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# THE CHRONICLE

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HURSDAY, JUNE 26, 2003

## After sad year, Phillips Chapel gets new pastor

Church's last pastor died last year

BY T. KEVIN WALKER  
THE CHRONICLE

It's hard to imagine how the word "senior" would apply to LaMont J. Johnson.

But barely 24 with a boyish face that could pass at a high school prom, Johnson was installed over the weekend as the new senior pastor of Phillips Chapel Missionary Baptist Church.

He is the youngest head pastor in the church's 62-year history and one of the youngest in all of Winston-Salem.

"He has everything that is required to be the senior pastor for this church. I think this church will grow right along with him," said Ernie Wade, a longtime church member who chaired the selection committee for the new pastor.

Wade said Johnson's age was a concern for some members of the church but not for members of the selection committee. Johnson's first full official week as pastor will coincidentally coincide with the one-year anniversary of the installation services for Phillips Chapel's last pastor, the Rev. Stephen Tyrone Thornton.

It was Thornton who invit-

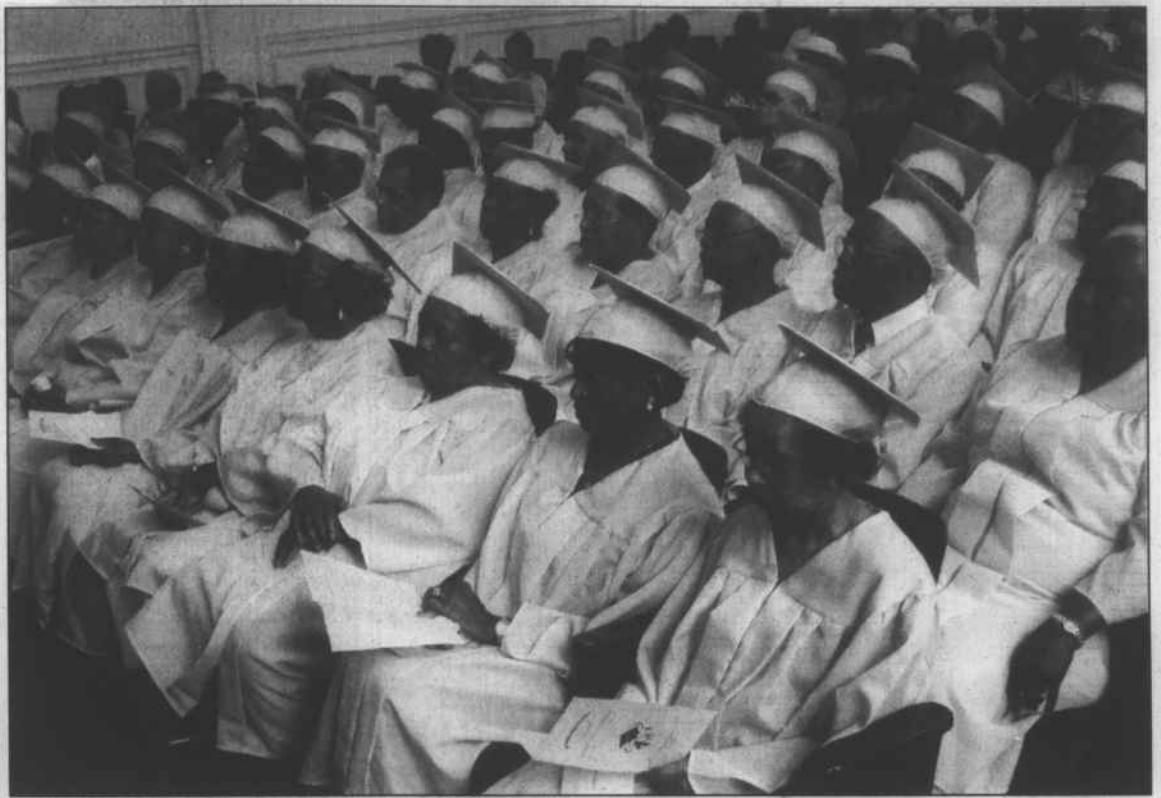
ed Johnson, an accomplished musician, to come to Winston-Salem to head Phillips Chapel's music ministry. The two men had become friends at a church in Supply, Va., where they served.



The Rev. LaMont Johnson

Thornton and Johnson were traveling together last summer near Greensboro when they were involved in a tragic car accident. The accident left Johnson with a severely damaged shoulder and a concussion; Thornton, just 36, was killed after heading Phillips Chapel for just a

See Johnson on A4



Photos by Kevin Walker

About 50 members of the Class of 1953 returned to Atkins for the commencement re-enactment.

