

# SPELMAN COLLEGE



## *Baccalaureate Service*

May Twentieth, Two Thousand Twenty-Three  
Ten o'clock in the Morning  
Georgia International Convention Center  
College Park, Georgia

## The Reverend Traci D. Blackmon

Reverend Traci D. Blackmon is the Associate General Minister of Justice and Local Church Ministries for the United Church of Christ, a denomination inspired by God's grace to welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all through God-centered action, Christ-driven connection, and Spirit-led leadership. A prominent and prophetic public theologian, Rev. Blackmon's voice has been featured on many local, national, and international platforms spanning the breadth of The White House, to the Carter Center, to the Vatican, as well as several documentaries and print publications. She currently serves as pastor-in-residence for Eden Theological Seminary in Webster Groves, Missouri.

From 2009 through 2020, Rev. Blackmon served as Pastor of Christ the King United Church of Christ in St. Louis, Missouri. Under her leadership, the ministries of this congregation expanded to serve as a sacred launchpad for community engagement. After the police killing of Michael Brown, Jr., Christ the King hosted the first community-led town hall meeting and dialogue with law enforcement and elected officials. The church led several other mobilization efforts and healing spaces during the Ferguson uprising.

From 2000 through 2014, she worked as a registered nurse throughout the city of St. Louis. Under her healthcare leadership, a community based mobile health unit was established engaging thousands of residents annually and providing a culturally attuned access point to health care in underserved and uninsured communities.

President Barack Obama appointed Rev. Blackmon to the President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based Neighborhood Partnerships for The White House and awarded her special recognition as a Presidential Volunteer for her community service. She was also appointed to the Ferguson Commission by former Missouri Governor Jay Nixon and led the criminal justice reform taskforce featured in the *Forward Through Ferguson: A Path Toward Racial Equity* report, calling for sweeping changes in policing, the courts, child well-being and economic mobility in 2015.

Rev. Blackmon is the co-author of "The White Privilege Curriculum" for the United Church of Christ and a prominent commentator in the PBS Special, *The Black Church*, hosted by Dr. Henry Louis Gates. She currently serves on the Boards of Trustees for the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference and the World Parliament of Religions. She is a recipient of the NAACP Rosa Parks Award, the Hannah G. Solomon Founder's Award from the National Council of Jewish Women, the National Planned Parenthood Faith Leader Award, and The Urban League of St. Louis Woman in Leadership Award, to name a few. In 2017, she was also named the 2017 Citizen of the Year by *The St. Louis American*. She is listed as one of *Ebony* Magazine's Power 100, one of the 15 Faith Leaders to watch in 2020 by The Center for American Progress. Rev. Blackmon has spoken all over the world, to expansive audiences at the World Council of Churches, the Pontifical Council, the United Nations, Global Women's Forum at the Carter Center, the United Reformed Church, SURRENDER Conferences of Australia, and many other national and global platforms.

Rev. Blackmon earned a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from Birmingham-Southern College, where she is listed among Distinguished Alumni, a Master of Divinity degree, and honorary Doctor of Ministry from Eden Theological Seminary. She is a graduate of Leadership St. Louis and is listed as one of St. Louis' 100 most influential voices. Rev. Blackmon was inducted into the 33rd Martin Luther King Jr. Board of Preachers of Morehouse College. She divides her time between St. Louis, Missouri and Cleveland, Ohio, and she is the proud mother of three adult children: Kortni Devon, Harold II, and Tyler Wayne Blackmon.

*Until the lion tells the story, the hunter will always be the hero.* ~ West African Proverb

*"I speak from the chorus of lions. And we are many!"* ~ Rev. Traci D. Blackmon

**Order of Service**  
**Helene D. Gayle, MD, MPH**  
11<sup>th</sup> President of Spelman College  
*Presiding*

PROCESSIONAL

Omelika Kuumba, C'1981 and  
Metropolitan Atlanta African  
Dancers & Drummers

PRELUDE

*All Children of Our God and King*  
Janet Linker

Joyce Johnson, D.Mus.  
College Organist

THE OCCASION

Helene D. Gayle, MD., MPH  
President

COMMUNAL HYMN

*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*

Robert Robinson

Come Thou fount of every blessing  
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace  
Streams of mercy never ceasing  
Call for songs of loudest praise

