

JAMAICA MISSIONS TRIP

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Committee for their guidance and Lorraine Stirneman for training the teens in writing and sharing their personal testimony and training them in salvation counseling.

One of the primary goals of the trip was to train youth leaders in new ways of reaching today's youth. Nick and I led a youth group leader session where leaders representing about 10 other churches attended; some even traveled from far distances to be there. We openly shared our own successes and failures in youth ministry, and what factors helped the ministry to grow and develop roots. This interactive discussion turned out to be very well received, as some leaders were in a season of discouragement. Pastor Brian joined us to offer advice and invited them to use RightNow Media as a modern curriculum tool.

Our GCA teens were instrumental in countless ways throughout the trip. Although many of our original plans changed after arriving, they adapted quickly and embraced all the modifications that needed to be made. They led outdoor games with over 50 children and teens, despite minimal preparation, and this was critical for the youth leader meetings to take place in an organized fashion. After the meetings had concluded, the teens also helped facilitate the main event for the day, which was a large-scale gaming tournament designed for gospel outreach and fun. They registered participants, assisted the youth in playing the games, assisted with other group games and even helped emcee the event.

After the first round of games had concluded, Alyssa, Makayla, and Alexis boldly shared their testimonies and then Nick shared the gospel with all the youth group attendees. The testimonies were extremely well received by the youth group listeners, and they provided a perfect segway for the gospel message which followed. At the conclusion of the message, at least 8 young people responded for salvation and others rededicated their lives to Christ.

The defining moment of the trip was when our teens stepped into the role of salvation counselors, guiding those youth who came forward for salvation and rededication. Watching them engage in these powerful gospel conversations and praying with the youth was the true highlight of the trip!

On Sunday, we attended Central Gospel Chapel, where Roman Lawson & Olivia Grant shared their testimonies during the service. We closed out our mission with some much-needed fellowship and downtime. We spent time at the beach in Ocho Rios and enjoyed authentic Jamaican cuisine at a local jerk pit.

This mission trip was life-changing for all of us. We witnessed our teens step out of their comfort zones, serve with love and compassion, and share the gospel with confidence. Their willingness to adapt and serve made us incredibly proud, and the impact of their efforts will surely resonate in the hearts of those they ministered to.

To God be the glory for an incredible mission trip! ✧

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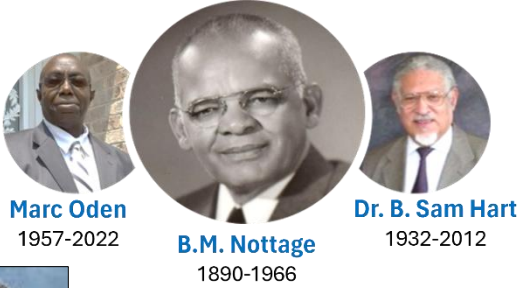
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GCA Reflections

Quarterly Newsletter of Grace Christian Assembly

BLACK PIONEERS IN MINISTRY



By Dr. Darryl Brown

(February 23rd, in keeping with Black History Month, we commemorated the lives and legacies of faithful pioneers in gospel ministry: B.M. Nottage, Marc Oden, and Dr. B. Sam Hart who paved the way for church planting and evangelism among Black communities in the United States. GCA and several of our sister Assemblies are part of the many fruits of their faithful ministries. It was a blessing to have their stories beautifully presented by two of our remarkable young members, Olivia Grant and Dylan Grant.

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Valentine's Day Balloons

By Damon Hobbs

Sunday, February 16, 2025...There was a buzz in the GCA congregation about receiving balloons in some people's front yard on February 14th. Here's the story behind it.

In July 2005, I started a teenage mentoring group called *The Brothers* consisting of seven boys and a young adult. My responsibility was to walk them through high school into adulthood. It was a five-year commitment. We would rotate houses each week and meet every Saturday at 6 a.m.

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The Purpose of this Newsletter

This ministry newsletter is intended to support the vision of the church—to be Christ-centered, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to build lives that glorify and worship God by emphasizing the Word, Evangelism, Discipleship and Caring for the whole man. We hope this newsletter will play an important role in encouraging the members of our assembly to fearlessly stand closer together, for the cause of the gospel of Christ.



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Each issue will be available on the GCA website under "News & Events".

A special thank you to all who contributed to this issue of GCA Reflections.

BLACK PIONEERS IN MINISTRY

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Their connection to this history is profound, as they are the great-grandchildren of our beloved late Pastor Charles Hart, brother of Dr. B. Sam Hart. This is a powerful testament that the legacy of faith continues in GCA and beyond!) - from the Pastor's Weekly Update.

This is what Dr. Darryl Brown said during the presentation:

For this year's Black History spotlight, we celebrate 3 Black pioneers in ministry: B. M. Nottage, Dr. B. Sam Hart and Marc Oden. We begin first with Berlin Martin Nottage, aka B. M. Nottage.

Brother Nottage's mother, Clementina, was a devoted Christian woman. She and her family of 11 children were native Bahamians living on the island of Eleuthera. Clementina prayed daily for the salvation of her children and witnessed faithfully to them. But to three of her boys, she said this, "You are good boys for living, but not yet for dying!" She was reminding them that they needed to be saved.

