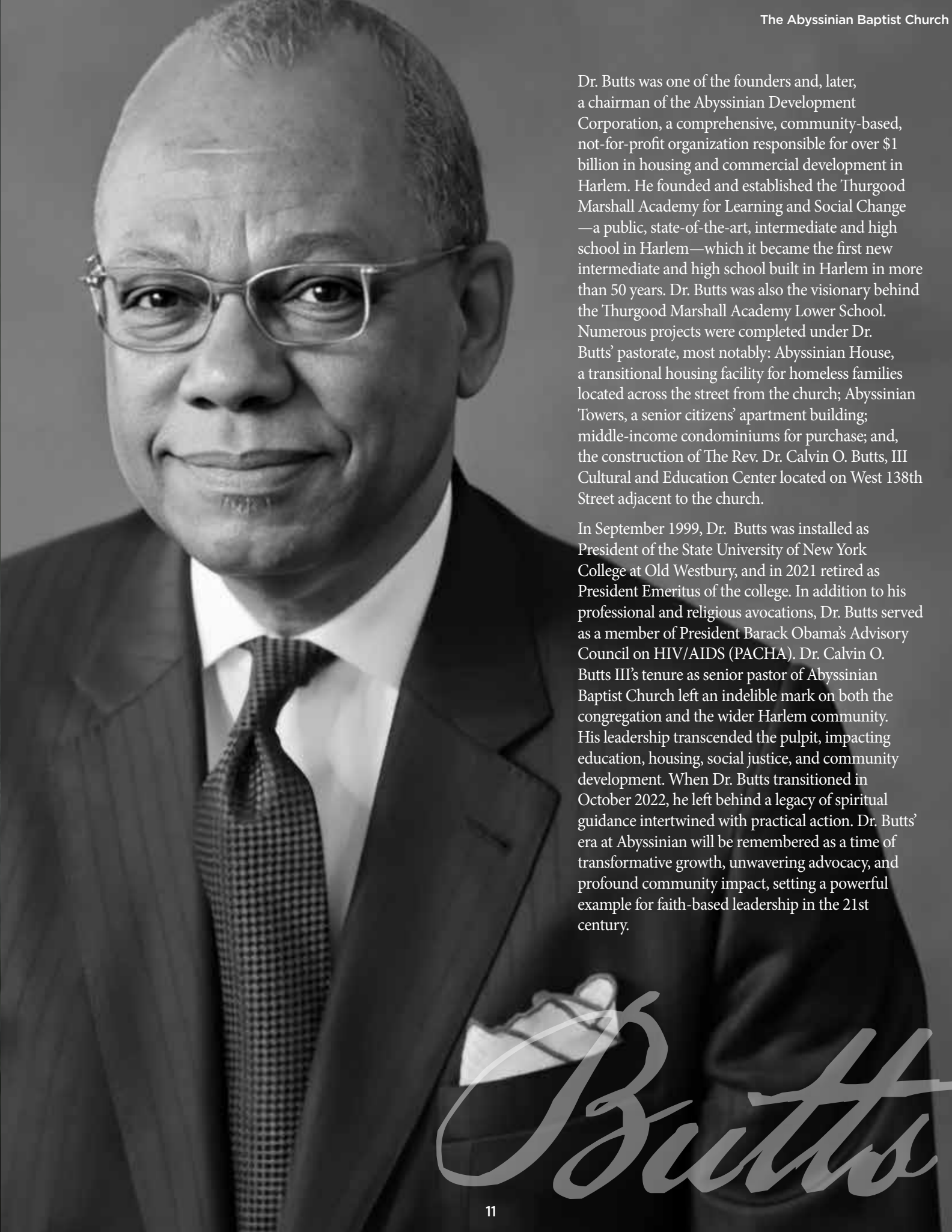
*Proctor*



Dr. Butts was one of the founders and, later, a chairman of the Abyssinian Development Corporation, a comprehensive, community-based, not-for-profit organization responsible for over \$1 billion in housing and commercial development in Harlem. He founded and established the Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change—a public, state-of-the-art, intermediate and high school in Harlem—which it became the first new intermediate and high school built in Harlem in more than 50 years. Dr. Butts was also the visionary behind the Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School. Numerous projects were completed under Dr. Butts' pastorate, most notably: Abyssinian House, a transitional housing facility for homeless families located across the street from the church; Abyssinian Towers, a senior citizens' apartment building; middle-income condominiums for purchase; and, the construction of The Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts, III Cultural and Education Center located on West 138th Street adjacent to the church.

