A GROUNDED IN LOVE Project

The Voices of MCC People of African Descent

in honor of Black History Month
Since the earliest days of Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC), people of African descent have been and continue to be a vital part of MCC. We have founded churches, led ministries, sung in choirs, served as interim and settled pastors, and made significant contributions to MCC’s life and ministry at the local and global levels of our movement. In the interest of building deeper connections with our MCC siblings, we share here a collection of testimonies and stories from just a few MCC people of African descent.

Through Jesus Christ who strengthens us, we are and will always be proudly Black and firmly grounded in love for God, ourselves, and our church.

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As an African American male born in New York City (NYC), I was raised in the Black Baptist and United Methodist Churches. I also was involved in a First Reformed Church that had established an outreach to people of other cultures. I loved visiting different NYC churches until I realized that I was Gay and then began to process the negative attitudes most of these churches had regarding my God-Given way of life. So, like so many others, I took a sabbatical from church, but not necessarily from God.

As I finally made peace with who I was, I realized that whoever I was, I had to find employment to ensure that I would be able to take care of myself. Thus began a career with the Federal Government that spanned almost 30 years and included careers in both Information Technology and Equal Employment Opportunity. I worked in Washington DC moved to Norfolk, VA and finally retired in San Francisco, CA.

In Norfolk, I became aware of MCC while chatting online with my future husband and soul mate, Allan Holden. I stepped out of my darkness and into the marvelous light on New Year’s Eve on December 31, 2000. What was supposed to have just been a 1 ½ hour service at New Life MCC of Hampton Roads, turned into a life time of love for and with MCC that has included a wonderful life together with Allan spanning 16 years. We had a Holy Union in 2005, and got legally married in California in 2008.

I found a home at MCC, where I could be my authentic self. I literally found a “New Life” where I learned to use my spiritual gifts in ways I never dreamed possible. MCC offered me a blank canvas and the tools to expand my creative, spiritual and professional abilities. There was no having to prove my worth, convert to a “oneness” of thought or learning to play “the game”. Their doors opened and I saw the face of Jesus in

Marc Eugene Anderson

“Be never silent O voice of conscience, for although there are times I may not want to acknowledge you, your voice is O so important and must always be heard.”

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Marc Anderson

California, USA

“But you are a race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of the darkness into his marvelous light.”

1 Peter 2:9

“Be never silent O voice of conscience, for although there are times I may not want to acknowledge you, your voice is O so important and must always be heard.”

Marc Eugene Anderson
others. In due time, I found myself becoming the face of Jesus to others and noted the fact that my black face was of no consequence; it was all about the work that needed to be done.

I began working with the Outreach Team and later became the team Lead. We greatly grew our Transgender community, reached out to People of Color and expanded our “Do Unto Others” ministry. Over the years, my ministries have included, Choir, Board of Directors, Meals-To-Go, Kitchen, Food Pantry, Hospitality, Communion Ministry, Council of Ministries and Director of Christian Education and Outreach.

My most cherished position was to serve as the Lead Teacher of a 4-year Christian education program titled, “Disciple” that was designed to build “Christian Disciples”. My life’s joy was in the sharing and being able to awaken the miracles that were inside my students so that they could share their gifts with someone in need. I successfully oversaw and directly and/or indirectly guided 160 individual students through one or more years of study. Almost 2 years of this was while we were without a Pastor; it is said that this ministry helped keep people actively involved in the church.

MCC has enabled me to reach deep inside myself to affect self-healing and to also positively impact others. Embodying our church’s Mission Statement – “To Reach, Teach and Empower through Jesus Christ,” I made a difference in people’s lives both within MCC and the surrounding community. I developed a sense of purpose; through MCC I am able to translate the “Word” into “Deeds” and actively be the body of Jesus Christ to a world that cries out for us to reach out and touch and help another.

My favorite verse above proclaims to me that those in the LGBTQI population are God’s people; therefore, People of Color (POC) as a subset of the population, are also fully God’s people. MCC has helped me find myself, and also people like me, who are in the Bible. As a microcosm of how it should be, MCC has led the way to wholeness and diversity by fostering and combining the spiritual, the theological and the wish for a society of inclusiveness into an effective way of life for me and so many others. MCC provides many positive reflections of me in the faces of POC leaders; lay ministry leaders, Pastors and the faithful who remind me that I am not alone in the journey.

I attended Peninsula MCC/Many Journeys MCC in San Mateo CA while living in the Bay Area and currently attend MCC of the Coachella Valley in Cathedral City CA where we live with our two dogs, Piper and Cary.

It is my hope that MCC can and will continue to find ways to successfully minister to its founding populace while developing innovative ways to appeal to the greater community. Diverse peoples are looking for a place to call home, like I was. MCC needs to promote a healthy leadership that fully resembles its membership and proactively vocalizes and defends all Human Rights equally. We are each Links in this chain called life. Each intertwined interlocked, and interwoven into this fabric we call humanity. MCC must do more to reach out to more POC in light of the current changes in demographics happening in the United States and around the world. We must have the forethought to grow leaders from the grassroots up, providing assistance, as needed to ensure that we can utilize all available Human Assets as resources. MCC has become a mature tree of life that must find ways of nourishing its roots while successfully managing its inclusive broadening branches.
Reverend Onetta Brooks is a native of Los Angeles, California. She was reared in a Christian home, baptized at an early age and raised in the tradition of the Black Baptist Church (National Baptist Convention).

Rev. Brooks received her B.A. in Mathematics from Pomona College, her M.P.A. from California State University at Dominguez Hills and her M.Div. from San Francisco Theological Seminary. For 34 years, she worked for various aerospace/defense companies as a programmer, software engineer and systems engineer as well as program manager for various classified/unclassified projects for the US military.

Rev. Brooks attended her first worship service at MCC Los Angeles (MCCLA, now Founders MCC) in March, 1992 at the invitation of Beverly Winters, a friend and Deacon at the church. She began attending MCCLA on a regular basis in 1996, eventually becoming a member in 1998.

Recalling what inspired her to become a member of MCC, she stated:

“At the time, it was my first MCC pastor’s welcome, message and opportunity to participate in a two-year study of the gospel of Luke. I felt MCC’s mission and open table were welcoming. I was drawn to our willingness to grabble with diversity and inclusion issues, etc. To continue, I seek respectful, global conversations on race, class, misogyny and privilege … so we can grow, forgive and become a more loving spiritual community.”

Rev. Brooks’ has been involved in MCC ministry on the local, Regional/Network and Denominational levels. She has served on the MCCLA Pastoral Search Team, 2000 –2001; MCCLA Board of Directors, 2001-2003; MCC Region 1 Worship Coordinator, 2004; MCC Region 6 Nominating Facilitating Committee, 2006; MCC Regional Conference Business Team, 2006; MCC Region 6 Worship Coordinator, 2009; MCC Southern California/Nevada US Network Team, 2009-2012; MCC PAD Worship Team, 2006, 2008; MCC PAD Chair, 2000; MCC International Judicial Pool, 2005-2010; MCC Elder Nominating Committee, 2008-2010;
Sensing and responding to her own call to professional ministry, Rev. Brooks was ordained in UFMCC on January 27, 2007. Since her ordination, she has served as an Intentional Interim Pastor for two (2) MCC’s: Christ Chapel MCC (2007-2009) and MCC of Northern Virginia (2012-2013).

Rev. Brooks encourages People of African Descent who are part of MCC to “stay true to your calling. You don’t have to fit in, just BE you! MCC is and has a global mission and we all have to be willing to take time listen to each other; and not just assume we know the other person’s journey without engaging in conversation. God still speaks through each of us. Be unapologetically you!”

Rev. Brooks’ hope for MCC, simply put, is we will learn how to treat each other with love and respect. As she stated, “I offer this quote from Maya Angelou: ‘I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.’”

Rev. Brooks currently resides in Inglewood, California and is a member of Founders MCC in Los Angeles.

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**Kedric Brown**
Texas, USA

“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.”

2 Corinthians 10:4

I am a native Texan from the city of Livingston. I currently reside in Houston, TX and I know that this is not my final destination. The City of Houston is vibrant with diversity, a great city economy and we are a blue city!!! I have truly grown as a man of faith, dignity, and pride. I am the middle child of 3 and I have 2 nephews and 3 nieces whom I love dearly and treat as my own. My passions in life are to live a life of authenticity and music. Singing has become a hobby of mine and I am a classically trained clarinetist. I also enjoy cooking great food, helping others and intellectually sound conversation.
My religious background is rooted in the Full Gospel/Missionary Baptist tradition. We believed in One God, One Baptism, and the Holy Spirit. I grew up in the church attending at least three or four days a week. I started off as a young leader being president of our BTU (Baptist Training Union) at the age of 15 and leading our youth group. While I attended college, I had an experience that began to shape my experience with the church. I had always heard the “homosexuals will go to hell” sermons but, they never really moved me until I started living my life. After that one Sunday in 2000, I took a year off from church and just worked on me and my spirituality. I had to get rid of “momma’s” religion and follow the truth.

My career path initially started with a desire to be a band director on the high school level. Well, that changed with life and I have now been in the oil and gas business since 2006 and working as a business analyst in the information technology world since 2013. I also hold leadership positions within my MCC church: Young Adult Coordinator and Board of Directors.

