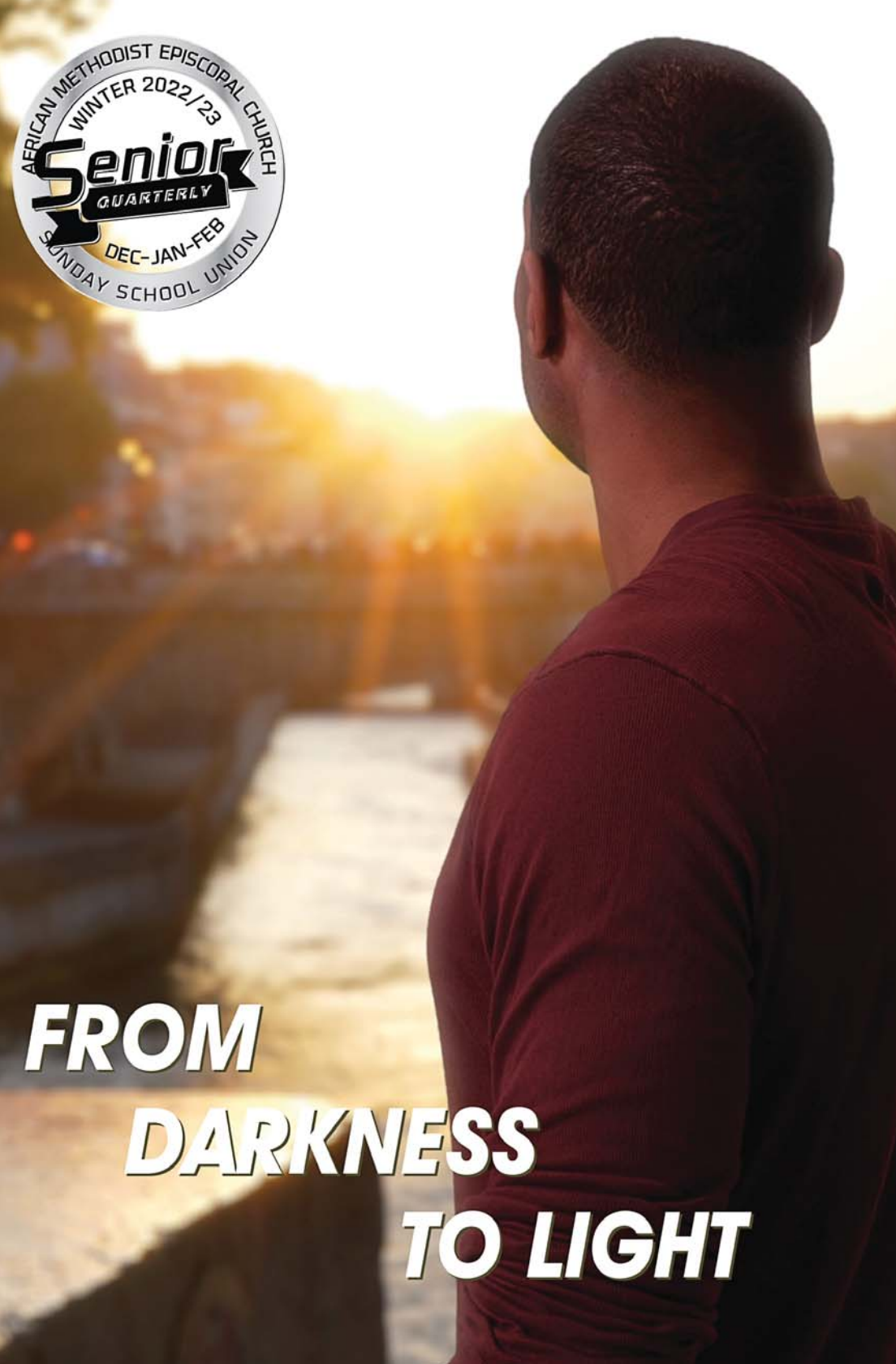
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
WINTER 2022/23
Senior
QUARTERLY
DEC-JAN-FEB
SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION
FROM
DARKNESS
TO LIGHT

# SENIOR SCHOLAR SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY

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Winter Quarter 2022/23 DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY Price $3.89