In September 1999, Dr. Butts was installed as President of the State University of New York College at Old Westbury, and in 2021 retired as President Emeritus of the college. In addition to his professional and religious avocations, Dr. Butts served as a member of President Barack Obama's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA). Dr. Calvin O. Butts III's tenure as senior pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church left an indelible mark on both the congregation and the wider Harlem community. His leadership transcended the pulpit, impacting education, housing, social justice, and community development. When Dr. Butts transitioned in October 2022, he left behind a legacy of spiritual guidance intertwined with practical action. Dr. Butts' era at Abyssinian will be remembered as a time of transformative growth, unwavering advocacy, and profound community impact, setting a powerful example for faith-based leadership in the 21st century.

*Butts*



## Service Of Installation

The Reverend Dr. Lawrence Edward Carter, Sr., Presiding,  
 Founding Dean of the Martin Luther King, Jr., International Chapel  
 Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia

### ORGAN PRELUDE

*Toccata from Symphony No. 3 by Charles Marie Widor*  
 Dina M. Foster • Organist

### PROCESSIONAL HYMN

*To God be the Glory* • No. 23

### LINE OF PROCESSION

The Marshals  
 The Choirs  
 Presiding Officer  
 Installation Preacher  
 Diaconate, Trustees, and Church Clerks  
 Dr. & Mrs. Johnson, Family, and Special Guests  
 Program Participants  
 Guest Ministers

### THE CALL TO WORSHIP

Psalm 149; Psalm 122; Psalm 23 KJV • Dean Lawrence E. Carter, Sr.

**Minister** - I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the House of the Lord;

**Congregation** - For surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall the dwell in House of the Lord forever.

**Minister** - Sing a new song to the Lord;

**Congregation** - Praise God in the Assembly of loving and faithful people!

**Minister** - Be glad, all people, because of your Sustainer,

**Congregation** - Rejoice, People of Zion, because of your God the Creator!

### THE EVOCATION AND CHANT

Reverend Lisa M. Weaver, The Riverside Church  
 New York, New York

### CONGREGATIONAL HYMN

*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing* • No. 29

### SCRIPTURE LESSONS

*Old Testament* - Psalm 27 • Reverend Janine Myrick, Pulpit Associate  
 Assistant Minister for New Members, The Abyssinian Baptist Church

*New Testament* - Ephesians 6:10-20 • Reverend Brandy Shiloh, Esq  
 Founder of Brandy Shiloh Ministries

### ANTHEM

*Lift Thine Eyes from Elijah* • Felix Mendelssohn  
 Silky M. Carter, Briana Sheriff & Jeanette Blakeney, trio

### GREETINGS

Deacon Illonka Javette Hines

### SACRED MOVEMENT

*Divine Grace* • Minister Denise Perry • Abyssinian Liturgical Dance Ministry

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & RECOGNITIONS

**Reverend Al Sharpton** • National Action Network

**Reverend Dr. Boise Kimber** • President, National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.

**Reverend Dr. Cheryl F. Dudley** • Regional Executive Minister of American Baptist Churches of Metropolitan New York

**Reverend Dr. Jeffrey Haggray** • Executive Director of American Baptist Home Mission Society and CEO of Judson Press

**Reverend Michele Lawrence** • Managing Director, Head of Strategy, Growth, Operations for Community and Business Development at J.P. Morgan Chase Bank

**Reverend Dr. Delman Coates** • Senior Pastor, Mt. Enon Baptist Church, Cllinton, Maryland and Former Martin Luther King, Jr. Chapel Assistants Program, Morehouse College

**Dr. Walter E. Massey** • President Emeritus, Morehouse College

### ANTHEM

*I Was Glad When They Said Unto Me* • Hubert Parry  
 United Voices of Abyssinian

### OFFERTORY

Offertory Selection • *Oh Give Thanks*

Doxology & Offertory Prayer • Reverend Clinton Miller, Pastor, Brown Memorial Baptist Church, Brooklyn, New York

### INTRODUCTION OF INSTALLATION PREACHER

Reverend Charles L. Fischer

Vice President for Seminary Advancement, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

### MUSICAL SELECTION

*He's Preparing Me* • Daryl Coley

Darian Clonts, soloist • United Voices of Abyssinian

### THE SERMON

Reverend Dr. Joseph C. Parker, Jr., Esq., Senior Pastor,  
 David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, Austin, Texas

### INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

Reverend Dr. Jawanza K. Colvin, Senior Pastor

Olivet Institutional Baptist Church, Cleveland, Ohio

### HYMN OF INVITATION

*Lead Me, Guide Me* • No. 235

### SOLEMN DECLARATION

Deacon Gerald Barbour and Deacon Karyn M. Davenport, Chairs, Diaconate Board  
 The Abyssinian Baptist Church

