

UK BLACK HISTORY MONTH SPECIAL EDITION

The People Who Hold Us Up

Four voices. One issue. Faith, service, community, resilience and legacy.



FORMER COUNCILLOR · COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP · PUBLIC SERVICE · P. 4

Akin Elekolusi PhD



FAITH · SERVICE · COMMUNITY · P. 34

Pastor Emeka Eluwa



BEYOND STRENGTH · MENTAL HEALTH & COMMUNITY · P. 40

Dr Samson Oluwatosin Festus

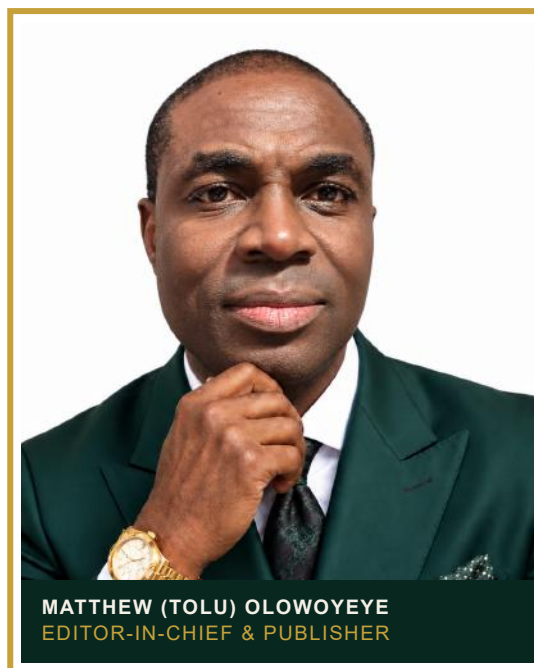


FROM SURVIVAL TO LEGACY · FINANCIAL RESILIENCE · P. 24

Wande Adeleye

Nobody carries this alone

Gratitude without naming is a kindness half-done. This month, name the people who kept you going — and tell them.



MATTHEW (TOLU) OLOWOYEYE
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & PUBLISHER

There are seasons when the work of keeping a life, a family, a community or a church steady is quiet and almost invisible. These are not empty seasons; they are the slow, patient labours that hold everything else together. This month we name that labour and the people who do it, because gratitude without naming is a kindness half-done. **Nobody carries this alone** is not a slogan — it is a summons to see who stands beside us, to bear burdens together, and to honour the steady hands that build and sustain.

The calendar gives us a rare convergence: a month that asks us to remember history, to tend our minds, and to gather the harvest of what has been sown. Black History Month asks for attention to stories that have been overlooked and for celebration of courage across generations. World Mental Health Day asks us to stop pretending that resilience is the same as silence. Harvest reminds us that growth is communal: crops are gathered by many hands, and gratitude is owed to every one of them. These observances are not separate items on a list; they are different angles on the same truth — our flourishing is relational.

So this page is an invitation and a small programme. First, look around and name the people who have kept you going this year. Say their names aloud, write them down, tell them what their presence has meant. Second, practise bearing burdens in the literal sense: offer practical help, make a meal, share a lift, hold a conversation that lasts longer than a text. Third, refuse the quiet erasure of labour — celebrate the unseen work in print, in speech, in small public gestures. When we honour those who build quietly, we change the culture that rewards only spectacle.

There is also a practical edge to this calling. Bearing one another's burdens means we must be ready to ask for help and to receive it without shame. It means creating spaces where confession and care are ordinary, not exceptional. It means that when someone names a struggle, we do not respond with platitudes but with presence and a plan: a listening ear, a practical next step, a follow-up. Faithfulness is not a private virtue; it is a communal practice that requires structures — prayer rooms, support groups, shared resources — and the courage to use them.

This month we launch **Honour One** (see the back cover or visit thebereanblog.com/honour-one; entries close 10 November 2026), a simple way to put gratitude into action. Pick one person who has strengthened you and tell their story. Offer a public thank-you, a small gift, or a practical favour. Let the act of honouring be both testimony and invitation: testimony to what has been given, invitation to others to join in the work of care.

If there is a single verse that holds this issue together it is the blunt, uncompromising call to bear one another's burdens. Not to admire from a distance, but to enter the work with hands and feet. That is the work of community, and it is the work of faith. We do not do it perfectly. We do it together.

With you in it,

Matthew (Tolu) Olowoyeye

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & PUBLISHER

"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."

ACTS 17:11 · NKJV

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Akin Elekolusi PhD

FORMER COUNCILLOR · SENIOR EPR CONSULTANT

EDUCATION	BSc (Hons) Political Science · Postgraduate Diploma in Business Management · PRINCE2
PROFESSION	Senior EPR Consultant, NHS and private healthcare digital transformation
PUBLIC SERVICE	Labour & Co-operative Councillor, Longmeadow Ward, Stevenage Borough Council
MILESTONE	First British-Nigerian councillor in the history of Stevenage Borough Council

Akin Elekolusi holds a BSc (Hons) in Political Science, with majors in International Relations and Public Administration, alongside a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Management and PRINCE2 Project Management certification.

He brings a diverse professional background spanning Banking, Procurement, Healthcare Informatics and IT Project Management. He currently works as a Senior EPR Consultant, leading and supporting Digital Transformation programmes across the NHS and private healthcare sector in the United Kingdom. His work focuses on the implementation and optimisation of Electronic Patient Record (EPR) systems, helping organisations improve healthcare delivery, operational efficiency and patient outcomes through effective use of technology.

Alongside his professional career, Akin Elekolusi previously served in public office as an elected Labour and Co-operative Councillor on Stevenage Borough Council, representing Longmeadow Ward. During his term he was the first British-Nigerian councillor in the history of Stevenage Borough Council, reflecting his commitment to public service, community representation and inclusive leadership.

His interests extend beyond his professional and political responsibilities, with a particular passion for community development, youth empowerment, education, technology and creating opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds.

Akin Elekolusi believes that effective leadership is fundamentally about service — listening to people, building bridges, creating opportunities and helping communities become stronger, more inclusive and more prosperous.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE

His guiding principle is simple: lead with integrity, serve with purpose and leave a positive legacy for those who come after you.



Akin Elekolusi PhD

Former Labour & Co-operative Councillor ·
Longmeadow Ward, Stevenage Borough Council

IN CONVERSATION

“The Most Valuable Community Assets Are People”

The Berean Post in conversation with Akin Elekolusi PhD

Community life is rarely sustained by prominent names alone. Behind thriving neighbourhoods are volunteers, carers, parents, teachers, youth workers, faith leaders, local businesses, community organisers and residents who quietly give their time, skills and compassion to others. For our October feature on “Honouring Our Communities,” we spoke with Akin Elekolusi about public service, community leadership, representation, the next generation and the people whose contributions too often go unnoticed.

Interview key — TBP: The Berean Post · CAE: Akin Elekolusi PhD

“

Being a councillor was, for me, fundamentally about people.

AKIN ELEKOLUSI PHD ·
LONGMEADOW WARD

“A strong community is not built by one person. It is built by people who are willing to look beyond themselves.”

AKIN ELEKOLUSI PHD · THE CONVERSATION
CONTINUES OVERLEAF

TBP: For readers encountering your story for the first time, could you introduce yourself, describe the community you serve, and explain your principal responsibilities during your time as a councillor?

CAE: My name is Akin Elekolusi, and I was elected as a Labour and Co-operative Party councillor and served Longmeadow Ward in Stevenage.

Being a councillor was, for me, fundamentally about people. My role was to represent the interests and concerns of residents, listen to their experiences, raise issues on their behalf, scrutinise and contribute to council decision-making, and work with partners to improve the quality of life within our communities.

I saw the role as being both an advocate and a bridge — connecting residents with the services, organisations and opportunities that can make a meaningful difference to their lives. Whether it is housing, the environment, transport, community safety, support for vulnerable residents or opportunities for young people, I believe councillors must remain accessible and grounded in the everyday realities of the people they represent.

TBP: What first inspired you to enter public service? Was there a particular experience, person or community need that influenced your decision?

CAE: My motivation came from a long-standing belief that public service should be about making a positive difference in people's lives.

My professional background has taken me through banking, procurement, healthcare informatics, technology and project management, but throughout those different experiences I have always been interested in how organisations can work better for people.

Entering public service gave me an opportunity to take that commitment further at community level. I wanted to be part of finding solutions rather than simply identifying problems.

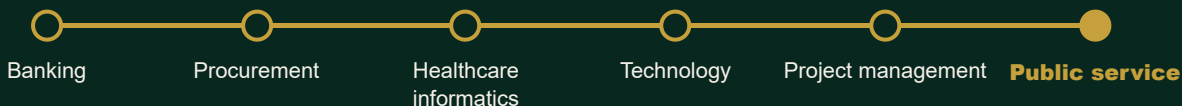
I have also been inspired by the people I have encountered — ordinary residents who care deeply about their families, their neighbourhoods and their communities. Their commitment reminds me that leadership is not about having all the answers; it is about listening, bringing people together and helping turn good ideas into action.

“Leadership is not about having all the answers; it is about listening, bringing people together and helping turn good ideas into action.”

PROFILE · LONGMEADOW WARD, STEVENAGE

FORMER LABOUR & CO-OPERATIVE COUNCILLOR

The road to public service



Advocate — **Bridge**

Housing

Environment

Transport

Community safety

Vulnerable residents

Young people

TBP: Which personal values and life experiences most strongly shape the way you lead, listen and make difficult decisions?

CAE: I would describe the values that guide me as integrity, compassion, respect, accountability, fairness and service.

I believe every person deserves to be treated with dignity, regardless of their background or circumstances. I also believe leadership requires the

humility to listen, particularly to people whose experiences may be very different from your own.

My professional and personal experiences have taught me that difficult decisions should never be taken lightly. Sometimes there are competing priorities and there is no perfect solution. In those circumstances, I try to ask: What is fair? Who is affected? Who may not have had an opportunity to be heard? And what is in the wider community interest?

Ultimately, I believe leadership is about doing the right thing, even when it is not necessarily the easiest thing.

HONOURING OUR COMMUNITIES

TBP: Our October theme is “Honouring Our Communities: Recognising the Often-Unseen People Who Sustain Community Life.” What does this theme mean to you personally?

CAE: It resonates with me deeply because communities are sustained by many people whose contribution rarely makes the headlines.

We often celebrate elected representatives or prominent community leaders, but behind every successful community initiative there are volunteers, carers, faith leaders, youth workers, community organisers, parents, teachers, local businesses and residents who quietly give their time, energy and resources. These people are the social infrastructure of our communities.

To me, honouring our communities means recognising that contribution and saying thank you. It also means ensuring that those who give so much to others are themselves supported, valued and listened to.

A strong community is not built by one person. It is built by people who are willing to look beyond themselves and ask, “What can I do to make things better for someone else?”

“Leadership is about doing the right thing, even when it is not necessarily the easiest thing.”

THE DECISION TEST

Four questions before a difficult decision

01

What is fair?

02

Who is affected?

03

Who may not have had an opportunity to be heard?

04

What is in the wider community interest?

VALUES THAT GUIDE HIM Integrity · Compassion · Respect · Accountability · Fairness · Service

TBP: Which community initiative or achievement during your time as a councillor makes you most proud, and who were the people working behind the scenes to make it possible?

CAE: One area that gives me particular satisfaction is supporting community-led initiatives that create practical benefits for residents, particularly projects that bring people together and encourage participation. One example is a major eco-friendly project we have helped kick-start in the ward.

I have also been particularly pleased to support initiatives such as the Stevenage Repair Café, where residents can bring items for repair rather than simply throwing them away. It is about much more than

repairing household items — it encourages sustainability, skills-sharing, social connection and community resilience.

What makes initiatives like this special is the people behind them: the volunteers who give their time and skills, community centre staff, local organisers, councillors and, most importantly, the residents who participate.

I am also proud of work addressing local issues such as fly-tipping and littering, as well as efforts to improve the Oaks Cross shopping precinct so that it becomes more attractive for residents and the surrounding public spaces become more usable.

The lesson for me is that sometimes the most valuable community assets are not buildings or budgets — they are people willing to give their time and expertise to others.

COMMUNITY NEEDS & LEADERSHIP

TBP: From your conversations with residents, what are the most urgent needs and aspirations within the community today?

CAE: Residents want many of the things that people everywhere want: safe and attractive neighbourhoods, good transport, affordable and decent housing, employment opportunities, quality public services and a positive future for their children. There is also a strong desire for communities to feel connected rather than isolated.

For young people in particular, I believe opportunity is critical. They need access to education, skills, technology, mentoring and pathways into employment.

At the same time, we must not overlook older residents, carers, people with disabilities and families facing financial pressures. A healthy community is one where people do not feel that they are facing life's challenges alone.

“The most valuable community assets are not buildings or budgets — they are people willing to give their time and expertise to others.”

SPOTLIGHT

Stevenage Repair Café

Residents bring items for repair rather than throwing them away. It is about much more than household items.