## Good as Golden

Atkins class graduates again 50 years later

BY T. KEVIN WALKER  
THE CHRONICLE

Members of Atkins High School Class of 1953 transcended the bounds of mere friendship decades ago. They have known and loved each other for half a century. They feel like blood kin.

The family's ties seemed tighter than ever over the weekend as members of the class came from as far away as California and Colorado to celebrate their 50-year class reunion. In between chitchat about grandbabies and the old days, members of the class - whose average age is 68 - took part in everything from a cookout to receptions. The highlight of the reunion was a re-enactment of the class's June 2, 1953, commencement ceremony.

"We wanted something different," reunion chairperson Juanita Penn said about the graduation ceremony. "This is special for us because we have been spared to be here for 50 years."

The ceremony had all the trimmings of the real thing.



Dr. Manderline Scales taught the class in the 1950s.

Members of the class lined up in the hall outside of the Atkins (now a middle school) auditorium. Some helped others adjust the gold caps and gowns they wore. Gold was chosen to symbolize the class's golden anniversary. It was also the first time that the class had worn caps and gowns at Atkins. Back in '53, the young women wore crisp dotted white dresses while the guys wore nicely-pressed dark blue suits.

The class didn't graduate in the school's auditorium either. With more than 200 members, the Class of '53 was the largest Atkins High had ever seen at the time, so commencement was moved to the gymnasium.

About 50 members of the class returned for the reunion. A sizable portion of the class is deceased, a fact that saddens those still living. Seven members of the Class of 1953 died since the class's last reunion in 2000.

Natasha Doby Villines attended the reunion because it was not possible for her father, the late Robert L. Doby, to attend.

"This is a happy occasion; however, I do have come tears,"

See 1953 on A10



The May 31 graduation still leaves a bad taste in the mouths of Lasanio Small and his mother, Voulyne.

## Graduate's kin is booted for clapping at commencement

Bishop McGuinness principal calls incident unfortunate; deputy says woman not singled out

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD  
THE CHRONICLE

Lasanio Small's family came from far and near to attend his graduation from Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School on May 31 at Salem College. They expected to get the chance to cheer him and the other graduates on as they closed one chapter of their lives and began another. What they didn't expect was for their cheering to get any of them thrown out of the ceremony.

Small's aunt, Prudence Small, missed her nephew's grand walk across the stage to accept his diploma before it happened. Prudence Small's mistake of clapping upon hearing the name of her nephew's friend, got her sent not to the back of the class but straight out of the auditorium.

"She didn't get to see her

only nephew graduate. They can never give that back to us. I don't care what they do; they can never give that back to us and that's what makes me so angry," said Voulyne Small, Lasanio's mother, who said her sister was in tears over the incident. "I've been to graduations and people cannot refrain from expressing some type of emotion."

Guests at Bishop McGuinness's graduation ceremonies were asked by administrators to refrain from showing any outward signs of enthusiasm - clapping, cheering, etc. - during the recognition of names. A school official announced that law enforcement officials would remove anyone who would not adhere to this request.

Lasanio and his mother said

See Graduation on A4



Photo by Kevin Walker

Anita Short brought the crowd to its feet at an outdoor concert/ outreach event held on the grounds of Goler Memorial Saturday. Short is a member of the G.B. Ensemble, a Salisbury group made up of young people from various churches.

## Grassroots drive for M&F off to good start

1,000 new depositors sought by December

BY T. KEVIN WALKER  
THE CHRONICLE

A grassroots effort to get more people to deposit money in Mechanics & Farmers Bank has already proven successful. Officials at the Winston-Salem branch attributes nearly half a million dollars in new deposits over the past several months to the effort, which has been named the Banking and Investing for Balance project.

"It has already been an overwhelming success," said Evelyn Acree, M&F senior vice president. "Almost every week we have people who come in because of (Banking and Investing for Balance)."

The Rev. Seth O. Lartey and members of his church - Goler Memorial AME Zion - put out the call for local folks of all races to support M&F, a

bank founded nearly a century ago in Durham by nine black businessmen.

Last December, Lartey and others kicked off a campaign to get 1,000 new depositors for M&F by December of this year. Lartey said that people

do not have to take all their money out of their current bank in order to support the effort. Just as people have two eyes and legs, Lartey believes they should also have at least two banks. He said that it is

See M&F on A5



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