

# Rev. Bennett wraps up lengthy tenure at Zion

## After 44 years at Nevada's oldest Black church, self-described workaholic retires

By Albert C. Jones  
Sentinel-Voice

In a city that used to be a pathway to Los Angeles for Methodist preachers, the Rev. Marion D. Bennett has had a long run here as pastor of Zion United Methodist Church.

Bennett, who served 44 years at Zion, retired on June 30. His tenure at Zion, which is Nevada's oldest African-American church, stretched from July 1, 1960 to midway through 2004.

That kind of longevity is rare for United Methodist pastors who have bishops, with the authority to reassign pastors, as overseers.

Most United Methodist pastors lead several different congregations during a career.

This, however, didn't apply to Bennett.

"Out in the West, people tend not to move as much," he said. "I fell in love with Las Vegas and the people wanted me to stay. This

church was founded in 1917 and preachers in the past used it as a holding station to get to Los Angeles.

"I met some people here who were dedicated," he said. "They were easy to pastor. Booker T. Washington was right. Fill up your buckets where you are. That's what I did. The bishop wanted to move me two or three times, but I wanted to stay and was allowed to do so."

With Bennett, a self-described workaholic, any talk of retirement is a misnomer.

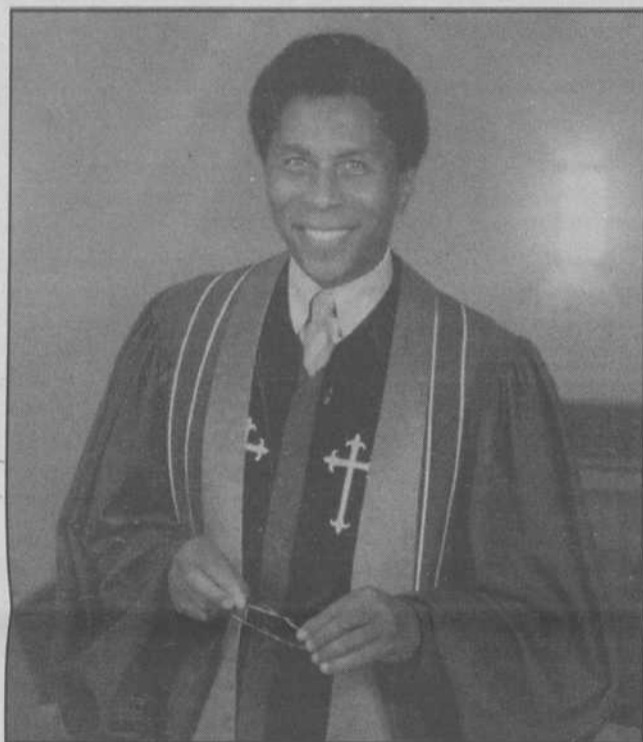
"I will stay active in community activities," he said. "I have a lot of job opportunities. I intend to wear out and not rust out. There is no mention of retirement. There is plenty of work to do. I won't leave Las Vegas. I'm in love with Las Vegas."

He was born in Greenville, S.C., where he worked at segregated Bob Jones University before going away to Morris Brown College and the Interdenominational Theological Center. Both are in Atlanta. At Morris Brown, he became a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. Bennett also holds a Doctorate of Divinity from Theroe Biblical Institution in Alabama.

His has been an active ministry, serving three terms



Martin Luther King Jr. and Mrs. H.P. Fitzgerald chat with a young Marion Bennett, who went on to build an extensive civic legacy spanning election to the state assembly, serving in the NAACP, helping found anti-poverty agencies, among numerous other activities.



The Rev. Marion Bennett served at Zion United Methodist Church from July 1, 1960 through June 2004.

as president of the Las Vegas Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Color People. He was elected to the state assembly, representing District 6 in West Las Vegas for 10 years. He was active in the NAACP when the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., spoke here at the Freedom Fund Banquet in 1964.

"I admired his self-giving, love and the cause he led

for moving the people forward," Bennett said of King.

In 1968, Bennett helped to establish a childcare center in Las Vegas for Black children, countering segregated public schools that held back high percentages of Black first-graders. The childcare center continues to provide service to the community.