- Sustainability
- Skills-sharing
- Social connection
- Community resilience

WHAT RESIDENTS WANT

- 1 Safe, attractive neighbourhoods
- 2 Good transport
- 3 Affordable, decent housing
- 4 Employment opportunities
- 5 Quality public services
- 6 A positive future for children

TBP: How do you ensure that people whose voices are not always heard can genuinely influence local decisions?

CAE: The first requirement is simple: we have to listen. But listening is not enough. People need to see that what they have said has been taken seriously and, where possible, translated into action.

Councillors should actively engage with different groups rather than waiting for everyone to come to us. That means attending community events, speaking with residents in their neighbourhoods, engaging with voluntary and faith organisations and creating opportunities for people to raise concerns in accessible ways.

Young people, carers, minority communities and people living with disabilities should not be treated as an afterthought. Their experiences should inform policy from the beginning.

Representation is strongest when people feel: “This is my community, my voice matters, and I have a role in shaping its future.”

TBP: How can councils, churches and faith communities, schools, businesses, charities and residents work together more effectively to strengthen community life?

CAE: We need to move from simply having organisations working alongside each other to genuinely working together.

Every organisation brings something different. Councils have public responsibilities and resources; schools have access to young people; businesses have skills and economic resources; charities understand community needs; faith communities often have deep networks of volunteers; and residents themselves have local knowledge that no organisation can replicate. The opportunity is to bring those strengths together around common objectives.

For example, youth development, digital skills, community safety, environmental sustainability and support for vulnerable residents are all areas where partnerships can make a much greater impact than organisations working independently.

The principle should be simple: collaboration rather than competition; partnership rather than isolation.

“Collaboration rather than competition; partnership rather than isolation.”



TBP: How can public institutions move beyond celebrating Black history only in October and ensure that Black contributions, experiences and achievements are recognised throughout the year?

CAE: Black history should never be confined to one month. Black History Month is valuable because it provides an opportunity to shine a particularly strong light on stories, achievements and experiences that have sometimes been overlooked. But those conversations should continue throughout the year.

Public institutions can do this through education, exhibitions, community events, leadership programmes, procurement and employment practices, cultural programming and by ensuring that diverse perspectives are represented in decision-making.

Most importantly, we should recognise Black contributions as part of British history and British society, rather than treating them as a separate subject. Representation should become part of the normal fabric of our institutions — in our classrooms, workplaces, public services, leadership and civic life.

TBP: Have you encountered particular barriers as a Black person in public life? What practical changes would help more people from underrepresented communities enter leadership?

CAE: Like many people from underrepresented backgrounds, I believe there can be barriers — sometimes obvious, sometimes much more subtle, and those subtle barriers can be even more difficult to prove or overcome.

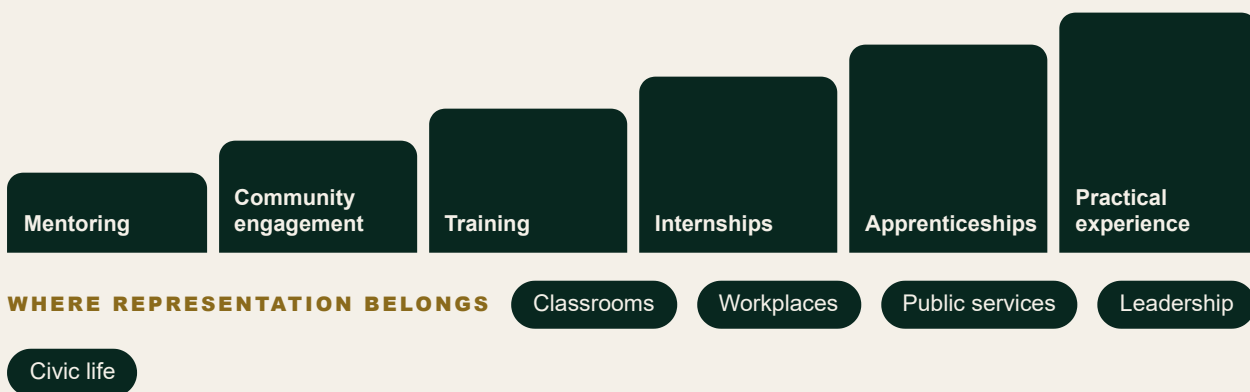
One of the greatest barriers can be a lack of networks and access. People may have the ability, passion and ideas but not necessarily know how to navigate the systems that lead to leadership opportunities. We need to make leadership pathways more accessible through mentoring, community engagement, training, internships, apprenticeships and opportunities for people to gain practical experience.

We also need to challenge unconscious assumptions and bias about who looks like a leader. But I would emphasise that representation is not about lowering standards. It is about ensuring that talent is not overlooked simply because someone did not have the same opportunities, networks or starting point as others.

“Representation is not about lowering standards. It is about ensuring that talent is not overlooked.”

PATHWAYS INTO LEADERSHIP

Making the route accessible



TBP: What can be done to help young people feel that public service, civic participation and community leadership are open and relevant to them?

CAE: Young people need to see that public service is not some distant institution inhabited by people they cannot relate to.

We need to bring civic engagement into schools, colleges, youth organisations and community spaces. Young people should have opportunities to meet councillors, community leaders, entrepreneurs, civil servants and other people involved in public service.

I am particularly passionate about skills and digital empowerment. Young people today are growing up in a rapidly changing technological environment, particularly with artificial intelligence and digital transformation. We should not simply prepare young people to find jobs. We should help them develop the confidence and skills to create opportunities, lead organisations and shape the future themselves.

TBP: What advice would you give to a young person, particularly a young Black person, who wants to serve their community but lacks confidence, connections or a clear starting point?

CAE: I would say: do not wait until you feel completely ready. Start where you are. You do not need to have all the connections. You do not need to have all the answers. Start by identifying an issue you care about and finding one practical way to help.

Volunteer. Attend community meetings. Join a youth organisation, charity or community group. Speak to people doing work that interests you. Ask questions. Find a mentor.

And most importantly, do not allow a lack of confidence to convince you that you do not belong. Sometimes you have to step into spaces before you feel completely comfortable in them. Your background is not a limitation. Your experiences can become part of your strength, and your perspective can become part of your contribution.

“Your background is not a limitation. Your experiences can become part of your strength.”

START WHERE YOU ARE · ADVICE FROM AKIN ELEKOLUSI PHD, FORMER COUNCILLOR

Do not wait until you feel completely ready.

01

Volunteer

Find one practical way to help with an issue you care about.

02

Show up

Attend community meetings and join a youth group or charity.

03

Ask questions

Speak to people doing work that interests you.

04

Find a mentor

Step into spaces before you feel completely comfortable.

TBP: Looking ahead, what lasting change would you most like to see in the community, and what role can residents play in achieving it?

CAE: I would like to see a community where opportunity is genuinely accessible to everyone, regardless of background, age or circumstance.

I would particularly like to see greater investment in young people, digital skills, innovation, entrepreneurship and community development. This is why I set up the Stevenage Innovation Circle CIC, a forum where young people, businesses and community leaders can collaborate to create stronger economic participation and a digitally skilled generation.

Stevenage has enormous potential. We have a strong history, a growing innovation and technology ecosystem, excellent connectivity and a diverse population with enormous talent. But lasting change cannot be delivered by the council alone.

Residents have an essential role. They can volunteer, support local businesses, mentor young people, participate in community organisations, look out for neighbours and engage constructively with local decision-making. The strongest communities are those where people do not simply ask, “What is the council doing for us?” but also ask, “What can we do together?”

THE ROLE OF RESIDENTS

“What can we do together?”

Lasting change cannot be delivered by the council alone. Six ways residents can take part:

1 Volunteer

2 Support local businesses

3 Mentor young people

4 Join community organisations

5 Look out for neighbours

6 Engage with local decisions

Stevenage Innovation Circle CIC

A forum bringing young people, businesses and community leaders together to build economic participation and a digitally skilled generation.

stevenageic.org

TBP: Finally, is there an unsung local individual or organisation you believe deserves greater recognition, and what message would you like to leave with readers of The Berean Post?

CAE: There are so many individuals and organisations that deserve recognition that it would be difficult to name just one. I would particularly recognise the volunteers and community organisations across Stevenage who continue to serve others, often without recognition or financial reward.

They are the people who organise events, support vulnerable residents, mentor young people, run community groups, provide food and practical assistance, support families and create spaces where people feel they belong. My message to them is simple: thank you.

Your contribution matters, even when it is not always visible. Every hour volunteered, every person encouraged, every neighbour supported and every young person given an opportunity contributes to building a stronger society.

And to the wider community, I would say: never underestimate your ability to make a difference. You do not have to be an elected representative to serve your community. You do not have to be wealthy or powerful. Sometimes leadership is simply seeing a need and deciding to do something about it.

If we can create a culture where more people are willing to serve, support and encourage one another, we will leave our communities stronger for the next generation.

A MESSAGE TO OUR READERS

“Sometimes leadership is simply seeing a need and deciding to do something about it.”

AKIN ELEKOLUSI PHD · FORMER COUNCILLOR

“The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members.”

CORETTA SCOTT KING · QUOTED BY AKIN ELEKOLUSI PHD

EDITORIAL TAKEAWAY

Community leadership is not only about office or title. It is sustained by ordinary people who choose to serve, collaborate and create opportunity for others.

The People Who Hold Us Up

BY MATTHEW (TOLU) OLOWOYEYE · EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & PUBLISHER

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

GALATIANS 6:2, NKJV

Nobody in Scripture fulfils a calling entirely alone. Moses had Aaron and Hur beside him when his strength failed and his hands became heavy. Ruth had Naomi, whose relationship helped shape her courage and future. Paul had Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Priscilla, Aquila and a long list of faithful people whose names appear near the end of his letters. Scripture does not simply tell the story of celebrated heroes; it reveals how God’s purposes advance through communities of people who carry, encourage, correct and strengthen one another.

Yet we often recognise the value of support only after it disappears. We notice it when a leader burns out, when a parent becomes overwhelmed, when a carer has nothing left to give, or when a familiar face quietly stops attending church and nobody calls to ask why. The absence of support is loud. Its presence, when it is working well, is often so quiet that it goes unnoticed and unthanked.

Behind every flourishing church, family and neighbourhood are people whose service rarely reaches a platform. They prepare meals, visit the sick, mentor teenagers, care for children, check on elderly neighbours, organise practical help and listen without rushing away. They may never receive a title or public applause, but their faithfulness prevents many lives from falling through the cracks. They are the people who hold us up.

Galatians 6:2 gives the Church a clear instruction: “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” This is not sentimental language. It is a call to shared responsibility. To bear another person’s burden is to move close

enough to notice its weight and remain present long enough to help carry it. Sometimes that means prayer. Sometimes it means a meal, a lift, childcare, financial support, professional guidance or a telephone call that says, “You have not been forgotten.”

Healthy communities do not wait for people to collapse before offering care. They create rhythms of attention. They ask better questions, share responsibilities, train others to serve and make room for honest conversations about exhaustion, grief and need. They understand that strength is not proven by carrying everything alone. True strength also includes knowing when to receive help.

This edition of *The Berean Post* is built around a simple conviction: God did not design us to carry life alone, and the Church must become the place where this truth is practised, not merely preached. We therefore honour the teachers, carers, parents, health professionals, mentors, volunteers, leaders and neighbours whose steady service strengthens our communities.

Let us become more intentional about seeing them, thanking them and standing beside them. And let us also look for the person whose hands are becoming heavy. A timely act of support may seem small, but it can restore courage, preserve a family, strengthen a ministry and remind someone that they do not have to carry life alone.

When we help carry one another, we reveal Christ’s love in practical form and build communities strong enough to endure every difficult season together.

“The absence of support is loud. They are the people who hold us up.”

MATTHEW (TOLU) OLOWOYEYE

The Three-Circle Relationship Audit

02
MINUTES

Before you can share a load, you need to know who is actually in the room. Take two minutes and place real names in each circle below.

DO NOT WRITE ROLES. WRITE PEOPLE. One honest name in each circle is enough to begin.

01

GUIDE ME

Who speaks truth into your life?

02

WALK BESIDE ME

Who is present in your ordinary days?

03

DEPEND ON ME

Who are you carrying right now?

TURN INSIGHT INTO ACTION

A support system cannot carry you if it exists only in theory.

1

NAME THEM

Replace vague categories with real people.

2

NOTICE THE GAP

An empty circle is information, not failure.

3

MAKE ONE MOVE

Call, thank, ask or reconnect today.

When the Circle Breaks Down

Isolation rarely announces itself. It looks like being 'too busy' for the small group three months running. It looks like always being the one who serves and never the one who is asked how they are doing. It looks like a phone full of contacts and nobody you would call at 2am.

In conversations with church leaders, a recurring concern is that people can drift away while quietly struggling – not because they have stopped believing, but because no one noticed in time to ask.

“

Isolation rarely announces itself.”

THREE EARLY WARNING SIGNS

01

PRESENCE

A regular attender has been missing for three weeks in a row, and no one knows why.

WHO COMES TO MIND?

02

RECIPROCITY

Someone always asks about you but never allows the question to turn back towards them.

WHO COMES TO MIND?

03

RESILIENCE

A serving responsibility has no trained cover, creating a single point of failure.

