



# PRESS RELEASE

THE ORIGINAL THOMAS A.M.E. ZION CHURCH  
RESTORATION CORPORATION

P.O. 895 / 300 Cragmont Road, Black Mountain, NC 28711

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## Black Mountain's "Original" Thomas Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church presents GospelFest Concert

**Program:** The "Original" Thomas Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church Third Annual GospelFest Concert

**Date:** Saturday, October 26, 2019

**Time:** 3 p.m.

**Location:** St. James Episcopal Church, 424 State Street, Black Mountain, NC

**Cost:** General Admission Advance Tickets – Adults: \$10; Children (12 and under): \$5  
General Admission Tickets, Day of the Event – Adults: \$12; Children (12 and under): \$6

The "Original" Thomas Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church will present GospelFest, a multicultural gospel music concert fundraising event, on Saturday, October 26<sup>th</sup> at 3 p.m. This historic African Methodist Episcopal Church, referred to as the "little church on the hill" at 300 Cragmont Road in Black Mountain, was built by freed slaves in 1892 as the first "Tom's Chapel." The current building dates to 1922. Serving as the mother church for the A.M.E. Zion and other dominations in the Valley, it's been restored to its original splendor.

GospelFest, with music from regional choirs, performers, and musicians, will be held at St. James Episcopal Church, 424 State Street, Black Mountain. Featured performers include Sharon Miller of Thomas Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, Black Mountain; The Stoney Knoll C.M.E. Church Ensemble of Mill Spring, NC; Sahara Peace Choir, Asheville, NC; Addie's Chapel United Methodist Church Choir, Marion, NC; Calvary's Touch Trio; and other talented voices.

Advance tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 12 and under. Tickets sold at the door on the day of the event for adults are \$12; \$6 for children 12 and under. Tickets may be purchased from board members, or online via Eventbrite (GospelFest 2019 Black Mountain). Proceeds go towards supporting the preservation fund of the church, and the nonprofit responsible for the care of the site.

The "Original" Thomas Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, adjacent to Black Mountain's Oak Grove cemetery, stood empty for several years after the congregation moved to a new building on West College Street. Since 2005, work to restore the building has continued. These efforts have resulted in the site's placement on the National Register of Historic Places by the US Department of the Interior on February

9, 2009. The church has also received two Griffin Awards from the Preservation Society of Asheville & Buncombe County for outstanding projects and individuals that further the goals of historic preservation. The church was officially reopened to the public on September 17, 2011 after the first phase of renovation repairs were completed. GospelFest is held in celebration of the extensive African-American history the site signifies, for in the past, the “little church” served not only as a spiritual gathering place, but also as the social heart of the surrounding community.

Dionne R. Greenlee-Jones, current President of the Board for The “Original” Thomas Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church Restoration Corporation, and a facilitator for the region’s Building Bridges initiative, is thrilled about the annual fundraising event. “After many years of working to restore this church site, we’re excited that it is finally ready to host educational programs regarding the rich African-American history in Black Mountain,” she shared. “We envision this site to become a local gathering place for events, programs, and community meetings, open to everyone, particularly to discuss topics of social justice and the legacy of community. There were many people of different hues who helped facilitate the church’s renovation, and we’re grateful for the continued support.”

This spring, the “little church,” in partnership with Black Mountain Presbyterian Church, hosted a book discussion featuring Bryan Stevenson’s book *Just Mercy*. Stevenson, an attorney, activist and best-selling author whose leadership led to the opening of the national memorial honoring victims of lynching, spoke in Asheville in April at an event sponsored by UNCA. Future programs at the “little church” will continue the trend that creatively combines cultural insights through the arts, spiritual gatherings, book discussions, and other events that build community and bring people together.

Platinum sponsor for GospelFest 2019 is Harwood Home for Funerals. The event is also generously being hosted by the St. James Episcopal Church in Black Mountain, a partner with GospelFest since the first concert in 2017. For more information, contact board members Dionne R. Greenlee at 919.638.0088 or Renee Weaver at 828.301.6701.

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