



Biography of the Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley

Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley is the exciting, gifted and anointed senior pastor of the historic Alfred Street Baptist Church (ASBC) in Alexandria, VA. A courageous, dynamic, and visionary leader, he is only the eighth pastor in the church's 216-year history of worshipping Christ while serving humankind. Currently, Dr. Wesley is part of the first of its kind in the world; the inaugural cohort of only ten exceptional students in the PhD in African American Preaching and Sacred Rhetoric program at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Under Dr. Wesley's extraordinary leadership, the Alfred Street Baptist Church has grown from 2,500 members to over 8,000 members, 40,000 plus monthly online viewers and 80 active ministries with an emphasis on children's ministries and missions. To accommodate its favor and growth, the church holds four weekend worship services, including one on Saturday nights. As a result, Dr. Wesley has launched an initiative to redesign and expand the current sanctuary and ministry facility.

Dr. Wesley is regarded as one of the most prolific and prophetic voices of justice and grace in our generation. An empathetic pastor who is not afraid to take on social and political issues, Dr. Wesley led community protest marches against the New York grand jury's 2014 decision not to indict an NYPD officer whose chokehold led to the death of Eric Gardner. His sermon, "When the Verdict Hurts," was acknowledged in Time magazine's July 29, 2013 cover story, "After Trayvon" as one of the best sermons preached in the United States following the "not guilty" verdict in the State of Florida

v. George Zimmerman, who fatally shot 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. Three of Dr. Wesley's sermons, "When the Verdict Hurts," "A Rizpah Response" (and with the black hoodie he donned while preaching this sermon), and "Tell Your Own Story," have been archived in the faith-based collection of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in Washington, DC. With his guidance, Alfred Street Baptist Church became the first and only faith-based institution founding donor of the NMAAHC with a \$1 million donation.

Known to challenge the mind and inspire the heart, Dr. Wesley is a much sought after speaker for worship services, conferences, and revivals. His preaching became a favorite of former President and Mrs. Barack Obama who worshipped with their family at Alfred Street Baptist Church on several Easter Sundays. "Faith Forward," his radio broadcast on the Radio/Urban One Network, is one of the most listened to religious broadcasts in the Washington, DC, area and his sermons on YouTube have

more than 40 million views.

Dr. Wesley is a compassionate and visionary pastor who cares deeply for the members of Alfred Street. At the church's CAYA (Come As You Are) service, he teaches and preaches to nearly 1,000 young adults, age 22 to 35, from across the Washington, DC, metropolitan area on topics that are real and relevant to today's young professionals. Dr. Wesley was twice recognized (2013 and 2016) by *The Root* as one of the top 100 most influential African Americans in the nation. In 2016, he received the NAACP's Chairman's Award for his work in social justice at the 47th Annual NAACP Image Awards. In 2017, Dr. Wesley was honored for his work in ministry as an Engaged Clergypersons with the Rainbow PUSH Coalition Trombone Award during the Rainbow Push Coalition's Annual Media and Telecom Symposium in Washington, DC.

A native of Chicago, Dr. Wesley is the product of the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools and graduated *magna cum laude* from Duke University with a bachelor of science in biomedical and electrical engineering. While in medical school, Dr. Wesley yielded to the call of God and walked away from a path to a medical career to attend seminary at the prestigious Boston University School of Theology where he was a Martin Luther King, Jr. scholar and a *summa cum laude* graduate in biblical studies and African American religious history. He received his doctor of ministry in preaching from Northern Baptist Seminary. His passion for and excellence in preaching has afforded him the opportunity to serve as an adjunct professor at Hartford Seminary, Boston University, and Virginia Theological Seminary. He currently serves on the Board of Trustees of Virginia Union University and the John Leland Center for Theological Studies, the Board of Visitors of the Duke Divinity School, and the Board of Directors of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Missionary Convention.

Dr. Wesley is the son of the late Rev. Dr. Alvin and Dr. Helene Wesley and represents the fourth generation of Baptist preachers in his family. He is an avid golfer, movie-goer, spades player, and aspiring chef. He is a Lifetime member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., and his sons, Howard-John II and Cooper Reece, are the greatest joys of his life.