

Pastor Byron Thomas

Pastor Byron E. Thomas is a native of Aliquippa, Pennsylvania. A veteran of the United States Air Force, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Religion and Philosophy from Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia and a Master of Divinity degree from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. He also holds a Certificate in Executive Leadership from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois. In 2016, Pastor Thomas graduated from the Association of Chicago Theological Schools (ACTS) program with a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min) in Preaching through McCormick Theological Seminary. He is currently enrolled in the Mini-MBA through Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, Georgia.

Pastor Thomas has served as Senior Pastor of Ben Hill United Methodist Church in Atlanta, Georgia since June 2013 where his focus has been on strengthening the link between spiritual formation and missions. Placing a premium on discipleship as opposed to membership, he has emphasized the importance of spiritual formation as foundational for faithfully executing the ministry God has entrusted to the Church. He also strongly believes that United Methodist churches operate best when the mission of the church is being carried out by laity who are Christ-centered and demonstrate a love for God, for themselves, and for the people of God.

Pastor Thomas teaches the Six Marks of Discipleship as foundational principles and practices that support the vision and mission of the church. He encourages believers to participate in weekly worship, engage in daily Bible Study, daily prayer, service, give, and develop spiritual friendships.

Pastor Thomas has previously served as the Pastor of Central United Methodist Church in Atlanta, Georgia; Associate Director in the Office of Connectional Ministries for the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church where his primary area of concentration was Advocacy; and as Pastor at the Fort Street United Methodist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. He has also served in various capacities within the North Georgia Conference and the Southeastern Jurisdiction including:

- Chairperson of the Committee on Related Agencies
- Chairperson of the Committee on Ethnic Local Church Concerns
- Chairperson of the Advocacy Committee
- Member of the Board of Directors of the Hinton Rural Life Center in Hayesville, North Carolina

He is a recipient of the Malone Dodson Award given by the Foundation of Wesley Woods to a clergyperson who best exemplifies visionary and committed leadership with respect to older adults. He has served the Atlanta-College Park District as a member of the District Board of Ordained Ministry and as the Chair of the District Committee on Superintendency. He has twice-served as Chaplain and Educational Liaison at the United

Methodist Children's Home and has also chaired the Board of the Interfaith Children's Movement (ICM).

In May 2015 Pastor Thomas was elected as the President of the North Georgia Black Methodists for Church Renewal (NGBMCR). In October 2015 he was elected as the Coordinator for the Southeastern Jurisdiction of Black Methodist for Church Renewal (SEJBMCR). At the 2015 North Georgia Annual Conference in Athens, Georgia, Pastor Thomas was elected as a Clergy Delegate to the 2016 General and Jurisdictional Conferences. At the 2019 North Georgia Annual Conference he was elected first in the delegation.

Pastor Thomas is married to DuWanna and they are the proud parents of two wonderful sons.