

First Missionary Baptist Church honored Mrs. Bernice Thomas 2014 Women's Day successful



THOMASVILLE, GA – **June 23rd, 2014** – First Missionary Baptist Church (FMBC) and its Pastor – the Reverend Jeremy G. Rich – just observed a successful 2014 Women's Day event at the church. This event took place on Sunday, June 22nd at 10:45am at FMBC.

FMBC's Women's Day was memorable for a few reasons: Ms. Troyla "Troy" Washington – WALB's Thomasville Bureau reporter – serving as the keynote speaker; Ms. Karla Heath-Sands – WALB Newscenter 10 Anchor – not only introducing Ms. Washington as speaker... but also singing a rousing rendition of "We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder"; Mrs. Bernice Thomas being recognized as First Missionary Baptist Church's Women of the Year for 2014; and the church's spontaneous serenade of Ms. Thomas as she accepted her award.

Ms. Troyla Washington stated: "The entire program was perfect in my eyes – from my vintage point as the speaker and as a member of the Women's Day Committee. It all just flowed. I was so honored to have been selected as the speaker; and also honored to have been a part of this event. In summary, it was a truly unforgettable service which moved me to tears."

Of Ms. Washington's speech, Reverend Rich said, "Troy's speech reminded the church that we must continue to embrace and encourage all women – especially our young women who are

searching for affirmation of identity. The church must continue to be the affirming voice to all women validating their gifts, their callings, and their worth.”

Ms. Bernice Thomas is a charter member of the Thomas County Branch of the NAACP; the widow of Curtis Thomas, Sr. – an iconic, local civil rights advocate; and a beloved, longtime member of First Missionary Baptist Church. 20 members of Mrs. Thomas’s family – including her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren – were all in attendance to see her recognized for her many accomplishments. As she came down to receive her award, the entire congregation rose to its feet and sang “There’s a Sweet, Sweet Spirit.” It was a very emotional moment.

Of Mrs. Thomas, Reverend Rich said: “Ms. Bernice Thomas possess the qualities of grace and dignity as virtues of her life. She has been a source of inspiration for not only myself, but for everyone at FMBC. She continues to be active in every part of the congregation: usher board, choirs, Deaconess and Mothers’ Board, and the mission groups of the church. Her service to this church and to this community go on record for having made this community a better place. We share with her flowers while she can enjoy the beauty they give.”

Of his mother, Keith Thomas said: “She loves her church and every ministry and organization within the church. My mother has done so very much for our entire family. Her award was awesome. It came as a complete shock and a total surprise. We were all so thrilled. We still are.”

The Chairwomen for FMBC’s 2014 Women’s Day were Sister Vicki Henderson and Sister Alyce Tillman

Ms. Vicki Henderson offered: “Troy’s speech was excellent. She spoke truth in terms of how both to reach and to empower the next generation. I felt that Mrs. Thomas’s recognition as Woman of the Year was very well deserved in light of all the people she has personally inspired and helped. The entire program was dynamic. I cannot imagine how it could possibly have been better.”

Ms. Alyce Tillman shared: “Ms. Washington stepped outside of the box. Rather than go the traditional route of using scripture and exposition, she simply spoke from her heart. As usual, our Choir sang so beautifully. My daughter and I both noticed that people were moved to tears during our Women’s Day morning service.

Ms. Jasmine Calhoun shared: “The Women’s Day Service was a once in a lifetime experience. Women from all ages were educated, uplifted and given the call to learn from one another.”

FMBC’s 2014 Women’s Day would not have been possible without the contributions of the Women’s Day Steering Committee, the Women’s Day Choir, the Women’s Day Ushers, Sister Dale Adams (who served as the event’s Decorator), Sister Dale Adams (who served as the event’s Photographer), the Women’s Praise Ensemble, Sister Lilia Graham (who introduced Ms. Carla Heath-Sands), Evangelist Sarah Johnson, Evangelist Linda McLean, Evangelist Cassandra Lawson, Sister Catherine Mitchell, Sister Yvonne Armster, and all church musicians.

Since its initiation in 1906, Women’s Day has become one of the most important days in the life of the church. Though most prevalent in African-American churches, Women’s day has gained popularity in other ethnic and cultural religious communities.

Perhaps the most significant impact of Women’s Day is that it continues to afford women an opportunity to plan worship and proclaim the Gospel as speakers and preachers, as well as

address the unique joys, struggles, and concerns evident in the lives of women in our worship communities and in the larger society in which we live. Of particular note is the attention given to the experiences of biblical women in many Women's Day sermons, inviting women and their worship communities to value women's contributions to religious life and acknowledge the injustices in church and community against which women continue to struggle. Women have accomplished much in religious life since 1906; yet there is much work to be done.

Established in 1853, FMBC is one of Thomasville's oldest churches. It has a long and distinguished history of encouraging its members to actively engage in community outreach, academic excellence, and equality for all of God's people. FMBC began observing Women's Day in the early 1950's under the pastorate of Rev. R. W Hughes

Ms. Josephine L. Mullins – stated: “The Women's Day Service on was just awesome. Troy's message was pointed and timely. The attendance was wonderful. It was just a beautiful day through-and-through.”

Ms. Willard Ward – a FMBC Women's Day 2014 attendee – opined: “It was a blessing for me to witness and be a part of ‘Bridging the Gap.’ The speaker's hands-on examples showed the need for today's young ladies to hold on, and not give up in the face of trials. I enjoyed how Ms. Washington both modeled and taught the love of God to the next generation.”

Reverend Rich commented: “One of the hopes/goals of this year's Women's Day was for our young girls to begin to see the more seasoned women sitting on the pews beside them as big sisters; while at the same time, our more seasoned women would begin to adopt our young girls as spiritual daughters. It is this intergenerational building that will move the church to meet the needs of children and seniors, give voice to those whose voices otherwise not be heard. It is this intergenerational movement that echoes the clarion call that whosoever will, let them come to Christ.”

First Missionary Baptist Church is located at 110 W. Calhoun Street (at the intersections of Calhoun and Madison streets) in beautiful, downtown Thomasville.

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