God had been dealing with these boys. In the year before their conversion, three of their brothers had died of disease. With their mother's reminders that they themselves were not ready to die, these future missionaries all came to Christ in a one-month period in 1904. Concerned about missions, Clementina had always prayed that some of her children would become missionaries. God answered her prayers as these 3 brothers all emigrated to the U.S. and became powerful missionary evangelists, particularly in cities with the largest concentrations of African Americans.

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Let Your Voice Be Heard!

Rehearse with us on
Thursdays at 7:30 p.m.
in the sanctuary.

Join the
Voices of Praise
Choir

LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

Continued from page 6.

- Volunteer by helping others which provides a sense of purpose and builds connections.
- Join a fitness class, book club or hobby group.
- Limit social media and seek genuine interactions.
- Use social media wisely and prioritize face to face connections. Engage in meaningful conversations.
- Improve self-compassion and self-worth.
- Avoid negative self-talk. Remember that loneliness is a phase, not a personal failure.
- Practice gratitude. Keeping a gratitude journal can shift the focus from loneliness to the positive aspects of life.

Loneliness is a common struggle but can be overcome with intentional steps to depend on the Lord, connect, engage and seek the support of others. We cannot go it alone. ✧

BLACK PIONEERS IN MINISTRY

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was inducted into the National Religious Broadcaster's Hall of Fame, joining past inductees such as Billy Graham, Charles Stanley and J. Vernon McGee.

Marc Oden is our final Black pioneer in ministry, a young person at Calvary Gospel Chapel, where B. Sam Hart was a leader. First, Brother Oden pursued Bible studies at the Word of Life Bible Institute. From there he began to work on methods to attract young people to the Word of God. He became a master at dramatic interpretations of Bible stories.

He became a youth director.

What made Marc Oden a ministry pioneer was his development of Youth Spectacular, a novel, tri-state, multi-activity program centered in churches (called affiliates) that targeted urban teens.

Youth Spectacular Activities included: All Night Super-ramas that began with an NBA game, then bowling,

then pizza, culminating in a centrally located church with more games, more food and a riveting presentation of the gospel. Activities also included Teen Hot Spots, Teen Conventions, Christian Proms, and College Tours.

Through Youth Spectacular, Marc Oden re-imagined the Word of Life youth camps model into a large-scale urban program involving scores of Black churches and hundreds of African American teenagers.

We salute B. M. Nottage, Dr. B. Sam Hart and Marc Oden, 3 Pioneers in Ministry and true American heroes.

My prayer request in 2025 is to disciple one person, also praying that new missionaries will join the work in Philly. I trust you will pray with me. ✧



By Margaret Aitcheson



LONELINESS is the feeling of being emotionally disconnected, even when surrounded by people.

SOCIAL ISOLATION is a lack of social connections or interactions with others leading to loneliness over time.

Loneliness has many different causes and varies from person to person, and we don't always understand what it is about. Research suggests that some people are more vulnerable to loneliness than others.

Certain life events or experiences can make you feel lonely such as: bereavement, relationship break up, changing jobs, the holidays, retirement, experiencing mental health problems, moving to a new area without family, friends or community support, estrangement from family and friends and certain mobility problems.

Loneliness and social isolation can contribute to depression, anxiety, sleep problems, weakened immune system and increased risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease.

WAYS TO OVERCOME LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION:

- Rely on the Lord. Isaiah 41:10 says, *"So do not fear, for I am with you, do not be dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you, I will uphold with my righteous right hand."*
- Be part of a faith-based community for spiritual and emotional support.
- Strengthen Existing Relationships:
 - ✓ Reach out to family and friends. Call them even if it feels awkward at first. Plan coffee dates, walks or video calls.
 - ✓ Open up about your feelings to trusted family and friends.
- Expand Your Social Circle.
- Join community activities such as church groups or community events.

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Valentine's Day Balloons

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Damon Hobbs at
Piney Grove Baptist Church



God's Word was the foundation, and I would use my life's pitfalls and triumphs from a teenager into adulthood to illustrate where they are and what lies ahead for them as a growing teenager. From DAY ONE I stressed, "We are going to go out" but I didn't know where. By the end of 2005 we moved the group to Piney Grove Baptist Church in Logan.

One night, I remembered the lonely feelings of Valentine's Day, and this is how the "Valentine's Day Balloon Campaign" began. All the balloons just said, "I Love You" and I put a tract in a zip lock bag and tied it on the ribbon. The Brothers and I went out around Logan and tied them on the hand railings and then drove down Broad Street in the church van, handing them out to people until we reached LOVE PARK where we handed out the rest.

The following year, I wanted to involve our two daughters who were 9 and 6 at the time. I added teddy bears to the gifts and took my daughters on home deliveries to the sick, shut-in, bereaved, widower and people who needed encouragement. The church would give me names and off my daughters and I went. It would take up to 14 hours. Then on Valentine's Day the Brothers and I went back out in Logan and did it again. This grew into a Piney Grove Baptist Church Evangelistic Outreach. We not only served the Logan neighborhood, but we also passed them out to the Logan Elementary School across the street from the church. This went on for about six years.



