

Merry May Messages

Celebrating Faith, Hope, and Community



Celebrating Older Americans Month: Champion Your Health

Celebrated every May, Older Americans Month (OAM) is led by the Administration for Community Living (ACL). Established in 1963, OAM is a time to recognize older Americans' contributions, highlight aging trends, and reaffirm commitments to serving older adults in our communities.

Enjoy reading an interview with Juanita Taylor, the only centenarian (102 yrs) at St. Titus' Parish who reflects on various issues and events.



Celebrating Mother's Day isn't just about cards and flowers — it's about honoring a role that shapes families, communities, and generations. At its heart, the day exists because motherhood (in all its forms) is one of the most influential forces in a person's life.

Parishioners share the things their mothers or mother figures said or did that made lasting impacts on them.

**How Titusians are Celebrating Faith,
Hope and Community**

Titusians Celebrating Faith, Hope, and Community



Juanita Wharton Taylor, known to her family and friends as Neet, was the youngest of three children born to Annie Harris Wharton and Fletcher Decatur Wharton on March 11, 1924 in Kentucky. Her father's occupation as an agriculture extension agent afforded the family the opportunity to travel and live in several states before settling in their home state of North Carolina.

Juanita earned her BS degree in Home Economics at North Carolina A&T University, obtained a Master's degree in Guidance Counseling & Psychology at Columbia University, pursued a Master's degree in Home Economics at Ohio State University, and completed a fellowship in Education Policy at George Washington University. It was while at A & T that she met football star Thomas Taylor, who would become her husband of 68 years and with whom they together raised a son, Dr. Thomas Kenny Taylor, III.

Juanita began her career as an educator and later a high school counselor in the NC Public School System, where she was the first Black teacher in Durham County to receive the Teacher of the Year Award. After 27 years in the public school system, in 1972 she was appointed Home Economics Consultant with the NC Department of Public Instruction, and later was promoted to Director of Vocational Development. Juanita excelled in that position, receiving numerous awards (often as the first Black recipient of the award) and recognition from the State, including her appointment as NC's representative on various national education and health-related boards and committees. This led to many long-term relationships with prominent national and international professionals. In 1987, Juanita retired from the NC State Department of Public Instruction after a distinguished 42-year career in health, counseling, and education.

Since her retirement, Juanita has dedicated her time and resources to St. Titus' Episcopal Church, where she has been a member since 1960, serving on the church Altar Guild, the Delany House After School Program and the Benevolent Committee. Always civic-minded and community oriented, Juanita provided transportation to church members in need, and checked on those who were sick and shut-in.

Juanita has enjoyed traveling throughout the United States and abroad, and has visited six countries outside the US. A friend to all, Juanita continues to mentor, support, advise and counsel family, friends and others who seek her wisdom. To this day former students still visit with her regularly, often marveling at her agelessness. When asked her secret to a long and healthy life, she replied, "Be kind and compassionate to people, exercise, and eat healthy."

Two Memorable and Historical Events



Wharton Apartment Complex at Penick Home named in honor of Juanita's parents.



Wharton Homeplace in Tarboro is now listed on the National Register

A Living Testamony of God's Grace

✠ 102 Years ✠



Thanks and appreciation to Sheila Bridges-Bond and husband Kenny Bond for their work in making this interview with Juanita Taylor possible.

Q: What has sustained you through the many seasons of your life?

A: What has sustained me throughout my life, was the teaching and observations of my

mother and father who were educators which allowed them to come into contact with many different people from across the country and from many walks of life; from the everyday people to social and political influencers and civic leaders. They shared their experiences and wisdom with me and that came to influence their training of me.

Q: What is your earliest memory of church?

A: I remember going to church probably when I was 2 or 3 years old because mom and dad were very active in church and they would carry me and my siblings to church with them. This taught me of the church teachings which helped to ground my faith along with the Sunday school classes for children of different ages.

Q: Is there a hymn or scripture that has carried special meaning for you?

A: His eye is on the Sparrow. I sang that among other songs in the choir at A & T where I sang as a high soprano. At that time a number of the churches did not have a youth choir.

Q: What life lesson took you the longest to learn?

A: When people try to hurt me, I don't get angry nor do I reciprocate their behavior, but I forgive them and ask God also to forgive them and correct their behavior.

Q: What advice would you give to younger generations in our church?

A: Advice to younger generation.... I would advise them to attend church service and do unto others as you would have them to do unto you.

Q: What has brought you the most joy in your 102 years?

A: Most Joy... Treating people as I think God would want me to. Also, I find joy in my children grandchildren, nieces, and nephews, my relatives and the number of friends who care for me, contact and visit me. They have come to my rescue when they think that I need it.

Q: What world events do you remember most vividly?

