

## Pastor runs for State Representative in Rhode Island

By Rev. Raymond V. Kirk

What does a pastor do while waiting for a ministry call, besides working as a vocational specialist to serve the homeless unemployed in Providence, Rhode Island? Pastor Emmanuel Nyema becomes a candidate for election to the Rhode Island State House from the 11<sup>th</sup> District. He runs as an Independent in the highly Democrat District, offering to serve in God's rule of the left hand while waiting to serve in God's rule of the right hand, the Church. Due to COVID 19 pandemic restrictions which severely limited his ability to



make door to door and other large gathering campaign appearances, he employs other means to communicate his platform to become better recognized among the electorate. On November 3, he polls 13.3 percent of the 3,809 ballots cast in the District, conceding to the Democrat incumbent, but delighted that he ran, satisfied with his efforts to serve people.

People run for political office all the time, but Pastor Nyema's desire to be in Rhode Island's State House could not have been predicted. Part of his willingness to make himself a political candidate is he knows the price of freedom since he escaped civil war torn Liberia as a teenager to live in refugee camps for some years in nearby African countries until he and family members came to America as immigrants in the early 2000s to settle in Staten Island, New York where many Liberian-Americans live. He came with only a high school education. But while in Africa he had been trained for and ordained for pastoral ministry in the Church of God in Christ while in a refugee camp. Now as a young adult living in the freedom and opportunity America provided he earned an associate degree to become a pharmacist's assistant, and began a relationship with Christ Assembly Lutheran Church, Staten Island.

In 2007 he and his family moved to Syracuse, New York where he became a wellness worker in a group home and began attending Trinity Lutheran Church where the Rev. Raymond V. Kirk was pastor. Soon thereafter Pastor Nyema and other Liberian leaders partnered with Trinity Church where a sizeable Liberian side of Trinity worshipped and developed. While working full time, serving at Trinity and leading the Syracuse Liberian American Association he earned a bachelor degree followed by a master of theological studies degree. He became an American citizen. Following a separation from Trinity Church, Hope Church was established as an English District congregation serving primarily Liberian Americans. In 2016 Pastor Nyema colloquized into Synod's ministerium with the expectation of being called by Hope, but suddenly and tragically his wife Helen died that year. Subsequently, he moved with his family to Providence, Rhode Island where besides his day job, he is an activist in the Liberian-American community, a member of Our Redeemer Church, Smithfield, enrolled in a doctoral program in

public health, and became a candidate for election to the Rhode Island Legislature, willing to use his gifts while awaiting God's call to full time pastoral ministry. He said he willingly offered to serve.