

Paine College Announces Pastor Ronald Slaughter as 2026 Baccalaureate Speaker

AUGUSTA, GA — Paine College proudly announces that alumnus and distinguished faith leader Pastor Ronald Slaughter will serve as the Baccalaureate Speaker for the College's 2026 Commencement Weekend. The Baccalaureate Service will be held on Friday, May 8, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. in the historic Gilbert Lambuth Memorial Chapel.

A “son of Paine,” Pastor Slaughter is a nationally recognized pastor, leader, and visionary. A native of Orlando, Florida, and an adopted son of Georgia, he currently serves as the Senior Pastor of Saint James A.M.E. Church in Newark, New Jersey, where he made history as the youngest pastor to lead the congregation.

Under his dynamic leadership, Saint James A.M.E. Church has experienced remarkable growth and transformation. In thirteen years of ministry, more than 1,850 individuals have joined the church, 98% of outstanding debt has been eliminated, and over \$1 million has been invested in facility renovations and upgrades. Additionally, the church has invested more than \$1.1 million to acquire six surrounding properties in preparation for the development of a new church and Transformative Center—accomplished without incurring debt.

Pastor Slaughter and the Saint James congregation remain committed to fostering a family-centered ministry rooted in their vision: “Making Disciples, Building Families, and Meeting Needs.” Guided by faith and a steadfast belief in Acts 5:39, Pastor Slaughter continues to lead with purpose, passion, and a commitment to service.

In addition to his pastoral leadership, Pastor Slaughter serves on several prominent boards, including Wesley Theological Seminary (Washington, D.C.), Turner Theological Seminary (Atlanta, GA), and as Chair of the Board for St. Michael's Medical Center (Newark, NJ). He has also been recognized for his civic leadership, having been appointed by Newark Mayor Ras J. Baraka as the first-ever Deputy Director of Community Relations for the Newark Police Division in 2021. In 2023, Governor Phil Murphy appointed him as Vice-Chairman of the New Jersey State Parole Board.

Pastor Slaughter is also a proud member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. and holds a Doctor of Ministry degree from Wesley Theological Seminary, earned in 2018.

“It is a tremendous honor to welcome Pastor Ronald Slaughter back to his alma mater for this sacred occasion,” said Dr. Lester A. McCorn, President of Paine College. “He is a powerful example of faith in action—demonstrating what it means to lead with vision, serve with humility, and transform communities. His life and ministry embody the very essence of Paine College's mission, and we are confident his message will inspire our graduates to walk boldly in purpose and calling.”

Despite his many accomplishments, Pastor Slaughter credits his success to the unwavering support of his family. He is deeply grateful for his wife, Kyla Trinette Brown Slaughter, and their children: Kellyn Skyla, Kylynn Rona, and Ronald Levant “R2.”

Reflecting on his journey, Pastor Slaughter shares that his life is a testament to God's grace, affirming that God can use anyone who remains "a work in progress." He firmly believes that "the best in Christ Jesus is yet to come."

The Baccalaureate Service is a cornerstone of Paine College's Commencement Weekend, offering a time of reflection, spiritual encouragement, and celebration for graduating seniors as they prepare to embark on their next chapter.

For more information about Commencement Weekend 2026, visit www.paine.edu.