



ANNUAL REPORT



BABER AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sunday Worship 12:00pm Sunday School 8:30am Wednesday Bible Study 12pm & 7pm Rev. James C. Williams, Pastor

550

THE PASTOR'S WORD >>

To Bishop Samuel L. Green, Sr., Episcopal Supervisor Phyllis Green, Presiding Elder Paul J. Thomas, Presiding Elder Faye Banks Taylor and members of the 30th Session of the Western New York Annual Conference:

Momentum is forward movement that results in increased impact. I'm pleased to report Baber continues to demonstrate clear and measurable momentum.

The new ministries Baber has launched are evidence of our momentum. The Baber Food Share, under the leadership of Brother and Sister Ronke Tapp, distributes fresh produce from the Rochester Farmers Market after worship each week. The Health Ministry, under the leadership of Sister Gwen Woodall, provides "health bites" and exercise classes each week.

The ministries Baber has revitalized are evidence of our momentum. The Sons of Allen, under the leadership of Brother Brian F. Smith and Brother Rashaad Parker, have created a "safe space for men to support, uplift, and empower one another." The Music Ministry, under the new leadership of Brother Lewis C. Banks, III, welcomed back the choir.

The health of Baber's ministries is evidence of our momentum. The Community Meal serves the homeless and others in need each week. The Lay Organization equips leaders with the tools needed to serve with excellence. The missionaries provide immediate care to bereaved families, read to students each week, and prepare meals for the homeless and coordinate a mission project each month. The Scholarship Ministry provided financial and spiritual resources to ten students. The Young People's and Children's Division participated in educational tours, created health-focused resources, collected nonperishable food items and cash for a local food bank, and met each month to develop our children. Some of these stories of success will be shared in this book.

I'm pleased to report Baber continues to demonstrate clear and measurable momentum. Of course, the fuel of this forward movement is God and our spiritual disciplines, such as our Bible Studies, Church School, Prayer Meeting, and worship experiences, which help us "to reflect the life and love of Jesus Christ." Thank you for the privilege and honor of being Baber's pastor!

Sincerely,

THE REVEREND JAMES C. SIMMONS
PASTOR



A LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF STEWARDS >>

Friday, June 29, 2025, was an unforgettable evening. On this date, we honored our longest-tenured pastor, the Reverend James C. Simmons, for 15 years of faithful leadership and service. Pastor made a grand New Orleans-style second-line entrance, setting the tone for a true celebration. With live music from Will Holton, a dynamic DJ, and a dance floor that stayed full all night, it was a fitting tribute to Pastor Simmons' legacy and to the spirit, unity, and joy he continues to bring to the Baber family.

We celebrated because Pastor has been a decisive and resilient leader. He stepped into a church facing near collapse and foreclosure, yet he made the hard calls, organized resources, and led us through uncertainty without losing direction. Today, we stand debt free. We celebrated Pastor because he has been a strategic and disciplined leader. He did not treat debt elimination as the finish line; instead, he established guardrails and practices to ensure we would not repeat the same financial and operational vulnerabilities. Through stronger financial oversight, centralized funding of ministries, and intentional planning for maintenance and upgrades, rather than reacting to emergencies, he positioned Baber for sustained stability. He has also created structures that allow the church to carry the mission forward, attract resources, and operate beyond a single budget cycle.

We celebrated Pastor because he has been an empowering leader. He teaches, mentors, and creates meaningful opportunities for others to step into leadership. The evidence is seen in the number of individuals who have grown into positions of influence, the ministries that are thriving and active, and the people who are now willing to step out on faith and take risks for Jesus Christ.

We celebrated because he is a preacher! Week after week, we receive a word that is powerful, relevant, and Spirit-filled. Through his voice the word comes alive and we're able to "go and be the church."

Pastor Simmons has been a stable and consistent leader whose impact continues to shape both our present and our future. Bishop Green, we prayerfully ask that you return our Pastor for another year of phenomenal leadership!

Sincerely,

THE SENIOR BOARD OF STEWARDS
BABER A.M.E. CHURCH



We Remember Them

2025-26 CONFERENCE YEAR

SISTER VIVIAN LATTA



FOUNDING MEMBER

BROTHER JOHNNY LAWREY



SISTER ANNIE RUTH MOORE



SISTER WILHEMENA SCOTT



SISTER ROCHELLE SLATER



BROTHER MARC YOUNG





BABER FOOD SHARE

The Baber Food Share, launched in October 2025 by Brother Reuben and Sister Ronke Tapp, Ph.D., reflects our commitment to reflect the love of Jesus Christ to our church and community. In partnership with Flower City Pickers, an organization focused on “feeding people, not landfills,” the Baber Food Share distributes fresh produce and other goods sourced from the Rochester Farmers Market. After each service, these items are made available to congregants and the community, helping increase access to healthy food. Because the program depends on seasonal harvests and weekly donations, the selection varies, offering a mix of items throughout the year.



