

# The Northside News

A printlink for neighborhoods of change

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND THE ROLE OF THE BLACK CHURCH

The black church served as a critical fixture during the Civil Rights Movement. It allowed community leaders to pray, sing, and gather before marches. As seen in the photo, demonstrators commonly gathered outside of St. Joseph's CME Church.



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The church continues to be an important place for organizing and advocacy. The only visible changes to St. Joseph is the addition of a brick sign out front and an add-on to the building.



## FAITH AS A GUIDING FORCE

*In addition to asking Reverend Brown for guidance, we sought out our beloved neighbors to gain pillars of advice for our new year. Sprinkled throughout this Northside News, and future ones to come, are quotes aimed at inspiring you and empowering your ability to make change. We hope the glimmer of their wisdom and knowledge ignites you as much as it has us.*

**You have been through some difficult periods in our history. What helped you through those times?**

“

I know what that struggle is. I've been through it. The Lord will fix it. I pray all the time. I don't think you can pray too much, even when you don't think God's answering. He is.

- Willie Mae Patterson

“

We were taught to pray and work together, to share ideas. Back then, everybody was just trying to survive. I always lean on the Lord's Prayer. That's the only way we made it through.

- Marian Cheek Jackson

## PROPHETIC IMAGES

Reverend Kevin Brown is the new pastor at St. Joseph C.M.E. on the corner of Rosemary and Roberson. St Joseph is a historic site of civil rights organizing (pictured to the left). We asked him for his thoughts on how to face the current historical moment.

“What manner of [hu]man is a prophet?” is the opening line of the late Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's The Prophets. Heschel proceeds to offer a composite definition, but in describing the content of the prophet's work, that is, prophecy, he writes, “Prophecy is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor...it is a form of living, a crossing point of God and [hu]man[ity]. God is raging in the prophet's words.”

Using this as a baseline of thought for life post January 20, 2017, we are challenged on many fronts due to the surprising shift in the political landscape. We face grave transition. We face social, economic and political regression. We face uncertainty, confusion and fear. Although these emotions are warranted and very real, we must invoke that which is within while invoking that which is beyond. What is beyond is an ultimate reality from which all of us come. That reality, the God of the Scriptures of Israel and the New Testament offers love, power and a sound mind in the wake of fear. Imperative to move forward in such a time as this is the recognition and acceptance that we need more inner strength in the face of clear and present evil. Inner strength to engage evil

on the level to which we bear witness can only be sustained by empowerment through God's spirit.

The breadth of what is at stake transcends racial, ethnic, religious, gender and many other boundaries, which elicits widespread participation in response. A national nightmare has descended upon us; a nightmare which involves an acceptance of evils by millions of our fellow citizens. What we witnessed on November 8 was America's endorsement of evil ideas most of which affect the most vulnerable among us. To counter this surge of acceptable evils we must assume the role of the prophet. We are called at this moment in history to shoulder the mantle of the prophet as the voice of God by standing up for righteousness in the face of evil.

The prophetic role applies to us all since we are made in the image of God. Consequently, the manner of each person possesses a tinge of divinity. That divinity within responds to the call of God to render prophetic voice and life to a world increasingly God-consciousness. As images of God, especially those who are part of the Body of Christ, we have a responsibility to bear God's character, standing in the breach, advocating for and protecting our vulnerable neighbors. Like the prophets of old, the Body of Christ and the whole human race is called to transform the world, not individually, rather, collectively because each of our neighbors is a face of God.

“

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”

-- Rev. Kevin A Brown

## DON'T GIVE UP

*Featured below is an ethnopoetic transcription of an oral history interview conducted with Northside neighbor and community activist, **Harold Foster**. Interviewer Hudson Vaughn is represented by italicized text.*

So how, how y'all been?

Sorry? How we been?

Yeah

Things are going well, you know, it's a struggle but...

but it's umm..

Oh, all right

as long as it's a struggle, I know you're trying. As long as you're struggling, just keep at it.

mmm...

Don't give up.

## TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

Unfortunately, the expression “they were mean to me” might have a familiar ring to those who have spent time with school-aged children. Still, for Ronnie Bynum, Northside neighbor and Heavenly Groceries steward, it recently took on new meaning.

At a community meeting organized in response to the results of the 2016 presidential election, Ronnie shared a story about an interaction that he had with a Latina girl, the child of a Heavenly Groceries patron. “The little girl came in and

said ‘they were mean to me today,’” Ronnie said to those who were gathered. “Some parent gave the kid a note which, in the parent's handwriting, said ‘we're sending you back to Mexico and your parents are going to build a wall.’” The girl was in first grade.

