

## LOCAL

**Community:** from pg3

bined praise team, or the choir came from which congregation. The audience reflected the same diversity and mix. There were no sections for this membership and sections for that membership. The family of God gathered, fellowshiped, praised, heard the call for action, and responded.

The two congregations are linked through the deep mutual respect and love demonstrated among its leaders. Bishop Kevin Adams was introduced by Abba's House senior pastor Dr. Ronnie Phillips as the mentor he had when he was spiritually searching in his early twenties while working at a secular job downtown. Growing emotional and clearly sincere, Dr. Ronnie Phillips honored Bishop Kevin Adams with more than simple words.

At the pulpit to deliver the evening message, Bishop Adams reflected upon

his teenage years of searching and being on campus at Central Baptist Church, now Abba's House. He would meet with Dr. Ron Phillips, Sr., then pastor of the Hixson church, for guidance and mentoring. Bishop Adams spoke of getting the cassette tapes of Dr. Phillips' sermons to study and learn due to his inability at the time to attend formal training and joking how the repeated sermons created the basis for his early ministry.

Seeing three faith leaders within our city model cross-cultural, multigenerational, and mutual respect and authentic love of each other gave no room for any to doubt the fact that their united hearts were the reason such actions were possible. In the gathering of over 500, hands were held extended across race, generation, and status in prayer to accept the challenge of the night, to Advance Now, based on words from the Book of Joshua.

As headlines and social media posts



Combined Praise singers of Abba's House and Olivet Baptist Church.

grab our attention about divisiveness, crime, broken homes, students struggling after COVID isolation, and the pressures of life, Chattanoogaans are looking to non-profit organizations for leadership, politicians for legislated solutions and all sorts of institutions for answers.

There are countless houses of worship, just like these two, that contain the possibility of unity, of community and solutions that show us the good of our community. So, as renowned Tennessean and author Alex Haley admonished, "Find the good and praise it." Let's commit to more.

**Chattanooga Spiritual Ensemble to Perform**

Sunday, September 25 at 3pm

Performance is FREE and Open to the PUBLIC

The Chattanooga Spiritual Ensemble will give its second performance this Sunday at 3 pm in the live acoustic of First Christian Church, 650 McCallie Avenue. The group, founded in 2021 by Artistic Director Harv Wileman, is a 30-voice semi-professional ensemble of singers from greater Chattanooga, Nashville, and Atlanta and will sing choral and solo arrangements of African-American spirituals by an array of Black composers past and present, including Margaret Bonds, Lee Cloud, R. Nathaniel Dett, Jacqueline Hairston, Moses Hogan, Undine S. Moore, and William Grant Still. Selections by living legend Roland Carter, a mentor to former student Wileman and many others in the group, will also be performed.

"Spirituals are uniquely American art form, says Wileman. "The classically-trained Fisk Jubilee Singers in Nashville were the first group to bring choral arrangements of spirituals to a national, then international audience, and the concert tradition continued to flower and be refined at other HBCUs until we now have a living

repertoire, ever growing and ubiquitous on concert programs on concert stages, schools, and churches around the world of numerous denominations. They unite audiences with their mix of deep feeling, wit, musicality, humanity, and divinity."

Several singers within the ensemble will step out to offer solo spiritual arrangements for piano and voice, including local favorites Neshawn Calloway, known equally as a jazz and blue stylist and classical mezzo-soprano; male soprano Jeron Devonté (himself the founder of the BATTLE Association); and baritone Vincent Hale, alumnus and Dean of Fine Arts at the Chattanooga High School Center for the Creative Arts. "I also wanted to feature vocal music by Black composers in other genres," says Wileman. LaFrederick Thirkill solos with the chorus in a number from Treemonisha, the first known opera by an African-American, Scott Joplin, best-known as the creator of ragtime, which was never produced in his lifetime.

"Several years ago the Chattanooga Choral Society produced the first fully-staged production in Tennessee, and LaFrederick recreates part of his role here." The opera Margaret Garner, premiered

in Detroit in 2005, was composed by Richard Danielpour, not a Black composer, but the libretto was written by Toni Morrison and based on her Pulitzer-Prize-winning novel *Beloved*. Tess Varlack, a graduate student at Lee University sings one of the key arias of its protagonist. Though Wileman founded and leads the group, no fewer than nine local conductors, including Calloway, Hale, Devonté, Michael Ake of The McCallie School and Michael Mitchell of the Chattanooga Choral Society, will step out of the ensemble to lead a number. "There is so much highly-trained talent in this community that it makes sense to give the musicians every opportunity to use this group as a kind of 'professional development' for their careers as both performers and educators," explains Wileman.

