BETHLEHEM CENTER
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Bethlehem Center Youth Choir
Mission

“We are God’s people, called to empower inner-city youth and families to model responsible behavior through discipleship, education and leadership development.”

Vision Statement

“The Bethlehem Center seeks a transformation of the Alton Park community by serving as a compelling safe haven and a strategic life equipper.”
Transforming Ministries Providing “Hope with Handles”

The Bethlehem Center is a faith based non-profit agency providing Spiritual enrichment and Educational tools with a focus on literacy to low income families and children of all ages in the inner city communities of Chattanooga.

The core objective of the Bethlehem Center is to share—through service and action—God’s promise of abundant life for His people, and to join God in the process of building His Kingdom in the inner cities of Chattanooga and the nation. People need hope, but people in the deep despair found in most inner city communities also need something concrete to hang on to while hope finds its way into their lives.

Consequently, the Beth offers “hope with handles” by combining the promise of God’s Word with empowering programs providing people the tools and means to help change their own lives and break free of the hopeless despair of poverty by way of literacy and spiritual guidance.

The Beth’s education programs strive to cause dramatic, positive changes in the lives of children trapped in an environment of poverty, illiteracy, violence, substance abuse, brokenness, and hopelessness through no fault of their own. Secondarily, the goal is to provide youth and adults with “second chances” to acquire the tools to make the same dramatic and positive changes in their lives.

About The Bethlehem Center

Recreation
Bethlehem Center History

1920 - Wesley Center programs begin in four houses at Polk and East 16th Streets
1921 - A ‘project with Negro people’ begins at Phillips Temple C.M.E. Church & becomes Bethlehem Center
1947 - Rev. Mrs. Sallie Crenshaw begins a mission with Sunday School on St. Elmo Avenue and 33rd Street in a borrowed beer tavern and soon thereafter opened a day care center (later the Good Shepherd Fold Day Care Center) in a nearby house.
1948 - New Wesley Community Center built ($167,000)
1952 - New Wesley Community Center Occupied at 1024 E. Main Street
1959 - Name changed to Miriam A. Brock Wesley Center
1960 - New building for Bethlehem Community Center occupied at 200 W. 38th Street in Alton Park
1967 - Brock & Bethlehem Centers merge under one Board of Directors and one Executive Director as United Methodist Neighborhood Centers, Inc.
1969 - Good Shepherd Fold Day Care Center becomes part of United Methodist Neighborhood Centers, Inc.
1971 - Good Shepherd Fold licensed for 70 children
1981 - Boys’ Club of Chattanooga leases part of Bethlehem Center
1985 - Sallie Crenshaw Day Care program moved to Bethlehem Center when Title XX funding is discontinued
1986 - Bethlehem Center building named for Rev. Sallie Crenshaw and the gymnasium named for Willis P. Vaughn
1988 - Boys’ Club of Chattanooga’s lease terminated
1992 - Wesley Center on Main Street closes after industrialization changed the demographics of the community it served and programming decreased
1992 - Miriam A. Brock Playground dedicated at the Bethlehem Center
1996 - Head Start Program begins at the Bethlehem Center

