

BISHOP CLAUDE RICHARD ALEXANDER, JR.

FAITHFUL & FRUITFUL



33rd Anniversary and Sabbatical Send Off Service
Sunday, September 24, 2023 | 9:45 AM
The Park Church

To Bishop Claude R. Alexander, Jr.:

Today, we gather to celebrate and honor your faithful and fruitful ministry that has spanned an incredible 33 years. As you prepare to embark on a well-deserved sabbatical, we reflect on the remarkable ways in which God has worked through you during this time.

The number 33 holds great significance, as it represents the fullness of life that Jesus lived. It is fitting that you, like Him, have found the importance of taking time to rest and rejuvenate. Your leadership as our visionary pastor has been nothing short of inspiring. Despite being in high demand with various organizations, you have remained steadfast in your commitment to shepherding our congregation and extending the love, life, and lordship of Jesus Christ to the world.

Your faithfulness and fruitfulness are evident in the initiatives and partnerships that have flourished under your guidance. From MT25:40 to Gilfield Park, from our collaborations with organizations like Loaves and Fishes to providing fresh produce to seniors, your impact is felt far beyond the walls of our church. The transformation and care you have brought to our community are a testament to your unwavering dedication.

Today, we celebrate not only the 33 years you have served this congregation but also the profound wisdom and knowledge you have imparted through your preaching and teaching. Your ability to articulate the Word of God is unparalleled, and it has played a significant role in the growth and success of The Park Church. Since the early days when you took on the responsibility of pastoring, then known as University Park Baptist Church, your authentic style and commitment to scriptural teaching have been instrumental in shaping our faith.

Even amidst the challenges of the pandemic, your leadership has remained steady and unwavering. Your forward thinking allowed The Park Church to pivot and adapt, ensuring that the voice of God continued to be heard through your preaching and Bible study. Your wisdom and Godly insight provided guidance and comfort during a time of uncertainty, and for that, we give thanks and praise.

Bishop Claude Richard Alexander, Jr., you are truly deserving of double honor. Your faithfulness and fruitfulness have left an indelible mark on our hearts and the lives of countless individuals. As you enter this sabbatical period, may you find rest, renewal, and a deep sense of satisfaction in the incredible work God has accomplished through you.

With utmost gratitude and admiration,

The Park Church

WHY SABBATICAL MATTERS

Sabbath is a time for expansion. For Bishop Alexander, this sabbatical will be significant for the expansion of his soul. In the fast pace of our lives and the constant demands of the church, it is too easy for pastors to get lost in the flow. They are expected to be all things to all people at all times. From national tragedies to personal losses, from ministry highs to material lows, a pastor is required to remain steadfast in the Lord, not wavering in the public eye, even when he or she wrestles alone. Bishop Alexander has been faithful in pastoral leadership, providing care and direction to the congregation for 33 years. During this time, he has led through mass shootings and school shutdowns, maintained ministry through economic recessions and a global pandemic, and provided care through hundreds of deaths and a multitude of tragedies. For more than three decades, he has pressed through fluctuations in attendance, the purchasing and selling of properties, the development of staff and leaders and more, all while attempting to navigate the needs of his family and of his own soul. For Bishop Alexander, this sabbatical will be a critical time of restoration, healing, and hope. It will be a necessary time for God to expand his being with God as the pressure of doing for God subsides.



For The Park Church, this sabbatical is an invitation to experience God's power to expand us anew. For 33 years, we have been strengthened by the presence of the Pastor and now, we take the time to find strength in the many ways God provides. As God has sustained us in the presence of our leader, so God will sustain us while he is away. By faith, we will see joy in this season, not only because of God's faithfulness in keeping us, but also in God's creative expansion in growing us. As God expands Bishop's soul through rest, He will also expand our souls through ministry and His Word. We will grow in our ability to trust God and to find our purpose in Him. In business, organizations who peak in success must immediately begin thinking of ways to regenerate. This "S-Curve" operates at the pace of creativity and growth, constantly expanding with new ways of being. Rather than coast downward, believing that nothing more needs to be done, innovative businesses take advantage of the downtime to experiment with new ways, discover new realities, and find new paths to get better at what they do well. We are the church and God's S-curve for us is ever transforming and innovating for His Glory.

