



# 2023 MID-YEAR MEETING



## *The Power of Prayer*

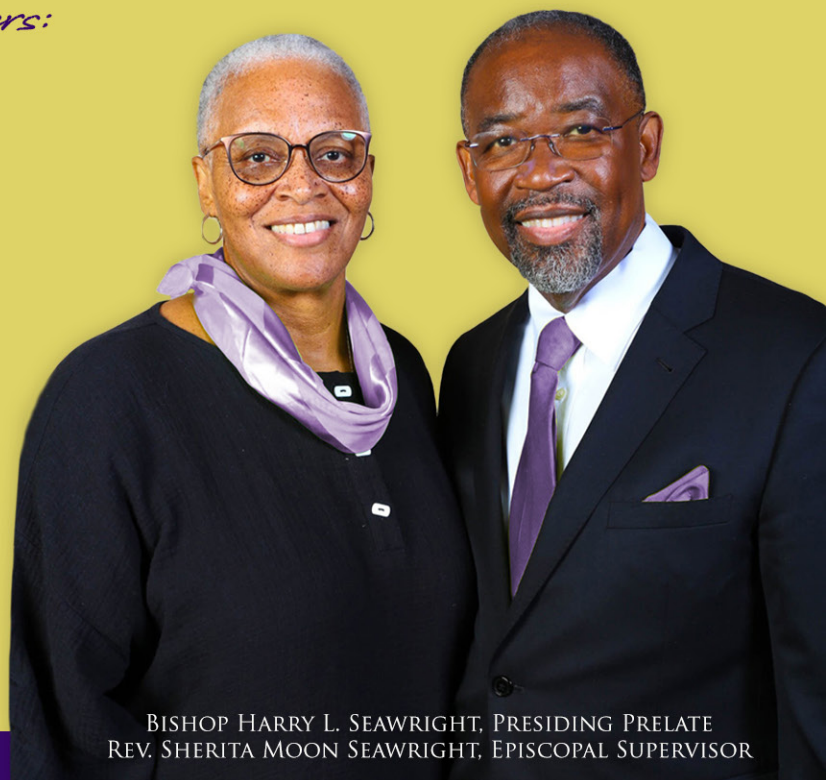
PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

THE MID-DAY WORSHIP SERVICE  
FRIDAY, MARCH 31, 2023 · 12:00 PM

DANIEL PAYNE COMMUNITY PLAZA | 1500 DANIEL PAYNE DRIVE | BIRMINGHAM, AL 35214

*Mid-Day Worship Service Preachers:*

REVEREND RAYMOND B. SWAFFORD &  
REVEREND ALVELYN SANDERS-SWAFFORD



BISHOP HARRY L. SEAWRIGHT, PRESIDING PRELATE  
REV. SHERITA MOON SEAWRIGHT, EPISCOPAL SUPERVISOR

**NINTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT OF THE  
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

**2023 Mid-Year Convocation**

*The Mid-Day Worship Service*

Friday, March 31, 2023

12:00 p.m.

*Reverend Charles Reeves, Worship Leader*

*Pastor, St. Paul AME Church - Mobile*

**The Doxology**

**Hymn #647 [Tune: Old 100]**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

**The Call to Worship**

**Reverend Lynntesha Henley**  
Pastor, Cherry Street AME Church  
-Dothan

**Minister:** I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord,  
our feet shall stand within Your gates, O Jerusalem.

**People:** **For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand, I had rather be a  
doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of  
wickedness.**

**Minister:** Because of the house of the Lord, our God, I will seek Your good.

**People:** **Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the  
courts of our God.**

**Minister:** Blessed are they that dwell in Your house Lord, I have loved Your  
habitation, the place where Your honor dwells.

**People:** **For the Lord is in His Holy Temple, let all the earth keep silence  
before Him.**

**Minister:** Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable  
in Your sight. O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.

**People:** **O sing unto the Lord a new song for He has done marvelous things.  
Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth and sing praises.**

**The Hymn of Praise**

**Reverend Miriam Harlan**  
Pastor, St. Luke AME Church  
-Hatchechubbee

**Hymn #21**  
**"To God Be the Glory"**

To God be the glory, great things He hath done;  
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,  
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,  
And opened the life gate that all may go in.

*Refrain*

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice!*  
*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the people rejoice!*  
*O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,*  
*And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.*

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,  
To every believer the promise of God;  
The vilest offender who truly believes,  
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

*Refrain*

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,  
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;  
But purer, and higher, and greater will be  
Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.

*Refrain*

**The Invocation**

**Reverend Roosevelt Williams, III**  
Pastor, St. John's AME Church  
-Montgomery

**The Choral Response**

**Hymn #272**  
**"Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior"**

Pass me not, O gentle Savior, hear my humble cry;  
While on others Thou art calling, do not pass me by.  
Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry,  
While on others Thou are calling do not pass me by.

