



## **Meet Reverend Dr. Jamesetta Ferguson- Pastor, Visionary and President / CEO of MOLO Village!**

We have previously spotlighted Sponsor4Success and Dave Christopher's AMPED business incubator. These innovative projects and many others are housed in the new business complex, The Village at West Jefferson, brainchild of Pastor Jamesetta Ferguson.

Jamesetta Ferguson grew up in the Beecher Terrace projects across the street from St. Peter's United Church of Christ, a German- American congregation. "That church was invisible to us," Ferguson remembered. "We were never invited in."

That changed after she completed her studies at the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and became an intern at St. Peter's. With only 12 members at the time, the church was planning to close as a congregation and donate the building to a local nonprofit. Ferguson had other ideas. She envisioned revitalizing the church and opening it up into a multiracial congregation. She was named pastor in 2006, and her vision began to materialize.

But, the old church had many problems. As a 172 year old historic building, it desperately needed renovation. The quoted cost for repairs was over a million dollars. Ferguson needed a plan.

It came as she was participating in the 2014 Bingham Fellows program, where she worked with other leaders from across the city to identify and brainstorm for ways to improve prosperity in west Louisville — an area of nine neighborhoods with high poverty rates.

The church owned a large adjacent parking lot. "Many times what happens when a church has excess property, it ends up selling it to someone else who develops it," Ferguson said. "We wanted to keep it for ourselves. There's no reason we couldn't develop it."

She devised a plan to develop The Village at West Jefferson on the church's property, with revenue from the project going toward repairs for the church. The Village would create a new space for businesses and social programming, providing the Russell neighborhood with closer and better access to food, banking, healthcare services, education, programs and much more.

With guidance from the United Church of Christ and local allies, she created a free-standing nonprofit organization, Molo Village Community Development Corporation. MOLO is a South African word meaning "Welcome Home." The corporation's mission: "to transform, empower and renew the lives of those we serve through education, community service, advocacy and healthy living."

St. Peter's church, under her leadership, is also transforming, empowering, and renewing lives in Russell. Until the historic building is repaired, they meet in a 5,000-square-foot space in a strip mall down the street. From the original 11 members (1 quit who did not want to work with an African American female minister), they have grown tremendously. Counting worship and the church's nutrition, recovery, prisoner-reentry and food-pantry programs, "right now we have 600 or 700 people a week go through our doors," Ferguson said. Worshipers at a Saturday service – timed with the food pantry – and on Sunday morning typically total 100 to 150.

To learn more, watch this Interview with Reverend Dr. Ferguson:

[https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=868991383834831&ref=watch\\_permalink](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=868991383834831&ref=watch_permalink)

<https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2021/02/01/louisville-black-owned-business-complex-opening-in-west-end/4275719001/>

<https://www.molovillagecdc.org/>