

## SHORT BIOGRAPHY

### REV. DR. BERNYCE H. CLAUSELL

Reverend Bernyce Hall Clausell was born November 19, 1916 in Thomson, Ga, later moving with her family to Columbus, Ohio, shortly after her birth. Her mother died shortly after the move and Bernyce was sent to live with her aunt in New York City, who raised her into adulthood.

Rev. Clausell's early employment with the Fraternal Council of Churches afforded her many opportunities for spiritual and personal development. While working as the registrar, she met her husband, the late Rev. James Aaron Clausell from Florida, when he came to register at an annual convention sponsored by the Fraternal Council of Churches. They were married in 1945 and to this union two daughters were born.

In 1956 she and her husband purchased a home in Tallahassee where she was attending college. She graduated from FAMU that same year with her Bachelor's degree and began her teaching career in the Leon County public schools. She later received her Master's degree from FAMU as she continued to teach and acknowledge her call into the ministry. She accepted the call and was licensed and ordained in the 1970's. She retired from teaching in 1976.

The Clausell's organized Calvary Baptist Church in 1958, Tallahassee, Fla., and she followed her husband's footsteps as Pastor after he retired. She remained pastor for 18 years. Under her pastorate, the church became a community based church with many outreach projects that made local and national history. She has been given the title "Black Mother Teresa" and "The State mother of Prisons," because of her many acts of Benevolence and her many visits to prisons throughout three states. She founded the Clergywomen's council united, The Tallahassee Association of Christian Women and the Tallahassee branch of the National Association of University Women. She has been instrumental in being the "first" in many things. She has received numerous plaques, awards and recognitions for her valued service to the community.

"God's love and the love of people keep me working and preaching with vigor and vitality. Love will always be my lifeline." These are the words of one very extraordinary woman who is now 92 years old, and still very active in community, civic and church work.

## Volunteer Experience & Achievements

Early 1940's - Member of first National Black Opera Company organized by music icon Mary Caldwell Dawson, Sang Alto and performed with the group in Washington, D.C. , Philadelphia, New York Madison Square Gardens, and Soldier's Field in Chicago; providing cultural awareness and ethnic entertainment for Black people. Member for about three years.

Late 40's - Assisted with organizing and participated in demonstrations and sit-ins led by Rev. Dr. Adam Clayton Powell Sr. in New York (Harlem) to bring about racial equality. Participated for about two years before moving to Washington.

-1956 - Organized Saturday Satellites; a Saturday learning program for students who wanted to excel. Provided tutoring, mentoring and projects to launch students toward their goal in life. This group met every Saturday for about two years.

-1956 - Organized Minster's Wives council whose goal it was to bring comfort and counsel to needy families. The organization met monthly for about 15 years.

-1956 -Organized the JRE Lee Park Singers; a group of children in the neighborhood who rendered musical programs and concerts in hospitals, schools, nursing homes and numerous community events. This group met weekly for about eleven years.

-1957 - Organized Tallahassee branch of the National Association of University Women  
Whose goal is to give scholarships and instill ambition into young people guiding them into careers through workshops and cultural events. This organization continues to meet monthly in addition to sponsoring special events about four times  
yearly.

-1958 - Co-founded, along with her husband, the Calvary Baptist Church. Served as Pastor of Calvary for eighteen years, after her husband's retirement and demise. Presented the first Pastor of the Year Award from the District Association of churches, for her boldness and commitment as the first woman pastor in the district and her innovative programs and approaches in church management.. She is now Pastor Emeritus and because of her 30 year Vision Plan, Calvary marched into it's new building in January of 2008, on it's 50th anniversary.

-1960' s - Organized Calvary's Outreach Ministry which has taken clothes, food and Money to needy families in many cities and states. She was honored with the title of "The Black Mother Teresa" after spearheading a pilgrimage to Tunica, Mississippi; The Sugar Ditch Community, the poorest town in the nation. In 1980. She currently continues to sponsor her famous clothing give-a-ways and other outreach projects monthly.

--1960' s- Began volunteer work with the Baptist State convention, Women's department as the head registrar. For about 40 years she volunteered tirelessly in this capacity leading a committee of four every year for one week during the duration of the convention.1970's - Became dean of the District Congress for Christian Education for 24 years, where she applied and maintained certification for the classes being offered. She was responsible for choosing, ordering, and training staff and materials to teach classes in the Congress yearly which convenes each July for one week. Although the Congress itself met for one week, the Dean's work was a year round job preparing for the July Congress. In the early nineties, she was asked to be vice President of the Congress and held that position for about eight years.

1971 - Rev. Clausell traveled to London, England and Scotland on a volunteer educational adventure with the Kappa Delta Pi National Honor Society. There she interfaced with other educators, touring learning institutions, mentoring teachers and students. She was allowed to critique their educational programs while gathering information on ways to help students back home in Tallahassee.

