

*"...to bring good news to the poor... proclaim release to the captives...let the oppressed go free..." - Luke 4:18-19*



## EMPOWER

Highlighting the impactful work of ABWM, showcasing how your support is making a difference in the lives of women and girls.

# February 2026: Celebrating 100 Years of Black History & Wisdom for Life's Later Chapters

Dear June ,

Happy Black History Month! This year, we're celebrating 100 years of Black history, culture, and excellence.

In 1926, Dr. Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History established "Negro History Week." This stood as a time of reflection and reverence for the experiences of African Americans. This century-long journey is a testament to resilience.

This month, we lift up the trailblazing African American women who have paved the way, both in history and in our present moment. Their courage and commitment, whether in education, missions, or ministry leadership, have changed lives and expanded God's kingdom:

### Historical Pioneers

- **Nannie Helen Burroughs** (1879-1961): An educator and orator, she co-founded the Women's Convention, Auxiliary to the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., breaking barriers for women in the church and in education.
- **Jarena Lee** (1783 -1864) was the *first woman preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME)*.
- **Betsey Stockton** (c. 1798 - 1865), sometimes spelled **Betsy Stockton**, was an American educator and missionary. In her early life, she was an enslaved person, but was emancipated and became a Christian missionary in Hawaii.

- **Clara Ann Howard** (1866-1935) was a pioneering African American educator and Baptist missionary who served in the Congo (Lukunga) from 1890 to 1895 with the Women's Baptist Foreign Missionary Society.
- **Gladys Brown West** (née **Gladys Mae Brown** (1930 - 2026) was an American mathematician. She was known for her contributions to mathematical modeling of the shape of the Earth, and her work on the development of satellite geodesy models, which were later incorporated into the Global Positioning System (GPS).
- **Patricia Roberts Harris** was dedicated to public service, civil rights and the promotion of social justice. A woman of many firsts, she was the first Black woman to serve the nation as Ambassador, the first Black woman to become dean of a law school, and the first Black woman to serve in a Presidential cabinet.
- The **Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon**, widely regarded as a founder of the Womanist movement, a formidable liberation theologian and Christian ethicist. The first African American woman to be awarded the Ph.D. at Union Theological Seminary and the first African American woman to be ordained in the United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Their legacy lives on through today's visionaries, who continue to break barriers and empower women in Baptist life. Here are just a few of the **modern trailblazers and leaders shaping our future**:

- **Rev. Dr. Gina Stewart:** Dr. Stewart has served as Senior Pastor of Christ Missionary Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, since 1995, becoming the first African American woman elected to lead an established Black Baptist congregation in Memphis and Shelby County. The first woman elected to lead the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Society, making history through international service.
- **Dr. Lisa Marie Bowens:** Bowens serves as Associate Professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary and is notably the first African American woman to earn tenure in the seminary's Bible department.
- **Carole F. Hoover:** For more than 50 years Carole F. Hoover has built a career that has blended civil rights, support of Northeast Ohio's businesses, civic leadership and philanthropy. As a student at Tennessee State University, she was at the forefront of the civil rights movement.
- **Rev. Dr. LaVerne C. Hall** is a veteran minister, theologian, artist, and cultural leader whose work integrates faith, education, artistic expression, and community preservation—leaving a lasting imprint on church life, African American cultural history, and women's leadership in ministry.
- **Rev. Dr. TaNikka Marie Sheppard** is a Baptist minister, global leadership specialist, and organizational executive whose work centers on equipping faith-based leaders, strengthening churches, and mentoring emerging generations. Sheppard serves as Regional Executive Minister of the Cleveland Baptist Association (beginning in 2024) and as General Secretary of the North American Baptist Fellowship, 1st Woman to serve in this role.
- **Rev. Dr. Jacqueline A. Thompson** is a Baptist pastor, scholar, and denominational leader best known for her historic leadership of Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, California , becoming in 2019 the first woman to lead the historic congregation, which was founded in 1919. Her leadership has also extended nationally; she was elected second vice president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, marking the first time a woman held an elected leadership role in that denomination.

In that spirit of honoring the wisdom and experiences of women in ministry, we invite you to join us for a deeply meaningful session in our **Empowerment Series: Embracing the Chapters of Our Lives**.