WHO COMES TO MIND?

WHAT TO DO NEXT

Notice

Pay attention to changes in presence, energy and communication.

Ask

Use a real question: 'How are you coping – honestly?'

Stay

Do not disappear after one conversation. Follow up.

Three Things to Do This Month

Community becomes real when insight turns into action. Before this month ends, complete these three small but meaningful commitments.

October
**ACTION
PLAN**

YOUR MONTHLY COMMITMENT

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

1

NAME ONE PERSON IN EACH CIRCLE

Write the names from your relationship audit. A name you can picture is a person you are more likely to contact.

GUIDE ME

WALK BESIDE ME

DEPEND ON ME

_____ ☐ COMPLETED · DATE: _____

2

REPAIR ONE RELATIONSHIP

Not fix – repair. Send a short, honest message to someone from whom you have drifted. A sincere beginning counts.

THE PERSON I WILL CONTACT

_____ ☐ COMPLETED · DATE: _____

3

SHARE ONE BURDEN

Tell someone in your ‘walk beside me’ circle what you are actually carrying this week. Let honesty create room for support.

THE BURDEN I WILL NAME

_____ ☐ COMPLETED · DATE: _____

**BEFORE THE MONTH
ENDS**

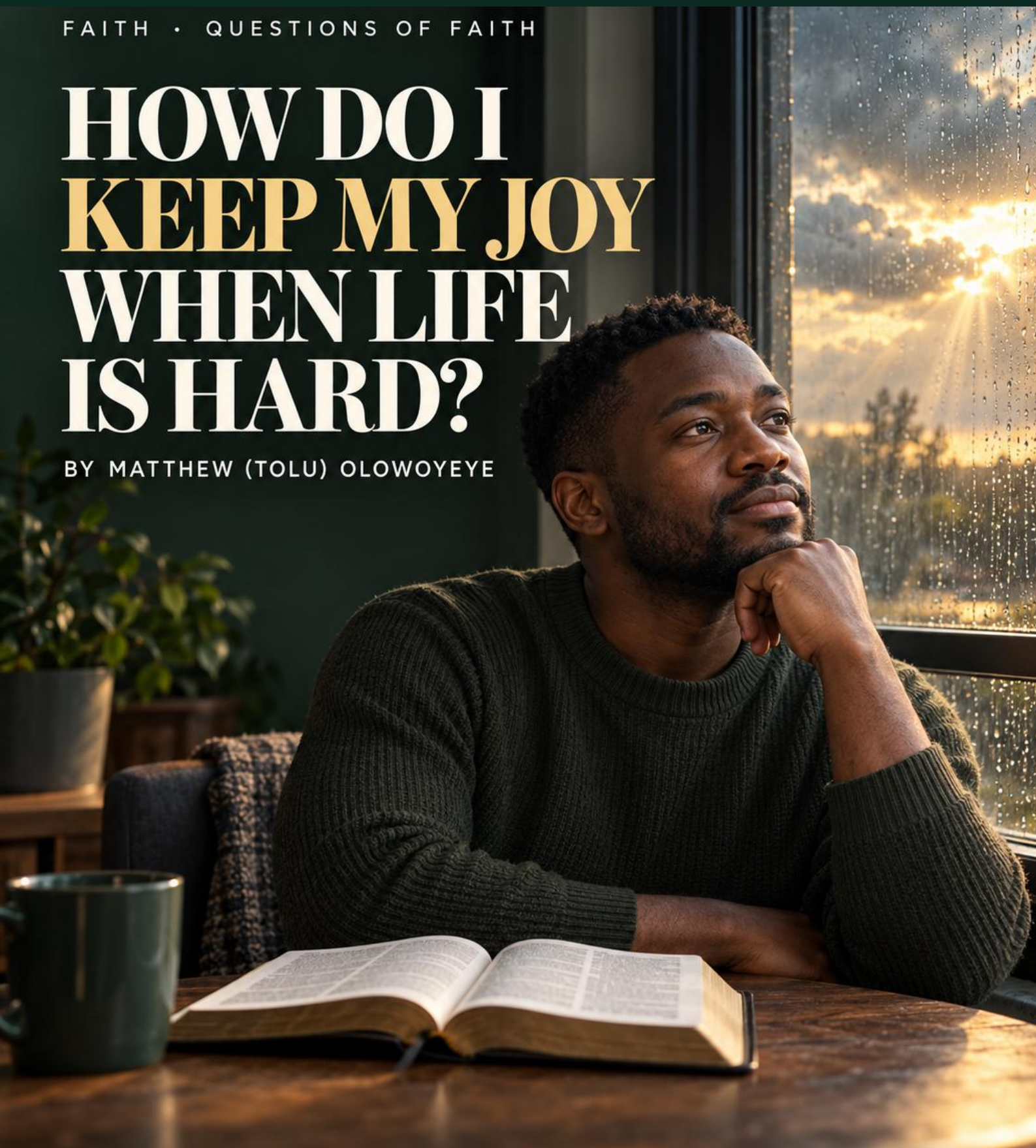
Turn intention into contact.

**One name. One repair. One
shared burden.**

FAITH • QUESTIONS OF FAITH

HOW DO I KEEP MY JOY WHEN LIFE IS HARD?

BY MATTHEW (TOLU) OLOWOYEYE



“In Your presence is fullness of joy.”

PSALM 16:11

More questions of faith: thebereanblog.com/faq

How Do I Keep My Joy When Life Is Hard?

BY MATTHEW (TOLU) OLOWOYEYE • EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & PUBLISHER **SCRIPTURE: PSALM 16:11**

It is natural to feel your joy challenged when life becomes painful, uncertain or exhausting. Christians are not required to pretend that everything is fine. Biblical joy is not constant excitement, forced smiling or denial of sorrow. It is a settled confidence that God remains present, faithful and good, even when circumstances are difficult and answers seem delayed.

Psalm 16:11 declares, “In Your presence is fullness of joy.” Lasting joy is therefore found first in God’s presence, not in trouble-free living. David wrote many of his songs while facing rejection, danger and loss, yet he repeatedly brought his emotions honestly before God. We can do the same. Prayer does not require polished language. Tell God where it hurts, what you fear and what you need. Honest lament can become a doorway through which hope returns.

When hardship fills your thoughts, deliberately redirect your attention towards God’s promises. Read a short passage slowly. Write down one truth about God’s character. Remember specific moments when He sustained you before. Gratitude does not deny pain; it prevents pain from becoming the only thing you can see. Even a simple prayer “Lord, thank You for carrying me through today” can steady a weary heart.

Joy is also strengthened through worship. You may not feel like singing, but worship gently lifts your vision beyond the immediate problem. It reminds you that the storm is real, but it is not sovereign. God is. His character has not changed, and His love has not weakened.

Do not suffer in isolation. God often strengthens us through people. Speak with trusted Christian friends, your pastor or a small group. Allow them to listen, pray and walk with you. Sometimes others can recognise God’s activity in our lives when disappointment has clouded our vision. Receiving help is not weakness; it is one way the body of Christ carries its members.

Give yourself permission to rest. Weariness can make every problem appear heavier. Healthy sleep, nourishing food, exercise, quiet reflection and time away from constant demands can support emotional and spiritual recovery. Appropriate professional help is not evidence of weak faith either. A doctor, counsellor or mental-health professional may be part of God’s provision, especially when sadness, anxiety or hopelessness becomes persistent or overwhelming.

Finally, remember that joy is not the absence of tears. Jesus wept, yet He remained secure in the Father’s love and purpose. Christian joy is the assurance that sorrow will not have the final word. Christ remains with you in the valley, and His resurrection declares that darkness cannot defeat God’s purposes.

Choose practices that help you remain rooted: begin the morning with Scripture, pause during the day to breathe and pray, and end the evening by naming three evidences of grace.

Take life one day at a time: one prayer, one promise, one conversation and one faithful step. The storm may continue for a season, but you do not walk through it alone. God is present, His grace is sufficient, and hope is still alive.

Have a question of faith? Read more answers at thebereanblog.com/faq

“It reminds you that the storm is real, but it is not sovereign. God is.”

MATTHEW (TOLU) OLOWOYEYE

When Quiet Becomes Unhealthy Isolation

KNOW
THE
DIFFERENCE

Solitude can restore us through rest, prayer and quiet. Isolation is different. Learn when time alone is no longer restoring you.

THE DIFFERENCE AT A GLANCE

Healthy Solitude

Time alone that restores connection

- ✓ Restores you for others
- ✓ Has a clear end point
- ✓ Can be spoken about openly
- ✓ Makes room for regular contact

! Unhealthy Isolation

Withdrawal that quietly replaces people

- Feeds on itself; no end in sight
- Often carries shame or hiding
- Makes you hope no one asks
- Quietly replaces your people

“Solitude gives you room to breathe. Isolation convinces you to disappear.”

BEREAN POST
EDITORIAL NOTE

A GENTLE THREE-STEP RESPONSE

1 NOTICE

Ask what has changed in your contact, energy or usual routines. Name the pattern without condemning yourself.

2 REACH

Send one honest message: ‘I have been withdrawing and could use some company.’ One safe person is enough to begin.

3 RETURN

Choose one low-pressure point of connection this week: a call, a walk, a service or a shared meal.

PAUSE AND ASK

Is this quiet restoring me – or helping me hide? What is one safe connection I can make today?

General guidance only; not a substitute for professional care.

The Family Load Conversation

Every family carries an invisible ledger: who remembers the appointments, who checks on the grandparents, who notices when the fridge is empty. In most homes, one person holds most of that ledger — and everyone else assumes it runs itself.

This month, put the ledger on the table. Literally. At dinner, ask each person to name one thing they think they're responsible for at home. You will likely be surprised by the mismatch.

THREE QUESTIONS FOR THE TABLE

01

What's one thing you carry that nobody else notices?

02

What's one task you could hand to someone else this month?

03

Who outside our home could we ask for help without embarrassment?

YOUTH HUB

Every Young Person Needs a Few Safe Adults

One theme runs through the research on resilient young people: they tend to have a few dependable adults — beyond their parents — they could call if something went wrong and know would answer.

For many teenagers in our churches, that circle is far smaller than it should be — not because adults don't care, but because nobody has ever explicitly said "you can call me."

THIS MONTH

If you're an adult in a young person's life, tell them directly that you're one of their dependable few. Don't wait for them to guess.

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Every family carries an invisible ledger: who remembers the appointments, who checks on the grandparents, who notices when the fridge is empty.

THE FAMILY LOAD CONVERSATION

Strong Enough to Ask for Help

Some corners of church culture have quietly taught that struggling proves weak faith. It doesn't. David wrote whole psalms about wanting to disappear. Elijah asked God to let him die. Faith and mental health difficulty have always coexisted in Scripture — the Bible never treats them as opposites.

Asking for help is not a failure of faith. It is often the most faithful thing available to you in that moment — trusting that God works through doctors, counsellors and friends, not only through willpower.

If today is heavy, please talk to someone. Your pastor, a friend, or one of the services below.

“

Asking for help is not a failure of faith. It is often the most faithful thing available to you in that moment.

WHOLE & WELL

UK SUPPORT LINES

Samaritans

116 123

Free, 24/7

Mind

0300 123 3393

Mon–Fri

CALM

0800 58 58 58

5pm–midnight

If you are in immediate danger, call 999 or go to A&E.

The Winter Money Reset

A four-week plan to get ahead of rising heating and holiday costs before they arrive.

Winter expenses rarely arrive as one dramatic bill. They gather quietly: higher heating, longer evenings, school holidays, travel, food, gifts and the small costs that appear when the weather changes.

The answer is not panic or perfection. It is preparation — four simple decisions that turn uncertainty into a plan and give every pound a clear purpose before winter demands it.

THE FOUR-WEEK PLAN

WEEK 1 Know the number Add up last winter's energy bills; set this year's target Gather last winter's bills and statements. Separate essentials, seasonal extras and existing commitments, then set one realistic target.	WEEK 2 Trim one cost Cancel or renegotiate one recurring subscription or bill Highlight recurring payments and remove, pause or renegotiate a single one. Move the saving into the winter fund the same day.	WEEK 3 Start a buffer Move a fixed amount into a separate winter fund Open a separate pot and automate a transfer you can afford. Small and consistent beats a large deposit made occasionally.	WEEK 4 Ask and offer Name one person to ask for help, and one to offer help to Name one person to ask for help and one to help. A lift, a meal or a shared bill protects dignity on both sides.
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The answer is not panic or perfection. It is preparation.

THE WINTER MONEY RESET

Check your tariff first. Ofgem's price cap limits unit rates and standing charges — not your total bill, which still depends on how much you use. Free, independent help is available from the MoneyHelper Budget Planner and Citizens Advice.

NEED HELP NOW?

Citizens Advice

0800 144 8848

From Survival to Legacy

Building financial resilience and generational wealth in the Black community

BY WANDE ADELEYE



Wande Adeleye

Financial empowerment & community development

From Survival to Stability

For generations, many Black families have mastered the art of making a little go a long way. We have supported relatives, helped children through university, contributed to family celebrations and stepped in when someone needed help. That spirit of community is a strength. But what happens when the goal changes from simply making ends meet to building something that lasts? How do we move from financial survival to financial resilience and ultimately towards generational wealth? Generational wealth is not just a large bank balance. It can include a home, pension, savings, investments, a business, insurance and, perhaps most importantly, financial knowledge. It is about creating assets and systems that can provide security and opportunity beyond one generation.