-Late 70'.s - Organized Tallahassee Association of Christian Women; an organiza.li.<.>n that provides sisterhood to other Christian Sisters, visiting the sick, providing Thanksgiving baskets, sponsoring programs for the uplifting of hearts, minds and goals of women, and providing benevolence and celebrations of joy for members of the organization & their families. This group began meeting monthly and currently meets quarterly. With special programs as needed.

- 1980's - Became the Vice President of the Fifth Sunday Union, after holding the position of Women's President for many years. She is now Vice-President Emeritus after serving as Vice President for about twelve years. This union continues to meet every fifth Sunday weekend, for two days.

-1980's - Organized Clergywomen's Council United; an organization of preaching women who fellowship, study and share ministry experiences while encouraging other women who are aspiring to heed the gospel call. This group meets every other month.

-1980's - Volunteered with the Hosto Ministries for 27 years. This ministry provides religious services to prison inmates in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. Because of her numerous visits to the Florida State Prison in Raiford, she has been given the title of "The State Mother of Prisons in Florida" The prisoners, both men and women, honor her and have sponsored numerous birthday celebrations for her right in the prison chapel. The prisoners baked the birthday cake and made cards by hand. Many of the prisoners will write to her and many have met her upon being released and let her know what an inspiration she was to them. She has assisted several prisoners in their release by providing clothing and arranging for shelter and employment. The leader of the Ministry,

Mrs. Hosto passed away a few years ago and the ministry has since limited its visits to once or twice a year.

1980's - Rev. Clausell volunteered with an organization that would provide comfort and empathy for families with persons on death row. She spent many hours at the capital each time a person was executed joining groups of people in prayer.

Mid 80's - Rev. Clausell worked as a volunteer at the Fla. State Hospital in Chattahoochee for about four years setting up the clothing store in the Forensic Unit. She would donate the clothing and actually hang and arrange them on the racks and Greet the patients as they came in to receive the clothing. She appeared on many programs for the patients, including Christmas plays, Black History programs and brought Calvary Church to the hospital twice a year to render religious services for the patients. Because Of her long years of volunteer service to the state hospital she was awarded Hospital Volunteer of the Year in 1996 and received the "Florida Finest" appreciation award from Governor Lawton Chiles in 1997.

-In early 1990's Rev. Clausell became associated with Habitat for Humanity where she was asked on numerous occasions to render prayer at the dedication of new homes. She has also donated furniture and other items to families moving into these homes.

-In 1995 - Traveled to the Mother Land of Africa to the capital city of Accra, Ghana. There she visited places of worship and institutions of learning to share their culture and experiences. She met well known pastors and leaders of the area. The high point of the trip was witnessing the crowning of a king in the village of "Kordiabe". While there she visited the village school and talked with the village children. She also visited the old slave camps and heard the stories of how the Africans were Taken by boat. Upon her return home, Rev. Clausell has given many presentations in churches, schools and community events where she shares her experiences in Africa and displays her artifacts and photographs. Many have asked her to do this presentation during Black History month.

Ongoing currently - Rev. Clausell volunteers her time to teach young ministers, providing Bible study, sermon preparation, ordination preparation, and general tutoring and mentoring. She meets weekly with ministers upon their request.

Ongoing currently - She provides piano lessons for interested persons, adults and children. Many years ago she starting giving FREE lessons, but it was difficult to gain student's commitment. Now the lessons are offered at the give-away price of \$5.00.

Ongoing currently - She is a registered volunteer with Riley elementary school, having had quite a legacy with Riley. She taught at Riley in the year 1955, her two daughters attended Riley in 1957 through 1961; four grandchildren attended Riley 1974 through

1988; and seven great grandchildren from 1995 through 2005. She has been a regular visitor there and has provided many mentoring and tutoring hours for many years.

Ongoing currently - Rev. Clausell is a prominent public speaker and preacher in great demand to appear on programs and events locally as well as in other cities and states. At least twice monthly she is scheduled to appear as a speaker or participant. She has been asked to pray at the Governor's prayer breakfast, for legislative sessions, for Commissioners and Judges installations, and at F AMU convocation events.

Ongoing currently - Rev. Clausell is registered with the county clerk's office as a counselor for couples applying for a Marriage license. She is also registered with the Department of Corrections Probation office to supervise persons having to complete community service hours. She provides this service weekly

## OVERALL STATEMENT

Rev. Bemyce Clausell is a staple, stalwart, steadfast and consummate community servant in the fields of education, religion, equality and justice; standing in the gap, in the trenches, and putting herself on the line for humanity, while proclaiming God's Goodness for mankind.