**The Scripture Reading**  
Philippians 4:4-8

**Reverend James A. Platt**  
Pastor, Allen Temple AME Church  
-Phenix City

**The Introduction of the Bishop**

**Reverend Vernon McCleod**  
Pastor, Samuel Chapel AME Church  
-Pritchard

**The Presentation of the Preachers**

**Bishop Harry L. Seawright**  
Presiding Prelate  
of the 9<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District

**The Worship Through Music**

**The Sermon**

**Reverend Raymond B. Swafford  
and Reverend Alvelyn Sanders-Swafford**  
Co-Pastors,  
Gaines Chapel AME Church  
-Phenix City

**The Invitation to  
Christian Discipleship**

**Reverend Paul Horn**  
Pastor, Hines Chapel AME Church  
-Dothan

**The Benediction**





*Reverend Alvelyn Sanders-Swofford  
Reverend Raymond B. Swafford  
Co-Pastors, Gaines Chapel AME Church – Phenix City*

**Reverend Raymond B. Swafford**

Reverend Raymond Bernard Swafford is the son of the late Joseph and Lavinia Swafford. He was born and raised in Evanston, Illinois, where he attended Bethel AME Church with his parents and sister, Janis. It was there that he accepted Christ at an early age. His parents emphasized the importance of a Christian upbringing by reading the Bible individually, and as family, and by attending a regular Prayer Meeting as well as church every Sunday.

Raymond received his elementary education in the Evanston public school system. After graduating from Evanston Township High School, he earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemical Engineering from the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chicago, Illinois. He earned a Master of Divinity Degree – Magna Cum Laude - from Payne Theological Seminary in May 2022.

Following his graduation from IIT, Raymond moved to Florence, Alabama, and began attending Greater St. Paul AME Church, where he served as a Steward, Trustee, Christian Education Co-Director, Sunday School teacher, and as a member of the Usher Board.

He accepted his call into the ministry in August 1987 under the pastoral leadership of Reverend Willis N. Huggins, Sr. Raymond was ordained an Itinerant Deacon in the African Methodist Episcopal Church in October 1989, at St. John AME Church, Huntsville, AL., and later an Itinerant Elder in 1991 at St. John AME Church, Birmingham, AL. Both ordinations were performed by the late Bishop Cornelius E. Thomas.

Raymond has served as a pastor of three churches in the Northwest Alabama Annual Conference. Two of those churches were in Florence: Hopewell AME Church and Oak Grove AME Church, where he served for 24 years. The third church was Hopewell AME Church, in the Kingston neighborhood in Birmingham. Under his tenure, Hopewell AME Church, Florence installed new lights, new carpet, and central heat and air conditioning. While at Oak Grove AME

Church, a fellowship hall was built, a parking lot paved, central heat and air conditioning installed, an audio system was purchased, and many other improvements were made. While at Hopewell AME Church, Kingston the audio-visual equipment was upgraded, A/C units replaced, and new property acquired. Raymond's primary goal is that under his watch as the shepherd, the congregation grows spiritually, financially, and physically.

Pastor Raymond Swafford is very devoted to the young people in his congregation. He does whatever it takes to get them to be all they need to be, whether it involves driving the van, writing skits, directing skits, or just being there to support them. For a period, Raymond, a second-degree black belt in Chinese Kempo, conducted a martial arts class out of the fellowship hall of the church for the young people of Oak Grove. Those who have grown up under his watch, still seek out his advice for matriculating through school, getting a job, or dealing with life's struggles.

Over the years Raymond has served on several committees in the AME Church, particularly in the Northwest Conference including, Chair and Secretary to the Board of Examiners, Chair and Secretary of the Ministerial Efficiency Committee, as a member of the Finance Committee and the Resolution Committee, and as the Northwest Conference Christian Education Director. He presently serves a Dean of the Board of Examiners in the Northeast Alabama Annual Conference. On the Ninth Episcopal District level, Raymond has served on the Pentecost Committee, and he serves as Co-Director of the Warriors on the Wall Prayer Ministry.

After thirty-seven years of service, Raymond retired from the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant in Athens, Alabama, in 2015, where he worked as a Senior Reactor Operator. He was married to the late Gail Simpson Swafford until her untimely passing in 2015 due to complications with liver cancer. They proudly raised three sons: Cori, Jason, and Travis. Raymond has five grandchildren with whom he shares a close relationship: Khia, Amya, Jacori, Nalaya, and Xyla.

In December 2018, Raymond married Reverend Alvelyn Sanders-Swafford. Together, they are serving as Co-Pastors of Gaines Chapel AME Church, Phenix City, Alabama – in the Northeast Alabama Annual Conference.

