

Cager Elevated in AME SoCal Conference, Leaves Impressive L.A. Legacy

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Published November 2, 2022

Rev. John E. Cager III (File photo)

The Rev. John E. Cager III, pastor of Ward AME Church in Los Angeles, has been promoted to presiding elder of the denomination's Midwest North District comprised of 22 churches in Kansas and Nebraska.



Bishop Clement W. Fugh, presiding prelate of the 5th Episcopal District of the AME Church, announced the move, along with new pastoral appointments for 2022-2023, at the close of the 98th Session of the Southern California Annual Conference on Oct. 24.

Cager's appointment leaves many admirers with mixed feelings in that people applaud his elevation while admitting his consistent activism will be sorely missed. During his nearly eight years at Ward, he illustrated the AME tradition of meeting spiritual needs and addressing social ills with equal ferocity.

"My father in ministry is the Rev. Dr. Cecil L. 'Chip' Murray, so I was taught to minister with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. Wherever I have or will minister, I will always speak out against injustice. I will always speak up for the empowerment of the least, the lost, left out, left behind, and I will always remember that God is the God of the oppressed, and he brings people out of oppression," declared Cager.

A pastor in Southern California for more than 18 years, Cager has been on the front lines advocating for the underserved. In addition, he has served as president of both the Southern California AME Ministerial Alliance and the ecumenical Los Angeles Council of Religious Leaders for the past few years. In fact, Cager attributed some of the most memorable moments in his ministry occurring while he was at the helm of both organizations.

Recalling those instances, he said, "One of my great memories was when the Ministerial Alliance honored those who were members of the AME Church for 50 years or longer in 2010. It really impacted me and warmed my heart to witness the number of people who had their lives changed, baptized their children, got saved and made a life through the AME Church.

"As the president of Los Angeles Council of Religious Leaders, we partnered with the Inner City Youth Orchestra in 2017 on the anniversary of Dr. [Martin Luther] King's death. We had a unity concert where we brought together 30 denominations at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, and it really united the city. Those are two of my great memories," remembered Cager.

Although excited about moving to a higher level in ministry, the new presiding elder vows to maintain his dedication to his calling to preach the Gospel and no matter the size of the challenge, lean on his foundational scripture – Philippians 3:14 – "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."

"The devil and the world spend much of its time trying to convince people in general and Black people in particular that you can't, but Jesus was crucified on a plus sign. God is always moving forward, and the Spirit of God always moves onward and upward," said Cager.

To combat the distraction of negativity, he advised believers to focus on Philippians 4:8 – "...whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

“In this age of fake news and created news and alternative facts, think on the truth of Christ Jesus,” recommended Cager. “Focus on what’s right rather than what’s wrong and that’s when you get into the will of God.”

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