

South Dallas Church to Install First Woman Senior Pastor, 142 Years Later

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DALLAS, Texas, 11.16.12 --[Rev. Irie Lynne Session](#), the former associate minister for [The North Texas Area of the Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\) in the Southwest](#), will be installed next month as senior pastor at [Warren Avenue Christian Church](#) (Disciples of Christ), making her the first woman to hold the job in the African-American church's 142 year history.

"I am excited that the congregation took that leap of faith. Because I know there are people who have issues and concerns with the fact that I am a woman. The responsibility is to be the best preacher and pastor that I can be," said Session, 53, who holds a doctorate of ministry in Transformative Leadership and Prophetic Preaching from [Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School](#) in Rochester, New York. She plans to help the church, located in South Dallas, clarify its mission, develop its spirituality and to "preach the good news of Jesus Christ."

The church, located at 2431 Warren Ave., will install her at 3 p.m. Dec. 1.

Session was hired as senior pastor, after 86% of the congregation voted Aug. 19 to call her, said Marilyn Calhoun, pastor installation chair. "It's that old African-American value that a male is the only one that can be in that position. It has been a challenge to get equality for women," said Calhoun, a deacon at the church. "It also signifies breaking the barriers for other denominations to come behind us."

Session said she learned she had been hired during a conference call with the search committee, chaired by Deacon Howard Coleman. Elder Bobby Williams told her, "Warren Avenue just made history," said Session, who adds, she makes the ninth woman, and the only African-American woman, to hold a senior pastor role in Dallas in the DOC.

She preached her first sermon, "A Crazy Call" from Luke 5:27-32, at Warren Avenue Sept. 30, the day after resigning from The North Texas Area of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest. In addition to pastoring Warren Avenue, Session is the advocate and spiritual support coordinator at [New Friends New Life](#). The Dallas agency helps women, who have been trafficked, "leave prostitution," said Session, who has worked there nine years. For six years Session pastored Rosemont Christian Center in Dallas and views herself as a "teaching preacher."

Rev. Patricia Maples is president of the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), whose husband Claude was Warren Avenue's interim pastor during the search. "I think it's a spiritual transformation. I feel that it's not just being the first woman pastor but being a spiritual leader that will move the church into the community," said Rev. Patricia Maples.

[Rev. Lloyd Facen](#), Warren Avenue's longtime senior pastor, died Dec. 20, 2010.

About Warren Avenue Christian Church

Known as "The Avenue," W.A.C.C. dates back to the late 1870's when a group of white missionaries meeting on Sunday afternoon conducted worship services with African-American Christians. After several mergers and moves to different sites, the church has become a South Dallas fixture that heartily serves its community. For more information, call 214.421.4895 or view: <http://www.wacc-doc.org/>.

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