During this time of extended sabbatical, we can trust God to expand our horizons like never before. By faith, we believe that God is calling our pastor to rest in a way that will expand his capacity to be and do according to His will. By faith, we believe that God is calling our church to accept the invitation for spiritual growth and supernatural expansion. The only thing that is required of us is to believe.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." (Ephesians 3:20-21, NIV)

Rev. Dr. Nicole Massie Martin

Order of Service Sunday, September 24, 2023

Praise and Worship	Fred Hammond
Welcome / Prayer / Announcements.....	Worship Leader
The Park News (TPN).....	Studio P
Presentation for Bishop Alexander and..... Lady Kimberly Alexander	Dr. Cleveland Huntley, Chairperson The Park Church Board of Directors
Offering.....	Worship Leader
Offering Song.....	Fred Hammond
Sermonic.....	Fred Hammond
Sermon.....	Dr. Jeffrey A. Johnson, Sr. Senior Pastor Eastern Star Church Indianapolis, IN
Invitation to Salvation / Discipleship.....	Worship Leader
Sabbatical Service	
Charge / Prayer for Bishop Alexander..... and Family	Dr. Leighton Ford
Charge / Prayer for Staff, Officers..... And Lay Leaders	Dr. Frank Thomas
Charge / Prayer for The Park Church Congregation	Dr. Jeffrey A. Johnson, Sr.
Closing Remarks.....	Bishop Claude Richard Alexander, Jr.
Benediction	Bishop Claude Richard Alexander, Jr.

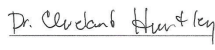
RESOLUTION OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
THE PARK CHURCH

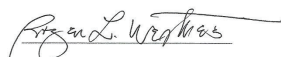
WHEREAS, Bishop Claude Richard Alexander Jr. has served as Senior Pastor of The Park Church for 32 years through several historical endeavors and challenging seasons,
WHEREAS, Bishop Claude Richard Alexander, Jr. has endured several spiritual, emotional, and physical challenges that affected him and the congregation for the past two years,
WHEREAS, The Park Church recognizes the pivoting and pioneering leadership Bishop Claude Richard Alexander Jr. has shown to The Park Church, the greater Charlotte community, and the global community during the recent COVID-19 Pandemic,
WHEREAS, in 2012, the Board of Directors adopted a pastoral sabbatical policy requiring the pastor to take a sabbatical every seven years, and
WHEREAS, the seventh year for Bishop Claude Richard Alexander Jr. to take said sabbatical was 2020, which he delayed to lead the church during the pandemic.


NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED as follows:

On November 20, 2021, The Park Church Board of Directors passed at their duly convened meeting that The Park Church Senior Pastor Bishop Claude Richard Alexander Jr. be granted a 12-month spiritual sabbatical within the timeframe(s) determined by him.

We, The Park Church Board of Directors, led by Dr. Cleveland Huntley and Roger L. Weathers, hereby certify that this resolution has been duly recorded in the minute book and signed by the officers below.


Dr. Cleveland Huntley
Co-Chairman


Roger L. Weathers
Co-Chairman


Larry M. McCorkle
Secretary


Brian Lowe
Assistant Secretary

GUEST PREACHER



JEFFREY A. JOHNSON, SR.

Senior Pastor

Pastor Jeffrey A. Johnson, Sr. accepted his call to ministry at the age of 17 and has served as the Senior Pastor of Eastern Star Church in Indianapolis, Indiana since 1988. Under his leadership, the “*One Church in Three Locations*” has grown to over 17,000 members and has planted three churches in Indianapolis as well. Pastor Johnson received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religion with Honors from Bishop College in Dallas, Texas and matriculated at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. He has also received numerous honorary doctorate degrees, highly-esteemed community awards and was voted the 2012 “Best Pulpitier” by *Black Christian News Network One*, an international online media resource.

