

Bishop promotes pastor to Kansas City church

# Barrett gives up NAACP leadership

By Lés Pierres Streater  
Sentinel-Voice

The Rev. Spencer F. Barrett, president of the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People since March, has left his post to pastor Bethel A.M.E. Church in Kansas City, Mo.

"It's fantastic," Barrett said during a telephone interview from Kansas City. "I'm very excited to be promoted to be a part of the work here. Right now I'm half way in North Las Vegas and half way in Kansas City at the same time."

Barrett, formerly pastor of First African Methodist Episcopal Church in North Las Vegas, made the announcement late last month at the branch's Annual Freedom Fund Banquet at the MGM Grand Hotel Conference Center.

Dean Ishman, the current first vice president, will fill out Barrett's term as president. The local branch is in the midst of reorganizing, but Barrett listed the recent Freedom Fund Banquet, Brown vs. Board of Education Topeka, Kansas and sending a group of young people to Disneyland as high points of

his presidency.

Barrett pastors in the 15-state Fifth Episcopal District headed by Bishop John Richard Bryant. The district comprises western states and Alaska. "The bishop felt Kansas City needed some leadership in the A.M.E. church and in the community," said Barrett. "After praying about it, God led him to move me to Kansas City."

He was appointed pastor of First A.M.E. in Sept. 1995. Barrett and wife, Mary, have three children.

"It was a promotion," Mary Barrett said. "That means he was moved to a larger church. They can move you every year. There is no set time you will be at any one church. I am very happy for him, so it's great."

Barrett described Bethel as the top A.M.E. church in the Kansas City area. "It's larger than First A.M.E.," he said. "The building is much larger than First A.M.E."

Barrett was elected branch president in March, which was restoring local activity after two years in limbo. In a December 2002 election, Barrett based his campaign on fighting discrimination in the workplace, which was a

key issue for members of the Las Vegas branch.

"I think there's an idea that fresh leadership might bring new agendas to the NAACP," Barrett said at the time of his election.

What had been described as a series of internal disputes forced Frank L. Berry, director of the NAACP's Western Region regional office, to shut down the local branch about two years ago.

Barrett led the local branch, rebounding from the loss of its charter by national headquarters two years ago. Now the Las Vegas branch has reorganized, restructured and rejuvenated a commitment from its members to win the struggle to obtain racial justice for all Americans.

The local branch, Barrett said, stands ready to continue the struggle of protecting civil rights, fair housing, quality education, employment opportunities and providing economic development to those who have suffered from a inequities.

"The NAACP belongs to us, it's ours," Barrett said. "We should not allow anyone to talk it down. Don't let anyone tell you that it's not operating and make sure your

membership is at least paid for one year if you're not a life member."

"Having Our Say" was the theme of last month's Freedom Fund Banquet.

"I'm excited, what a wonderful night," Barrett said at the time. "Look around, all the stars are shining in the NAACP tonight. I'm excited because this is definitely our night. I'm excited because the stories and rumors have not proven to be true. We are a community. Amen. We are together. We are able to be a force to be reckoned with. We know what's right. We know when we are being abused and tonight because of our presence here, we are definitely 'Having Our Say.'"

"The NAACP has positioned itself as a cornerstone for the African-American community and beyond," said Clark County Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson Gates, who was mistress of ceremony at the banquet. "'Having Our Say' is where a lot of us in the local chapter would like to give a huge applause to our local chapter president, Pastor Spencer Barrett, and his team of dedicated workers. They've done a great job."

## Citizen Review Board marks third anniversary

By Lés Pierres Streater  
Sentinel-Voice

The Citizen Review Board, which has independent oversight of the Metro Police Department, held an open house last week at the Clark County Government Center, marking year three of its existence.

The Citizen Review Board (CRB) is charged with reviewing Metro Police Department investigations and complaints of misconduct filed against police and corrections officers. The CRB also investigates deaths that occur while individuals are in the custody of or in connection with the actions of Metro Police and corrections officers.

The board advises Metro Police of citizens' complaints and makes recommendations to the sheriff regarding discipline, as well as department policies, procedures and training.

