

'Sanctuary' opens lens on black worship

Photographer comes home to keynote event

By Yolanda Jones
Contact
April 22, 2006

Photographer Jason Miccolo Johnson, who has just published "Soul Sanctuary: Images of the African American Worship Experience," will be keynote speaker today for the 10th annual Memphis Black Writers Conference & Southern Film Festival.

Johnson, a native of Memphis now living in Washington, spent the past 10 years traveling the country to photograph churches in Memphis and the Mississippi Delta, as well as New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Detroit, Baltimore and in North Carolina and Virginia.

The 165 black-and-white images capture Sunday services at churches including eight in Memphis: Christ Missionary Baptist Church, Greater Middle Baptist Church, Greater Mt. Moriah Baptist Church, Longview Heights SDA Church, Mason Temple COGIC, Mt. Vernon Baptist Church-Westwood, St. Stephen Missionary Baptist Church and Temple of Deliverance COGIC.

With a foreword by famed photographer the late Gordon Parks, "Soul Sanctuary" includes photos of the "mothers" of a church at an early morning service, a tent revival, a wedding day and "call and response" worshipping.

Johnson wrote that growing up attending Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Memphis inspired him to compile the book. He has been the African Methodist Episcopal Church's official conference photographer for 25 years, and has served as director of the photo lab at USA Today and as production assistant at ABC News' "Good Morning America."

For more information on the writers' festival, which includes workshops and lectures featuring visiting authors, visit angelfire.com/tn/blackwritersconf.

Johnson is scheduled to talk at 10 a.m. today at the Memphis Marriott Downtown, 250 N. Main. He also will attend a service at Mt. Vernon Baptist Church Westwood on Sunday.

For more about the book (Bulfinch Press, \$29.95) go to soulsanctuarybook.com.

-- Yolanda Jones: 901-529-2380



Rev. Gina M. Stewart, pastor of Christ Missionary Baptist Church, moves the congregation during her "Resurrection Sunday" message in Memphis, 2005.