

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Stephen J. Thurston

PERSON

Thurston, Stephen John, 1952-

Alternative Names: Reverend Stephen J. Thurston;

Life Dates: July 20, 1952-

Place of Birth: Chicago, Illinois, USA

Residence: Olympia Fields, Illinois

Work: Chicago, Illinois

Occupations: Pastor

Biographical Note

Reverend Stephen J. Thurston was born on July 20, 1952, in Chicago, Illinois, to John L. and Ruth E. (Hall) Thurston. He received his B.A. degree in religion from Bishop College, in Dallas, Texas, in 1975, and his Master of Divinity degree from Payne Theological Seminary, in Wilberforce, Ohio, in 2013. He also completed post-graduate studies at Wheaton College, in Wheaton, Illinois, and attended the Master of Divinity degree program at Shaw University, in Raleigh, North Carolina.

In 1971, Thurston preached his first sermon at New Covenant Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois, which was founded by his grandfather, Elijah Thurston, in 1954, with the succession of pastoral leadership being passed on to his father, John, in 1968. Thurston was ordained in 1974 by his father and appointed co-pastor of New Covenant in 1975. Upon the death of his father in 1979, Thurston became pastor. From 1986 to 1989, Thurston served as corresponding secretary of the National Baptist Convention of America International, Inc. (NBCA). Thurston served as third vice president of the NBCA from 1989 to 2003. In 1992, he was elected president of the Illinois National Baptist State Convention, serving until 2003, when he was elected president of the NBCA, a position he held until 2014. Thurston published his first book, *ATTITUDE: The Paint Brush of the Mind*, in 2007. Under his leadership, New Covenant completed construction of a new worship center in 2008. In 2021, he celebrated fifty years of preaching.

Thurston has served as a trustee and chairman of finance at Chicago Baptist Institute, as a member of the Broadcast Ministers Alliance of Chicago and Vicinity, on the board of NAACP, as co-chairman of the Religious Affairs Division of the Rainbow PUSH

Coalition, on the board of directors of the National Alumni Association of Bishop College, as an officer of the Illinois Ethics Board, as a commissioner of the Illinois Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission, as a member of the Economic Empowerment Forum, as a board member of the Arise and Build National Church Building Conference, as a member of the Baptist Pastors Conference of Chicago, and as executive board member of trustees at Florida Memorial University, among other positions.

Thurston was named one of Ebony magazine's "100+ Most Influential Black Americans" in 2004 and was listed among the "Ebony Power 150" in the religious category in 2007. He received the Campbellsville Universities Leadership Award in 2014 and the Ministerial Pioneer Award from the Baptist Minister's Conference in Chicago. Thurston has received honorary doctorate degrees from Temple Bible College and Seminary, Cincinnati, Ohio; Chicago Baptist Institute, Chicago, Illinois (1986); St. Thomas Christian College, Jacksonville, Florida; and Richmond Virginia Seminary, Richmond, Virginia.

Thurston and his wife, Joyce (Hand) Thurston, live in Chicago. They have four children: Nicole, Teniece, Christon, and Stephen II, who was appointed co-pastor of New Covenant in 2004.

Reverend Stephen J. Thurston was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on March 2, 2022.

Related Entries

John M. Harlan Community Academy High School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Bishop College [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Payne Theological Seminary [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

M.Div.

Wheaton College [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Shaw University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

New Covenant Missionary Baptist Church [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1971 to ?]

Pastor

National Baptist Convention of America International, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2003 to 2014]

President

Illinois National Baptist State Convention [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1992 to 2003]

President

Chicago Baptist Institute [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Chair

Broadcast Ministers Alliance of Chicago and Vicinity [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Member

NAACP [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Religious Affairs Division of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Co-chair

National Alumni Association of Bishop College [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Illinois Ethics Board [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Officer

Illinois Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Commissioner

Economic Empowerment Forum [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Member

Arise and Build National Church Building Conference [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Baptist Pastors Conference of Chicago [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Member

Florida Memorial University [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Executive Board Member