The first MCC church I attended is the church that I am a member of: Resurrection MCC (RMCC) in Houston, TX. I have visited various other MCCs across the nation and I loved them all. Some college friends of mine in 2001 had heard about RMCC and we decided to take a road trip to Houston. The exposure to so many folks who identified as GLBT that were in the room (at least 300-400) was astonishing! At the time I was dating someone and it felt great not only to worship with him but to hold his hand and not be ashamed!

What has inspired me to not only continue as a part of MCC but to be an unremovable staple is the practice of sound theology, authentic Christian education, the Chosen family that I have gained, freedom to consistently be myself, and our belief in social justice and inclusion. Since joining RMCC, I have served in the following ministry areas: Board of Director- Director of Community Presence (Current); Young Adult Coordinator (Current); Assistant Director of the Gospel Ensemble (Current); Communion Song Leader (Current); CLM Trainer (Current); LEAD Participant (Current); Communion Distributor (Current); Reader (Current); Lay Delegate (Past); Usher (Past); Praise and Worship Leader (Past).

Our practice of inclusion, celebrating the Eucharist every Sunday and liberation of faith keeps me both involved and inspired to share MCC’s message. Growing up in the church I came from, there was only one “god” on a throne with daggers to through as sin punishment/discipline that was recognized as a man. Now I know of one God that is genderless and loving of all people unconditionally. Not only that, Jesus truly is the center of my joy and the Holy Spirit isn’t a scary ghost wrapped in a sheet yelling boo!! The Holy Spirit is truly my comfort and guide throughout ALL of life’s experiences.

One of the greatest gifts I have received through MCC is a large family of brothers and sisters whom I can call no matter what, along with MCC moms and dads whom I truly love dearly. Also, my gift of music is stronger that it has ever been before. I know I can go anywhere across the country and experience God the way I now know God to be. For me to “be MCC” means to “do justice, show kindness, and walk humbly with our God,” showing love, sharing grace and giving willingly to our neighbor!!

My hope for African Americans in MCC is to continue to bridge the gap where there is indifference and
practice the true meaning of the Gospel. We are a spirited bunch of folk that carry an innate traditional practice of worshipping a free flowing God of all. We need to continue to share that practice willingly to all people. MCC is teaching us to never be ashamed or afraid of who our God is and what our God IS doing for us in this day and time. We are equipped with the whole truth that can set all people free in any manner. Let us live loud, laugh lots and love with power. My hope for MCC is that we will never die!! The world needs us!!

Michelle Burnett  
Texas, USA

“And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.”  
2 Thessalonians 3:13

I am a native of Mississippi and was brought up in the Baptist and Holiness traditions. Currently, I hold the position of Director of Worship Arts at MCC San Antonio. I served in the US Army and the US Air Force. I also work for the Alamo Community College system here in the beautiful city of San Antonio, where I live. I am married to Marsha Warren. And we've been together 19 years and married 1 ½ years. We have one handsome son, Marcanthony, who grew up in the fellowship.

My first MCC experience was Exodus MCC in Abilene, TX. I attended there while I served in the Air Force. My partner at the time told me about a church where I could go and not feel ashamed of whom I was with and worship freely. When I moved to San Antonio, I visited numerous churches trying to find a place for my family to worship. Marsha and I were adamant that as a family we would worship together. Most churches were not a great fit for our son. And when we found MCC San Antonio (MCCSA) it felt like a double blessing; Marc was happy, comfortable, and accepted. I felt that this was where we were supposed to be. We’ve been members of MCC-SA since (that’s mostly because my lovely wife doesn’t want to leave the great country of Texas!). In addition to being Director of Worship Arts, I have also served MCCSA as Music Minister, Choir Director, Church Secretary, Children’s Church Leader, Lay Minister and Volunteer.

I believe my love of Christ and the fact that I get to encourage others who are like me keeps me inspired to
I am a native of New Jersey, born in Elizabeth and raised in Roselle. At the age of 13, I moved to the South – Savannah, Georgia. After graduating from high school in 1981, I moved to Miami, Florida in 1984 and became a top Hair Stylist and Image Consultant. In 1988, after the death of my mother (my best friend), I relocated to Atlanta, Georgia to be close to family. I built a career there, becoming a very successful business owner, Life and Development Coach, and Image Consultant. After much prayer, I decided to go to Bible College, Beulah Heights University in Atlanta, Georgia, at the age of 36 (late starter). I did this because I believed a woman who suggested I did not belong at Armstrong State College after failing my first class. This caused me to never enter the academic arena again for 18 LONG YEARS!

As we move toward the future, my hope is that we, as African Americans, and MCC, will encourage more of us to get involved on all levels. I pray and hope that those who have yet to find an MCC have a person set in their path or run across an advertisement that will spark something in their spirit to come and visit an MCC and then stay at MCC. My prayer for MCC in general is that we continue to spread the love of God, remember where we have come from, while embracing where we are going. We are so much stronger together than we are divided.

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Rev. Victoria L. Burson
Maryland, USA

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding, but in all your ways, acknowledge God, and God will direct your path.”

Proverbs 3:5-6

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I am a 3rd generation pastor/preacher, growing up Missionary Baptist. My father was a Charismatic Baptist preacher from the age of 9 until he passed at 75. My grandmother was Pentecostal for over 60 years. As
God was transforming my world, I knew I was called from a very early age in life; however, my father did not initially believe in women preachers, so I hied behind the music ministry as a Choir Director, Praise and Worship Leader, and Evangelist – an exhorter. My father preferred that one of his sons become a preacher. After much contemplation, I answered the call of God at the age of 32 and never turned back. After realizing my time in the Baptist arena was over, I was wooed to attend a church with a female pastor. At first, I had an issue because of the way I was reared in the church; women were great speakers but not preachers. I attended the Ray of Hope in Decatur, Georgia, where Cynthia Hale is Senior Pastor. My world became clearer and I knew I belonged. I left the Baptist church in 1997 and became a Disciple of Christ (DOC). I really learned a lot under Pastor Hale yet it was still too traditional for me as it related to my sexuality and orientation. While in Seminary at Brite Divinity School of Religion in Dr. Steven Sprinkle's class, I learned of Bishop Yvette Flunder via a film. After connecting with The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries, I fully discovered who I am and the freedom around it.

I have been in church all my life; I grew up in the church. All my learned “sins” were from the CHURCH. I love the Black Church as I am a product of the Black Charismatic Church. Unfortunately, the Black Church does not fully embrace my ability to be free, living in my truth. I vowed to never again go back to BONDAGE.

I have served as a minister for over 20 years, Associate Pastor for 8 years and now as Senior Pastor of MCC Baltimore for the last 3 years. I absolutely loved my position working at Trinity Community College while I was in Dallas, Texas. I served as Leader of Student Leaders and pouring into their lives was amazing. I have a wealth of leadership development skills as well as administrative and entrepreneurial.

The first MCC I attended was Promise MCC in Dallas, TX during a joint service with Living Faith Covenant Church, Bishop Alex Byrd, Senior Pastor, in 2007. Quite frankly, I became part of MCC as a result of a need. I was sought after by Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Bishop Flunder and Rev. Elder Darlene Garner. Nevertheless, I learned in my three years I am a great fit for MCC due to their theology and the ways in which MCC attempts to be radically inclusive although this work is on-going.

The ability to assist with dismantling racism as a conduit, the wealth of knowledge, the camaraderie, and learning about otherness are some of the reasons I am inspired to give witness to and share MCC’s message. I love the fact its roots are that of Pentecostal and charismatic. Although I believe MCC has a lot to learn about people of color and ‘white privilege,’ I am glad to be part of the solution and not the problem.

I attended the 2014 PAD Conference [MCC Conference for People of African Descent, Friends, and Advocates] in Atlanta. I was fully amazed with the collaboration and respect for Black intellectuals. I was intrigued some time ago when I first heard Rev. Elder Darlene Garner speak at a TFAM Conference and said to myself, “I need to know her.” I immediately felt a kindred spirit. I said to myself, “I need to get to know her.” I did, I did! To that end, the PAD Conference allowed me to see just how MCC really treasures people of African Descent.

I must say MCC Baltimore’s love for me is amazing! I had a hard time embracing it initially as I have always
been the giver. I always had a hard time learning how to receive until MCC Baltimore; they have taught me how to accept love from others. They never cease to amaze me. I have received some of the greatest gifts from them – time away, electronics, love gifts, and an abundance of holy hugs every Sunday. For me, to “be MCC” means to enculturate not assimilate; it means freedom and acceptance.

My hope for African Americans already involved in MCC is for more African Americans to be invited to the table of major decisions (e.g., the theologies team), to be part of the hermeneutic used for dismantling racism and patriarchy, to get more involved with one another, have more dialogue, and to end the horizontal violence in which particular groups of people try to perpetually antagonize. As more African Americans assume leadership roles in MCC, MCCers in general need to keep in mind that People of Color lead differently culturally; as such, culturally considerations should be kept in mind for those invited to leadership. For those African Americans still searching for a spiritual community which embraces and welcomes all, I say find a great fit CULTURALLY!