In August 2007, Pastor Johnson launched *Kingdom Word Ministries* and authored the following titles: “*Song of Solomon: Love, Sex and Relationships*”, “*Making A Comeback: Reclaiming Our Lives In Christ*”, “*Life Illustrated: Daily Thoughts For Your Daily Walk*”, “*Dialogue with My Daughters*”, “*Dialogue with My Sons*”, “*Dialogue with Single Parents*”, and his newest release “*The Making of a King*”.

A devoted husband, Pastor Johnson is married to Sharon Henry Johnson and is the loving father of four sons.

GUEST WORSHIP LEADER



FRED HAMMOND

Gospel Singer/Songwriter/Producer

For more than 35 years, music lovers around the world have known Grammy Award Winning artist Fred Hammond as a gifted vocalist, songwriter, musician, producer and arranger. But as his peers and supporters alike have so reverently declared, he is without debate the architect behind the creation of a phenomenon in Gospel music, Urban Praise & Worship—a genre of gospel music that did not exist prior.

As a result, Fred Hammond has become one of the most respected names in the music industry! In fact, Essence Magazine (2017 Collector’s Edition) names Fred Hammond in the esteemed list of the 50 Greatest Male Singers of All Time! Fred Hammond has been hailed as an Inspirational Music Icon whose music *STILL* reaches people from all walks of life.

Throughout his professional career, Hammond has maintained a reputation for excellence and few gospel artists can boast of the consistency of sales, radio airplay and concert appearances that Hammond has achieved over the course of his career independent of the cross-over boost. As a solo artist, founder of the pioneering urban group, Commissioned, and his work with Radical for Christ combined, Fred has sold over 8 million albums and these endeavors have made him a mainstay on Billboard’s Gospel Chart top 10.

LEIGHTON FORD

Leighton Ford, author, social activist, leader, communicator and mentor, was singled out by Time Magazine as “among the most influential preachers of an active Gospel.” He is Founding President of Leighton Ford Ministries.

As an author, he has written 11 books, including the award-winning, *Sandy: A Heart for God* (the biography of his son who died during heart surgery in 1981). His most recent book is *A Life of Listening*, published by InterVarsity Press.

As a social activist, Ford has been an advocate for such issues as world hunger, poverty and racism. He received the “Two Hungers Award” in 1990 in recognition of his contributions in addressing the physical and spiritual hungers of people around the world.

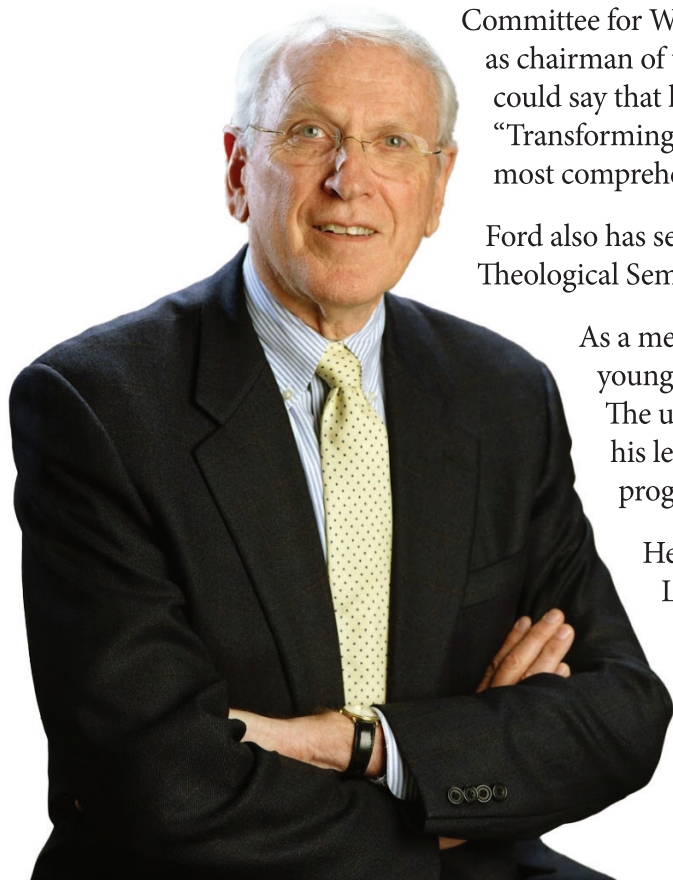
As a communicator, he has spoken to millions of people in scores of countries on every continent of the world. An ordained Presbyterian minister, he was named “Clergyman of the Year” in 1985 by Religious Heritage of America, and as “Presbyterian Preacher of the Year” by the National Presbyterian Center. Ford was vice-president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, where he served for 31 years. He was also a regular alternate speaker with Billy Graham, his brother-in-law, on the Hour of Decision, one of the most popular religious broadcasts of its time. He has also been featured on his own radio and television spots in the United States, Canada and Australia.