### MUSICAL SELECTION

*My Tribute* • arr. Joseph Joubert  
 Joseph Joubert, piano



## *The Investiture*

The Reverend Dean Carter, Presiding

### **THE CHARGE TO THE CHURCH**

The Honorable Reverend Dr. Raphael G. Warnock  
United States Senator of Georgia and Senior Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church,  
Atlanta, Georgia

### **THE CHARGE TO THE PASTOR**

Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Pastor Emeritus  
Olivet Institutional Baptist Church, Cleveland, Ohio

### **PRAYER OF INSTALLATION**

Reverend Dr. D. Darrell Griffin  
Oakdale Covenant Church, Chicago, Illinois

### **RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP**

Pastor and Diaconate

### **MUSICAL SELECTION**

*Something Happens/Something About the Name Jesus* • Khrista White  
Creative Worship Director, Dare to Imagine Church

### **PRESENTATIONS AND EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE**

**Presentation of the Baptist Hymnal** • Reverend Dr. J. Wendell Mapson, Jr.,  
Senior Pastor, Monumental Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Presentation of the Holy Bible** • Reverend Michael A. Walrond, Senior Pastor  
First Corinthian Baptist Church, Harlem, New York

**Presentation of the Keys to the Church** • Trustee Alexis Thomas, Chair  
Trustee Board, The Abyssinian Baptist Church

**Presentation of the Robe** • Reverend Dr. Carolyn Ann Knight,  
Founder and President of “CAN DO!” Ministries, Atlanta, Georgia

**Presentation of the First Lady** • Mrs. Patricia R. Butts

**Presentation of the Pastor** • Miles, Laila, and Lena Johnson

### **FIRST STATEMENT OF PASTOR**

Reverend Dr. Kevin R. Johnson

### **ANTHEM**

*Anthem of Praise* • Richard Smallwood  
United Voices of Abyssinian

### **BENEDICTION**

Reverend Dr. Herman “Skip” Mason, Jr., Senior Pastor  
Historic West Mitchell Christian Methodist Episcopal Church,  
Atlanta, Georgia

### **RECESSIONAL**

*Lord, Make Me More Holy* • No. 205  
Ministers & Guests

### **ORGAN POSTLUDE**

*Improvisation on We Shall Overcome* • Carl Haywood  
George Davey, organist

**A LEGACY CONTINUES,  
A NEW VISION UNFOLDS**

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by  
so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid  
ourselves of every burden and sin that  
clings to us and persevere in running the  
race that lies before us.*

**Hebrews 12:1-2 NIV**



### Core Committee

Trustee Alexis Thomas, Chair  
Deacon Illonka Javette Hines, Chair  
Deacon Gerald Barbour  
Deacon Karyn M. Davenport  
First Lady Kimya S. Johnson, Esq.  
Deacon Calvin O. Butts, IV  
Sheila Boston Robinson, Esq.  
Min. Denise Perry

### Banquet Committee

Rev. Janine Myrick  
Rev. Jerome Robinson  
Rev. Lee Hodge  
Deacon Adrienne McWilliams  
Deacon Andrew Morrison  
Hazel Smith  
Javon Phillips  
Alicia Ferriabough Taylor  
Isaiah J. Joyner  
Kanika Williams Morgan, Esq.  
Lacey Britton  
Rahni Sumler  
Naomi Graham

### Welcome and Hospitality

Dana Fleming  
Dr. Demetria Thomas  
Angela Zenon  
Dr. Cynthia Barnes

### Logistics

Deacon Morris McWilliams  
Deacon Andrew Morrison  
Michael Bryant

### Community Day

Deacon Dr. Sandye Johnson  
Deacon Tiffany Ellis Butts  
Cynthia Wade  
Susie Drayton

### Installation Service Committee

Deacon Michael Deas  
Deacon Calvin O. Butts, IV  
Deacon Karyn M. Davenport  
Deacon Gerald Barbour  
Sheila Boston Robinson, Esq.  
Rev. Janine Myrick  
Rev. Jerome Robinson  
Rev. Lee Hodge  
Min. Denise Perry  
Deacon Olga Dais  
Deacon Keith Hines  
Vinroy D. Brown, Jr.  
Naomi Graham  
Eric Johnson

### Communications and PR

Lamonda Williams  
Latoya Evans

### Special Appreciation Extended to

Aby Administrative Office • Aby Facilities • Aby Finance  
Aby Security • Aby Ushers • Aby Volunteers  
Aby Welcome & Hospitality





**THE ABYSSINIAN BAPTIST CHURCH**

*Founded 1808*

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212-862-7474

[abyssinian.org](http://abyssinian.org)