They were anything but silent at the 61st Lott Carey Youth Seminar. Mime, dance, drama energized traditional teaching and preaching, fueling spiritual renewal and magnifying the call to missions. Shout Hallelujah for praise, worship and service bonanza, Pages 13-21.

Ebony Ellard, award-winning mime, is a member of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Baltimore, Md.
They’re Youth Ministers Not Babysitters!
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Ministry Arts Can Spur Participation.
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Young Folks on Their IYD Experience.
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Preachers Get a Tweet and Hashtag.
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Spirited Youth Mission to Canada.
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South African Takes in Greensboro, N.C.
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Liberian Scholar Heads to U. of Rochester.
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Flint Fights for Clean Water: Lott Carey Deploys, Local Pastor Stands.
Page 26

IYD Photos: Knox & SHIROD.G video production, and Arseneaux Robinson.

Lott Carey short-term mission teams to Carries, Haiti, recently completed the foundation for a senior home kitchen, assisted at the medical clinic and finished an exterior four-stall bathroom. Participating churches included Spring Creek Baptist Church, Richmond, Va.; Wayland Baptist Church, Baltimore, Md.; Shiloh (Old Site) Baptist Church, Fredericksburg, Va.; and St. Paul Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C.

The Lott Carey/National Baptist Convention of America Disaster Network has mobilized to Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi and Alabama to deal with flooding that has destroyed or damaged homes. They are distributing food and supplies, and helping to clear homes and neighborhoods of debris.
As Mary and Thomas entered the building, they wondered what they could do with their children, Ashley and Trey. They could hear that praise and worship had started but by the look of the parking lot, they knew that getting a seat would be impossible. They walked past the visitor's station, and one of the greeters approached them.

"You look a little flustered, how may I help you today?" she asked with a smile.

“We would like to find seats together.” Mary answered.

“Well, we do have a special service for the children on the other side of the campus,” the greeter said. “I can take you there.”

As they briskly walked to the other side of the campus, they could hear music coming from the room. They could see other parents with children, signing in and workers whisking the children away. Mary and Thomas quickly filled out the registry then turned to leave.

“Don’t you want to know what time to pick up your child?” a worker asked as Mary and Thomas rushed toward the service to get good seats.

“No, we’re good,” Thomas said. “We will get them after church.”

As the couple entered the sanctuary, Mary whispered: “Isn’t it great that the church has a babysitting service?”

It’s Ministry to Children, Youth and Their Families
Across the United States, youth leaders, youth workers and youth pastors are often categorized as “Church Babysitters.” Any time there is a program, parents drop off their children and trust that the church will take care of them for a few hours. Long after the program or...
Everybody, it’s time. Get in position,” Aunt Cynthia belted down the hall. I slowly walked to my assigned spot, ran over my lines once more, and wiped the sweat from my forehead. I couldn’t decipher whether this sudden perspiration had come from the intense heat created in the crowded choir room or from the heavy duty one-size-fits-all choir robe I was wearing. (It was probably both.) One thing was sure—I was excited. Finally, I was a part of the annual Christmas production, and with acting opportunities, an orchestra pit, choir renditions, and dance routines there was space for everyone.

This was one of my fondest memories of Arts Ministry growing up in church. From the Christmas orchestra to the Easter play, there was no place I’d rather be than church on a weeknight most days. That’s the power of a relevant and quality Arts Ministry: It has the unique ability to bring together a multitude of gifts, personalities, age groups and backgrounds for a common cause through song, dance, drama, poetry, and instrumentation.

Here are four reasons why church should use the fine and performing arts to create a greater connection among youth and young adults:

Shekinah Glory Dance Ministry of Maple Springs Baptist Church, Capitol Heights, Md., bring new expressions of worship to the sanctuary.
1. **Everyone Can Play a Part**

We've all been there, trying to help someone get plugged into our church but they just don't seem to fit anywhere. They don't like kids, are horrible with administration, they are too shy to greet people, they can't sing on key. And we don't let anyone but trustees near the finances. But an Arts Ministry is a bridge that connects all abilities . . . and the lack thereof. Anybody can work the stage, adjust the lights or be an extra. Maybe they play an instrument or know a song on keyboard that wouldn’t normally be used on Sunday morning but could fit perfectly in a dramatic presentation. Arts is the hub for all those looking for a place to feel at home, and research suggests an individual is 70 percent more likely to stay connected to a church once they are serving in some capacity.

