



# Jacob's Ladder



A NEWSLETTER OF BURNS UNITED METHODIST AND HAMMITT HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES

Rev. Christopher C. Diggs, Pastor, Burns UMC &  
Rev. Dr. Marvin J. Gipson, Pastor, Hammitt Hill

Volume 14, Number 2, February 2014

## Black History Month—The Church's Response

by Bishop James E. Swanson, Sr.

The month of February in the United States has been designated as Black History Month. In some of the churches within the United Methodist Connection we will celebrate and seek to highlight the achievements and progress made by African Americans in the United States.

I want to offer another insight to this important celebration that I believe we overlooked: The journey of African Americans toward experiencing liberation in the United States is one that we often celebrate as being won on the political battlefields and this I affirm. But, we must never forget that when black persons were devoid of political power we were never powerless. It was our constant and abiding faith that God was just as concerned about our plight as God was concerned about and ready to struggle for the liberation of the Hebrews in Egypt.

It was those prayers and the underground religious community of the slaves, the post-Civil War Black Church that fueled our faith, hope and confidence that gave birth to our

heroes and heroines that led in the struggle and continue to lead today.

So my suggestion to our churches this year and for the future is not to simply celebrate Black History Month in isolation from our relationship with the Risen Christ.



It would be interesting to delve into the history of great black leaders to see just how much of a role the church played in the shaping of their lives. You may discover where their courage truly came from.

You may discover that the source of their thirst for learning came from an encounter in a Sunday school class or at the encouragement of a leader in the church. We may discover that many of them would not have received an education had it not been for the church.

I write to encourage Mississippi United Methodists to lead the way in their local churches in recognizing and highlighting the achievements of people whose contributions to the life of this United Methodist Church and our nation was either ignored or coopted. First, we should do this to acknowledge that

our Christian journey is not devoid of contributions from African Americans. We are aware that Simon of Cyrene, the man compelled to carry the cross of Jesus was of African descent and that the first to be baptized by a lay preacher was the Ethiopian Eunuch. The great Methodist orator Harry Hoosier traveled with Francis Asbury and many times the people preferred to hear Hoosier preach rather than Asbury. This is not to say that others were not a part but to affirm the contributions and presence of those of African birth.

Second, the church needs to correct the mistakes of our past when we treated African Americans as second-class citizens at best and inconsequential at worst within the life of the Christian community. This month provides The United Methodist Church with an excellent opportunity to practice in our actions what we declare with our lips that in Christ there is no east or west, no male or female, no bond or free but that we are all one in Christ Jesus. It is important to us that people do not mistake where we stand on the issue of people of color.

Third, we need to set the agenda for our future as a church that is open to leadership being given by church needs to lead the world in being like-minded. I realize with much sadness that there is not a universal acceptance of a vision of openness to African American persons within our world and even sadder sometimes even within our churches but we are called to share this vision regardless. The vision is deeply rooted in God's vision for humanity as written to us by John.

"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the lamb.'"

Mississippi Annual Conference, let's lead the way in making this happen.

## **Black History Month at Burns UMC Began with a Lecture on The Emancipation Proclamation**

Burns United Methodist Church kicked off its Black History Month Celebration with a lecture on The Emancipation Proclamation on Sunday, February 2, 2014. The guest lecturer for the occasion was Justin Isaac Rogers, a Doctorial Student in the Department of History at the University of Mississippi. Rogers was raised in North Carolina and received his B.A. in History

and Political Science from North Carolina State University in 2009. He developed the "Slavery" Exhibit at the Burns-Belfry Museum and Multi-Cultural Center.

The program was coordinated by Niler P. Franklin. Everyone was given a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation suitable for framing. Pizza & refreshments were served

afterwards. Pictured below, a Certificate of Appreciation was presented to Rogers (3rd

from left) by Rev. Marvin Gipson, Pastor Christopher C. Diggs and Niler .



## **Pulpit Switch Advances Racial and Christian Harmony**



Rev. Chris Diggs, pastor of Burns UMC, the oldest African-American Church in Lafayette County, will fill the pulpit at Oxford-University UMC on Sunday, February 16, 2014. On the same Sunday,

Rev. Claire Dobbs, associate pastor of Oxford-University UMC, will assume morning pulpit duties at Burns.

The exchange was initiated by Rev. Diggs, but is a continuation of a the intentional connections between the two churches that has been ongoing.

“Initially, I approached Claire about preaching at my church during Black History month,” Pastor Diggs said. “I wanted her to preach to my congregation based on her personal and professional experiences dealing with this subject. In turn, I agreed to share with OUUMC during

the same time,” Rev. Diggs said.

“I thought it would be something different because we both are Monroe County, Miss. natives and graduates of Ole Miss,” he said.

For this full article go to following web address: <http://hottytoddy.com/2014/01/31/pulpit-switch-advances-racial-christian-harmony/>

**Free GED Classes at Burns UMC**  
Tuesday and Thursday Nights beginning at 7:00 p.m. See [www.BurnsUMC.org](http://www.BurnsUMC.org) for more details.

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# Soup For Seniors

Burns UMC has a new Senior Ministry called “SOUP for SENIORS” on the 1st & 3rd Wednesday in each month. Come for a study of God's word, fellowship and yummy soup. Sponsors are Ann Cancer & Janis Blake.



# Burns UMC Bible Study

Bible Study is on Wednesday night each week beginning at 6:00p.m. We now have a "POT LUCK MEAL" after our studying. **EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO COME OUT AND PARTICIPATE and MAY GOD BLESS.**

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE