



**GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF ST. ALBANS  
NEWSLETTER**

**GRACE NOTES**

ISSUE VIII

Rev. Alpher Sylvester, Pastor

February, 2015

***AT GRACE, AFTER GOD, WE PUT PEOPLE FIRST***

***Reverend A. Sylvester Proposed to His First Lady***

What a Sunday! On January 22, 2015, after a powerful spiritually inspiring message, everyone was pleasantly surprised when after Sunday Worship Service Benediction, a message suddenly flashed on the church monitors, “**Carlene will you marry me?**” Our Pastor was on his knees about to propose to Carlene Brown.

Many of the members rushed to the front of the sanctuary to clearly see what was going on. There was Rev. Sylvester on one knee, with a small black velvet box extended towards this attractive woman sitting in the front row. She said “yes”, of course.

Rev. Sylvester wanted to share this special moment with his church family.

Congratulations to Rev. Sylvester and Ms. Brown.

May God Bless them both.

\*(At GUMC, when you miss a Sunday , you miss a lot.)



**DATES TO REMEMBER**

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Valentine’s Day Celebration– Saturday, February 14, 2015 from 7-10pm at GUMC. Tickets \$14. (**wear something red**)

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**Confirmation classes for ages 12 and up began January 25,2015. Contact Renee Phills or Majorie Richards.**

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**Women’s Day Luncheon on Saturday, May 2, 2015 from 12:00pm–4:00pm at Antun’s. Tickets \$75.**

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**Vacation Bible School—July 6th—31st. Volunteer teachers are needed. Contact Hazel Knights and Fleur Greene.**

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**Dedicated Sunday School teachers needed. Contact Simone George**

**WORD FROM PASTOR****Rev. Alpher Sylvester**

**These are the words of Jim Rohn. Its part of my motivational meditation, see how it applies to your life? His words of wisdom could be yours too. Give me feedback**

***“Basics/Fundamentals***

*“Success is neither magical nor mysterious. Success is the natural consequence of consistently applying basic fundamentals.” “There are no new fundamentals. You've got to be a little suspicious of someone who says, ‘I've got a new fundamental.’ That's like someone inviting you to tour a factory where they are manufacturing antiques.” “Some things you have to do every day. Eating seven apples on Saturday night instead of one a day just isn't going to get the job done.”*

*“Success is nothing more than a few simple disciplines, practiced every day; while failure is simply a few errors in judgment, repeated every day. It is the accumulative weight of our disciplines and our judgments that leads us to either fortune or failure.”*

*Someone once said to me that success isn't everything and I think I know what they really meant. I believe they really meant that money isn't everything, and I certainly agree with that. But I do believe that success IS everything.*

*First, **you need to succeed to survive.** We must take the seasons and learn how to use them with the seed, the soil and the rain of opportunity to learn how to sustain ourselves and our family.*

*Second is to then **succeed to flourish in every part of your life.** Good question to ask mature people: “If you could do better, should you?” And I think almost everybody would answer the question in the affirmative. If you could improve your health, shouldn't you do that? If you can learn more, shouldn't you do that? If you could earn more and share more, shouldn't you do that? If you can improve your relationships and spirituality, shouldn't you do that? And I think that is what success is really all about.*

*It is not just a destination that is set for everybody to try and go for. It is like Zig Ziglar said, “improving in every area of your life to see if you can't say with satisfaction at the end of the day, week, month and year, ‘I have made excellent progress this year, for myself, for my family, for my business, my career and my health.’” I think that kind of success everybody recognizes is legitimate and something we should all strive for.*

*Interesting phrase in the Bible that says strive for perfection—not that we can ever reach it. But it is in the striving, to be a little bit better today than yesterday, in our speech, our language, our health, everything we can possible think of.*

So yes, in my opinion, Success Is Everything” - Jim Rohn's news letter, 2014

# GUMC'S FIRST ANNUAL ESSAY CONTEST IN CELEBRATION OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY

The Annual Contest was organized by the Education Committee at GUMC for high School students in the community. The guest speaker was author, Jason Spencer-Edwards.

The legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was celebrated thru songs of praise, dance, and prayers. Awards were given to High School Essay winners and MLK poster contest winners.

The essay winners are;



Dayana Mendez, first place



Krystle Hall, second place

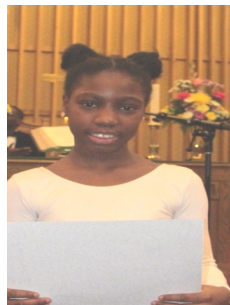


Domonique Gordon, third place

## Poster Contest Winner



Kelar Walker



Samira Hamilton



Camille Rudder

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After the MLK celebration, members watched the movie "Selma" in Fellowship Hall. Popcorn and snacks were served.



## **My version of the story of Daniel in the Old Testament**

My name is Mara and I live in Iraq, one day a group of men calling themselves ISIL came to my city and demanded that all the people serve their god. These men were Muslims and most of the people in my village were Christians. The leader said we had to become Muslims or die. My father spoke to my mother, my two brothers and myself and said " family we are not Muslims, we serve Yahweh and we are not going to convert to any other religion; so today we will die". We were all afraid but my father said "do not be afraid, the God whom we serve will save us and if he choose not to save us then today we will be with him in paradise".

My family shut the door of our house and began to pray, we asked Yahweh for deliverance. Soon the soldiers were banging on our door. Our neighbors who were Muslims had reported to them that we were Christians and have refused to be converted. We were dragged out one by one and lined up against a wall, our arms were tied and hoods were placed over our heads, soldiers with machine guns were in front of us.

The leader gave my father one more chance to convert and again he refused. The leader gave the order to his men to "fire". As the men lifted their guns and fired all we heard were loud clicks, soon we heard firing but felt no pain and suddenly there was silence. Someone came and lifted the hoods from our heads and untied our arms. We saw all the soldiers lying dead. We asked what happened? "The guns were leveled at all of you" said a neighbor, " but when the soldiers fired, their guns jammed and suddenly their guns backfired and killed all of them". There was great rejoicing in our village because God Yahweh had delivered his people from the hands of the enemy. Many Muslims converted to Christianity that day and my father counseled them and prayed with them. Some were even baptized.

The men from ISIL never returned and we heard that their leader converted to Christianity and stopped killing, causing many of his followers to lay down their weapons and follow him to serve Yahweh.

Submitted by Maureen Gill

## HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELF?

*“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed in the image from glory to glory , just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”*

II Corinthians 3:18

The image we have of ourselves is from how we see ourselves. So the big question is how do you see yourself?

Our thoughts about ourselves largely determine how we feel about ourselves. When our thoughts are factual we are more apt to think well of ourselves. Adversely, when our thoughts are highly opinionated and not based on facts our sense of self is low and detrimental to our overall sense of contentment.

Our sense of self makes us feel either confident or lacking confidence. That determines our degree of self-worth and esteem.

When we allow others to define us and determine how we are valued, we find ourselves confused and unsure of who we really are and Life becomes quite problematic.

If you desire to know more about yourself and how to make whatever changes necessary, here are some questions you can ponder in the depth of your soul. Be honest with your answers. That is the only way you really will be able to get to know how you really see yourself.

Do you find yourself thinking that you are unworthy of being loved? Do you spend too much time scolding yourself? Are you overly critical of everything you do? Are you often caught up with “should have,” “could have” or “shouldn’t have?” Do you regret most of the decisions you make and the things you do? Are you embarrassed by your physical appearance? Do you find yourself accepting the negative expressions of others as if they were true?

You alone should determine what your answers should be - based on how you feel about yourself. If your answers are “yes” when they should be “no” or “no” when they should be “yes,” what are you going to do about it?

You should be aware that our Creator made you and everything He makes is good. Since everything coming from Him is good, He is pleased when we do well by ourselves and others. God’s gift to us is life, and what we do with our life is our gift to Him. We are blessed by the good we do, and part of that good is being good to ourselves. We should see ourselves worthy of love, respect, kindness, compassion and gentleness. What you give to others you also give to yourself.

**Continued on next page**

## HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELF? (continued)

God values you highly and He wants you to highly value yourself and life. You are unique. There is no other person like you. You are special because everything He makes is special. Although you are made in the image of God, you are one of a kind. You have everything you need for greatness.

