

INTRODUCING

Reverend Jonathan V. Newton
Assistant Minister, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church



AN INTERVIEW WITH THE REVEREND JONATHAN V. NEWTON

This interview was conducted to introduce Rev. Newton to the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church family and community.

Question 1: Is there anything you would like to share about your life that affected your choice to enter the ministry? Were there difficulties or challenges encountered on your path to becoming a minister that may serve as inspirations in your assignments at Metropolitan?

Rev. Newton: My journey from the South Bronx to Harvard Law School led me across many socio-economic lines within the Black community. My observations along the way have revealed how economic conditions affect fundamental assumptions about life. While Black Theology has thoroughly contemplated racial disparities outside the Black community, God also equipped me to understand economic disparity within. While this understanding did not directly affect my acceptance of the call, it is a part of the foundation God established long before I realized where He was leading me.

Question 2: Some youth and/or young adults feel that church workers pay greater attention to the programs for youth rather than focus on the

actual ministry to youth. Do you think there is a difference? If so, what are your expectations for bridging the differences at Metropolitan?

Rev. Newton: This is difficult to answer in the abstract. The phrase "bridging the difference" assumes that programs for youth and ministry to youth are mutually exclusive; that assumption is not necessarily true and should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

However, I should distinguish youth ministry from young adult ministry. My focus will be on young adults, which is roughly defined as ages 18-39 in The A.M.E. Discipline. This is a stage that often entails life-changing transitions through college, career, marriage, family, child rearing, and/or home-ownership, among various other things. Consequently, young adults have specific ministry needs that are not usually encountered in youth ministry.

Question 3: How do you plan to blend the challenges of being a lawyer and being a minister at Metropolitan? That is, how will you meet the demands of the two professions, as you attempt to do both well, so that neither profession is short sighted?

Rev. Newton: The balance between being a lawyer and minister is admittedly an ongoing challenge. However, that challenge is an essential element of the ministry to which God has called me. These days, most people have competing demands on their time; the church must remain sensitive to that reality and its multi-faceted implications in order to effectively meet the needs of a changing community. Dual professions means the issue is not just academic for me and increases my sensitivity to the demands placed upon church members.

Question 4: What are your expectations of the congregation and its involvement in your ministry at Metropolitan?

Rev. Newton: While I am grateful for the ministry God has given me, Metropolitan is a dynamic and talented community of which I will be just a part. I am honored to be a part of something that is much bigger than me. The

Bible is clear that we all have gifts that contribute to God's plan and my prayer is that each member of the congregation will share (and/or continue sharing) their gifts in concert with each other to glorify God. "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." (1 Peter 4:10, NIV)

Question 5: How do you expect Metropolitan's congregation to benefit from your reactivation of "The Bethel Literary and Historical Society"? How will youth and young adults benefit since the original audience of this organization seemed to have been adult participants? (**Note:** Rev. Newton stated his intent to reactivate the Bethel Literary and Historical Society. This organization held meetings at Metropolitan A.M.E. Church from 1881-1913.)

Rev. Newton: The Bethel Literary and Historical Society provided a venue where the community could openly discuss issues, share insights, and provide exposure to the vast talent pool within their ranks. Today, that type of discussion is often compartmentalized and relegated to smaller forums where new and/or conflicting ideas can be stifled. I think community development is enhanced when its members express opinions, are exposed to new ideas, and learn to address differences without predetermined outcomes.

As this relates to the youth, young people can learn character through observation. Consequently, if the Bethel Literary and Historical Society can bring complex issues into the light and address those issues without excessive emotionalism, prayerfully we will inspire a generation of youth that communicates better.

We welcome Rev. Jonathan V. Newton to Metropolitan A.M.E. Church and look forward to his faithful service.

Delores Zimmerman-Jeter

THE BETHEL LITERARY
AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"The Bethel Literary and Historical Society" was an African American learned society that met from 1881-1913 at the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, 1518 M Street NW in Washington, DC. The Bethel Literary was a large, formal group that regularly attracted hundreds, who would listen to a presentation by an invited speaker, then participate in an open public discussion." (Excerpted from "The Bethel Literary and Historical Society," by Kim Roberts, The Washington Post website, Literary Organizations.)

The Society, organized by Bishop **Daniel Alexander Payne** of Union Bethel Church (one of two congregations that merged to form Metropolitan A.M.E. Church), was inspired by a similarly organized group that met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