The Reality We Need to Acknowledge

The financial starting point is not the same for everyone. Office for National Statistics analysis found that median total wealth for households headed by someone in the Black African group was £34,300, compared with £286,600 across Great Britain. These figures relate to 2016–2018 and should be understood as evidence of a significant disparity, rather than a current estimate of every Black household's wealth. More recent FCA research also highlights the importance of resilience. In 2024, 39% of Black and Black British adults were assessed as having low financial resilience, compared with 24% of UK adults overall. The FCA also found that one in 10 UK adults had no cash savings, while a further 21% had less than £1,000 in emergency savings.

“Generational wealth is not just a large bank balance.”

WANDE ADELEYE

First, Create Financial Breathing Space

Building wealth starts with creating room to breathe. That means understanding what comes in, what goes out and where money is being spent. A simple budget does not have to be complicated. Start with essential household costs, debt repayments, regular commitments and discretionary spending. Then identify a realistic amount that can be saved consistently. An emergency fund is an important first line of defence. MoneyHelper suggests aiming for around three to six months of essential outgoings in accessible savings, although starting with a smaller amount is still worthwhile. If high cost or priority debt is putting pressure on the household budget, dealing with that can be an important step before focusing heavily on long-term investing.

Saving Is the Foundation. Investing Comes Next.

Saving and investing serve different purposes. Savings can provide accessible money for emergencies and shorter-term goals, while investments are generally intended for longer-term growth and can rise or fall in value. The goal should not be to chase the highest possible return. It should be to understand what you are investing in, the level of risk involved, the charges, how long the money can remain invested and whether the investment is appropriate for your circumstances. Diversification can help spread risk, but it cannot eliminate it. Scams are another serious risk. Be cautious about unsolicited investment opportunities, pressure to act quickly or promises of guaranteed or unusually high returns. The FCA's Firm Checker can be used to check whether a financial firm is authorised.

The Wealth Quietly

Building in Your Pension

For many working people, a pension may become one of their largest long-term assets. Under workplace auto-enrolment rules, the minimum total contribution is generally 8% of qualifying earnings in 2026/27 — typically split between the employee, tax relief and the employer, although the precise breakdown can vary depending on your scheme. Some employers contribute more. Understanding your pension is therefore part of understanding your wealth. Check what your employer contributes, what your pension is invested in, the charges involved and whether old workplace pensions need to be traced or reviewed. Retirement planning is not only about being older; it is about giving your future self options.

Ownership Is Bigger Than Property

Homeownership is often seen as the ultimate symbol of financial progress, and property can be an important asset. But owning a home is not the only form of ownership and buying a property is not the right or realistic choice for everyone. Official data show substantial differences in homeownership between ethnic groups in England. These differences remind us that access to capital, income, housing costs and other structural factors can shape the ability to acquire property. Ownership can also mean building a business. Black entrepreneurs and other ethnic-minority-led businesses can face particular challenges in accessing finance, even while many show strong ambitions to grow. Building a sustainable business requires planning, cash-flow management, appropriate finance and an understanding of risk. Supporting Black-owned businesses can also strengthen economic opportunity within communities, while entrepreneurs can benefit from learning about funding, business structures and professional advice.

“Retirement planning is not only about being older; it is about giving your future self options.”

WANDE ADELEYE

Protect the Wealth You Build

Creating wealth is only half the job. Protecting it matters just as much. A will can help ensure assets are distributed according to your wishes and can make things clearer for those left behind. Insurance can also protect a household from financial shocks caused by death, illness, disability or other significant events, depending on the cover chosen. Estate planning becomes particularly important as assets grow. In the 2026/27 tax year, and correct at the date of publication, the standard Inheritance Tax nil-rate band is £325,000 and the residence nil-rate band is £175,000, subject to eligibility and the relevant rules. Tax rules can change, so significant estate decisions should be checked against current guidance or professional advice.

The Greatest Inheritance May Be Knowledge

Money conversations are part of wealth building. Children do not need to know every detail of a family's finances, but they can learn the basics: how to budget, the difference between needs and wants, how saving works, what credit means, how pensions build over time and why

investments involve risk. We also need to stop thinking of financial literacy as something reserved for people who already have money. Financial knowledge is most powerful when it helps people make informed decisions at every stage of their financial journey.

We Can Change Where the Next Generation Starts

Wealth is rarely built through one dramatic decision. More often, it grows through repeated choices: saving regularly, managing debt, investing carefully, contributing to a pension, protecting assets and passing on knowledge. We may not be able to change the financial starting point we inherited. But we can influence the financial foundation we leave behind. The legacy may be a house. It may be a pension. It may be a thriving business or investment portfolio. But it may also be the child who grows up knowing how money works, understanding the value of ownership and believing that financial security is something they can actively build. Survival gets us through today. Resilience prepares us for tomorrow. Legacy gives tomorrow's generation somewhere stronger to start.

Your Legacy Checklist

- ✓ Know your income, essential spending and debts.
- ✓ Deal with expensive or priority debt.
- ✓ Learn before investing and understand risk and charges.
- ✓ Consider appropriate insurance protection.
- ✓ Keep important financial and legal documents organised.
- ✓ Learn from and support sustainable Black-owned businesses and entrepreneurs.
- ✓ Build an emergency fund, starting with an amount you can maintain.
- ✓ Review your workplace pension and understand employer contributions.
- ✓ Check that financial firms are FCA-authorised.
- ✓ Make or update your will.
- ✓ Talk to children and family members about money and financial responsibility.

CONTRIBUTOR

Wande Adeleye is passionate about financial empowerment, community development and creating opportunities for individuals and families to build stronger financial futures. Through her work and advocacy, she encourages practical conversations around financial resilience, ownership, financial education and generational wealth.

EDUCATIONAL NOTE

This article is for general educational purposes only and does not constitute individual financial, investment, tax or legal advice. Financial circumstances, objectives and tolerance for risk vary between individuals. Readers should consider seeking appropriate advice from an FCA-authorised financial adviser or other suitably qualified professional before making significant financial decisions.

Information checked September 2026.

Sources: ONS household wealth by ethnicity; FCA Financial Lives 2024; MoneyHelper; GOV.UK Ethnicity Facts and Figures; British Business Bank 2025/26; HMRC / GOV.UK Inheritance Tax thresholds.

Heritage at the Table: Nigerian Jollof Rice

BY TITILAYO OLOWOYEYE

A heritage story—not simply a recipe, but a reminder that food can preserve family history.

Jollof rice is more than a meal; it is the taste of celebration, welcome and belonging. The recipe travelled from a grandmother's kitchen in Nigeria into homes abroad, where it still makes every gathering special.

No written measurements guided the cooks. Tomatoes, peppers, onions and spices were judged by colour, fragrance and instinct. Rice was added when the stew had reached the rich flavour everyone recognised. Younger relatives learned by watching, tasting and asking questions.

"She never measured anything. I stood beside her with a notebook until I could record what her hands already understood."

That notebook now preserves more than ingredients. It carries memory, cultural identity and the generosity of a table where nobody leaves hungry.

Traditional dishes can disappear when knowledge is assumed rather than shared. Ask an elder how your family cooks its meal. Write it down, prepare it together and keep the story alive for generations.



Titilayo Olowoyeye

Nigerian Jollof Rice Ingredients

Serves approximately 6–8 people

- 4 cups long-grain parboiled rice
- 6 large ripe tomatoes
- 3 red bell peppers
- 2 Scotch bonnet peppers, adjusted to taste
- 3 medium onions
- 3 tablespoons tomato purée
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 4 cups chicken or beef stock
- 2 teaspoons curry powder
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 teaspoons smoked paprika
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder or 4 fresh garlic cloves
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 2–3 seasoning cubes
- Salt to taste
- ½ teaspoon ground black or white pepper
- 1 tablespoon butter, optional
- Cooked chicken, beef, turkey or fish for serving
- Fried plantain, coleslaw or salad for serving

For the pepper base: Blend the tomatoes, red bell peppers, Scotch bonnet peppers and one onion until smooth. This mixture forms the rich, colourful foundation of authentic Nigerian jollof rice.

31 Days of Belonging

A verse a day — fellowship, mutual care, gathering and gratitude

01 GENESIS 2:18 Not good to be alone	02 EXODUS 17:12 Aaron and Hur hold up Moses' arms	03 1 SAMUEL 18:1 Jonathan and David's covenant
04 PROVERBS 17:17 A friend loves at all times	05 MARK 2:3 Four friends carry the paralysed man	06 JOHN 15:13 Greater love has no one than this
07 ROMANS 12:15 Rejoice and weep together	08 GALATIANS 6:2 Bear one another's burdens	09 ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10 Two are better than one
10 RUTH 1:16 Where you go, I will go	11 JOB 2:13 Sitting with a friend in silence	12 PROVERBS 27:17 Iron sharpens iron
13 LUKE 10:33 The Good Samaritan stops	14 ACTS 2:44 All things in common	15 ROMANS 15:1 The strong carry the weak
16 1 CORINTHIANS 12:26 If one part suffers	17 COLOSSIANS 3:13 Bear with each other	18 1 THESSALONIANS 5:11 Encourage one another
19 HEBREWS 10:24-25 Spur one another on	20 JAMES 5:16 Confess to one another	21 1 PETER 4:9 Offer hospitality without grumbling
22 1 JOHN 4:11 Since God loved us, we ought to love	23 EPHESIANS 4:16 The body grows through every part	24 ACTS 4:32 United in heart and mind
25 PSALM 133:1 Dwelling together in unity	26 PSALM 68:6 God sets the lonely in families	27 DEUTERONOMY 16:14 Rejoice at the harvest, together
28 PSALM 107:9 He satisfies the hungry soul	29 2 CORINTHIANS 9:11 Generosity results in thanksgiving	30 LUKE 12:24 Consider the ravens, fed by God
31 PHILIPPIANS 4:6 With thanksgiving, present your requests		

Seven Prayers for Those Who Carry Others

PRAYER ROOM

- 1 For the exhausted carer.** Lord, renew those with nothing left today. Grant rest without guilt, help without shame, sleep, and strength to face tomorrow with hope.
- 2 For the parent who feels alone.** Surround them with people who see, listen without judgement, offer support, and remind them they are valued and never abandoned.
- 3 For the leader with no one above them.** Send them a Barnabas: a friend who will encourage them, speak truth, share their burden, and ask how they are.
- 4 For the friend who always listens.** Let someone notice their silence, make room for their story, and care for their heart with the same patience they give others.
- 5 For the one caring from a distance.** Ease the helplessness of loving someone they cannot reach. Grant them wisdom, peace, communication, and trustworthy people who can provide support nearby.
- 6 For the newly isolated.** Send someone to call, visit, listen, and welcome them into a community where their presence will be recognised and valued.
- 7 For all of us.** Open our eyes to those who are missing, overlooked, or quietly struggling. Give us compassion to notice, courage to respond, generosity to help, and faithfulness to remain present.

Elders Building Our Communities



Elder Ade Adeyemo

NHS NURSE • CARER • COMMUNITY SERVANT

Elder Ade Adeyemo is a dedicated NHS nurse whose professional life reflects compassion, courage and an unwavering commitment to the wellbeing of others. Through her work, she supports patients and families during some of their most vulnerable moments, providing skilled care, reassurance and hope.

Her contribution extends beyond clinical responsibilities. As an elder and community servant, she brings the same patience, empathy and sense of responsibility to those around her. She understands that helping to save lives involves not only medical knowledge, but also listening attentively, treating people with dignity and offering a steady presence when it is needed most.

Working within the NHS requires resilience, teamwork and selfless dedication qualities Elder Ade demonstrates through her daily service. Her willingness to care for others, often behind the scenes and without public recognition, represents the spirit of those who quietly sustain our communities.

Through healthcare, faith and compassionate service, Elder Ade Adeyemo continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals and families. Her example reminds us that every act of care carries the power to restore strength, preserve dignity and renew hope.

Elder Mauline

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER • COMMUNITY BUILDER • WOMAN OF WISDOM

Elder Mauline is a gifted and thoughtful Sunday School teacher whose ministry helps people understand Scripture and apply its truth to everyday life. With clarity, patience and spiritual insight, she creates lessons that remain with her students long after the class has ended.

Her teaching goes beyond simply sharing information. She encourages her learners to think deeply, ask meaningful questions and develop a personal understanding of God's Word. Through careful preparation and faithful service, she helps nurture spiritual growth, strengthen biblical knowledge and build confidence in those she teaches.

Elder Mauline's influence also extends beyond the classroom. As a community builder, she has a natural ability to bring people together and help newcomers feel welcomed, recognised and valued. Her warm and open-hearted approach creates a sense of belonging and strengthens relationships within the church community.

Her wisdom, diligence and commitment reflect the important contribution of those who serve faithfully, often away from public attention. Through teaching, encouragement and genuine care for others, Elder Mauline continues to strengthen lives and help build a more informed, connected and spiritually grounded community.

