



ABINGTON SCHOOL OF RELIGION

Council of Bishops and General Board Meeting
June 20-21, 2017
Los Angeles, CA

Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie
Presiding Prelate
Tenth District AME Church

Rev. Dr. George Johnson, Jr.
Dean
The Abington School of Religion, The Institute

New Ways for New Times

The African Methodist Episcopal Church always has been on the cutting edge of education. Our Wilberforce University was the first private Historically Black College in America, established in Ohio in 1856. Today's educational challenge is to find new ways to offer classes to our clergy, lay and communities in easily accessible and affordable ways. Everyone is busy with packed schedules and more responsibilities than time. How do we, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, once again, find a cutting-edge solution to bridge the education opportunity gap?

In the Tenth Episcopal District, we recently reactivated The Abington School of Religion and just weeks ago concluded our first academic session. Through the Institute at Abington School of Religion, convenient online courses and continuing education units are offered at affordable prices, a one-time registration fee of \$25 and each class currently set at \$125 paid through PayPal. Now, pastors, preachers, officers and interested persons who are serving or who want to serve in their local congregations can get the biblical, theological and practical training they need without leaving home. This allows the busy students to attend school while at the same time, more easily maintaining their work and family responsibilities.

The focus of The Institute is to provide Spiritual Discipline and Discipleship, Professional Development, Educational Leadership and Training, and Personal Development in Transforming Experiences and Self-Care. Classes are held in six sessions over 90 days taught by instructors who are leaders in their fields. We capped the class size at 30 students to ensure we could meet the financial requirements of the teleconference provider. The classes are coded with a unique password for student access which registered students receive in an email invitation to join the online sessions. Each class convenes live over the Internet on WebEx one night of alternating weeks and can be accessed via PC (personal computer), Apple or even mobile devices. Students can see their professor, ask questions, interject thoughts, share comments, and see slide presentations and videos. Everything they can do in a classroom, they can do in these online courses, including see each other if they chose to communicate via their computer cameras.

If students' homes do not offer enough bandwidth to participate via the teleconference, the students can watch online and speak by phone to interact with the class. Technical difficulties are handled in real time by our Technical Director Rev. Jasmine Saint-Jean. She also offers a tutorial prior to the semester's beginning, talking students through each screen and function to familiarize students with the process.

The professors are accessible to answer questions and interact with students between classes by phone or the Internet. Also, the students engage with each other and the professors through a Google Group. For some of our older students who do not have Internet access at home or who simply prefer to learn in a brick-and-mortar classroom, many of our pastors opened the local church and connected to the classes using the church's Internet. This offers the additional benefit of fellowship and bonding while learning and serves to strengthen the church through a shared experience and understanding as they move to implement new outlooks gained from the classes. As a result, these pastors develop a core group working toward a common goal.

Inaugural Session

In the Winter Session 2017, with an enrollment of 33 students, including 3 who audited classes, The Institute at The Abington School of Religion offered its first two classes of recent times.

“Adaptive Leadership and Communities of Faith” was offered on the second and fourth Mondays of the month over 90 days. Adaptive Leadership is a practical framework to help individuals and churches to change in uncertain times when there are no clear answers. It is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive. The class was taught by Rev. William H. Lamar, IV, pastor of Metropolitan AME Church in Washington, DC. He is the former Managing Director for Leadership Education at Duke University and a graduate of Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina. The required textbook for this course was *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* by Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky.

“Soul Care: The Art of Caring for Oneself and Others” was offered on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month over 90 days. In this course, students explored the art of “soul care,” that is, to care for persons’ mind, body and spirit. Soul care is a key component of leadership and involves learning how to listen to others beyond words and to tap into what nourishes their whole self. In addition, this course was designed to help students engage in the necessary self-care that will help them experience emotionally healthy spirituality for themselves. The required text for this class was *Recalling Our Own Stories: Spiritual Renewal for Religious Caregivers* by Edward Wimberly. The class was taught by Rev. Willacin Precious Gholston, manager of Pastoral Services and Chaplain at Methodist Health System in Dallas, Texas. She is certified as Supervisor in the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, a multicultural and multi-faith organization devoted to providing education and improving the quality of ministry and pastoral care offered by spiritual caregivers of all faiths in a clinical setting. She received her Master of Divinity degree at Southern Methodist University.

The Institute

The Institute at The Abington School of Religion is an opportunity for both clergy and laity to engage in continuing education that contributes to the wellbeing of people, congregations and communities. The Institute is designed for those who are seeking professional and spiritual development and to foster a spirit of innovative service and transformational ministry in the church and in the community. The areas of study include Christian Education, Pastoral Counseling, Biblical Studies, Leadership Development, Counseling, Church Growth and Development, Church Planting and Church Repurposing, Congregational Life, Psychology of Religion, Spiritual Transformation, Discipleship and much more.