April 27, 1996 - Over 200 AmeriCorps workers and residents team with Beth to clean up the community, paint the Beth, and plant shrubs for National Service Day
May 31, 1996 - 1st Annual Beth Benefit Banquet. Reggie White (Green Bay Packers) was keynote speaker. 425 people attended
June 2, 1996 - 1st Annual Community Crusade and Block Party hosted by the Beth and area churches. Activities included face painting, horseback riding and singing. Reggie White was a featured speaker. Over 4,500 attended and were fed.
December 5, 1996 - First meeting to discuss a community development credit union. Many different city interests were represented by attendees.
February 21, 1997 - First meeting of the Board of Directors of the Bethlehem Community Development Credit Union.
Summer 1997 - First Annual Bethlehem Center Sports Academy, a 6-week program of academic, technology, sports, and spiritual enrichment classes, was attended by over 250 low-income youth. A 100-voice mass choir formed.
July 21, 1998 - Ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Bethlehem Community Development Credit Union.
November 24, 1998 - 1st meeting of the Steering Committee to establish the Bethlehem Academy for Boys.
December 23, 1998 - Credit Union certified by U.S. Treasury Dept. as a Community Development Financial Institution (Only the second in Tennessee).
January 1999 - Board of Directors approves comprehensive strategic plan outlining Bethlehem Center future development.
September 1999 - 1st class of K-1 boys enters the Bethlehem Academy for Boys.
May 18, 2000 - Tennessee Legislature passes Joint House & Senate Resolution No. 748 honoring the Bethlehem Center for 80 years of service to Chattanooga and Tennessee.
May 25, 2000 - City of Chattanooga selects Bethlehem Center for Best Practices Award from 1,100 other non-profits
August 2000 - Bethlehem Economic Development Center opens
January 2001 - Economic Development Center (BEDC) offers first and only Individual Development Account (IDA) program in Hamilton County.
March 2001 - BEDC graduates first Money Management class
May 2001 - BEDC graduates first Small Business Training class
March 2002 - First IDA Program participant completes program having increased personal net worth by almost $10,000
August 2002 - Bethlehem Community Development Credit Union certified by federal government as a Community Development Entity (CDE)
August 2002 - Bethlehem Literacy Academy opens as a year-round program serving public and private school students in grades K-12

2006 - The Leadership Academy was started to help our teens become more responsible citizens in their community.
2007 - The V-FUND was established to provide mini-grants for other ministries focusing on inner-city transformation
2007 - Radio Show “PEP Talk” started on WGOW Talk Radio 102.3 FM to expand the message of hope for the inner-city.


**Spiritual Development**
The core objective of the Bethlehem Center is to share—through service and action—God’s promise of abundant life for His people. People need hope, but people in despair also need something to hang onto while hope finds its way into their lives. The Beth offers “hope with handles” by combining God’s promise with empowering ministries that give people the tools and means to change their own lives and break free of the despair of poverty and hopelessness.

- Bible classes and worship sponsored by local churches
- “Progress Toward Wholeness” Tours
- Community Outreach Programs consisting of Gospel Concerts, messages of hope and Missions for Change

**Bethlehem Literacy Academy - Summer and After School Program**
The goal of the Bethlehem Literacy Academy - Summer and After School Programs is to empower students to succeed in school by helping them to read at or above their appropriate grade level. The Bethlehem Center is a safe haven and ‘second home’ for students after school. It is also a place where they are held accountable for their homework and taught new skills. On average, the After School Program services 75 students and the Summer Literacy Academy services 125.

The programs provide:
- Literacy Assessment and Instruction
- Homework Assistance
- Behavioral Intervention
- Enrichment Activities

to low income and at risk children in the first through eighth grades at no cost to the participant. It is done in a caring, nurturing environment where each enrolled student is given intensive, individual tutorial assistance and is encouraged to maximize their performance and reach their individual potential.

**Bethlehem Leadership Academy**
The Bethlehem Leadership Academy invites young leaders ages 13 — 18 from our targeted demographics who are interested in improving their leadership skills to impact social change. The Bethlehem Leadership Academy is an ongoing program with monthly meetings to track the progress of the project assignments of each participant throughout their school year.

**VISION Tours**
This program includes students, teachers, counselors and administrators that participate in highly motivational tours to high performing high schools, colleges and businesses as well as mission trips to see how others are changing their communities.

**VOICE of Youth Advisory Council**
The Bethlehem Leadership Academy’s Voice of Youth Advisory Council (VYAC) consists of high school and college students within our targeted demographics. Members of the VYAC serve as special ambassadors of the academy. The council members are selected based on their outstanding participation in the academy’s programs and for their leadership skills, academic achievement and commitment to serving their communities. The VYAC members present leadership workshops throughout the academy’s youth conferences. These students also participate as guests and co-producers/interns on the Beth’s radio program “PEP Talk” which airs every Monday at 7 p.m. on WGOW TALK 102.3 FM. Call-in at 423-267-1023 and 888-779-TALK or listen online live on www.WGOW.com

**Coach’s VICTORY Scholars**
The Coach’s Victory Scholars program seeks to identify students who will make a significant contribution to their community. As part of its commitment to education and youth, the Bethlehem Leadership Academy will provide scholarship awards to high school and college students who participate in its signature programs.

