

Westminster, SWNA, Amidon-Bowen Partner to Bring Inspirational Story and STEM to SW

By: Grace Hu

On Saturday, May 13, more than 100 people attended a *Hidden Figures* movie night at Westminster Presbyterian Church, an event sponsored by three Southwest organizations—Westminster Church Faith & Film Ministries, the Southwest Neighborhood Assembly Education and Scholarship Task Force (SWNA ESTF), and Amidon-Bowen Elementary School. Featuring the Oscar-nominated film *Hidden Figures* and a discussion led by Dr. Talitha Washington, mathematician and tenured math professor at Howard University, and Mr. James Ewing, lead STEM teacher at Amidon-Bowen, the event stressed the importance of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education and setting high expectations for our children.

Based on the bestselling book by Margot Lee Shetterly, the movie *Hidden Figures* tells the true story of African-American women at NASA who persevered and helped NASA send astronauts to space during the 1960s, despite facing discriminatory laws and practices. In spite of being skilled mathematicians, these women had to fight for equal opportunities.

Mr. James Ewing kicked off the event by introducing the topic of STEM to the audience. Although the events of the movie occurred more than five decades ago, women and minorities continue to be underrepresented in STEM careers. Underrepresented minorities hold only 10% of science and engineering jobs despite making up more than a quarter of the U.S. population aged 21 and older. Women make up 12% of the engineering workforce and 26% of the computing workforce.

Washington served as the guest speaker during the discussion following the movie. Challenging the audience to think outside of the box, she emphasized: "We must give our children encouragement to pursue being the first. ... Mathematics is still predominantly white male. Just because you don't see yourself there doesn't mean you shouldn't be there. Everybody has a right to be there at the table."

Dr. Washington also explained that STEM careers are a source of good, high-paying jobs and there will continue to be high demand for STEM-educated professionals in the future. "We have a lot of things that need to be

solved—cancer, cybersecurity, diseases. There's going to be a lot [of societal challenges] going forward and we are going to need the STEM machinery to help solve these problems."

A mother of three teenagers, she discussed the importance of setting high expectations for academic success. She frequently tells her children, "There's the school requirements and then there are my requirements for graduation [which are more demanding]." Dr. Washington requires her teenagers to take math all four years in high school, including statistics, physics, biology, and chemistry—with at least one of those courses at the advanced placement level.

Ewing ended the discussion with thoughts on how families can encourage their children to become STEM thinkers. "Talking and learning to think as a STEM thinker at home is just as important as talking and learning about it at school. We encourage our families to ask questions that may not have answers, create projects that have multiple solutions, and teach our kids that failing is a learning experience. When we fail at an attempt to solve a problem, we have an opportunity to learn how to make changes, try new ideas, and, most of all, evaluate what we can do better."

The event was a first in bringing together Westminster Church, SWNA ESTF, and Amidon-Bowen to support Amidon-Bowen's STEM education program.

"Westminster, Amidon-Bowen's neighbor, is always seeking ways to support the school, its staff, students, and families. As a church, we celebrate the gifts of science and technology and are glad to encourage elementary students, especially the girls, to get excited and inspired by the *Hidden Figures* story," said Westminster Co-Pastor Ruth Hamilton.

"SWNA views support for Amidon-Bowen as one of the critical aspects of fulfilling our organization's mission to enhance the quality of life in Southwest. The ongoing efforts by school staff and parents to sustain a top-quality STEM program are something we salute," said SWNA President Bruce Levine.

SWNA's History and Youth Activities Task Forces, the Thelma D. Jones Breast Cancer Fund, the World Bank Group-IMF African American Association, and volunteers from the community also helped make the event a success.



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CELEBRATION OF HOLY MASS

WEEKDAY

Monday—Friday: 8:00 a.m., 12:10 p.m.
(8:00 a.m. only on a Federal Holiday)
Saturday: 9:00 a.m.

WEEKEND

Saturday: 5:00 p.m. Vigil
Sunday: 8:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m.

HOLYDAYS

5:00 p.m. Vigil
8:00 a.m., 12:10 p.m., 5:00 p.m.

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Monday—Friday: 11:55 a.m.

Saturday: 4:30 p.m.

Sunday: After the 10:30 a.m. Mass.

EUCARISTIC ADORATION AND HOLY HOUR

Thursdays: 4:45 p.m.

YOUNG ADULT GROUP

Thursdays: 7 p.m.—Adoration;
7:40 p.m.—Talk/Discussion

UPCOMING EVENTS

ST. DOMINIC CENACLE

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Tuesdays: 6:45 p.m. - Eucharistic Adoration
7:20 p.m. - Discussion

Meetings:

June 6 ~ Watch and Discuss: *The Journey of Faith*
(Symbolon 1, 20 min)

June 13 ~ Our Longing for God

June 20 ~ Religion and Revelation

June 27 ~ Social Night (Potluck)

Outing:

Saturday, June 3 ~ Visit to the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land
www.stdominiccenacle.org

CATHOLICISM — The Pivotal Players

Bishop Robert Barron's film series on key figures who shaped the life of the Church and the course of civilization.

Sunday Evenings: 6:30 p.m. — 8:00 p.m. in the Parish Meeting Room.

June 4 ~ Bl. John Henry Newman: The Convert

June 11 ~ St. Catherine of Siena: The Mystic

June 18 ~ G. K. Chesterton: The Evangelist

June 25 ~ Michelangelo: The Artist



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