We honour her faithful service and thank God for the lasting difference she continues to make.



***"Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith."* – HEBREWS 13:7**



Deaconess Toyin Keshiro

EXECUTIVE HEAD TEACHER · COMMUNITY CONVENER · WOMEN'S ADVOCATE

“True influence is not measured merely by position or visibility, but by the people empowered.”

Deaconess Toyin Keshiro is an accomplished educational leader, community convener and woman of influence whose work continues to strengthen schools, families and communities.

As an Executive Head Teacher overseeing two schools in London, she carries significant responsibility for strategic leadership, educational standards, staff development and pupils' wellbeing. Her leadership extends beyond the administration of schools; she helps to shape environments in which children can flourish, educators can grow and families can feel supported. Through experience, discipline and compassionate leadership, she demonstrates the transformative role that education plays in building confident individuals and stronger communities.

Her commitment to people is equally evident in her work as the Convener of *Nigerians in Hertfordshire*, a WhatsApp community of approximately 1,000 members. Under her guidance, the platform provides a valuable space for connection, information-sharing, encourage-

ment and practical support. By bringing people together across different backgrounds and professions, she helps members develop relationships, exchange opportunities and maintain a meaningful sense of community.

Deaconess Toyin is also an active member of the *Exclusive Women of Influence Circle*, where she contributes to a network committed to strengthening women, promoting purposeful leadership and creating opportunities for positive impact.

Her wisdom, consistency and genuine concern for others have earned her considerable trust and respect. Whether she is leading schools, connecting Nigerians across Hertfordshire, supporting women or serving through her faith, Deaconess Toyin Keshiro brings vision, integrity and thoughtful leadership to every responsibility.

Her life reminds us that true influence is not measured merely by position or visibility, but by the people empowered, the relationships strengthened and the communities made better through one's service.

ROLES & INITIATIVES

Executive Head Teacher

Overseeing two schools in London

Convener

Nigerians in Hertfordshire, about 1,000 members

Member

Exclusive Women of Influence Circle



Elder Toyin Ajileye

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT · EDUCATIONIST · FOUNDER
· TEENAGE MENTOR

“When a child learns to read confidently, doors are opened to learning, imagination and a more promising future.”

Elder Toyin Ajileye is a Chartered Accountant, educationist and respected community leader whose influence reaches across generations. Her professional expertise, entrepreneurial vision and commitment to education reflect a life devoted to creating opportunities and helping others fulfil their potential.

She is the founder of *Bella Hands Academy*, an initiative established to equip people with practical skills, develop creativity and encourage greater independence. Through the Academy, she provides a platform where knowledge can be transformed into capability, confidence and meaningful economic opportunity.

Her passion for literacy and child development also inspired the creation of the *Bella Reads Programme*. The initiative encourages children and young people to develop a lasting interest in reading, strengthen their communication skills and discover the possibilities that education can unlock. Elder Toyin understands that when a child learns to read confidently, doors are opened to learning, imagination and a more promising future.

She is also the founder of *Mabella Schools* in Nigeria, where her vision for quality education is translated into an environment that nurtures academic excellence, good character and responsible citizenship. Her contribution demonstrates that education is not simply about passing examinations; it is about preparing young people to think clearly, live purposefully and contribute positively to society.

Elder Toyin is particularly passionate about teenagers. She offers guidance, encouragement and a trusted voice during the formative years in which their identity, confidence and aspirations are being shaped.

Whether she is applying her expertise as a Chartered Accountant, developing educational initiatives, or mentoring teenagers, Elder Toyin Ajileye leads with wisdom, compassion and purpose. Her life demonstrates the enduring impact of using professional knowledge, personal influence and practical service to build stronger individuals and communities.

ROLES & INITIATIVES

Founder

Bella Hands Academy: practical skills and creativity

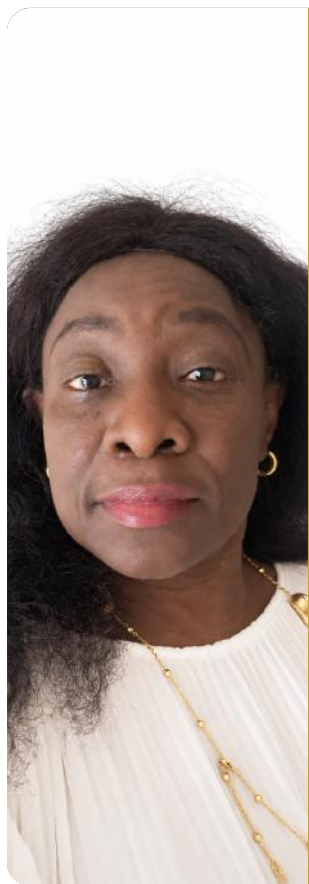
Founder

Bella Reads Programme: literacy for children

Founder

Mabella Schools, Nigeria

Elders Building Our Communities



Princess Fadesola Adetosoye

HOUSING OFFICER • ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES • COMMUNITY ADVOCATE

Princess Fadesola Adetosoye is a dedicated public servant whose professional work reflects compassion, responsibility and a strong commitment to protecting the dignity of vulnerable people.

As a Housing Officer within Adult Social Services in London, she supports individuals who may be experiencing difficult, uncertain or life-changing circumstances. Her role requires more than administrative knowledge. It demands patience, sound judgement, careful listening and the ability to respond sensitively to people whose housing needs may be connected to health challenges, disability, safeguarding concerns or social isolation.

Through her work, Princess Fadesola helps vulnerable adults navigate complex systems and access the assistance they need to live with greater security, stability and independence. Her calm presence and people-centred approach enable her to serve with both professionalism and humanity.

Her educational background has equipped her with a broad and valuable perspective. She holds a degree in History, together with postgraduate qualifications in Human Resources and Education. This combination provides her with an understanding of people, institutions, leadership and the social experiences that shape communities.

Beyond her professional responsibilities, Princess Fadesola is recognised within the Stevenage community as a dependable and thoughtful woman who listens carefully, speaks with wisdom and uses her influence to encourage others.

Her life and service demonstrate that community leadership is not always exercised from a public platform. It is also expressed through daily acts of advocacy, compassion and practical support. By helping vulnerable people find stability and hope, Princess Fadesola Adetosoye continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals and the wider community.

Pastor Paul Odiyi

PASTOR • ENTREPRENEUR • COMMUNITY LEADER • MAN OF FAITH

Pastor Paul Odiyi is a devoted pastor, entrepreneur and community leader whose life reflects faith, compassion and a genuine commitment to people. Within the church, he is more than a familiar presence; he is a rallying point—someone who brings people together, encourages participation and helps to build a strong sense of belonging.

His leadership is expressed not only from the pulpit or through public responsibilities, but also through the personal support he gives to those facing difficult seasons. He has become a dependable shoulder to many and a trusted friend to people experiencing distress, uncertainty or disappointment. Through attentive listening, prayer and practical encouragement, he helps others rediscover hope and the strength to continue.

As an entrepreneur, Pastor Paul understands the discipline, resilience and courage required to transform ideas into meaningful outcomes. His experience enables him to encourage others to pursue their aspirations responsibly, embrace opportunities and remain steadfast when progress appears slow.

At the heart of his service is an enduring faith in God. That faith shapes his leadership, strengthens his relationships and inspires his willingness to stand with people when support matters most. He demonstrates that ministry is not confined to preaching; it is also found in showing up, carrying burdens, creating opportunities and remaining present.

Pastor Paul Odiyi represents the kind of leadership that strengthens both church and community. His life reminds us that genuine influence is measured not merely by visibility or position, but by the people gathered, the distressed comforted, the discouraged strengthened and the lives quietly transformed through faithful service.



What Holds a Community Together

None of the people profiled on the pages set out to become community pillars. They simply noticed a need and kept showing up. Sometimes it was a lift to an appointment, a warm meal for a struggling family, a place on a rota, a listening ear, or another Saturday morning freely given when it would have been reasonable to rest.

This is the pattern worth honouring during Black History Month. Community strength is not built only through grand speeches, prominent titles or public ceremonies. It is sustained through years of small, often unglamorous acts of faithfulness. The people who hold communities together are frequently those working without a budget, recognition or applause. Yet their consistency creates trust, belonging and hope.

When a parent knows someone will check on them, when a young person finds a dependable mentor, when an older neighbour receives practical help, or when a church opens its doors beyond Sunday worship, community becomes more than a location. It becomes a network of people who refuse to let others struggle alone.

Britain's strongest communities are not those with the greatest resources. They are those where ordinary people accept responsibility for one another. Their service may appear small in the moment, but its influence often reaches across families and generations.

This month, let us notice them, thank them and learn from them. Let us also ask what need is within our reach. Communities endure when people stop waiting for someone important to act and offer what they already have.

**Not grand gestures, but
decades of small, unglamorous
faithfulness.**



Pastor Emeka Eluwa

Executive Pastor, RCCG City of David, Stevenage

IN CONVERSATION

In Conversation with Pastor Emeka Eluwa

Faith, service and the people who sustain community life

Pastor Emeka Eluwa is Executive Pastor of RCCG City of David, Stevenage. In this interview with The Berean Post, he reflects on leadership, practical service, Black heritage and the people whose contributions sustain community life.

TBP: Pastor Emeka, please introduce yourself and briefly describe your journey into Christian ministry and leadership.

PEE: Hello, and thank you for this opportunity.

My name is Emeka, and I'm the Executive Pastor of City of David, Stevenage, a parish of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). I am responsible for the operations of the church and its governance.

My growth in service and responsibility stems from my desire to add value in the Lord's house and to use my abilities for God's glory. This has seen me serve in various departments over the years and develop skills and resilience that I might not otherwise have developed.

For me, leadership came first from seeing how my voluntary contributions could influence positive change within the church community. So, when I was asked to officially serve in leadership, I did not say no, and I have not looked back.

God has been faithful in allowing me to continue to influence and make meaningful contributions to the growth of the church.

“Leadership starts with service, and service is a fruit of one's availability.”

PASTOR EMEKA ELUWA · THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES OVERLEAF

TBP: What experiences have most significantly shaped your leadership philosophy and approach to serving people?

PEE: I believe leadership starts with service, and service is a fruit of one's availability. Talents and gifts have their greatest impact when we make ourselves available to use them. So, for me, it has been first about being available and, second, about asking, "What can I do?"

We can always make a contribution to any situation. Your contribution doesn't always mean doing something; sometimes presence, prayer, encouragement or listening is the contribution. We serve a God who is limitless, so if you trust Him in all situations, there is always a meaningful contribution to be made.

When serving and leading, especially in a charity where people volunteer their time, you must recognise the value that every individual brings in their own way. The gift of someone's time should never be taken for granted. That respect and appreciation are key ingredients in creating a space where people feel able to contribute their gifts and talents.

TBP: Please tell us about RCCG City of David Stevenage: its vision, mission and place within the local community.

PEE: The vision of our church is to be a place where you will experience love beyond reason. Our focus is on building a community where love is both seen and experienced. Jesus teaches that it is by how we love one another that we show that we follow Him, and this is what we seek to live out.

We aim to ensure that everyone who fellowships with us experiences the love of Christ through our church community.

This is continuous work. It requires showing up regularly and showing love consistently. It is also a communal effort because the leadership cannot personally reach every single person, but the community can.

We are also active in the wider Stevenage community through our open doors and social action initiatives. Over the years, we have partnered with local charities and international organisations to help ensure that the love of Christ extends beyond the walls of our church.

TBP: Beyond regular church services, what practical needs within Stevenage and the surrounding community is the church helping to address?

PEE: We work with local charities such as Stevenage Haven, The Foodshed and Magic of Play, which supports children at Lister Hospital, providing financial and material assistance to support their efforts to help those who are struggling in our community.

This has been such a privilege because we get to see the work these organisations do and how our contributions help enable them to continue serving people in need.

We have also held events such as coffee mornings, community barbecues, clothing drives and boot sales as ways of reaching out to our community.

One of the most impactful things we do is provide Christmas hampers to families in the local area. It has been such a blessing to bring the joy of Christ to so many people, especially during financially difficult seasons.

"I believe leadership starts with service, and service is a fruit of one's availability."

PASTOR EMEKA ELUWA

TBP: This edition recognises the often-unseen people who sustain community life. Who are some of these individuals within your church or community, and why is their contribution important?

PEE: I would start by recognising the elders in our church community. The wisdom they bring and the blessing of their presence are almost impossible to quantify, especially for younger generations.

Secondly, I would recognise our Children's Church teachers, who give up their Sundays to teach and impact the next generation of believers. It is such a selfless act of service and one that can easily be taken for granted.

Thirdly, there is the often-unseen service of our evangelism and social action teams. Much of their impact happens outside our regular church services, but they are our fingers of impact within the wider community.

Finally, I would recognise our sanctuary cleaning team. It is so easy to come to church Sunday after Sunday without seeing the work that has already been done to ensure that the building is clean, welcoming and ready for our parishioners. These are all examples of people whose service may not always be visible, but whose contribution makes community life possible.