BABER HEALTH MINISTRY

The Baber Health Ministry entered a new chapter in July 2025 with the appointment of Sister Gwen Wooddall as director. Under her leadership, the ministry has expanded its focus on education and wellness through several new initiatives.

One of these efforts, Health Bites, provides a weekly feature in the church's virtual announcements, offering accessible and practical health information. Topics have included vaccination schedules, seasonal affective disorder, mindfulness, the African Heritage Diet, HIV/AIDS, and breast cancer, all aimed at increasing awareness and encouraging healthier choices.

In addition, the ministry now offers weekly exercise opportunities. Each Monday, participants can join low-impact cardio and yoga classes designed to support overall wellness. The yoga sessions are led by Dr. Anika Simone Johnson, founder of Love, Light, and Yoga LLC, bringing professional expertise and a welcoming approach to participants at all levels.



KEENAGERS MINISTRY

The Keenagers, led by Sister Etta J. Cohen, is a ministry of love, friendship, care, and fellowship for senior adults. Each month the ministry creates a welcoming space which combats isolation, promotes mental and physical well-being, and builds strong community. From movies and bingo to meaningful conversations and presentations on subjects like home health care, Medicare, and Scams 101, there's always something that brings people together.

This year featured several standout experiences. In July 2025, members participated in a “Self Defense for Seniors” class led by Cameron McClaney of Roc Martial Arts, gaining practical skills and confidence. In November, the group attended A Soul Symphony: Where Gospel Meets Orchestra at Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre—a powerful and inspiring performance celebrating the richness of African American musical traditions through a collaboration between the Eastman School of Music, the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, and a community gospel choir. Their annual Christmas party in December 2025 featured a feast, fun activities, and plenty of laughter and fellowship. Then in March 2026, 28 members took a train trip to Syracuse, New York. This outing was filled with connection, joy, and lasting memories.



THE THOMAS DAVIS LAY ORGANIZATION



The Thomas Davis Lay Organization, under the dynamic leadership of Sister Regina Grice, continues to equip and inspire members for impactful service. Grounded in its mission “to teach, train, and empower members for lay ministry, global leadership, and Christ-centered service,” the organization creates consistent opportunities for growth, learning, and leadership development.

A key part of this work is the monthly Lay Institute, which offers practical, relevant training on a wide range of topics. This year’s sessions included “Work Smarter, Not Harder: An Introduction to A.I.,” “Stress Management & Self Care for Leaders,” and “Servant Leadership in Crisis.” The organization also held a special session on “Church History Collection and Story Gathering” by Antoine McDonald, Reference Librarian at the Monroe County Central Library.

In March 2026, the Lay Organization hosted its Servant Leadership Conference, centered on the theme, “Uplifting others through trials, purpose, and faith for such a time as this.” The conference brought together a diverse group of presenters, including Sgt. Justin Collins of the Rochester Police Department, Rochester City Council President Miguel Melendez, Jr., Clianda Florence (founder and CEO of Strength 2 Say and Let’s Get L.I.T.), Lorenzo Marc Williams (author and owner of L. Marc Williams Productions), and Shirley Borger, Peer Educator at Trillium Health. The panel discussion was facilitated by Dr. Charmaine Cohen and offered both inspiration and practical insight for navigating leadership in challenging times.

The organization also made a strong investment in the next generation. In May 2025, it hosted its first Youth Leadership Conference. This engaging and impactful day included a youth leadership panel, career development presentation, professional etiquette session, and a RochesterWorks workshop. Each participant also received a professional headshot, equipping them with both knowledge and tangible tools for their future.



THE THOMAS DAVIS LAY ORGANIZATION
BABER A.M.E. CHURCH

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Richard Allen Essay & Video Contest

GRADES 7-12

Theme: **SERVANT LEADERSHIP — UPLIFTING OTHERS THROUGH TRIALS, PURPOSE, AND FAITH**
JOHN 13:14-15, ESTHER 4:14

STUDENTS ARE ASKED TO SUBMIT EITHER A WRITTEN ESSAY OR VIDEO. ALONG WITH THE TITLE OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP PROVIDED IN EACH FULL ESSAY AND VIDEO CONTAINER WILL BE AVAILABLE ON THE CHURCH WEBSITE: WWW.BABERROCHESTER.ORG