Other soloists include Atlanta opera singers Kayla Wilson and Aja Brimm and former Chattanooga Nicole Ellis, now



living in Nashville. Five upperclass voice majors from Chattanooga High Center for the Creative Arts, students of Calloway's, will also rehearse and perform as part of the group. "Giving the next generation of performers an opportunity to work alongside the professionals as peers is also part of the mission of the group," says Wileman. The Chattanooga Spiritual Ensemble is under the aegis of Voices of The Southeast, Inc. a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Chattanooga. The concert is made possible by a grant from ArtsBuild, private donations, and the partnership of First Christian Church. The performance is free and open to the public.

**Grove Street Community in Chattanooga Remembers September 25, 2021**

Grieving for our "murdered" relatives

**Location:** Renaissance Presbyterian Church | 1211 Boynton Dr. - Chattanooga, TN 37402

**Date and Time:** Saturday, September 24, 2022, at 1:00 pm

On September 24, 2022, Chattanooga's grieving community will con-

vene to remember all seven women, including the two fatalities. At the Celebration of Life Resilience and Remembrance service, we will be reminded of these ladies and all victims of gun violence. On a warm evening in September 2021 seven females were gunned down while attending a neighborhood block party and two were fatal. To date, no justice has been served. There is still no word despite a \$20,000 reward offered by The Grove Street Justice Fund, and Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly's Office information and the conviction of the shooter (s). To date, no witnesses have come forward and no arrests have been made. Hopefully, the day will come when we will not be able to add new

victims to this list. Each tragedy leaves visible and invisible scars on survivors, families, and entire communities.

To date, there have been some 470 mass shootings in the United States. Last year alone, according to the Chattanooga Police Department Crime Analysis division, 61% of the homicides in Chattanooga were committed by African American male perpetrators, who are becoming increasingly younger each year. Homicides include violent crimes, domestic, gang related, and gun violence.

"To lose a loved one in death can be a very emotional process for the families left to mourn," says Betty Maddox Battle, founder of G.R.I.E.V.E., a non-

profit organization offering support to victims of violent crimes. "To lose a loved one whether son, daughter, brother or father to a senseless murder such as gun violence, is a different kind of grief and even more challenging to process. And the gun violence continues." She believes the real challenge is the act of forgiveness. "We are all children of God and that love dwells within". On September 24th 2022, at the Renaissance Presbyterian Church 1211 Boynton Drive, a community of clergy, concerned residents and community leaders will gather to honor those victims and provide support. "I know because I've been there."

**Tourism:** from front

third largest employer in the state.

Tennessee Governor Bill Lee and Department of Tourist Development Commissioner Mark Ezell highlighted efforts to continue the industry's strong recovery.

"Tourism drives economic development and job creation so that every Tennessean can thrive," said Gov. Lee. "Our decision to prioritize strong recovery has yielded record levels of tourism growth, and we continue to welcome visitors to see all Tennessee has to offer, from the Mississippi River to the Great Smoky Mountains."

"Tennessee is crushing it with the largest visitor spending national market share for Tennesseans in our history," said Mark Ezell, Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development. "Tennessee is one of the top travel destinations in the world because of our tremendous assets including our unmatched scenic

beauty, diverse cities, and small towns, as well as our world class attractions, music, cultural and historical sites. We're so grateful to this industry and our partners and blessed visitors come experience these destinations and support local businesses, local restaurants and local lodging and support communities."

**Key Highlights from 2021 report:**

Tennessee tourism generated a record \$24 billion in domestic travel spending

Travel and tourism is the third largest employer in TN in 2021

Travelers in Tennessee spend an estimated \$66 million per day. Visitor spending in Tennessee increased by 44.4%, year over year. Visitor spending nationally increased by 35.7%, year over year

All 95 counties saw an increase in visitor spending over 2020

51 counties fully recovered and exceeded their 2019 visitor spending record

Nine counties experienced more than 40% growth in year-over-year travel spending, including Davidson, Cheatham,