### **Reverend Alvelyn Sanders-Swafford**

Reverend Alvelyn Sanders-Swafford, a native of Atlanta, Georgia, has worked extensively in media/film, the arts, the ministry, and politics. Sanders-Swafford received her Bachelor of Science degree in Radio-TV-Film from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She has a Master of Arts degree in African American Studies from Clark Atlanta University, as well as the Master of Theological Studies and Master of Divinity degrees from the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Additionally, Sanders-Swafford studied at the City of London Polytechnic in London, England when she studied abroad in college. In August 2022, Sanders-Swafford received a 2022 President Joseph R. Biden Lifetime Achievement and Volunteer Service Award for her work in the media – telling the story of the “foot soldiers” of the Atlanta Student Movement in her award-winning documentary, “Foot Soldiers: Class of 1964,” which has been broadcast on PBS stations – gratefully.

Sanders-Swofford is an ordained itinerant elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. She was ordained as a Deacon (2007) and an Itinerant Elder (2009) in the Sixth Episcopal District in the Atlanta North Georgia Annual Conference by the late Bishop William Phillips DeVaux, Sr. Sanders-Swofford's "home church" is Big Bethel AME Church on Auburn Avenue in Atlanta, Georgia, where she came to know and appreciate the AME Church under the leadership of now Bishop James L. Davis. During her time there, as a Steward and later as an Assistant Minister, she provided leadership for numerous ministries at the local church and Presiding Elder district levels. She "walked down the aisle" and accepted Christ at the age of eight, was baptized soon thereafter, and "grew up" as an active participant in the life and ministry of the church – in the Baptist and United Methodist denominations – thanks to her mother who made sure she attended church. Sanders-Swofford is thankful to God for the AME Church where she experienced immense spiritual formation and maturation to prepare her for greater works.

In 2014, she received her first pastoral appointment in the Ninth Episcopal District. She has served as the pastor of New Magnolia AME Church in Bessemer, AL; Greater St. Paul AME Church in Florence, AL; and St. James AME Church in Birmingham, AL in the North Avondale neighborhood. Now, she and her husband, Reverend Raymond B. Swofford, are making history as co-pastors of Gaines Chapel AME Church in Phenix City, AL.

As a pastor, Sanders-Swofford focuses on the spiritual growth of the congregation and the community at-large by emphasizing the gift of prayer, preaching on the promises of God, and encouraging God's people to live their best God-ordained life through Jesus Christ. Additionally, she believes the Church should be a leader in community outreach and civic engagement – using her skills in and passion for both areas to enhance the congregation's ministries in those efforts – or start new ones. Finally, she's been blessed to share her background as a communications professional to help the churches she's served receive positive media coverage for their ministries – sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. She's served as the Chaplain of the Day for the Georgia State Legislature – delivering a homily on the House floor; delivered the Invocation for a Birmingham City Council meeting and at the Inauguration of the Board of Education for Birmingham City Schools; and she has served as a resource for two mayors of Florence, Alabama on community concerns.

Her present ministry as a pastor includes serving on the administrative staff of the 9<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District of the AME Church, under the leadership of Bishop Harry L. Seawright. Also, she has the privilege of serving by invitation as needed on the staff of Dr. Jeffery Cooper, General Secretary/Chief Information Officer of the AME Church. Additionally, she served on the Correcting and Editing Committee of the 2021 edition of the *Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church*. Sanders-Swofford was appointed as the Dean of the Board of Examiners of the Ninth Episcopal District by Bishop Seawright in 2022.

Sanders-Swofford is the producer, director, and writer of "Foot Soldiers: Class of 1964," an award-winning independent documentary which premiered in the 2012 BronzeLens Film Festival in Atlanta, before making its television debut on Atlanta's PBS station, WPBA-TV30. "Foot Soldiers: Class of 1964" received two awards at the 21<sup>st</sup> Pan African Film Festival in Los Angeles in February 2013: Best Documentary Short (57mins) in the juried competition and Audience Favorite in the Documentary Short category. It tells the story of the women of the

Class of 1964 at Spelman College who participated in the largest coordinated series of protests in Atlanta's history during their freshman year. Sanders-Swofford and her mother, Dr. Georgianne Thomas, a Spelman College alumna who tells her story in the film, produced the project together. The film became a part of the U.S. Congressional Record in May 2022. It is now available for streaming on pbs.org – until fall 2024.

In 2020, she published her first book, *Lord, Have Mercy: 5 Go-To Prayers When You Need To Pray, But Don't Know What To Say*. As an award-winning writer and journalist, she was a longtime reporter, host, and producer at WABE-90.1 FM, Atlanta's National Public Radio station. She received an award for her work at WABE from the Atlanta Association of Black Journalists, and a fellowship from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. As a writer, Sanders-Swofford's work has been published in *Essence* magazine, *Black Issues Book Review*, *Northwestern (University) magazine*, and *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

Sanders-Swofford currently serves as an Adjunct Professor at Morehouse College, and she has served on the faculty at Morris Brown College, Spelman College, Clark Atlanta University, and Atlanta Metropolitan State College. She is an active member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and the recipient of many awards and honors.

Reverend Alvelyn Sanders-Swofford is grateful for her family, village, mentors, and the kindness of friends and strangers. She is grateful for God's love, grace, and mercy, and she prays to lead a life and ministry pleasing to God.