PLEASE EMAIL SUBMISSIONS TO: RICHARDALLEN@BABERROCHESTER.ORG

AWARDS: 1ST PLACE: \$100, 2ND PLACE: \$75, 3RD PLACE: \$50

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 7, 2026

WINNERS ANNOUNCED: BY FEBRUARY 15, 2026

BABER AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
530 HOOVER STREET • ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14607
SISTER ETTA J. COHEN, D.D., SISTER REGINA GRICE, PRESIDENT
THE REV. DR. JAMES H. C. SIMMONS, PASTOR

THE THOMAS DAVIS LAY ORGANIZATION
BABER A.M.E. CHURCH

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Poster Contest

GRADES 1-6 (ELEMENTARY)

Theme: **SERVANT LEADERSHIP — UPLIFTING OTHERS THROUGH TRIALS, PURPOSE, AND FAITH**
JOHN 13:14-15, ESTHER 4:14

Submission Options:
• Poster Submission
• Video Submission

Submissions must reflect the theme of servant leadership. Winners and selected submissions will be featured on the Baber A.M.E. Church website: www.baberrochester.org

Submission Deadline: Friday, February 7, 2026
Please email submissions to: RichardAllen@baberrochester.org

Awards: 1st Place: \$100, 2nd Place: \$75, 3rd Place: \$50
Full contest criteria, guidelines, and submission instructions will be posted on the church website at: www.baberrochester.org under the News section.

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SONS OF ALLEN MINISTRY

The Sons of Allen is a growing and dynamic ministry committed to creating “a safe space for men to support, uplift, and empower one another.” Since stepping into leadership in July 2025, Coordinator Brother Brian F. Smith and Co-Coordinator Brother Rashaad Parker have cultivated a strong, consistent space where men can connect, grow, and be challenged.

Through monthly fellowships, the ministry brings together conversations that speak to the whole person—financially, emotionally, and physically. Sessions have ranged from financial literacy, where Brother Brian F. Smith encouraged participants to take control of their money and build stronger habits, to deeper moments like The Courage to Grieve and the Power to Heal, led by Pastor Simmons. That gathering created space for reflection and remembrance, honoring the life of Brother Marc Young, with the atmosphere enriched by a live jazz trio. The focus on total wellness continues with practical teaching on nutrition, led by Professor LaQuanna Sparkman, and interactive experiences like Chair Pilates with Stanley Purdie of Peacemakers Lifestyle. We challenged assumptions that Pilates was just for women and reinforced that health and self-care matter at every stage of life.

Together, these experiences reflect what the Sons of Allen is all about: building brotherhood, encouraging growth, and creating space for men to show up fully and support one another.



THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S DIVISION

The Young People's Department (YPD), under the leadership of Director Jocelyn Gaston and President Jazzmere Cohen, continues to thrive as a space where young people learn, lead, and serve. Meeting monthly, the YPD offers consistent opportunities for growth, creativity, and community engagement, supported by a strong network of advisors, parents, and extended family. Throughout the year, YPDers have been actively engaged in experiences that expand both their knowledge and their impact. In April 2025, Rochester hosted the Buffalo-Rochester District quarterly session, themed "Game On," where youth explored how gaming can be used as a positive force in the community. In May, they participated in the connectional "Freed Between the Lines" banned book reading and poster contest, with Rehani Tapp earning 3rd Place Youth Auxiliary, Manuel Tapp receiving Allen Stars 2nd Place, and Josiah Tapp winning 1st Place Auxiliary honors.



The fall brought opportunities for both leadership and learning. In October 2025, the YPD attended the First Episcopal District Annual Meeting in Stamford, Connecticut, where the Reverend Robert Isaiah Dubose completed his tenure as First Episcopal District YPD President. In November, during the Month of Service, the YPD partnered with the Artrie M. Turner Missionary Society to support families at Edison Tech High School—collecting more than 30 turkeys and contributing gift baskets for those in need, exceeding expectations.



December was especially full, blending education, creativity, and support for one another. YPDers researched and presented Black history segments highlighting both national and local figures, including Frederick Douglass, Austin Steward, Clarissa Street, Kelsey's Landing, Sister Emma Dixon, and Baberite Sister Sabrina LaMar. They also showed up in support of their own, attending a production of A Christmas Carol featuring Allen Star Manuel Tapp.



In the new year, the momentum continued. In January 2026, YPDers visited the Hall of Justice, gaining firsthand exposure to the legal system and interacting with professionals in the field. In February, they brought both knowledge and energy to the Souper Bowl of Caring, hosting a Black History-themed Family Feud competition and coming out on top against other church ministries. The event also raised over \$300 and collected more than 100 non-perishable food items for a local food pantry.

In addition to these larger events, the YPD remains grounded in consistent acts of care and service. Each month, the Sunbeams and Allen Stars create cards for bereaved families and those who are sick and shut in, demonstrating compassion in tangible ways.