TBP: What role should churches play in strengthening families, supporting vulnerable people and building healthier communities?

PEE: The church is God's family planted within cultures and communities, so there is a responsibility to bring God's love to all.

Love is first seen and experienced within the family unit, and the church has a responsibility to teach and reflect that love into families. The Word of God also encourages believers to help and support those who are vulnerable in society.

This requires a continuous and intentional effort to ensure that our activities create space for inclusion, support and care. A healthy church should ultimately contribute to healthier families and a healthier community.

TBP: What are some of the distinctive challenges facing Black families, young people and faith communities in the United Kingdom today?

PEE: Family life, adulthood and faith are continuous uphill climbs, especially if we want to do them well. For Black families and young people in the UK, those challenges can sometimes be compounded by mental health struggles, financial pressures, societal exclusion, questions of identity and unequal access to opportunities or services.

The UK economy has been through a difficult period in recent years, and often it is those who are already less fortunate or feel excluded who experience the effects most sharply.

At the same time, I think we have to be careful not to define Black communities only by the challenges they face. There is tremendous resilience, faith, aspiration and strength within our communities. Our responsibility is to recognise the genuine challenges while continuing to build environments in which individuals and families can flourish.

“These are all examples of people whose service may not always be visible, but whose contribution makes community life possible.”

PASTOR EMEKA ELUWA

TBP: How can churches preserve valuable aspects of African and Black heritage while helping younger generations develop a confident British identity?

PEE: The church has a responsibility to reflect the values of the Kingdom of Heaven within its local community. This means first understanding where it has been planted and then considering how best to reflect Christ's love there. Culture can be a powerful strength within a church community, while recognising that no culture should ever become more important than the message and values of the Kingdom.

As a church with a congregation predominantly of Black British and African heritage, culture and shared values can be a strong bonding agent. We have been planted by God within the families and communities we are part of, and that context can contribute positively to our growth and development.

The church has to tap into the power of culture to show that the love of Christ is not only inclusive, but can also be expressed through who we are and what we bring.

There is a message the world needs that only your unique voice can bring. Identity is powerful and should never be denigrated. Young people should not feel that they have to choose between appreciating their heritage and being confidently British. Both can form part of the unique voice and contribution they bring to society.

TBP: What can churches do to engage young people more effectively and prepare them for leadership, service and responsible citizenship?

PEE: Christ teaches believers to be salt and light in the world. This means we must bring value and wisdom wherever we find ourselves.

For churches, that means doing more than simply talking to young people; we need to listen to them, invest in them, give them meaningful responsibility and create genuine opportunities for them to serve and lead. Leadership is influence, and influence often starts by stepping up to meet the needs around us with the abilities we have.

Whether at school, at work, among friends or within the church, how young people show up and make their contribution count is important. The church should help them recognise their gifts and give them safe environments in which to develop and use them.

Being passive does not make our society better; it simply creates more room for negative influences to become stronger. We should therefore prepare young people not only to participate in church life, but also to make meaningful contributions wherever God places them.

“There is a message the world needs that only your unique voice can bring.”

PASTOR EMEKA ELUWA

TBP: Can you share a community initiative, testimony or experience from your ministry that has particularly encouraged you?

PEE: One initiative that is close to my heart is our annual collection for Operation Christmas Child. Every year, we contribute funds, gifts and shoeboxes, and all of this culminates in us coming together as a community to pack the shoeboxes before they are shipped to children and families facing difficult circumstances in different parts of the world.

To be able to contribute, even in a small way, to bringing joy to children and families far away is such a blessing.

I especially love the small notes and cards that our Children's Church writes and places inside each shoebox. These small, thoughtful touches can go a long way. It is also beautiful to see our own children learning that they can make a difference in the life of another child they may never meet.

TBP: What lessons have you learned about collaboration between churches, local authorities, charities and community organisations?

PEE: Community work is often difficult and much of it happens without recognition. That has taught me not to underestimate the people who quietly and consistently show up. One thing I have learned is that help is almost always needed, so a useful starting point is simply to

ask, "How can we help?" Sometimes the contribution may be financial or material; at other times, simply being present and showing support can go a long way.

I have also learned that no single church, charity or organisation can meet every need within a community. Collaboration allows each organisation to bring its particular strengths, experience and resources to the table.

In a day and age when societal division can seem increasingly common, we all need to stand up, show up and continue showing up for our communities. The diversity of our communities makes us stronger, not weaker.

TBP: Looking ahead, what is your vision for RCCG City of David Stevenage and its impact on the wider community?

PEE: It goes back to our vision for the church: to be a community where people experience love beyond reason.

My hope is that we continue to become the arms of Christ's love within our community — a church that does not only gather on Sundays, but one whose presence makes a meaningful difference to the people and organisations around us.

I would like us to continue strengthening our partnerships, expanding our social impact and creating more opportunities for our members to use their gifts in service to others. Ultimately, I hope that when people think about City of David Stevenage, they see a community that consistently shows up and demonstrates the love of Christ in practical ways.

"The diversity of our communities makes us stronger, not weaker."

PASTOR EMEKA ELUWA

TBP: What message of hope and encouragement would you like to share with Black communities across the United Kingdom during Black History Month?

PEE: Strong communities are built when everyone has the opportunity to show up and contribute. We are all poorer when voices, talents and perspectives within our communities are absent from that building effort.

A strong United Kingdom is the product of people with different histories, experiences, cultures and abilities choosing to contribute towards a shared future. During Black History Month, we rightly honour those who came before us and the contributions they made, but we should also ask ourselves what contribution we are making today.

Our history should remind us that our presence matters, our contribution matters and our willingness to serve matters.

TBP: How can readers support or become involved in the work of RCCG City of David Stevenage?

PEE: Readers can visit our website to learn more about the church, our activities and ways to get involved. You are also very welcome to join us in person on any Sunday morning in Stevenage.

TBP: Is there anything important about your ministry or community that we have not discussed but that you would like our readers to know?

PEE: No, I think we have covered the heart of what we are about. Thank you again for the opportunity to share a little about our church, our community and the people who make it what it is.

ABOUT

City of David Stevenage

We are a Pentecostal church blending both contemporary and traditional worship with the glorious and unchanging message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our guests are quick to discover that they have found a safe place to learn, to grow and to connect with wonderful people in a welcoming environment. We want you to come as you are because this is a place where you experience love beyond reason.

We are a dynamic multi-ethnic community made up of people who find life and hope in Jesus Christ. We find meaning in the story of Jesus –

his birth and life, his teaching and healing, his suffering, death and resurrection. We aim to promote the kingdom culture and raise a Jesus-like generation.

Planted in 2009, God has been faithful to our church family saving, healing, building, and sending us to serve Stevenage and beyond. What began as a small community has grown into a vibrant, multi-generational church passionate about the presence of God and the practical outworking of the gospel.

Beyond Strength

Breaking the silence around mental health in the
Black community

Dr Samson Oluwatosin Festus, MBBS

GMC-registered medical practitioner · Resident Medical Officer (Psychiatry) · MPH student, University of Warwick

Black History Month gives us an opportunity to celebrate achievements, resilience and contributions, but it should also give us permission to speak about the quieter burdens carried within our communities.

As a Nigerian-trained doctor now working within adult mental health services in the United Kingdom, I have become increasingly aware of how culture can shape the way emotional distress is understood and expressed. In many Black families, strength is deeply admired. We are taught to persevere, provide for others, pray, keep going and avoid bringing shame to the family. But there is a point at which the expectation to be ‘the strong one’ can make it difficult to say: ‘I need help.’

Mental ill-health is not a failure of character, faith or gratitude. Like physical illness, it deserves understanding, timely assessment and appropriate care.

Why the silence can be harmful

Stigma remains one of the reasons people delay seeking help. In some families, anxiety or depression may be dismissed as overthinking. A person experiencing severe emotional distress may be told to toughen up, pray harder or keep private matters inside the home. In other situations, people fear being labelled ‘weak’, ‘unstable’ or ‘mad’.

For Christians, faith can be an enormous source of hope. I believe prayer and professional mental healthcare should not be presented as opposites. We do not tell someone with diabetes that taking medication means they lack faith. We can pray for a person, walk alongside them and still encourage them to speak with a GP, therapist or mental health professional.

“We do not tell someone with diabetes that taking medication means they lack faith.”

Faith communities as partners

Recent research from Nigeria gives reason for optimism. A 2026 study involving more than 14,000 adults across 233 churches and 81 mosques in Lagos found that a brief, culturally adapted mental health awareness programme improved knowledge and attitudes and increased referral for professional care [1].

Another 2026 Lagos study of Christian and Muslim religious leaders found that spiritual explanations often existed alongside biological and psychosocial understandings, and that previous mental health training was associated with more supportive attitudes [2]. These findings show how faith communities can become important partners in early recognition and referral. Our churches and communities can serve as safe, supportive spaces, helping people to speak more openly and seek help when needed.

The pressures behind the smile

Mental health cannot be separated from the realities of everyday life. Racism and discrimination can create chronic stress. Migration may bring separation from family, loneliness, changes in professional status and the challenge of rebuilding a support network. Financial pressure can be intensified by the responsibility to support relatives both in the UK and abroad. Some people are working long hours while also trying to be the dependable child, parent, spouse, sibling or church member.

The World Health Organization recognises that migration-related pressures can include social isolation, discrimination, insecure income and separation from support networks [3].

“Our churches and communities can serve as safe, supportive spaces, helping people to speak more openly and seek help when needed.”

DR. SAMSON OLUWATOSIN



In England, NHS data for 2024–25 recorded Mental Health Act detention rates among Black or Black British people at nearly four times the rate of the White group [4]. This inequality should prompt reflection on access, trust and early support.

Consider a familiar scenario. A young professional relocates from Nigeria to the UK. He works extra shifts, sends money home and reassures everyone that he is doing well. Over several months he stops calling friends, sleeps poorly, becomes irritable and loses interest in activities he once enjoyed. When asked how he is, he says, 'I'm fine. I just need to be strong.' The words are not dramatic, but the change in his behaviour deserves attention.

Signs we should not ignore

Mental health difficulties do not always look like a crisis. Warning signs can include:

- persistent sadness, anxiety or irritability
- withdrawal from family, friends or church
- sleeping too little or too much
- loss of interest in usual activities
- changes in appetite
- poor concentration
- increasing use of alcohol or drugs
- difficulty managing usual responsibilities
- a growing sense of hopelessness

Someone can still go to work, care for children and smile in photographs while struggling internally.

Particular attention is needed when a person talks about feeling worthless, being a burden, having no reason to live, wanting to disappear or harming themselves. Such statements should never be dismissed as attention-seeking.

If it is urgent

If someone is in immediate danger or there is an immediate risk to life, call **999** or go to A&E. In England, urgent mental health support can also be accessed by calling **NHS 111** and selecting the mental health option [5].

“I’m fine. I just need to be strong.”

DR. SAMSON OLUWATOSIN

Seeking help is wisdom

The first step does not have to be a psychiatric appointment. It may begin with an honest conversation with a trusted relative, friend, faith leader or healthcare professional. A GP can assess symptoms, consider whether a physical problem may be contributing and discuss appropriate support. Adults in England can also self-refer to NHS Talking Therapies for common problems such as anxiety and depression [6]. The important thing is not to wait until a person reaches breaking point.

Families can help by listening without rushing to judge, compare or lecture. Instead of asking, 'What is wrong with you?', we might ask, 'How have you really been coping?' We should protect confidentiality, avoid turning somebody's distress into community gossip and offer practical help with appointments or daily responsibilities where appropriate.

Churches and community leaders also have a powerful role. They do not need to become therapists. They can learn to recognise the warning signs and know where to signpost people, invite qualified professionals to provide education and make it clear that seeking treatment is not evidence of weak faith.

Perhaps we also need to pay closer attention to the people we routinely call 'strong': the parent everybody depends on, the pastor carrying other people's burdens, the healthcare worker who cares for everyone else, the friend who never says no, or the relative supporting an extended family across two countries. The people who sustain community life also need to be sustained.

A BLACK HISTORY MONTH REFLECTION

REDEFINING STRENGTH

This Black History Month, let us broaden our definition of strength. Strength is not pretending that nothing hurts.

01

Sometimes strength is speaking.

02

Sometimes it is resting.

03

Sometimes it is praying and seeking professional help.

04

And sometimes it is simply allowing another person to say, without shame, 'I am not coping,' and responding, 'You do not have to carry this alone.'



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Dr Samson Oluwatosin Festus is a GMC-registered doctor with over four years of postgraduate clinical experience across psychiatry, internal medicine and emergency medicine. He currently works in a hybrid Resident Medical Officer / Specialty Doctor role across adult acute, psychiatric intensive care and secure mental health services in the UK. He is undertaking a Master of Public Health at the University of Warwick, with professional interests in mental health, population health, patient safety, teaching, research and quality improvement.

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Master of Public Health (MPH), University of Warwick — in progress (2026–2028)

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Health information note: This article is for general education and does not replace individual medical assessment, diagnosis or treatment. If you are concerned about your mental health, please speak with an appropriate healthcare professional. If there is an immediate risk to life, call 999 or go to A&E.