As a leader, he serves as the Honorary Lifetime Chairman of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, having served from 1976 to 1992 as chairman of this international body of Christian leaders. In fact, one could say that he has written the book on what it means to be a leader – “Transforming Leadership”, published by InterVarsity Press, is one of the most comprehensive books on leadership ever written.

Ford also has served on the boards of World Vision US, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, and Duke University Cancer Center.

As a mentor, he has spent recent years pouring himself into younger men and women through Leighton Ford Ministries. The unique Arrow Leadership Program established under his leadership has now become a continuing international program in its own right.

He lives in Charlotte, North Carolina with his wife, Jean. Leighton and Jean have a married daughter, Debbie, and a married son, Kevin, who now serves with his father as chief catalyst for Leighton Ford Ministries.





Congratulations to The Park Church Dr. Frank Thomas

This is an excerpt of an expression of love written by a devoted member to their pastor. It was expressive of the value of sabbath and rest to health and longevity. The following conveys the sentiment of the Park Baptist Church for their Senior Pastor Claude Richard Alexander, Jr.

A Thousand Years of Work

“Your legacy is written in the gold pavements approaching the mansion of our God! I’ve said it to you before and I’ll say it again ...You need to take a seriously long sabbatical if you are to continue pastoring our church! Your life is far more precious to me than your pastoring position! You have sacrificed, you have devoted, you have given, you have exceeded even your own expectations! Your impact on this church and this nation is your legacy! Therefore, this is advice from one older and wiser! This is advice from one who loves you from the depths of his heart! This is advice for one whose concern is for your immediate family who needs you healthy. You’ve put in a thousand years of work!”

A Prayer for Bishop Claude Richard Alexander, Jr.

This is a prayer that all of us, congregation, staff, friends, family, and fellow pastors and ministers from all over the country can offer for our beloved Bishop Claude Richard Alexander, Jr. We send him forth with our prayers undergirding him and we release him to God the great healer and lover of our souls. We stand together in one accord, with one mind, heart, and spirit about this matter and we prayerfully say:

May the God of all joy, rest, and peace, give you the grace to reconnect with Lady Kim, Carsyn, and Camryn and your family as never before; may it provide time for you to decompress and rest after over 40 years in ministry service; may you also reassess what God is doing in your life, ministry, and family for this next season of your life; may you discover laughter without burden; life without oversized commitments, rest without worry; may you offer your needs unto God without prioritizing the needs and concerns of others; may you meet the blessed Savior in the deep recesses of your own soul. May this Sabbath rest help you to return to us and be even stronger for future years of ministry. We give thanks to God, who gives us the victory in all things through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!

Lady Kimberly Nash Alexander

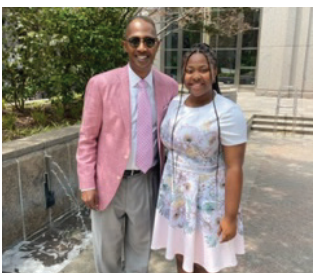


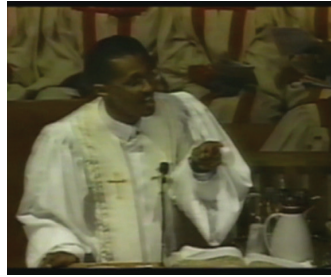
I celebrate you, Claude Richard Alexander, Jr. When I reflect on our almost 30 years together, I stand in awe of how God provided the man for me that I needed. You are everything God knew I needed. You see me and love me with all my flaws. You are able to make me laugh (sometimes till I cry). You can bring a smile to my face with just a look. You calm me when I am creating my own stress and remind me to keep healthy boundaries. Your prayers over me and our girls have been the wind that fuels the sails of our hope. You cry with us and for us, you provide for us, encourage us and cover us in prayer. You may be a gift to the church and the community but you are OUR greatest blessing. We chuckle as you get that look of delight over a delicious dessert, or chironical what we were doing last week at this time. Any time with you is fulfilling whether we are on a rollercoaster or chilling at the pool. Thank you for being the husband and father that you are.