My hope for MCC in general is to develop a path to effortlessly seek to add more color to the Council of Elders, the Governing Board and other places of Power. In doing so, seek to partner with African-American Clergy in the task of dismantling racism, as White theologians cannot do this work without having experienced racism. I believe live narratives not caricatures should assist in embodying lived experiences from those whose lives really do matter. It is my ultimate hope that MCC embraces the model of enculturation and not force others to assimilate to the ways in which MCC desires people of color to fit in.

I currently live in Baltimore, MD with my spouse, Prophet Theresa Burson. We have been together since July, 2007. We have a daughter, Trachena Wallace, 29, and our 10 year-old Miniature Pinscher dog named Sir Napoleon.

Lucia Chappelle
California, USA

“Metaphors be with you.”
Caroline Casey

I was born in Washington, DC and raised in Paterson and Teaneck, NJ before moving to Los Angeles.
for college. My parents were Baptist but when I insisted on being allowed to go to Sunday School for convenience, they sent me to a near-by Presbyterian church with a neighborhood friend who was the Sunday School Superintendent there. The pastor was a former Baptist, so I barely noticed any difference! As a young teenager, I was baptized and confirmed Presbyterian, attended a Catholic high school, and belonged to a Girl Scout troop at an Episcopalian church.

In college, I took an interest in Eastern religions and other spiritual experiences, still attending campus chapel services and singing in the choir every week. I came back to the dorm one Sunday complaining about how boring the services were, and a classmate suggested that I check out “that gay church.” Not many weeks later I found my way to MCC.

I first attended MCC Los Angeles (MCCLA, now Founders MCC) in March 1972. I had heard about the church before. When some friends and I met some MCCers at a bar one Saturday night, we accepted their invitation to come to church with them Sunday morning. The energy in that building – the church at 22nd and Union that was destroyed by arson less than a year later – was incredible! It was the power of a people being caught up in the Holy Spirit and brought out of their oppression by the hand of God. It was a community forged in faith and determined to change the world, despite being surrounded by enemies on every side. You can’t get much closer to the African American experience than that!

Immediately after college, I went to work in community radio, and within a year I began studying for the clergy in MCC. My dual career track of radio/media and church/justice work has continued throughout my life. In 1975, I became a producer for “IMRU,” one of the longest-running LGBTQ radio shows in the USA, worked as the WomanTimes editor of “Coast to Coast Times” newspaper in 1978-79, and in 1988 helped launch “This Way Out,” the only internationally distributed LGBTQ radio magazine. I served as Program Director of KPFK-Los Angeles from 1987-1994, and was a news producer for the PlanetOut LGBTQ internet platform from 1996-2001. I was a co-anchor for the live Pacifica Radio broadcasts of the LGBTQ Marches on Washington in 1979 and 1987, and PlanetOut’s coverage of the LGBT Millennial March on Washington in 2000.

Running parallel to these jobs I held a number of positions in MCC (including memberships at All Saints MCC, DeColores MCC, and MCC in the Valley). Among the many positions I’ve held through the years are Student Clergy, MCC-LA; Lay Delegate, MCC-LA; Student Body President, Samaritan Theological Institute; 1975 General Conference panel on Racism (1st racism panel in UFMCC); Fellowship Task Force on Racism; Southwest District Racism Task Force; Fellowship and Southwest District Task Forces on Women; Licensed Clergy (1977-1987); Pastoral Staff, All Saints and West Bay MCC; Office Staff, UFMCC; Department of Third World Ministries; Interim Pastor, All Saints MCC; Pastor, DeColores MCC; Dean, Samaritan Theological Institute; Minister of Social Justice, Founders MCC (position currently held).

My social justice work has included organizing against the Vietnam War, African American civil rights, LGBTQ liberation and the feminist movement. I have served on the Boards of Christopher Street West (Los Angeles Pride), the Natalie Clifford Barney/Edward Carpenter Gay and Lesbian Archives, Common Ground, Overnight Productions, and the National Organization of Lesbians and Gays among others; I’ve been a
representative on the Gay and Lesbian Police Advisory Task Force, the Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center Advisory Board and the Los Angeles March on Washington Committee to name a few.

I currently live in Los Angeles, where I continue as Associate Producer of “This Way Out” and a member of Founders MCC.

Anthony “Tony” Crisp
Virginia, USA

“It’s my desire to do some good things every day. It’s my desire to help the fallen find a way. It’s my desire to bring back those whose gone astray. It’s my desire to be like my Lord. It’s my desire to see His face when life is done. It’s my desire to help the Father and the Son. It’s my desire to hear Him say my child well-done. It’s my desire to be like the Lord.”

(“My Desire,” sung by Mahalia Jackson, words by Tommy Dorsey)

Tony Crisp is a native of Pulaski, Virginia, a small town in Southwest Virginia. The nearest MCC is MCC of the Blue Ridge, in Roanoke, Virginia. He was born into and raised in the United Holy Pentecostal Church and started attending Good Samaritan MCC in Norfolk (VA) in November 1979. Tony joined Good Samaritan in August of 1980, being taken into membership there by Reverend Elder Troy Perry. Reverend Eddie Helm was Pastor of Good Samaritan at the time which later became known as New Life MCC.

Tony and his partner, Rev. Jim Whalen, became involved in MCC when they were having problems in their relationship. So, they sought counseling, not from just anyone but from someone that could relate to who they were as two “gay Christian” men. Having read Rev. Troy Perry’s book, The Lord is My Shepherd and He Knows I am Gay, and both of them being spiritual, it made sense to find a local MCC and seek counseling with an MCC pastor.

When recalling those who inspired him to become a part of MCC, Tony states:

As an African-American, the Reverend Delores Berry made Jesus come alive to me and in the early days, our
church, although small, was a true teaching church and Rev. Helm was an absolutely wonderful teacher. Some of the earlier “founders” such as, Rev. Elder Jeri Ann Harvey, Rev. Elder Don Eastman and the Rev. Elder Arlene Ackerman were also influencers. Other influencers over the years included members of New Life MCC, who are now reverends in their own rights, and they are Rev. Laura Brown, Rev. Brendan Boone, Rev. Catherine Houchins, Rev. Terri Stancil and my own, Rev. Jim Whalen.

As a member of New Life, Tony has assumed various leadership roles in the church. Among those roles are: Board member on several occasions (including Treasurer and Vice-moderator); Stewardship chair (currently and in the past); Small circle group facilitator and coach; Choir member (currently and in the past); Covenant Team member and Alternate lay delegate. He has also served on the Mid-Atlantic District Committee under Rev. Elder Arlene Ackerman.

For Tony, the foundational teachings, the original MCC pioneers and their vision, the relationships with MCCers throughout the country and the hope that MCC brings to people who walk through the doors of MCC every Sunday keeps him involved. From his perspective, to “be MCC” is to be inclusive, accepting, seeking, studying, teaching, loving, leading, embracing, helping and shouting.

My early church home (United Holy Pentecostal Church), shaped my initial spiritual journey, but MCC sharpened it through great foundational teaching and worship (especially at the District and General Conference levels). Through the years, I have been blessed to many gifts through MCC, including: Leadership (Rev. Arlene Ackerman); Jesus is real/anointing (Rev. Delores Berry & Rev. Brendan Boone); Teaching & Studying (Rev. Eddie Helm, Rev Marty Luna-Wolfe) and saved my marriage (Rev. Eddie Helm).

Looking toward the future, Tony is pleased to see so many African Americans in leadership in MCC and prays that it remains, both on the local and the national level. “New Life MCC has always been a church with a large African-American presence and I don’t see that changing,” Tony writes. “In fact, I see it growing. At New Life, we play a large leadership role in our church from board membership, music ministry and worship participation.” As it relates to MCC in general, Tony hopes we do not forget our past as we define and grow our future.

Professionally, Tony is the deputy executive director of a large ($80 million) behavioral healthcare agency serving people with mental health and substance use disorders, as well as, people with intellectual and developmental disorders.

Tony currently lives in Norfolk, Virginia with his husband, the Rev. Jim Whalen. They have been together since October 15, 1974; celebrated their Holy Union on their 30th anniversary and were officially married on October 12, 2013 in Washington, D.C. They are members of New Life MCC in Norfolk, although they consider St. John’s MCC in Raleigh, NC their second home.
I am a native of St. Louis, Missouri (MO), but moved to North County when I was eight years old. We were the black family in our neighborhood in Hazelwood, MO and were greeted with a swastika and racial slurs spray-painted on our driveway and garage door. It was the first time I encountered racism in my young life.

I was raised in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church from birth to the age of eighteen. After a born-again experience watching the televangelist Kenneth Copeland at the age of sixteen, I left the A.M.E. Zion church at eighteen and went on to experience a non-denominational mega church of 3500, a large Church of God in Christ (C.O.G.I.C.) in my early twenties, and a small non-denominational church in my late twenties. I was outted by two of my friends at this small church in 1994 and left the church with no intention of returning to a church ever again. I honestly do not like church folks because they are phony and hypocritical. God has a great sense of humor!

I have had several careers. I went to college and studied vocal music education but did not graduate. Music is my first love and always will be. I was a certified medical coder for fourteen years and I am an information technical support specialist by education and trade. My wife Rev. Kelly Durbin and I currently live in Port Charlotte, FL and will be moving to Dunedin, FL in March. We have two adult children, Jonah is twenty-one and Grace is eighteen. Both are in college at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Illinois. We have two adorable Boston Terriers, Emmett who is four and Toby, three.

