

Rev. Dr. Kimberly Elyse's Dean's Address April 14, 2021

Opening Prayer

Protocol

To

- Moderator, Pastor Nathan Johnson
- 1st Vice Moderator, Pastor Mark Gray
- 2nd Vice Moderator, Pastor Lee Winfrey
- 3rd Vice Moderator, Pastor Kenneth Ricks
- And our Auxiliary Presidents & Past Moderators

Thank you for your prayers, covering, and encouragement.

To

- Congress President, Pastor Floyd Davis
- 1st Vice President, Sis. Patricia Suber
- 2nd Vice President, Pastor Richard White
- And to our past Congress Presidents
- And the entire Congress President's Staff

Thank you for your confidence in me, support, direction, and for the many conversations and planning sessions we have had together over this past year.

To the Dean's Office Staff

- Associate Deans - Sis. Sheila Clifton, Sis. Tara Hamilton, Pastor Kevin Johnson, Sis. Patricia Sanders, & Sis. Donna Wilson
- Registrars - Sis. Leanelle Simmons & Sis. Shante Woods
- Secretary - Sis. Cynthia Greene
- And to our immediate past Dean, Sis. Toniya King

Thank you for your continued service and willingness to grow with me in this role. I look forward to continuing to develop relationships with each of you as we serve.

To

- Any International, National, State, District, and Local Officers who may be present

- The Sunday School Publishing Board's Certified Instructor Team who lend themselves so graciously for service throughout the District
- The Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church Media Ministry, Teaching Ministry Support Team, and members of my own Church family
- All the students - both in the Certificate of Progress Program and those who are continuing their education through General Bible Study
- And to the entire Metropolitan Missionary Baptist District Association at large
- As well as to our guests and friends

I am so grateful for the opportunity to serve and to serve alongside each of you. I am tremendously grateful for those this past year who have encouraged, prayed for, and welcomed me into service at this level.

Involvement

The pandemic has interrupted so many things over this past year. However, the Kingdom building work of Christian Education through the Metropolitan Missionary Baptist District Association has not stopped. In fact, over this year, ministry has expanded as digital offerings have become available across all levels of our Baptist Association work.

Internationally, I continue to serve the **Baptist World Alliance** Women's Department in the Executive Director's Office under the leadership of General Secretary and CEO, Rev. Elijah Brown (of the US), Women's Department President, Pastor Karen Wilson (of Australia), and Executive Director, Sis. Moreen Sharpe (of Canada). While we were all disappointed that we would not be gathering in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil due to the COVID-19 pandemic last year, we take joy and hope in knowing that God has allowed us to gather virtually this year for global education, fellowship, and meeting. I bring greetings from President Karen Wilson and Executive Director Moreen Sharpe as they invite each of you to register for the Baptist World Congress and the Global Conference of Baptist Women in July 2021. This truly will be an historic opportunity for education and fellowship on the world stage.

Nationally, on behalf of our District Congress, I have kept in touch with the National Congress through our own Moderator, Dr. Nathan Johnson, who serves as the MidWest Vice President of the **National Baptist Convention USA Inc. Congress** under the leadership of National Congress President, Dr. Elliot Cuff, and National Dean, Dr. Carl Washington. I was allowed the opportunity to be helpful in spreading the word regarding Digiversity and other opportunities for study for our member pastors & churches. Additionally, we are so proud of the Metropolitan District Association members who have served as National instructors and support staff over this last year.

For the **Wolverine State Convention**, I have represented the Dean's Office of the Metropolitan District Association's Congress as our State Congress President, Dr. Craig Tatum, State Dean, Dr. John Tolbert, and State Directors, Sis. Cecilia Dawson and Dr. Ava Lewis offered training and information sessions. By God's grace, I was afforded the opportunity to serve on the planning and selection committee where Metropolitan instructors were recommended and subsequently invited to serve during Wolverine State Congress Sessions. Each of these instructors represent the Metropolitan District and

their local assemblies well as they present an excellent offering of service to our God on our collective behalf.

The **Metropolitan Missionary Baptist District Association's Congress of Christian Education** has hosted two certified Christian Leadership Schools this past year. We are grateful that Sis. Toniya King served as the Dean of Record of the session from January - March 2021. I am personally so grateful for her continued support, encouragement, and excellence in Christian Education as an example to us all. This Annual Session is also a certified school offering both general Bible Study for those interested in continuing their Christian education and credit towards the Certificate of Progress Program. *Be sure to register for the class you are in this week so that your course card may be electronically delivered.*

Additionally, I have been so blessed this year to work directly with our District Pastors **locally** to offer support and training via workshops tailored to specific needs and concerns. It truly has been an honor to serve each of you.