It is extremely important for you to know that God has given great thought and interest in creating you. So when you think about the questions that have been posed to you, know that you have the entire tool you need to work with in making yourself all that you were created to be. All that you need is available. Read Matthew 6:33.

How you see yourself may not be as the world sees you. That is because much of the negative things you see about yourself the world does not see. They only see it when you act out your feelings.

If you are a very quiet person who keeps your feelings to yourself, people don't get to know that you are possibly hurting. How you have been dealt with or spoken to when you were a young defenseless child may be one of the reasons why your yes and no answers are not as they should be.

However, if you are an adult (regardless of your age) you have the absolute right to think in a manner that is most benefitting to you and is going to bring the joy, peace and happiness you desire and deserve as a unique creation of God.

When we ponder our thoughts, it is wise not to entertain such statement as: "I cannot do so and so because I am not smart enough." "I am not good enough to be treated well." "I am not attractive." "I am ugly." "I am too clumsy to try to put things together even when I am given simple assembling instructions." Your answers will determine if you have been fair (or good) to yourself.

When we examine ourselves in terms of what we honestly see, we will become able to make better choices and necessary changes. A serious and true assessment of ourselves is so vital to our emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual wholeness.

In making whatever changes needed, we will be empowered to be all that we can be. If we desire all the blessings that God longs to give us, we will do all we can to receive them. We will then see ourselves in the best possible light, and know that God is well pleased with us. "All things are possible to those who believe." Mark 9:23. **Your final question is - do you believe?**

**To God be the Glory!**

Submitted by Dr. Mel Hall

## THE BEST INSURANCE = GOD'S ASSURANCES

By Hyacinth E. Bailey



Why do we buy insurance? Oh. I'm not saying that you shouldn't. Basically, we buy this service to ensure our future security, preparedness for loss, compensation for damages and destruction, to secure health care coverage and so on. The truth is that, after paying and paying, the holders of these insurance policies are not really eager to pay in the face of disaster. Very likely you will be referred to the 'fine print' to show you that 'that was not covered'.

What assurances do we have from the word of God that could not be provided by any insurance for which we might pay? I will share some below.

The original word 'insurance' was used for something other than what we use it for today. It meant 'betrothal', an old word for 'engaged to marry'. The word 'ensurance' was also used back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The insurance company is literally engaged to protect you against all ills. Over the centuries, both insurance, ensurance and assurance (later) came to be used interchangeably but meaning less 'engagement for marriage' and meaning more 'to make certain'. Now, don't be surprised to see the word 'Esurance' today, in reference to vehicle coverage in this technological age.

God's word provides us with a multitude of vital **assurances** which we would do well to remember and not lose sight of, especially faced with today's challenges. These assurances take us way beyond any possible needs, demands or disasters. With these many specific assurances, both our present and our future are secure. Among them are the following, for which we should rejoice:

John 6: 37-40: "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day."

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## THE BEST INSURANCE = GOD'S ASSURANCES (continued)

John 9:31: "Now we know that God does not hear sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him".

John 10:27-30: "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life and they shall never perish neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one"

Romans 5:1-5: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance and perseverance, character and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

Romans 8:16: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"

Romans 8:11: "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Romans 11:29: "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."

Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Philippians 1:6: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

II Timothy 1:7: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

Hebrews 6:11 "And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the **full assurance** of hope until the end."

I John 5:14: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."

**What more assurance do we need?**



## METHODIST YOUTH FOUNDATION

Three of our MYF members will be traveling to Antigua, West Indies from February 14 to 22nd to do missionary work. Every year two MYF members are chosen to be mission youth ambassadors. This year three were chosen; Stephen Cox, Sapphire Tucker and Shamar Greene. Tyrone Johnson, MYF leader, will accompany them as the chaperone.

In preparation for this trip, the teens did various fund raising events including bake sales to pay for their portion of the trip. In addition, many generous members of the congregation contributed towards the travel expenses. The church will pray for them during the upcoming Sunday worship before their departure.

Youngsters who are selected for mission trips as Youth Ambassadors should be active MYF members for at least one year. After they return, they are required to give an oral presentation to the congregation on their experience.



