

# Rev. Battle: "People Working Together Can Make A Difference"

By Jalyne Strong  
Post Staff Writer

"When I rise each morning, I don't know what the day's going to bring. But I do know there will be something to do—something positive and constructive."

That's how Rev. George Battle describes his daily outlook. He is the pastor of Gethsemane AME Zion Church, an elected official of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board and the founder and organizer of the Five Points Community organization. Such heavy and varied obligations would make most people consider each morning with dread. But not Rev. Battle, who assures, "Because I'm doing what I love, I tend not to look at it as a burden. It's always exciting."

Each responsibility, furthermore, is one Battle has freely chosen to take on. To begin with, this Rocky Mount, N.C., native was actually on his way to becoming a lawyer before he "felt the calling" to become a minister in his freshman college year. He gave his initial sermon in 1966, at the age of 19. He became the pastor of his first church, Mt. Zion AME Zion Church in Lancaster, S.C., later that same year.

Today, Rev. Battle has been a pastor for 20 years. Does he believe he's made the right career choice? "I know I did," he readily offers. "I've always wanted to help people. I believed in them and felt people working together can make a difference."

This is not just "talk" from this young minister, who backs his words with evidence of how he has helped get people to work together to make a difference. Besides his fluent



Rev. George Battle

.....Innovative, vivacious young minister

leadership of his church, Battle's influence is felt throughout the Charlotte community. "The church and the community are inter-related," he expounds. "Being a pastor requires a commitment to the community."

Rev. Battle likes to consider himself as being "broad-based." He has initiated program after program which serve to uplift someone, someplace in society.

when he speaks of it, it appears that the Gethsemane Enrichment Program is one of the social endeavors closest to Battle's heart. "The program involves youth from all over the city. We have about 500 kids participating," he beams.

Explains the program's director, Adelaide Hunt, "The Enrichment program is designed to reinforce the skills of the children enrolled in grades K - sixth in the areas of reading and math." There is also emphasis on including an enriching program for the children, oftentimes a field trip or some sort of recreation.

Hunt says Rev. Battle is an "innovative, vivacious young minister. This (the program) is his brain-child."

He's had others; like the Gethsemane Hot Lunch program, which is the largest lunch program in the city and also the church's day care, which, Rev. Battle says, "takes young children and prepares them for going to school and being successful."

His overriding concern for children's education could stem from his work with the School Board. Or vice versa. Whatever, Battle has been a member of the board for eight years. About his work

there, he claims, "The schools are the only places where everybody's an expert on what they want for their children. I weigh the pluses and minuses, and personally believe we're (Charlotte-Mecklenburg) on a good course. There's much to attest to that fact."

From his church responsibilities to his community programs to the school board and many, many other activities far too numerous to include in one article, (Rev. Battle's resume is four pages long and the bulk of it is listings of his professional honors, professional awards, professional organizations and affiliations) it would appear he hasn't a minute to spare. But he loosens up and admits he does find time to relax. "I enjoy reading leisurely, good clean jokes, spending time with my children and I'm an avid sports fan."

"I love singing," reveals Rev. Battle, "normally by myself. I never get a chance in church because I have such fantastic

choirs," he smiles.

But at the same time, he admits he's always looking for some new way to help amend some problem that exists. "I never can be satisfied," he confesses. "I'm my own worst critic. There's always room for improvement."

"My congregation is so nice to me and my family," relates Rev. Battle. He is married to Iris and they have two children, George and LaChianda. "I'm always pushing myself to be better."

"All good pastors are achievers," concludes Rev. Battle.

And he appears to be one of the best.

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