
Reconnecting with New Eyes

An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by CanonCarolynne Williams

Last month, the Albany Civil Rights Institute in Albany, Georgia hosted the second annual Boyd-Grant Awards dinner, named in recognition of two local senior pastors. H.C. Boyd still pastors Shiloh Baptist Church, having led that parish since 1959. E. James Grant pastored Mt. Zion Baptist Church for 48 years. He was my father. He and my mother being truly connected to the community, on many levels, formed me into who I am today. I was privileged to give the benediction at the dinner.

Shiloh and Mt. Zion were the central meeting places for the beginning of the Albany Movement and Civil Rights era during the 1960s. These clergymen, Rev. Boyd and Rev. Grant, opened the doors of their churches, risking much beyond what the eye could see, so that progress for all citizens could begin. These churches were across the street from one another, on the corner of Whitney and Jefferson Streets. Thus overflow crowds could hear, see, and participate in the momentum building which led to strategizing on all levels. There was no distinction as to who could participate.

Seeing with one's eyes and hearing with one's ears was very important as a manner of being which allowed for moving into action, especially during those days. Seeing and hearing led to consistent praying and consistent developing of a community with one common goal. Seeing with new eyes became a part of the vision and believing in what one was seeing with new eyes brought about a difference during the 1960s, eventually.

Today, there is still work to be done, as it is in most places. The "old Mt. Zion" is now a museum and is listed on the historic registry. The artifacts are clear and prevalent.

At the Boyd-Grant Awards dinner, being reconnected with this community where I grew up renewed within me and uncovered a freshness long desired for others. Seeing the interactions of the citizens and hearing the words describing the work which is being done throughout the city was invigorating and brought to my eyes and thus my mind, a sense of wonder.

When we have a sense of wonder about what we are seeing and what we are hearing, invariably there is room for the possibility of growing, within. As I looked around the room at most of the people present, I was very aware that I did not know most of them.

What I did see in their faces was a presence of something beyond themselves. Something beyond the surface. The words which were spoken were words which represented a possibility of unity amongst many citizens and especially those who lived beyond themselves.

The new eyes I brought back to Atlanta have propelled me to a level of which I am most aware. I hope that these new eyes will lend themselves to a clearer vision of myself and others in community.

Within families, nuclear and created, we have a humanness which carries us. We can and do make all manner of adjustments, for worse or for better.

The beauty comes in recognizing and making a difference. The beauty comes in making a decision to look at circumstances within your families and with your friends and within your community and making a difference. When there is a new

manner of looking and hearing and seeing them all, you will be refreshed. I promise.

If you consider this possibility, you will see with new eyes and will be refreshed.

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