



FIRST AFRIKAN CHURCH SHABBAT DEVOTIONAL 2025



Ancient Kemetic Symbol
House of Life
Center of learning, knowledge and healing

Per Ankh (House of Life) Study and Sermon Series

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PREFACE

The First Afrikan Shabbat (or Sabbath) was conceived and developed by the First Afrikan staff in the Fall of 2003. As we thought and prayed together about ways to further empower First Afrikan members spiritually, it occurred to us to develop and provide First Afrikan families with a resource that would:

- 1) Assist them in growing spiritually;
- 2) Build stronger familial bonds;
- 3) Provide periodic times of rest throughout the year;
- 4) Teach the First Afrikan liturgical calendar called Afrikan Rhythms;
- 5) Reflect on the church's Theme for the year; and
- 6) Further empower the church membership as a whole to achieve our collective vision of "Building Beyond our Years."

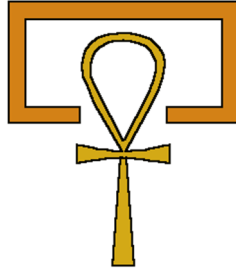
The First Afrikan Shabbat is different from and similar to the Shabbats we read about in the Bible and observe among our sisters and brothers of the Jewish faith. The First Afrikan Shabbat is different from those we read about in Scripture or observe in the practices of contemporary Jews because of the proposed time sequences. At First Afrikan we observe Shabbat during the month of January. In Judaism, Shabbat is a weekly observance that begins at sundown on Friday evening and ends at sundown on Saturday evening. Further, contemporary Jews do no work on the Shabbat whereas members of First Afrikan must work due to the length of time our Shabbat lasts.

First Afrikan's Shabbat is similar to the Shabbat we read about in scripture and observe among our sisters and brothers in contemporary Judaism because it is a time for families and close friends to come together to remember their ancestral past, celebrate their collective covenant with the Creator, sing songs of the faith, reflect on the church's theme for the year, and share a common meal.

A key feature of First Afrikan's Shabbat is family time. Shabbat is a time during which parents should be intentional about reconnecting with their children and, assuring that their children understand the importance of spiritual growth and development as it relates to their life's purposes. The fact that Shabbat is family time does not preclude its importance to single people who live by themselves. Such persons should use Shabbat time to reconnect with close friends and family members around the spiritual principles and practices offered in this document.

Harambee! Shabbat is a time to come together spiritually, that we might live, work and play together physically.

Pastor Lomax



2025 Shabbat & Per Ankh Sermon and Study Series

FAC Theme: “Akoma Ntoso.” “Linked Hearts” in the Twi language of the Asante people of Ghana, West Africa.

FAC VISION Statement

First Afrikan Church envisions the spiritual, psychological, and social healing of marginalized people, and people of Afrikan descent in particular, by means of our bold and unapologetic Africentric Christian witness.

FAC MISSION Statement

First Afrikan Church is an Africentric Christian Ministry called by the Creator and led by the Spirit of the Ancestors to shape consciousness, serve the needy, welcome the marginalized and address social and ecological injustices and all other forms of structural and systemic oppression.

The FAC 2025 Shabbat Sermon and Study Series

The phrase Per Ankh means “House of Life.” It is an ancient Kemetic (Egyptian) institution run by priests and often attached to Temples. The House of Life is the center of cultural endeavors to preserve and ensure the ongoing process of cosmic, political, and social life.

From its inception First Afrikan Church has struggled to be a sanctuary – a place where peoples of Afrikan descent can come and find a sense of “home,” a place where their true thoughts and deepest feelings can be honestly expressed, and a place where they are surrounded by images and energies that help to heal and affirm their Afrikan identities.

At First Afrikan January is the month we rest and dedicate time to spiritual, relational, political and cultural enrichment; rededicate ourselves to the pursuit of cultural and spiritual knowledge and set the tone for the rest of the year through reflecting on the church’s theme which is “Akoma Ntoso.” Akoma Ntoso means “Linked Hearts” in the Twi language of the Asante people of Ghana, Africa. The adinkra symbol for Akoma Ntoso is imaged below.



