

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Expectations And Spirits High At Opening Of School Celebration Service On St. Croix

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ST. CROIX – The Virgin Islands Department of Education hosted the second of two Opening of School Celebration Services—this time on St. Croix—at the historic Bethel A.M.E Church in downtown Christiansted on Sunday, September 20, a press release DOE issued late Sunday has made known.

The gathering commemorated the first opening of a new school year under the Mapp-Potter Administration and was marked by a rousing sermon exploring the importance of setting high expectations in the new school year. The message was delivered by Reverend Carlos Perkins, pastor of St. Luke A.M.E. Church on St. Croix and a new member of the Education family, working alongside Victor Sommes at St. Croix's

Alternative Education Program.

Using New Testament scripture found in the Gospel of Luke 8:40, which chronicled the actions of a crowd awaiting Jesus to perform miracles of healing, Rev. Perkins told congregants that “Jesus will show up at your church, workplace or Government House when you expect him to do so.” Additionally, he urged listeners to “sit in a position of expectation,” adding, “This year, you should expect great things from your teachers, students and administrators. Expect God to do great things for your families and communities. The best is yet to come.”

Bethel A.M.E., which will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2020, was filled with Education and government officials, including Commissioner Sharon Ann McCollum, Governor Kenneth Mapp, Assistant Commissioner Chermaine Hobson-Johnson, Superintendent Colleen Williams, Deputy Superintendents Vaughn Hewitt and Faith Dane George, St. Croix Administrator Stephanie Williams and other luminaries.

During her remarks, Commissioner McCollum said, “We have great expectations in the Department of Education and my role is to set those expectations. To whom much is given much is expected. I didn’t get in this to fail; we are going to produce.” She said the Education Department’s 2015-16 theme, *Transformation Through Teamwork*, resulted from the shared commitment across the St. Croix and St. Thomas-St. John Districts, and asked congregants to offer daily prayers for the Department and its leadership.

Governor Mapp, who remains a longtime member of Bethel A.M.E. along with members of his family, reiterated his support of the Education Department, as he did at the September 13 Celebration Service held at the St. Thomas Assembly of God Church in Estate Contant.

“I am going to support the Department of Education and on October 1 at the beginning of fiscal year 2016, we are going to raise the salaries and pay of teachers and principals,” he remarked.

The St. Croix Central High School band offered its talents to the success of the gathering, with renditions of the classic hymns *Amazing Grace* and *Rock of Ages*. Additionally, the Bethel Youth Choir gave an energetic performance of the popular gospel tune, “I Know Who I Am” by Sinach.

Bethel A.M.E. Pastor Reverend Uklyn A. Hendricks presided over the ceremony.