In the past three years, the CRB has processed more than 200 cases and referred 10 of those cases to an independent evidentiary hearing panel. Andrea Beckman, who was selected in April 2000,

is executive director.

"Over the past three years the Citizen Review Board has seen a significant improvement in the thoroughness of internal affairs investigations and I believe that this watchdog committee of civilians deserves some credit for this," Beckman said at the Nov. 6 open house.

"Establishing a working relationship and cooperation between the board and Metro, I think, has been one of the hardest things that we have worked for but one of the most successful things we have accomplished."

The board is composed of 25 citizens who are appointed by two members each of the Las Vegas City Council and Clark County Board of Commissioners.

"The Citizen Review Board has forced the Las Vegas police department to do better and more complete internal investigations," Beckman said. "This watchdog committee has earned its reputation of being tough but fair and has on several occasions referred cases back to Metro to reopen their investigations. In all of these cases

the police department had the integrity to admit that they could have done a better job and they did a better job the second go round."

Christine Brady, a community relations officer for the Economic Opportunity Board Community Action Partnership, is a CRB member.

"I have been a member of this board since October of 2000 and have participated on several hearing panels," Brady said. "I am a member of the screening panel that initially reviews cases to determine if the IAB (Internal Affairs Bureau) needs to provide more information because the board does not have an investigative arm. I have seen improvements in the IAB investigations."

"The first couple of hearing panels that I sat on, didn't have adequate information and the files were very thin. People were not interviewed and there wasn't enough information established to warrant if a further investigation was necessary."

"Now the files are thick and they interview many more individuals and do more

research before we get the files," Brady said, adding. "Most of the cases are discourtesy cases where people feel that Metro was not courteous to them and many of those cases are referred to mediation because people want closure as to why the police was abrupt to them."

The CRB has jurisdiction over any allegation of misconduct, including excessive use of force, discrimination or harassment, improper discharge or use of firearms, illegal search or seizure, false arrest, false reporting and criminal misconduct.

"The board has made recommendations to the Metropolitan Police Department requesting officers to identify themselves when asked by citizens because they were not doing so in the past," Beck said. "Also, when people are stopped for minor traffic incidents, officers not handcuff them for thirty-five minutes regardless of their race, creed, ethnicity, or age. We found that there was too much handcuffing going on and Metro has followed those recommendations."

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## School trustees to meet on Westside

By John T. Stephens III  
Sentinel-Voice

The Westside Action Alliance Korps-Uplifting People (WAAK-UP) would like the predominately black Westside to turn out in scores to voice the need for a new high school in the community at the next regular school board meeting.

The Clark County School District Board of Trustees will convene the "special meeting" at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 18 at Kit Carson Elementary School, 1735 N. "D" St. Although moved from its regular meeting place, all trustees, including Superintendent Carlos Garcia, are expected to attend this business meeting. If necessary, votes will be taken on agenda items.

"They (school trustees) are bringing the board meeting to us," said Marzette Lewis, WAAK-UP president and founder. "This is an opportunity for parents who don't have transportation or get off too late from work to attend a board meeting and express grievances or just be informed."

Lewis' intent is to have school board meetings in the African-American community every three months. The board of trustees normally meets in district offices at 2832 East Flamingo Road.

The last time a regular school board meeting was held in the black community, Lewis recalled, was at Mabel Hoggard Elementary School, 950 N. Tonopah Dr.

That was during the so-called Prime 6 conflict, which led to construction of H. P. Fitzgerald and Charles I. West Jr. Middle School in the predominately African-American community.

Prime 6, which was spearheaded by WAAK-UP, called for the removal and home schooling of Westside children to protest the practice of unfairly building of schools outside the black community and disproportionately allocating federal monies away from the black community.

"People want to be in their neighborhood," Lewis said. "Make sure they build what's right for this community. People can't believe we live like this."

A dedicated proponent of children and education, Lewis would like to see the school district build a high school on the site of the recently vacated Addeliar D. Guy III Ambulatory Care Center. The Veterans Administration-owned building is considered dilapidated.

"We don't care if it's three or four stories high," Lewis said.

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