Adinkra Symbol: **Akoma Ntoso.** *Linked Hearts/Understanding and Agreement*

Another way of interpreting Akoma Ntoso is “understanding and agreement.” Whether the phrase used to define this symbol is “linked hearts” or “understanding and agreement” several unspoken though implied steps must be taken to arrive at the relational space implied by it.

First, there must be an intentional effort made by all parties involved to establish dialogue to identify matters of common concern. Second, the dialogue must be courteous and respectful of all views expressed. For this to happen empathy and compassion will have to be utilized in the relationship building process. Third, participants will need the willingness to negotiate and compromise with the best interest in the group in mind. Fourth and finally, there must be a commitment to operationalize the common agenda.

This sermon and study series will identify four biblical, theological or cultural principles that will aid us in achieving Akoma Ntoso. In the admonishment captured in the Negro Spiritual “*Walk together children, don’t you get weary, there’s a great camp meeting in the promised land.*”



Adinkra Symbol: **SESA WO SUBAN.**
Change or transform your Character

PREPARING FOR THE SHABBAT MEDITATION

SHABBAT MEDITATION OVERVIEW:

According to the writer, the children of Israel are to be instructed to consecrate something that is not yet in their possession. But actually, they are being directed to consecrate themselves first. The land is to observe a Shabbat because it is intended to be possessed by a holy people who are in a sustained relationship with a holy Creator. *This is the real secret to the Shabbat.*

So what is a Shabbat? Why is it important to observe a Shabbat during key moments in our individual and communal lives? Fundamentally, a Shabbat (or Sabbath) is designated time that is set aside for rest, reflection, worship and renewal. It is a time for rejuvenation in all aspects of our lives. The writer of Leviticus 25:1-2 shares the same perspective as the one who penned Genesis 2:1-3. For both, the Shabbat is the crowning jewel of creation and worship. The Holy Creator is also the one who enters into a sacred promise with those who consecrate themselves and everything around them for the purpose of transforming the secular into the sacred. Indeed, from this point of view, there is no secular time or space. The cosmos is Yahweh's and all that is contained within it. But before this can be fully manifested externally, it has to be deeply rooted internally.

The observance of a Shabbat provides us with an opportunity to examine what is most important in our lives. We should ask ourselves this question in a concerted way. The ancient Hebrews realized that it is extremely difficult to do this work of self-examination in midst of the business of the daily grind of work. Therefore, they instituted the Shabbat. Shabbat was a day within a seven-day cycle to be set aside exclusively for rejuvenation, worship and reflection. Later on in their history this concept was extended to include a year-long Shabbat. This is referred to in the entire chapter of Leviticus 25. Not only was the land to observe a rest, but slaves were to be set free and interest on loans were to be waived. These were all symbolic acts of a community's reliance upon their Creator to meet the needs of the entire community throughout all of their generations.

Even though it may not be possible to fulfill the requirements of a text like Leviticus 25 in our own context, it is possible to rededicate ourselves to our Creator through the cultivation of spiritual disciplines that are practiced consistently for a designated period of time. Therefore, the devotional you now have in your hands is intended to be a guide during the next few weeks of a sacred journey. During this time of rest, reflection, worship and renewal you are invited to develop a sustained period of spiritual growth with your family and close friends. This devotional is divided into several components in an effort to facilitate your progress.

Conclusion

On behalf of the staff of First Afrikan Church, we extend our gratitude to you, your family and our entire community of faith for your willingness to participate. Please familiarize yourself with the content of this publication and take note of additional Bible Study Series and other experiences planned throughout the year.

SHABBAT RITUALS OF VENERATION AND WORSHIP

Before attempting to perform the rituals, be sure to read the instructions and gather the necessary materials in advance. At the designated time - the family, or individual, will engage in a candle lighting and libation ceremony. This is important preparation that involves paying reverence to the Creator, one's ancestors, one's family and community and the unborn. Through prayer, songs and affirmations our attention is called to 'center down' during this time of meditation.