———— **Ages 15-18 (High School and Young Adult)** ————

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# The Order of Service

I. Bell tap or organ voluntary as a signal for silence

II. Singing

III. The Apostles' Creed

IV. Prayer, closing with the Lord's Prayer in concert

V. Singing

VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers

VII. Responsive reading of the lesson text by school

VIII. The Decalogue

# The Lesson

I. Organ interlude while the classes are being arranged

II. Class study of the lesson

III. Warning bell — 5 minutes

IV. Closing bell — silence

# The Closing

I. Singing

II. Review and application of the lesson

III. Secretary's report

IV. The Church School Creed

V. Singing

VI. Benediction


## EDITORIAL STAFF

**Rev. Dr. Roderick Belin**, Publisher
**Dr. Dennis Dickerson, Jr.**, Lessons
**A.L. Stanfield**, Copy Editor
**M.E. Russell**, Layout Design


## THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

## THE CHURCH SCHOOL CREED

I believe my AME Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus' name.

*AME Discipline*

# WINTER QUARTER

DECEMBER 2022 – FEBRUARY 2023

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LESSON 1 (SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT) DECEMBER 4, 2022

# Zechariah Hears from God

Lesson Scripture: Luke 1:5-23
Focus Scripture: Luke 1:8-20

**KEY VERSE:** *The angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John." Luke 1:13*

## *WORDS TO KNOW*

- *LOT – one of a set of objects, such as straws or pebbles, drawn or thrown from a container to decide a question or choice by chance.*
- *SANCTUARY – the section that is the holy of holies in the tabernacle and temple*
- *REJOICE – to be joyful*
- *RIGHTEOUS – persons whose life is characterized by good morals and a faithful observance of God's laws*
- *MUTE – to be speechless*
- *ZECHARIAH – pronounced: zeh – kuh – RAI – uh*
- *ELIJAH – pronounced: ee – LAI – zhuh*
- *GABRIEL – pronounced: GAY – bree – ul*

SAMPLE

*FOCUS SCRIPTURE: LUKE 1:8-20*

**8** Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty,

**9** he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense.

**10** Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside.

**11** Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.

**12** When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him.

**13** But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John.

**14** You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth,

**15** for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit.

**16** He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God.

**17** With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

**18** Zechariah said to the angel, "How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years."

**19** The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

**20** But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur."

SAMPLE

## INTRODUCTION

The Winter Quarter continues the theme "Chosen, Not Choice" and the unique way of God's calling, which is rooted in grace rather than in humankind's merit. God is not bound by cultural norms or expectations for choosing "best" or "first," nor are God's criteria met by human striving. The threads of God's choosing are woven together across time to serve a divine purpose and to bring God glory. Over the next three months we explore the theme of "From Darkness to Light" in the books of: 2 Chronicles, Isaiah, Joel, Luke, 1 Corinthians, 2 Timothy, James, and 1 Peter.

For the next four weeks, we will explore the Gospel of Luke. Luke was a physician as well as a Greek and Gentile Christian. He was a close companion and friend of Paul. He wrote Luke and Acts which are considered a two-volume book. Luke desired to give an accurate account of the life of Christ and to present Christ as the perfect man and Savior. In today's lesson, we explore God's promise to Zechariah.

*Do you participate in any ministries or activities at your church? How does serving God influence one's faith?*

## BIBLE STORY

**Luke 1:8 – 12** The account of John the Baptist's birth is only recorded in the Gospel of Luke. Zechariah, a priest, and his wife, Elizabeth, were called righteous because they genuinely loved and obeyed God with their whole hearts. But Elizabeth was barren (1:7). Zechariah was a Jewish priest who worked and served God at the temple. He served on a rotating basis along with about 20,000 other priests in the country. They were divided up into separate groups of 1,000 each (1 Chron. 24:3 – 19). One day while serving in the temple, by the casting of lots, Zechariah was chosen to burn incense in the temple and when the people assembled outside saw the smoke, they prayed (1:9 – 10). As the smoke drifted heavenward, it symbolized their prayers ascending to God's throne. This occurred twice a day.

This regular occasion for prayer turned into an extraordinary day for Zechariah. Zechariah possibly was praying for a child at this time. An angel appeared next to the altar of incense. The angel manifested itself in visible form and spoke to Zechariah. And as you could

SAMPLE

imagine, Zechariah was terrified (1:12).