2. **The Arts Creates Ownership**

Name an area in the routine church structure where a teenager or millennial can effect change with their words and ideas. Still thinking? It probably doesn’t exist. When was the last time this age group was allowed to make a decision about the church budget or order of service? Do they get to give suggestions on sermon series development? Or how about the design of the sanctuary in the new building (because you know youth and young adults always get the “old sanctuary”)?

Truth is, we want our youth and young adults to be “participants” but there’s no space for them to be “partners.” An active Arts Ministry is an outlet so they may have a voice and take ownership of some aspect of church life. They may express their issues, their language, and their personality all in their way; all wrapped up in a spiritually edifying experience through their church. Bottom line: You don’t have to beg someone to be a part of something that they helped create.

3. **Intergenerational Relationships Are Built**

Where can you see a baby boomer and a millennial, Generations X and Z, and a toddler in one space, together for multiple weeks at a time? The Arts Ministry. In a time where we are more divided generationally than ever before, we have the power to reconnect generations through laughter, hard work and, ultimately, intense time spent together in the Arts Ministry. There’s nothing like bringing a production to life. For many youth and young adults, the research suggests they rarely get to witness the personality of their elders. They’ve seen them serve, meet, sing, pray, and correct. But rarely have they seen them dance, crack jokes, get in trouble (which always happens in a production rehearsal no matter your age), and be conversational. Let’s be honest, our churches just aren’t set up like that. While youth church services are a great asset they can also damage generational connectivity. But not in the Arts Ministry. We need each other to bring it to life. We need the expertise of every generation to do something great. That’s the Arts Ministry—the planning acumen of a parent with the media savvy of a youth; the resourcefulness of a tool shed coupled with a new app that can get the job done. All are welcome in the Arts Ministry, where new conversations, relationships and partnerships are built.

4. **Wins the Competition with Worldly Culture**

I love Romans 12:2: “And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” I always thought it interesting that while it says “don’t conform” it doesn’t say “don’t compete.” The Church is in competition with a culture that no longer values the sacredness of Sunday or mid-week activities. Don’t believe
4 REASONS

Continued from Page 5

and individuals deploying water, sanitation and hygiene supplies, money, and volunteers to help our sisters and brothers in these challenging times.

“I don’t know what I would have done without your delivery,” a vision-impaired elderly woman told one of our teams. “You don’t know what I have to go through to brush my teeth and bathe myself.”

Clearly, our engagement must continue to bring help and hope to Flint. Contact Kathi L. Reid, Program Director, Disaster Services at kreid@lottcarey.org or 301.429.3300, extension 12, to learn how you can serve.

Lott Carey helps churches to extend the Christian witness throughout the world. You will find glimpses of impact and opportunities to share in this issue of our magazine. Enjoy the pictures, read the articles and answer the call.

Grace,

David

WE’RE NOT BABYSITTERS

Continued from Page 3

youth event is over, “Church Babysitters” are often left waiting for parents to claim their children.

So . . . are we a babysitting service? I don’t think so.

Ministry to our young people is a vital part of the church. It is ministry, and for those actively involved in the life of our youth and young adults, it is intense ministry.

Youth Ministry is a place where our young people learn how to be disciples of Christ. They learn how to go against the beliefs of popular culture. Youth Ministry is designed to challenge, encourage, and empower our young people to become agents of change in their communities, homes and, eventually, the world.

Youth ministers and workers, like other pastors and leaders, are called upon in times of need. We visit young people in their homes, schools, hospitals and even during the loss of loved ones.

We play but it’s more than fun and games

Some people believe that as youth leaders all we do is play games. Do we? Yes, and we have just as much fun as the children. But our games are designed to create a friendly atmosphere.

Many of our children do not know each other and the games are used to introduce the children to new youth that may be visiting for the first time. The games are also designed to go along with the message that will come later in the worship service, Bible study or youth event.

Our children do not spend enough time as children. Some of them are dealing with stress that would cause adults to be depressed. And think about what they’re hearing on TV news and social media. Youth Ministry brings laughter, which helps the healing process.

So what should we expect from the IYD?
The International Youth Development Department of Lott Carey is a safe environment where young people will learn about the love of Christ, learn how to share Christ with others and develop as young Christians. The messages, skits, and worship style may not be in a format that some adults are used to but it is designed to challenge them and encourage them in their Christian journey. Trust us that the message is never watered down; it stays true to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

IYD needs your involvement

Contrary to popular belief, you don’t have to be young, have a lot of free time or a lot of children to get involved with IYD. Youth ministries across the globe are looking for caring adults who:

• Love God and live for God.
• Have a passion to see young people changed for Christ.
• Are willing to pray for young people.
• Are willing to invest in their growth.
• Are willing to laugh with them.
• Are willing to remember their names.
• Are willing to be real, authentic and human.
• Are willing to believe in them.