Sevier, Union, Polk, Grundy, Knox, Blount and Hamilton

Five counties experienced more than 40% growth over 2019 travel spending, including: Cheatham, Union, Lake, Hickman and Meigs

Travel in Tennessee generated \$1.9 billion in state and local tax revenue in 2021

Travel-generated tax revenue generated by tourism saved each Tennessee household \$755.41 in state and local taxes last year

Leisure & Hospitality Industry Highlights (source: TN Dept. of Revenue & TN Department of Labor & Workforce Development)

Leisure & hospitality industries supported 317,000 jobs in 2021, an 8% increase from 2020 and 91% of 2019 levels

Leisure & hospitality revenues have recovered to record levels and outpaced inflation

Leisure & hospitality employment has returned to pre-pandemic levels but still

struggles to keep up with travel demand

Average leisure & hospitality wages have surged as the industry competes for a limited number of workers. Leisure & hospitality wages increased to \$17.71 in June 2020, compared to \$14.14 in 2020.

The 2021 Economic Impact on Travel Report includes county data and comprehensive models of the economic impact of spending by industry. Partners and media can utilize the new online interactive dashboard for the latest state and county information. Economic Impact on Travel Report booklets will be handed out at the Governor's Conference on Hospitality & Tourism Sept. 28-30 in Memphis.

The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development works with the Tennessee Tourism Committee, local convention and visitors' bureaus, chambers of commerce, city and county leaders, tourism attractions and the hospitality industry in all 95 counties to inspire travel to the state.

**Coleman:** from front

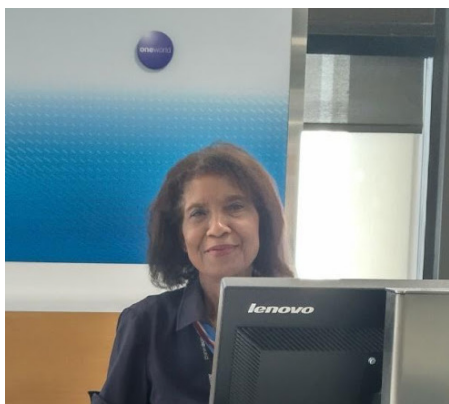
Charlene Shortte. Coleman's great-niece, Gigi Coleman, was also aboard the flight to help celebrate her legacy.

Elizabeth "Bessie" Coleman was born on Jan. 26, 1892. The 10th of 13 children who were a family of sharecroppers in Texas, Coleman worked in the cotton fields at a young age while also studying in a small segregated school.

With the encouragement of Robert S. Abbott, publisher of the Chicago Defender, Coleman learned French and saved up money from her work, first as a manicurist and then a manager of a chili parlor. In November 1920, she gained entrance into the Caudron School of Aviation in Le Croy, France.

On June 15, 1921, Coleman obtained her pilot's license from the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale, and after some additional training in Paris, she returned to the United States in September 1921.

With the age of commercial flight still



Customer Service Agent Denise Ashford was part of an All-Black female crew that helped operate an American Airlines flight from Dallas to Phoenix paying tribute to trailblazer Bessie Coleman.

a decade or more in the future, Coleman quickly realized that in order to make a living as a civilian aviator she would have to become a "barnstorming" stunt flier, and perform for paying audiences.

Committed to promoting aviation and combating racism, she used her influence in the following years to encourage



Bessie Coleman on the wheel of a Curtiss JN-4 "Jennie" in her custom-designed flying suit, c. 1924. Smithsonian Institution.

other African Americans to fly--even refusing to perform air shows at locations that would not admit African Americans.

"Queen Bess," as she was known, died tragically on April 30, 1926, at age 34, preparing with another pilot for an air show that was to take place in Jacksonville, Fla. that day. At 3,500 feet, an unsecured wrench got caught in the control

gears, causing her Curtiss JN-4 (Jenny) plane to crash. Coleman, who was not wearing a seatbelt, fell to her death.

While there was little mention in most media, news of her death was widely carried in the African American press. Ten thousand mourners attended her ceremonies in Chicago, which were led by activist Ida B. Wells.

"She bravely broke down barriers within the world of aviation and paved the path for many to follow," the airline said of Coleman in a written statement.

Ashford said the airlines is being intentional in its efforts to diversify the flight deck, and "dedicated to increasing the numbers of female African American pilots."

Black women have been "notably underrepresented in the aviation industry," she noted.

Black women currently represent less than 1% in the commercial airline industry.