The first MCC I attended was MCC of Greater St. Louis. It was after I attended my first pride celebration June 2000. I had not heard of MCC before. As an African-American, I was inspired to become a part of MCC because of their stance on communion and welcome of all. Because of my religious background that was steeped in scripture and hatred of who I really was, I was shocked to find a church and to find out that God cared about and loved me. It is one of the most important reasons I continue to be a part of MCC today and will continue to be a part of MCC. I have not held memberships at other MCCs. Before ordination I served as the director of Congregational Care at MCC of Greater St. Louis and a co-GAP pastor at MCC of

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Rev. Gina Durbin
Florida, USA

“Be the change you wish to see in the world.”
Mahatma Gandhi
Topeka. I have served as Interim Pastor at Heartland MCC in Springfield, IL and I currently serve as the Interim Pastor at SunCoast Cathedral MCC in Venice, FL through March 2017. I have sung on the praise and worship team and choir since 2000 and continue to serve in that capacity as a worship leader and choir director as needed. Worship and music will always be my first love and where my heart and spirit soars.

What keeps me involved and inspired to give witness to and share MCC’s message is still and always will be our right to “come as you are, believing as you do.” We may not agree on everything, but everyone is invited to the table. There are no barriers to God; only the ones we bring ourselves. As an African-American, it has been disappointing not to see more of folks who look like me at MCC. Unfortunately, Sunday remains the most segregated day for worship services. The greatest blessing I have received through MCC has been to rediscover my relationship with God and to rediscover worship and music. After I left church in 1994, I did not sing or play music. I figured, what was the use? If God gave me this beautiful gift and I can’t use it to bless people because I am a disgrace and an abomination, what’s the point? MCC helped me to heal and to sing again. It means I can be a witness and an example of who I know God to be in this world and being MCC lets me live out my favorite quote.

I would like to see more African Americans find MCC as a viable spiritual community which embraces and welcomes all. I am not naïve. I know we have a long way to go for this to happen. Most MCCs do not offer worship styles that fit the gospel flavor that is needed. I would like to see more African-American and other People of Color in leadership if in fact that is what they/we need. I am not a fan of politics and privileged folks putting on airs, but if there are African Americans in leadership who are willing to come to the table and have honest, authentic dialogue, I am in favor 100%. My hope for MCC in general is for us to rise and be the change we want to see in the world!

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Rev. Wanda Floyd
North Carolina, USA

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”
Philippians 3:14

I was born in Henderson, North Carolina (NC) and grew up in the Southern Baptist faith. Professionally, I
served as a Project Manager for FedEx Office Commercial Print Center, Associate Pastor for St. John’s MCC and Senior Pastor of Imani MCC. Currently I reside in Charlotte, NC with my wife, Collis Jean Floyd. We have a daughter named Anna Ruth Nelson and granddaughter named Adeline Jean Thomas and one four-legged child – Odie. I first attended St. John’s MCC in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1987 during Gay Pride Weekend.

As an African-American, having grown up in the church, the first time I stepped foot into MCC I felt “at home”. Because of my church upbringing, my faith and relationship with God is very important to me. I continue to remain in MCC because I have learned to live the authentic life God created me to live without compromising my faith or who I am as an African-American.

Within MCC, over the years, I have been involved in the Faith, Fellowship and Order Commission, The Women Secretariat, early diversity ministry, Lay and Clergy delegate during the time of Districts, Commission on the Laity, Founding Pastor of Imani MCC, Chair of Regional Elder Nominating Committee, volunteer staff for the Transitional Ministry and part of the planning team for People of African Descent Conference for many years. I have had membership in St. Johns MCC in Raleigh, North Carolina; Imani MCC, Durham, NC and Las Vegas MCC, Las Vegas, Nevada. Currently, I am a member of MCC Charlotte, NC where I serve as transitional pastor.

As an African-American, I feel very blessed to have found MCC when I did. The greatest blessing has been the ability to be in a place where I know God loves all of me and I do not have to be in denial of my sexuality in order to serve God. When I came out, I felt God was pulling a cruel joke on me but once I found MCC, I knew I had found my “place”. I continue to remain involved because it is important to be here for those that are “to come”. I learned early on to stop asking the question, “Why me?” and turned it around to “Why not me?” MCC has proven to be a place where the LGBTQA community can come and find a word of hope and be in a place of hopefulness. On this journey, MCC has served as a place of faith where all of God’s beloved can attend and share their faith and worship God in spirit and truth. When I think of what the phrase “be MCC” means, it is to be in a place which I can be, unapologetically, ALL of who God has called me to be . . . a woman of African descent and a woman of faith who, by the grace of God, is a lesbian.

As we look toward the future, my hope for MCC, as it relates to African Americans already involved, is that we will continue to be involved and be present for those yet to come. We need to encourage African Americans and other People of Color to continually ask how to get involved and to be willing to be the “lone ranger” if necessary. It is important not only to find a place at the table; sometimes we just have to sit down at the table anyway. We need to continue to be present and involved so that other African Americans can find their way to MCC where they can really understand God’s unconditional love. When other African Americans find to MCC, they need to see African Americans in leadership roles such as lay and clergy.

Overall, my hope for MCC is to continue to be a voice for the voiceless and to stand up in the face of injustice. I believe MCC is in a unique position to be examples of the “priesthood of all believers” and to continually live as “Jesus with skin on” for others.
I am a Native of Southern California. My religious background is in the Baptist and Pentecostal traditions. I believe that all religions share some level of truth; however, I follow the teachings of Jesus feeling that he truly (but not solely) is an example of how we should be and live in the world. I currently live in Riverside CA and attend University of California Riverside finishing my Bachelors of Arts degree in Religious Studies with a minor in Ethnic Studies.

The first MCC I attended was Antelope Valley MCC in Palmdale CA. I first visited because I was inspired to know that people from various backgrounds, cultures, and race could gather and worship together sharing the common factor that most us were LGBT and that God loved us regardless of what others might say. It was an African American that encouraged my return. I am currently a member at Founders MCC in Los Angeles, where I serve as a Board Member and Praise and Worship Leader. I have also been a member of the Young Professionals ministry, served in the Azania Ministry, and served as a leader for the Creative Service and as a Praise Leader for 5th Sunday Gospel services. On the denominational level, I am on the PAD [People of African Descent] Working Group and formerly served on the MCC Theologies Team. I attended the Young Adult Leadership mentoring retreat in 2012, General Conference in 2013 and in 2016, PAD Conference in 2014, and MCC’s Young Adult Conference in 2014.

To be MCC is to be part of a religious community that challenges one to think outside of the box. The denomination was started as a group on the margins of heterosexual Christian normativity. As LGBT people of Christian faith, they made noise and made everyone realize that they existed and deserved the right to be who God called them to be. To be MCC is to stand boldly and proudly in one’s truth and authenticity; to live a life that is continuously open to the realities of the world and the realities that are around us.

MCC is a community that reflects many traditions and backgrounds through music, styles of worship and spiritual practices. Growing up in a Baptist church, communion wasn’t offered to just anyone; there was a process that you had to go through to receive the love of Jesus. At MCC, we’re told to come just as we are, no matter if it is our first time at an MCC, regardless of whether we are believers or not, no matter the mistakes we have made; we’re invited to partake. My spirit was called to this level of love and inclusivity that
MCC provided and continues to provide. In my church tradition, rejection on various levels was expected, and rejection based on sexual orientation was commonplace. At MCC, I can bring my entire self to church. I am free to be the authentic person I am. This creates a spiritual liberation and deeper connection with God. Being black and female creates an intersection of two issues. This intersection shows the need for deep spiritual healing and transformation amongst women, people of color, and those at the intersection of these very issues. One of the biggest blessings that I have received from MCC is the ability to have my identity as a female and person of color not be a hindrance to my desire to be a leader and potentially a pastor, but to have these intersecting identities affirmed. The message of justice, liberation for oppressed people around the world, and the fight to live our authentic selves is why I continue to be MCC.

My hope as it pertains to People of African Descent and UFMCC is to make stronger connections with Black bodies globally. While there is still a need and importance for MCC to continue to support and provide a safe environment for African Americans, I think UFMCC needs to also find ways to increase the involvement of black bodies across the world. As African Americans, the need to explain our situations and share our stories is important. As a denomination we should make it possible for both African Americans as well as non-black persons to be able to deliver truth about the history of blacks in America and more specifically the history of blacks within our denomination. Because of the social issues that are still present, often the result of racism, as a church we should ensure that victims of racism are not left to fight for themselves or to continuously initiate the dialogue.

I would like to see an increase in black clergy in each MCC network so that young queer people of color can have someone to talk and relate to. If people don’t see themselves reflected in ministerial leadership (lay and ordained) and in a place of worship that says we represent and welcome all God’s children, we have an issue. When we remember history, though slavery was abolished, segregation and institutionalized racism persisted. Even today the effects of our collective past are still very present. MCC is not untouched by the effects of history and while many African Americans have college degrees and can advance to positions of authority, the number of black clergy who have positions of leadership within the denomination on matters beyond People of African Descent is small.
A native of the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area, I was baptized in and joined an American Baptist church as a child and was active in the youth choir, Bible school, prayer meetings, and serving as a junior deacon. I was then ordained as a deacon as a young adult in the Baptist church. Judaism was also a significant influence in growing up and actually inspired my interest in developing a relationship with God. I am a lawyer that has served in and out of government, focusing on public policy. I currently live in Laurel, Maryland with my tuxedo cat, Seven.