**Luke 1:13 – 17** The angel visited Zechariah to relay a message from God. The angel encouraged him "do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard" (1:13). It is so comforting to know God hears and responds to our prayers. The angel informed Zechariah that his wife would indeed bear a son, and they were to name him "John." The name "John" means "the Lord is gracious." God answered the prayers of God's righteous ones despite Elizabeth and Zechariah's physical condition and age. John's birth would cause great joy for all. God had a special plan for his life. Therefore, John had to refrain from all alcoholic drinks. Before John's birth, the angel told Zechariah he would be filled with the Holy Spirit (1:15). John's role would be to encourage people to turn away from sin and back to God. His life was very similar to the prophet Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:1 – 2 Kgs. 2:11).

**Luke 1:18 – 20** Zechariah clearly doubted the angel's message due to his and Elizabeth's situation. His doubts were valid, but God's power is greater than any human limitations or obstacles we face. "With God all things are possible!" The angel identified himself as Gabriel, one of God's messengers who is always in the presence of God. Therefore, his message of good news came directly from God. As a consequence of Zechariah's doubts, he became mute until God's promise was fulfilled. God accomplished his will in the unexpected way of John the Baptist's birth.

*What would your reaction be if you had an encounter with an angel? Does your life reflect God's purposes for you? When doubt fills our minds about God's purposes and plans for our lives, what can we do to overcome those feelings of apprehension?*

## SANKOFA

Do you know about the circumstances of your birth and the name you were given? If not, talk to your parents or others who can give insight. Often our beginnings have a direct effect on our futures. There can be situations that occurred that you lack direct knowledge about which have influenced who you are today. If you are curious about more information about your name, try researching on the Internet. Websites that may be helpful: www.behindthename.com;

SAMPLE

www.names.org; or www.nameberry.com.

First name: _____

Meaning: _____

Other interesting facts: _____

_____

*Does this information change how you view yourself? Why? Why not?*

## REAL TALK, FAITH WALK

God uses angels to be his messengers. There were other occasions in the Bible, besides Zechariah's encounter, that angels appeared. For example: Genesis 32:22 – 32, Daniel 10, Luke 1:30, and Luke 2:10. Four volunteers in class can take one scripture and scan the verses. Then share how the person reacted to the angelic encounter. What is the normal reaction to angels?

Verse 17 states, "With the spirit and power of Elijah, he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." For whom would John prepare the way? Why do you think the angel mentions the prophet Elijah when speaking of John? What are their similarities and/or differences (1 Kgs. 17:1 – 2 Kgs. 2:11)?

God desires for us to trust him. As Christians, when we pray, God hears us. The Word confirms this is a fact, as well as all of God's promises. But often doubts and fears fill our minds if our prayers are not answered. What can happen if we are disobedient? How can we strengthen our faith in God? The amazing thing is God is always gracious towards us even when we do not deserve it. We can give God praise for his love and grace.

SAMPLE

## SUMMARY

Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous people. They loved and served God faithfully. This was despite Elizabeth being barren. They trusted God. God heard the priest, Zechariah, praying and sent the angel Gabriel with a message that his prayer was heard. Elizabeth, in her old age, would conceive a son they were to name John. John had been chosen before birth to be consecrated for God's work. He was to prepare the way for Christ. Because of Zechariah's unbelief, he was made mute until the birth of John. The people outside the temple would have questions that Zechariah could not answer. How can you use mimes to reenact what happened? How do you handle godly correction? No matter our circumstances, we always can thank God for all that has been given to us.

## CLOSING DEVOTIONS

*Prayer: God, thank you for always listening to our prayers. No matter the outcome, we are going to always trust, love, and serve you. Amen.*

*Hymn: "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" (AMEC Hymnal #84)*

SAMPLE

LESSON 2 (THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT) DECEMBER 11, 2022

# Zechariah Speaks

Lesson Scripture: Luke 1:57-80
Focus Scripture: Luke 1:57-66, 76-79

**KEY VERSE:** *Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. Luke 1:64*

## *WORDS TO KNOW*

- *MERCY – the kindness of God, who does not give us the punishment we deserve*
- *CIRCUMCISE – the act of cutting around the foreskins of Hebrew males who are eight days old as a seal of Jehovah's covenant with them*
- *PROPHET – God's spokesperson who is a divinely called minister who announced the will of God to his people*
- *SALVATION – to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, as well as forgives all sins*
- *PEACE – a state of security and tranquility*
- *ZECHARIAH – pronounced: zeh – kuh – RAI – uh*

