

## Restoring Hope & Dignity: MLK, Jr. Virtual Celebration

An MCC East Coast event in partnership with the Kingdom Builders Network (KBN), an MCC partner in Philadelphia, Pa.

[mcc.org/service-day](http://mcc.org/service-day)

January 18, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. EST

### Event participants:



**Panelist:** Reverend Dr. Lori (Dr. Lo) Banfield is a native and resident of Philadelphia, with multidisciplinary expertise in psychology, social justice and practical theology. She serves as a higher learning educator, clinician, researcher, clergy person and all-around social justice advocate. Banfield has dedicated her life to fostering spiritual resilience and liberation paths to oppressed and suppressed groups. She is the executive director of the Philly-based nonprofit Redemption Housing and founder of the Spiritual Resilience Council, a training initiative under Lori Banfield Ministries, LLC. She is also the author of the spiritual formation book, *Walking Worthy of My Calling: Journey Back to the Likeness of God*, among other articles and publications. A wife and mother of two children, Banfield endeavors to build atmosphere changers and restore sacred space within and beyond church, school and prison walls.



**Dancer:** Syketa Harris Cropper is a Philadelphia native who has been training in dance since age 10. Cropper received training at Bodies in Motion Performing Arts and Dance School, Freedom Theater of Philadelphia and Actors, Models, and Talent for Christ (AMTC). She specializes in praise, contemporary, jazz and hip hop dance music. She decided to combine her dance background and love for Caribbean culture to create a Caribbean dance fitness class, *Calypso Groove*, in 2015. Cropper is currently the lead coordinator of her praise dance team at the Ark of Safety Christian Church. She aspires to open her own dance studio, where people can express themselves through the art of dance.



**Panel moderator:** Reverend Leonard M. Dow is a Stewardship and Development Specialist for Everence in Philadelphia. Dow helps individuals and communities in urban areas strengthen, sustain and build their financial capacity. Dow joined Everence in April 2017 after nearly 20 years as pastor of Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia. He was a founder of Oxford Circle Christian Community Development Association (OCCDA), which launched many programs to benefit children and adults. He also worked in the retail banking field for 12 years. Dow earned a bachelor's degree from Eastern Mennonite University (EMU). He was recognized with EMU's Distinguished Service Award in 2017. Dow is married to Dr. Rosalie Rolón-Dow. They have three children: Carmela, Marcela and Lorenzo.



*Panelist:* Deputy Christopher Fitzgerald is a deputy sheriff for the Philadelphia Sheriff's Office in the training and community outreach unit. Fitzgerald is a man of God first, and a married family man second. Then there's law enforcement. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Fitzgerald was raised by two police officers. At the age of 19, he was hired by the police department. Fitzgerald has experience in both corrections and policing for a combined total of nine years. Fitzgerald's testimony gives him an understanding of both sides of law enforcement due to his own personal experiences with the law.



*Panelist and vocal performer:* Ruth Naomi Floyd is a vocalist and composer who has been at the forefront of creating vocal jazz settings that express theology and justice for over 25 years. Blessed with a soaring mezzo-soprano voice, critics praise Floyd's music for its distinctive sound of progressive ensemble jazz that is seamlessly blended with messages of hope, faith, redemption and love. Rooted and grounded in a faith ethos, Floyd has been a presence and worker in areas of the arts and justice throughout her career. She has lectured prolifically on the intersection of beauty, theology, justice, culture and the arts at numerous universities, seminaries, conferences and academic settings. A committed music educator, Floyd is Director of Jazz Studies at Cairn University, and an adjunct professor and artist in residence at Temple University. Previously, Floyd taught music for 20 years at The City School. She continues to make the city of Philadelphia her home.



*Dancer:* Scarlette Gaudin is a talented young woman, full of energy and committed to serving others through dance. Originally from Elizabeth, N.J., Gaudin began dancing at the young age of five and it quickly became one of her greatest passions. As she grew older, she continued to strengthen her talent by participating in many dance activities and competitions and also formed and led a multicultural dance organization. Gaudin is a Praise Dance Leader at First Baptist Church of Linden, where she teaches praise dance to the women and youth praise dancers. She is a versatile dancer with an extensive background in praise dance, hip-hop, contemporary, modern and lyrical dance. Gaudin attributes all her success to God who has blessed her with a vision to walk in her true purpose to serve people wholeheartedly while utilizing her gift of dance as a ministry.



**Panelist:** Reverend Steven B. Lawrence has served as the administrative assistant to the pastor, Reverend William J. Shaw, at the White Rock Baptist Church for over 40 years. He received a B.A. degree from Eastern University and a M.Div. from Union Theological Seminary. He is deeply involved in Christian education. At White Rock, he teaches the Bread of Life Fellowship, a midweek Bible study. He plans, staffs and teaches the monthly Learning Conferences of the West Philadelphia Baptist Congress of Christian Education. Lawrence is known for his insightful and inspiring teaching and preaching. He is on the design team and faculty for the Church of Christian Compassion's School of Ministry. Lawrence has served as an adjunct faculty member of Palmer Theological Seminary in

its School of Christian Ministry since 1992. He is a board member of the Metropolitan Christian Council of Philadelphia and chairs its education committee. Lawrence is board chair for NewCORE: The New Conversation on Race and Ethnicity. He is married to Cheryl Baker Lawrence.



**Opening prayer and opening speech:** Juan E. Marrero is the preaching pastor of Christ Centered Church of Philadelphia. This church plant of the Koinonia Fellowship of Churches was planted 5 years ago and is a growing congregation today in North Philadelphia. Juan serves in many roles, as the Executive Director of Crossroads Community Center an inner city ministry whose mission is to evangelize, disciple and demonstrate the gospel in word and deed. Marrero presently serves as the chair for the Kingdom Builders Network (KBN). He earned his undergraduate degree at the Center for Urban Theological studies and an M.Div. from Biblical Theological Seminary (Philadelphia, Pa.). Marrero also has a degree from the "school of hard

knocks" in North Philly. Marrero loves to participate in the rescuing, empowering and transforming of indigenous future urban leaders. He is happily married to the love of his life Sandra and together they have seven children.



**Spoken word poet and performer:** Katherine Menard is a medical assistant, wife and mother of three. She has a love for music, dance and spoken word poetry. As a young girl writing provided her with a safe place to make sense of her world. Throughout her walk with God, spoken word has become less of a hobby and more of a way to inspire, encourage and share the gospel.



*Vocal performer:* Deion Payton is a native of Boston, MA and grew up in Philadelphia, PA. He began singing at the age of four and continued on to study at the Philadelphia High School for Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) as a Vocal Major. While attending CAPA, he was afforded the opportunity to perform in such venues as The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, The Academy of Music and a host of other prestigious organizations. He has shared the stage with artists such as Paul Simon, Mali Music, Ruth Naomi Floyd and Myron Butler among many others. He has even performed in the presence of Barack Obama. Payton studied at Cairn University and graduated with a B.A. in music with a concentration in voice. While at Cairn, Payton restored and led the Cairn Gospel Choir, which is now an accredited course and University Ensemble. Presently, Payton serves as one of the directors for the choir. Payton is most known for his distinguished ability to effortlessly sing many diverse genres. As a teaching artist, Payton has taught from K-12th grade in his career.



*Closing prayer:* Ben White is one of the pastors of Circle of Hope, serving at their congregation in Pennsauken, NJ. He is a member of the MCC Philadelphia Program Coordinator's Advisory Committee. He is husband to Gwyneth and father to Oliver (10) and Theo (7).