We do not need babysitters. We are looking for caring, committed and compassionate adults who are willing to invest in the lives of young people.

Rev. Robert James is Team Leader for International Youth Development, Lott Carey, and Pastor of Youth & Young Adults, Mount Ararat Baptist Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
TESTIMONIES FROM THE HEART & SOUL

Youth Share the Transforming Power of Christ and Why Lott Carey Means So Much

“I was questioning how close I was to God before Lott Carey but during the week I found out how close God and I really are. I really enjoyed the evening chant competitions (#ADVOCACY), the packing of the food, the ending program and the celebration after the program.”

—Imani, 14

“It was great to get exposed to so many talented Christian young people, working as a team and enjoying doing missions. They were inspirational. It was refreshing to see them utilize so many divergent talents as they worshipped Christ in spirit and truth.”

—Denise, Adult Leader

Continued on Page 8
“Lott Carey will always be a memorable learning and helping experience that demonstrates how youth can collaborate and make a significant difference in someone’s life that we may never meet. It frustrates me when someone insults my generation, saying that we are selfish or lazy, because there are many more teenagers like me who wish to selflessly make a difference in the world. Lott Carey is an excellent reflection of that, which is why I plan on attending my third year in the summer of 2016, and I highly recommend this program to any people my age who want to make a difference.”

—Davon, 15

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—Davon, 15

“My first time at Lott Carey was a great experience. I feel like I encountered and felt God like I never have before. I definitely plan on coming back for years to come.”

—Joyrenzia, 19

“I’ve met a lot of people at Lott Carey and had a fun experience. I still text and communicate with some to this day.”

—D’Angelo, 16

“This was my first time attending the Lott Carey Youth Seminar. It was a great experience. It intrigued me. I want to attend each year. It allowed me to have an impact by giving back to a community in need of my services.”

—Terrance, 20

“I learned a lot during Lott Carey about worship and about myself. I am the person people always see in the shadow and the person who usually never smiles. I have learned that being alone may work now but may become loneliness later. I learned that through the people I was fortunate enough to meet. The services at Lott Carey were different from what I was used to. Minister Holmes’ sermon was definitely out of the ordinary. His message was ‘When Ministry Gets Messy.’ He passed around the buckets of dirt (and we symbolically rubbed it on figures in white that represented Jesus). From that, I learned that everyone has “dirt” but with Jesus Christ, we can be cleansed. Lott Carey was a learning experience, so I believe that there is no way anyone went home unchanged.”

—Krishae, 15
“This being my third year at Lott Carey, I was truly amazed to see something different. The functions were well-planned and the family groups were good. I’ve never been touched by a sermon. I used to just watch my friends cry during sermons in previous years. This year, I was moved and felt comfortable letting everything out. This year was eye-opening, I learned a lot about myself and my desire to help people all around the world. Lott Carey opened my heart and my eyes to be more compassionate. It was truly a great experience and I can’t wait to see what is in store for next year.”

—Milahn, 17

“I really enjoyed teaching and spending time with my group. Initially, I thought because they were teens they were not going to be engaged in our class discussions but, to my surprise, they were. It was also enlightening to see how diverse my group was in age, and political and religious thought. I was encouraged because many of them displayed a genuine appetite for the word of God. The topics we discussed in class were relevant to them, which contributed to their continuous engagement in class. When we discussed race, the government, gay marriage and sin, my students listened and gave feedback. We truly had great conversation. I learned from my students and they learned from me. They asked lots of insightful questions, showing interest in their faith and social issues.”

—Huschai, 21

“Wow! My first experience at Lott Carey was not what I thought would be. Coming to Lott Carey I was a rock. I didn’t think I would cry or be emotional. ‘When ministry gets messy’—that was the message that broke me. I cried so hard and feel like I grew. Seeing how God has blessed me, how he will carry my dirt really got to me and opened my eyes because I feel like I took things for granted before. Now that I’m back home, I have been more open with church and allowing God to use me. I am so happy for Lott Carey because I am definitely a different person. The me before Lott Carey and the me after Lott Carey are two totally different people. And I am happy with that. The reason why I am different is because I am open to letting God use me.”

—Saiyana, 14

“I rarely feel as if I have people around me who I can relate to, who have been through what I’ve been through or understand the magnitude and power of my God. At Lott Carey, I was surrounded by kingdom kids, none perfect nor righteous or more holy than the next but young people striving towards God. It was almost like heaven to me.”

