

AL

Enid native Pamela Fields graduates from doctorate of ministry program

By James Neal
Staff Writer

Enid native the Rev. Pamela Fields graduated Saturday from her doctoral program in ministry at Bethel Seminary, completing a 10-year journey to her doctoral degree.

Fields, a 1982 graduate of Enid High School and daughter of long-time St. Stephen AME minister the Rev. Bonnell Fields, now resides and works in Dallas, but returned to Enid to celebrate her online graduation.

Also present for her celebration Saturday were her mother, the Rev. Bonnell Fields; brother, Venson Fields; sister, Ann Fields; son, Wayne Morris; and grandchildren.

Fields completed her bachelor's degree in December 2005 at Paul Quinn College in Dallas, and went on to study for her master's degree in ministry at Bethel Seminary in St. Paul, Minn.

"I went with the intention of being a missionary," Fields said, "but when I got there, one of my professors at Bethel wrote a book on reconciliation, and I got the reconciliation bug."

That affinity for reconciliation work grew, she said, when she traveled with a group from Bethel to South Africa to meet with members of that country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which worked to unite the country after the fall of apartheid.

During her time in seminary Fields found herself in a fight not just to graduate, but to overcome a brain tumor the size of a golf ball.

A difficult path of surgery, radiation and physical therapy interrupted — but did not prevent her from completing — her seminary studies and ordination.

She had to learn to walk again and suffered extreme headaches and some vision loss. Fields still suffers with memory and hormonal issues, she said.

Despite those hurdles she went on to enroll in her doctoral studies in 2010, and to found in 2016 the nonprofit Visible Unity, which works to "bring diverse peo-



The Rev. Pamela Fields graduated from her doctorate of ministry program Saturday. (Photo provided)

ple together to have healthy conversations around race and build bridges across cultures."

More information on Visible Unity is available at <http://www.visibleunityinc.org>.

Fields said she will continue her work at Visible Unity, and hopes to apply there her doctoral dissertation, titled "The Unity Process and its Effectiveness in Decreasing Cross-Cultural Divisions in Society due to Racism," which she successfully defended in February.

"The challenge I give to people is you should build relationships across cultures and barriers that have the depth of refrigerator buddies," Fields said.

A "refrigerator buddy," she explained is "someone who is in a deep enough relationship with you that they can come to your house and go to your refrigerator."

A major focus of Visible Unity and the Unity Process is overcoming "racist thinking and ideology that we have been raised with in the United States," but Fields said the program also can be used to reconcile people across any dividing lines, of faith, race, class, gender, orientation or age.

"My belief is from the Christian perspective," Fields said, "if we believe we all are created in the image of God, then every human is worthy of dignity and some level of respect."