

Elizabeth (Timmons) Nkonoki-Ward



Elizabeth (Timmons) Nkonoki-Ward was born in Tallahassee, Florida, moved to Kensington, CT where she was baptized at St. Paul' Roman Catholic Church. She moved to New Britain, CT and attended St. Joseph School, graduating in 1950 to continue a very exciting life's journey through New Britain High School with opportunities abounding.

She became the first African-American accepted into the Music Department at Danbury State Teachers College, graduating with a B.S. Degree in Music Education in 1958 and an M. S. in Elementary Education in 1973. She taught throughout Connecticut spending over 30 years in the Hartford Public Schools, being named Hartford's "Teacher of the Year" in 1986. She became involved with Catholic Family Services of New Britain in the 1970's, initiating and producing television programs on Cable Access to help the community become better aware of services available within the agency to address the needs of all groups, including African Americans, Spanish-Speaking and Polish-Speaking and other ethnic groups. She coordinated and produced two concerts as fundraisers for Western Region Catholic Family Services, utilizing outstanding Black, talented, operatically-trained soloists, the New Britain Symphony, Nigerian and Ghanaian choirs of the Archdiocese of Hartford, along with a youth Gospel choir from the Hartford area. She became a member of the Black Secretariat (forerunner to the Office for Black Catholic Ministries) and was part of a committee which helped to develop the list of Black Catholics in the Archdiocese identifying over 10,000 during the 1980's. She was selected to be part of the delegation of Black Catholics who traveled to New Orleans, Louisiana for a special gathering with Pope John Paul II; promoted vocations for the priesthood and novitiate; supported and encouraged the Black priests and nuns in the Archdiocese; collected and delivered clothing to new arrivals from various parts of Africa, becoming known as "Mama Liz" to many; collaborated with Myles Hubbard, when he became Executive Director of the Office for Black Catholic Ministries, to revive and host the radio show entitled Good News on WJMJ, a program which had been originally initiated by Eckley Macklin (now Father Macklin). She continues to be an active member of the Advisory Board for the Office for Black Catholic Ministries for the Archdiocese of Hartford; she was the recipient of the Greater New Britain Arts Alliance, Lifetime Contribution to the Arts Award in 2008; is organist at St. Joseph Church in New Britain, CT (16 years), and, along with Mr. Joseph Ward, Sr. is parent to six children, 14 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.