SAMPLE

*FOCUS SCRIPTURE: LUKE 1:57-66, 76-79*

**57** Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son.

**58** Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

**59** On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father.

**60** But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John."

**61** They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name."

**62** Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him.

**63** He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed.

**64** Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God.

**65** Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea.

**66** All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

---

**76** "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

**77** to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.

**78** By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us,

**79** to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

SAMPLE

## INTRODUCTION

New babies in our families bring joy and a sense of hope. In some families there are special naming ceremonies for babies. Names have meaning and are important. Would you choose to have a different name than your current one? Why? Why not?

In today's lesson, we delve into the birth story of John the Baptist. This story is a continuation from last week when Zechariah had an encounter with an angel who gave him a message from God.

## BIBLE STORY

We were introduced to Elizabeth and Zechariah last week (1:8 – 20). They were faithful servants of God and deemed righteous. Elizabeth was old and barren. Zechariah was a priest who served in the temple. When it was time for his group of priests to be on duty, Zechariah had been chosen by the casting of lots to go to enter the holy of holies to offer incense. It was there that the angel Gabriel appeared and shared that as an answer to his prayers Elizabeth would bear a son. Because of Zechariah's unbelief, God punished him. Zechariah became mute for the duration of Elizabeth's pregnancy.

**Luke 1:57 – 66** Let's fast forward nine months because Elizabeth has given birth to her son. Verses 57 through 66 give the account of Elizabeth's son's birth, circumcision, and naming. Relatives and neighbors rejoiced with Elizabeth in the birth of her son and the fact of him being the firstborn male of an older couple. They also had the opportunity to witness his circumcision on the eighth day, which symbolized he was now a part of God's family (Genesis 17:4 – 14; Leviticus 12:1 – 3).

The relatives and friends who witnessed his circumcision naturally thought he would take the name of his father or at least a family name. But Elizabeth had to obey to God. She named him "John." John means, "The Lord is gracious." Chaos arises because of her decision. The relatives and neighbors go to Zechariah to get his opinion. However, he could not hear nor speak so Zechariah had no way of hearing what Elizabeth said. They motioned to him what name he wanted for his son. He took a pad and wrote, "His name is John." Miraculously, as soon as Zechariah obeyed God, his speech

SAMPLE

and hearing was restored. He immediately started praising God. Those who witnessed the miracle were filled with the fear of God. How does one process the unexpected movement of God?

**Luke 1:76 – 79** Zechariah, being filled with the Holy Spirit, sang, and prophesied the coming of a Savior who would redeem his people. He also predicted that John would be the one to prepare the way for the Messiah. His inspired prophecy through song is called the "Benedictus" after the first word in the Latin translation. What an exciting time for Zechariah! Throughout his life, he had heard and learned about the coming Messiah. Now Zechariah would be an eyewitness of the Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled through Jesus Christ. The covenant with Abraham would be remembered, and all enemies will be overthrown by the "horn of salvation" (the power of God) whom God has raised up (Genesis 12:3; 1 Samuel 2:10; 1:73 – 75).

The primary focus is on Jesus and that John "will go before the Lord to prepare his ways" (1:76). Verses 76 through 79 are a summary of what John will do and what Jesus will do. His prophecy draws on Old Testament promises, which he saw would be fulfilled in the person and work of the coming king. The song draws heavily on Malachi 3:1 – 2 and 4:2, 5 – 6; Isaiah 9:2 and 42:7. What specific role will John have based on verses 76 – 79?

## SANKOFA

The Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah and the life of John the Baptist were connected. Both pointed to the future Messiah who would be the Savior of the world. Jesus came to redeem us from sin. The past impacts the present.

On May 13th, 1963, Roanoke, Virginia's NAACP President Rev. R.R. Wilkinson urged Roanoke City Council to close Washington Park Dump. The city dump was located in the black community of Gainsboro in Washington Park. The dump's toxic fumes were making residents and school children sick. After several delays and false promises made by Roanoke City Council to close the dump, Rev. R.R. Wilkinson threatened Roanoke City Council with public demonstrations in the courtyard. He also warned them of a "Baby

SAMPLE

Carriage Brigade" demonstration. Rev. R.R. Wilkinson promised Roanoke City Council that he would march mothers with their babies in carriages to Washington Park dump to form a human barricade to block dump trucks from entering the park if they did not vote to close the dump by June 1st. The following week to avoid these public demonstrations Roanoke City Council voted to close Washington Park Dump. To read the full story of Rev. R.R. Wilkinson's fight to close Washington Park Dump please visit: https://www.rrwilkinson.org/rev-rrwilkinson-protest-dump.