I first started to attend MCC-DC [MCC of Washington, DC] in 1995 during my first year in law school. I was invited by a volunteer at the Whitman Walker Clinic (where I had started to volunteer). During my visit, a choir member encouraged me to join the choir; I did and have been attending ever since. Despite being active at MCC-DC since 1995, I did not officially join until 2003. While I enjoyed the music ministry and the people, I was still struggling to reconcile my Baptist roots with MCC traditions. In 2003, I came to terms with the fact that MCC was my spiritual support and inspiration and, as such, decided to make it official and join.

As an African-American, what initially brought me to the church was that the invitations to first visit and then join the choir came from African-American women. Admittedly, I did have to get used to attending a church that was not all African-American. While there were few African Americans in the school I attended, growing up or in my neighborhood, I was accustomed to attending predominantly African-American churches. I think the friendships, the welcoming spirit, the music, and the community kept me coming back. I have held memberships at two African-American Baptist churches but currently I remain an active member of MCC-DC.
While at MCC-DC, I have served in a number of ministries including as a deacon; member of choirs and Board of Directors; leading certain Bible studies such as the Bible in 90 Days; coordinator for Eclectic Praise, one of the musical groups; the video and live streaming ministry; and the Revival team.

I know what it is like to feel left out and judged. In my life, I have visited many churches and very often, even in the most well-meaning church, I have found a level of superficiality. MCC’s message of inclusion and of God’s love for all is a powerful one, especially for those who have felt left out. And, for better or worse, the people I encounter at MCC are real. Admittedly, I have been challenged over the years – challenged to be more accepting and open; but, I would rather that than to attend a church that tells anyone they don’t belong.

MCC has expanded my thinking – not just about cultural diversity but spiritual diversity. I gained an appreciation for traditions of other denominations and, in a way, also gained a deeper understanding of my own Baptist tradition. It has helped me to see that while different spiritual rituals and practices like communion, baptisms, etc. can help facilitate our journey with God, they don’t dictate that journey and should not become hurdles to our relationship with God.

One of the greatest blessings I have received through MCC is belonging – being accepted, supported, and encouraged. To “be MCC,” probably means something different to everyone (or I actually hope it does) because I believe it means to “be me.”

My hope for African Americans already involved in MCC is that they continue to stay committed to MCC’s message and hold the denomination accountable to that message.

I would hope that MCC grows in diversity in congregations and denomination leadership. While I know my church, MCC-DC, is one of the more diverse congregations, I understand others are not so diverse. I would hope that this changes.

I would hope that African Americans still searching for a spiritual community find us. I hope when they do find us, they feel welcomed and feel as though they belong.

My hope for MCC in general is that it truly lives by its message. Inclusion is deeper than ensuring inclusive lyrics and words. It is more than giving a welcome to someone. It is even deeper than how many people of color you can count among your members. Inclusion is a change in heart and spirit. You can have representation of every walk of life in your congregation and still not be inclusive. Ultimately, for me, inclusion must come down to the individual – it must start with how each of us views, treats, and shows love for another. While statistics are important and the words we use matter, my hope for MCC is that each of us truly learns in our hearts and souls, what it means to be inclusive. We are told in Proverbs 3:3: “Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.” (ESV). When we achieve that, our outwardly works and words will reflect that.
“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—God’s good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

Less Henderson is a native of Portsmouth, Virginia (VA) and was raised in the Baptist tradition. Professionally, Less works various events and in healthcare. She resides in Oxon Hill, Maryland (MD).

The first MCC Less attended was MCC-DC because it was primarily an open and inclusive LGBTQ church. Less remains involved in MCC by focusing on what lies ahead; namely, the future. “Like all churches,” she says, “MCC has its cultural issues, but, working together, the issues are recognized and worked on.”

Since finding MCC, Less has discovered the importance of reconnecting as a queer black person back with the church and enhancing the importance of her spiritual journey. One of the greatest blessings she has received since coming to MCC is the ability to use her gifts of relating her life experiences to spiritual teachings and bible verses, making it relate-able. After pretty much having had a “people suck” attitude, Less now recognizes that good people are still out there. For Less, to “be MCC” is to be the change within ourselves and be the light for ourselves and others.

In looking toward the future, for African Americans already in MCC, Less hopes that leadership outside of the Sunday “entertainment” and the work to keep up appearances will cease and we as a people will begin to hold people more accountable and not remain docile. Less notes: “As Black Churches become more inclusive, MCC has to improve the diversity and inclusion issue if the church is to remain a staple in the LGBTQ faith community. If not, then blacks will find their worship home elsewhere.”

Less hopes MCC continues to grow culturally and holistically, that the church continues to be the change that they desire to be and MCC will be prepared and positioned to go forward during upcoming tumultuous times because the churches will be needed for our communities across the world.
I am a native of Guntersville, Alabama, a small town in north Alabama. I grew up and was very active in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church on the local, district and state levels. I’m a graduate of the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. For 28 years, I worked in retail management in Atlanta, GA., the last 15 years with Brooks Brothers. Two years ago, I made a career change and now I’m the Development Director of a nonprofit, The Atlanta Children’s Shelter, that works with homeless families, helping them move from homelessness to sustained financial stability. I currently live in Lawrenceville, GA (a suburb of Atlanta) with my partner of 19 years, Dacus Stewart.

My first experience with MCC was in 1985 while I was a junior in college. I don’t remember where but I heard about this “gay church”. The closest one to me was in Birmingham, AL. Even at that young age, I was trying to find a connection between my spirituality, which was extremely important and my sexuality. Several weeks later, I finally got up the courage to go. The whole time there and afterwards I felt like I was a piece of meat. After I left, I was like “OK. Done that. Never again.” Fast-forward four years...

I’m living in Atlanta, still very active in an AME church and I meet this man. I soon find out he is the choir director for First MCC of Atlanta. I attend First MCC several times with him but left each time feeling like I wasn’t quite spiritually filled. The irony of it all was what I felt was missing was the way music in the AME church would lift me up and have me soaring before we even got to the sermon. Remember the reason I was going to MCC church in the first place was the choir director. But in those visits and the fellowship afterwards I got to know the Pastor, Reid Christiansen. Just being around him and observing how he interacted with his congregants, I saw what true Christian leadership should look like. In the AME churches, the pastor was always lifted up on a high pedestal. But if you looked real close you would see who the man was behind the curtain (reference to the Wizard of Oz).

Even after I quit dating the choir director, I continued to get to know the pastor. I started to come to more
MCC services even though I was missing that movement of the spirit that the music gave me in the AME church. Eventually, the way Rev. Christiansen taught and made you feel about the intertwining of your spiritual and sexual self, made me decide that what I was missing with the music didn’t compare to what I was gaining as I became a more authentic person.

Knowing my history in the AME church, Reid quickly put me to work. He didn’t just get me involved in the local church but also at the district level. I have served on the local church board and education team. I was on the original Board of Ordained Ministry when ordination approvals were turned over to the districts and helped to develop that structure. When the denomination transitioned to the regional format, I helped develop that structure which was copied by other regions. I later served as the Communication Facilitator and the Laity Development Facilitator for Region 2. I also helped to plan two MCC conferences in Brazil.

I have attended all the People of African Decent conferences, was one of the co-chairs for the 2002 PAD conference in Atlanta and was presented the 2006 PAD Trail Blazer Award.

Rev. Elder Lillie Brock asked me to be one of the Project Managers for the denomination’s Church Revitalization Initiative (CRI). Through CRI we worked to identify the challenges with our churches that were on a downward spiral and help them create a plan to bring them back to vibrancy. I have served on both the MCC Geographic Review Board and the Structure Review Team. Both teams helped to shape the way we are and do MCC today.

I am currently serving as one of the co-facilitators for the Laity Empowered for Active Discipleship (LEAD), helping to train and develop the next generation of lay leaders.

Because of MCC, I have been able to find my true authentic self. I am able to bring together my blackness (sorry I’m old school, no matter how we try to dress up the name I can still proudly say I’m BLACK), my spirituality and my sexuality all together in one place. My own “trinity” comes together very nicely in MCC. I still miss the music from my AME days, but I am able to get that every 3 years at the PAD conference. The people I have encountered in MCC allows me to share my gifts and talents consistently inspire me. They are the spark that ignites my flame. Without that interaction, my light wouldn’t shine as bright. Because of MCC’s belief about the empowerment of the laity, I don’t have to be constrained by the collar (clerical) or lack thereof to be a full contributing member of this denomination. Because of what MCC is and has allowed me to be, I know I have been called to ministry and to share the news that no matter what your place is in the pecking order of life you can make a difference. You can “be MCC.”

I hope that by the way I have carried myself over these 25 plus years in MCC, other African Americans have been inspired to think that they too can make a difference. Maybe something I say or something I do will give them the freedom to drop one of the pieces of baggage they have been carrying and move closer to their true authentic self. For those African Americans who are now and will become a part of MCC, I say if you want a seat at the table and to be a part of the banquet, all you have to do is step up. But make sure you have a knife and fork in your purse along with your hot sauce; in that way, no one can limit how you enjoy your meal. Please know that there is a place for you in this movement we call MCC. Because of your addition to it,
the way the water ripples might be very different; without your addition, the movement of the water might be none existent. When water just sits with no movement it becomes stale, stagnant, starts to stink, and eventually dries up. You do make a difference.