—Langston, 20

“Lott Carey has gotten more powerful each year I have attended. Not only has the mission outreach been memorable but the worship experience is like none other I have ever experienced. It is truly a blessing to partake in something as life-changing as Lott Carey.”

—Marissa, 16
119th Lott Carey Annual Session

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THESE DAYS, PREACHERS SHOUT:
‘CAN I GET AN AMEN . . . A TWEET AND A HASHTAG?’

By Min. Anthony Holmes

S
ocial media websites are among the most popular gathering place for youth and young adults—and they are now a staple resource in many churches.

“Hashtag this” and “Tweet that” is commonly heard in some pulpits.

In fact, if you want to know the latest about who said or did what, you might have to look at Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube or Twitter to be in the know. Even gaming and video sites have a piece of the social media action.

Social media often is the medium of choice for people to interact with each other and share content such as stories, music, videos and conversations online. And it is an integral part of the worship experience for many. Users tweet nuggets of sermons to their followers, share photos and even comment and ask questions. Churches use social media not just as a tool of evangelism and Christian education but to get news and information to members.

Social media sites serve as important portals for entertainment and communication, but not all are healthy environments for young people. It is easy for some youths to get hooked on the seeming popularity that can come from social networking—counting how many people clicked “like” on your posts, left comments, or even shared your post with others. If young people are not careful, they may—intentionally or not—gradually change the nature and content of their posts to suit their audience, which can be anyone online.

It is the responsibility of parents and other adults to teach them how to use these public sites appropriately.

Youth ministers and leaders, in particular, should be careful about how they engage with young people on and with social network. A good rule of thumb to follow is to build safe boundaries with your youth. Some simple guidelines:

• Talk with them about the appropriate use of social media, including what is appropriate and not appropriate to do online, and how to safeguard their privacy and financial information.

• Create with them a covenant that outlines clear expectations and rules for their Internet use.

• Warn them about online predators, scams and phishing schemes. Let them ask you to be friends online—not the other way around. If they make the request, that is an indication that they trust you.

• Don’t publicly condemn them when you see them posting inappropriate content online. Wait to address your concerns with them privately offline. The timing, setting and approach are crucial in order to get the desired result for change.

Anthony Holmes is Minister of Millennial Development, The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square, Capitol Heights, Maryland.
‘PUT YOUR DIRT ON HIM’

Doing Praise & Worship Their Way at the 61st Lott Carey Youth Seminar
WORSHIP

Youth respond to inspiring message by Min. Anthony Holmes: “Jesus loves you enough that He’s willing to deal with all the lies that you’ve told. Put your dirt on Him. He can handle it.”

Mimes communicate without words but nonetheless draw emotional reactions from congregations.
Winston-Salem State University Chancellor Elwood Robinson addresses gathering.
MISSION

Young people never lost sight of the mission portion of the event—sorting, packing and praying as an estimated 108,000 meals were prepared for shipping to international areas in need.
A local TV crew spotlights activities during Youth Seminar.

International Youth Development participants collect money to dig a well in Zimbabwe and buy a maize grinder for a village in Mozambique.
Sometimes it’s isolated moments that make the Seminar special. Clockwise from top left: fun and games; choir and band praising; Min. TaNikka Sheppard fires up youth; classroom concentration; worship experience, and teaching the Word via Skype–Pastor Emmett L. Dunn of West Hyattsville Baptist Church in Maryland.
YOUTH MISSION TO CANADA STRENGTHENS PARTNERSHIP, LEADERSHIP

‘We came to Toronto with the Word in us’

We thank Lott Carey for the opportunity to engage international mission assignments specifically geared toward youth. We also thank the leadership and congregation of Bates Memorial Baptist Church of Louisville, Kentucky, for their support in this endeavor. This short-term mission to Toronto, Canada, was great. We were able to serve in several camps, strengthen missional partnerships, learn about leadership development strategies for youth and young adults, share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and serve those in need. Each member of the team was challenged and strengthened, and we were able to achieve more together than we could ever imagine doing alone.

—Min. TaNikka Sheppard
Lott Carey IYD Team

The trip to Toronto was an awesome experience. To spread the word about Jesus Christ in an unfamiliar place with unfamiliar people, from different cultures and religions was awesome. Many of the youth we met at the neighborhood outreach were unfamiliar with Jesus, and although time didn’t allow us to share like we really wanted to, gospel seeds were planted. The youth missionaries participated in daily devotions and even led sessions. Not everything on the trip went according to plan, though. Despite cancelled flights, misplaced luggage, and lost phones, God was still in control. “Things” were not needed to share the gospel, because we came to Toronto with the Word in us. That was all we needed. Min. Sheppard closed with a powerful word about being a vessel God could use until there was nothing left. This reminded us that leaving Toronto didn’t mean that our mission was over. This trip has motivated me to take my ministry to the next level of commitment and service.”