In January 2024, the Spirit of God laid it on my heart to revamp the program but this time focusing on the Mount Airy section of the city, with the code name: Operation "Agape Love." About 15 churches in Mt. Airy, Norristown and Harrisburg showed interest. But only Piney Grove Baptist Church and our oldest daughter Kayla assisted in this endeavor. It took one year and one month to plan: three months to prepare all the materials and logistics, four days to distribute a total of 100 teddy bears, 1615 tracts and balloons, and we covered 368 miles. Some were home-delivered, some went to a business, to Logan Elementary School, and some were handed out to people walking. People asked, "Why are you doing this?" "Who sponsored this?" My response: **FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE** The Father loves you (I'd point at the balloons which said, "I Love You"). And He sent His Son to die for you, and this tract (I'd point at the tract that said, "Someone Loves You") tells you how much.

To God be the glory. Great things He has done. ✧

BLACK PIONEERS IN MINISTRY

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However, Brother Nottage, whose passion for sound Bible teaching and evangelism, would have the greatest impact among African Americans, having started eight churches, one in Harlem, two in Chicago and five in Detroit. Brother Nottage was driven by these impressions of the people he encountered:

- “20 million colored people in this country and, for the most part, they are not evangelized. They're religious, but not saved”
- They have no sense of their lostness. They simply believe in “going to church, helping to pay the minister's salary and doing good to neighbors,”
- And despite the social consciousness of the day, B. M. understood that “when you come to the cross, you identify with the cross, you must die. Die to your whiteness, to your blackness, to your Presbyterianism, “Brethrenism.” You must die to all that.

B. M. Nottage was a pioneer in reaching African Americans for Christ.

Our second pioneer is Dr. B. Sam Hart. B. Sam holds a connection to B. M. Nottage in that he was named after B. M. Nottage. B. Sam was born in Harlem, but was raised in Jamaica during the 1930's and 1940's. And during the mid-1940's in a hill county assembly, B. Sam gave his heart to the Lord. Like B. M. Nottage, B. Sam became a

powerful missionary evangelist to the states.

B. Sam returned to the states to gain a solid Christian education. Seeking to attend Bob Jones University, he was rejected because of his race. As God would have it, B Sam was offered admission to Gordon College where he excelled in theology and homiletics.

B. Sam's education and understanding of his call to the ministry laid the foundation for his work among African Americans that would rival his namesake, B. M. Nottage. B. Sam planted 12 churches, including two in Philadelphia: Calvary Gospel Chapel in West Philadelphia (founded in 1960) and Germantown Christian Assembly in Northwest Philadelphia (founded in 1973).

In 1961, B. Sam established the Grand Old Gospel Fellowship (GOGF) as an umbrella organization for his various ministries which included church crusades, Christian camps and, most notably, radio ministry.

B. Sam's work in the radio ministry is the reason why we highlight him as a pioneer. Within a few years of the inaugural broadcast of the Grand Old Gospel Hour on July 15, 1962, B. Sam was reaching more people around the world with a regularly scheduled Christian message than any other black preacher in America.

In 1978, B. Sam purchased WYIS/Philadelphia radio, making “WISE” radio the nation's first black owned religious radio station. And in 2007, B. Sam

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By Lisa Lambert

Retirement

Lisa has served as a BCM missionary in Philadelphia from March 2007 to January 2025. We asked her to comment on this time in her life:

In January 2025 I retired, and my two sisters took me to Athens, Greece for a treat. The trip was very nice. We had a good time of fun and fellowship. Besides hurrying and connecting flights, the trip was a 5-star adventure.

When I got home, I continued with my three after-school Bible clubs. The clubs are held Monday (Opal Street), Wednesday (Gratz Street), and Thursday (North10 Lenfest Community Center). These have remained running for at least eleven years or more, having been taught by three others previously. For at least 7 years I have had at least fifteen different clubs.

One of the joys of retirement is seeing a parent, who attended Bible club as a kid, bring her young child to the club to learn more about Jesus. It is amazing how time flies when you are having fun! I am so grateful for all the prayers and support the body of Christ has given to me in the work of the Lord

My prayer request in 2025 is to disciple one person, also praying that new missionaries will join the work in Philly. Trust you will pray with me. There are many children whose parents don't bring their children to Bible Club so we must continue to reach out. ✧

JAMAICA MISSIONS TRIP

By Rita Grant

Our mission trip to *St. Mary, Jamaica* at the Highgate Gospel Chapel was an unforgettable experience. Nick, myself, and 6 of our teens from Grace Christian Assembly (GCA) — *McKayla Hoilett, Alyssa Lawson, Roman Lawson, Alexis Toliver, Olivia Grant, and Dylan Grant* — had the privilege of partnering with 7 Admirals (Gaming Ministry) and Go Sports (Jamaica Sports Ministry) to serve the local community.

First and foremost, we would like to extend our deepest gratitude to our GCA church family for the prayers, financial support and words of encouragement. We would also especially like to thank the Mission

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