You will have to take an active role in finding your place. If you sit waiting to be invited to the party you may eventually realize that the cake has been eaten, the confetti thrown and everyone has gone home and you are alone in the parking lot. Ask to be invited or better yet help to plan the party; in that way, you can ensure that the cake has a chocolate swirl (pun intended) and isn’t just vanilla (but if you prefer vanilla cake that is good, too).

There will always be a place for MCC in this world, what it will look like may be very different than what it looks like now and that is OK. I know that God has a calling for my life and my part of the plan is to get out of the way and let God be God. Every day I ask myself what will be my mark for today? How will I help God to make a difference in someone’s life today? What do I need to do to prepare myself to make that difference? Am I ready for the next time that God says “Who will I send, who will go for me?” My prayer is always to say “Here I am God, send me!”

Rev. Jeffrey Jordan
Pennsylvania, USA

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

Rev. Jeffrey H Jordan is a native of Kimball, a small town in the coalfields of Southern West Virginia. His father, Hernon E Jordan, was a coal miner and Rev. Jeff’s hero, his mother, was a housewife, Cub Scout den mother, 4-H leader, Sunday School Teacher, and overall Domestic Goddess. The youngest of seven children, Rev. Jeff was practically raised in the Missionary Baptist Church. As a teenager, he served as Junior Sunday School Superintendent and President of the Baptist Youth Fellowship. While still in high school, Jeff spoke at the West Virginia Missionary Baptist State Convention. Jeff was being groomed to enter the ministry as a Missionary Baptist.
In 1982, Jeff began his freshman year at West Virginia University which is in the northern part of West Virginia. Away from home and on his own for the first-time, Jeff immediately sought a church where he could fellowship. He quickly discovered that the Baptist Church in Morgantown, West Virginia held its primary worship service at the same time as the only Sunday meal, brunch, was served in the dormitories. This was also true for almost all churches that Jeff visited in his search. St Paul African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church however, served a home cooked meal almost every Sunday after worship. On the Sundays when the church did not serve a meal, one of the church mothers made certain that all the students were invited to members’ homes to get a good meal. So, Jeffrey joined St Paul AME Church.

In 1984, Jeff announced his calling into the ministry and preached his trial sermon. He was licensed as a minister in the Third Episcopal District of The African American Episcopal Church by Bishop Vincent Anderson. While working on his secular education, Jeff and four other young AME ministers at West Virginia University completed the course of studies required by the AME Church for ordination. In October 1989, Jeffrey was ordained an Itinerant Elder by Bishop Richard Allen Hilderbrand and began serving as an Itinerant AME pastor in Southern West Virginia.

In 1992, on the floor of general conference, Rev Jeffrey H Jordan was “outed” as being gay and was stripped of all his credentials. Jeffrey then moved to Horsham, PA and obtained employment at a camp for urban youth. That summer, on a day off, Jeffrey went to Center City Philadelphia looking for something to get into. Jeffrey stayed in a cheap hotel near the gayborhood. The following morning, Jeffrey awakened to what was the first Pride Parade he had ever experienced. Still a sheltered southern boy, Jeff was awed by the drag queens, men in leather and all the rainbows. Also in that parade was what Jeff describes as a “small, seedy marching group” who carried signs proclaiming God’s love. As this group passed by, Jeffrey stood on the sidelines with tears flowing down his face. This was in June 1993. In October 1994, Rev Jeffrey H. Jordan was installed as pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of Philadelphia.

Rev Jeffrey states:

Metropolitan Community Church is the place where I discovered what is really meant by God’s unconditional all-inclusive love. This discovery has given me purpose. Having personally experienced the unconditional love of Christ, it is my calling to share the liberating good news to whosoever. I am compelled to offer hope, restoration and love to whosoever and to raise a sacred voice of defiance against injustice and inequality especially spiritual abuse.

I am a native of Detroit, Michigan, raised and educated as a Roman Catholic. While I explored other Protestant religions, I continued to maintain my identity as a Catholic until I became a part of MCC.

I've held a variety of secular jobs in order to maintain an active ministry during a time when there were few resources to support clergy. For a number of years, I worked with homeless women at a shelter in midtown Manhattan, helping them regain emotional stability and secure housing. While in NYC, I also worked with substance abusers in Harlem during my tenure as the founding pastor of Harlem MCC, the denomination’s first intentional outreach ministry targeting African Americans.

I first attended MCC Detroit in 1976. Back then, the bars were the most significant institutions for LGBTQ persons and I met several members as they were conducting bar ministry. I did not take them seriously at the time, but reasoned that this so-called church might be a good place to meet good Christian women. I attended the service the following Sunday and found much more than expected. I remained active in that congregation, becoming a deacon and ultimately an MCC clergy.

I was well aware of the oppression of African Americans and had grown increasingly cognizant of the additional layer of discrimination I would experience as a Lesbian. MCC was a critical organization in addressing this and provided guidance for how I could work to make a difference in my life and in the lives and futures of other African Americans. It was natural for me to work within the church to bring about social justice and work for human rights. As a child of the civil rights movement, the church just felt like the most effective and appropriate place to do that work. MCC was the only faith body willing to take that mantle and the camaraderie of other LGBTQ persons of faith provided a viable and aware community. It was distressing, however, to experience racism within the congregation and throughout the denomination. I had not expected that.
I believed in the mission of MCC and met individuals sensitive to the importance of addressing racism, bigotry and discrimination within the denomination and the LGBTQ community at large. I remained part of MCC because of the commitment of many people to genuine inclusivity. I left MCC for a number of years because I felt called to organize a congregation intentionally designed to address the needs and concerns of African Americans and reflect our culture. At that time there was no place within the organizational structure of MCC for such a venture and few people, including people of color, understood its significance. Although that congregation is still operating, I returned to MCC Detroit because I continue to believe in the mission of the denomination.

Since 1981, I have consistently worked in various aspects focusing on HIV/AIDS including prevention education, counseling and testing, pastoral care, and research. For a few years, I was the Executive Director of the National Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays, an organization for which I was also a founding board member. For several years, I was the Director of HIV/AIDS Programs for the Detroit metropolitan area, responsible for overseeing prevention and care programs and funding in six counties of the State. During that time I also served as founding pastor of a local non-MCC congregation (Full Truth Fellowship of Christ Church) and executive director of an HIV/AIDS prevention organization focused on serving African Americans and women (Healing Ourselves through Prevention Education and Services).

I have a doctorate in anthropology with a specialty in medical anthropology. For the last 20 years, I have taught courses at Wayne State University, Eastern Michigan University, and the University of Washington, including linguistic anthropology, business and organizational anthropology, medical and global health, cultural meanings of death and dying, the anthropology of identity, and introductory courses in anthropology. For over nine years, I conducted ethnographic research for the Michigan Department of Community Health, focused on reaching difficult-to-reach populations in order to identify risks for HIV. Most recently, I served as Bridge Pastor (interim) of Eastgate Congregational United Church of Christ in Bellevue, WA.

While active in MCC, I held memberships at MCC New York and MCC-DC; Served on staff at New Heart MCC/UCC (Tacoma, WA) and MCC New York; was the Founding Pastor of MCC Harlem; served as Chair of the Racism committee and went on to build and chair the Department of People of Color (now MCC People of African Descent). Until recently, I served on the MCC Public Policy Team.

I remain connected to MCC because of MCC's continual commitment to inclusivity. For me, the mission of MCC demands that we work to spread good news. Being a person of faith demands that we do all we can to share the truth of God's presence and acceptance in our lives. Being MCC means demonstrating an active commitment to social justice and human rights. It means expanding one's understanding of global issues that construct barriers to basic needs beyond those grounded in lifestyles and in narrow and limiting cultural beliefs and behaviors. Being MCC means dedicating one's life to showing up in differing and radical ways that promise to affirm goodness and truth, even when those ways of being in the world challenge our own desires and historic values. Among the greatest blessings I've received through MCC is the gift of meeting and building community with others who dare to take risks in order to demonstrate and promote God's affirming and empowering love and grace. I remain connected to individuals who have been family to me for over 40 years.
My hopes for MCC relating to African Americans are the same as those for the denomination as a whole. My hopes are simple: I hope MCC can grow to be more responsive and open to the needs and concerns of all groups, especially African Americans given the growing hostile climate emerging throughout our country. I hope we can find innovative ways to address and affirm the lives, needs, and challenges that are faced by ordinary individuals, i.e., those persons who are not particularly steeped in religion or in the church as an institution central to their daily existence. I hope we will find realistic ways to address issues such as health and safety, and violence, and building community/family seated on a loving and moral foundation. My hope is that we can develop culturally pertinent and appropriate programs that reflect the diversity of African Americans in ways that honor who we are, wherever we are in the world. My hope is that we will explore, identify, and honor the diverse cultural meanings that exist throughout our national and global communities, especially within the context of such issues as gender identity, economic disparities, geographic/regional differences, spirituality, etc. Finally, my hope is for an increase in genuine inclusivity that expands as we discover more and many parts of who we are. A genuine spirit of welcome props open the doors of our community in ways that make it safe for African Americans to celebrate our lives however they unfold, ways that encourage African Americans to truly be proud of ourselves just as we are rather than secretly desire to change even a little bit in order to make our blackness more palatable to others.