Seven Ways to Support Someone Without Trying to Fix Everything

BY MATTHEW (TOLU) OLOWOYEYE · EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & PUBLISHER

This October, The Berean Post honours the often-unseen people who sustain community life. Among them are those who sit beside someone in distress, bring a meal and keep checking in. Their example invites us to practise a form of care that respects dignity, listens carefully and offers help without taking control.

The person who delivers a meal to a grieving family rarely becomes a headline. Neither does the neighbour who accompanies an older resident to an appointment, or the church member who notices that someone has been absent and quietly checks on them. Yet these acts help make a community a place where people can belong, especially when life becomes difficult.

Our October UK Black History Month special edition celebrates contributions that can easily go unrecognised. Within many Black British families, churches and neighbourhoods, care is expressed through shared food, practical assistance and the willingness to make room for someone else. We should honour that generosity while remembering that those who give so much also need support.

As pastors and community leaders, we have a responsibility to help people feel safe enough to tell the truth about their lives. Sometimes our desire to help gets ahead of our willingness to listen. We offer advice too quickly, search for an explanation or assume that encouragement means asking someone to be strong. A hurting person may need something simpler: someone who will stay, hear them and help with the next manageable step.

Romans 12:15 asks believers to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Compassion makes room for another person's experience. These seven practices offer a starting point.

1. Ask how they are really doing and allow silence

"How are you?" can become a greeting that expects no honest answer. A more thoughtful question is, "How have things really been for you?" Ask it privately, at a time when you can listen, rather than while rushing towards your next responsibility.

Then allow a pause. Someone may need time to find words, decide what they want to share or feel confident that you are not merely being polite. Put your phone away. Resist filling the silence with a second question or an immediate solution. You might say, "Take your time. I'm listening."

In Job 2:13, Job's friends initially sit beside him in silence because they recognise the depth of his suffering. Their presence at that moment offers an important lesson. We do not need a speech for every sorrow. If someone does not want to talk, respect that decision and leave the invitation open.

2. Bring food before offering advice

A difficult season can make ordinary tasks feel heavy. A meal, a small grocery shop or help preparing food may be more useful than another explanation of what the person ought to do. Ask first about preferences, allergies and dietary needs. Offer to leave the food at the door if a visit would feel overwhelming.

In 1 Kings 19:5–8, the exhausted Elijah receives food, water and time to rest. The passage reminds us to notice physical needs alongside spiritual concerns. People still need nourishment when they are grieving, caring for a relative or trying to cope with uncertainty.

For some families, sharing food is a familiar language of affection. Let it remain a gift, without requiring a conversation or a display of gratitude in return. Practical help should lighten the person's load, not create a new obligation to entertain the helper.

3. Be honest when you do not have an answer

"I don't have an answer, but I'm here" can be a deeply reassuring sentence when it is sincere. It acknowledges that some circumstances cannot be explained away. Bereavement, a frightening diagnosis or a painful family situation deserves more than a hurried reassurance that everything will soon be fine.

Jesus weeps beside those grieving Lazarus in John 11:35. His response gives Christians permission to take sorrow seriously. Faith does not require us to hide emotion, and our inability to explain someone's pain does not prevent us from caring for them.

Be clear about what "I'm here" means. Perhaps you can visit on Saturday or call tomorrow evening. Offer what you can reliably provide. You do not have to become someone's only source of support; where further help is needed, you can assist them in finding it.

4. Offer one specific task and respect their choice

"Let me know if you need anything" is kindly meant, but it leaves a tired person to identify a need, organise help and ask for it. A specific offer is easier to consider: "Would it help if I collected your groceries tomorrow?" or "Would you like me to accompany you to the appointment?"

The Good Samaritan in Luke 10:33–35 responds to the injured man's immediate needs and arranges continuing care. His compassion takes practical form. We can learn from that attentiveness without assuming that another person's vulnerability gives us permission to run their life.

Ask rather than announce. Accept "no" without taking offence, and do not spend beyond your means to demonstrate concern. Keep personal information private. A photograph, testimony or prayer-group update requires consent; someone else's difficulty is not material for publicising our generosity.

PRACTICAL FAITH · SEVEN WAYS TO SUPPORT SOMEONE

5. Keep checking in after the first response

The first days of a crisis may bring messages and visitors. Later, the person still has to face appointments, paperwork or an empty chair at the table. Continuing contact can be especially valuable when the initial attention has faded.

Arrange a check-in in two weeks, or sooner if that is appropriate, rather than waiting for them to ask again. There is no universal timetable for grief or recovery. Ask how often they would welcome contact and whether a message, a call or a visit would suit them best.

A simple message might read, "You came to mind today. No pressure to reply. Would a call this weekend be welcome?" Do not make them responsible for reassuring you or explaining a delayed response. This steady care is often carried by quiet volunteers whose names never appear on a programme. It deserves recognition and should not depend indefinitely on one exhausted person.

6. Offer to pray with them and remain present

For a person who welcomes prayer, ask, "Would you like us to pray together now?" A short, gentle prayer can acknowledge what they have shared and ask God for comfort, wisdom and the help they need. You do not need to turn the moment into a sermon.

Romans 8:26 describes God's help in our weakness when we do not know how to pray. Someone who cannot find words, or who is too distressed to join in, should not be made to feel spiritually inadequate. Respect their wishes if they would prefer silence, practical help or no prayer at all.

Never use prayer to pressure someone to stop treatment, reconcile with an unsafe person or disclose more than they wish. Seeking professional help is compatible with faith. After praying, remain attentive to the practical need they brought to you; prayer should not become a polite way of ending an uncomfortable conversation.

7. Let their story remain their own

When someone describes a painful experience, it is tempting to respond with our own. We may hope to show understanding, yet the conversation can quickly shift away from the person who needed to be heard.

Listen before comparing. You could ask, "What has been the hardest part for you?" or "Would you like me simply to listen, or would some suggestions help?" If your experience might be useful, ask permission to share it briefly. Leave room for the fact that their circumstances and feelings may differ from yours.

This matters when someone speaks about racism, migration, identity or exclusion. We should not dismiss their account because another person experienced something different. James 1:19

urges us to be quick to hear and slow to speak. Taking a person seriously is a good foundation for deciding what support, advocacy or further action may be needed.

Care that respects limits and involves others

These practices support everyday relationships; they do not replace safeguarding or professional care. The NHS advises that mental health difficulties affecting daily life may require further support, including a GP or appropriate services. Offering to help someone make contact can be useful, while respecting their choices wherever it is safe to do so.

In England, call NHS 111 and select the mental health option for urgent mental health help. If someone's life is at risk, or you cannot keep yourself or another person safe, call 999 or go to A&E. Samaritans offers listening support on 116 123, but it is not a substitute for emergency care.

Do not promise absolute secrecy if someone may be at risk. Explain sensitively when appropriate help must be involved and follow your organisation's safeguarding procedures. Churches and community groups also need clear boundaries, shared responsibilities and support for their volunteers. Caring for others should not require a helper to become permanently available.

Honouring those who quietly stay

This Black History Month, our appreciation should reach those who keep community life going through ordinary, faithful care. Ask the regular visitor how they are doing. Give the volunteer a proper break. Thank the person who has been making the calls, and offer to share the work.

Pastoral and community care also has to recognise the circumstances causing distress. A meal cannot remove discrimination, insecure housing or an unsafe workplace. Alongside personal kindness, leaders can help people reach appropriate advice and work with others to address unfairness. Listening carefully helps us understand what action is actually needed.

Galatians 6:2 calls believers to bear one another's burdens. We can begin without claiming to know every answer. Think of one person whose difficulty you know about. Ask what would help, make a realistic offer and agree when you will check in again. That is a small act of care worth carrying beyond October.

Further reading

NHS Every Mind Matters guidance on supporting others

NHS guidance on urgent mental health help

Pastoral reflection and general community support guidance. It is not a substitute for medical assessment or professional treatment.

JAMES 1:19

**Be quick to hear and
slow to speak.**

WHERE TO GET HELP

111

NHS 111
Mental health option

999

999 or A&E
If a life is at risk

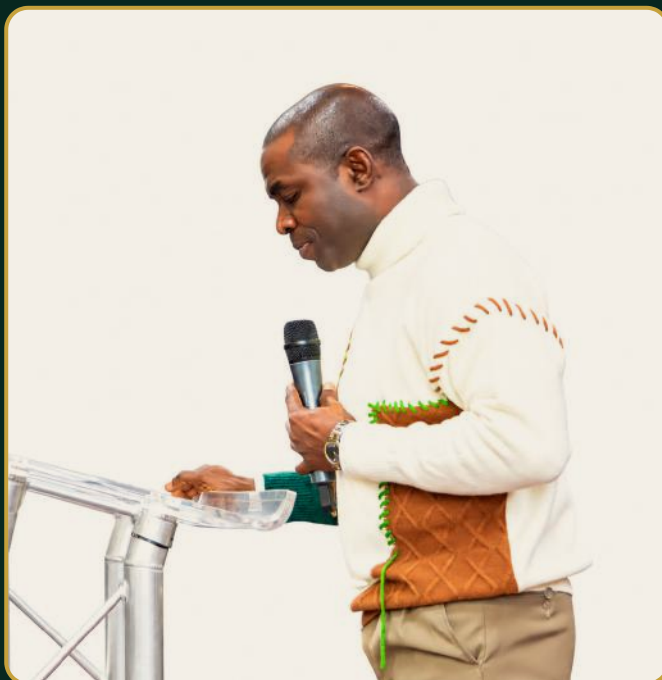
116 123

Samaritans
Listening support

If the Ministry Collapses Without You, the Team Has Not Been Built

BY MATTHEW (TOLU) OLOWOYEYE • EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & PUBLISHER

“One pair of hands can start a work. Only many prepared hands can carry it into the next generation.”



It may look like commitment when a ministry depends entirely on one leader, but it is often a warning sign. A team built around one irreplaceable person is not truly a team; it is one person surrounded by helpers.

This dependence rarely develops intentionally. A need arises, and the leader steps in because doing the task personally seems quicker than explaining it or training someone else. What began as a temporary solution gradually becomes permanent. Years later, that leader alone holds the passwords, knows the suppliers, understands the history behind every decision and carries responsibilities that others were never prepared to manage. Exhaustion is then mistaken for faithfulness, while overdependence is praised as dedication.

However, a ministry that can function only when one person is present remains dangerously fragile. One illness, family crisis, relocation or difficult season could interrupt everything.

Healthy leadership is not measured by how many responsibilities depend upon you, but by how faithfully you equip others to lead, serve and make wise decisions without your constant supervision.

Jesus modelled shared ministry. He called disciples, taught them, entrusted them with responsibility, allowed them to participate, corrected their mistakes and prepared them to continue the work after His departure. In Ephesians 4:11–12, ministry leaders are described as people who equip God’s people for works of service. The leader’s calling is therefore not merely to perform the ministry, but to prepare the saints to participate in it.

Building a resilient team requires deliberate action. Share important knowledge. Document procedures. Develop more than one person for every critical responsibility. Delegate meaningful assignments, not merely minor errands. Give emerging leaders room to think, contribute, make mis-

takes and grow. Hold regular conversations about vision, values, safeguarding, accountability and succession. People cannot carry what they have never been permitted to understand.

Delegation does not mean abandoning responsibility. It means replacing control with stewardship and creating appropriate structures for support, review and accountability. A wise leader remains available without becoming the answer to every question.

The aim is not to make the leader unnecessary, but to make the ministry sustainable. When the vision, values and work can confidently continue beyond one personality, a genuine team has been built. Such a ministry can survive transitions, welcome fresh gifts and serve its community faithfully for generations. The strongest evidence of leadership is not what stops when you leave, but what continues because you prepared others well together.

MINISTRY & LEADERSHIP • CONTINUED

So this month, do one uncomfortable thing. Identify the single role only you can do, and begin training a second person into it — not because you are leaving, but because love builds a bench. Write down what lives only in your head. Hand over one responsibility you have been guarding. Let someone do it at eighty per cent of your standard, and resist the urge to take it back.

You will feel less needed. That feeling is not loss; it is the evidence that you have led well. The shepherd's goal was never a flock that could not move without him. It was a flock that knew the way.

Succession is not an admission that you are finished. It is the most generous thing a leader ever does — proof that what you carried was always meant for the people, and never only for you.

THE PATTERN TO COPY

"And the things that you have heard from me... commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

2 TIMOTHY 2:2 · NKJV

01

Name the one role only you can do right now.

02

Write down what lives only in your head.

03

Hand one responsibility to a second person this month.

FROM THE FIELD

The Elders Who Stayed

Three of our five elders have served over twenty years. None set out to. Each describes the same pattern: a short-term need, filled without much thought, that never ended.

What kept them: not duty alone, but being asked, regularly, how they were doing — not just what they were doing.

FAITH AT WORK

A Business That Won't Compromise

Abiodun closed his barbershop on Sundays before the business could afford to. Twelve years and three branches later, he still does — and his staff get paid whether or not the till is full.

His advice: decide your non-negotiables before the business needs the money. It is much harder to hold the line once you do.

