

Elder C.W. Harris

A compelling presence, a man of great faith, a community activist, an initiator of new projects, a man in pursuit of justice, an avid and skillful dancer: these phrases and many more describe the man we know as Elder C.W. Harris.

Born in Sandtown in 1950, Elder Harris grew up on the 1300 block of Stockton Street along with his mother and father, four brothers and two sisters. “We were poor but never knew it because we had everything: a strong sense of community with a high value for life, family and education. Our families were able to make chicken soup out of chicken feathers.”

Attending Robert Brown Elliott Elementary and Booker T. Washington Middle School, he graduated from Edmondson High School in 1969. (Ask him about his expertise in lacrosse!) It being his first time away from Sandtown, his exposure to Edmondson Village began to change his life as he saw a little bit of the outside world. He then attended Baltimore Junior College.

A significant event occurred on Fremont Street when he was 13 years old: he met a girl named Amelia. Needless to say he was bedazzled, and he ended up marrying her in 1970. They lived on Lauretta Avenue and then moved to Fulton Avenue in 1980 where they raised their family and still live to this day.

While growing up, Elder Harris attended Gillis Memorial Church with his family, but he eventually became involved with a Pentecostal church and was ordained as a minister.

He began Newborn Apostolic Faith Church of the Trinity in 1981 and started a Christian school for the children. Today the congregation (Newborn Community of Faith Church) is located at Pennsylvania and Presstman and has initiated Newborn Holistic Ministries (including Martha’s Place and Jubilee Arts) to impact the surrounding community, the realization of so many of Elder Harris’ dreams!

Elder Harris has always been deeply involved in his community. When in 1988 he was “sent out” by the director of the community association, Ella Johnson, to “see what these white people who moved in were up to,” he concluded that “This is great! My father and entire family would have loved this interracial effort and been strong advocates of it.” And so Newborn and New Song have ministered closely as partners ever since.

A few tidbits about Elder Harris: his favorite food growing up was spaghetti and King Syrup sandwiches (yes, you read that correctly), and then for most of his life it has been sloppy joes made with ground turkey. He once dropped a meatball onto Allan Tibbels’ face, and during a period of his life he would not dance. He states that his father and Gordon Cosby have both had a tremendous impact on his life.

If you know Elder Harris you know that his life and actions have resulted in significant impact and blessing for individuals, his family and the entire community. Speaking about his deep faith, he said “Faith is what sustains. It has given me tenacity and allowed me to survive through anything my entire life.”

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