One year into new leadership, Salem Baptist Church looks to its next chapter in North Omaha

104-year-old, 2,300-member congregation will mark Pastor Jarvis Ellis' first year Oct. 11 as church considers its role in a changing North Omaha community



Pastor Jarvis A. Ellis Sr., his wife, Malloree Ellis, and their son, Jarvis "J2" Ellis II. The Ellis family has shared Salem Baptist Church's first year of new leadership as the congregation looks ahead to its next chapter of faith, service and community impact.

OMAHA, NE, UNITED STATES, September 28, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- One year after the Rev. Jarvis A. Ellis Sr. preached his first sermon as pastor of Salem Baptist Church, the 104-year-old North Omaha congregation will mark the anniversary Sunday, Oct. 11, while looking ahead to how one of the community's longstanding Black institutions can deepen its impact beyond Sunday worship.

The anniversary comes at a significant point for both Salem and the neighborhood it has served for generations. The 2,300-member congregation is completing its first full year under new pastoral leadership following the departure of the Rev. Selwyn Q. Bachus, who became Salem's senior pastor in 2005 and left in March 2025 after nearly two decades of leadership.

Ellis preached his first sermon as Salem's pastor Oct. 11, 2025, and was formally installed in March 2026.

At the same time, the North Omaha corridor surrounding Salem is receiving renewed attention through economic and community development efforts, including plans for a full-service grocery store near 25th and Lake streets and an innovation district near 30th Street and Ames Avenue.

Salem, located at 3131 Lake St., sees its next chapter as an opportunity to examine what role a historic church should play as its surrounding community evolves.

“Church and community go hand in hand. What we learn inside the sanctuary should make a difference outside the walls,” Ellis said. “Salem is not just a church in the community. We are a church called to impact the community. The Word of God has to touch our homes, our jobs, our stress, our hopes and our plans. The church has to be a community that serves, cares and helps people know they have a place to belong.”

The Oct. 11 anniversary will give members an opportunity to reflect on Salem’s first year under Ellis while also focusing on the congregation’s future. The anniversary theme, “The Journey Continues: Standing on the Promise,” is drawn from Philippians 1:6.

During his first year, Ellis has challenged Salem to strengthen relationships across generations, make Christian faith relevant to everyday life and expand the church’s connection to the broader Omaha community. The congregation has described the period as its “Year to Reimagine,” with an emphasis on reconsidering how the church worships, builds community and serves others.

Ellis has previously described the transition as an opportunity to rethink Salem’s community involvement as well as its worship. His arrival follows a line of pastors who have led the congregation through periods of growth and change during Salem’s more than century-long history.

“We thank God for what He has done, and we trust God for what He will do next,” Ellis said. “One year gives us an opportunity to look back with gratitude, but it also reminds us that the work is not finished. We are not here just to do church. We are here to be the Church, and that means our faith has to make a difference in the lives of people beyond our walls.”

Salem was founded in 1922 and has remained part of North Omaha through decades of demographic, economic and neighborhood change. The congregation moved to its current location at 3131 Lake St. in 2000 after members marched from its former church building at 3336 Lake St.

Ellis’ installation earlier this year also received recognition from the Nebraska Legislature, which adopted a resolution congratulating him on becoming Salem’s pastor.

The anniversary will recognize Ellis’ wife, Malloree Ellis, and their son, Jarvis “J2” Ellis II, as well as members who supported the church through the leadership transition.

“This has been a shared journey,” said Greg Johnson, who leads the deacon’s ministry at Salem. “Pastor Ellis has provided leadership and vision, but the congregation has had a role in every step. Our members have prayed, worked, served and welcomed the Ellis family into Salem. This anniversary gives us a chance to say thank you to them while also recommitting ourselves to the work that is still ahead.”

As Salem enters Ellis' second year, church leaders say priorities include creating stronger connections among generations and addressing the needs of young adults, families, children and older adults.

"We do not know every turn the journey will take," Ellis said. "But we know the God who leads us. God began the work, God is still at work and we believe God will see the work through."

About Salem Baptist Church
The Salem Baptist Church is transforming lives by Exalting the Savior, Evangelizing the Lost, Equipping the Saints, and Expanding the Kingdom of God. Salem is home to the most prominent African American church population in Nebraska. The church was founded in 1922 and has played essential roles in the history of African Americans in Omaha and the city's religious community. Church leadership has impacted the city in a variety of ways. Salem's long-time senior pastor Rev. J.C. Wade was recognized in the Congressional Record in 2000.

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