

Hello, I'm Rev. Larry Simmons, a Pastor at *Baber Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church* in Brightmoor, which is a neighborhood in Northwest Detroit, one of the poorest neighborhoods in North America. I grew up in a neighborhood called Conant Gardens and Krainz Woods and I could literally walk for two miles in complete safety... people knew each other... they talked to each other. If I did something two miles away from my house, by the time I walked home, my mother had the news. So one of the most significant events of my early teenage years was the murder of four girls in a Birmingham church, the safe place to study the word of God and some coward bombs and murders them. It made me search for the truth... why are we in this condition? And what I learned is that we were oppressed people, former slaves, as that understanding deepened and my faith grew – I came to understand that the oppressor is oppressed or in prison in much the same way that the oppressed is. Their physical position may be more privileged, but they are as much locked in to a world view which is wrong, as they impose on those who are oppressed. So we all got to get free together and that's become my life's journey. But I fell in love with Brightmoor because of the resilience and the power of the people who are here. They're incredibly poor. But you know, the old saying that 'necessity is the mother of invention'. Necessity is just another way of saying poor. And so they create and invent solutions. They invent gardens because they don't have fresh food market. We invent things and we don't wait because we're the poorest area around. Of course, we usually have been at the bottom of the totem pole. So if we didn't do it ourselves, it didn't get done. This is integral to my faith in Christ because I see Jesus as a man who preached liberty and went through the community, usually the poorest, elevating people and telling them you don't have to wait for somebody. You have power within you right now. Use it, take up your bed and walk.