—Deacon Marcus Workman
PACT Boys’ Mentoring Leader
Bates Memorial Baptist Church

Having fun in recreational area of city.

Majestic building on the University of Toronto campus.
Deacon Marcus Workman enjoys field hockey; young participant creating melted crayon artwork; Min. TaNikka Sheppard en route to mission site.

“We learned on this trip was to never think of someone as unimportant. Treat them as you would want to be treated. That’s the point of missions—to help people in need. My favorite part of this trip was meeting new people and stepping outside of my comfort zone.”
—Isaac Huddleson, ninth-grader

“I so enjoyed meeting the leaders of the TC3 ministry. They were great hosts, and it was so inspiring to see their work with the youth. It was so encouraging to see all the ways young adults were taking on leadership roles, whether it was directing a youth camp for young kids, developing the curriculum, preparing music and arts, or giving leadership to a neighborhood outreach. It was a good reminder of how much young adults and youth can accomplish when others around them empower them and give them space to lead. I hope that some of our young people saw this as well. I appreciate Lott Carey and its IYD leadership. You all do phenomenal work and give great opportunities for young people in the kingdom to experience God more fully and learn about His heart.”
—Rev. Kimberly Blackford Missions Co-Leader Bates Memorial Baptist Church

“I give honor to God for giving me this opportunity to go to Toronto. Our group was able to meet people from all walks of life and it was amazing. We went to Weston Baptist Church to help prepare for a kids’ art day camp and prepared the space with a unique project. I blow-dried crayons (see picture above). That’s something I’ve never done before, but you never know how something different can be used to make something beautiful. We also got to enjoy a Pan-Am Games event (field hockey) with people visiting Canada from all over the world. It was very exciting.”
—Camberleigh Bagwell, ninth-grader

“I enjoyed serving as leader-in-training at a neighborhood block fellowship sponsored by our host group, TC3 and other Christian ministries. I made and served popcorn to our neighbors and enjoyed sharing a smile and talking about Jesus. Later that evening, we went to a Pan Am concert, ate at a West Indies diner and enjoyed the international celebrations.”
—R. LeeSean Lewis, rising seventh-grader

“The thing we learned on this trip was to never think of someone as unimportant. Treat them as you would want to be treated. That’s the point of missions—to help people in need. My favorite part of this trip was meeting new people and stepping outside of my comfort zone.”
—Isaac Huddleson, ninth-grader
Commentary by Patamedi Lebea

My “brother” Lwandiso Linyana and I had the incredible privilege of being a part of a delegation of believers attending Lott Carey’s 118th Annual convention in Greensboro, North Carolina. When we were first told about the trip I almost couldn’t believe it. This was made possible through the great contributions and efforts of our home church, Kagiso Baptist, as part of a plan to fellowship and build relationships with churches and youth from all over the world.

Greensboro is beautiful, and as green as its name suggests. All that compares to the beauty of the area are the souls of its residents. My brother and I spent the next few days there understanding what Lott Carey is about—especially through the convention’s 2015 theme, “Good News for the Poor.”

The first night we had made friends with most of the IYD team and built a strong relationship that will last a lifetime with a group of young people who could barely pronounce our names. We eventually just went by the aliases “London” (a name Lwandiso had picked up from our host family in New Jersey) and “PJ.”

The team immediately took us in; we were not South African guests to them, we were treated like family that came to do the work of the Lord. We hit the ground running—planning, organizing and executing the planned activities for the young people in attendance.

Our week was a combination of early mornings, busy days, long nights and very little sleep. But we never tired of doing the work of the Lord by making a difference in the lives of the young people placed in our care. It was as if we were all in silent but solid agreement about what really mattered above all else—sharing the gospel. Seeing lives being touched and forever changed by the work a group of determined young people was doing, is an experience that forever changed me.

I cannot remember having so much fun doing God’s work. We laughed as hard as we worked and played as much as prayed. London and I would find ourselves amazed by all the work being done by Lott Carey—Men on Missions, Women in Service Everywhere and International Youth Development. It’s not just what they did but how they did it. I saw believers giving everything they’ve got in service to the Lord, not out of obligation, but out of love. This grew in me the heart of a servant, and taught me the true value of Christians missions. My entire plan in coming to America was to make a difference in somebody’s life but it seems God’s plan was to change mine. We left North Carolina with a new family, new friends and, most important, a new outlook on life.

