

The Ottawa University Alumni Association
Presents the 2006
OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

To
Classaral McMillan Preston
Class of 1974



Field of Accomplishment: Community Service,
Education and Ministry

The life story of Classaral “Classy” McMillan Preston reads much like the quintessential success story. . .with multiple happy endings.

The oldest of eight children, reared in one of the poorest counties in the country, Classy describes her family as being very close knit. She credits her mother and father with being instrumental in shaping her character. By their example, Classy says, they taught her the value of work and the importance of doing her share. She speaks admirably about their incredible work ethic and says she hopes she is living up to their

example. Most observers would conclude there is no doubt of that. Classy credits her parents with being “a great inspiration; they are very dear to me.”

After graduating with the BA in Business Administration from Ottawa University in 1974, Classy took a position with Bristol-Myers Squibb. The company clearly recognized her talents, and kept her moving with assignments on both coasts. After 18 years, she moved to North Carolina to work for Carolina Power and Light (CP&L), which is now Progress Energy Company. As a corporate executive, she had a stellar career of over twenty-four years. She has served on many Boards and Councils within the North Carolina area

Classy formally answered her call to ministry in 1987 at Third Baptist Church, Toledo, OH. She was ordained by the American Baptist Churches USA in 1992, and received a Masters of Divinity from New York Theological Seminary in 1995. She became pastor of the Pleasant Grove Church in Morrisville, NC in 1998.

In 2000, Classy “stepped out on faith,” leaving her corporate career to become President/CEO of Communities in Schools of Wake County, a nonprofit organization which operates after-school tutorial programs in public housing complexes and schools. At the time she joined the entity it had been without executive leadership for more than a year, had missed a fund-raising cycle and was strapped for cash. Classy spent the next four years raising funds for the

centers and developing new programs. "It's more than a job, it's a ministry," she was quoted as saying at the time.

During this period, the irrepressible Classy pursued a Doctor of Ministry Degree from the Graduate Theology Foundation. Her specialized area of training is pastoral care and counseling. In 2005 she joined the faculty of the Apex School of Theology where she teaches pastoral care and counseling. The News and Observer, Raleigh, NC, recently honored her as "Tar Heel of the Week."

Eventually, her call to full-time ministry took precedence. Classy is currently serving her eighth year as Senior Pastor of Pleasant Grove Church, and is leading the effort to build a wonderful new physical facility for the congregation. Located in Cary, NC, the building project will eventually total over \$7 million. Classy says they are "really excited about our ability to facilitate family ministry by providing a healthy and nurturing environment for all age groups. Families are really challenged today, and our church has the gift of helping others to make connections through the love of Jesus Christ."

Classy has been married to Deacon Jay Preston for over 28 years. Together, they strive to build up the Body of Christ by modeling Christian character while showing genuine love for the people of God.

Classy Preston shares the following: "For as long as I can remember I have lived to serve the Lord. One of my favorite Scripture passages is 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.' Philippians 4:13. This word has sustained me during every challenge, trial and tribulation in my life."

For her tireless efforts to "raise people up" through community service work, educational opportunities for the disadvantaged, and her energetic devotion to the ministry, the Rev. Dr. Classaral McMillan Preston is presented with the OUAA's prestigious Outstanding Achievement Award.

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Outstanding Achievement Award

This new award, established in 2005, is designed to recognize those who have made their mark and made a difference in their chosen field of endeavor. Recipients will, over time, constitute OU's "hall of fame" and their life stories will help demonstrate what one can do with an OU education. The OUAA Board notes that the large number of awards being presented this year should not be interpreted as diluting the importance of the recognition. With over 18,000 living alumni, the Board has worked to identify a broad range of recipients in the first few years, to help demonstrate the scope and intent of the award. The number of awards given annually is expected to decrease in coming years.