Teach me some melodious sonnet  
Sung by flaming tongues above  
Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it  
Mount of Thy redeeming love

Here I raise my Ebenezer  
Here by Thy great help I've come  
And I hope by Thy good pleasure  
Safely to arrive at home

Lord, You sought me when a stranger  
Wandering from the fold of God  
Then to rescue me from danger  
Interposed Your precious love

Oh, to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be  
Let Thy goodness like a fetter  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee

Prone to wander, Lord I feel it  
Prone to leave the God I love  
Here's my heart, oh take and seal it  
Seal it for Thy courts above

INVOCATION

The Reverend Neichelle R. Guidry, Ph.D.  
Dean of Sisters Chapel and Director of the  
WISDOM Center

THE HEBREW TESTAMENT

Jeremiah 29: 10-14  
New Revised Standard Version

Ms. Charlize B. Cox, C'2023  
2020 – 2023 WISDOM Scholar  
and 2022 – 2023 President, Sisters  
Chapel Executive Board

THE HOLY QURAN	Surah Ar-Rahman (55:1-13)	Mrs. Madison R. Stewart, C'2023 2022 – 2023 President, Atlanta University Center Muslim Student Association
THE BHAGHAVAD GITA	BG 18.37	Ms. Imani Y. Page, C'2023 Sisters Chapel Assistant and Second Attendant to Miss Spelman
THE NEW TESTAMENT	Philippians 3:13-16 New International Version	Ms. Iman R. Pearce, C'2023 Sisters Chapel Assistant
WOMANIST HERMENEUTIC	<i>Rest is Resistance</i> Tricia Hersey	Ms. Oumou E. Diallo 2020-2023 WISDOM Scholar and Sisters Chapel Assistant
MUSICAL SELECTION	<i>Anthem of Praise</i> Richard Smallwood	Spelman College Glee Club
INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER		President Gayle
LITURGICAL DANCE	<i>It Ain't Over</i> Maurette Brown Clark	Movements of Praise Liturgical Dance Ministry of Sisters Chapel
BACCALAUREATE SERMON		The Reverend Traci D. Blackmon Associate General Minister of Justice & Local Church Ministries, United Church of Christ
MUSICAL SELECTION	<i>Blessed and Highly Favored</i> The Clark Sisters	Spelman College Glee Club
BENEDICTION		Dean Guidry
RECESSIONAL	<i>Trumpet Tunes</i> David Johnson, Vernon Hoyle, <i>et al.</i>	Dr. Joyce Johnson

**Reverend Neichelle R. Guidry, Ph.D., Dean of the Chapel**  
**Kevin Johnson, D.M.A., Director, Spelman College Glee Club**  
**Joyce F. Johnson, D.Mus., College Organist**

## **The Baccalaureate Service**

Custom dictates that there are two graduation ceremonies—Baccalaureate and Commencement. The Baccalaureate service is religious in nature and is held annually on the day before Commencement. It is an occasion for delivering a farewell sermon to the senior class whose members are prepared and qualified to enter the world of graduate and professional school, as well as their respective professional fields. The Baccalaureate service is a reminder that this world is spiritual as well as secular, and that religion and faith play critical roles in adding meaning and depth to the human experience.

Spelman College, a historically Black college and global leader in the education of women of African descent, is dedicated to academic excellence in the liberal arts and sciences, and the intellectual, creative, ethical and leadership development of its students. Spelman empowers the whole person to engage the many cultures of the world and inspires a commitment to positive social change. In order to fulfill our mission in the midst of an increasingly multi-faith community, we seek to embrace our common understanding that we are not our own work of art, but we are God-created and God-sustained. Therefore, we seek to express this understanding in ways that are respectful of our religious differences as well as differences in ability, personal background, ethnicity, age, class and sexual orientation. We welcome all to this Baccalaureate service, and we hope all will feel included.

### **Liturgical Dancers:**

Ms. Isis P. Evans, C'2023  
Ms. Destinee Whitaker, C'2023

### **Spelman College Commencement Exercises**

Sunday, May 21, 2023  
Three O'clock in the Afternoon

Georgia International Convention Center  
2000 Convention Center Concourse  
College Park, GA 30337

*Guests must have tickets to attend.*