

## BIOGRAPHY

The Reverend Ron Rawls is the pastor of Greater Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church located in Gainesville, Florida, the same city where he was born and raised. He graduated from the University of Florida with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religion. Reverend Rawls was ordained as an itinerant deacon in 1997 and an itinerant elder in 1999. He received his first pastoral appointment in 1999 and since, has served congregations in Chiefland, Trenton, Jasper, and St. Augustine, Florida.

As an itinerant elder, Reverend Rawls is fully aware that social justice is in the DNA of AMEs and he continues to exemplify the importance of the church being positioned in the forefront of the pursuit of justice. He is widely known for his intense and aggressive activism in St. Augustine, St. John's County and the State of Florida. He is among a small group of civil rights leaders who challenged the city of St. Augustine and won. He follows in the footsteps of Presiding Elder F. D. Richardson, Dr. Robert B. Hayling and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr in their pursuit of justice.

Being mentored by Dr. Robert B. Hayling, the father of the Civil Rights movement in St. Augustine, is an experience that Reverend Rawls values and relies on in expanding his work in the ministry. He approaches ministry from a three-legged perspective believing that our ancestors are pushing us forward by: (1) Confronting (2) Educating and (3) Building. He envisions us being the head and not the tail, being above and not beneath and having the discipline to leave an inheritance for our children's children and a legacy for our descendants.

Reverend Rawls is married to the Honorable Meshon Rawls, County Court Judge in Alachua County. They have three children and five grandchildren who completely occupy his heart. GranFriday is his brand.