**V-FUND (Vision, Voice and Victory - Fund for Urban Neighborhood Development)**
Mini-Grants will be awarded to qualifying churches, organizations and businesses for projects or initiatives that will improve and promote education, social justice, economic development and spiritual growth/character development. Youth leaders will help select and monitor these projects in their community.
Lurone was born in Lafayette, Alabama, but grew up in the South side inner city of Chattanooga, Tennessee. He is a 1972 graduate of Howard High School, where he became an outstanding athlete in football, basketball and track. His athletic and academic skills earned him a football scholarship to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, one of the most prestigious Black Colleges in the country. Lurone earned a Bachelor of Science in Health and Physical Education in 1977.

After graduating from Fisk University, Lurone returned to Chattanooga and began his teaching and coaching career with the Chattanooga City School System. During his coaching career Lurone had the pleasure of coaching NFL Star, Reggie White, former Green Bay Packer, All-Pro Defensive End. He also coached Olympic Gold Medallist, Venus Lacy, who starred on the US Women’s Olympic Basketball Team.

In 1983 Lurone became a committed disciple for Jesus and in 1986 he was licensed and ordained as a Baptist Minister. He attended Beracah Bible Institute and earned a Certificate of Study in 1988. In 1992 he received a Master’s Degree in Education, with a concentration in Administration and Supervision, from Trevecca Nazarene College in Nashville, TN.

In 1992, Lurone became Principal of his alma mater, Howard School of Academics and Technology, the largest inner city high school in Chattanooga. He later moved to the school system’s Central Office as Director of Drug Education and Athletics, with responsibility for programs in forty-one schools.

After much prayer and 18 years of working with youth in the public schools of Chattanooga, in 1995 Lurone heard the Voice and felt the hand of Jesus calling him into full-time ministry. He was appointed founding pastor of the Bethlehem United Methodist Church, now known as Bethlehem-Wiley United Methodist Church. He jointly serves as the Executive Director of the United Methodist Neighborhood Centers, Inc. otherwise known as the Bethlehem Center. He is one of the founders of the Bethlehem Community Development Credit Union, the first of its kind to be chartered in the State of Tennessee. He is also the Associate Publisher for the Chattanooga Courier, an African American owned newspaper.

In 2005 Lurone released his book, “Crisis in Urban America” which reveals his vision for dealing with the many problems plaguing our inner city communities. He is also co-host and creator of the radio show PEP Talk that offers sound and encouraging advice to listeners. The show airs every Monday at 7 p.m. on WGOW TALK 102.3 FM. Call-in at 423-267-1023 and 888-779-TALK or listen online live on www.WGOW.com.

Lurone is married to Glinda H. Jennings and they have 3 children, Lurone II., Luronda and David, as well as three granddaughters, Ania, Tymber, and Nadia. Lurone also shares his faith and ministry through his revivals, conferences, workshops, and sermons in other churches, schools, and ministries throughout the country.
Bill Holland

Bill Holland joined the Bethlehem Center staff in March 2003 as the assistant director of economic development and now serves as business manager. He has extensive experience in sales, operations management and has owned a fire safety business. Bill attended the University of Central Florida and received a bachelors degree in marketing in 1982. He then attended the International Seminary in Plymouth, Fla. and was ordained as a minister of the Gospel in 1985. He completed his masters degree in ministry from the North Tennessee Bible Seminary in 2006. Bill is very proud to serve as a Major and Battalion Chaplain with The Tennessee State Guard. Bill has also served in ministry as senior, youth and children’s pastor along with music minister but says the most interesting job he held was as a Walt Disney World character from 1975 to 1980.