*How did Rev. R.R. Wilkinson's brave actions lead to change for the community? What impact do you think his past actions have had on our present-day society?*

## REAL TALK, FAITH WALK

In Zechariah's song, he prophetically described God's plans for John's life (vv. 67 – 79). Write down what John's life might have been like as he grew into adulthood.

_____

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Write a song about God's plans for your life. Think about things you are currently doing and what you believe God desires you to do in the future.

_____

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## SUMMARY

When a baby is born, they represent love and hope for the future. It can be an exciting time for the family. Newborns inspire us to do better for ourselves and others. With the birth of John, God fulfilled his promise to Zechariah. The Holy Spirit flowed through Zechariah as he sang of the glorious blessing John would be to the world. But more importantly, John prepared the way for the coming Messiah.

## CLOSING DEVOTIONS

*Prayer: God, thank you for being faithful to your Word. We trust your plans for our lives. Amen.*

*Hymn: "Joy to the World!" (AMEC Hymnal #120)*

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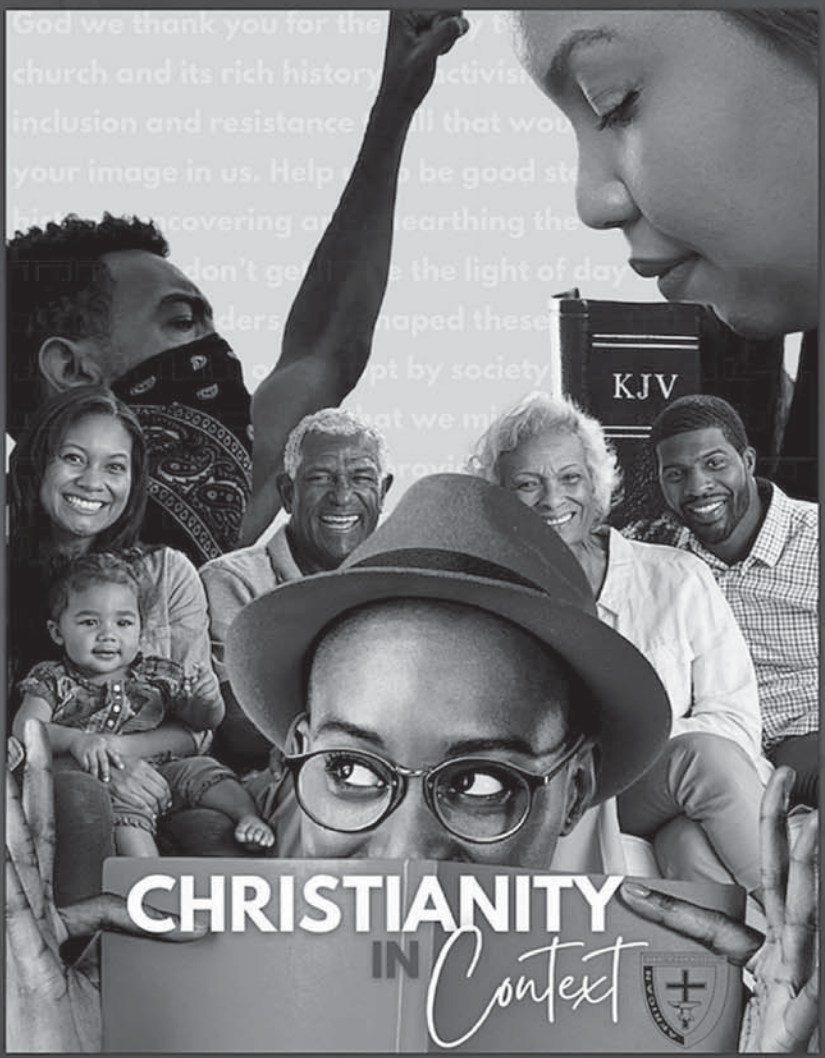


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