Ideas For Consideration

It is through service this past year in these areas that I offer for consideration the following three ideas for the upcoming Christian Education Year:

- 1. Extending Ministry Opportunities throughout the Association through Volunteer Training**
- 2. Providing Opportunity for Personal Transformation in our Deans and Christian Educators**
- 3. Supporting Member Church Pastors in Equipping their Congregations to Meet Specific Needs**

Extending Ministry Opportunities throughout the Association through Volunteer Training

First, I am so very grateful for my own Tabernacle Church family. As I accepted the role of District Dean, so many came alongside to support the efforts of the January-March Christian Leadership School Offering and the April Congress Annual Session itself from a technical standpoint. Specifically, Rev. Debra Carter, District Corresponding Secretary, accepted my invitation to support Sister Toniya King as she led the January-March session. Rev. Carter ensured that we had everything we needed from a technical standpoint. She offered the Dean's Office Staff one-on-one, real time training on Zoom proctoring, breakout rooms, and so much more in addition to the Zoom classes that were offered and open for all. I am so grateful for this partnership with my church family.

The Associate Deans of the District have stepped up and continue to serve well and with excellence. We all have learned right alongside our students an unwritten curriculum no one saw coming, but one that we have all benefited from because of their willingness to flow and transform in this digital age. I am grateful to the Dean's Office Staff for their flexibility and willingness to serve.

There are so many behind the scenes activities that are required to provide a place for our instructors to teach and our students to learn. Thank you to all who stepped up, worked quietly but efficiently, and helped. Thank you to all who stretched beyond their traditional responsibilities to present our collective best offering in this present age.

This last year revealed a ministry opportunity that the District Congress is uniquely poised to respond to. As the training arm of the Metropolitan District Association, **I propose opening the opportunity for those serving in the technical support teams in their local church to pool their best practices together.** With approval from the President and his staff and the Moderator and his staff, let us envision a team trained of volunteers beyond the traditional Dean's Office staff who can lend support to the future digital offerings for the District and her auxiliaries. Creating a volunteer team of trained and equipped ministry servants will aid in strengthening the work at the local level as well as the District. It will provide opportunity for us to learn together while adapting to necessary shifts in a rapidly changing technological age.

Providing Opportunity for Personal Transformation in our Deans and Christian Educators

Secondarily, the Sunday School Publishing Board has over the past several years worked diligently to expand access to the office of the Local Dean. Through accelerated programs and fast tracks, Deans are being certified in record numbers. Metropolitan Missionary Baptist District Association has over 15 certified and active local Deans alone. For that we give God all the glory and praise for such a concentrated focus on Christian Education throughout our District.

An unforeseen, yet highly positive, consequence of the pandemic has been the opening of access to these Christian Education opportunities across boundaries. Virtual CLS offerings such as this one we are in, are open to people beyond our traditional Districts' and State Congresses' borders. Anyone seeking to matriculate through the Certificate of Progress Program has easy access to do so right from their own homes.

Given both the number of local opportunities and the increased activity, the question arises, where does the leader go to learn? Where does the Dean go to be refreshed? We are often the ones setting and running the schools but we are in need of a place for personal reflection and study.

Our Wolverine State Congress is doing an excellent job of gathering Dean's together for training, information, and fellowship. **I propose creating an opportunity at the District level for the Deans and other Christian Educators to come together for personal Bible Study, an opportunity for personal transformation, and for small group accountability.** Working with the President's and Moderator's Offices, I would like to offer a place of ministry to the Christian Education leader to be poured into even as they seek to pour out into so many others.

Supporting Member Church Pastors in Equipping their Congregations to Meet Specific Needs

Finally, our prayers continually cover our District Pastors as they seek to hear God's

voice clearly through the noise of the pandemic, political pandemonium, and vast unpredictability. We believe that God, Himself speaks to the leader guiding and directing them through whatever circumstance presents itself. We also believe everything that the Pastor needs to accomplish what God has assigned for them to do is available in the people assigned to their undershepherding and the larger Church community in which they are affiliated. As God calls, He equips. As God guides, He provides laborers to accomplish the assignment.