I currently live in Seattle, WA and am married to Rev. Dr. Patricia Hunter, an associate minister at a local Baptist Church and a Certified Financial Planner working with clergy throughout the country to facilitate financial wellness. We have been together for eight years and have a seven year-old Border Collie/Labrador mixed dog named Baxter.

Dallas Midgette, Sr.
North Carolina, USA

“For God so loved the world, that God gave God’s only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

John 3:16

I am a native North Carolinian, born and raised in the small rural town of Vandemere, in northeastern NC. I was raised in the Baptist church, the son of a minister. From an early age, I was involved in church, attending
Sunday school, singing in the children’s choir, etc. As an adult, up until the age of thirty-eight, I was deeply involved in the Baptist church, serving on the board of trustees which is very similar to a Board of Directors in MCC, teaching Sunday school, lay representative at New Bern Eastern Missionary Baptist Association, and singing in the choir. I am a graduate of Pamlico County High School, attended Pamlico Community College and worked as a Lab Technician until my retirement. I am a divorced father of three adult children, one daughter and two sons, of whom I am very proud, and the grandfather of four.

The first MCC that I attended was St. John’s MCC in Raleigh, NC in January, 1991. I was in the throes of coming out gay and also HIV+. To make a long story short; my therapist and spiritual counselor, who was a straight man, told me of MCC. I was being treated for severe depression at UNC Hospitals and was not in a very good place. At that time, I had stopped going to church altogether as I had had more than enough biblical abuse and my self-esteem was almost nonexistent. While struggling to reconcile my spirituality with my sexuality, my therapist told me he knew of a church in Raleigh that had an outreach primarily to the LGBTQ community, and that he thought that visiting there would benefit me. Eventually, I met a member of St. John’s MCC, Jay Kelderman. He took me to my first service on a Sunday afternoon. Being there was so freeing for me. I could not help but cry throughout the whole service. It was Pastor Wayne’s [Rev. Wayne Lindsay] sermon, the songs, the acceptance, and communion. I could go on, but I won’t. I had found a place, a place where I felt comfortable in my own skin, MCC.

What inspires me to continue to be a part of MCC is I believe there are others out there that are like me in needing a welcoming and an affirming church, a church where they will be celebrated, not just tolerated. That is why I stay.

I became a member of St. Jude MCC in Wilmington, NC, on May 30, 1993, although I’ve been active there since the first organizational meeting. In the past, I have served as deacon, member of the hospitality committee, pastoral search committee and office volunteer. Presently, I am a member of the choir, lay delegate, congregational care team, volunteer in our food bank ministry and a member of the history commission.

MCC’s message of tolerance, inclusion, acceptance and social justice is still one that is vitally needed. There are other Dallases out there not knowing where to turn, feeling and being told because of who they love, they’re an abomination to God! Yes, MCC is still very relevant. I shudder to think of what my life would have been like had I not found MCC. My hope for MCC is that it remains a beacon for those seeking a welcoming and an affirming place where they can just ‘be’. For me, as African American, I had to let go of the ism’s that held me captive and was keeping me from fully realizing that I, too, am a child of God, and that God loves me just as I am. MCC helped me to come to that realization. John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that God gave God’s only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” My LGBTQ brothers and sisters, we are whosoever!
Rev. David K. North  
Maryland, USA

“And David danced before the Lord with all his might.”  
2 Samuel 6:14a

“Behold, God desires truth in the inward being.”  
Psalm 51:6a

Rev. David K. North is a native of Alton, Illinois. Raised in the African-American Baptist tradition, he was licensed to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in November, 1979, ordained an American Baptist minister in June 1982 and ordained in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches in December, 2002.

Rev. North holds a B.A. degree in Physics (1977), a M.S. degree in Environmental Studies (1980) and a Master of Divinity degree from Colgate Rochester Bexley Hall Crozier Theological Seminary (1982).

Rev. North first attended MCC-DC in October, 1991, two months after a tumultuous/scandalous resignation from Antioch Baptist Church (Washington, D.C.) where he served as Pastor from 1984 to 1991. At MCC-DC, Rev. North found a “safe, nurturing environment” that encouraged him to continue to remain faithful to his musical and pastoral callings. While there, he served as the Director of the Gospel Choir from 1992-1998.

The greatest blessing Rev. North has received through MCC is that of shared resurrection stories. As he states, there are “so many testimonies of endurance, survival, and claiming of new life, new family, new and broader perceptions of God. MCC’s witness is a continuation and natural extrapolation of the African-American witness (Psalm 118:22-23).” His hope is MCC will continue to BE, evolving, discerning, assessing and reassessing and searching deeper (Psalm 51:6). “Staying the course,” he states, “will speak to and bring encouragement to all those marginalized.”

Professionally, in addition to pastoring Antioch Baptist Church, Rev. North has been an Adult Protective Services Investigator with Prince George’s County, Maryland, Department of Social Services (1993-2011); Director of Mosaic Harmony Interfaith Community Choir in the Washington metropolitan region.
Voices of MCC People of African Descent

(1996-present); Director of Social Services for Travelers Aid International, Beltsville, MD, (2014-present) and Pastor of Holy Redeemer MCC, College Park, MD, (2003-present).

Rev. North currently resides in Indian Head, MD with his spouse of 27 years, David York, whom he married in October, 2015.

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Leah Sampson
North Carolina, USA

“Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Hebrews 12:2

I am a native of Los Angeles, California (CA) and grew up with a dual religious experience of American Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal traditions. At 19 years old, I headed to Greensboro, NC for college and never looked back. I have lived in several cities in NC and lived in Hilton Head, SC for 6 years before moving back to NC. Over the last 18 years, I had been a member of a Church of God in Christ and a member of a Non-denominational church with a Pentecostal flair before joining MCC. I was never able to be fully myself within any church before MCC.

I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Licensed Clinical Addictions Specialist working full-time in Community Mental Health in Raleigh, NC. I am an active Lay leader in St John’s MCC and I am currently working full-time towards a Masters of Divinity at Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond, VA. I have been happily married for 4 years to my wife TaKoma and we have a 12 year-old son named Gabe. We also have 3 dogs: Sir Byron, the boxer; Bonnie Mae, the lab mix, and Sweet Pea, the terrier mix. Neither one of us has family in the Raleigh area but we have made the most beautiful friendships through our membership at St. John’s MCC.

My wife and I had been looking for a church home and we looked all over Raleigh and had been to several churches. We found St John’s MCC by doing a google search one Sunday morning. The same Sunday of
the search we came to St. John’s. Something was different about the energy within the church; there was a buzz of acceptance, belonging, and familiarity. I came out in my late 20’s and never felt comfortable with my sexuality and my spirituality. Attending St. John’s I finally entered an environment where I could reconcile who I was as a triple minority and a part of God’s handiwork. MCC allowed me to see all of who God would have me to be and to begin to touch the surface of the work he has called me to do. As a member of St. John’s MCC in Raleigh, NC, I hold several positions as a lay leader, Lead of the Red Tent Women’s Ministry, Ministry Support Team Lead, Member of the Pastoral Search Team, and Member of the Pastoral Care Team.

MCC was the first denomination where I felt I was living in my truth. That truth honors the woman, mother, wife, lesbian, African-American and human being God shaped me to be. Through MCC, I have learned that the spiritual journey is one of inclusion, not exclusion. My work in seminary has broadened and strengthened my understanding of MCC’s message of love and acceptance. One of the greatest blessings of being a part of the MCC family is the spiritual guidance I gained through the Pastor of St. John’s [Rev. Brendan Boone]. He saw a gift in me and challenged me to explore its possibilities. The possibilities have led to accepting whose and who I am in God. Being MCC is the paradigm that fosters love, community, and inclusion of all people.

My hope for African Americans and People of Color already involved in MCC is that we can develop a network to combat some of the stereotype and stigma that other denominations carry about churches that are openly affirming of all people. Developing a network of support within the MCC infrastructure will help to increase the involvement of more people of color in roles of lay leadership and clergy.

The black church is a key patch in the quilt that makes African-American culture but that patch has caused a lot of pain for those in LGBTQ community. We have often been judged, shamed, and not welcome if we “choose” to live this lifestyle. This pain has caused many LGBTQ folks of color to steer clear from the church. My hope for the future of MCC is that we become a force of education, love, and inclusion and become radical missionaries to share the good news that God doesn’t care who you love; He cares that you love and love inclusively!
I grew up in Washington DC. I was christened in the Mt Zion United Methodist Church that my family has been attending since the mid-1800s. I grew up attending Sunday school, working in church youth groups and singing in the young adult choir. As an adult, I continued singing in the senior choir, attended adult bible study and served as a trustee of the church.

Professionally, I’ve spent over 35 years working in the Computer Tech field in various positions from operations to programming and software quality assurance.

In 1996, I attended MCC-DC for the first time one Sunday to hear the choir. A friend told me that the MCC-DC Gospel Choir was one of the best in choirs in Washington DC. I was surprised to find the preaching very good and the people very friendly.