When we arrived back in South Africa the first question we were asked was “How was the U.S.?” My response: “America was amazing but God is awesome!”

Patamedi Lebea is a Youth Leader at Kagiso Baptist Church in Johannesburg, South Africa, and host of a Christian radio show.
By Mike Tucker

Rocks are a critical part of Emmanuel Todd Gweamee’s young life: Christ is his Solid Rock; he plans a career in geology and he’s all smiles when he thinks about his rock-solid offer to study at the University of Rochester in New York.

His acceptance into the school through the Akwanya, a scholars’ program of MasterCard Foundation, is not only a win for him but for Lott Carey Mission School in Liberia, where his reputation as a disciplined scholar began.

“He excelled in everything,” says the school’s superintendent, Rev. Emile D.E. Sam-Peal. “He served as vice president then president of the student council, and on many occasions represented our school at the local, national and international level.”

Emmanuel, who enjoys music and soccer, credits the school’s strong academic program and his spiritual upbringing for his accomplishments.

“Christ is the driving force for excellence in my life,” he says. “I try to always let the light of Jesus shine through me. He is the solid rock on which I stand.”

Emmanuel is an unabashed cheerleader for his alma mater.

Says the young sage: “I started attending LCMS when I was in seventh grade in 2007 and graduated in 2013. There has never been a day I regretted attending this institution because it has been one of the main factors behind my success. Every teacher was so passionate, creating a culture of excellence among students. LCMS taught me to build good character.”

Emmanuel, who turns 22 in November, is now anxious to begin his geology studies at Rochester. But he doesn’t want to just study the earth’s physical structure and substance, he wants to change the world.

“A wide range of environmental issues in Liberia and across the continent have drawn my attention,” says Emmanuel, son of teachers Samuel and Esther Gweamee, who have six other children. “Some mining companies have poor waste management systems that, in turn, cause pollution and environmental damage.”

He is also interested in entrepreneurship thanks to his recent participation as a scholar in the Bridge2Rwanda program, started in 2007 to expand Rwanda’s global profile. He sees starting new ventures as “a tool to quickly uplift people from poverty and foster development,” so he will approach studies at Rochester “with an open mind.”

Emmanuel favors the words of Seneca, the Roman philosopher, statesman and dramatist, when advising others on study: “Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.”

He says finding study-abroad opportunities can be “challenging and really frustrating” but possible for students who “take their lessons very seriously and make the required grades that most universities need to admit you.”

“I would encourage students to get involved with their communities by volunteering,” he says. “Do extracurricular activities in high school. Be a student that always looks to maximize opportunity.”

Mike Tucker is Managing Editor of Lott Carey Herald.
Of course residents feel betrayed. Wouldn’t you if state officials signed off on your drinking water then allowed you and your family to drink poison?

By Geri Coleman Tucker

The quest for clean water never ends in Flint, Michigan. That’s been the case for two years, ever since state officials tried to save money by switching the city’s water source from the fresh waters of Lake Huron to the waters of the Flint River. The very basics of life are dependent on clean water—water for drinking, bathing, cooking, cleaning—but little is found in the pipes or taps of homes and businesses in Flint.

For nearly 18 months, residents used the water—not knowing it was contaminated. Stomach ailments, rashes, lead poisoning and even Legionnaires’ Disease have been linked to the Flint River. Yet government officials repeatedly denied there was a problem until a local pediatrician and her research team proved them wrong.

The water crisis in this post-industrial city is a human tragedy of enormous proportion. And fatigue is setting in as residents tire of the unending circle of pickups and deliveries of bottled water needed to maintain even a minimum standard of living and cleanliness.

Flint was once a prosperous city in the heart of Michigan, home to a thriving middle class and a haven for African Americans who migrated from the South, drawn by high-paying jobs in the auto and other industries. But over the past several decades, Flint’s population declined as plants closed and businesses shuttered. Now the city of less than 100,000 is about 60 percent African American with an aging population; nearly 40 percent live below the poverty line.

Water problems in Flint were not what then-mayor Dayne Walling toasted back on April 25, 2014, when he and other state and city officials celebrated the city’s switch to water from the Flint River. Michigan Governor Rick Snyder hailed the switch as a cost-cutting move. They vouched for the water’s cleanliness. What residents swallowed instead was water contaminated with E. coli bacteria and iron that leached from the old corroded water-main pipes.

Making matters worse, many of the service lines leading from the main lines into homes are made of lead. The water, which was not properly treated, has caused lead to seep into tap water.

