

introduced her to God and modeled faithful living. Mother Janie Long, her prayer partner, once told her, “Sister Jones, no matter what you’re going through in life, you don’t have to show it.” Those words became a quiet source of resilience.

Her journey has not been without challenges. She stood as a strong daughter during her mother’s health struggles,

remained a dedicated wife and mother, and is a Stage Two breast cancer survivor. She also serves as a caregiver to her husband as he faces health challenges of his own. Through pain and tears, she has learned to trust God with everything. Holding fast to prayer and scriptures such as Psalm 23, she has found the strength to face life’s challenges with a smile and the hope of knowing that

God is always with her, allowing her to be victorious.

Her message to younger generations is clear and heartfelt: Stay true to yourself. Do not allow the opinions of others to define who you are. Put God first, then family and church. And remember the promise of Psalm 27:14a: *“Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart.”*

Spotlight on Women’s History Month

Thalia D. Gee (Mama Gee)

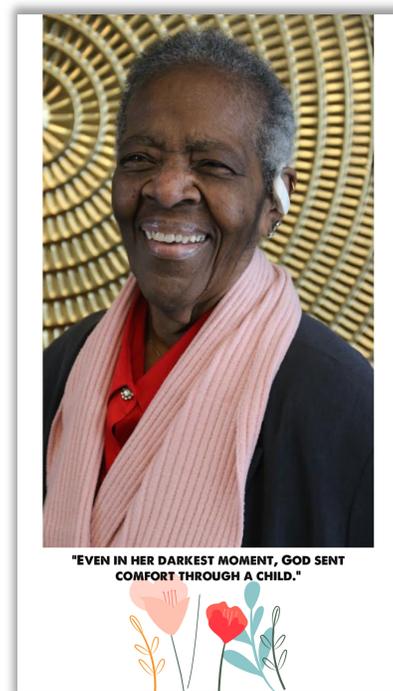
Thalia D. Gee, affectionately known to us all as **Mama Gee**, has been a faithful member of The Sanctuary for over twenty-five years. Born in Baltimore, Maryland, she moved to Prince George’s County at just five years old. She often laughs and says she truly enjoyed being a youngster — especially her high school years. In fact, she has been known to say she wishes she could go back! She graduated in 1971 and is the oldest of four siblings.

After graduation, her parents gave her and her siblings a choice: go to school or go to work. Thalia chose to work; and work she did. She served for 28½ years for the State of Maryland at The Mental Health and Hygiene

Office, 8 years in the Prince George’s County School system, and she also worked in group homes helping teenagers transition into living on their own. Caring for others has always been woven into who she is.

She is most proud of her children and grandchildren. In fact, her love for children extended far beyond her own home. While raising her own children, she became a foster parent; a role she faithfully carried for over 30 years. Her first foster child, Jason, is still a very big part of her family. She didn’t just open her door; she opened her heart.

Her parents were foundational in shaping her life. They never forced their children into a specific path, but they consistently encouraged them to become the very best at whatever they chose. Her father, a faithful church-going man, made sure



Sunday School was a priority. Mama Gee says she can count on one hand the number of Sundays she missed. He was the disciplinarian, a man who wanted the best for his family

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no-nonsense lady who took care of the home. Her godfather, Charles Ross, also played a significant role in her upbringing. She would sometimes visit with him on the weekends and always had enlightening lessons she learned from him.

One of Thalia's greatest life challenges came after ten years of marriage when her husband decided to leave. The pain was deep, but so was her faith. God restored her strength and allowed her to move forward. She often recalls her earthly father's words: *"No matter how hard life gets, pick yourself up by your bootstraps and move forward."* And that is exactly what she did. As a single mother working three jobs, meeting endless demands, she proved that with God's help, even the heaviest loads can be carried.

Then came a challenge she never could have imagined.

In 2007, she began losing her eyesight. What started as doctor visits and referrals to specialists became surgeries, treatments, and difficult news.

Diabetes, hypertension, and stress had begun affecting her vision. She underwent surgery to stop bleeding in the back of her eye. Despite multiple procedures and countless shots, her vision worsened rapidly.