"We wanted to make a difference in the lives of chil-

dren," he said. "We wanted to lay a foundation for Black boys and girls.

He helped start the Economic Opportunity Board of Clark County (EOB) and the Nevada Economic Development Corp. (NEDCO), which provided loans to Black businesses. He still has a seat on the EOB board of trustees.

Through it all, however, Zion was the base from which (See Bennett, Page 6)

## MetLife contest to test essay ability

Special to Sentinel-Voice

MetLife announced the sixth annual MetLife Scholar Program—a national essay contest offering 26 scholarship awards valued from \$1,000 to \$10,000 in U.S. Savings Bonds for a total of \$50,000 at maturity.

Young people in grades 6 to 12 enrolled in U.S. schools are encouraged to enter the essay contest titled, *Immigrant Contributions to America*.

"Since opening our doors in 1868, MetLife has had a proud history of helping immigrant families gain financial security," said Beth Hirschhorn, chief marketing officer for MetLife's U.S. Insurance and Financial Services businesses.

"It's our honor and privilege to further that commitment with the MetLife Scholar Program. MetLife is dedicated to encouraging bright young students from the communities we serve."

Applicants must be U.S. residents. Entries to the MetLife Scholar Program will be judged in two categories: grades 9-12 and grades 6-8. Every eligible participant will receive a certificate of recognition from MetLife. An independent panel of judges will select the winning entries based on originality, creativity, language proficiency and organization of ideas. Essays must be submitted with an official entry form—one entry per child. Essays and entry forms must be postmarked no later than September 28, 2004 and mailed to: The MetLife Scholar Program, 502 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA 15904.

## NBSI seeks to develop clients' job skills

By Lés Pierres Streater  
Sentinel-Voice

Nevada Business Services Inc.'s motto is "Good Employees aren't born... they're trained and NBSI is committed to change in the community."

In describing NBSI as an organization and its clientele, Bill Murphy, executive director, said, "Nevada Business Services serves several active clients. We service the adult population, which includes those individual 18-80 who are seeking skills development and ultimately employment. We offer assistance to allow them to become self-sufficient.

"We service a dislocated worker population, those individuals who lost their jobs through no fault of their own," Murphy said. "The one program that has the most notoriety has been our year-round youth pro-

gram that's providing opportunities and avenues for our youth ages 14-21."

NBSI, is a private, non-profit founded in 1981, is located at 930 W. Owens Ave. NBSI specializes in locating and assessing potential employees for employment with companies by providing customized training to meet companies' needs. This process enables NBSI to reduce the time it takes perspective companies to find potential employees and reduce the costs associated with hiring potential employees.

Through training & education, NBSI is able to offer potential employees internships and work experience while earning a competitive wage. Programs strive to provide growth, development, good work habits and long-term employability.

Some of the programs offered by NBSI includes: GED preparation, Cardiovascular

Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid, work experience, banking, teen parenting classes, leadership development, preparatory apprenticeship, tutorial assistance, life skills, mentoring, computer labs, career search and development and the Explorer's Program.

"We cover the four counties of Southern Nevada, Nye County, Lincoln County, Esmeralda County and, of course, Clark County, operating in eight locations," Murphy said. "For the adult population there is no income requirement to participate in the program, they just need to be underemployed or unemployed and seeking assistance in either training or job search.

NBSI targets youths and young adults living in low-income families, homeless, offenders, dropouts, foster children, skill deficient, pregnant, parenting and ex-of-

fenders. The Summer Youth Program has an enrollment of 1,000 students. If more funding were available, NBSI could expand capacity.

"We operate on a yearly budget of \$4 million to \$4.5 million that is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Workforce Investment Act. We work with approximately 5,000 potential clients a year through various programs and activities," Murphy said.

Mark McFadden Jr., has a good reason for seeking help from NBSI.

"I'm here basically looking for a job," McFadden said. "I'm trying to save up for college and pay off my acting tuition that I'm doing now. Nevada Business Services is a great company. I was with them three years ago and they helped me find (See NBSI, Page 6)