“ Being asked, regularly, how they were doing — not just what they were doing. ”

WHAT KEPT OUR ELDERS SERVING FOR TWENTY YEARS





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Deaconess Mojisola Selesi

CHOIR LEADER • PUBLIC SERVANT • TEACHER • CATERER •
HOSPITALITY LEADER • WOMAN OF FAITH

“Sometimes the most powerful ministry is found in the simplest acts of kindness.”

Deaconess Mojisola Selesi is a remarkable woman whose life is a beautiful reflection of faith, service, excellence and an extraordinary love for people. She is a woman of many gifts and talents, whose influence reaches far beyond the titles she holds and the responsibilities she carries. Her life is a testament to what it means to serve God wholeheartedly, love others sincerely and approach every assignment with grace, dedication and a willing spirit.

At the centre of her life is her unwavering love for God and her commitment to His work and His people. Her faith is not simply something she professes; it is something she demonstrates through her actions, her service, her compassion and her daily interactions with others. Whether within the church, the workplace or the wider community, Deaconess Mojisola strives to be a vessel through which God’s love, kindness and goodness can be experienced. Her dedication reminds us that true service is not measured solely by recognition or position, but by the sincerity of the heart and the willingness to make a difference in the lives of others.

As a choir leader, she recognises the power of music to uplift the soul, strengthen faith and draw hearts closer to God. Through her leadership, she encourages unity, discipline, harmony and spiritual growth, helping others discover the beauty of worship and the joy of serving God through song. Her commitment extends beyond rehearsals and performances; she seeks to nurture an atmosphere in which people can grow in faith, develop their gifts and worship with purpose.

As Head of Hospitality in the church, Deaconess Mojisola brings warmth, thoughtfulness and a genuine spirit of welcome to every gathering. She understands that hospitality is far more than receiving guests or organising refreshments; it is an expression of love, generosity and Christian fellowship. She has a special ability to make people feel comfortable, appreciated and at home, demonstrating that sometimes the most powerful ministry is found in the simplest acts of kindness.

Her talents, however, extend well beyond the church environment. As a teacher, she possesses the patience, wisdom and dedication required to share knowledge, nurture understanding and encourage others to fulfil their potential. She appreciates the importance of guidance, discipline and encouragement, recognising that every person has something valuable to learn, contribute and become.

As a caterer, she brings creativity, skill and a special touch to the preparation of food. She is the kind of woman who can truly cook up a storm, transforming ingredients into delicious meals that bring people together and create lasting memories. Her cooking is more than a talent; it is an expression of care, generosity and love. Through her food, she nourishes not only the body but also the bonds of family, friendship and fellowship. For her, preparing a meal is another opportunity to bless others, share joy and make people feel special.

Elders Building Our Communities

DEACONESS MOJISOLA SELESI · CONTINUED

Her creativity also shines through her exceptional eye for colour, beauty and presentation. Much like Joseph's coat of many colours, her talents reflect a wonderful variety of gifts, each adding something distinctive to the life she leads. She appreciates the details that make an occasion memorable, combining imagination, organisation and a natural flair for bringing things together beautifully. Whether preparing a meal, arranging a gathering or welcoming guests, she brings a personal touch that makes ordinary moments feel special.

Alongside her many gifts, her service as a public servant reflects her commitment to contributing positively to society. Through diligence, responsibility and a

strong sense of duty, she demonstrates that service to humanity is an important expression of character. She understands the value of hard work, integrity and consistency, carrying these qualities into the different areas of her life.

What makes Deaconess Mojisola truly remarkable is not simply the number of things she can do, but the heart with which she does them. She is a woman whose hands are willing to work, whose heart is ready to serve, whose home and hospitality reflect generosity, and whose faith provides the foundation for her actions. She brings together many different abilities, yet they are united by one purpose: to honour God and be a blessing to others.

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Birthdays & Celebrations

BIRTHDAY OF THE MONTH · 1 OCTOBER



Happy Birthday, Mrs Vivien Udealor!

As October begins, we joyfully celebrate a wonderful woman whose life is a beautiful gift to her family, friends and community.

On your special day, **1 October**, we thank God for your life, strength and the many ways you bring encouragement to those around you. May this new chapter be filled with peace, sound health, renewed hope and countless reasons to smile.

May the Lord continue to guide your steps, bless the work of your hands and grant you the desires of your heart. May every seed of kindness you have sown return to you in overflowing measures of love, favour and happiness.

As you celebrate another year, may you look back with gratitude, embrace today with joy and move confidently into a future filled with divine possibilities.

From all of us at *The Berean Post*, we wish you a memorable birthday and many more fruitful years of purpose, fulfilment and abundant grace.

Happy Birthday, Mrs Vivien Udealor!



Happy Birthday, Pastor Rufus Ajayi

Today, I celebrate not just your birthday, but the incredible impact your life has had on so many people. Thank you for being a mentor who leads by example, a pastor who shepherds with love, a teacher who brings wisdom, and a father who genuinely cares for the growth and wellbeing of others.

Your dedication to God, your commitment to people, and your passion for seeing lives transformed are truly inspiring. Through your guidance, prayers, encouragement, and godly counsel, you have helped many of us become better and stronger.

May this new chapter bring you greater wisdom, divine strength, excellent health, abundant grace, and renewed joy. May God continue to enlarge your territory, honour your sacrifices, and reward your labour of love.

May your ministry continue to flourish, and may your life remain a powerful testimony of God's faithfulness.

With love and honour,
BUNMI ADEKIITAN

**A BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE ·
28 OCTOBER**

Pastor Rufus Ajayi

MENTOR · PASTOR · TEACHER
· FATHER



Happy Birthday, Mr Ifeanyichukwu Onyemaobi!

12 OCTOBER

On this special day, 12 October, we warmly celebrate you and thank God for the precious gift of your life. May this new chapter bring you renewed strength, abundant joy, sound health and greater opportunities. May the Lord continue to guide your steps, prosper the work of your hands and surround you with people who genuinely value and support you.

As you reflect on the journey so far, may your heart be filled with gratitude for every victory, lesson and blessing. May the years ahead be even more fruitful, fulfilling and memorable.

From all of us at *The Berean Post*, we wish you a truly joyful birthday and many more wonderful years of purpose, peace and divine favour.



Happy Birthday, Tinuademide Emmanuel Babarinde!

6 OCTOBER

Today, we joyfully celebrate you and thank God for the precious gift of your life.

May your birthday mark the beginning of a beautiful new chapter filled with happiness, discovery and remarkable achievements. As you continue to grow, may God bless you with wisdom, confidence and the courage to pursue every good dream He has placed within your heart.

May you always be surrounded by people who love, encourage and inspire you. May your days be bright, your friendships meaningful and your journey filled with wonderful opportunities to learn, flourish and become everything God has created you to be.

Tinuademide, may the Lord guide your steps, protect you wherever you go and grant you excellence in all your endeavours. May His favour distinguish you, His grace sustain you and His peace remain with you through every season in Jesus name.

On this special occasion, we join your family and loved ones in celebrating the remarkable young person you are and the promising future ahead of you.

Happy birthday, Tinuademide Emmanuel Babarinde. May this new year bring you greater joy, unforgettable memories and countless reasons to smile, in Jesus name.

With warmest wishes from all of us at *The Berean Post*.



Happy Birthday, Oladipupo Selesi!

6 OCTOBER

On this special day, we warmly celebrate you and the wonderful gift of your life.

May this new chapter bring you abundant joy, renewed strength and many beautiful opportunities. May every dream in your heart receive fresh inspiration, and may your journey be filled with meaningful achievements, treasured friendships and unforgettable moments.

As you mark another year, may God continually guide your steps, surround you with favour and bless the work of your hands. May He grant you wisdom for every decision, courage for every challenge and peace through every season.

Today, we honour the person you are and look forward with excitement to all that the future holds for you. May your birthday be filled with laughter, love and the company of those who genuinely value and appreciate you.

Happy birthday, Oladipupo. May the year ahead be your brightest, most rewarding and most fulfilling yet in Jesus Name.

With warmest wishes from all of us at *The Berean Post*.

Happy Birthday, Princess Fadesola Adetosoye!



On this special day, we celebrate a remarkable woman whose life reflects grace, wisdom, compassion and dedicated service to others.

Princess Fadesola, your commitment to supporting vulnerable people and strengthening your community speaks powerfully of the values you carry. Through your professional responsibilities, thoughtful leadership and willingness to encourage those around you, you continue to make a meaningful difference—often in ways that may not always receive public recognition.

As you begin another year, may God reward your labour of love, renew your strength and surround you with people who genuinely value and support you. May He grant you wisdom for every decision, favour in every endeavour and courage to embrace the opportunities ahead.

May this new chapter bring you peace, excellent health, lasting happiness and the fulfilment of the desires God has placed within your heart. May your influence continue to grow, and may the lives you touch remain enduring testimonies to your kindness, faithfulness and service.

Today, we join your family, friends, colleagues and community in honouring the wonderful person you are.

Happy birthday, Princess Fadesola Adetosoye. May the year ahead be filled with abundant blessings, joyful celebrations and remarkable accomplishments, in Jesus' name.

With warmest wishes from all of us at *The Berean Post*.

Happy Birthday, Princess Fadesola Adetosoye!

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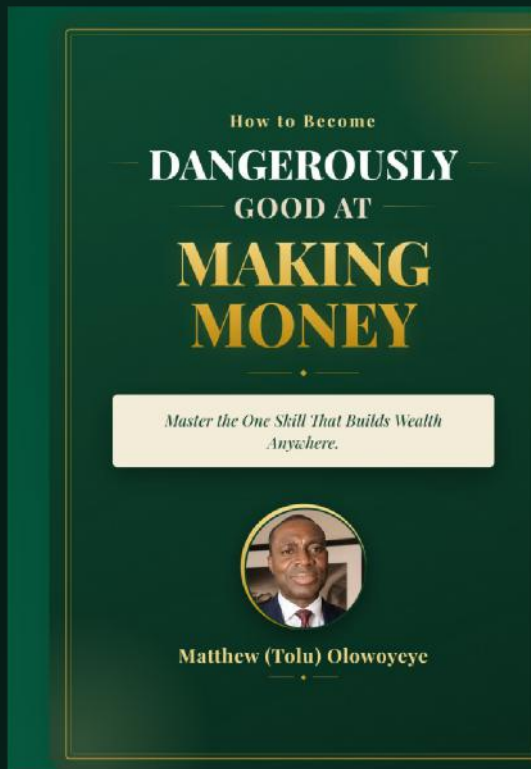
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The Harvest Belongs to the Patient

A REFLECTION FOR OCTOBER

“Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy.” — Psalm

126:5, NKJV

October is a month of gathering in. Across the country the fields are cleared, the last of the long light is counted, and churches lay their harvest tables with the plain evidence of a year's patient work. It is a good month to remember that almost nothing we value was produced quickly, and almost nothing was produced alone.

Scripture is honest about the cost of sowing. The psalmist does not promise an easy field; he speaks of those who go out weeping, carrying seed, and come home carrying sheaves. Between the two there is a long, unglamorous stretch of tending — watering what cannot yet be seen, trusting a harvest no one has

photographed. Much of the work that holds a family, a congregation or a community together lives in exactly that stretch.

This is the season to name that labour rather than wait for its results to become obvious. The carer, the volunteer, the parent at the school gate, the quiet giver — these are people sowing in a soil that will not report back for years. Honouring them now, before the harvest, is itself a kind of watering.

“Almost nothing we value was produced quickly, and almost nothing was produced alone.”

“Every harvest table is set by hands that kept trusting God through the long season of waiting.”

THE BEREAN POST

Do not lose heart before due season

There is a particular tiredness that comes not from doing wrong but from doing good for a long time with little acknowledgement. Paul names it plainly, and then tells us what to do with it: “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Galatians 6:9, NKJV). The promise is not that the season will come quickly, but that it will come.

If you are the one sowing in tears this October, hear the second half of that sentence. Weariness is not a failure of faith; it is the honest weight of sustained love. The faithful response is not to grind harder in silence but to do what any good farmer does between planting and harvest — rest, gather with others, and share the load. Ask for help before you are empty. Let someone water your field for a season.

And if you are watching someone else carry a long, quiet labour, this is your invitation. Do not wait for the harvest to thank them. Name the work now. Bring the meal, make the call, say the name aloud. In doing so you become part of the answer to a prayer they may have stopped expecting to be heard.

That is the whole of it, really. We sow together, we wait together, and in due season we gather together. Nobody carries this alone.

Nobody carries this alone.

“

Weariness is not a failure of faith; it is the honest weight of sustained love.

SCRIPTURE
FOR THE SEASON

“Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”

GALATIANS 6:9, NKJV



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CORRECTIONS

We correct errors promptly — please write to the editorial address.

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“

**Bear one another's
burdens, and so fulfil the
law of Christ.**

———— GALATIANS 6:2 · NKJV ————

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Honour the person who held you up

Send a photo, a name and 100 words on the person who held you up. We'll print a selection in the November issue.



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01

A photo

A clear picture of the person you are honouring.

02

A name

Their full name and how they are connected to you.

03

100 words

How they held you up, in your own words.

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