



# SAINT JAMES A.M.E. CHURCH

*One Church, Two Locations*

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Pastor Ronald L. Slaughter, Senior Pastor

January 20, 2016

## “State of the Church Address”

In the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 1:3-5 (NIV), “I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

I begin this address in the same spirit of my last four addresses using the Apostle Paul’s greetings to the Church of Philippi. I thank God for your prayers, support, loyalty, and commitment to God and to Saint James. God continues to do amazing things at and through Saint James. Author Debra Meyerson in her book said, “celebrate the small victories,” because they will lead to bigger ones. We have so many victories to celebrate from 2015.

God blessed Saint James in an abundant way in 2015. God blessed us to purchase the property directly across the street from our main location for \$375,000.00 without borrowing any money or obtaining a loan. Visionary supporters responded to the vision “Dirt to Destiny,” by sowing into the vision to purchase the property where our new facility will reside. God did not stop there! God allowed us to liquidate over \$100,000.00 worth of debt, pay additional principal only payments of \$36,000.00 on the facility behind the sanctuary, replace the entrance doors to the sanctuary with energy efficient classy glass doors with a sturdy wood grain metal frame, and install state of the art security cameras inside and outside of our main location facility. Beloved, God has been GOOD to Saint James Church. Our South Location is experiencing major growth and on many occasions is standing room only. 2015 was indeed the “Year of Victory.” The state of our church is STRONG!

In 2016, “Making Disciples, Building Families and Meeting Needs” remains our vision. A 1<sup>st</sup> Century rabbi stated, “If not now, when? If not me, who?” Being a leader and not a manager requires me to make critical decisions. For the past five years, I have been consumed with the debt of this church. God is releasing me at this time to look forward. It is hard to move forward when I’m consumed with financial burdens of the past. This does not mean we will abandon the debt plan all together. It is our God given responsibility to practice financial integrity by taking care of the debt so that it does not cripple our future. My decision to focus more on the future rather than the past is reflected in the budget approved by the finance committee and voted unanimously by the Steward Board. Therefore, at this time, we will abandon the “Faith on the Fast Track Campaign.” I gladly continue the sacrifice myself (and my family) for the assignment God has given me. And I sincerely thank those who faithfully show their love for me. Your generosity in the “Love Gift for Pastor” is indeed a blessing and makes up the difference for my electing to not take a raise in five years.

I have asked myself over and over again and have wrestled with God like Jacob did, as to whether I need to put my spirit, mind, and body through yet another building project! At times, my mind says, hey your name is already on a cornerstone and you will be remembered forever in the history of that church. Why go through that again? Just chill, eat, drink, and be merry. Satan has reminded me consistently what happened to my body the last time I worked on a building project and the depression that took place. But then, I hear the voice of God say, 'you will never fulfill your purpose, enjoy peace, or prosperity if you don't complete the vision I have given to you. As I was with you in 2007-2008, I will be with you this time.' As usual, God wins every time. Beloved, the pros far exceed the cons when it comes to building a new facility. The new facility is not just for us who are here now; it is for the generations that will certainly come after us. The Bible is clear, throughout Exodus, the people of Israel fussed and cussed in the wilderness although it was clear that the plan of God was for them to leave Egypt. Saint James is a beacon of light in this community and we all know it is more than a building. However, we owe it to the people who are a part of our family now, and in the future, to be able to worship, plan ministries, and pray in an environment that is conducive for everyone. Not being able to do basic things such as use the restroom, have enough space for ministries to meet, and go back and forth from the sanctuary and fellowship hall is painful to watch. I believe with all my heart this is a God-given assignment. There are persons that unabashedly oppose this vision, however, as your chosen leader, it is my responsibility to cultivate the persons that are willing to make history while also remaining respectful to those who believe where we are is good enough. This ministry once again has the opportunity, seventy-five years later, to leave an indelible mark on this community.


To that end, today marks the official launch of our "Dirt to Destiny Capital Campaign!" The campaign is designed to raise 1.5 million dollars in the next four years. Pledge cards will be distributed tonight. I am asking that you take them home and pray over them before making a decision. We cannot do this without sacrificing. Once you make that pledge, I am humbly asking that you honor it. Any amount that you give consistently will be a blessing. EVERY dime will be accounted for and deposited in a separate account.

Kindly remember beloved, never get into a debate with people who do not believe in the vision or support the visionary. Be respectful at all times. Recite daily Acts 5:39, "But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these people; you will only find yourselves fighting against God." God has already shown me the completion of this vision and I believe by FAITH, God will do it! Everyone will receive a magnet tonight as a vision party gift. I am asking you to place this magnet with the image of the new church on it in a high-traffic area in your home. Every time you see the magnet, I want you to stop and say a prayer asking God to bless the vision and to bring it to pass. I am proud to be your pastor but more importantly, I am proud you are a part of this family.

In conclusion, let's get excited! This is a journey that may include some adversity. But remember, we are Saint James. We are made out of the right stuff! Please take plenty of pictures; post them on your social media page(s) and share them with family and friends – Saint James is getting ready to turn the world upside down! (Acts 17:6)

As always, I remain,

God's Humble Servant,



Ronald L. Slaughter,  
Senior Pastor