

Interview with Dr. May Nicholas-Holmes

Conducted by Jordan Scott at Liberty Grace Church, Baltimore

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May Nicholas-Holmes: I am a Baltimorean. I was raised and born here in Baltimore. I went to Morgan State University and Howard University. I'm an orthodontist here and I have been here at Liberty Grace Church of God, I'd say, since 2000, and I have been involved with the Women's Ministry and Sunday school and the garden, and any other projects. You know that the church is involved in, as far as reaching out to the community.

Jordan Scott: Well, when the garden was introduced here, what did you notice like from church members? What was their reaction?

May Nicholas-Holmes: Well, the thing about it is, I don't know about what their reaction was. But I knew that with my interaction with Mother Neufville and other programs and projects in the church that she was out there and it just seemed very interesting. And I said, 'wow, I think I will get out there and help you. I said, 'you need help?' And she said, 'yeah, you're interested?' And I said, 'absolutely, I'll be your *sous*. So, I'm her *sous* gardener.'

Jordan Scott: That's amazing. In your opinion. Do you think more people should be starting their own garden?

May Nicholas-Holmes: It would be wonderful if everybody could. One thing that you have to find that I found very interesting is that people love the things that come from the garden, but people don't like to be in the garden. That's one thing. Our society has become a fast food society, and people don't know how to cook. I find that some of the people in the church who are from the south, they were raised working in the garden and doing things like that. Many of them don't want to do that, or some of them have a really small one, but I think the garden is important, because I know how bad processed food is. And I can see what processed food is doing to our society and historically, people used to always have their own garden and they would cook because they couldn't go out and say, 'let's go get breakfast at McDonald's,' or things like that. But they had real meals. And I just think a garden is really important to our society. If you can do it, if you have the space, and I know I've been to some members' houses where they actually don't have that much space, but they'll have a little porch, and they have all of these little planters, and they have stuff.

But those are people who cook. Our younger generation is we're still trying to pull them in to be a part of that and being understanding how to get involved. And in fact, the church is looking at we have a culinary ministry where we are going to, actually, they're going to actually start doing different kind of meals and things and have the kids involved in that. So yeah, the garden is really important. And we do have the kids in the summer in the summer program coming and

working in the garden, too, just with supervision, so that they can plant things and then watch it grow, and then come back and pick it, and I think we did some greens one time for them. I wasn't there at that time, but I helped them set up everything, and they were very excited about that.

Jordan Scott: I'm also wondering, like, what's been the connection between faith in the garden. I was talking to Mother Neufville, and she was saying that there was like a therapeutic element to being in the garden, and I'm wondering if you've experienced anything similar.

May Nicholas-Holmes: Well, the therapeutic is physical. The physical fact of well, she's always singing and saying, I don't need any Jenny Craig, because we're bending and we're pulling, and we're moving, and we're twisting. And that is the best physical activity. Number one. We're out in the fresh air, number two. And then we always start with a prayer and end with a prayer and just being with other people, and talking about what's going on, or looking at what is grown, and taking pictures of the different flowers, or making different displays and things of that nature. It's very therapeutic, very much so. And it's just a great thing to do

We are doing with CCBC, I think, is so wonderful, because here's a generation of young people who come out and they help set the garden up in the spring and they come back in a fall, and they break it down. But in between that time they had the opportunity to see what we did, look at the garden, see the results of it, get fruits and vegetables that we have, and things of that nature. So, and they are really excited about it, and that's really nice. At one time we did have other colleges coming, and it used to be all young men and they would come also, and they would talk about how they helped the parents in their gardens, and they said, 'oh, if you need us anytime, call us,' so young people when they get out there and see how much fun it is. It's work. They enjoyed it, and not just the males, the females, too, because last time there was more females from CCBC than males, and it was really inspirational. We've had a lot of fun with the community college in doing that.