

# ALLEN TEMPLE BAPTIST CHURCH

Global Ministries

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** March 4, 2019

**To:** Dr. Jacqueline Thompson  
Assistant Pastor  
Allen Temple Baptist Church

**From:** Rev. Theophous H. Reagans, Esq.  
Director of Global Ministries  
Allen Temple Baptist Church

**Subject:** Proctor Conference Report—

The 2019 Conference “Beckoned Us to Be the Change We Want To See”

*The 2019 Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference convened February 18-21, 2019, in Birmingham, Alabama. The Conference issued the call to gather in the tradition of and with affirmation of the legacies of Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon and Dr. James Hal Cone, whose footprints continue to guide our ministry. This year’s theme, Cry of Black Blood: The Call to Sacred Memory was both powerful and sobering. The events brought the theme to life as we worshipped at the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church, the Birmingham church where terrorist killed four girls with a bomb in the sixties. The Spirit of our fell upon us as we sang the Black National Anthem, remembered, and mourned the suffering of these children and of our all of fallen ancestors. We felt the power of their faith and God’s faithfulness. The Conference scripture was very fitting: “But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that our eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; Make them known to your children and your children’s children...” Deuteronomy 4:9. Three of our children, young adults from Allen Temple, attended the conference—Rev. Alexandria Spearman, Daniel Mastin, and Michael Sneed, Jr. As demonstrated by their attached reflection papers, the worship experience at 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist and our visit to Montgomery to the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice caused them to consider our history and motivated them to greater participation in the social justice movement.*

During the worship and throughout the Conference, we were reminded that this year marked our Quad-centennial—400 years since the first documented arrival of enslaved Africans to North America by way of Point Comfort, Virginia. We were reminded that still in America, black, brown and poor people continue to feel the brunt of “Empire” through lack of access to health care, food, and water, over-policed communities, state-sanctioned violence, unemployment, xenophobia,

transphobia, classism, homophobia, sexism, and racism. Rev. Traci Blackmon, a Birmingham native, spoke during the worship service presenting a personal and powerful history of Birmingham. She acknowledged the historical racism of the city of Birmingham and the state of Alabama but she also celebrated the significant economic and civil rights achievements of the Birmingham's African American citizens.

The conference workshops included:

- Setting the Record Straight: The Quad centennial/1619-2019 & Telling Our Story
- Representation Matters: Building Political Power and Strengthening Communities
- Truth Telling as Sacred Memory and Healing
- Living Debt Free and Preparing for the Future
- Effective Proposal & Grant Writing Strategies to Fund The Vision
- Flourishing Beyond the Pulpit: Caring for the Shepherd
- Preparing our Youth for Stewardship and a World Economy
- LGBTQ: Room at the Table

- Sisters of the Rock: Womanism and Power From Generation to Generation
- Global Disruption: Movement for Black Lives From Palestine to Brazil to the United States
- Economic Empowerment and Job Creation Through Social Media and Technological Advancements
- We Are All At Risk: Eco-justice
- Mass Criminalization In the Age of Afrophobia
- Caregiving and Giving Care: A Holistic Approach to End of Life Care
- Land, Faith and the Future of the Black Community

Additionally, the conference provided a seminarian track facilitated by Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas, Dean of Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary, New York, New York. The Conference provided an independent intensive that each of our young adults attended.

In addition to our young adults, several Allen Temple members attended the Conference—Rev. Warren Long, Sherrell Sneed, Rev. Alonzo Fuller, Dr. Brenda Guess, and Dr. Ineda Adesanya. Se

In a reflection meeting I posed the following questions to our young adults:

PROMPT: As you reflect on the trip to Montgomery, the Legacy Museum, that documents so much of our history of oppression, struggle, and OVERCOMING, how did that impact you as a young preacher? Did it alter your path?

PROMPT: As you reflect on the Lynching Museum that memorialized the many African American men and women lynched in the U.S., how did that experience impact your ministry call, or the urgency of your need to answer God's call?

PROMPT: As you reflect on the lives and stories of those honored and remembered this year, including Fania Davis, Dr. Katie Cannon, Dr. Cone, and Bryan Stevenson; how did hearing about their work and contributions affect your call to ministry?

As we remembered the lessons of Black Liberation Theology taught by Dr. Cone, we were comforted by our belief that God, our liberator, continues to walk with us. Likewise, as we remembered the lessons of Womanism taught to us by Dr. Cannon, we remembered that we all should, must do the work that our souls must have as we noted the contributions of women theologians to the academy and to the church. Answering the call and doing the work was made ever more urgent as we listened to the prophetic voices that spoke to us—Dr. Frederick Haynes, Rev. Traci Blackmon, and Rev. Starsky Wilson. Our commitment to mission ministry, locally and globally, was enhanced as we heard the cry of the blood of our ancestors when we visited the Legacy Museum and when we visited the Lynching Museum. We remembered their lives and achievements during the worship service at 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church and throughout the conference. Their witness strengthened us. We felt the presence of the God of our fathers and mothers and we felt empowered to do the work that each of our souls are called to as we reflected on their struggles and sang the songs of remembrance. We attended workshops that challenged our understandings and our theologies. These workshops gave us new tools to continue to do the work and to strive for social justice in our community and in our world. We were blessed, taught and empowered.

We were uplifted by the stories and the voices of those who were honored—Fania Davis, Bryan Stevenson, Sounds of Blackness, Mother Ruth Barefield Pendleton, Dr. James Abbingon, and Dr. Gail Christopher. Their work and achievement inform and motivate ours. Indeed, this year's Conference "beckoned us to be the change we want to see."