

## Empowerment through Community Outreach and Education by Chaplain Frank Harris

As a chaplain who offers support to those navigating critical decision making in crisis moments involving medical care for their loved-ones, I am well aware that there is a dire need in many communities for awareness surrounding advance directives and end-of-life care planning. Not only is there increased opportunity for mistrust and communication breakdown between the medical team and the patient and/or family when values are not expressed or there is limited medical understanding, but there is also a greater chance for family discord during the patient's hospitalization and after their passing.

Values expressed through religious belief systems concerning medical care at the end of life can be honored by the medical team when they are communicated. However, many laypersons are unaware of the resources available that can assist the patient, family, and medical team in communicating clearly with each other.

In partnership with the International African American Museum, representatives from MUSC offered a presentation on the importance of advance directives and end of life care at the Royal Missionary Baptist Church in North Charleston, SC on Wednesday, March 13, 2019. This was held as part of the church's "Wellness on Wednesday" initiative which seeks to share practical information with church members and the local community. Over 150 attendees took part in this discussion and gained information from medical, social work and clergy representatives with the goal of empowering individuals and maintaining cohesive family units when a medical crisis is faced.

(L-R: Chaplain Frank Harris, Manager of MUSC Pastoral Care Services; Rev. DeMett Jenkins, Lilly Director of Education and Engagement for Faith Based Communities at the International African American Museum; Dr. Amanda Overstreet, Assistant Professor/Geriatrics and Palliative Care, MUSC; Mary Catherine Dubois, Palliative Care Social Worker, MUSC; Rev. Kay Colleton, Pastor of Manna Life Center, Johns Island, SC; and Dr. Thaddeus J. Bell, Founder of Closing the Gap in Healthcare.)