

**THE FAITH BASED AND BUSINESS COMMUNITY UNITING TOGETHER**

Today is a day of reflection and also of thanksgiving. Early in the year I became a part of several groups who were all concerned about the education of our children. As a stakeholder in the community I was disappointed in the status of our educational system, but even more disappointed in myself, because I am fully aware that it takes a village to raise a child and as a religious leader I knew it was time to take responsibility.

As my wheels began to turn I was introduced to the National Council on Educating Black Children (NCEBC) who approved our church to become one of the sites for the Augustus F Hawkins Literacy Center. The Center was a natural fit to answering the call from the community at large. It also gave our Church an opportunity to take its rightful place in the "village," and thanks be to God all required resources fell in line. With our motto in place, "Believe In Me and I will Achieve" coming forth was: An educator from our Church, Carmen

Ross, who agreed to direct the Program; Volunteers saw the need and stepped up (from our Church we had Fay Allen, Carey Walls, Jarrod Posey, and Ellen Gales) (from the Community there was Keith Bertrand, Antia Fields and Tom Byerly); • The NCBEC developed the curriculum, trained our volunteers, and provided the books; The Community Foundation of Southern Indiana donated 35 dictionaries, allowing each child the benefit of their own.

We were told the program was designed to facilitate a maximum of 15 children. In collaborating with the Clark County School District we immediately found the need to far exceed 15. The Center opened with 34 students and full cooperation from Mrs. Starks, Principal of Maple Elementary School.

During our training with the NCEBC we were told the only expense would be the cost of providing a small snack for the 15 children twice a week. This, I thought, would not place a financial burden upon the Church. As

mentioned, we opened with 34 instead of 15 students and immediately found that a small snack was not going to work. The children were, in fact, hungry. And in some cases the meal received at the Center would be the last meal of the day. It now appeared the Church had bit off more than we could chew, but our civic and business community came through and because of them we are able to serve a nutritious and fulfilling meal each time we meet. It is only fitting that we acknowledge and thank the following organizations for their continued financial support: The Methodist Men United; Jim Grahn and the Evening News; The Clark County Branch of the NAACP; The WalMart Stores; and The Community Foundation of Southern Indiana. In addition to having a fruitful collaboration with the Clark County School District, the Literacy Center is in collaboration with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars who provide supplies and guidance throughout the year.

This year the Augustus F Hawkins Literacy Center at Bethel AME Church was awarded the NAACP 2009 Community/Education Award for which we are most grateful. A special thanks also goes

to the Rapid Response Recovery News and especially to Mr Carey Walls, General Manager, whose class has fallen in love with him.

The winter session opens January 12<sup>th</sup>. If your child is 2 years or more behind in reading, don't let another year go by and please do not give up on him/her - call Ms Carmen Ross at 812 283 0624 to enroll your child. All materials have been designed according to the State of Indiana standards.

In closing, we the members of Bethel AME Church thank God for allowing us to take our rightful place within the "village" as we help in not leaving one child behind, and we thank all who gave of their time, talents, and treasures. Volunteers and monetary support from the community are mandatory for the continued success of the Literacy Center. If you would like to contribute please contact Rev Sheiler Stokes at the church - 200 West Park Place, Jeffersonville, IN. 47130 (812) 283 0624.

We pray your New Year be filled with good health, peace, joy and prosperity

Rev Sheiler Stokes, Mdiv  
Pastor - Bethel AME Church

**THE CHRISTMAS STORY**

The most miraculous, breath-taking account in the entire Bible is God becoming a man to free us from the bondage of our enemies and offering us freedom to fellowship with Him.



An account that necessitates faith, a young virgin woman gave birth to the God man, Jesus Savior, the Christ. Without this miraculous birth of Jesus, there would be no cross. With the cross, the greatest secret of the ages was revealed, that Jesus Christ came to take away the sins of man. Now believers stand justified and acquitted in God's courtroom through faith in who He is and what He has done. Without this account of Jesus' birth, there would be no biblical accounts, no faith, no hope, no resurrection and no eternal bliss.

You see, without the King's birth, there would be no knowledge of what we did not know, what we could not possibly do and no deliverance.

The story of Christmas gives us the opportunity to anticipate a great and miraculous new year.

Dr. Jayel Jacobs Jr.  
Pastor  
Christian Life Missionary Baptist Church Oklahoma City OK.

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