In 2012, she recalls driving to work one morning when one eye suddenly went completely dark. She made it to work, but she knew something wasn't right. Within six months, she had lost her vision entirely.

And in true Mama Gee fashion, she will tell you honestly — she was MAD. Not a little upset. MAD. One of the most emotional moments came while she was helping a student named David read. As her sight faded, she broke down in tears. The young student gently said, *"Mrs. Gee, don't cry. Please don't cry. It's going to be alright."* Even in her darkest moment, God sent comfort through a child.

Adjusting to life without sight was not easy. Learning to navigate with a cane, cook, clean, dress herself, and manage daily tasks required determination and humility.

Through FAB — Foundations of Adjustment to Blindness — she committed herself to regaining independence. And she did just that.

Today, Mama Gee has embraced her new way of seeing the world — not with physical eyes, but through faith, strength, and heightened senses. She dances. She travels. She shops. She exercises. She goes to the movies. (And if you think blindness slows her down, you clearly haven't met Mama Gee.)

She refuses to let limitations define her. She does not allow people's assumptions to stop her. Most importantly, she places her full trust in the Lord.

Mama Gee's life reminds us that resilience is not about never falling — it's about getting back up. It's about trusting God in the dark seasons. It's about choosing joy when life looks different than you imagined. She added this thought to leave us with, *"Don't let nobody tell you what you can't do. All you have to do is go out there and try! Nothing beats a failure but a try!"*

***"Don't let nobody tell you what you can't do.
All you have to do is go out there and try!
Nothing beats a failure but a try!"***

Welcoming Spring

by Carlette Jameson

As we begin to thaw out from a very cold and snowy winter, and spring approaches, it's the perfect time to start refreshing our homes and preparing for a new season. If you are like me, you want to enter the warmer months feeling renewed and organized. This is a great opportunity to clear out clutter, get organized, and create spaces that feel peaceful and welcoming.

Warmer weather also brings opportunities to start gardens, care for our lawns, lay fresh mulch, or even create a rock garden in your outdoor space. It's also a good reminder to take care of practical tasks like servicing your HVAC system and completing seasonal home maintenance so our homes stay comfortable and safe. In this issue, we have included helpful tips and expert advice from members of The Sanctuary community. Prayerfully, you will find something that fits your specific spring-cleaning needs, and you are always welcome to reach out to the experts personally for additional guidance.

Welcome Spring-Declutter/Organization/Cleaning Tips

by Trustee Danette Anderson

Making room for a new baby, getting your kitchen re-modeled, putting away winter clothes to prepare for Spring, preparing to move, or just trying to maximize the space in your home, are all just some of the reasons you will probably need help from **Trustee Danette (Deni) Anderson**. She has shared a few tips to help you get started. If you are in need of more personalized assistance from her, you can reach out to her through her business Perfect Space by Deni at PerfectSpaceByDeni.com.



TOP TIPS FOR GETTING ORGANIZED

- Think about the main space that you want to attack first
 - ✓ (What area will bring you the most peace?)
- Prepare and plan for this like it's an event
 - ✓ (Put it on your calendar—a date and a time.)
 - ✓ (Consider setting a time limit for yourself so that you do not get overwhelmed.)
 - ✓ (If you are organizing your pantry, purchase some baskets or clear containers. Have the tools you will need ahead of time before you start.)
- Avoid distractions
 - ✓ (Put your phone in a different room that you will not be working in.)
- Do a little at a time so you don't get discouraged
 - ✓ (Take small bites.)
 - ✓ (Start purging by sorting first—lay the things out so you can see what you have and what you really don't need.)
- Continue to put it on the calendar to keep you accountable of what you set out to accomplish

Welcome Spring

As the weather begins to warm up, it's the perfect time to prepare your lawn and garden for a healthy, beautiful spring season. Here are a few simple steps to keep in mind:

Lawn Care Tips

1. Clear Away Winter Debris

Remove fallen branches, leaves, and any leftover debris from winter storms. Raking helps prevent mold growth and allows sunlight and air to reach your grass.