A: World events. The election of President Barack Obama as the first Black president. I recall that I didn't believe that he would win that election given the state of the country at that time, so I simply went to bed without waiting for the results of the election. I recall my nieces calling and waking me up very excited to let me know that Barack Obama had been elected. I was overcome with appreciation, joyful and thankful to God.

Q: What changes in society have amazed you the most?

A: Changes in society – The rise in crime and the way the government is being run. The erratic behavior and violence of teenagers today.

Q: Which decade was your favorite to live through?

A: Decade – NA

Q: What family or church traditions have meant the most to you?

A: Church Traditions – Attending church and having my son's participation for many years as an acolyte and altar boy. I was very active at St. Titus' when I retired. I helped with the altar guild, I

was a lay reader, an active member of the ECW and coordinated hosting refreshments and the kitchen committee.

Q: How has community supported you over the years?

A: Community support -NA

Q: What do you hope future generations will continue to value?

A: Future generations - That they will value family and one another, the wisdom of their elders, education, and the love and worship of God.

Q: What is something simple that brings you joy today?

A: Joy – being in the company of family, relatives, friends, and pets.

Q: What do you still look forward to?

A: Look forward to – a good healthy life.

Q: What blessing from God are you especially grateful for right now?

A: Blessings – My long life, my family, and my friends

Q: What was your favorite treat or pastime as a child?

A Favorite Childhood treat– playing with my dogs and other pets, riding horses, playing with my friends, and playing the piano.

Q: What is something you tried once and never want to try again?

A: Never again- Speed boat riding, it was very scary.

Q: If you could relive one day from your life, which would it be?

A: Relive one day - Can't say, as there were many. When Alex my granddaughter, my son Kenny, and my two nieces Annita and Sheila were born.

When Kenny graduated from Medical School at East Carolina University. **The groundbreaking ceremony for the Wharton Building at Penick Village honoring my parents.** When Kenny and Sheila and Annita and Bobby got married. When we all traveled to Brazil for my son Kenny and his wife Eve's wedding.

Q: What in your life has made you the happiest?

A: The many achievements that I have witnessed by others, in particular my brother and my granddaughter. **When my brother invented and had patented the first plastic water bottle.** My brother, FD. Wharton, Jr. was sent by the US Dept. of State to Ghana for three years to develop the research program there. He returned to the US where he was a researcher with Monsanto, and he developed the first plastic drink bottle for Cocoa Cola. Also, he was invited and consequently attended many International Conferences where he represented the US.

Witnessing Alex, my granddaughter's many achievements. She is very loving and considerate of others; she is successful academically and speaks Chinese. Alex has followed in her grandfather's and father's footsteps as a talented tennis player. She is outstanding. She has won many tournaments and has received numerous trophies and awards.

Q: What has been the greatest surprise that you have witnessed in your life?

A: Here are two...

1. A staff member of president **Gerald Ford** contacted me to have the president to speak at one of my scheduled one-day annual State Vocational Development meetings to be held at the State Auditorium in Raleigh. I told them to call me back in 10 days. I had to determine whether I could rearrange the program to allow him 20 minutes. After 10 days I gave him my go ahead to attend. There were many state and national news correspondents present.

2. I contacted **Marvin Cetron, international futurist** who was in France at that time. I wanted him to assist in one of my weeklong Vocational Development Workshops. After a month's time he personally returned my call and agreed to participate. He participated for the next three consecutive years. He died in 2020, and his death was televised by several major networks.

Titusians Celebrating Faith, Hope, and Community



Mr. Philip A. Harewood
Legacy Honoree

Mr. Philip A. Harewood Harewood is a visionary leader whose decades of service have profoundly shaped **Lincoln Community Health Center and the Durham community**. Over a distinguished 30-year tenure, he served as Chief Financial Officer, Chief Information Officer, and ultimately Chief Executive Officer, guiding the organization through significant growth, technological advancement, and expanded community partnerships.

His leadership strengthened Lincoln's mission to deliver high-quality, compassionate care, particularly to the community's most vulnerable populations, while solidifying its role as a trusted healthcare anchor.

Beyond Lincoln, Mr. Harewood's impact extended to state, national, and international levels through board service, policy contributions, and healthcare leadership. From his early career in New York to executive and consulting roles across the Caribbean and Latin America, he consistently demonstrated a commitment to equity and excellence in healthcare. Above all, he takes greatest pride in his family, whose support has been central to his journey. His legacy reflects a lifetime of service, integrity, and lasting community impact.

Founded in 2008 by Joyce Nichols, the Lincoln Community Health Center Foundation serves as the fundraising arm for Lincoln Community Health Center. The Foundation's mission is to "enhance the quality of health and improve access to healthcare in Durham and surrounding areas."