Walling lost his job as mayor late last year, defeated by current Mayor Karen Weaver who hit him hard during the campaign over failures related to the water debacle. Snyder is widely blamed for failures related to the crisis and there are efforts to recall him. And although the city has since switched back to water from Lake Huron, the water still has to flow through those same corroded pipes.

Estimates of the costs to clean up the problems vary widely—from $60 million to replace the lead service lines that run into homes to billions to replace the main pipelines and cover the medical costs of the children and adults who have been harmed by the tainted water.
LIVING WATER FOR THE BODY NOW PART OF FIRST TRINITY’S EXPANDED MINISTRY FOR THE SOUL

Pastor Ezra Tillman says the crisis in Flint is entering a new phase: fatigue. People are tired of the mixed messages . . . and living off of bottled water.

By Geri Coleman Tucker

W when Rev. Ezra L. Tillman, Jr., came to Flint two years ago, he had no idea the church he had been called to pastor would become a divining rod of sorts for the city of Flint.

At the time he was one of the youngest pastors in the city, and First Trinity was an aging traditional Baptist church with some 240 members.

But tainted water flowing through the pipes and into the homes and taps of thousands of people in Flint has triggered an unprecedented need for clean, safe water in the city and brought new energy and a new mission into focus for Tillman and First Trinity Missionary Baptist Church. It is a mission of both service and advocacy. And it is captured in the words seen on T-Shirts all over town: “Flint Lives Matter.”

Tillman says because so many of his church’s members are older. “They have the concern in their hearts but they don’t have the strength. Many people feel uncomfortable or they have never been involved in community work.”

Lott Carey volunteers coming in to work alongside members and helping with the heavy work of lifting cases of water has made it easier.

First Trinity is no longer just an oasis for the soul where the living water restores. It is an oasis for the body where residents can draw down gallons and cases of water, and where donations of water from around the world are graciously accepted and distributed.

Since January, First Trinity has given out and delivered an estimated 100,000 cases of water plus 19,000 gallon jugs, says Deacon Bill Quarles.

Every Tuesday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the church operates two water distribution centers. One water station is at
Vernon Hammett of Alfred Street Baptist Church, Alexandria, Va., on the scene.
the church; the other is at a fire station on the north side of town. For residents, picking up water, care packages, and diaper and disinfectant wipes has become a weekly ritual. On Wednesday and Thursdays, the mission shifts as volunteers deliver cases of water to community and recreation centers, mental health facilities, nursing homes and to individuals and families who don’t have transportation.

As news of Flint’s water crisis and its day-to-day impact on the city’s residents garnered major national headlines, Flint Mayor Karen Weaver, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder and President Barack Obama declared states of emergency. And the severity and enormity of the Flint water crisis brought in help from churches, community groups, celebrities, firefighters and individuals across the nation.

First Trinity is located in one of the city’s nine wards where residents are most affected by the lead that is poisoning their tap water. No part of the city is untouched by the water crisis. But the poor, the elderly, the sick, the homeless, the disabled, undocumented immigrants and those who live in the margins are most at risk. Often they are unable or unwilling to go get water or they don’t have the identification required at other water stations.

Tillman and First Trinity are partnering with Lott Carey and its network of churches to help meet the needs in Flint.

Lott Carey President Alyn E. Waller, pastor of Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church in Philadelphia, Pa., went to Flint in early February to attend an environmental rally hosted by First Trinity and assess the best ways for Lott Carey and its churches to help. What he found was a leader in Tillman who had an understanding of what the real issues were—someone “who was not just being reactionary but being proactive because addressing the water issue in Flint is a multi-dimensional issue,” Waller says.

As a result, churches have raised thousands of dollars and donated tons of water, baby wipes and disinfectant wipes. As the strain of long hours of pickups and deliveries and loading and unloading water began to take its toll, teams of volunteers from Enon Tabernacle and Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, Va., have come in to share the work. Waller says the goal is to be the love of God in action. And he is confident Lott Carey will be able to sustain its support of First Trinity because of the many churches in its network that are willing to assist.

“Pastor Tillman was not just being reactionary but being proactive because addressing the water issue in Flint is a multi-dimensional issue . . . he and the First Trinity Baptist Church seemed to have the pulse best able to represent the cause of Christ in the conversation.”

—Pastor Alyn E. Waller
President
Lott Carey

there is also “advocacy around the political issues. I wanted to find someone who was thinking about it on all those levels,” Waller says.

“Some of the advocacy we see working now. The people of Flint no longer have to pay for their water. That is a direct result of some of the legislation that went forth from the rally. Pastor Tillman and the First Trinity Baptist Church seemed to have the pulse and are best able to represent the cause of Christ in the conversation.”

