For Immediate Release
November 13, 2014

NIU Law Graduate Installed as First African American Pastor of Historic Kansas City Church

Northern Illinois University College of Law graduate Tina L. Harris (’98 cum laude) was installed on Nov. 9, 2014, as the first African American pastor of the historic Grand Avenue Temple United Methodist Church in Kansas City, Mo. Before being called to the ministry, Harris was an attorney and diversity expert with two international law firms. She is the 37th pastor of the church, which celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2015.

Harris is a native of Galesburg, Ill. She graduated with honors from DePaul University in Chicago (B.A. ’93) prior to attending NIU Law. Before answering her call to the ministry, Harris was director of strategic diversity initiatives and of counsel at Shook, Hardy & Bacon law firm and chief diversity officer at Bryan Cave law firm, both in Kansas City. After graduating from Kansas City’s St. Paul School of Theology with a Master of Divinity degree in 2012, she served as pastor of children and youth at St. James United Methodist Church in Kansas City. Addressing the needs and interests of people from all walks of life has been a key aspect of Harris’ mission and purpose, even prior to being called to the ministry. She is a dynamic public speaker and presenter and regarded as an innovative and forward-thinking leader in diversity initiatives.

The Grand Avenue Temple Methodist congregation was founded in 1865. The church building was built in 1912. Both the church and its E.M. Skinner Opus 190 organ are on the National Register of Historic Places. Through its Lazarus Ministries non-profit corporation, Grand Avenue Temple has continued a 30-year commitment to providing bodily and spiritual support to the homeless population of downtown Kansas City.

“I am absolutely thrilled to lead this congregation that has been making such an important impact by meeting needs and serving God in downtown Kansas City,” said Harris. “This ministry gives a voice to the voiceless, welcomes the outsider, feeds the hungry and demonstrates Jesus’ love to all. People are looking for something different, something real, something that will change their lives. They will find it here.”

Photo Caption:

Rev. Tina L. Harris

For more information, contact

Tina L. Harris
816-582-4080 (mobile)
816-842-3484 (office)
pastortina@grandavenuetempleumc.org