Since 1971, Lincoln Community Health Center provides direct services to over 36,000 patients annually, many of whom are low income and under or uninsured. Your contribution to the Lincoln Community Health Center Foundation helps the most vulnerable in our community receive quality primary and preventive health care regardless of their insurance status or income.

The Foundation raises money from the community and makes an annual financial contribution to Lincoln Community Health Center to help support new programs and services when other funding may not be available. The Foundation is needed because health center funding is uncertain, and Lincoln's resources alone are not enough to serve the healthcare needs of our most vulnerable citizens.



Congratulations

Carol Dorsey was recently appointed to the Lincoln Community Health Foundation Board of directors.



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One of the things other said to me many, many times as I was growing up is "if you really set your mind on accomplishing something you will find a way to do it." She was such a great example of this. She set her mind on going to Stanford University to get her Ph.D. In English and Comparative Literature, and she did this with a family of 5 young children, with the youngest being just 9 months old, and with me the oldest at 9 years old. Of course she had lots of help from my dad. Because of this I decided, as a third grader, that I too wanted to go to the USA and get my Ph.D. at an excellent university. I set my mind on this, and at the tender age of 21 I entered the Ph.D. Program in Developmental and Molecular Genetics at Cornell University's Graduate School of Medical Sciences. I received my Ph.D. 4 years later. After I graduated she said to me that when, as a third grader, I had told where what I planned on doing, she was sure that I would accomplish it. *Althea Alton*

Being a first-born and having parents who were factory workers who left home for work before daybreak, I was expected to parent my siblings. The advice they gave me was that I must do right in order for them to do right. *Mary Hawkins*

My Mother - Yvette Fay Francis McBarnette taught generosity. She did so with grace and humility and would say, referencing Matthew, to give so your left hand does not know what your right hand is doing. I hope to emulate her. *Yvette McMiller*

When my sister, brother and I attended high school (in the early '60's), we would come home each day with new names and experiences. Mama would always listen and say, "Make as many new friends as you can, but always hold on to the old ones. Choose your friends carefully". *Dwight Peebles*

My mother would always say: **"There's many a slip between the cup and the lip!"** My siblings and I thought that meant to be careful when making decisions. Always take time to research an issue thoroughly, consider the consequences, select the positives, and then make the best decision possible because things can easily turn out differently than you think! *Marguerite Peebles*

One thing that my mother told me was God bless the child that has his own. That has stuck in my mind for many years. *Alexine Miller*

My mother often told me, "When something plucks your nerves, walk away and come back to it later. Either the problem will work itself out, or you will be able to face it with a clearer mind." That wisdom has never failed me. Today, I thank God for my mother's steady voice, her practical grace, and the gift of knowing when to pause, breathe, and trust that clarity will come.
Rev. Valerie Mayo

My Mother, Mary Hawkins “The Hawk” “Mother Mary”

Let me start by saying I got the best Mother in the whole wide world, and I never express to her how much I love her. She is such a loving, giving and person. When my mom stepped into my life, I was the typical daughter if she said go right, I would go immediately go left. But she hung in with me through the many mistakes I made and brought me out of some and left me to dig myself out of others. My mom is also that person that will help others when she sees where she can help others, she is always willing to step up to the plate to help others. She is rather quiet, but she will step up and do whatever she can to make whatever you are doing shine. She will bring out all of her “bells and whistles” to make you look good. My mom is a person that is just spectacular. I just love; love love her.

I can't count the number of times she has popped my hands for not listening but that is just what a daughter is supposed to do. In conclusion, my mom is like a bird. A bird learns to fly by being pushed out of the nest. The mother bird does not teach the bird how to fly. The ground to wiggle, get up, fall back down, and continue to practice. The mother bird will continue to come and feed and take care of her of her bird and soon that bird is able to fly away. That is the way my life has been with my mother mom. She has pushed me out of the nest. She has nudged me, so many times in ways that no one has seen and said you can do it. Now and I look back and I want to thank my mother Mary for being my mom for over 30 years. She has been such a loving grandmother to my children for 30+ years and a great grandmother to our 3 great grands. They might now say it to you, but they sit around the table and always talk about your mother Mary.

(submitted by Lois J. Pettiford)



Sharing Faith, Hope and Community

Robyn Furges served as the Women's Day Speaker at **Mt. Nebo Baptist Church** in West Point, VA. Speaking before a congregation of more than 50 family members and friends, she shared a message on the importance and value of women's ministries and delivered a homily on the Women's Day theme,

“Women Born to Serve, Built to Lead.”

From the very beginning, Scripture shows us that service and leadership are not separate callings—they are intertwined. God forms women with a capacity to nurture, to discern, to build community, to hold stories, to carry wisdom, and to move with courage. And when God places these gifts in a woman, leadership is not optional. It is inevitable.”



