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for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

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### Note:

The editor would like to thank Dr. Oneal Sandidge for collecting the articles and for using his long experience in Christian Education to edit this special volume.

TLJM



## INTRODUCTION

Oneal Sandidge<sup>1</sup>

From research writers to writers of personal experiences, this journal edition is unique because it features content that illuminates the role of Christian education leaders on many levels. Theological professors of Christian education, religious education professors, deans of religious studies, pastors, directors of Christian Education as well as ministry leaders and church leaders will all benefit from the insights provided by this issue's contributors. The questions posed throughout the articles featured here bear greatly on all of us. Does Christian education need to change in the twenty-first century or do we continue to teach Christian education as we have done in the past? Is it possible to teach what students need to survive in this postmodern age in theological schools and churches? What would faith formation look like through 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies? What does Christian education in

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Oneal Sandidge, Ph.D. is a scholar who served as Dean of Religious Studies at Arkansas Baptist College in Little Rock, AR and Academic Dean of National Bible College in Fort Washington, MD. The Harvard Merrill Fellow is former instructor at Liberty University and former Associate Professor of Christian Education at Beulah Heights University in Atlanta, GA and instructor of graduate Christian Education at Luther Rice Seminary in Lithonia, GA. "Dr. Sandidge is a former instructor of Religion and graduate classes in Research and Church Leadership at Liberty University and Virginia University of Lynchburg. He also served as pastor at three churches in the Lynchburg area: White Rock Baptist Church in Arrington, Greater Peaceful Zion in Lynchburg and Second Buffalo Baptist Church in Nathalie." (*Newsadvance.com*)

the Black church look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century theological and church classroom?

The articles in this Special Edition volume on Christian education of the *Journal of Interdenominational Theological Center* exemplify ways to guide Christian education in the Black church. The first section launches five scholars in Christian education: our Guest Editor, Oneal Sandidge. Cain Hope Felder, Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, Dolores Carpenter and Harold Dean Trulear. The second section of this journal presents two seasoned practitioners in Christian education: Youth minister and curriculum writer Antoinette Vallrie and Merrill-Jean Bailey. In the third section, Oneal Sandidge presents suggested resources for African American church educators in both the church and higher education.

As we begin reading the first article, we can quickly see how important it is to use a new set of lens when we speak about Christian education in the twenty-first century. Cain Hope Felder, a renowned Professor of New Testament at Howard University, reminds readers about the biblical foundation for teaching and guiding Christian education in the Black church. He informs listeners and readers that we should remember to include viewing oneself and various ethnic diverse groups as we interpret the Bible. The second article by Anne E. Streaty Wimberly gives us a cumulative report from a research project conducted by the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia. This study was entitled "Vision Quest Research Project." The project was on ministry with Black youth and was led by Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, the principal investigator. She shares three dominant keys for congregations: context, critical content, and connection. Church leaders were allowed to tell stories that related to joy, difficulty, and hope for teaching Urban Black youth. The third article by Dr. Dolores Carpenter allows readers to utilize their learning of biblical interpretation and furnishes them with various strategies for teaching in the African American congregation. The fourth article by Dean Harold Trulear provides Christian educators with a message

about Christian education and prison ministry. Dr. Trulear affirms that Christian education "needs to be formative, contextual, and relational," focusing not just on the initially obvious populations affected by crime, but on crime's broader social effects. He makes some compelling arguments about why Christian education should do more than just allow the church to enter prisons for church services.

In the fifth article of this series that acts as a handbook for maintaining a healthy youth ministry, Antoinette Vallrie invites us to consider an integral demographic for Christian education. The sixth article by Merrill-Jean Bailey gives us insights about the benefits of looking beyond independent work as a church and discusses the potential of training and discipleship with other churches and communities. The idea of forming a training union is helpful when planning discipleship. The author speaks specifically of the Baptist Training Unions as a model to redefine church training unions but her point is relevant to all Christian denominations.

The contributors featured herein have years of teaching experience as well as years of indelible practical experience related to Christian education in the Black church. The content of these articles will help create new models for teaching in seminaries and doing Christian education in the Black church.