**CHRISTIAN SPEECH**

**FOR**

**WYLIE FRYER**

Hello everyone!! I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak with all of you today. I want to express my thanks to (**Name the person that invited you to speak**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, who has asked me to stand here, share some thoughts, and continue the conversation with all of you as we spend our time getting to know each other even better while learning the wisdom of our faith. We are all so blessed to have a place to call “ours,” and Greater Zion Hill Baptist Church has served our community with dedication and purpose for many years. Today we commemorate our Church School Anniversary by celebrating (**fill in the number of years**) the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years this institution has inspired, taught, encouraged, and opened the eyes of so many of us throughout the years. I’m sure most of you know that while this church came into being in 1929, thanks to the determination, passion and faith of the founders and congregants who led the way for us, each year, as we honor the establishment of our church and school, we give testimony to the light of knowledge that has shown us the way. It is a blessing to have a place to gather to learn about the Word of God and in turn, about ourselves, each other, and the complicated, evolving times in which we live. Knowledge like that which we gain here, in this environment, and in our school, is priceless, timeless, and critical to our survival as human and **HUMANE** beings.

As I was preparing to speak with you today, something struck me. This church has been in existence for eighty-nine years. In that time, it has morphed and moved... it has shared buildings and has withstood the tests of time, urban renewal, and other conditions and situations that have threatened its existence. The buildings themselves provided a physical “context” for our worship and learning, but the truth is that the genuine, lasting impact of what this church and its teachings mean to us exists within the hearts and souls of everyone who is a part of it. Our faith provides an invisible, **INDIVISIBLE** connection to each other and to God. Over recent years and months, we have heard about various acts of nature... and other threats that conspire to shake our physical foundations.... actually, in hindsight, we know that **EVERY** generation has its challenges from which to rise above, but once the Word of God reaches our innermost souls, that learning doesn’t leave... our mission is to practice what we learn. Our wisdom and faith and our Christian teachings become our fiber...the thread of what we’re made ... those lessons enter our beings and guide us....those teachings act as a lens and a layer of protection that serves us no matter where we are. Never forget that it was Nelson Mandela who said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” That goes for **ALL** education and that knowledge **maintains its effect** on us... once we receive that word, we have it.

Proverbs 2:6 teaches us, “For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.” I know someone who has taught me a very simple lesson... she tends to say, “I don’t know what I don’t know.” Think about that.... not **ONE** of us has any idea what we **don’t know**. We may walk around thinking that we are aware of all there is to know, but if we **AREN’T**, that breeds ignorance, division, and a woeful lack of **understanding**. How do we remedy that? Simple... by maintaining a thirst for knowledge, wisdom, guidance.

I believe in keeping my mind open to study... we are placed on this earth to learn... **Everything**, without exception, holds a lesson... and it is our duty as humans and as good Christians to be there for people... to constantly, **relentlessly** be open to learning... to receive the word.... to question what we don’t understand until we **DO** understand... to feed our souls and in turn, teach others what we now know... to spread light... to share truth and wisdom, in order to vanquish ignorance and hate... in order to do our best to **KNOW** what we previously didn’t know. Sometimes the “**struggle**” seems more “**real**” than it should, but I truly believe, and I invite you to do the same... that we **MUST** persevere.... to learn whatever we can about life, faith, and family, and share that knowledge. I am pleased to be a student under the instruction of the master teacher, The Reverend Dr. Walter L. Glover Jr. and the very capable Christian educator, The Rev. Richard Austin. Both are men of God who have a passion for holiness, fidelity for scriptural truth, and a concern that people come to Christ. Their dedication and passion for helping Christians mature certainly leaves a lasting impression upon the lives of all who attend our church school and helps to ensure that our church grows and matures in holiness and remains doctrinally sound as the church assumes its responsibility in leading and standing as a “Mighty Fortress in West Macon.”

