

Commerating kindness

*Antioch Baptist Church
celebrates 25 years of
community service*

By Maria Vizcaino
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the Durham VOICE

When TaQuan Lynch moved to Durham in 2012, he visited a different church every Sunday for months, hoping to find one that reflected his beliefs and values.

“I was looking for certain things in a church, like the atmosphere, how people worship, how sincere they are to the word of God,” he said. “Antioch was it for me.”

Lynch, 25, who will graduate this spring with a master’s degree in social work from North Carolina Central University, said what has kept him at the church is not the preacher, but the congregation’s mission to serve the community.

Sunday, Jan. 28, marked the beginning of the celebrations of Antioch Baptist Church’s 25th year of giving back. Dozens of members gathered to kick off what will be nearly a year of celebrations, running until Dec. 9, 2018.

“This special service is to acknowledge our service for the first 25 years and how to face the next 25,” said the Rev. Michael Page, the senior pastor of the congregation.

The Rev. Edwin Taylor, an associate minister at Rivermont Baptist Church in Virginia, delivered the morning message.

“We’re encouraging people to become involved all year in our special services, special mission

projects, and some activities to help us understand our history for the past 25 years,” said Page, who added that the details for upcoming special events will become available as the dates approach.

After 17 years of leading Antioch, Page, now 59, believes the quarter-century anniversary is an opportunity for the congregation to have a deeper understanding of Antioch’s history and purpose.

Through volunteers and donations, the church takes on mission projects, including serving hot meals and providing shelter for the homeless when the temperature



Stacey Harrison, a member of the congregation, dances to the men’s choir performance during the special service at Antioch Baptist Church on Sunday, Jan. 28. Harrison began attending services 2 years ago, after receiving one of the churches Thanksgiving food baskets. (Photo by Maria Vizcaino)

drops below 40 degrees.

There are several ministries, or committees, where members of the congregation can help with initiatives ranging from Christian education to hospitality. The church also offers a food pantry, where people from the community can pick up canned foods regularly.

Additionally, the church provides Christmas dinners and Thanksgiving baskets.

“My life has changed since I came to Antioch,” said church member Stacey Harrison. “It’s like night and day.”

He joined the congregation after attending the Thanksgiving service two years ago, where he was given a basket filled with food for the holiday. Now, he volunteers every Tuesday and Thursday at the food pantry,

attends the Sunday service and participates in the Bible study.

Mary L. Sims, 71, presented to the congregation the first anniversary project for the year — assembling a 50-by-70-inch quilt, representative

of the church’s history.

“It’s to commemorate where we started at and where we’ve come from, the things that we’ve accomplished,” she said.

The quilt will be made of embroidered pictures of the church’s leaders, including its founder, the late Rev. Dr. Harold J. Cobb, and current leader Page.

Sims, who joined Antioch 20 years ago,

is proud of Antioch’s community outreach initiatives and is eager to celebrate the milestone.

“We might not be many in number,” she said. “But we do a lot of great things.”

According to Page, about 80 to 100 people attend Antioch’s service on Sundays. Despite the constant growth of the congregation, he still wants to attract more young people to Antioch.

“Some of the members come and go, some of them have decided to grow with the church, and that’s a blessing for us,” Page said. “But we’re also trying to become a more innovative ministry to engage more youth.”

The building, located at the intersection of North Guthrie Avenue and Holloway Street, has housed Antioch since its establishment in December 1993 as the First United Antioch Baptist Church Christian Center.

In 2001 Page became the senior pastor, and two years later the members voted to rename the church Antioch Baptist Church.

“It’s just an awesome place for me,” Sims said. “I love Antioch. We always have something coming up and everything we do is for our congregation and our community.”

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