

Blog:

July 2025

Restoration's Camp Embrace 2025

Restoration A.M.E. Zion Church may be just two years old, but under the leadership of Rev. Donna M. Richardson, this new ministry has already begun making a lasting impact in Baltimore. Restoration is part of the Baltimore District, under the leadership of Presiding Elder Rev. Dr. Evalina Huggins, and the Mid-Atlantic Episcopal District, where Bishop Brian R. Thompson and Missionary Supervisor Rev. Felica R. Thompson serve as the Episcopal leadership.

Restoration continues to live up to its mission: to extend the embrace of Christ to all. This summer, Restoration reached a historic milestone with the launch of its very first children's camp Restoration's Camp Embrace. At Restoration, "*EMBRACE*" is more than just a word it's a way of life. We are committed to Engage, Minister, and Mentor; Build, Respect, Accept, Care for, and Encourage all who walk through our doors. Camp Embrace was a living testimony to this spirit.

A Vision Realized

Thanks to a generous grant from The Foundation for Evangelism, what began as a vision blossomed into a manifested reality on July 17, 2025, right in the heart of inner-city Baltimore. With the support of Bishop Michael Evans and Adonai Ministries, who graciously opened their church as the host site, Camp Embrace welcomed 25 children ages 5–14 for four weeks of free activities filled with faith, fun, and enrichment.

More Than a Camp

Every child who entered Camp Embrace brought their own story. Many were navigating difficult life experiences, yet they arrived eager to experience joy, relief, and the reminder that they are loved by God. Grounded in **Psalm 139:14–16**, the camp theme reinforced that each child is wonderfully made and part of God's divine plan.

Each week carried a special focus:

- **Week 1:** Created With Purpose
- **Week 2:** Different by Design (God Made No Mistakes)
- **Week 3:** Empowered With Purpose
- **Week 4:** We All Need Each Other – Every Part of the Body Matters

Beyond the daily faith-based lessons, children participated in hands-on projects, including a Service Gratitude Project where they planted flower pots to beautify Adonai Ministries, leaving behind both color and love as a reminder of their time together.

Throughout the camp, children also had the opportunity to earn Camp Embrace Bucks for exemplifying the Fruits of the Spirit, as well as demonstrating leadership, honesty, courage, and perfect attendance. Each Friday, they joyfully spent their earnings at the Camp Embrace Store, where they could purchase a variety of treats and prizes, learning valuable lessons about stewardship, reward, and positive behavior.

The campers also experienced a variety of exciting field trips, made possible through the generous donations of the Friends of Camp Embrace. Adventures included visits to The Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., Top Golf, a pool party, and a closing program where the children showcased their gifts and talents. During this celebration, each child received awards and parting gifts, recognizing their growth, participation, and the special ways they contributed to the Camp Embrace family.

One of Camp Embrace's central goals was also to address the growing issue of food insecurity faced by many children in the community, especially those affected by the withholding of SNAP benefits. To help meet this need, the camp provided breakfast, lunch, and a take-home snack each day to ensure that every child had access to nutritious meals even at dinner time.

Community at Work

Camp Embrace was made possible because of the selfless generosity and dedication of many. From financial support to volunteering time and talents, the Restoration community rallied to ensure the camp's success.

Special thanks to:

- The Foundation for Evangelism – for the grant that launched this vision
- Bishop Michael Evans, First Lady Evans, and the Deacons of Adonai Ministries – for their radical hospitality
- Rev. Dr. Eleazar Merriweather, CGD – for mentorship and support
- Rev. Jeanette Banks, Judah Temple – Co-Camp Director
- Ms. Francis Watkins, Judah Temple – Volunteer Camp Leader
- Mr. Isiah Bank, Judah Temple – Camp Support in Various Capacities
- Bria Gittens, Restoration A.M.E. Zion – Camp Leader
- Kendal Ingram, Adonai Ministries – Camp Leader
- Dr. Patricia Webley-Bethune – STEM Instruction
- Rev. Leslie Barnett Davis – Christian Education Director
- Kyra Baker – Health & Movement Workshops
- Sharon Hassan, Baltimore District Missionary President – Motivation & College-Bound Info
- Carletta Jones – Art & Self-Expression
- Attorney Karla Moses, Penn Ave. A.M.E. Zion – Legal Advisor
- Deoleous Parker, Baltimore District Lay, Penn Ave. – Guidance
- Nalicia Good, MSW, LMSW – Compliance Guidance
- Greg Lewis & American Limousine – Transportation Assistance
- Kimberly Campbell – Sponsorship

- Faithful Members of Restoration A.M.E. Zion

We are especially grateful to the **Church Growth and Development Department** and **Rev. Dr. Eleazar Merriweather** for their unwavering guidance in strengthening Restoration's long-term vision.

Looking Ahead

The success of this first year is only the beginning. Under the direction of Pastor Donna Richardson, Camp Embrace has become a beacon of what faith, community, and vision can achieve when they come together. Restoration looks forward to expanding the camp in the years to come, continuing to provide a safe, joyful, and empowering space for children to grow and embrace the fullness of who God created them to be.

If you would like to join us in this journey, whether through prayer, volunteering, or financial support, we invite you to help us sustain this vital work. To give, please see the *Ways to Give* section on our website and follow God's leading. If making a donation, please include "Camp Embrace 2026" in the memo line.

Together, we can continue to E.M.B.R.A.C.E the next generation with love, hope, and purpose.

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