

NEW BETHEL M.B. CHURCH

CANTON, MS 39046

(601) 859-2829

Rev. J P Walker, Pastor

Youth Department/Education Division

DR. R.B. HARRIS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

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DR. R.B. HARRIS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
YOUTH DEPARTMENT/Education Division
101 JAMES AVENUE
CANTON, MS. 39046

A Legacy of Hope

“...It takes everyone in a child's community to help him along the way.”

~Dr. R. B. Harris Sr.

Pastor, teacher, social activist and friend to the community, Dr. Roby Bernard Harris committed his entire life to empowering others spiritually, socially and academically. Born in Sharon, Mississippi, February 26, 1917, Dr. Harris lived most of his life in Canton seeking ways to enrich the lives of all people through quality education.

Often the “voice” for those who were in need, Dr. Harris believed that everyone deserved the opportunity to live his or her best life. The path to that life, he taught, could be achieved through a personal relationship with Christ and a solid education.

Raised by a single mother, and the first to obtain a formal education in his family, Dr. Harris graduated from Cameron Street High School in 1939. He worked for twenty five cents a day at a local department store to save money that later earned him a college education. Many tried to convince him to settle with *finding a job* and *making a living*. However, Dr. Harris believed he could achieve far more through higher education and could thereby assist others in doing this same.

With great determination and diligence, Dr. Harris earned degrees from Jackson State, Alcorn State and Mississippi Industrial colleges. On May 31, 1972, he received his Doctorate of Divinity degree from Mississippi Baptist Seminary. He also committed a decade of his life to education as principal of Hickory High School in Hickory, Mississippi. The school was later renamed, Harris Middle School in his honor.

In 1959, the greater call on his life to minister the Word of God intensified. He pastored churches in several cities including Canton, Meridian, Kosciusko, Walnut Grove, Hickory and Carthage. It was in Carthage that he met his soul-mate, Estella Clayton and to their union, five children were born: Rose, Bernard, Joe, Allen and Yolanda.

Although he grew up in a time when schools were segregated, and African Americans were discouraged from reading, Dr. Harris found the courage to take the path less traveled. During his lifetime, he tutored children in his home, raised funds to send aspiring teens and adults to college and spoke out against the enemies of racism, hate and economic injustice. He ordained countless pastors into ministry and today, many remember him as their mentor.

In his farewell speech at Hickory High School, Dr. Harris shared:

“I have devoted my best talents and abilities toward the growth and development of the kind of institution I wanted for my own children and for the children of this community. I have had only two objectives in mind, the one is to raise the educational standard of all people to the extent that they would respect and appreciate themselves and their surrounding; and two, to work for good human relations with all the citizens of our school community. For it is in my humble opinion that education and good human relations are most essential...”

Dr. Harris pastored New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church until his death, February 7, 1993. We salute the life and legacy of Dr. Roby Bernard Harris Sr. His passion for life and education will forever live in our hearts!

Yolanda Harris