

Reverend Dion J. Watkins is a native of Lackawanna, New York. Reverend Watkins is a man of God who was led at an early age to motivate and inspire generations of people. He accepted Christ at the age of 16, and was a faithful member of the Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church in the City of Lackawanna, New York where he was very active in many ministry activities while growing up in Mount Olive. Reverend Watkins graduated from Lackawanna Senior High School in 1997. He then continued his education at Canisius College where he obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education in 2001. He also obtained a Master's of Science Degree with a concentration in Reading Education in 2003 from Canisius, Then returning to school to receive his Masters of Divinity Degree in December 2007 from Northeastern Seminary in Rochester, New York. With his strong belief of scholastic achievement, Reverend Watkins achieved each degree with honors. Reverend Dion Watkins was employed by the Lackawanna City School District from 2001 thru 2014 where he served as a sixth grade teacher. On December 31, 2013 he took a leave of absence from the school district to pursue full-time ministry. His friendly disposition and understanding of others allowed him to be effective in his classroom and beloved by his students and peers. Because of his efforts, in June, 2010, the Lackawanna City School District honored Reverend Watkins by inducting him into its prestigious High School Wall of Fame. In 1997 at the age of 17 Reverend Watkins was called into the ministry. April 29, 2001 at the young age of 21 Reverend Watkins was installed as Pastor of the Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church in Lackawanna, NY, becoming the first associate minister to become pastor of his home church. During his leadership, at Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church, the membership grew considerably. As a result of this increase, in June 2011, Rev. Watkins and his church expanded their church services to Revelation Baptist Church of Buffalo, New York, making it a satellite location for their 8:00 a.m. worship service. Mount Olive became one church in two cities Reverend Dion J. Watkins is no stranger to public service. In the summer of 2011, Rev. Watkins ran a great campaign for Mayor of the City of Lackawanna. After a marginal loss (14 votes) in the primaries, he promoted a write-in campaign. Although he did not win this seat, he offered hope to residents and encouraged many to vote who had never voted in their lifetime. In 2013, the Holy Spirit would speak to Pastor Watkins, thus, redirecting his footsteps to Hartford, Connecticut. Humbly, he accepted the call as pastor of the historic Mount Olive Church Ministries. In a short period of time, he has impacted the community greatly. Mount Olive Church Ministries has grown tremendously, receiving over 500 souls to the ministry in the first year of his Pastoring. Under Pastor Watkins leadership several new ministries were implemented, Psalms of Worship Youth Choir (POW), Seniors on the Move, Marketing, Pastor's aide, and the Hospitality Ministry. Through Pastor Dion J. Watkins' vision of taking ministry beyond the four walls, Mount Olive Church Ministries established seasonal give backs. The Food Give Away blesses over 200 unsuspected families with groceries at their doorsteps for the past four years. Also instituted is Mount Olive's Annual Community Block Party, which is attended by over 2,500 people yearly and gives away over 700 fully supplied back packs to students in the Greater Hartford area. Another giveback is the gas giveaway, Gas on God. Gas on God gives back to the community by taking away some of the stresses at the pumps by giving away in average of \$4,000 between two gas stations. Newly added is the College Care Packages. College Care packages consists of 150-200 backpacks, supplied with snacks and essentials, are given away to students on campus. Pastor Watkins has initiated miraculous services for diversified groups such as "Daddy and

His Daughter's" and "Behind the Mascara", a deliverance service for women. He has also started the Youth Shut-In's to address the values and assert education for the youth of Greater Hartford. Pastor Watkins has aligned himself with the community because of his compassion to change the lives of the wayward, homeless and lost souls that find their way to the doors of Mount Olive Church Ministries. In April of 2014, Pastor Watkins implemented the Vision 220 Plan, which successfully paid off the mortgage of the church, in a short 24 months, instead of the five years projected by the bank. On April 24, 2016, Mount Olive held its Mortgage Burning Service celebrating the completion of the vision. As the Pastor of Mount Olive Church Ministries, Pastor Watkins also serves as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Mount Olive Child Development Center, Inc. Taking the helm, Pastor Watkins guided the program through some major changes that has put the program on a steady path of success, increasing enrollment, stimulating staff morale, as well as rekindling parents feeling of security. Pastor Dion J. Watkins continues to be an asset to the Greater Hartford area influencing change in the lives of those he comes into contact with, preaching salvation, walking in humility and operating under the grace of our Father in Heaven.