The room was quiet for a moment, some maybe wondering how such words could be directed at a child so young. When asked how he felt, Ronnie said that it brought back memories of his own childhood. “They chased us with ropes, with

hoods,” he said. “The Klan chased us on the bus and off the bus just to go to Carrboro School. So I lived through it...and it hurts to go through it again and watch these little kids in this day and time after all this...”

If there was any question before, Ronnie's story confirmed that young children are hurting. “I hear that at Heavenly Groceries every day,” he later said.

How will we, as a community, respond?

## A CAUSE FOR CHANGE What message might you share with the whole neighborhood?

“

People can't keep hopping on the sand. We must find bright spots and share those. This is a dark time, but people must stand together. We need love and togetherness.

- Keith Edwards

“

Listen and don't have a hard head. It's alright to use your own ideas, but first think about it and listen. God ain't going to let nothing happen that you can't bear.

- Billy Hemmingway



FIRE UNTIL THE MORNING

Alexander Stephens was the Associate Director of the Jackson Center for three years and is the founder of our Fusion Youth Radio program. We asked him for his reflections on the current historical moment.

I carry Northside with me. Everywhere. I started going to St. Joseph and volunteering with Heavenly Groceries and the Jackson Center during my final year of college. After graduating from UNC, I took an opportunity to work at the Center for six months; I ended up staying for two-and-a-half years. No period of my life has shaped me more than the time I spent working, learning, laughing, and listening with you.

It was our shared work that motivated me to deepen my study of history, which I am doing now in graduate school in Michigan. I wanted to understand how your stories, and mine, fit within the vast, entangled forces of persistence and change. I still do not have a lot of answers, but many of my questions come from Northside.

Questions like, how is history dangerous? I owe that one to my younger colleagues at the Jackson Center; the high school students from Fusion Youth Radio. To cap the first year of the program, they decided to produce a live show entitled "History is Dangerous." Over the course of an hour-long broadcast, our youth hosts talked about the threat of erasure—a means of control via redacted stories in textbooks and popular media. And they discussed the more promising perils of history—a method for understanding how oppressive systems got built and how people challenged them.

Nearly five years have passed since then. About two months ago, I called Keith Edwards in the

wake of the presidential election. She told me she spent a long time hoping she could protect young people from the worst of what her generation had to face. Now, she said, that is impossible. And that is devastating. Still, if elders cannot shield the youth, they can arm them with history that is dangerous.

Dangerous history means insights, gained through painful experience, into how power works.

Dangerous history means questions: Ms. Ruby, why did you sit down in the middle of Franklin Street with a sign calling Chapel Hill the "Home of Candy Coated Racism"? Mr. James, what happened when you went on hunger strike in front of the post office? What worked? What failed? What can we do differently?

Dangerous history means listening, deeply, to each other.

Now, more than ever, I depend on the stories you have told me and the dangerous history they convey. Winter is here. The nights are long. But people have always shared stories in the dark. Stories to console each other. Stories to recall possibilities and inspire actions. Stories to remember how to survive the night. Like gently blowing on embers that never burn out, the telling and the listening create warmth and light: fire until the morning.



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ASK KEITH

Ms. Keith Edwards is a lifetime resident of McDade St. and a lifelong advocate for the community. Keith is widely known as a fighter for justice and receives calls from neighbors asking her about programs and referrals for help with household and community issues. To submit questions for "Ask Keith," call us at (919) 960-1670 or email at [contact@jacksoncenter.info](mailto:contact@jacksoncenter.info)

What can we look forward too for the New Year from the Jackson Center?

The Jackson Center has a lot to look forward to in our program areas this year!

**Organizing and Advocacy:** We are excited to be organizing one of our Annual Wills Drafting Clinics on February 24, 2017. The details of this free, all-day event will be posted in next month's issue. The Jackson Center and partners have resources to support critical and urgent home repairs and property taxes reduction for elderly homeowners through our Promise of Home Program. Applications and information are available for this at the center. We also host small workshops called Keeping Your House a Home, in which we discuss tools & values for preserving homes with neighbors, lawyers, and a host of partners. We will continue to connect families with housing in Northside, so if you are looking for a home or looking to sell your home, please be in touch with us! Last year alone, 15 homes were preserved, fixed up, and connected to families in the neighborhood. We hope many more are this year with your support.

**Youth and Education:** We look forward to continuing civil rights workshops at Northside Elementary, Phoenix Academy, Boomerang, and schools in Durham. We welcome neighbors who have made history here to join our Community Mentor Team, to continue to share stories with young people. Your continued efforts keep the spirit and history of the Northside community alive.