Sharing Faith, Hope, and Community

SERVICES AT HOLIDAY REGENT RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

When resident Warren Wheeler approached Rev. Valerie about leading a service on Sunday morning at Holiday Regent Retirement Community, she asked David Stanford if he might be willing to do a regular Sunday service there. He said that he would be willing to do one Sunday a

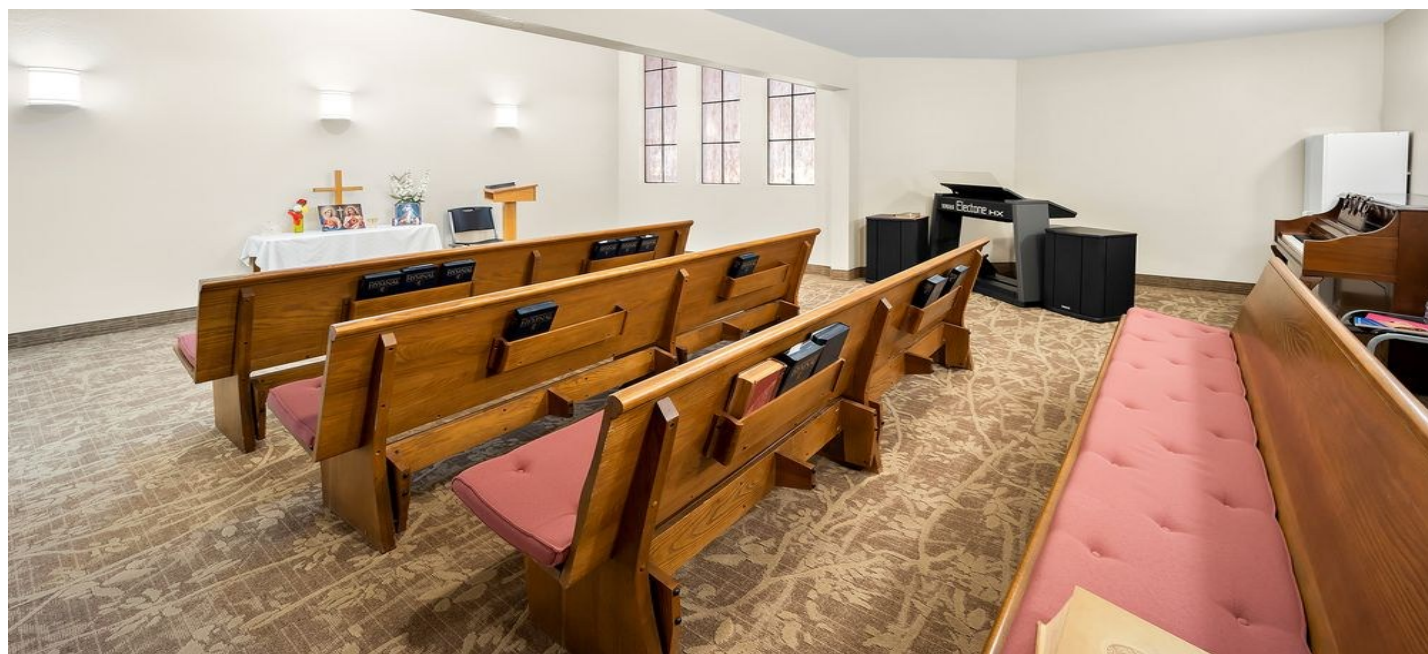
month, but he invited 4 other retired Episcopal clergy to assist on a once/month rotating clergy.

Greg Jacobs, Jeanine Driscoll, Joyce Corbin-Allen and **Miriam Saxon** (for fifth Sunday's), and **David Stanford** have accepted this service.

Greg Jacobs graciously provided a chalice and paten, corporal and purificators to be kept in the chapel at the Holiday Regent. With the approval and support of Mercedes Deo, administrator at Holiday Regent, the services started the first Sunday in January and have been running ever since. The group averages between 8 and 12 participants, most of whom are from different denominational backgrounds, but are so grateful to have someone doing the service for the community, ever since their former chaplain retired and has not been replaced.

The group is experimenting with different liturgical forms, since most of the community come from many different denominational traditions. They have requested a liturgy that is simple and easy to follow. The issue is that Warren when he was providing organ accompaniment was handing out 2 sheets of music, and with our lectionary lesson insert, and whatever liturgical sheets we were using, it seemed cumbersome and confusing. So we are in the process of simplifying and making things less confusing. (many of us who have come from different traditions can relate to the number of books – prayer book, hymnal and lesson inserts- used in our services. We will be working to simplify and make our services more inclusive and “friendly”.

We would welcome parishioners and especially lay readers who could also lead the service (as Morning Prayer or “Communion under Special Circumstance” with reserved elements (bread and wine). Please see Pastor Valerie or one of the volunteer clergy if you would like to assist and/or lead this important worship service, as we extend the ministry of St. Titus’ into our community.





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