Willie Kitchens

Willie is the Center’s performing arts director. His musical presentations are defined as electrifying orchestrations that are sensitive, yet soul stirring, with heartfelt creative arrangements that encourage hope and joy through personal life experiences. His hand clapping, foot patting and meditative style reaches all audiences of all ages and races. Through the years, after mastering the lead guitar and the bass guitar his desire to know more about where God was leading him in his music motivated him to teach himself how to play the piano, electric keyboards and also the harmonica. Throughout his musical career, he has ministered with The Five Sons of Calvary, The Ambassadors of Christ, Reverence, The Bethlehem Community Center Mass Choir, and The Harmonizing Superiors. He has performed at youth rallies, retreats, prison, government institutions along with two appearances on BET’s “Bobby Jones Gospel Show” to name a few.

David Meredith

David Meredith is the literacy academy coordinator. He graduated from Chattanooga’s Riverside High School and attended Alabama A&M University where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in art education. Afterwards he continued his studies at the Nazarene College. David taught 17 years in the Chattanooga public school system, three years at the Bethlehem Academy for Boys and worked with the Boys Club of Chattanooga teaching art and recreation.

DeWayne Bryant

DeWayne is the building superintendent and a graduate of Chattanooga High. He began working at the Bethlehem Center on August 23, 1996. His desire is to continually serve the Lord and the community. He is married to Effie Bryant and they are the parents of three children. DeWayne and his family are members of the Bethlehem-Wiley United Methodist Church. Among his hobbies are playing basketball and wrestling.
Meet Some of Our Students

My name is Lebron and I live with my grandmother. I am 11 years old and am in the 5th grade at Calvin Donaldson School, My best subject in school is math and reading. I like to eat pizza and play with play station 2. I am good at rapping and want to learn more about geometry. My favorite book is, “The Cat in the Hat.” I like coming to the Bethlehem Center so that I can learn more about basketball and the Lord. When I grow up, I want to be a Police Officer like my cousin.

My name is Kristinn and I live with my mother and brother. I am 10 years old and am in the 5th grade at Battle Academy. My best subject in school is reading. I like to eat cheese, chicken and grapes. I am good singing, acting and ballet. I like coming to the Bethlehem Center because I can learn more. When I grow up, I want to be a massage therapist. Someone I admire is my mom. My favorite book is, “Chicken soup for the Girls soul.” I like to collect nail polish and lip gloss. I believe in God. I like to visit my family in Ohio. Something special about my family is that we love each other.

My name is Davonta and I live with my grandma. I am 9 years old and am in the 3rd grade at Calvin Donaldson school. My best subject in school is math. I like to eat ravioli. I am good at football. I want to learn more about reading. I like coming to the Bethlehem Center because I like to read and play games. When I grow up, I want to be a train driver. I have been going to the Beth for 1 year. Someone I admire is Mr. Meredith. My favorite experience at the Beth Center was going to Dollywood. My favorite book is, “The Frog and the Toad.” I believe in God.

My name is Eriona. I live with my mother and father. I am 7 years old and in the 2nd grade at East Lake school. My best subject in school is Math. I like to eat apples, strawberries and bananas. I like to visit my friend Jazmin. I am good at making friends and drawing. One thing I would like to learn more about is math. My favorite book is, “Being Best Friends”. I like to collect toys. I like to go to the Bethlehem Center because Mr. Meredith is nice and they help me with my homework. I believe in God. I want to be a teacher.

My name is LeBrisha and I live with my mother. I am 6 years old and am in the 1st grade at Calvin Donaldson school. My best subject in school is math and recess. I like to eat pizza and soup. I like to play with dolls. I like to visit my daddy. I like to make new friends. I am good at reading and like coming to the Bethlehem Center because it’s fun. My favorite book is “Dr. Seuss.” I believe in that God and Jesus. When I grow up, I want to be a cheerleader. I admire Mrs. Elworth (my teacher). The Beth Center helps me to learn.
Board of Directors

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Holston Annual Conference
Contact Us

United Methodist Neighborhood Center
The Sallie Crenshaw Bethlehem Center
200 W. 38th Street
Chattanooga, TN 37410

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 2156
Chattanooga, TN 37409

Telephone: 423-266-1384
Fax: 423-756-3557
Web Address: www.TheBeth.org