In 2 Timothy 2:15, we are reminded, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” It’s been said that ignorance is really a sort of **arrogance**.... why **WOULDN’T** we want to know as much as possible about the complexities of life? Why **WOULDN’T** we want to have a guide... let’s call it a “holy handbook” to teach us how to survive, thrive, and prevail when times and circumstances are poised to threaten us??? And most of all, why **WOULDN’T** we want the insights and inspiration that fill our souls to show us how to really treasure our everyday existence???... to see us through the twists and turns and complexities of life? Every moment of our lives... from the time we are born, is dedicated to the purpose of unraveling the mysteries of life. It is with dedication and commitment to studying the Word of God that our most precious potential and understanding can be reached.

History tells us... I should say **TEACHES** us, that Sunday school was initiated as far back as 1750, when parishioners gathered to teach poor children, who otherwise had no opportunity to gain knowledge, to learn and be guided towards goodness and faith. We, here at Greater Zion Hill, expand and expound on that initial, early concept. While we don’t reserve our formal teaching to just one day of the week, we **DO** accept and honor our mission to teach and lead and share the wisdom of our faith. Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations once said, “Knowledge is **power**. Information is **liberating**, Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.” That has been steadfastly true for all people... throughout history... through time and crisis, evolution and revolution, and the teachings of the Bible have strengthened the souls of our forebears for almost as long.

George Washington Carver shared that, “Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom...” The words I share with you today have, for the most part, been around for generations... centuries.... millennia... we may wonder why that is.. The simple answer is that we have an ingrained **need to know**. We, as human beings, thirst for knowledge, guidance, and understanding... some of us may not realize it... some of us may get frustrated and angry at our shortcomings to express ourselves, but we also **KNOW** that **KNOWLEDGE** and **TRUTH** will set us **FREE**. We are all given just **ONE** main mandate in life... **LEARN**.... it is those among us... those that search the **deepest** for the **WORD**... that make the best teachers... but that hunger... that thirst... that fire for understanding exists within each one of us... and each one of us has what it takes to unlock that safe place inside within which we have the capacity to store knowledge and wisdom.

So many of us, through our selfless gestures and passion for sharing our humanity realize that the rewards of life are not found in the receiving of gifts... the true benefit is in the **giving**. Having said that, we may ask ourselves, “What or who makes the best teacher?” Guess what? There’s no simple answer... there’s no wrong answer.... we are **ALL** teachers. Each one of us possesses the capacity, the patience, the compassion, and point of view so necessary in spreading the richness and multi-dimensional word of wisdom and faith, and as we learn, it is our mandate to teach. And it is with the guidance of patient, wise, and compassionate teachers like Reverend Dr. Walter L. Glover Jr. and Rev. Richard Austin that we hold the promise to find our answers.

It is in Luke 2:52 that we find, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”

I am standing here, before you, with the enthusiasm and passion of one that has received and understands the power of knowledge. As I’ve said, I truly believe that “I don’t know what I don’t know,” but I am also aware that the rewards are to be found in the search, and so I intend to live my life with curiosity and the capacity to be open to new ideas and points of view that establish and support greater understanding of the mysteries... and histories... of life. I truly believe in the benefits of the knowledge gained in studying God’s word.... benefits such as finding support in time of need... comfort, joy, peace, wisdom, assurance, you name it... a Christian foundation will guide you to the questions as well as the answers.

I would like to invite you, our family, our friends, our community, and most of all this congregation to reflect upon the bible pledge and maintain your continued commitment for studying the Word of God. We all have questions... and in working together, in support of one another, we have the possibility of finding that comfort... that joy... the missing pieces that we all need to live a fulfilled and faithful life.

In conclusion, let us keep this close to our hearts at all times...

 Psalms 119:105: “I pledge to the Bible God's Holy word, and will take it as a lamp unto my feet, a light unto my path, and hide its words in my heart that I may not sin against God.”

I believe in that passage wholeheartedly and you know that if there is anything I might be able to do or share to support your own realization and revelations, I am here... we are here for each other... as one body, to learn and share the Word of God. Thank you all!!