When it comes to your call to serve the Lord there are no limits to how God uses you. Your faithful presence on boards brings wisdom, discernment and direction in some of the most critical times. Your sermons and teaching challenge us to discover more about God and grow as we apply them to our real-life situations. As a chaplain for Sundance, I have watched your gift for the fusion of film and faith, as you share theological insight many would never see.

So, this is more than an appreciation, this is a chance to express extreme gratitude. We celebrate not just your faithfulness, but the fruitfulness of what God has produced through you. You have navigated the season of change when it was time for a break. Instead of getting a break you pastored us, you taught us, you set an example for adjusting to change and grieving well. You have pressed and powered through losses, chiseled away at change and continued to go and give when your oil light was flashing, "maintenance check". So, enjoy this rest! Take not just a selah moment but a selah season. Know that God has His hand on what you have sown. Together we will get to live, laugh and love to the fullest. Know I am your biggest cheerleader, prayer warrior, accountability partner and teammate. This is where we get to ride off into the sunset for some QT and I can't wait. It promises to be worth the wait.

We Are Family







On August 26th, 1990, we began our journey as pastor and people. We did so believing in God's leading, calling, faithfulness and power. A 77 year old congregation wounded by a church split that literally separated families with an \$800,000 debt at 18% interest and a 26 year old pastor with three and ½ years of pastoral experience dared to believe God, never dreaming that we'd last this long and go this far. Truly, we've come this far by faith leaning on the Lord. God has done exceedingly abundantly above all that we've ever thought, imagined, or asked. To God be the glory for the great things He has done.

Our time together runs against the trend. The average time of pastor and people is five years. We've eclipsed that by a factor of six and ½. God is truly good.

Last year, the board of directors presented the congregation with my taking a one year sabbatical in keeping with the pastoral sabbatical policy formed in 2012 that every seven years the senior pastor must take a sabbatical of no less than three months. That year has flown by as we approach its beginning on September 25th. We do so recognizing several things:

- This is God's call and will for me, my family and for God's church.
- This step is an indication of how seriously our church takes the health and well-being of the one who watches over its souls.
- Just as a fatigued crew compromises the safety of a plane flight, a fatigued pastor compromises the well-being of a congregation.

We take these steps in the context of pastors leaving the ministry at an alarming rate. According to a recent study, over one-third of pastors have left their pastorate within the past five years. A Barna Survey conducted in March 2022 called the Great Pastor Resignation that revealed the top five reasons why 42% of clergy surveyed were considering quitting.

- The immense stress of the job: 56%
- I feel lonely and isolated: 43%
- Current political divisions: 38%
- I am unhappy with the effect this role has had on my family: 29%
- I am not optimistic about the future of my church: 29%

A 2021 Pastoral Mental Health Report compiled by Faithlife found that 1 in 10 pastors contemplated committing suicide in the past year.

These realities cause us to understand that pastoral longevity is not something to assume. It is something to assure. Our pursuit as pastor and people is our taking a step to assure longevity. God is far from through with us. There is so much more that God has in store for us. God has put together a program for the year which I believe will take us to places beyond our comprehension. Special thanks to Drs. Nicole Martin and Frank Thomas for their willingness to join the Kingdom Team in the shepherding and care for the congregation.

I am grateful and humbled by the love and concern that is being shown to me and my family during this season. I am thankful to God for the Board of Directors, the Kingdom Team and each and every member of The Park Church. You are my family, whom I dearly love. I look forward to returning rested and ready for the next that God has prepared for us.

“Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior be glory, honor, dominion, and power, both now and ever. Amen”

Bishop Claude Richard Alexander J



The Park
CHURCH

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