## Upcoming Session: Higher Rungs on the Ladder

Date: Monday, February 16 | Time: 7:00 PM EST

As we climb the ladder of life, the view changes. This session is dedicated to the unique experiences of womanhood in later seasons—navigating the physical changes, the emotional weight of grief, and the spiritual power of legacy. We are blessed to have three incredible leaders guiding this conversation:

- **Managing Aging Bodies:** Rev. Kathryn Johnson, Former Associate Regional President, ABWM Greater Cleveland; Associate Minister and Treasurer at Restoration Ministries of Greater Cleveland.
- **Grief and Loss:** Pastor Legenda Cloud, Senior Pastor of The Grace Church of God in Christ in Cleveland, OH.
- **Legacy:** Dr. Narriett Butler, motivational speaker, author, leadership trainer, and Ministry Founder.

👉 [Register Here for the Empowerment Series](#)


## Empowerment Series:



*"Embracing the Chapters of Our Lives"* 

"Higher Rungs on the Ladder" Managing aging bodies, changing relationships, grief, loss, and legacy

Monday, February 16th, 2026 | 7:00 - 8:45 PM EST

Live on Zoom 



Rev. Kathryn Johnson  
**"Managing Aging Bodies"**  
*Former Associate Regional President, ABWM, Greater Cleveland, Associate Minister and Treasurer, Restoration Ministries of Greater Cleveland, Euclid, OH*



Pastor Legenda Cloud  
**"Grief and Loss"**  
*Senior Pastor of The Grace Church of God in Christ, in Cleveland, OH*



Dr. Narriett Butler  
**"Legacy"**  
*motivational speaker, author, leadership trainer, and Ministry Founder*

Register now at [www.abwomensministries.org/events](http://www.abwomensministries.org/events)



Register

## What's Coming Next?

We are already preparing for an inspiring spring season! Here is a glimpse of what is on the horizon:

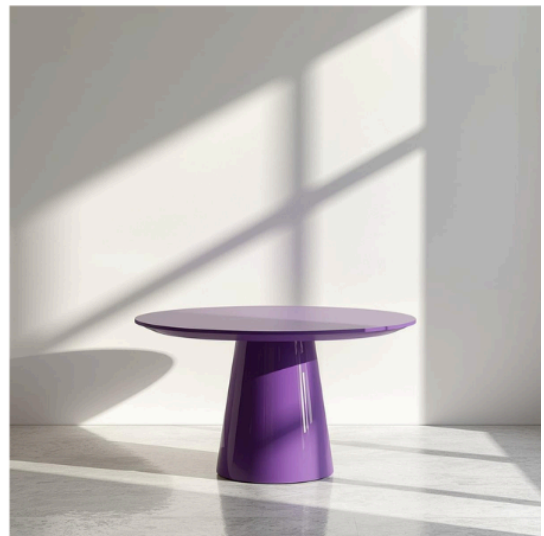
**March: Women's History Month**

Get ready for the **Purple Table Series: It's All About the Table**. We will be gathering to discuss the pivotal role women play in creating spaces for dialogue, decision-making, and discipleship. [Learn more here.](#)



**PURPLE TABLE SERIES:**  
*"It's All About the Table!"*

Join us this  
**Women's  
History Month**  
Live on Zoom 



**Monday, March, 2026 | 7:00 PM EST**

- March 9: Getting to the Table
- March 16: Influencing the Table
- March 23: Challenging the Table
- March 30: Building the Table

[Register Now](#)



[WWW.ABWOMENSMINISTRIES.ORG/EVENTS](http://WWW.ABWOMENSMINISTRIES.ORG/EVENTS)

[Register](#)

**April: Domestic Violence Awareness**

Mark your calendars for a crucial three-part webinar series: **Empowering Communities to Combat Domestic Violence Through Faith-Based Education.**

**Dates:** Thursday, April 2, 9, and 16, 2026

**Leader:** Rev. Simone Oliver

Registration details coming soon.



# SAVE THE DATE

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## Domestic Violence Webinar

Empowering Communities to Combat Domestic Violence  
Through Faith-Based Education

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Thursday, April 2, 9, and 16, 2026 | Time TBD | Webinar Series  
Led by Rev. Simone Oliver | three-part Zoom series  
Registration: Details forthcoming



We are grateful to walk this journey with you, celebrating our history, embracing our present, and preparing for a future filled with hope.

With blessings,

Erin A. Davis  
Marketing and Communications Director  
American Baptist Women's Ministries

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