



PRESS RELEASE

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Saint Mark Baptist Church, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families Host Documentary Screening and Discussion on Maternal Mortality

Little Rock, AR (March 20, 2023)— In recognition of April as Minority Health Month and Black Maternal Health Week April 11-17, Saint Mark Baptist Church (Saint Mark) and Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF) will host a screening of [*Aftershock*](#) on **Tuesday, April 11 at 6pm at Saint Mark Baptist Church, 5722 W. 12th St.** Following the documentary screening, there will be a discussion about Black maternal mortality in Arkansas with Dr. Creshelle Nash, the Arkansas Blue Cross Blue Shield medical director for Health Equity and Public Programs; and Dr. William “Sam” Greenfield, Arkansas Department of Health medical director and UAMS professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology. The discussion will include topics such as access to maternal healthcare, affordable healthcare accessibility, and the role of community organizations. This event is free and open to the public.

Aftershock brings attention to the alarming rate of Black maternal mortality in the United States and explores the racial disparities in healthcare access and treatment, systemic racism, and the trauma Black mothers experience during childbirth and pregnancy. Arkansas ranks as one of the worst states in America for maternal health. A 2021 Department of Health report showed Black mothers were more than two times as likely to die as white mothers during pregnancy. In the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s 2018 comparison of 26 states with available data, Arkansas had the highest maternal mortality ratio.

“Our health ministry is pleased to partner with AACF to bring this powerful documentary and discussion to our community,” said Dr. Phillip L. Pointer, Sr., Senior Pastor of Saint Mark Baptist Church. “It is crucial that we shine a light on the devastating effects of healthcare inequities on Black maternal health and take action to address these disparities.”

“There are several factors that contribute to the extremely poor maternal health outcomes in Arkansas, including high poverty rates and inadequate obstetric care in rural parts of the state,” said Keesa Smith, AACF executive director. “We are hopeful that conversations like these, as well as continued advocacy at the state level to invest additional resources in rural communities, doctors can save more expectant mothers’ lives.”

For more information about the event, contact Stephanie Jackson at stephanie@designgroupmarketing.com.

About Saint Mark Baptist Church

Founded in 1892 with only four members in a nameless storehouse, Saint Mark Baptist Church has grown to become one of Arkansas' largest congregations serving families in Central Arkansas and beyond. From small group lessons on money management, to food programs for the homeless, disaster relief assistance and educational tutoring for youth, Saint Mark uses biblical principles to help its nearly 9,000 members and surrounding community grow in every aspect of their lives. Saint Mark's ministry includes five live events on Sunday and Wednesday, Growth Factor, a weekly television broadcast, SMYM, a thriving youth ministry, and a robust outreach division. Find us at smark.org or on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or [YouTube](#) @SaintMarkLR.

About Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families is a statewide, nonprofit child advocacy organization established in 1977. Our mission is to ensure that all children and their families have the resources and opportunities to lead healthy and productive lives and to realize their full potential.

Visit <http://www.aradvocates.org> for more information.

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