

Minister Lesley L. Bligen
Biographical Statement

Minister Lesley Bligen was born to Ethel Bligen and the late Joseph Bligen. He grew up on Edisto Island with one sister and three brothers, in a home filled with love and encouragement. He attended Jane Edwards Elementary, Edisto Island; Boggs Academy, Keysville, GA and graduating from Baptist Hill High School in 1981.

His parents instilled in Lesley that he could do anything that he put his mind to. Special words of encouragement provided by his father were to “handle your business, treat people with respect, trust in the Lord and never forget where you come from.”

Minister Bligen received an Associate’s Degree in General Studies from Barton County Community College, a Bachelor’s Science Degree in Public Administration, from Upper Iowa University (both while in the military); and a Masters of Divinity Degree from Johnson C. Smith Seminary at the ITC in Atlanta, GA (2006).

Minister Bligen retired with 20 honorable years of military service in the United States Army where he received numerous awards.

Minister Bligen is a member of Edisto Island Presbyterian Church, under the leadership of Rev. Dr. McKinley Washington Jr. where as a young man was active in the youth choir and served as the president of the Youth Group. After accepting the call into the ministry Minister Bligen served as a minister for a local homeless shelter for six months.

Minister Bligen has served as the (student) pastor Aimwell and Hopewell Presbyterian Churches where he continues to be obedient to God’s calling to the ministry of the church and community. My service in those two churches ended in 2013.

He enjoys reading all types of books, listening to Jazz, Gospel and R&B. His hobbies are cooking, writing, bowling, playing football, basketball and fishing. He has two children, Domonique and Taurean, and two grandchildren, Kallid and Myles. He also enjoys going out to dinner and spending time with his family.

MY FAITH JOURNEY

My faith journey began in 1963, with my birth and my baptism (at the Edisto United Presbyterian Church). I grew up in a Christian home with a Presbyterian father and a Methodist mother.

I served as the Youth President, on the Youth Choir, was a faithful in my attendance in Sunday School and the functions that pertained to the Youth of the church. I attended Boggs Academy, in Keysville, GA., as a part of my formal schooling, spending my 8th – 10th grade school years there. I returned home and to Baptist Hill High School and to Edisto United Presbyterian Church.

Upon graduating I entered the military, where I served my country for twenty years. During this time I attended many different Protestant Churches, including a Pentecostal Church, but the desire for the church of my youth never left me. So when I retired, I came home and back to my church roots and what was now Edisto Presbyterian Church, USA.

In the Fall of 2002 I had a dream where I replaced Rev. Dr. McKinley Washington, Jr., my pastor, as the pastor of Edisto Pres. He and I were seated in the pulpit area and he was telling me some things, then he got into the pulpit. Announced his retirement and introduced me as the new pastor. I stood up, we embraced and I entered the pulpit and began to preach. I kept this to myself for a while, not sure what it meant. For about 2 months after the dream every night at about 2 a.m. I was awoken and guided to a passage of scripture and I began to write sermons. These experiences awaken me to the call of God to the ministry of His church and to His claim on my life.

When I finally spoke about it, I did so to my mom, who told me that God wanted a more intimate relationship with me. I began to search colleges in the area to see what kind of classes they offered and finding none, I went to Rev. Washington who immediately said, “I’ve been waiting on you.” We talked about it, about my being called by God, and later that year (2003) I was in seminary.

I have worked with two churches as a Student pastor and I must say that it has been an awesome experience. There have been highs and lows, good and bad, sweat and tears and the exposure to the deeper calling to ministry, not just to preaching. I have always believed that a preacher and a pastor are two different things. I have been called to preach (although that has been questioned by some), but also to ministry, serving God and God’s people, utilizing the gifts given me.

One of the most difficult obstacles along this journey has been passing all of the Ordination Exams. I believe that I was being tested in many ways and on many levels, but mostly in my trust in God. I felt that I knew the work, felt good about passing any number of the exams, but I was not attentive to what God was doing in me. I paid too much attention to what I thought God was doing in the church.

I refused to let my faith in what I knew God had called me to do not be accomplished. If I put my trust in God, first and allow God to be Lord of my conscience and God’s Spirit to be my guiding force, I knew that I would persevere. The road has been difficult at times. The journey has been seemingly a blessing in spite of everything. I have lost a lot while on this journey. I lost my dad, have been separated from some family, and I’ve lost some friends. But I am still here. And through it all I know that God has been by my side preparing me to serve a congregation willing to trust GOD and step out on FAITH.

My journey has to serve as a Student Pastor of Aimwell and Hopewell Presbyterian Churches in Walterboro for 8 years. And NOW with the opportunity to be the Pastor of College Heights Presbyterian Church in Fayetteville, NC.

A STATEMENT OF MY FAITH

I believe in GOD almighty, the creator of heaven and earth. There is one triune GOD, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The same is the Holy GOD of Israel, whom I worship, serve and trust. Having a personal relationship with GOD is the most important thing for my life. This close relationship gives me peace, joy and purpose for living. Almighty GOD is sovereign, majestic, holy, wise and just; He is compassionate, merciful, forgiving, loving and gracious.

I believe GOD created the world and all that is in the world was created by Him and for Him. He made male and female in His own image and likeness. He gave them a free will. GOD does not force people to obey Him and because He doesn't, we humans sometimes misuse our freedom of choice by choosing unwisely. We rebel against GOD and break His commandments. But instead of condemning us, GOD shows mercy and compassion on us and with His abundant grace redeems us.

I believe that Christ is the second person in the Holy Trinity. HE is the sacrificial Lamb of GOD who died that I may live and serve GOD. Through HIM I have the gift of eternal life and I am growing in my understanding of what that means and what my response should be. I am encouraged and refreshed every time that I think on this.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He (The Spirit) indwells in all believers and He renews, sustains and guides us. The Holy Spirit knows our thoughts and deeds and intercedes for us even when we don't know how to pray. He convicts us of sin (as our conscience) and empowers us to be Disciples of Christ. The Holy Spirit binds us together with all believers in the church (body) of Christ. This Holy Spirit quickens us to serve GOD faithfully, to protect GOD's creation, to proclaim GOD's grace and forgiveness and to invite others to share in the Good News. As we walk in GOD's will, we help to bring about reconciliation, liberation of the oppressed, food to feed the hungry, a balm to heal the wounded and provide help and comfort those who need it.

I believe that I have been called to serve God and the people of God as a messenger, proclaiming the Word of GOD as the revelation of GOD in Christ Jesus, to perform ministry in the life of the Church and the community (world) and to avail myself to that which is the chief end of all mankind, which is to glorify GOD. In spite of my shortcomings, GOD has redeemed and restored me for service to the people of GOD and I have devoted my life to this process.