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By RON KISNER

With the spiritual pageantry of dance and stepping, choral singing, and soul-stirring preaching, the historic Greater Abyssinia Baptist Church celebrated the 49th Anniversary of its pastor, Rev., Dr. E. T. Caviness.

Aside from the presence of good friends Arnold and Betty Pinkney, the 49th observance was mostly an in-house affair with the church auxiliaries and various individuals lifting up the extraordinary achievements of one of the city of Cleveland's iconic spiritual and community leaders.

Determined to remain in the Glenville community since many have fled over the decades, Caviness showcases the profound words of the late Booker T. Washington to "cast down your buckets where you are."

In doing so, when Glenville was burning in the l960's, Caviness was gearing up to build additions to the church nestled on the corner of E. 105th and Tacoma Avenues.

Under his pastorate, the church has touches of beauty and history on its grounds with a Fountain of Life and a Wall of Faith inscribed with the names of prominent church families and members.

Inside the spacious sanctuary, Caviness has directed the edition of an audio tape and video ministry that enhance weekly and special church services.

As Caviness took a front seat pew filled with his extended family members, his son, co-pastor Rev. Theophilus J. Caviness, brought a rousing sermon on the awesome challenges facings the modern-day preacher.

Later in the afternoon, in the E.T. and James Pitts Caviness dining hall that honors the memory of his late wife of 42 years, glowing tributes were offered by the offices of Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson, U.S. Rep. Marcia Fudge, and various church members. Each feted Caviness for his extensive body of work that includes serving as a Cleveland City Councilman, membership on the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Sewer Board of Cleveland, Chairman of the Ohio Civil Rights Commission, past president of the Baptist Ministers Conference and president of the local Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).

Additionally, he served as an executive assistant to U.S. Senator George V. Voinovich, when he was mayor of Cleveland.

Never one to bask in accolades, Caviness is marked by his unselfish giving which includes an initial half-million dollar gift to the church to establish an endowment that is now worth more than $700,000, despite dips in the economy, and the establishment of the E.T. Caviness Scholarship

Fund that annually rewards outstanding area students.

Weeks before his anniversary, Caviness delivered financial gifts from Greater Abyssinia to salute Rev. Obie Rush's retirement from the St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church of East St. Louis, IL., where Caviness pastored from 1955-1961.

And, he was invited to preach at the Mt. Nebo Baptist Church of Madison, IL., where he pastored from 1949-1955.

At the close of the service, reflective of his life of giving, Caviness presented a check for $1,000 to establish a book fund for local children.

A week after his uplifting tribute, Caviness hosted the Grammy-Award winning Central State University Choir, an annual gesture that acknowledges his strategic behind the scenes work to save the historically black college from closing and the scholarship he established in his late wife's name.

Overwhelmed by the outpouring of affection, Caviness, intently, and, at times, tearfully, watching the salute unfold, said afterward, "This was one of my best anniversaries ever."