In addition to the individual benefits that are to be derived from this practice, you, your family, friends and community of faith will be strengthened as a collective body through the spiritual energy that will be unleashed through this communal practice of being on one accord. Once this is accomplished, the group can move forward with a keen sense of purpose and motivation to complete any goal it has set for itself. Even when this has to be fulfilled in stages, like the ancient Hebrews, we will not lose sight of our main objective, to "build beyond our years."

GATHER FOR THE MEDITATION

Materials:

1. The family/individual will need candles, one per person. The candles represent the unborn and the ancestors.
2. A live plant and water for pouring libation. Libations should be poured outdoors when the weather permits.
3. A sacred space/altar where the family/group will gather for the meditation. If possible to acknowledge the role of feminine energy in this coming age, the Mother or eldest female identifies and organizes a sacred space/altar where the family will gather for the meditation.

Note: An altar can consist of a white towel/mat on which is placed a rock representing earth, a feather representing air, a bowl or cup of water, and a candle. (Other sacred items may be placed on the altar, Kinara, books, libation cup, pictures of family, etc.)

CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY

Place the candles in the center of the gathering space. (Note: single men can also do this part of the ceremony themselves).

2. The Mother or eldest female initiates (see note in # 1 above) lighting of the candles, by lighting her candle first. Then the Father or eldest male lights his candle. The children light their candle from the eldest to the youngest. As the candles are being lit, one member of the family should read – a bible verse, poem or lyrics of an appropriate song.
3. The youngest family member lights the candles that represent the ancestors and the unborn.

4. After all the candles are lit the family sings – a song the family has chosen.

LIBATION CEREMONY

A pitcher of water and plant are needed. Water is poured into the plant in honor of a worthy ancestor or a family member give thanks to the Creator. Remember that ancestors are those people in our families who served their own families as well as the broader community with love, dignity, and power. “Ashe” is said after each statement of thanksgiving to the Creator or after an Ancestor is lifted up.

1. To the Supreme Being -(pour the water)- “Ashe!”
2. To Mother Afrika
3. To Ancestral spirits in Afrika
4. To Ancestral spirits who endured the MAAFA (i.e. the Holocaust of the Middle Passage)
5. To Ancestral spirits who survived enslavement (name some of those you know aloud)
6. To Ancestral spirits who fought for freedom (name some freedom fighters you know aloud)
7. To Ancestral spirits who form our present as the cloud of witnesses (those who have transitioned)
8. To the unborn who will someday remember us as Ancestral spirits



MEDITATION HYMN, REFLECTION, AND [FAMILY] DISCUSSION

The family is now prepared for the singing of the Meditation Hymn OR listening to an appropriate music accompaniment selected by the person, family, or group. (CD, music service, Youtube, etc.).

Using the suggestions on “How to Study the Bible”, read the bible verse and then reflect on what was read and then engage in a meaningful [family] discussion.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Pastor Mark A. Ogunwalè Lomax



1. Choose a good study bible. I recommend either *The New Interpreters Study Bible* (NRSV), or *The Harper Collins Study Bible* (NIV).
2. Choose a good bible dictionary. I recommend the Interpreter's Bible Dictionary, the Harper Collins Bible Dictionary, or on-line resources like Biblegateway.com or Biblehub.com.
3. Choose a good bible commentary. There are a lot on the market but I recommend either the Anchor Bible Commentary.
4. Read the entire biblical book (ex. Genesis, Matthew, Revelation, etc.) in one sitting. The purpose of reading the entire book in one sitting is to enable the reader to discern the purpose of the book being studied, as well as to acquaint the reader with the setting, characters, plot, and purpose of the book.
 - a. while reading, jot down any thoughts, insights, questions, or comments that come to mind while reading
 - i. do not try to look up definitions or do deep research in this stage of study.