**Celebration and Connection:** We continue to organize block events that bring students and long-term neighbors together. The Jackson Center offers a neighborhood history soundwalk for anybody who wants to learn about the amazing history of this neighborhood. We will also be planning our annual Northside Festival, which is our celebration of the year. Stay tuned for details in the coming months!

To end, we would like to emphasize our commitment to the whole Northside community. We will never exclude or turn someone away from our programs on the basis of race, nationality, religion, or any other identifying factor.

For more information about any of these activities, please call (919) 960-1670, email [contact@jacksoncenter.info](mailto:contact@jacksoncenter.info), or stop by 512 W. Rosemary Street!

A WARM WELCOME TO NORTHSIDE

We want to welcome three of our newest sets of neighbors: Nicole, Kelsey, and their children Shiloh and Asher moved onto Craig Street in November; Tim and Ellen moved into their home on Starlite Drive in December; and Margaret Cole, a former resident of Northside, moved onto Gomains. We are honored to have these new neighbors in our community. Please join us in showing these wonderful new neighbors a Northside welcome!



Pictured above: Two of our newest neighbors (third welcome coming soon!) with their welcome party & baskets!

**Sam Cooke on your doorstep? A little John Legend for your love? Lean On Me for a neighbor?** For the fourth time, our star musician Brentton Harrison will deliver singing telegrams and a rose or chocolate to a loved one, neighbor, or friend. Northside neighbors get a special discount - for only \$20, you can sponsor a neighborhood delivery on Valentine's Day! Please call (919) 960-1670 to plan a song-a-gram to help support the Jackson Center!



ARCHIVE TRIVIA

WHO WAS THE FIRST BLACK POLICEMAN IN CHAPEL HILL?

Think you know the answer to this month's archive trivia? Call the Jackson Center anytime after 9am to win a prize! Last month's answer: Mama Kat; Ms. Patterson's rock wall

COMMUNITY BOARD

- |                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1/1 Ronnie Bynum     | 1/18 Norma Alston      |
| 1/6 Vimala Rajendran | 1/21 Clarence Farrar   |
| 1/7 Hudson Vaughan   | Dennis Farrington      |
| 1/8 Harold Foster    | 1/23 George Barrett    |
| 1/9 Deidre Farrar    | 1/25 Lula Bell Norwood |
| 1/14 Lilian Alston   | 1/30 Willis Farrington |

january birthdays

IN MEMORIAM

Reverend J. R. Manley, a beloved leader of our community, passed away December 11, 2016. His spiritual leadership touched many over his 60+ years of service as a pastor. He led the fight for educational and housing justice in our community. His legacy will live on through his good works.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

**CEF Opportunity Classes** Every Saturday from 9:00am-2:00pm, the Community Empowerment Fund (CEF) offers free opportunity classes that provides the skills and resources needed to transition into self-sufficiency and permanent housing.

Topics range from personal finance to job readiness to health. The training is free and open to all!

How Can I Join?

To sign up or learn more about CEF's next class, contact us at (919) 200-0233 or [savings@communityempowermentfund.org](mailto:savings@communityempowermentfund.org)

Location

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
300 E Rosemary St  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

COMMUNITY EVENTS

**MONDAY, JAN 23<sup>RD</sup>**  
**COMMUNITY INPUT MEETINGS**  
12:00-1:00, 5:00-6:30 at Hargraves

Review the Town Council's first draft for the W Rosemary Street Development project. We want to ensure a community-first vision, so your voice matters! Please note, both sessions are the same and meals are provided.

**LATE JAN - EARLY FEB**  
**"THE RECIPE" PODCAST RELEASE**  
The Jackson Center

We are excited to present a podcast series of intergenerational conversations in collaboration with community activist Keith Edwards. Dialogue centers around life lessons and challenges black people face in our own community and around the nation.

**THURSDAY, FEB 9<sup>TH</sup>**  
**SENIOR CITIZEN BLACK HISTORY BREAKFAST**  
10:30-1:00 at Hargraves

Hargraves Center will host a special program and breakfast for senior citizens aged 55+. Registration is required. Limited number of registrations accepted. Please call the Seymour Senior Center at (919) 968-2070 to register.

**WEDNESDAY, FEB 15<sup>TH</sup>**  
**SENIOR CITIZEN DOMINO TOURNAMENT**  
10:30-12:00 at Seymour Senior Center

Put your domino skills to the test at this year's domino tournament. Trophies will be awarded for first, second, and third place. Registration is required. Please call the Seymour Senior Center at (919) 968-2070 to register.