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This is all we ever do,” Waller says. “We live for missions. It is not that we are better than other groups, but we are a bit more equipped,” he added.

Working through Lott Carey is a way to do missions more efficiently, says Rev. Howard-John Wesley, pastor of Alfred Street.
“We are foreigners in Flint. We didn’t know the city. We didn’t really know the specific needs. But Lott Carey was already on the ground and had developed an infrastructure and knew how best we could help.”

And help the church did. In one week alone the church raised more than $45,000 in a special offering for Flint. And it sent teams of volunteers each week for six straight weeks to help with water distribution.

This is about more than water, Wesley says. “This is a social justice issue that affects poor and particularly vulnerable people all over this country. It is a tragedy that exposes a social justice issue that needs to be addressed.”

Tillman says the crisis in Flint is entering a new phase: fatigue. People are tired of the mixed messages they are getting from government and health officials and they are tired of living off of bottled water.

“There’s lots of water coming to the city now. Everyone has water,” Tillman says. But people are growing weary of living from bottle to bottle. Even the gallon and five-gallon jugs of donated water that are now preferred get used up pretty quickly. With summer just a few months away, there’s little chance the situation will improve, he says.

While lead in the water can lead to brain damage, especially in young children, some people are starting to ignore warnings and bathe in the contaminated water. And they’re getting sick or risking rashes.

People don’t trust anything they hear from government officials about the water and what they should and should not do. For example, residents were told early on when the water in the Flint River was contaminated with E. coli that they could boil the water and use it. After chemicals were used to rid the river of E. coli, however, parents continued to boil the water and use it not knowing that boiling increased the concentration of lead in the water.

There are so many mixed messages coming from officials. “So that puts a greater responsibility on the churches” to sort out the facts, Tillman says.

First Trinity has also become one of the most reliable and easy-to-access water stations in Flint. Tillman says some of the other churches, garages, social halls and sites that are stockpiling the donations of water are not distributing it in a timely manner.

“Lott Carey has given us the power and the influence to really impact our community in a positive way,” he says. “We’ve been taking Lott Carey to the streets—to the shut-in grandmother and to the mother with small children who doesn’t have transportation, to the elderly person who can’t walk and doesn’t have the strength to carry.”

First Trinity is “an older church, a seasoned church … and we’ve been utilized as much as possible on the grounds for people to drive through to pick up water. But to get water to the projects, to get it to forgotten parts of town that are dilapidated and scattered about . . . Lott Carey has helped us to do so in a tremendous way. It has been a beautiful experience and blessing to our church.”

Tillman already is thinking about the future and exploring solutions for addressing the long-term mental and physical health problems that may persist for decades as a legacy of the water crisis. He and First Trinity hope to turn the church annex into a community health and education center.

“We very much want to be part of the solution,” he said. “If everyone is coming to help us, what are we doing to help ourselves?”

Waller says now that Flint is out of the news cycle and the water crisis recedes from the national headlines, it is more important than ever to keep up the advocacy for the long-term cleanup of the city’s water and the long-term care of people who have been harmed by the contaminated water.

Geri Coleman Tucker is a freelance writer and editor living in the Washington, D.C., area.
Thank you for supporting the residents of Flint, Michigan, who are in the midst of a water crisis. All donations need to observe the following guidelines, which allow volunteers to handle donations safely and efficiently.

The following items are acceptable:
- Full cases of commercially packaged water (no loose bottles)
- Commercially sealed gallon (or larger) containers of water
  All containers must have an expiration date at least 6 months in the future
  - Hand sanitizer (in US Postal Service Priority Mail Large Mailing Box, 14-3/4" x 11-3/4" x 11-1/2" OR shipping box 12" x 12" x 12"
  - Baby wipes (in US Postal Service Priority Mail Large Mailing Box, 14-3/4" x 11-3/4" x 11-1/2" OR shipping box 12" x 12" x 12")

The following items cannot be accepted:
- Canned water
- Containers with open/broken seals
- Carbonated water
- Flavored water
- Water past its expiration date

To coordinate shipments, contact:
First Trinity Baptist Church
1226 Beach Street, Flint, MI 48502
Pastor Ezra L. Tillman, Jr.
firsttrinitymbc@gmail.com
810.234.2653
www.ftmbcflint.org

To register teams for service, contact:
Kathi L. Reid
Program Director, Disaster Services
Lott Carey, 8201 Corporate Drive
Suite 1245
Landover, MD 20785-2230
kreid@lottcarey.org

Send financial support to:
Lott Carey
8201 Corporate Drive,
Suite 1245,
Landover, MD 20785-2230

Donate online at LottCarey.org