

BISHOP RONNIE ELIJAH BRAILSFORD, SR.

A native of South Carolina, he was born and raised in Clarendon County. He was elected and consecrated the 136th Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church during the 50th Quadrennial General Conference held in Philadelphia, PA, July 2016. He has served as President of the AMEC Council of Bishops. Since August 2024, he serves proudly as the Presiding Prelate of the 10th Episcopal District of the AMEC for the state of Texas.

Prior, he served the 19th Episcopal District, comprised of 246 churches and over 54,000 members in South Africa from July 2021–August 2024. Also, he served the 20th Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Church with 223 churches and over 23,000 members in the African countries of Malawi, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Uganda, and Mozambique from July 2016 to July 2021. During his tenure in Africa, 28 churches and over 5,000 new members were added. Fourteen churches were built, 19 churches were dedicated, 12 churches were planted and 16 churches joined the AMEC.

Bishop and Supervisor Brailsford visited over 240 churches and 28 AMEC schools, even in rural and remote areas, where safe to travel. Funds were raised to help provide school supplies for over 20,000 students and the staff. They provided funds and food for disaster relief for over 2,500 families. Medical mission trips served over 11,000 people with medical, dental, eye and dermatology services. They partnered to provide scholarships and school fees for 100 plus students. In addition, the United Methodist Church and Africa University partnership was started August 2020 and provides \$700,000 of four year full scholarships for 32 students. They raised funds for campus improvements and refurbished three buildings on Wilberforce Community College campus. The ministry was undergirded by monthly Episcopal District wide prayer time!

Having graduated in 1976 as Valedictorian from Scott's Branch High School of Summerton, SC, he went on to graduate from the University of South Carolina, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing. His Master of Divinity degree was earned at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta, GA. where he was a Benjamin E. Mays Fellow and a John Middleton Scholar. An honorary Doctor of Divinity degree was bestowed upon him by A.M.E. University of Monrovia, Liberia in 2006. He did Studies in the Doctor of Ministry program at I.T.C. and earned his Doctor of Ministry degree in 2007 from United Theological Seminary. He has received many academic, professional and community honors.

His diverse professional career beyond the church includes working for the Southwestern Publishing Company with top salesman and management recognitions; Fellow and Mentor with the Congress of National Black Churches (CNBC); Fellow with Atlanta Economic Development Corporation (AEDC); Community Development Religious Consultant with Atlanta Neighborhood Development Corporation (ANDP) and Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company.

He was licensed to preach on January 20, 1980 at his home church, Historic Liberty Hill A.M.E. Church in Summerton, SC. He served at Big Bethel AMEC in Atlanta, GA. Later, he pastored at Mt. Carmel AMEC, Gray Court, SC and Amanda Flipper AMEC, Decatur, Georgia.

His twenty-four years, from 1992-2016, at Bethel A.M.E. Church, Columbia, SC were highlighted by exceptional spiritual, numerical, and financial growth. In 1995 Bethel relocated from its landlocked Sumter Street site to 819 Woodrow Street, a \$5,000,000 campus with five connected buildings, 86,000 square feet, on 5 acres of land. The 1.5 city blocks offer 366 parking spaces and modern accommodations, including 120 classrooms and offices, a Christian Life Center and Gymnasium. A new school, Bethel Learning Centers, was founded, and accredited since 1995, educating thousands. A \$3,000,000 new school building was completed in 2008.

In 1983, he married Carolyn Elizabeth Irvin. She is an Itinerant Elder. They have three children: Veronica-Carol, Ronnie, Jr. and David; a daughter-in love, Erica; and seven grands, Harper, Kyndal, Gracen, Dawson, Roman, Brendan & Kai. He is a very devoted husband, father, bishop, and community leader. **(Updated 12/20/24)**