2. Check Your Soil

Early spring is a good time to test your soil's pH level. Most grass grows best in slightly acidic soil. If needed, add lime to balance acidity or compost to enrich the soil naturally.

3. Aerate the Lawn

If your soil feels compacted, aerating (making small holes in the soil) allows water, oxygen, and nutrients to reach the roots more easily. This helps your grass grow stronger and thicker.

4. Apply Fertilizer

Feed your lawn with a slow-release fertilizer to encourage healthy growth. Be sure to follow directions carefully and avoid over-fertilizing.

5. Seed Bare Spots

If winter left thin or patchy areas, overseed those spots. Gently loosen the soil first, spread grass seed evenly, and keep it moist until new growth appears.

6. Check Lawn Equipment

Sharpen mower blades and make sure equipment is clean and working properly. Sharp blades cut grass cleanly and prevent damage.

Gardening Tips

1. Clean Out Garden Beds

Remove dead plants, fallen leaves, and weeds left behind from winter.

2. Test and Refresh the Soil

Checking to see if your soil is healthy is the key to having a nice garden. Consider testing your soil to check nutrient levels and pH balance. Mix in compost or organic matter to enrich the soil and improve drainage.

3. Loosen and Turn the Soil

Gently turn the soil with a garden fork or tiller to break up compacted areas.

4. Divide Perennials

Early spring is a great time to divide overcrowded perennials.

5. Prune Shrubs and Roses

Trim back dead or damaged branches before new growth begins.

6. Plan Your Planting

Choose plants suited for your climate and sunlight conditions. Group plants with similar watering needs together to make care easier throughout the season.

7. Apply Fresh Mulch

Add a new layer of mulch around plants to retain moisture, regulate soil temperature, and reduce weed growth.



Words of Inspiration from Reverend Clarence Parker

(reprinted with permission from the Golden Agers Ministry)



Because of weather conditions, February's Golden Agers meeting was held virtually via Zoom, and our newly-appointed **Chaplain, Reverend Clarence Parker**, was asked to share some words of inspiration.

Reverend Parker began by stating that there are four (4) pillars of health that we need to pursue – **physical health, mental health, financial health, and spiritual health**. Physical health is our real wealth and the longer we have it, the better the quality of our lives. We must modify our diets and follow the directives of our doctors and be more physically active. He pondered the question of why we do these things and concluded that our health is one of the most important blessings that God has given us.

Our mental health or state of mind is as big a blessing as our physical health because, as **we age, our state of mind can change as our life situation changes**. We tend to take our mental health for granted, but statistics have shown that seniors are subject to depression and anxiety as we age and realize that our memories are not what they used to be, and our bodies cannot do the things we used to do when we were younger. We should **praise God for the abilities we still have**.

Reverend Parker addressed the issues we face as we lose spouses/significant others and become empty nesters as our children begin living on their own and no longer depend on us. We sometimes experience loneliness and isolation and to combat those feelings, we need to remain active, to read to keep our brains engaged, to interact with grandkids as they can help to keep us “young”. He suggested volunteering to help other people and expressed gratitude for the Golden Agers Ministry which gives us the opportunity to travel. He stressed the importance of fellowship with others of similar ages and interests.

Reverend Parker spoke on financial health – we must be careful stewards of the resources that God has given us by keeping an eye on our stock portfolio and by setting aside savings from our income but not forgetting to give God His share. Our financial health is not just for us, as God's word says in *Proverbs 13:22* – “*A good person leaves an inheritance for their children's children.*”

He asserted that the glue that holds our physical, mental, and financial health together is our spiritual health – our relationship with Jesus Christ who is the source of our strength and our hope. James 1:17 says “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” Our spiritual health is an important quality of our life because it comes from God.

Reverend Parker concluded with fervent prayers of thanksgiving that lifted the spirits of our members. We extend our grateful thanks to him for his words of inspiration.

***Golden Agers Ministry, Sister Carolyn Coleman - President,
Newsletter Editor & Publisher - Sister Lee Boucaud***