We also acknowledge that there are points when the vision comes but training is necessary to respond in excellence. As the teaching arm of the District Association, **I propose a cooperative partnership between the member church and the Congress that affords our staff to not just hold District schools but local, specialized, training curated from the vision the pastor has received for their local church.**

We are tremendously blessed in the Metropolitan Missionary Baptist District Association to have a Congress equipped with a certified Dean's Office Staff. Our Associate Deans are trained, recognized by the Sunday School Publishing Board, in Good Standing with their Church and their Pastors. I would like to work with the President's and Moderator's staff to support the educational efforts of our member churches, to extend the role and responsibility of the Associate Dean to include supporting our District Pastors and Instructors. Where the local church has a Dean already, we would like to support their efforts. Where they do not, we would like to help the pastors identify and train someone for service.

The Certificate of Progress Program is important as it facilitates matriculation in a guided and structured way. In addition to the COP Program, as we seek to teach for transformation, we have the opportunity to teach the student outside the traditional COP phases, enabling them to continue to grow without limit.

Inspiration - Walking in Righteousness (Psalm 27:11; Micah 6:8) - We Must Know the Word - - 2 Tim 2:15, 3:16

Indeed, in these unprecedented times we all must seek to study God's Word with intention for transformation. For it is within the Word that we will find the answer to our dilemmas, disappointments, and dire needs.

To provoke your thinking about the need to study the word with intention, I point you to our 2021 Congress theme given by President Davis. As we endeavor to "Walk in Righteousness" we need to know the Word in order that our hearts, minds, and lives will be transformed to be more like Christ.

We all know King David was the one called "a man after God's own heart." That didn't exempt him however from experiencing life's ups and downs. In fact, early in his adult life, after having been anointed King, but not yet ascended to the throne, David found himself running for the hills as his enemies pursued him with the intent to kill. David cries out in Psalm 27...

“Because of my adversaries, show me Your way, Lord, and lead me on a level path” (Psalm 27:11, HCSB).

David cries out to God because he knows that God knows the way. In the midst of uncertainty David turned to the One who anointed him king, the One who guided his life as a shepherd in the fields. David cried out to the One who knew the way.

We too cry out, amidst pandemic, political pandemonium, and vast unpredictability. We cry out against loneliness and isolation. We cry out seeking to hold onto the God source of our faith. We cry, “Lord, show me Your way, lead me on a level path.”

That’s why study is so important... If we are to know the way. If we are to discern the path we must know what God has said. In fact, the answer is already written in the Word. This is what Micah was talking about in chapter 6:8a...

“Mankind, He (God) has told you [already] what is good and what it is the Lord requires of you: to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8, HCSB).

God has told you what is good and what the Lord requires. But how will you know unless you study? 2 Timothy 2:15 tells us to study to show ourselves approved. We are to study so that we are not ashamed. We are to study so that we know what it is that is good and what the Lord requires of us.

But I find it necessary to be clear. 2 Timothy goes on in 3:16 to tell us what to study. We are to study the Scripture - all Scripture is the very Word of God. We are to know what God has said so that our responses, our actions, and our wills can turn to His. It is not just study for study sake, for knowledge acquisition, or so that we can impress others with how much we know.

We study to become changed. We are becoming new as we study. We keep studying after we earn our Certificate of Progress Completion Card. We keep studying after our graduation from the specialization program. We keep studying after our matriculation through Bible School and Seminary. We keep studying after attaining instructor certification. We keep studying. We keep learning.

As a Congress, we will therefore keep teaching. We’ll keep teaching after we’ve exhausted the Phase classes. We’ll keep teaching after we’ve graduated our biggest classes. We’ll keep teaching in the face of the pandemic because we’re teaching not just to convey information, but we’re teaching for transformation of the heart of the student, by the grace of God.

Students will keep studying and instructors will keep teaching because of the object of both our study and instruction - the Word.

The Word transforms as it reveals, rebukes, corrects, and trains. The Word transforms as it makes perfect and complete. The Word protects as we seek shelter in it and informs as we seek answers from it.

Teaching and studying the Word of God is the goal of transformative Christian Education. This is my charge, challenge, and cherished assignment.

So before we end tonight I'd like to introduce to some and remind others WHO the WORD is that we teach and study to transform our hearts, change our wills, and save our souls...

The Word has existed forever. From eternity past through eternity to come the Word is...

One day about 2000 years ago the Word became flesh...

The Word incarnate was born

The Word incarnate lived

The Word incarnate died

The Word incarnate was buried

The Word incarnate rose from the dead

The Word incarnate ascended and sits on the right hand of the Father

The Word incarnate is Coming again

The Word incarnate has a name - The Word is called Jesus!

I humbly invite you to partner with the District Congress of the Metropolitan Missionary Baptist District Association as we endeavor to TEACH the WORD, for the TRANSFORMATION of people's hearts and lives.