As an African-American gay male, my home church was not very kind to homosexuals in its doctrine and practice of faith. When I found MCC-DC, I knew I was a part of God’s promise and I did not feel I was condemned by God because of who I loved. I could worship and feel the goodness of God’s grace without judgement. I had found a new church home. I became active with choir, People of Color outreach ministry, and served as a board member. Being a part of MCC-DC church family made me feel like I was living God’s promise.

When my partner accepted a job in St Louis, Missouri, we were glad to find out that there was a MCC in St Louis. MCC of Greater St. Louis (MCCGSL) became our church home. I became a leader of one of the covenant families, a leader of the Out and About ministry, a member of the choir (which is a regional winner of the “How Sweet The Sound” choir competition). I was also a leader of the PAD team when the PAD conference was held in St Louis. We are currently members of MCCGSL.

MCC has helped me to be proud of being an African American gay male. The message that keeps me inspired...
is the love of God for all people and that all people are created in the image of God. This message also helped me in my professional life. I worked as an out gay male (no more closets for me!). I was one of the leaders of the PRIDE group at MasterCard and worked with the HR team in getting gender reassignment covered under the MasterCard health plan.

One of the greatest blessings I have received through MCC is the pride I feel in knowing that I am loved by God and not a mistake. I would like to see more African Americans step into more leadership roles in the local church and for MCC in general to continue doing work that MCC does in the world in spreading the good news of God for all people. For me, to be MCC means to walk in the light of God and to share God’s promise whenever I can.

I currently live in Wildwood, MO west of St Louis with my husband of 17 years (10 years as partners, 7 years legally married) and our two dogs.

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**Rev. Dr. Gale Smith**  
*California, USA*

“For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.”  
Psalm 139: 13-14

Rev. Dr. Gale Smith’s formative years were in Illinois and Iowa. Reared in a Roman Catholic home, she attended Catholic School for 12 years and did her undergraduate studies in Biology and Microbiology. She has a Master in Theological Studies degree with an emphasis in the History of Christianity and a Doctorate in Religious Education. She studied French, Spanish, Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic. An Air Force Vietnam veteran, Rev. Smith worked in many science and medical fields before entering ministry. She served as a Campus Minister at Cal State Long Beach (1994-1995) and as Senior Pastor of MCC in Palmdale/Lancaster, California (1996-2016).  

Rev. Smith first attended MCC in Long Beach, California and Dallas, Texas in the early 1970’s, although she kept a low profile because she was still on active duty. She found her inspiration to become involved in
MCC through the presence of many Black women and men clergy. “There were many more Blacks attending MCC prior to 1990.” Before entering pastoral ministry, Rev. Smith served in many roles in MCC through the years, including usher, deacon and campus minister.

When speaking about how the message of MCC has inspired her, she recalls:

> The inclusive atmosphere in many of our churches has kept me involved. Some of our churches have been open in providing a place to raise our children in the Christian faith without the hateful language in many churches.

For Rev. Smith, to “be MCC” is to “be a part of a Christian Movement that can reach people for Christ regardless of sexual orientation. MCC has taught me to be authentic in my person and faith. I’ve learned I do not have to water down the gospel to bring people into our churches.” Her hope is MCC will truly become an inclusive and open environment for African Americans where more African Americans can assume more leadership and mentoring roles in the MCC.

Looking toward the future, Rev. Smith believes MCC needs to make our denomination more open to African American involvement. One way this could happen would be to utilize our older clergy, active or retired, to mentor younger African Americans, including youth, to help keep them in MCC. “I can say as a Black woman pastor, I have inspired many other Black women to choose MCC as a place of growth. Just as many Black clergy women inspired me, God has been able to use me to inspire others.”

Rev. Smith’s spouse of 32½ years, Theresa, passed in 2010. They have two children, four grandsons, two godsons, as well as many dogs and cats over the years. Although she is now retired from MCC ministry, she continues to facilitate weekly Bible Studies with members of the LGBT community. Rev. Smith currently resides in Lancaster, California.
I am a native of Fort Wayne, IN and raised in the Baptist faith. I was a member of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship Association, a very conservative Black Baptist sect.

Professionally, I was trained to be a Special Education Teacher (8 years), then trained to be a Guidance Counselor (6 years) and later appointed to be a Vice-Principal (1 year). I am now serving as the Senior Pastor of MCC Detroit where I currently reside with my spouse of 7 years, Gerald (Jerry) Peterson. We have 3 adult children and 5 grandchildren.

The first MCC I attended was MCC Detroit. I had just come out of the closet in 2001 and a friend took me thinking I would like it. I didn’t. It wasn’t until I discovered Jesus MCC in Indianapolis two years later that I began to appreciate the MCC. Although I had attended Jesus MCC on occasion, I did not intend to join. After attending school at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley (CA), a prospective student from the MCC in Philadelphia came to visit and told me his church was predominantly Black. I was very surprised and pleased to hear this . . . knowing that there could be a place for me as a Black man in MCC encouraged me to join. I joined New Spirit MCC in Berkeley after that. I was the Interim Pastor of MCC Sacramento for a year and later helped found “A Church for Me” in Sacramento. In addition, I served as the Worship Lead for the 2016 MCC General Conference, Worship Lead for the Interim Moderator installation, a member of the People of African Decent Working Group and previous member of the PAD Conference planning team.

I strongly believe that MCC has a place in communities to help be an oasis for those who are seeking progressive theology as well as provide a place to heal from spiritual violence from other religious communities. I see MCC as helping me find my voice as an OUT and unashamed Gay Black Man. There are still so many who need to have this encouragement as well. I have absolutely loved being the pastor of MCC Detroit. It is a wonderful community that has been a good hand-in-glove match. I enjoy being their teacher and leader. To be MCC means that you have a marriage of your spirituality and sexuality and/or gender identity.

Rev. Roland Stringfellow
Michigan, USA

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”
Isaiah 41:10
As African Americans already involved in MCC, I hope we will be able to continue finding our authentic place and space to worship God and not feel we have to make the choice between cultural worship and being welcomed as our authentic selves. I hope the future for MCC sees even more diverse voices being included and encouraged to enter into leadership. In this new era of the backlash against diversity (i.e., Trump), I hope MCC will be a strong leader for racial, ethnic and gender inclusion. I hope the old “let’s just go along to get along” mentality of many who attend non-inclusive and spiritually oppressive churches would have the courage to leave and find spiritual spaces that are welcoming of all of their identities. For us, as MCC, I hope we take our rightful place as leaders of inclusive spiritual spaces and inclusive theology. I see this as the future of the Christian church. If we do not step into this place, another denomination will.

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Marsha Warren
Texas, USA

“And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

Micah 6:8

I am a native of Cincinnati Ohio. As a child, I attended St. Luke Baptist Church. I have attended several different churches, including Episcopal, Lutheran, and Catholic. When my mother and I moved to San Antonio, I joined Faith Temple Church of God in Christ. After the death of my mother, I left Faith Temple and found my way to Metropolitan Community Church of San Antonio (MCCSA).

I am an Army veteran. Professionally, I have been a Social Security Adjudicator and a Social Worker. Presently, I am a Certified Public Accountant, an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) financial products specialist and IRS VITA instructor and volunteer. I have held various religious positions, including as a deaconess, Sunday school teacher, church missionary, church treasurer and board member, UFMCC finance team member, UFMCC PAD treasurer, UFMCC treasurer and member of the MCC Board of Administration. I am a founding member and treasurer for the Circle of One and San Antonio Pride Center. I have been a board member and treasurer of the San Antonio Gay and Lesbian Community Center, Unity Foundation, and Pridefest Pride Festival. I am now serving as the Mayor of San Antonio’s representative to the LGBT
community and serve on the LGBT committee.

I currently live in San Antonio, Texas. I am married to my partner of 19 years Michelle Burnett and we have one son, Marcanthony.

The first MCC I attended was MCC of San Antonio in 1997. Michelle and I were looking for a church home for our family. I was inspired to become a member of MCCSA because Michelle, Marc and I could worship as a family. I continue to be a member of MCCSA, PAD and MCC Churches because it is where I became whole. My spirituality and my sexuality became one.

One of many things that keep me inspired to share MCC’s message is my belief that we are the voices for those without voice in the world and not just in my area of it. We are the hope and the light shining brightly to all those who have been told God does not love them. We offer a place to worship without reprisal and without judgement. We live out Micah 6:8. We are the love and the activists to bring dignity and respect to all of creation. Because of who we are, I am. I am whole. I know God loves me. It has been the leadership, the conferences, and the people from all over the world that encouraged me and loved me. The greatest blessing or gift I have received from MCC is its love for justice and mercy for all people. To be MCC is to walk humbly with God, to do justice in the world and to be merciful.

As we move forward, my hope for MCC is to recognize that its African American members are capable and ready to lead this organization into a diverse future for the sake of its survival in the coming years. I hope those who have vote and voice realize the demographics of the coming centuries. MCC Churches will be led by the “other” ... the other who is of color and who are other genders. My hope for those yet to come is that they do come. My hope is they will challenge us to be more than what we are and to move outside of ourselves to widen the table of grace, mercy and love. My greatest hope for MCC as a movement is that we survive so others can live.