On January 10, 2015, Bishop Jane Middleton (center in green sweater), met with all the Methodist Youth Ambassadors and their chaperones who will be going on the mission trip to Antigua. The Bishop was invited to the meeting by Rev. Ewoodzie, the mission team leader. She spoke with the group about their mission as well as prayed for them.

## PAT'S CORNER



Hello GUMC folks,

I have two things to tell you about, first, we all know how cold it is outside. This means the Southeast Queens homeless cluster program has started, eight to ten men are being helped with shelter this year. On Wednesday's we provide food and a warm clean place for them to spend the night. Our church does a great job helping with this program. We need donations of men clothing as well as hats, gloves, scarves and socks. If you would like to come one night and help out or just see what we do, you are more than welcome. Just let me know and I will make the necessary arrangement.

We also have a "free will " concert at the end of the program to raise funds to pay the caregiver that stays over night with the men. Our dancers of praise always do an outstanding number. Last year they were phenomenal. All the churches in the cluster are involved in the concert. We praise and worship God with the praise dancers and choirs from the various churches. This concert is scheduled for the beginning of April. The date, place and time will be in the church bulletin.

The second event I want to tell you about is that Grace will have its first ever Valentine's Day Party. This is going to be a great function which will allow you to celebrate Valentine Day with those you love. Your mom, dad, children, family, and friends, get my drift? You can invite anyone you love; there will be music, food, prizes, and games. How cool is that? The cost is only \$14.00 plus you get to spend this popular day with a loved one.



Next time I will be reporting on some great eateries and jazz clubs you can visit. Till then BE BLESSED!!

## HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS

On Sunday, December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Grace United Methodist Church, through its Higher Education Committee had the distinct privilege of presenting to three of our young people, scholarships as they begin their College careers. Each scholarship is valued at one thousand dollars (\$1,000). The recipients for this year (2014 )are Imani Brown, Louis Mclean and Andre Morgan. The awards, along with certificates, were distributed to the scholars by Reverend Alpher Sylvester.

In order to qualify for the award students were required to submit the following documents: *An application form, a copy of their High School transcript or diploma, enrollment verification from their College of choice and two letters of recommendation.*

During the ceremony Grace's congregation was reminded of the purpose of the Higher Education Committee which is as follows:

- (1) To show that GUMC, St Albans is committed to the educational growth and development of our High School Graduates.
- (2) To encourage our scholars.
- (3) To share the good news that Jesus Christ changes lives.
- (4) To build positive relationships.
- (5) To support and love each other.

An open letter was read to the students, part of which asked them to ponder the words of Abraham Lincoln, "**Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality.**" **What is your promise?**

A moment of silence was observed to honor the memory of **Sister Rosa Hamlet** who had headed this committee for many years.

The Higher Education Committee: Fleur Greene, Victoria Bigby, Olga Matthias and Lillian Barracks.

Submitted by Fleur Greene.



*Imani Brown*



*Andre Morgan*



*Louis Mclean*

**Grace United Methodist Church  
of St. Albans**

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**OUR MISSION**

***We, at Grace United Methodist Church of St. Albans, are a body of Disciples, committed to building relationships in Christ for the transformation of our community and beyond.***

**Worship Hours**

Sunday School: 8:30 am to 9:30 am

Church Worship Services: 9:45 am

Friendship Circle (Seniors) Bible Study on Wednesdays at 10:00 am

Bible Discipleship on Wednesdays at 7:30 pm

One hour of prayer every Friday at 7:30 pm

Early morning Community Bible Study with Rev. Alpher Sylvester; Monday thru Friday 6:00 am—7:00 am.. Dial (559)726-1000, enter access code 549072#. If you wish to only listen, please place your phone on mute. If you wish to join in please make sure there are no background noises.

**Grace United Methodist Church  
of St. Albans**

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**Grace Notes Newsletter Committee** : Sharon Webley, Team leader; Hyacinth Bailey, Team Co-leader;  
Mavelin Germain, Maureen Gill, Dr. Mel Hall, Wanda Jackson, Sarah Sweetwine, Patricia Yarber.