

The Reverend Shonda Nicole Gladden 2022 Ministry Bio

The Rev. Shonda Nicole Gladden has been serving in ministry since 1994. She is the ministry daughter of Rev. Dr. Lee P. Washington and Rev. Dr. Debyii Sababu Thomas. A proud Itinerant Elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, she hails from the Washington Annual Conference of the Second Episcopal District where she was ordained by Bishop Adam Jefferson Richardson, assisted by both Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie and Bishop McKinley Young. Long before being ordained, Rev. Gladden has preached, presented workshops and facilitated panel discussions throughout the Connection as a servant of God.

Rev. Gladden currently serves alongside Rev. Jerry E. Davis, III as the Associate Pastor of Crossroads AME Church in Indianapolis, IN. Prior to joining the staff at Crossroads, she held pastoral appointments in Indianapolis, IN, at Allen Temple AME in Marion, IN, where her ministry flourished and she became deeply involved in the fabric of the community, as well as Bethel AME Church in Lafayette, IN. Prior to accepting the call to the senior pastorate, she served alongside Rev. Dr. Norris E. Jackson, Jr. at St. Paul AME Church in Glencoe, IL, as the Assistant to the Pastor, as Commissioner of Youth & Young Adults at her home church, Reid Temple AME, under the pastoral leadership of Rev. Dr. Lee P. Washington, on the staff of Rev. Jesse Hawkins as Associate Minister to Young Adults at St. John AME Church in Aurora, IL, and as Senior Minister to Youth & Young Adults at Brown Memorial AME Church on Capitol Hill under the pastoral leadership of the late Rev. Dr. Henry Y. White. Rev. Gladden is currently the Indiana Annual Conference Director of Christian Education, the Coordinator of the Indiana Annual Conference Women in Ministry, and the immediate past Connectional Treasurer of the Richard Allen Young Adult Council (RAYAC). She has also previously served as the Worship Leader of the Fourth Episcopal District Women in Ministry (WIM). With more than twenty-eight years of combined lay and clergy experience, Rev. Gladden is still young enough to be relevant, but seasoned enough to appreciate the wisdom, history and legacy of the shoulders upon which she now stands.

Anointed and called both for the academy and the church, education is of prime importance to Rev. Gladden. She is an American Studies PhD candidate matriculating through the Cultural Ecologies Track at IUPUI, holds a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Morgan State University, and both a Master of Divinity and Master of Theological Studies from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC. Her research emerges at the intersections of philosophy, art, gender, and cultural studies. Utilizing critical visual culture methodologies, her work explores representations of identity and the framing of movements- social, spatial, and spiritual- as cultural productions that inform Blackness, and Black aesthetics, within the colonial project of the Americas.

She has led and participated in short term humanitarian projects throughout the continental United States, Canada, England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Czech Republic, South Africa, Kenya and South Korea and has received numerous awards and recognitions, including a Reflective Leadership Grant from Leadership Education at Duke Divinity (2018), a Do Good X Fellowship from The Forum for Theological Exploration (2017) and The Wabash Pastoral Leadership Award from Lilly Endowment, Inc. (2014). Vocationally, she is the CEO of Good to the SOUL, a social enterprise that energizes individuals and institutions to flourish and do good, especially good that promotes the “spirit of universal liberation”(SOUL). She remains actively engaged in the landscape of religion in the public square through organizing with Faith in Indiana, The Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, and The Ministerium.

As a classically trained vocalist, she has a passion for creating, performing and experiencing musical art. She has had the privilege of singing at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the Kennedy Center, to name a few. She has sung under the baton of the late Dr. Nathan Carter, Moses Hogan, and Robert Shaw, as well as alongside living legends such as Wynton Marsalis, Bobby McFerrin, and Yolanda Adams.

More important to her than any of the aforementioned accolades, Rev. Gladden is the proud mother of one child, who is her most precious gift and responsibility. Her favorite hymn is “Oh For a Faith” and the scripture she lives by is Philippians 3:12-14: “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brothers and Sisters, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”