Phillips Theological Seminary  
2014 Marshall Award Recipient  
Jesse Jackson, Jr.

The Reverend Jesse Jackson Jr. is the proud pastor of the East Sixth Street Christian Church in Oklahoma City, OK. He is the longest serving pastor in the history of that historic congregation that was founded in 1919.

Rev. Jackson is a native of Jackson, MS and a fourth generation minister. After high school, he entered Jackson State University where he was a member of both the Tiger football and track teams. After completing his sophomore year, he transferred to Murray State University in Murray, KY and was a member of the 1986 Ohio Valley Conference championship Football team.

While a student at Murray State, he accepted his call to the ministry and preached his first sermon in February of 1987. That campus also nurtured in him an activism planted by his parents. While at Murray, he led efforts to birth a campus chapter of the NAACP; he organized campus efforts to divest in the Apartheid era regime of South Africa and free Nelson Mandela. He was elected president of the campus chapter of the Young Democrats and became a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc. In December of 1989, he graduated with a degree in Journalism and a minor in Youth Agency Administration.

After graduation, in January of 1990, he moved to Oklahoma City to become the Program Director for the Eastside Branch YMCA. He later spent three years as a Community Center Supervisor for the City of Norman Parks and Recreation Department before becoming the Recreation Supervisor for the Guthrie Job Corps Center. It was while serving in Guthrie that Rev. Jackson became Pastor Jackson of the East Sixth Street Christian Church.

In 2002, Jesse traveled with other Disciple and UCC ministers to Palestine and Israel to get a firsthand look at the Palestinian/Israeli conflict and to look for ways to engage African American congregations of our respective fellowships in “peacemaking”, justice and the theological interpretation surrounding that conflict.

It was that experience that spurred his to return to PTS and the completion of the M.Div program. While a student at Phillips, he also traveled to the Sonoran Desert of Arizona and Mexico studying Border Theology and human rights. In 2007, he graduated from Phillips Theological Seminary and also accepted the assignment of classroom teacher at the Marcus Garvey Leadership Charter School where he taught the all – male Making of Men Academy. In this research based class, he stayed with his students from second to fifth grade searching for the “best practices” in educating young men. After four years of research and teaching, he moved on to the Oklahoma City Public Schools where he once again taught all boys, this time, it was an alternative education class.
Rev. Jackson is a member of several boards, organizations and committees locally as well as nationally. He is the President Elect and sitting Vice President of the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. He is an officer and board member of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC); a board member of One Church – One Child of Oklahoma as well as the JFK Neighborhood Association. He is also the program chair for the Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Breakfast, the largest of its kind in the state.

In 2012, he organized and led a book study/action group on “The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness”. That study led to the formation of an ecumenical body that invited, designed and hosted the author of the book, Michelle Alexander in Oklahoma City. He has led workshops on Mass Incarceration throughout the state including at PTS during the DWF Encounter, Leadership Training School in Oklahoma City as well as in Enid.

He has designed those same type of workshops for the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, the Oklahoma Alliance of Black School Educators in addition to many churches. At the General Assembly (July 2013), he led a learning opportunity for the entire church on Mass Incarceration and was one of the speakers to bring a resolution to the floor of the General Assembly regarding that subject.