The Institute is open to anyone anywhere across the country and around the world who wants to connect for this rich experience. It’s an opportunity for pastors and leaders to grow. It’s an opportunity for local officers and leaders to hear someone else explain the need and purpose of things pastors may have been saying for years. A professor explains the topic and teaches the path to implementation, guiding students to new ways of looking at things and developing a deeper level of understanding of the options. It’s a great opportunity for students to expand their thinking and learn how others have crossed barriers to achieve similar goals. At the same time, it offers an easy path to bring other members along, learning and moving toward church goals.

The Abington School of Religion

Founded in the early 1950's under the African Methodist Episcopal leadership of Bishop Joseph Gomez, the school's sole purpose is providing educational opportunities and enhancements for ordained clergy and lay leadership. Originally, it was housed on the old Paul Quinn College campus in Waco, Texas, and held sessions in the classrooms, George B. Young Auditorium and John Hurst Adams Student Life Center; as well as in laboratories and A.M.E. churches across the state of Texas.

The school is named in honor of Rev. Charles William Abington, who transferred to the Central Texas Conference in 1904. He pastored Metropolitan-Austin, Bethel-Dallas, and St James-Dallas and was responsible for the installation of the first pipe organ in an African American church in the state of Texas (when St. James was downtown). Later he served as Presiding Elder of Dallas, Editor and Chief of the Sunday School Union, and as a member of the General Conference from 1912-1948.

During the reactivation of The Abington School of Religion, a scripture theme was designated for the school by Bishop Vashti McKenzie, "Be transformed by the renewing of the mind." Romans 12:2 (NIV). The school is an education ministry of the 10th Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church under the leadership of Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, Presiding Prelate. Rev. Damon Blakely is the Chair of the Board of Directors. Rev. Linda Connor is Executive Director and Rev. Jasmine Saint-Jean is Technical Director.

Humbly submitted by,

Rev. Dr. George Johnson, Jr.

Dean

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The Institute Info

The Institute at The Abington School of Religion



Continuing Education for Clergy & Lay

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is a continuing education opportunity for clergy and lay persons. It provides biblical, theological and practical training that contributes to personal and congregational growth. The academic program of The Institute is designed for those who are seeking professional and spiritual development and to foster a spirit of innovative service and transformational ministry in the church and in the community.

1

VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Take classes from the comfort of your home

2

CEC CREDITS

Earn credits towards a M.Div through Payne Theological Seminary

3

AFFORDABILITY

Reasonable Tuition Fees with just a \$25.00 Application Fee



Personal Development

Fostering Personal Growth & Self-Care



Professional Development

Fostering Educational & Professional Growth



Spiritual Development

Fostering Spiritual Growth & Discipleship

Educational Opportunities

Adaptive Leadership and Communities of Faith - Rev. William H. Lamar

Adaptive Leadership is a practical framework to help individuals and churches to change in uncertain times when there are no clear answers. It is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive.

Taught by Rev. William H. Lamar, IV, pastor of Metropolitan AME Church in Washington, DC. He is the former Managing Director for Leadership Education at Duke University Divinity in Durham, North Carolina.

The required textbook for this course is *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* by Ronald Hifetz, Alexander Glasgow and Marty Linksy (available in bookstores and Amazon). This class will be held 2nd & 4th Mondays beginning January 9, 2017.

“Moving beyond wishful thinking about what our churches can be.”

Soul Care: The Art of Caring Oneself and Others - Rev. Willacin “Precious” Gholston

In this course, students will explore the art of “soul care” to care for persons’ mind, body and spirit. Soul care is a key component of leadership and involves learning how to listen to others beyond words and tap into what nourishes their whole self. This course will help students engage in the necessary self-care that will help them experience emotionally healthy spirituality for themselves.

The required text for this class is *Recalling Our Own Stories: Spiritual Renewal for Religious Caregivers* by Edward Wimberly (available in bookstores and Amazon). This class will be held 2nd & 4th Tuesdays beginning January 10, 2017.

CONTACT US

The Institute at The Abington School of Religion
Richard Allen Plaza
c/o The Tenth Episcopal District
4347 South Hampton Road, Suite 245
Dallas, Texas 75232

(214) 333-AMEC
(214) 333-2632

TheInstituteAdmin@10thdistrictame.org
Rev. George Johnson, M.Div, Dean of Students