5. Now read verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter. In this second (close) reading, read margin notes, footnotes, and cross check biblical references that often appear in the notes. The goal here is to discover the meaning of the biblical passage.

6. Look up and get the definitions of the words you don't know.

7. Using your bible dictionary, look up place names, names of deities mentioned in the text (especially in the Old Testament), and the names of biblical characters (sometimes the names of the characters are keys to understanding the biblical text.

8. Note recurring words and phrases. Recurring words and phrases are normally indications of the writer's true intent and message.

9. Using a good concordance, (bible gateway, bible hub) check to see how often a word, phrase, or character actually appears in the author's book (for instance, how many times does the word "brother" show up in Matthew's gospel? About whom is Matthew speaking when he uses the word "brother?")

10. Now, re-read the chapter you've just studied. Think and jot down what you think it is saying.

9. Note whether chapters begin with conjunctions (and, therefore, since). If so, to what idea or action is the chapter connected? It is important to note the *context* of a particular chapter or verse – what comes before and after the chapter under consideration? If they are linked in some way, then true understanding cannot be attained without considering that to which they are connected.

10. There will often be times when you will want to know more than what the Bible says about a place, a person, or a people. Both bible dictionaries and biblical encyclopedias are helpful in garnering more information. ***Do not consult a commentary until you have done this work.*** The commentary simply affirms your own work with primary source materials.

11. Pay particular attention to the setting of the biblical text. What is transpiring on the stage of human history at the time of the writing? Who was in power? Was there oppression? Who (what people) does the text seem to privilege? Is the setting one of wealth or poverty? Etc.

12. Pay close attention to the *spirituality* of the text. Is God mentioned? If so, in what way is God speaking and acting? On whose behalf is God acting?

13. Having done your best to discover what a biblical passage meant, now ask yourself what it means. Since the passage spoke a particular way back then, how does it speak today?

Shabbat Study Format, Themes, and Scriptures

GATHER FOR THE MEDITATION

CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY

LIBATION CEREMONY

MEDITATION HYMN

Format for engaging this study through Shabbat:

- Read the passage either silently or by taking turns, verse by verse, with those studying with you.
- Discuss your understanding of the principle under consideration for this week. It could be love, ubuntu, soul force, or
- Ask, “what does the biblical passage have in common with the principle? “
- Share the meaning of the biblical passage with one another.
- Consider ways to integrate this principle, along with the meaning of the biblical passage, into your daily routine.

Sunday, January 5, 2025

LOVE:

Biblical Text: 1 John 4:1-12 *4 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.² By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.⁴ Little children, you are from God and have conquered them, for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.⁵ They are from the world; therefore, what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them.⁶ We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and whoever is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.⁹ God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.¹⁰ In this is love, not that*

we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Sunday, January 12, 2025

UBUNTU: The interconnectedness of all living things. A person is a person through other people.

Biblical Text: Mark 12:28-34

²⁸ One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” ²⁹ Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; ³⁰ you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” ³² Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; ³³ and ‘to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself’—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” ³⁴ When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask him any question.

Sunday, January 19, 2025

MLK Birthday Celebration: SOUL FORCE

Biblical Text: Galatians 5:1, 13-15

¹ For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery . . . For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence,^[c] but through love become enslaved to one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Sunday, January 26, 2025

RECONCILIATION:

Biblical Text: Matthew 18:15-17

15 "If your brother or sister sins against you,^[a] go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. 16 But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector. 18 Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

MAOL

At the end of the Shabbat we enter into the Liturgical Season of BIRTH/INITIATION (February through the 2nd Sunday in April)

Symbol: The Ankh



Color: Red

We believe in the living Creator, who fashioned the Universe, The one who gave life to this galaxy, solar system and planet, more specifically life here on mother Earth, and the most ancient presence of humanity that originated within our Mother, Africa. We were formed in the image of our Creator, male and female. And this is very good.